

trons, interrupted finally by a gale of laughter. Every person in the bar had turned to watch the British comedian Ali G on television. And they got all the jokes.

Some young Europeans see a downside to all this cultural convergence: it often feels like homogenization. Paola La Falce, 34, an Italian who works for Universal Music in Paris, recalls her first trip to the U.K. 15 years ago: "It was incredibly different from where I came from. But now the center of London is just like the center of Milan—it's the same Gap and Levis stores. I'm nostalgic for that period when you really felt like you were somewhere else. I'm all for a united Europe, but I think we're losing something at the same time." That ambivalence about the momentum of European integration—and in a larger sense, globalization—is widely felt. Young adults in all four countries surveyed by TIME said they believed that by 2010 the balance of political power in Europe will tilt toward the European Parliament and away from national governments—to an extent greater than they would prefer.

So does this mean the European project is in trouble? Not necessarily. They may not entirely approve, but most 21- to 35-year-olds

CZECH FAMILY VALUES

Percentage of people who agree with the following statements:

A woman can consider her life fulfilled only if she can provide a happy home for her family

80.5%

Being home full-time can be as satisfying as having a regular job

49.7%

Parents should sacrifice their needs for the sake of their children

52%

A man and a woman should share equally the household chores

78.1%

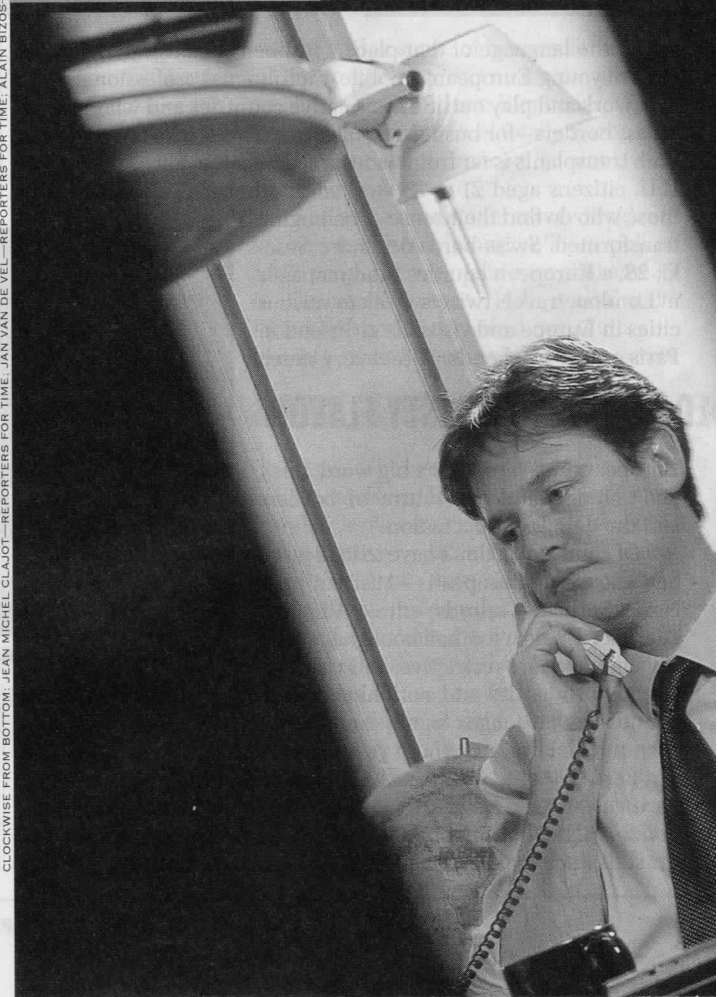
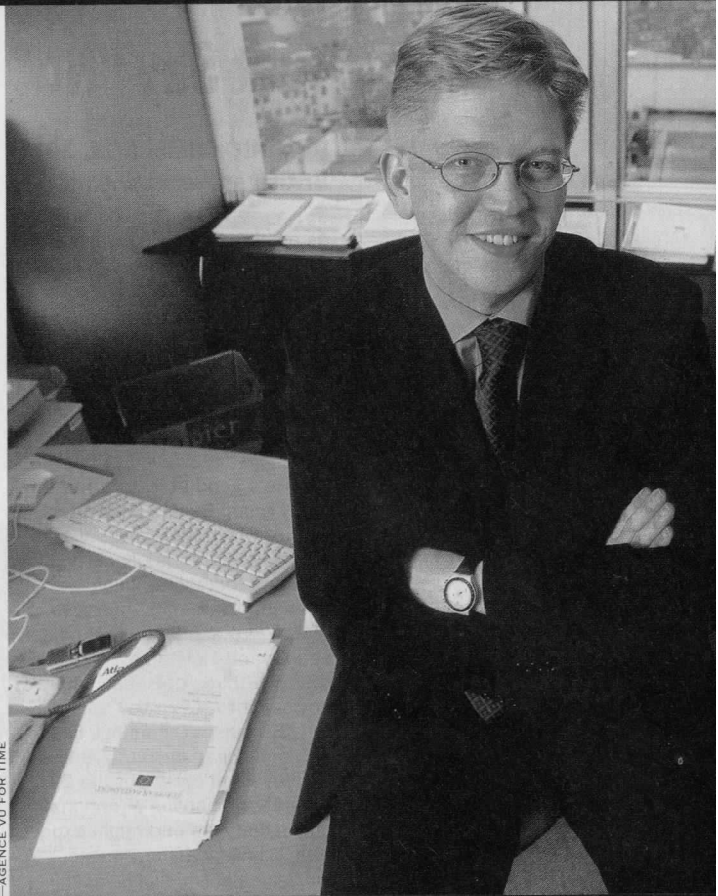
Source: GfK—TN Sofres—STEM/MARK

expect federal bodies to hold more power than national legislatures within 10 years. So for them, the argument is already settled. "For this younger generation, the E.U. is something taken for granted and not a cause," says Mark Leonard, 26, the director of the Foreign Policy Centre, a London think tank. "Our parents' generation experienced Europe pulling itself to pieces and lived with the constant threat of war. Now you don't need to focus on why the E.U. was set up in the first place."

That has some advantages. Europeans in their 20s retain only hazy memories of the ideological struggle that divided Europe for 50 years. As a result, many young adults in the E.U. tend to be enthusiastic about extending membership to Eastern and Central European countries. Says Sara Priem, 24, president of the Young European Movement, a British pro-Europe grassroots group: "It's one of those issues that's easy to be strong on because everyone agrees with it. The Berlin Wall came down when we were 10 or 11, so for us those in the east are part of Europe. There's no divide in our heads."

No one has benefited more from the steady erosion of that divide than those who lived on the other side. "Growing up in Hungary, you tended to think of Westerners as better than you were, but that feeling of inferiority has been overcome," says Balint Nemeth, 24, a Budapest native and student at the London School of Economics. "You don't feel you have to prove anything anymore."

Perhaps nowhere has technology made a more dramatic impact: Nemeth marvels that his friends in Hungary are "miles ahead of me in their familiarity with technology: they know how to surf the Web on their mobile phones and download all the music files they want. It's truly breaking down barriers." Czech



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM: JEAN MICHEL CLAUOT—REPORTERS FOR TIME; JAN VAN DE VEL—REPORTERS FOR TIME; ALAIN BIZOS—AGENCE VU FOR TIME

MICHEL VAN HULTEN

INTERESTS

E.U. institutional and agriculture policy reform

HOBBIES

Reading, films, music (Madonna, Dido)

WEBSITE

www.vanhulten.net

LOUSEWIES VAN DER LAAN

INTERESTS

Democracy, human rights, environment, fighting fraud

HOBBIES

Literature, scuba, horseback riding

WEBSITE

www.vanderlaan.net

NICK CLEGG

INTERESTS

E.U. reform, energy, telecoms

HOBBIES

Mountaineering, skiing, literature, theater, sculpture

WEBSITE

www.nickclegg.org

Shaking Up the Brussels Bureaucracy

THE INSIDERS

Euro MPs

Most young Europeans don't dream of making it big in Brussels. But members of the European Parliament **NICK CLEGG**, 34, **MICHEL VAN HULTEN**, 32, and **LOUSEWIES VAN DER LAAN**, 35, are not your average thirty-somethings. For a start, they are passionate about European politics—and that means they're passionate about the European Union. Mention institutional reform and they bristle with excitement; ask of their ambitions and they gush about shaking up the E.U. "If you're young and want to change things, you should follow the power—and power is shifting toward Brussels," says Dutch Liberal Van der Laan.

Since they were first elected in June, 1999, the three M.E.P.s have been making waves in the still pond of the Brussels bureaucracy, striking at some of the E.U.'s cushiest perks and least effective talking shops. Dutch Socialist Van Hulten suc-

cessfully fought for Friday meetings of the European Parliament in Strasbourg to be scrapped because no one bothered to turn up for votes, a move that has saved taxpayers millions of euros; Clegg has campaigned for the Parliament's over-generous system of pay and allowances to be scaled back; and Van der Laan has called for feckless institutions like the Committee of the Regions, which represents local and regional interests, to prove their worth or face the axe. "Ironically, being a bit of an insider helps you be a bit more of a reformer," says British Liberal Clegg.

On key issues, such as parliamentary reform, the three often club together to push their case. For example, the end of the Friday votes in Strasbourg was the first step toward their goal of canceling the Parliament's expensive monthly treks to Strasbourg altogether. Despite their youth, they are old hands at playing the Brussels power game. Before they were elected M.E.P.s, all three worked as speechwriters

or policy wonks in various E.U. institutions, picking up language skills, contacts and a shared distaste for bureaucracy. With their personal websites, e-mail campaigns and regular appearances on high-brow talkshows, they know how to work the media too. Van der Laan, in particular, is a spectacular self-publicist. Last year, she sparked an unholy debate after she urged the Netherlands to break off diplomatic links with the Vatican because of the Pope's stance on family planning.

Although Van Hulten, Clegg and Van der Laan squirm at the "young Turks" characterization, they concede that fresh ideas are needed as the E.U. faces the challenges of internal reform and eventual enlargement to the east. "We need a reconciliation between the generation that built Europe and the one that will take it into the future," says Van Hulten. Waging war on the old guard might seem a strange way of building bridges, but the three M.E.P.s know that time is on their side. —By Gareth Harding/Brussels