

Editors:

Klaus Hurrelmann  
Michael Weichert

# LOST IN DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION?

Political Challenges and Perspectives  
for Young People in South East Europe  
Results of Representative Surveys in Eight Countries

Authors:

Sergej Flere  
Klaus Hurrelmann  
Rudi Klanjšek  
Miran Lavrič  
Haley Reibold  
Dane Taleski



Klaus Hurrelmann, Michael Weichert, Editors

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**Authors:** Sergej Flere, Klaus Hurrelmann, Rudi Klanjšek, Miran  
Lavrič, Haley Reimbold, Dane Taleski

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## Preface

The countries of South East Europe SEE are involved in a process of political and economic transition. They share a communist legacy and face a long and troublesome route to Western-style democracy. Many of them have faced violent conflicts and subsequent challenges involving state and nation building. In some countries, authoritarian parties have prevented regime change and impeded democratization. In other countries, the absence of state legitimacy, together with the presence of weak institutions and a fragile civil society constituted obstacles to democratization, not to mention the recent challenges from populist movements, criminalisation, corruption and the shadow economy. The processes of democratization and integration into the European Union (EU) are interlinked. Undoubtedly, EU integration is one of the main incentives or external impetuses behind democratization. On the other hand, to integrate into the EU and to become an active and successful member of the EU, SEE countries need to reach a certain level of democratic development.

Obviously, South East Europe is a fruitful region for studies of the transition from an authoritarian communist system to a parliamentary democratic system accompanied by membership in the European Union. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung has seized the opportunity to initiate several research projects. These projects focus on the specific role of the younger generation in SEE countries. Prior democratization studies have rarely looked at youth as an agent in these processes of democratic development. Nevertheless, it is the younger generation that carries the expectation of better times ahead and that anticipates having options for changes towards a more democratic, just and prosperous future. It will require good education, decent jobs and social security in order to give the younger generation a positive outlook on their future.

In this publication the authors compare the results of eight representative youth surveys that were conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in the countries of South East Europe between 2011 and 2015. The studies align with international indicators, as well as being specific to issues within each nation. They capture youth attitudes, beliefs, and participation in core domains of life, including democracy, politics, governance and the EU; they also include sections devoted to education, employment, religion, family and lifestyle. Each nation used a questionnaire developed in 2006 for Germany's Shell Youth Studies as a template and made modifications based on their country's context to ensure relevance to particular intra-national issues.

This publication provides empirical data and analytical insights into a new generation about which little is known, but which will determine the fate of their societies and of the wider region in the near future. It points to the enormous challenges that young people face and which represent an urgent task for the societies and for politics within the countries of SEE as well as for the wider European neighborhood. The studies have been implemented by teams of experts and research institutions in each of the participating countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania). As part of the study program, a network of researchers and experts has been established, one which continues to deepen research and to

offer public debate, with the objective of making the issue of a future for youth into a priority for politics and programs of international cooperation.

The comparison of the results from eight countries has revealed both similarities and differences. Surprisingly, the variations do not differ much between those countries which are already members of the European Union and those countries which still aspire to membership. It can be concluded that, among the countries in SEE, being a member of the European Union does not preclude the existence of similar challenges for the younger generation and perspectives similar to those in the candidate countries. All SEE countries are therefore confronted with the urgent need to respond and to react in order to offer young people and young citizens a working perspective for their future lives.

The research results indicate that a majority of young people do not feel that their interests are taken seriously either by democratic and political institutions or by their leaders in the countries of SEE. This is also why only a minority of these youth become involved in politics and social initiatives. There can be no doubt that the process of democratic transition in South East Europe is at stake, and the younger generation is at risk of getting lost in this transition.

Youth is potentially a factor for change – a potential that needs encouragement and support – first of all, from within their societies, but, secondly, also from international and other European partners and actors. After all, the European Union as a zone of peace and prosperity cannot become a reality as long as there are major regions or societies excluded. The empirical data show that South East Europe is in a critical phase of its development. If the countries of this region do not offer an attractive alternative to the frustration and resignation which at present are widespread among young people, huge sectors of the younger generation will consider leaving their countries as soon as possible. The challenge for the EU is to place the emphasis above all on the risk of major waves of immigration and asylum seekers from SEE. From within the countries of SEE, the challenge is to cope with the negative consequences of continuing brain drain and the loss of social capital.

The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung focuses mainly on strategies for and instruments of political education, in order to allow young people to become important agents of change in the process of democratization and socially sustainable reform. As the editors of this publication, we hope that the studies presented provide information, while encouraging debate and subsequent action, in order to make a contribution to this urgent task: the task of creating the conditions for youth to have a real future. We want to thank the members of the eight research teams and the FES offices in SEE who took responsibility for implementing the studies and who have contributed to the comparative study presented in this publication.

Klaus Hurrelmann  
Michael Weichert

## Introduction and Methodology of FES Youth Studies

Since 2005, the FES has supported national teams of experts in launching youth studies in eight transition post-socialist countries. The countries included are often treated as part of a group under the geo-political term 'South Eastern Europe' (SEE), although they differ substantially in many respects. These differences have much to do with countries being in various stages of accession to the European Union, which, of course, is not only a political issue but an issue that affects the entire social system.

The FES youth studies in SEE align with international indicators while also being specific to issues within each nation. These comprehensive studies capture youth attitudes, beliefs, and participation in core domains of life, including democracy, politics, governance, and the EU and also include sections devoted to education, employment, religion, family and lifestyles. Each nation used a questionnaire developed in 2005 for Germany's Shell Youth Studies as a template and made modifications based on their country's context to ensure relevance to particular intra-national issues. The core questionnaire provided youth with the opportunity to respond to questions during a 40 to 50 minute long face-to-face interview regarding their attitudes and behaviors in the domains listed above. The representative youth samples were structured according to key socio-demographic characteristics, including gender, age, place of residence/settlement type, socio-professional status, education level, and father's education level and usually had a size of about 1000. In addition, most countries conducted five to ten extended qualitative biographical face-to-face interviews of 30 to 40 minutes and/or two or three focus groups designed to gain in-depth information on the topics mentioned above.

*Table 1. Overview of youth studies in SEE supported by FES*

	<b>Year of study</b>	<b>Survey sample</b>	<b>Age cohort</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Reference</b>
<b>Albania</b>	2011	1200	16-27	Quantitative and qualitative	Cela et al., 2013
<b>BiH</b>	2014	1004	15-27	Quantitative	Žiga et al., 2015
<b>Bulgaria</b>	2014	1018	14-27	Quantitative and qualitative	Mitev and Kovacheva, 2014
<b>Croatia</b>	2012	1500	14-27	Quantitative and qualitative	Ilišin et al., 2013
<b>Kosovo</b>	2012	1000	16-27	Quantitative and qualitative	Pasha et al., 2012
<b>Macedonia</b>	2013	1065	15-29	Quantitative and qualitative	Latkovic et al., 2013
<b>Romania</b>	2014	1302	15-29	Quantitative and qualitative	Sandu et al., 2014
<b>Slovenia</b>	2013	907	16-27	Quantitative	Flere et al., 2013

Albania was the first country to initiate the representative youth survey and additional focus groups. Research was done in 2011. IDRA Research & Consulting conducted a survey of 1200 randomly selected 16 to 27-year-olds. Following the survey, nine focus groups were held, five of which were general youth groups and four of which were with specific sub-groups of youth (Cela, Fshazi, Mazniku, Kamberi and Smajj, 2013).

A research team from the Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo conducted the youth study in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The sample design and survey of 1,004 respondents from 15 to 27 years in age, across the whole territory of the country, were conducted by IPSOS Agency

(BiH). The research team used Chi-squared tests to analyze deviations of responses according to socio-Demographic features (e.g. gender, age, type of settlement, professional status and level of education) (Žiga, Turčilo, Osmić, Bašić, Džananović Miraščija, Kapidžić and Brkić-Šmigoc, 2015, 3).

To complete the youth study in Bulgaria, Gallup International Agency conducted quantitative and qualitative data collection with young people between the ages of 14 and 27 between June and August 2014. The results of a nationally representative random sample of 1018 structured questionnaires informed the findings, as well as 10 in depth interviews, selected through purposive sampling (Mitev and Kovacheva, 2014, 17-19).

In Croatia, data were collected in July 2012 by Henda Research and included a representative sample of 1500 respondents aged between 14 and 27, as well as the use of computer-assisted personal interviewing methodology for individual interviews (Ilišin, Bouillet, Gvozdanić and Potočnik, 2013, 5-6).

Between June 1 and June 30, 2012 researchers in Kosovo, in partnership with IDRA Research & Consulting, conducted a survey of 1000 randomly selected 16 to 27-year-olds. Following the survey, from September 5 to 15, 2012, nine focus groups were held, five of which were general youth groups and four of which were with specific sub-groups of youth, including those who identified themselves as politically-engaged and K-Serb youth (Pasha, et al., 2012, 10).

Macedonia's youth study was conducted by surveying 1065 youth between the ages of 15 to 29, using quota sampling to ensure representative groups (Latkovic, Popovska, Serafimovska and Celic, 2013, 9). This questionnaire was almost identical to that of Kosovo, Croatia and Albania but included a few additional questions specific to the nation. Data were analyzed at the univariate, bivariate, and multivariate levels (2013, 10).

From July 19 to 31, 2014, Romania implemented a nationwide opinion poll, receiving responses from 1302 youth aged between 15 and 29 from a random, stratified sample with proportional representation from different geographic regions and types of communities (Sandu, Stoica and Umbres, 2014, 11). Face-to-face interviews were conducted using a questionnaire similar to those for the other nations (2014, 13). Focus groups were designed based on core discussion themes, including problems and values, religion and confidence in institutions, civic and political participation and democracy. Ten focus groups were conducted with a total of 117 participants in locations across the country (2014, 14).

A questionnaire, both oral and written, was administered to 907 youth between the ages of 16 and 27 in Slovenia via face-to-face interviewing between May 29 and July 20, 2013 (Flere et al., 2013, 24). Technical issues prevented Slovenia from conducting a random sample, and the nation instead used a stratified quota sample based on 35 geographic and urban-rural regions (*ibid.*, 20). Quotas regarding gender, age and education level were used to ensure proportional representation similar to that of the full population (*ibid.*, 21). The validity of responses from the face-to-face interviews was ensured through follow-up calls from the research team to youth respondents (*ibid.*, 23).



# A. Building Democracies in South East Europe: Youth as an Unwilling Agent?

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## 1. Introduction

The process of European Union (EU) integration has been successful in building democracy and functioning market economies in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) (Vachudova, 2005). The question is to what extent it can be successful in South East Europe (SEE) (Epstein and Sedelmeier, 2008; Verduna and Ruffa, 2011). EU accession involves Europeanisation and many subsequent changes. However, it leads not only to EU integration but also to state-building and democratization (Denti, 2014). Notwithstanding the variety of theories to explain the process of EU integration from its inception to the present (Rosamond, 2000; Bomberg and Stubb, 2003; Wiener and Diez, 2004; Moravcsik, 1993; Marks, Hooghe, and Blank, 1996; Pierson, 1996), the inclusion of SEE was seen from a conflict management perspective (Belloni, 2009), and the Stabilization and Association Process was the driving tool behind the changes in SEE which were expected to lead to EU integration (Elbasani, 2008). There is lack of enthusiasm for and interest in enlargement with SEE in the EU, conditionality standards have been over-stretched and many domestic 'gate-keeping elites' are against EU integration (Kmezic, 2014).

Research on EU integration of SEE has focused primarily on the process of regional cooperation and conditionality as the main driving mechanisms (Anastasakis and Bojicic Dzelilovic, 2002; Grupe and Kusic, 2005; Delevic, 2007; Stubos and Tsikripis, 2008; Oktem and Bechev, 2006; Andreev, 2009; Stubbs and Solioz, 2012). The EU had an important role in fostering regional cooperation in the Western Balkans (Bechev, 2006; Bastian, 2008; Bastian, 2011) and advancing policy and process reforms (Montanaro-Jankovski, 2007; Trauner, 2009; Bache, 2010; Ged-

des, Leeds and Taylor, 2012). Although both specific internal political issues and the policy of the international community influence the pace of EU integration, the latter is regarded as a strong determinant (Masari, 2005). Therefore, it was argued that EU should focus more on local ownership to have a sustainable political transition (Keane, 2005). Research shows that regional cooperation is typically an elite-led, top-down process (Dehnert and Taleski, 2013), which runs counter to some functionalist and neo-functionalist theories of EU integration.

The processes of democratization and EU integration are interlinked. For example, EU integration is often cited as the main incentive or external impetus for democratization. On the other hand, to become integrated into the EU, SEE countries need to reach a certain level of democratic development. Therefore, SEE is a fruitful region for studies of democratization, EU integration and their inter-linkages. This study includes the specific role of the younger generation in SEE countries. Prior democratization and EU integration studies have rarely looked at youth as an agent in these processes of democratic development. The present study tries to close this research gap.

The central questions of this study are the following: What are the perceptions of and extent of support by youth in SEE nations for democratization and EU integration processes? These research questions lead to two additional areas of inquiry: What impact does a nation's EU membership status have on youth perceptions of democratization and institutions? And, are young people in each nation of interest likely to support or advance democratization processes in their home countries?

To answer these questions, we utilize results from representative youth studies conducted in SEE nations between 2011 and 2015. The studies were supported by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), an independent political foundation in Germany. They cover Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania and Slovenia. Methodologically, FES Youth Studies in SEE follow the model of Shell Youth Studies, which have been conducted in Germany every three to four years since 1953.

## 2. Democratization and EU integration: the situation in South East Europe

What is democracy and what are the defining characteristics of democratization? Notwithstanding the prolonged interest raised by these issues in political science, the consensus on a definite item list is not in sight. For example, Dahl (1971) places the focus on participation and contestation (i.e. competition). Schmitter and Karl (1971) define democracy with institutional provisions (e.g. checks and balances) and procedures (e.g. elections), and point out that a democratic regime guarantees rights and freedoms and has the consent of the people. This would imply that citizens in a democracy trust institutions, are active and engaged, and respect pluralism and diversity. On the other hand, Diamond and Morlino (2004) stress the rule of law, participation, competition, vertical accountability, horizontal accountability, freedom, equality and responsiveness. O'Donnell (2004) extends the list to include human development and human rights.

According to the research literature, successful democratization depends on the existence and functioning of democratic political institutions (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Collier and Levitsky, 1997; Schedler, 1998; Diamond, 1999; Merkel, 2004; Schneider and Schmitter, 2004), economic performance (e.g. good growth rates and low to moderate inflation) (Przeworski et al., 1995) and socio-cultural cohesion (Lipset, 1994). There is also variety in the existing attempts to measure democracy and democratization. For example, Freedom House has two indices: one measures freedom in the world and is based on the level of political and civil liberties. The second is a democracy score that considers elections, civil society, media, national governance, local governance, the judiciary and corruption (Puddington, 2015). The Bertelsmann Transformation Index looks at political management, defined with the following categories: stateness, political participation, rule of law, stability of democratic institutions, and political and social integration (Donner, Hartmann, and Schwarz, 2014).

The Democracy Index created by the Economist Intelligence Unit is based on four dimensions: whether elections are free and fair, voter security, influence of foreign powers on government and the capacity of civil servants to implement policies. The Polity IV data set includes three dimensions: whether elections are competitive and open, the nature of political participation and checks and balances on executive power (Marshall and Gurr, 2013). There are also less well known indices, like Vanhanen's Index of Democracy – focused on competition and participation—and the Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy which assesses performance and equality levels by looking at freedom and the characteristics of a political system (Vanhanen, 2000; Campbell, Barth, Pözlbauer, P. and Pözlbauer, G., 2015).

Democratization in SEE has obviously made less progress than in CEE, but is more advanced than in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Berglund, Ekman, Deegan-Krause and Knutsen, 2013). While violent conflicts and subsequent challenges to state and nation building efforts have prevented the advance of democratization in SEE, many CEE countries forged ahead with EU integration in 2004 (Pridham, 2000). In the post-conflict period, power sharing imposed a complicated institutional design for the functioning of democracy in SEE, and other factors slowed down democratization (Bieber, 2013). Authoritarian parties prevented regime change and impeded democratization in SEE (Dolenec, 2013), and the absence of sovereignty and state legitimacy presented problems for democratization in the Balkans (Vucetic, 2004). A lack of democratic tradition, weak institutions and weak civil society were another set of obstacles facing democratization (Jese Perkovic, 2014). There are also challenges from populist movements, criminalization, corruption and the shadow economy (Brusis, 2006).

Some SEE countries are regarded as democracies (e.g. Slovenia, Croatia, Romania and Serbia), while others are labelled as hybrid regimes (e.g. Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo) (Berglund, Ekman, Deegan-Krause and Knutsen, 2013). Slovenia and Croatia are regarded as being ahead in democratic development, while Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are

still considered to be fragile. A variety of domestic issues and external factors hamper democratization (Bieber and Ristic, 2012). For example, it is argued that Bosnia has been unable to make democratic progress because of structural impediments set in the Dayton Agreement, permanent instrumentalization of ethno-nationalism and prolonged socioeconomic problems (Dzihic, 2012). In Serbia, there is dwindling zeal for activism and participation in political activities, and the majority of citizens expect change to come from outside (Matic, 2012).

In contemporary research about the types of democracies in SEE, there is a lack of analysis about the interaction between politics and the economy (Segert and Fassman, 2012). In SEE, it seems that no one questions democracy as the only game in town; however, in spite of substantial international donor support for development of civil society in SEE (Fagan and Sircar, 2012), citizens are disappointed in and dissatisfied with democracy, since the future is not improving (Matic, 2012), trust in institutions and politicians is low, there is a growing antiparty sentiment, and it seems that there are no longer any reformist-oriented elites (Krastev, 2002). Large popular dissatisfaction with democracy gave rise to populist leaders and enabled elites to define political opponents as enemies and move to exclude them from politics (Varga and Freyberg-Inan, 2012). Scholars have pointed out that elite-initiated institutional change led to democratization in SEE (Alexander, 2008). Some point out that good ethnic relations and neighborly relations are a prerequisite for democratization (Veljanoska, Andonov and Shibakovski, 2014), while others maintain that economic changes were more important than the development of democratic institutions for democratization in the Western Balkans (Cohen and Lampe, 2011).

EU membership is among the strongest incentives for democratization (Jese Perkovic, 2014). It provides a strong impetus for undertaking democratic reforms; however, political elites often fail to comply with EU rules (Noutcheva, 2009). Notwithstanding the dilemmas of national elites, EU political conditionality has exerted a significant influence on democratization (Schimmelfennig and Scholtz, 2008). If the EU offers membership, then there are political reforms in support of democrati-

zation. Partnership and cooperation with the EU without a clear path to membership, however, are insufficient to sustain democratic change.

The youth cohort has not been addressed in studies of EU integration of SEE. Nor have youth been treated systematically in democratization studies. There are diverging expectations in regards to youth contributions to democratization. Research has established that social and political unrest is more likely in nations with large youth cohorts. This is especially true among marginalized groups in nations that provide few options for the advancement of educational or economic prospects. These uprisings can either function to promote democracy by challenging undemocratic governments and institutions and catalyzing regime change or, as has been the case recently in many nations, can threaten democracy if disenfranchised young people turn to extremism and support authoritarian rule. It has been established that young males, more than other age and gender Demographics, are more likely to support authoritarian rule and turn to violent political action, so in nations with a large cohort of disenfranchised young males, there is a much greater chance of political unrest and risk of violent uprisings (Weber, 2013). For example, the large number of unemployed youth in Arab nations, "whose political frustrations were aggravated by their inability to express themselves in a tightly controlled police state, political corruption, and the incapability of the state to deal with social and economic problems" contributed to political unrest and regime change during the "Arab Spring" (Al-Momani, 2011).

On the other hand, youth help to overcome negative consequences in some post-conflict democratization cases. For example, youth are the main hope for democratic development in Kosovo (Feltus, 2013). Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, young people have been able to bridge ethnic divisions, while education and youth were the most productive domains for reconciliation and democratization in the post-conflict period. Despite institutionalized segregation, youth in high schools overcame divisions and interacted with ethnic others (Hromadzic, 2009; Hromadzic, 2011).

### 3. Youth in SEE: Political attitudes towards democratization and EU integration

In this section we present cross-country comparative results from the FES youth studies. We focus on four dimensions which are directly connected to the processes of democratization and EU integration: youth values, political interest and participation, attitudes toward the EU and immigration expectations.

#### 3.1 Social and political values of youth in SEE countries

Youth in SEE have some values in common. For example, most of them seem to be generally satisfied with their situation and are optimistic about the future. This youthful optimism is expressed despite their views on the economic and political situation in their country and despite their future aspirations. To look good is the greatest preoccupation among youth in all SEE countries. To have a career and to be independent are also common goals, along with completing the education process. This hints that youth in SEE have a self-centered orientation toward an individualistic culture. On the other hand, there is variation in regards to how common it is to be engaged in politics and civil society. The results are shown in Table 2.

*Table 2. The frequency of activity in politics and civil society among youth in SEE, in percentages*

	ALB	BIH	BG	CRO	KOS	MK	RO	SL
To be active in politics	35.8	52.6	24.3	34.8	32.4	33.9	30.5	9.3
To be active in civil society	27.7	38.7	26.8	32.6	45.9	30.7	31	27.9

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia stand on the far ends of the spectrum. In Bosnia and Herzegovina it is quite common for the young to be involved in politics, but this is less so in Slovenia. It is interesting to find that in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Macedonia it is more common to be active in politics than in civil society. On the other hand, in Bulgaria, Kosovo, Romania and Slovenia, young people would much prefer to be active in civil society. The results show a variation among the countries in regards to the levels and forms of preferred youth social engagement.

Based on youth rankings of the importance of eight core values, including personal dignity (identity, education), fighting spirit (fighting to achieve a goal), material wealth, social prestige (social status, social standing), altruism (commitment, helping others), correctness, tolerance (acceptance of and respect for different opinions), and innovativeness of the spirit (creating ideas, acceptance of ideas of others), youth across SEE appear to have similar values. The results of the values they find most important is shown in Table 3.



Table 3. Ranking of most important values

First Important Value	
Value	Countries
Personal Dignity	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia
Second Important Value	
Value	Countries
Fighting Spirit	Bulgaria, Croatia
Correctness	Romania, Slovenia
Altruism	Kosovo
Tolerance	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Honesty	Macedonia
Third Important Value	
Value	Countries
Social Prestige	Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania
Tolerance	Croatia, Kosovo
Fighting Spirit	Slovenia
Correctness	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Across different countries in SEE, personal dignity is the most important value among young people. Other values which are regarded as important are fighting spirit, correctness (fairness), tolerance and social prestige. Interestingly, innovative spirit is among the values that are deemed least important across the different countries. Enrichment is another value that often emerges as less important. These results suggest that personal integrity is more important for youth in SEE than is creativity. Giving great importance to individualism positions the youth cohort as a potential candidate for supporting the democratization process.

However, things are not that straightforward. For example, youth in SEE place the highest level of trust in family members and relatives. They have comparatively greater trust in friends and colleagues than in neighbors. Moreover, they place less trust in people whose religious affiliation and political beliefs are different from their own. Youth in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Slovenia do not place much trust in religious leaders; however, youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Romania and especially in Kosovo have higher levels of trust in religious leaders. The results indicate that youth in SEE have a limited potential for building social capital and extending their social networks, and especially in regards to creating the kind transversal ruptures that can overcome religious or political divisions. The results for youth's levels of trust are shown in Table 4.

*Table 4. Levels of trust, on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest)*

	<b>ALB</b>	<b>BIH</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CRO</b>	<b>KOS</b>	<b>MK</b>	<b>RO</b>	<b>SL</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Family	9.79	9.35	9.50	9.41	9.85	9.57	9.38	9.31	9.50
Relatives	7.01	7.28	8.36	8.10	8.30	7.72	7.85	7.65	7.78
Friends	5.98	7.37	7.93	8.55	7.20	7.27	7.34	8.54	7.52
Neighbors	3.34	5.62	5.35	6.15	5.88	5.10	5.45	4.86	5.22
Colleagues	4.39	6.12	6.23	6.98	5.89	5.66	6.10	5.67	5.80
Diff. religion	4.43	5.83	5.08	6.40	4.94	4.75	5.62	4.98	5.25
Diff. Political	3.99	5.50	4.92	6.10	4.62	4.28	5.45	4.60	4.93
Religious leaders	3.78	5.65	3.81	5.69	7.70	4.66	6.66	3.63	5.20

Additionally, a limited percentage of youth in SEE accept social and political diversity. For example, across the different countries, when asked whom they would prefer to have as a neighbor, young people are most likely to choose a family from the EU or the United States, and also to some extent a family from another Balkan country. On the other hand, youth in SEE do not want to have homosexuals or Roma as neighbors. Therefore, they might not be the best agents for advocating pluralism and social diversity.

At the same time, youth are not very sensitive toward discrimination. Most believe that they have never been discriminated against and that discrimination is not prevalent in their society. Discrimination is reported on different bases in SEE, for example, on the basis of family and region in Albania, ethnic belonging in Bulgaria and Macedonia, and on the basis of personal economic situation in Romania and Slovenia.

Accompanying the lack of social sensitivity, only a small percentage of the young are socially engaged. Table 5 shows the results of self-reported youth volunteerism in SEE. According to FES Youth Studies, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania have the highest percentage of youth volunteers, while Croatia and Macedonia have the lowest.

*Table 5. Young People and volunteer work*

	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Primary Volunteering Activities Reported</b>
<b>Albania</b>	16	Cleaning public areas, repairing green surfaces
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	19	Public work in local community, assisting seniors and disabled persons.
<b>Bulgaria</b>	23	Public work in local community, peer assistance in studying, assisting disabled persons.
<b>Croatia</b>	13	Helping seniors and people with disabilities, helping peers with study material and organizing cultural events
<b>Kosovo</b>	21	Cleaning public areas, repairing green surfaces and construction of public facilities.
<b>Macedonia</b>	13	Help and support for vulnerable groups, maintaining green areas and support and training in educational activities.
<b>Romania</b>	23	Helping people with special needs, community service and organizing cultural events.
<b>Slovenia</b>	38.2	Sport and culture events, assisting seniors and disabled persons, volunteering in NGOs

On the other hand, the types of volunteer activities in different countries seems to fall into similar categories. Most of the time, youth volunteer in community work (e.g. building, improving or maintaining public infrastructure) or to help people with disabilities. This shows that the young people who are socially active have a sense of community duty and want to improve social inclusion. However, most of the young are not members of any organizations or associations. For example, 85% of youth in Bulgaria say that they are not members of any organization/association, and only 8% say that they are members of sport clubs.

One of the interesting findings concerning the values of youth is that religion is an important marker of their personal identity. Large segments of the youth population claim to belong to the dominant religion in their country. For example, there are only a handful of atheists in Albania, and most young people are affiliated with one of the main religions. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, over 95% say they are religious, with 55.8% Muslim, 27.3% Christian Orthodox and 12.5% Catholic. In Bulgaria, 90% say that they are religious, with 74% Christian Orthodox and 16% Muslim. In Croatia, 90% self-identify as Catholic and 90% in Kosovo as Muslim. In Macedonia, 63% identify themselves as Christian Orthodox, and 34.2% as Muslim, and in Romania 85% say they are Christian Orthodox. Slovenia is an exception to some extent, where 68% identify as Catholic, and 24% say that they do not believe in religion.

Besides identity, belief in religious dogma is also high. For example, in Croatia 78% believe in the existence of God, and 62.4% say that he created the world. 62.3% believe in Heaven and Hell, and 55.7% say that God is the source of moral prescriptions and duties. In Romania, 63% believe in Heaven and Hell, 73% that God created the world and 64% that God is the source of moral rules. On the other hand, the reported practicing of religion is rather low across the countries. Religious practice comes down mostly to participation in religious holidays, less so in prayer and even lower attendance at mass and confession. Given that religion is an indicator of conservative values, one could conclude that youth in SEE share a conservative outlook.

## What we know from previous studies

Previous studies about the values of youth in East Europe show the following: While young people are typically more open to and accepting of diversity than adults, many youth still harbor and express intolerance toward immigrants and social minorities (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 40). Across Europe, an average of 10% of young people agree with the statement that all foreigners should be sent home, and in a few areas of Western Europe this figure stands at 20% (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 40). According to Chisholm and Kovacheva, within CEE and CIS countries, levels of intolerance were on the rise in Croatia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Additionally, in Slovenia, a study found that young people's views toward foreigners and minorities in the 1990s were more negative than they had been in the 1960s (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 41).

However, Chisholm and Kovacheva (2002) warn against "overplay[ing] the extent of intolerance and xenophobia in central and eastern Europe as opposed to western Europe," since these views are held by sub-groups within every nation (p. 41). In the most recent International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) study on the citizenship and civic engagement of fourteen-year-olds across the world, 40% and 50% of youth strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, with the statement "immigrants should have the right to equal educational opportunity," and over 75% of youth respondents agreed or strongly agreed that immigrants have the right to maintain their customs, language, and vote" (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald and Schultz, 2001, 102). Countries with the most negative attitudes toward immigrants are not clustered geographically, with the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and Switzerland all falling below the international mean (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, 104). Similarly, Hooghe and Wilkenfeld's (2008) study found great variance in youth attitudes toward immigrant rights among countries and regions and were unable to generalize about tolerance in eastern versus Western Europe. Among eastern European countries, however, Slovenia was identified as the nation with the most negative attitudes toward immigrant rights (Hooghe and Wilkenfeld, 2008, 161).

According to Kacarska (2012), youth in the Balkans have the highest levels of trust in their family members and friends and generally do not trust people from neighboring countries or those living in their own country who come from different ethnic backgrounds. In Romania, trust rates are also considered to be low, with almost 65% of citizens expressing a “prudent attitude” towards others, except for family members (Plaesu, 2008, 119).

Religion is an important marker of youth identity: Over 90% of youth in the various countries identify with the main religion(s) in their country, but religious practice is mainly relegated to religious holidays. However, the majority of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia said that they would not marry someone who was of a religion different from their own. Also, about 37% of youth in Croatia and over 20% in Albania would not marry a person of different religion, and youth in Western Balkan countries do not feel inclined to marry a person from a different ethnic group (Kacarska, 2012).

### **3.2 Political interest and participation of youth in SEE countries**

Across SEE nations, there is divergence concerning which institutions young people trust, and among the eight countries, each youth cohort has selected a different institution as the one that they trust the most. The results are given in Table 6. In Albania, youth have the most trust in media. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, youth place most trust in religious leaders. In Bulgaria, youth are more inclined to trust the European Court of Human Rights. In Croatia, it is the police, the EU in Macedonia, the Church in Romania and educational institutions in Slovenia. There are several domestic institutions which in which young people place their trust, for example, the army, police, judiciary, non-governmental organizations and media.

*Table 6. Ranking of trust in institutions: Most trusted*

	<b>First</b>	<b>Second</b>	<b>Third</b>
<b>Albania</b>	Media	Police	High State Audit
<b>Bosnia and Herze-govina</b>	Religious leaders	Media	Judiciary
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Eur. Court of Human Rights	Police	Local government/ Media
<b>Croatia</b>	Police	Judiciary	NGO/Media
<b>Kosovo</b>	Religious leaders	Police	Media
<b>Macedonia</b>	EU	NATO	Army
<b>Romania</b>	Church	Army	Police
<b>Slovenia</b>	Educational institutions	Police	NGOs

On the other hand, the youth in SEE share similar opinions about which institutions they trust the least, with political parties ranking at the top of almost every nation's list. The results in Table 7 are rather alarming for the state of democracy in SEE.

*Table 7. Ranking of trust in institutions: Least trusted*

	<b>First</b>	<b>Second</b>	<b>Third</b>
<b>Albania</b>	Central Electoral Commission	Political Parties	Parliament
<b>Bosnia and Herze-govina</b>	Political Parties	Parliament	Entity government
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Trade unions	Political parties	Government
<b>Croatia</b>	Political parties	Government	Parliament
<b>Kosovo</b>	UNMIK	Political Parties	EULEX
<b>Macedonia</b>	Political parties	Parliament	Govt./President
<b>Romania</b>	Political parties	Parliament	Government
<b>Slovenia</b>	Political parties	Parliament	Government

The results show that young people have least trust in political parties, parliament and government. Political parties serve to aggregate and represent political interests. Parliament and government, along with the judiciary, are the central democratic institutions. Widespread distrust in the main democratic institutions indicates dissatisfaction and disappointment among youth with the functioning of democracy in their country. This is also the case in the EU Member States from SEE. For example, in Bulgaria there is “complete lack of trust ... in two main institutions: parliament and the government” (Mitev and Kovacheva, 2014, 143), and EU institutions and local government are trusted more than the national government. Table 8 show the results for levels of youth trust in the democratic institutions of their countries.

*Table 8. Trust in democratic institutions, combining answers for “very” and “somewhat” in percentages*

	ALB	BIH	BG	CRO	KOS	MK	RO	SL	Mean
<b>Parliament</b>	24.4	11.9	15.3	20.6	34	33.4	8.6	11.8	20.0
<b>Government</b>	26.6	10.5	13.2	19.7	27.2	41.8	12.1	12.6	20.5
<b>Judiciary</b>	39.7	31.1	21.4	35.3	43.7	44.3	35.5	29.9	35.1
<b>Media</b>	55.1	31.2	34.3	33.9	56.5	39.5	27.8	33.6	39.0
<b>Parties</b>	20.2	11.3	12.6	17.0	18.7	27.4	5.5	8.6	15.2
<b>Unions</b>	36.2	23.4	11.1	29.2	39.4	45.8	14.6	26.0	28.2
<b>NGO</b>	38.0	30.2	15.7	34.0	44.0	37.8	28.3	42.9	33.9

Young people have rather low levels of trust in parliament and government, even though trust in parliament is comparatively higher in Kosovo and Macedonia, and trust in government is a bit higher in Macedonia than in other countries. Trust in political parties is also relatively low, however, somewhat higher in Macedonia and Albania, and very low in Romania and Slovenia. On the other hand, levels of trust in the judiciary, media, unions and NGOs is relatively higher. For example, trust in the judiciary is higher in Kosovo and Macedonia, and trust in media is high-



er in Albania and Kosovo. Also, trust in unions is higher in Macedonia, but lower in Bulgaria. At the same time, youth in Bulgaria also have low levels of trust in NGOs, while youth in Kosovo and Slovenia have higher levels of trust. In general, one can conclude that young people are less inclined to trust institutions which are connected with the electoral side of democracy (e.g. parties, parliament and government) but have greater trust in institutions which perform a control function (e.g. judiciary, media). Moreover, youth are more trustful of civil society representation (e.g. unions, NGOs) than of political representation (e.g. political parties).

Previous youth studies had similar findings, and they conclude that lack of trust in democratic institutions leads to dissatisfaction with democracy. The results of these youth studies in SEE reiterate similar findings. Table 9 sums up the results on the question of (dis)satisfaction with democracy.

*Table 9. (Dis)satisfaction with democracy, combining answers for “very” and “somewhat” in percentages*

	ALB	BIH	BG	CRO	KOS	MK	RO	SL	Mean
<b>Satisfied</b>	24.1	18.4	12.0	25.7	24.3	6.2	18.3	7.9	17.1
<b>Not satisfied</b>	27.8	36.3	46.0	21.0	23.8	44.5	43.9	59.8	37.9

In most SEE countries the rates of dissatisfaction are higher than the rates of satisfaction. The gap is greatest in Macedonia and Slovenia. In Macedonia, only 6.2% are very or somewhat satisfied with democracy, while 44.5% are very or somewhat dissatisfied. In Slovenia, 7.9% are very or somewhat satisfied with democracy, and 59.8% are very or somewhat dissatisfied. In Croatia and Kosovo the youth who are satisfied with democracy are marginally more numerous than those who are dissatisfied. The results show that young people in SEE are not satisfied with democracy. It is quite clear that the low level of trust in democratic institutions contributes to low satisfaction with democracy. This is not

necessarily a criticism or rejection of democracy as a political regime, but it registers a clear dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy in their countries.

It is unclear what it is precisely that youth are not satisfied with. There is great variation concerning the degree of interest in national politics and participation among the youth in SEE. Table 10 shows the answers of those young people who said that they were interested in national politics. The youth in Kosovo and Macedonia report the most interest, while the youth in Romania, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are least interested in national politics. In the case of the former, over half of young said that they were interested in national politics. Only 14% in Romania said that they were interested in national politics. The youth in Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are similarly less interested, with only 25% reporting interest in both countries. On the other hand, youth in Bulgaria and Croatia are somewhat interested in national politics.

*Table 10. Interest in national politics, combining answers for “very” and “somewhat” in percentages*

	<b>ALB</b>	<b>BIH</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CRO</b>	<b>KOS</b>	<b>MK</b>	<b>RO</b>	<b>SL</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Interested in national politics	41.0	25.8	39.9	36.1	52.9	51.0	14.4	25.4	35.8

The reported voter turnout also varies by country. The results are given in Table 11. Electoral participation of youth in Slovenia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina is below 20%, in Romania it is around 20%, in Bulgaria and Croatia it is 25-30%, in Albania it is around 30%, and it is over 40% in Macedonia.

*Table 11. Electoral participation of youth in SEE*

	<b>ALB</b>	<b>BIH</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CRO</b>	<b>KOS</b>	<b>MK</b>	<b>RO</b>	<b>SL</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Voted in all elections	30.3	19.0	27.7	24.5	16.9	41.6	20.8	12.8	24.2

Notwithstanding the differences in voter turnout, most of the youth in SEE do not feel represented in politics. For example, only about a third of the youth in Albania and Kosovo feel that they are represented by the people who are active in politics. That is a high figure compared to the rest. Around 60% of the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and even more in the other countries (e.g. over 70% in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia) feel that they are not represented in politics. The results are given in Table 12.

*Table 12. Youth perception of representation in politics, combining answers for “very” and “somewhat” in percentages*

	<b>ALB</b>	<b>BIH</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CRO</b>	<b>KOS</b>	<b>MK</b>	<b>RO</b>	<b>SL</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Represented	30.9	21.3	13.2	11.6	33.7	24.7	9.9	14.0	19.9
Not represented	63.8	59.6	73.2	77.2	62.6	62.5	77.2	77.7	69.2

Young people in SEE are thus not very satisfied with the state of democracy. However, they are somewhat interested in national politics and do vote in elections, albeit not in high numbers. On the other hand, they feel that their views and interests are not represented in politics. It seems that most of the youth are disengaged from politics. And this seems to be the origin of their dissatisfaction with how democracy functions in their country. Moreover, few young people consider that they can have an impact on governing institutions. Table 13 presents an overview of SEE youth’s perceived impact on national and local government. Youth in different SEE countries share the same impression: that they can make

a stronger impact on local government. On the other hand, there is variation regarding the percentage of youth who think they can make an impact. For example, in Slovenia, 14.4% of young people think they can influence national government, and 24.3% think they can influence local government. In Albania, 40% think that they can influence national government and 50% local government, which is the highest expressed percentage. The perceived influence of youth on national and local government is significantly lower in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Romania.

*Table 13. Percentage of youth who believe they can influence governing institutions, combining answers for “very” and “somewhat”*

	<b>ALB</b>	<b>BIH</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CRO</b>	<b>KOS</b>	<b>MK</b>	<b>RO</b>	<b>SL</b>	<b>Mean</b>
National	40.4	15.6	22.7	17.4	41.0	30.9	25.7	14.4	26.0
Local	50.8	17.5	23.8	19.3	48.3	38.9	31.6	24.3	31.8

Despite the variation in perception of institutions, the political process, and the ability of young people to influence these, youth across SEE identified relatively consistent priorities on which policymakers should focus. When youth are asked about their biggest problems or concerns, unemployment and poverty rank highest across the different countries. Uncertainty regarding employment prospects is also frequently mentioned among the most commonly given answers. For example, 79.4% in Croatia, 94% in Kosovo and 71.5% in Slovenia consider unemployment as the biggest problem in their country. And 68.4% in Croatia, 92% in Kosovo and 49.6% in Slovenia consider rising poverty to be the biggest problem. For the younger generation, these issues should be among the top policy priorities of the government. Most young people believe that government should set employment and economic growth among the top policy priorities of their government. For example, 77.6% of the youth in Croatia and 97% in Slovenia think that decreasing unemployment should be the most important policy priority. Similarly, 71% in Croatia and 94% in Slovenia consider that their government should be dedicated to creating economic growth and development. Young

people even say that they are likely to protest over issues that concern them. For example, 53% of the youth in Romania say that they are likely to join protests over issues which concern them. In Romania, such issues would be lack of jobs, other economic issues and the health system.

## **What we know from previous studies**

Previous studies have demonstrated that political participation is a central pillar of democracy, since citizen engagement can have considerable impact on the quality of democratic rule (Robertson, 2009, 16). Among youth, participation often takes the form of civic engagement or volunteering, with 22% of youth in all EU member states being connected to a non-governmental organization (NGO). Newer member states have lower rates, averaging 10%, with the lowest rate of NGO involvement at 7% in both Romania and Bulgaria (Plaesu, 2008, 116). In Western Balkan countries, the percent of youth self-reported social engagement (e.g. to address a problem in the community or society in general in past 12 months) is rather small. Most young people say they would be interested in becoming involved to decrease unemployment, and there is greater reported likelihood of becoming involved in issues like human rights, poverty, corruption, education, health care and to some extent the environment (Kacarska, 2012). Very few of the youth in Western Balkan countries say that they would get involved in upgrading democracy and democratic institutions, with a reported 5-7% in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania and 3% in Croatia, Macedonia and Kosovo (Kacarska, 2012). About one-third of youth in SEE do not believe that they can make an impact on finding solutions to common problems, with the highest level of skepticism at 40% in Croatia and Serbia. On the other hand, 50% of youth in Kosovo and over 30% in Macedonia and Albania believe they could have an influence on the solution of problems in society (Kacarska, 2012). While all respondents expressed an interest in participating in civic life, a survey of Albanian youth living in Macedonia found that only one in ten youth had been involved in a volunteer project within the past year, citing a lack of organized opportunities as the primary reason for disengagement (Sinani, 2014, 297).

Levels of youth interest in politics have been used to indicate civic engagement and potential commitment to the future of the nation. Much debate surrounds this measure, since 'politics' is often perceived by youth as a narrow field that is disconnected from the realities of their daily lives. As noted by Chisholm and Kovacheva (2002), "nine in ten young Latvians do not see being active in political parties as relevant to their lives...[but] 85% say that they are interested in the political life of their country" (ibid., 39). While it remains a useful indicator, it is important to keep in mind its limitations, especially given the range of options for civic participation available to young people today.

Comparative international studies have found that approximately one-third of youth, on average, report a lack of interest in politics (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 39). In Hungary, low political participation rates were attributed to youth's dislike of politics and lack of interest, coupled with their general distrust of politicians (Matrai, 1998). Although they constitute a select group that is likely to have higher levels of interest in politics than the general youth population, almost 67% of university students surveyed in Macedonia reported that they were partially or very interested in politics (Cvetanova and Naumovska, 2014, 24), and 79% reported talking about politics sometimes or very often with their peers (Cvetanova and Naumovska, 2014, 26). Among European nations, youth in Romania have the lowest reported levels of interest in the problems of their city, region, or country, and this is largely attributable to their lack of trust in political institutions and "perception of a political climate dominated by private interests" (Plaesu, 2008, 119).

A common explanation for declining participation relates to levels of confidence in political institutions. In describing the engagement of youth in Bulgaria, Mitev (2001) hypothesized that participation requires trust and the belief that citizen action could influence decisions made by those in power. Similarly, Mierina (2011) describes the reinforcing nature of trust and participation: "the better political authorities perform, the more people will trust them, the more trusting and efficacious they will feel, and the more likely they will be to take part in democratic processes" (ibid., 18). Without young people having confidence in the sys-

tem and the leadership of their nation, researchers have raised concerns that this could lead to the “erosion of legitimacy of the foundations of the nation and representative government in the next generation” (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, 93).

While confidence in political institutions across the world declined between 1990 and 2001, in Baltic countries this shift was extreme, with levels falling by as much as 55% in some nations (Catterberg and Moreno, 2006). Research has consistently shown that post-communist countries have low levels of political and institutional trust compared to other European nations (Mierina, 2011, 34). In their comparison of youth political attitudes in eight western European and SEE nations, Hooghe and Wilkenfeld (2008) found that Scandinavian countries had the highest levels of political trust and SEE and eastern European countries the lowest (*ibid.*, 160). Torney-Purta’s (2002) study found that most nations with trust in government levels above the international mean were those with over 40 years of democracy. An outlier in this pattern was Slovakia, the only CEE nation that was above the international average (*ibid.*, 137).

When asked to rank specific institutions according to their confidence in each, European youth generally rank the courts and police as more trustworthy than political parties and elected officials (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, 176). In CEE and CIS nations, youth placed the highest confidence in the church and, following this, the press (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 7). In Balkan countries, it was found that youth had least trust in government and parliament. They are more inclined to trust local government, the presidency, judiciary and unions; and have most trust in the church, police and the army (Kacarska, 2012). Although it by no means constitutes a representative sample, in Stevenson-Murer’s (2011) study of youth identified as radical activists, 75% stated that they did not trust their country’s government, and 70% did not trust political parties (*ibid.*, 16). Among youth surveyed in Hungary, 86% said that the system did not function well, and 30% even claimed that it did not function at all. Similar figures were found for youth believing that the system did not function well in Krakow, Poland (66%), Brno, Czech

Republic (76%), Bratislava, Slovakia (67%) and slightly lower numbers in Warsaw, Poland (48%) (Stevenson-Murer, 2011, 15).

As a clear indicator of formal political participation across nations, voting can help highlight differences among nations. Overall, citizen voting rates have been declining across Europe in recent years (Plaesu, 2008, 119). Researchers have offered two main explanations for this trend. The first is that people are opting to participate in politics through unconventional forms rather than traditional means (Plaesu, 2008, 119), and the second that citizens have low rates of political efficacy and no longer believe that their vote will make a difference (Robertson, 2009, 218). While young people vote at lower rates than their older counterparts, research has shown that youth can be mobilized when there is a critical election that puts their personal interests at stake. For example, in Slovakia only 20% of youth voted in 1992, but in the 1998 election, 80% of people under 25 went to the polls (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 36). As explained by Chisholm and Kovacheva, "Major political crises with potential consequences for the future of democracy clearly mobilize young voters, whereas their participation falls when democratic political life is stable and seems to be running smoothly" (ibid., 36). In Poland and Romania, low voting levels were attributed to youth intentionally not voting because they "felt there was a lack of choice between suitable candidates... [perceived politicians] "as self-serving, unrepresentative and untrustworthy," and "felt alienated from politicians and the electoral process" (Robertson, 2009, 218). Youth who did vote also expressed feelings of alienation, but perceived voting as their duty as citizens (Robertson, 2009, 220). In Balkan countries, when asked whether they expect to vote in the next election, 70-80% of young people responded that they would vote (Kacarska, 2012). Hooghe and Wilkenfeld's study found no clear patterns in voting rates between eastern versus western European countries, but identified Switzerland as a "clear outlier, with low voting intentions and equally low turnout" (Hooghe and Wilkenfeld, 2008, 162).

Participation in established political parties is an additional indicator of formal participation in civic life. This type of participation is also declin-



ing among all Demographics across Europe. Among EU countries, an average of 1% to 1.5% of young people are members of political parties (Plaesu, 2008, 116). Torney-Purta (2001) found that, while young people generally believed that voting was an important activity, they were more interested in unconventional civic action than in joining a political party (Torney-Purta, 2001, 136).

### 3.3 Attitudes of youth in SEE countries towards the European Union

There are differences in support for the EU between member states and aspirant countries in SEE. Support for EU integration is higher in aspirant countries and much lower in member states. The results are shown in Table 14. For example, 89% of the youth in Albania, 82% in Kosovo and 73% in Macedonia support EU integration. The support in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a bit lower, but still higher than in Croatia, Bulgaria or Slovenia. Only 42% of youth in Croatia, 45% in Bulgaria and 33% in Slovenia support the EU. It seems that young people in aspirant and candidate countries are eager to join the EU and supportive of the integration process. At the same time, most of the youth in new member states in SEE are disillusioned with EU membership.

*Table 14. Percentage of youth who support EU integration<sup>1\*</sup>*

	ALB	BIH	BG	CRO	KOS	MK	RO	SL	Mean
Support for EU	88.6	55.0	45.0	41.7	81.8	72.7	n/a	32.6	52.2

1 \*Different results could potentially derive from variations in question wording. The question in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia was asked down the line as to what extent the youth support their country to join the EU. The results are the combined responses "very" and "somewhat". The question in Bulgaria and Croatia was to what extent the youth see EU integration as being positive or negative. The results are the combined responses "very" and "somewhat" positive. The question in Slovenia was whether the country should leave the EU, and the results are the answers of the youth who said "No". No question about support for EU integration was asked in Romania.

Most of the youth in aspirant and candidate countries think that they stand to gain from EU membership. The main expectations are connected to economic opportunities and free movement. For example, these are the main expectations of the youth in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia when their countries join the EU. The youth in these three countries generally consider that their government is committed to the process of EU integration and is doing enough to achieve the EU standards. On the other hand, they have different expectations as to when their country will join the EU. In Albania and Macedonia, the young are more cautious. In Albania, the youth do not expect their country to join the EU in the next 10 years. In Macedonia, 37% of the youth consider that membership is within reach in 10 years, and 24% say it would take more than 10 years. In Kosovo, the youth seem unrealistically optimistic: about 50% expect that Kosovo will become an EU member in the next five years.

On the other hand, youth in member states agree that there are benefits from EU membership, but they also share their disappointment. For example, about one-third of the youth in Bulgaria recognize that there have been benefits from EU membership in regard to travel possibilities, new friendships and improvement of minority rights. However, many are disappointed with their living standard, employment and economic development. In Croatia, youth expected cultural, educational and economic benefits from EU membership, but after membership they consider that there have been negative consequences in regard to dependency on the EU, economic exploitation and limits to their country's development. About 28% of youth in Croatia trust EU institutions, while 21% do not. Probably, the situation in Slovenia is the most alarming. Most young people are not satisfied with EU integration. 67% consider that EU integration has had negative effects on the economy, and 66% consider EU integration to have had negative effects on politics. 45% think Slovenia should drop the Euro and leave the EU altogether.

## What we know from previous studies

Across nations and time, research has consistently demonstrated that young people hold more positive views toward European integration than their older counterparts (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 40). Youth have much to gain from integration, including “the right to study, live, and work in any member state, together with equal access to health and social security rights” (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 41). Among youth in Europe, Chisholm and Kovacheva (2002) found that young people living in SEE and CEE nations were the most positive about and supportive of European integration and that the benefits they valued the most were the opportunity for cultural exchange and developing a shared European identity (*ibid.*, 8). Also, youth in CEE and SEE simultaneously had increased recognition and pride regarding their national identity (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 40). On the other hand, a recent study of youth in the Western Balkans found that youth identified the benefit of EU integration as access to prosperity and wealth (Kacarska, 2012). This is similar to those youth living in countries already in the EU, who were found to be “more pragmatic and more skeptical” regarding the prospects and benefits of integration and who identified the primary benefits of integration as relating to increased mobility and work opportunities (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 8).

However, support for EU integration has waned. Even between 1997-2002, Chisholm and Kovacheva (2002) found that CEE nations’ economic challenges, coupled with administrative and bureaucratic challenges with the EU accession negotiation process, resulted in less support for integration among EU member nations’ adults and youth alike (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002, 41). In a 2001 white paper, the European Commission wrote that, while youth are largely supportive of integration, they feel disengaged from the EU and have not been sufficiently engaged as resources to facilitate enlargement (European Commission, 2001, 21). Youth have also expressed frustration with EU economic policies, holding that they “do not want to live in a ‘Fortress Europe’ and they would like to see a more equal distribution of resources...in the interests of humanitarian values and social justice” (Chisholm

and Kovacheva, 2002, 34). On the other hand, the majority of youth in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro do support membership in the EU. In Serbia and Croatia only 50% and 40%, respectively, of youth support integration (Kacarska, 2012).

### 3.4 Emigration intent of youth in SEE countries

There is some variation in the patterns of reported intent to leave the home country. However, the proportion of youth planning to leave their country is high or very high everywhere. For example, in Albania 66.7% have expressed a wish to leave the country. Over half of the youth in Macedonia and Kosovo, and about the same in Bosnia and Herzegovina are considering the same. In Bulgaria, 42.5% of the youth are planning to leave, in Romania 39.9%, 30.8% in Slovenia and 26.7% in Croatia. The reported trends represent a real hazard for the future human capital of SEE.

*Table 15. Percentage of youth in SEE countries expressing the intent to leave, combining answers for “very” and “somewhat”*

	ALB	BIH	BG	CRO	KOS	MK	RO	SL	Mean
Intention to leave	66.7	49.2	42.5	26.7	55.1	52.8	39.9	30.8	45.5

Almost half the young people in SEE want to leave their country in search of better life. The dominant motivations include improving their standard of living, better employment possibilities or better educational prospects. These are the most common answers, when the young asked their main reasons for leaving. For example, in Kosovo 50% of those planning to leave cite an improved standard of living as the main reason, and 20% say they plan to leave in order to access better education.

There is some variation in regards to the preferred destination for emigration. In general, most of the youth in SEE are considering moving to Western Europe, and Germany seems to be the country of primary pref-

erence. For example, Germany is the preferred immigration destination for 36% of the youth in Bulgaria, 19.6% from Croatia, 16% from Kosovo and from Romania, and for 11% of the youth in Slovenia. However, 33% of the youth in Kosovo would prefer to immigrate to Switzerland, while 25% of the youth in Macedonia would choose the United States and Canada, which is also the case for 17% of the youth in Slovenia. Other attractive migration destinations for the youth in SEE include the United Kingdom, Austria and Italy.

## **What we know from previous studies**

The desire and intention of young people to leave their country of origin has long been used as an indicator of perceived opportunities, or lack thereof, within their country (Ådnanes, 2004, 808). Across nations, young people are the Demographic most likely to emigrate (UNDP, 1996). Especially in post-communist countries, the retention of young people has been cited as a critical factor for both the political and the economic development of the country. In addition to indicating youth satisfaction with opportunities available to them within their country, the desire to emigrate has also been used to assess levels of optimism among youth about their own future and that of their country (Ådnanes, 2004, 808). This measure has also been used to indicate levels of contentment with and trust in governments and reform processes and an interest in participating more fully in consumer culture (Ådnanes, 2004, 796).

In the literature on youth exit versus voice, which posits emigration (exit) as an option at the opposite end of the spectrum from political and civic engagement in one's own country (voice), a young person's intention or desire to emigrate has been interpreted as a choice against participation. Emigration intentions and desires have also been used as a proxy measure for the level of commitment young people have to the future of their countries, but at the same time, many studies find that today's youth express a desire to live abroad while also holding the belief that political and social participation and contributing to their own nation are of critical importance (Ådnanes, 2004, 807). In a study of Bulgarian youth, findings by Ådnanes (2004) "blur the impression of Voice and

Exit as distinct concepts, where Voice represents political and community-oriented citizenship while Exit represents apolitical and passive citizenship based on private interests" (ibid., 808). In 2000, two studies of Bulgarian students found that 86% were "ready to choose emigration" (Topalova, 2000, 150) and that 85% wanted to live in another country "for some time" (Kovatcheva, 2000, 125). In Ådnanes' (2004) study on Bulgarian students' emigration perceptions and plans, almost 25% viewed immigrating to a Western nation as important, while half of them thought that living outside the country for a period of time was important. Those who desired to emigrate expressed critical and negative views on the political system, as well as receptiveness toward the West, and a "rejection of traditions" (Ådnanes, 2004, 807). At the same time, Ådnanes (2004) found that, while students perceived emigration as important, 70% also considered contributing to the development of Bulgaria as important, indicating that the voice-exit dichotomy discussed above may not be as clear as previous scholarship has indicated (Ådnanes, 2004, 806).

In other nations studied by Kacarska (2012), the percentage of youth interested in emigrating ranged from 35% in Kosovo and Albania to 46% in Macedonia and Montenegro, with Croatia (36%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (43%) and Serbia (45%) falling between (ibid., 3). In this study, it was found that Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States were the most popular prospective destinations (Kacarska, 2012, 3).

## **4. Democratization potential of youth in SEE countries**

Being active in politics and civil society are not very common among youth in SEE. In contrast, religion is important for young people's identity. Youth do not trust formal institutions, but place more trust in family and friends. They are dissatisfied with democracy and somewhat disengaged from politics. Youth in member states are disillusioned with the EU, while youth in aspirant countries support the EU and have high

expectations from EU integration. On the other hand, large parts of the youth in SEE want to leave their home countries. Given these challenges, it remains unclear what the democratization potential of youth in SEE could be. To what extent can the youth support democratization and thus also contribute toward EU integration?

The presentation of the comparative results was structured around four dimensions, which were derived from previous youth studies. Some of the issues are positively related to democratization, for example values and political interest and participation. If youth are willing to be more engaged in politics and civil society, then it is more likely that their potential for contributing to democratization will be higher. Also, theoretical proposals and empirical analyses validate participation as an important feature of democracy. Moreover, there is a clear expectation that, if participation is higher than the state of democracy would be better. For assessing youth's democratization potential in SEE, this would mean that if the participation of youth is higher, then their potential to contribute to democratization would also be higher.

Several indicators measuring values and political interest and participation can be used to assess youth's democratization potential. For example, the popularity of politics and civil society and volunteering seem to be values that are positively related to democratization. Similarly, satisfaction with democracy, voting, interest in national politics, influence on national and local governance, and perception of youth representation are also positively related to democratization. Lastly, one should also take migration potential into consideration; this means that, if there are higher proportions of youth who want to leave the country, then their potential for fostering democratic change will be lower.

This provides the opportunity to use ten indicators to measure the democratization potential of youth in SEE. Three are based on value attitudes (popularity of activism in politics and civil society, and volunteering), six are attitudes and behaviors based on political interests and participation (satisfaction with democracy, voting, interest in national politics, perception of youth representation, and impact on national and

local governance), and one is based on emigration expectations (planning to leave the country).

One should point out that the indicators for participation take into consideration only conventional forms of participation (e.g. voting) and do not consider other forms of youth participation (e.g. protest and signing petitions). This is due to differences between the questionnaires used in the youth studies. The question whether youth voted in all elections was asked in all the countries, while questions about other forms of participation (e.g. protest) were asked only in Bulgaria and Romania. Also, some youth research studies point out that the intention to emigrate is not necessarily negatively related to democratization, because they find that young people's behavior blurs the concepts of voice and exit. It is uncertain whether plans for leaving could potentially have a positive impact on future democratization, if the young people decide to return, or whether they plan to leave their country for good. However, the youth identified economic prosperity and prospects for a future career as the main reasons for leaving. Therefore, one would be inclined to think that emigration expectations are more likely to diminish the human capital and be negatively related to democratization. Lastly, support for EU integration was not taken as an indicator for measuring democratization potential because an appropriate question was not asked in Romania, and there is lack of comparable data for all SEE countries.

In the first step, we present data concerning the above mentioned questions from SEE youth studies in Table 16.



*Table 16. Overview of data from SEE Youth Studies on democratization indicators*

	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>ALB</b>	<b>BiH</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CRO</b>	<b>KOS</b>	<b>MK</b>	<b>RO</b>	<b>SL</b>
<b>Values</b>	Popularity of politics	35.8	52.6	24.3	34.8	32.4	33.9	30.5	9.3
	Popularity of civil society	27.7	38.7	26.8	32.6	45.9	30.7	31.0	27.9
	Volunteering	16.0	19.0	23.0	13.0	21.0	13.0	23.0	38.2
<b>Interests and participation</b>	Satisfaction with democracy	24.1	18.4	12.0	25.7	24.3	6.2	18.3	7.9
	Voting	30.3	19.0	27.7	24.5	16.9	41.6	20.8	12.8
	Interest in national politics	41.0	25.8	39.9	36.1	52.9	51.0	14.4	25.4
	Youth represented	30.9	21.3	13.2	11.6	33.7	24.7	9.9	14.0
	Impact on nat. govt.	40.4	15.6	22.7	17.4	41.0	30.9	25.7	14.4
	Impact on loc. govt.	50.8	17.5	23.8	19.3	48.3	38.9	31.6	24.3
<b>Migration</b>	Planning to leave country	66.7	49.2	42.5	26.7	55.1	52.8	39.9	30.8

In the next step, we ranked the countries according to the results. The highest results were placed in the highest position. For example, 52.6% of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina say that being active in politics is popular. This is the highest result compared to youth in all other countries, so they are ranked 1st. On the other hand, 38.7% of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina think that being active in civil society is popular, which is the second best score, after Kosovo, so they are ranked 2nd compared to others.

We use the ranking to assess youth's democratization potential. There is an intuitive logic behind the ranking. All of the indicators are positively related to democratization, with the exception of emigration. For example, higher popularity of activism in politics and civil society, more volunteering, greater satisfaction with democracy, more voting, greater interest in national politics, higher impact on governance, and higher perception of youth representation are expected to contribute positively to democratization. In that sense, if the youth are ranked higher in these dimensions compared to their peers in other SEE countries, then they would have a comparatively greater democratization potential.

One could simply add the rankings in each of the categories to get a sum that would designate the country's overall youth score. However, since the positive contribution is associated with a high ranking, and a high ranking has a low arithmetical value, then we expect lower sums to indicate stronger potential support for democratization.

The emigration dimension works inversely. If more youth are inclined to leave, then fewer of them would be willing to stay and contribute toward democratization. Therefore, following the logic of ranking and summing, we gave the highest rankings to youth in countries which are less inclined to immigrate. For example, only 25% of youth in Croatia said that they would be willing to immigrate, which is the lowest compared to all others; hence, they are ranked in first place. Youth in Slovenia, with 32% willing to immigrate, are second, and so on.

Table 17. Ranking of youth answers in democratization indicators

	Indicator	ALB	BiH	BG	CRO	KOS	MK	RO	SL
Values	Popularity of politics	2	1	7	3	5	4	6	8
	Popularity of civil society	7	2	8	3	1	5	4	6
	Volunteering	6	5	2	7	4	7	2	1
Interests and participation	Satisfaction with democracy	3	4	6	1	2	8	5	7
	Voting	2	6	3	4	7	1	5	8
	Interest in national politics	3	6	4	5	1	2	8	7
	Youth represented	2	4	6	7	1	3	8	5
	Impact on nat. govt.	2	7	5	6	1	3	4	8
	Impact on loc. govt.	1	8	6	7	2	3	4	5
Migration	Planning to leave	8	5	4	1	7	6	3	2
TOTAL SUM		36	48	51	44	31	42	49	57

The summary of the assessment is that youth in Kosovo have the highest democratization potential (total sum of 31), followed by Albania (36), Macedonia (42), Croatia (44), Bosnia and Herzegovina (48), Ro-

mania (49), Bulgaria (51) and Slovenia (57). It would seem that youth's democratization potential is higher when the challenges for democracy are greater. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a small exception; however, in the other countries, if democracy is more stable, then the youth democratization potential is lower. For example, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia still face some challenges with democratization, but according to these results, the democratization potential of their youth is higher than in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia, which are more stable democracies.

This is an interesting and somewhat counter-intuitive finding. One might have expected youth to support democratization if they are provided with more opportunities. However, it appears that youth are more willing to support democratization if there remain a greater range of challenges. This is in accordance with findings from other studies which claim that, if the young are dissatisfied and frustrated, then they are more likely to contribute to regime change (Al-Momani, 2013; Weber, 2013) and that youth are more willing to be active in political change during critical times (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002).

This first attempt to assess the democratization potential of youth in SEE comes with several caveats. The assessment is an instrument for calibrating expectations from youth and for provoking discussion. It is unclear whether the simple sum of rankings is an effective measure. The ranking is not weighted, and there are no reasons to consider that voting and volunteering make the same contribution to democracy, even though both are probably more important than a declared interest in national politics. Also, the assessment lacks a benchmark for comparison. The results of SEE's youth are compared with each other, so the assessment is relevant only for SEE youth. It is unclear how SEE youth would measure up in comparison with youth from other countries, if comparable data were available. Lastly, one could argue that it is quite speculative. It relies on self-reported answers from young respondents and does not take

into consideration their actions. Moreover, it does not provide a definite answer on whether youth in a given SEE country would act in support of democracy if they had the opportunity, or whether the young are merely expressing a wish for democracy to improve. However, one hopes that the assessment points out that in some SEE countries, young people have greater potential to support democracy and hence, they are more likely to become involved.

## **5. Building democracies in South East Europe: political recommendations**

As the literature review in sections one and two have demonstrated, democratization studies point to institutional, economic and social factors that support the process of democratic development. Moreover, the EU integration process is regarded as an important external stimulus for democratic development. Findings from other youth studies were structured around four dimensions (values, political interests and participation, attitudes toward the EU and immigration expectations) to guide the presentation of the results and to assess the democratization potential of youth in SEE.

### **5.1 Youth as an (un)willing agent of democratization in South East Europe**

Youth potential as an agent for supporting or impeding political change has been recognized in only a very few democratization studies. The role of youth in EU integration has not so far been taken into consideration. This research project fills this gap with systematic and methodologically grounded youth studies in different SEE countries, following the pattern of the Shell Youth Studies in Germany. The key findings of the cross-country analysis are that participation in politics or civil society is not particularly popular. Young people have a specific value profile, with “personal dignity” as the most important item. They place most trust in their family, relatives and friends, and are suspicious of persons whose ethnic identity or political affiliation is different from their own.

Few among them volunteer. The ones that volunteer mainly support community work and help people with disabilities. Religious affiliation is an important marker of individual identity.

In some countries youth are fairly interested in politics (e.g. Kosovo and Macedonia) and in others not at all (e.g. Romania and Slovenia). Youth place their trust in different institutions. From among the domestic institutions, they tend to trust the police, army, NGOs and media. They do not trust political parties, their government or parliament. Most of them are dissatisfied with democracy. Reported voter turnout is rather low, and most young people feel that their views are not represented in politics. They believe that they can have a greater impact on local government than at the national level.

Unemployment, poverty and job insecurity are the biggest concerns for youth across SEE. Youth consider that these issues should be top priorities for their national governments. Support for EU, and expectations from the EU, are higher among SEE's youth in aspirant countries. The younger generation in EU member states seems disillusioned with the EU.

The results indicate that, unfortunately, youth in SEE constitute an unlikely agent for supporting democratization and EU integration. They value their personal integrity and have a conservative outlook; they are distrustful toward key democratic institutions, dissatisfied with democracy, only mildly interested in politics, and they feel that they are not represented. These young people are preoccupied with economic concerns. If youth are not better included in their societies, if they are not provided with more opportunities for personal development, then they are more likely to immigrate, primarily to Western Europe, than to push for changes in their respective countries. This study shows that the percentage of SEE youth willing to immigrate ranges from 27% in Croatia to 67% in Albania. A brighter economic future and improved education prospects are the most common reasons for the expressed intent to leave the country. Western European countries, primarily Germany, are most preferred destinations.

Nonetheless, the democratization potential of youth in SEE, based on ten indicators from three of the four dimensions, is higher in countries that have problems with democracy (e.g. Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia), than in countries that have more stable democracies (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia). Other studies show that youth are more willing to engage in political change if they perceive that it is a critical moment, or if they are dissatisfied with their situation. On the other hand, it is unclear whether expressing a higher democratization potential will lead to more direct action in support of democratization.

## **5.2 Policy implications**

The process of building democracies in SEE countries has reached a critical stage. As the present study has shown, the younger generation is dissatisfied with the political and economic development of their home countries. Many of them want to leave the country, and many actually do so, as the increase of numbers of immigrants and refugees from these countries to CEE demonstrates. It is time for political intervention on the national and the international levels. Interventions should cover the whole spectrum from education to international agreements. Based on these findings, the following are several recommendations to improve youth participation.

For young people to play a more positive role in democratization and EU integration, it is necessary to improve the education system. It is important to strengthen the democratic capacities of youth in SEE countries. For example, introducing compulsory courses on civic education in primary or secondary school would be one possibility. Young people should be exposed, at an early age, to democratic values and standards, to democratic institutions and their functioning and practices. Innovative educational policies should be explored, such as experiential learning, study visits and guest lectures. It would be beneficial for the democratic capacities of the young, and in return for the democratization process, if the youth gained a sense that they were an essential element in the democratic system and were educated on their potential of to be an active element. Furthermore, policies should be put in place to support

informal educational opportunities, for example, youth training, seminars and conferences. The EU has several programs that support youth in action; however, national governments could make a greater effort to target youth support.

Supporting youth organizations, financially and technically, would be beneficial for expanding informal educational possibilities, but also for empowering youth engagement. It is very likely that if a person becomes active in a youth organization, he or she will remain socially active in adulthood as well. Another policy to increase youth social participation and engagement is to introduce compulsory voluntary service in the final year of high school. This would increase the sense of civic duty, and is also very likely to encourage social solidarity among young people. Further, volunteering will empower youth and allow them to boost their personal skills and capacities.

To increase the level of youth's political participation, national governments in SEE countries should introduce a more inclusive policy process. The policy making processes, especially those which are pertinent to youth needs and interests, should be done in dialogue, or at least in consultation, with youth organizations. The opinions of youth do not need to be obligatory; however, they should be duly taken into consideration and especially if the young are relevant stakeholders. According to the SEE youth studies, it would probably be advisable to include youth more often in the policy process at the local level. Young people perceive that they have a higher impact on local government, and local governments usually deal with tangible, hands-on issues. Therefore, it would be beneficial for youth to be included in policy making, to get a sense of participatory, collective problem solving. Youth would learn about the policy process and how to contribute to it.

To support EU integration, youth mobility in the region and in the EU should be further supported. Increased mobility is among the greatest expectations from EU integration. Even though some EU programs do support student mobility, overall student mobility in SEE remains relatively low. Arguably, greater mobility would also be beneficial for rec-



conciliation, and for overcoming political and historical divisions. Youth mobility allows for new experiences to be gathered. Mobility would expose SEE's youth to a sense of greater diversity. Sharing experiences and meeting new people, especially if done in a country where democracy is consolidated, could also serve as an infusion of democratic values and standards. Then youth would have a wider set of personal experiences and be empowered to act as democratic transformation agents. The experience in a democratic environment might induce personal expectations that youth would then demand in their domestic environment.

Last, but certainly not least, youth need to be retained in SEE countries. Several policy options should be elaborated. On the one hand, the quality of higher education should be improved and technical and vocational education should be reformed to be in direct relation with labor market needs. This would contribute to the creation of greater employment opportunities for youth in their respective home countries. Also, national governments would be well advised to put policies in place that support youth job creation, for example, giving grants or subsidies for youth self-employment and subsidies for youth employment. On the other hand, SEE countries should develop a set of "brain gain programs". It is essential to introduce incentives for youth to return, and to attract know-how and knowledge. To start, the focus should be on researchers and individuals with strong personal skills and capacities. National governments in SEE, with support from the EU, and private companies and universities in SEE, should make greater efforts to attract back the human capital that they have lost.

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## B. Youth and Family in South East Europe

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### 1. Introduction

Family life, with its structure and substance being changeable and reacting to change at the macro-societal level, is nothing new in social science. Industrialization, for example, has brought about the minimal conjugal, 'nuclear' family (Therborn, 2004), after the prevalence of various forms of extended family living (see, for example, Therborn, 2004; Flere and Klanjšek, 2013). Family change in the early 21st century is no exception to this process of social change involving the family. Daly sums up these changes: (1) as to family forms, living alone has risen sharply, at least as of the latter half of the past century; (2) a fall in fertility is notable, possibly on a European scale during a somewhat shorter period, and (3) a decrease in the number of marriages is marked, related to parenthood outside wedlock. These three major changes have in sum brought about 'an increasing variation in the composition of households and families' (2005, 282). As to family organisation, she finds 'the two income family is now the dominant form in most EU 15 states' (2005, 383), the trend not being limited to EU 15 countries. However, she also notes that household chores are not yet equally distributed (2005, 384). Although the Parsonian family picture (sharp differentiation in roles and positions between spouses) is reversed, Daly still writes of 'the family' as an entity. Finally, in family relations and values, Daly finds a troubling separation between 'coupledom (partnership) and parenthood'. 'Partnership demands mobility and is typically not founded on a long term commitment, whereas the increasingly child-centered family of today requires immobility and stability' (2005, 386), which would amount to an internal contradiction within the structure of daily relations. Of course, there is variation in Europe as to these trends: however, as Torres et al. (2008) and Flere and Klanjšek (2013) have established, *inter-country variations between family patterns are diminishing in the assertion of*

*some basic trends.* Besides these trends, the impact of migration upon the European family situation needs to be mentioned.

To sharpen our focus in understanding contemporary social change in the family, the *traditional family* of departure in modernization needs to be contrasted not only to the modern family, but also to *individualization*. The traditional family including the countries under consideration exhibited great variety, although forms of patriarchy were universal, as was universal marriage as part of the social order and not as a matter of choice (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 2002); the family was also the dominant work group in agriculture. However, we need to introduce the issue of inter-cultural variation in the analysis of the traditional family. As one moves towards the east in Europe, the extended family becomes more prevalent, although nowhere is it the exclusive type. The East European extended patriarchal family (*zadruga* in Serbian, *fis* in Albanian) was characterized by the dominance of males, the separation of males and females in everyday life, joint ownership of property, inalienability of real estate, and regulation of social life entirely by custom law. According to these customs, males never leave the family, whereas brides enter, creating a particular web of relationships, also ruled by custom. This is in contrast to the West European conjugal family, although this was also patriarchal (Erich, 1966). Much has changed from the models functioning as operational in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but traces may still be found in cultural norms and habits.

Individualization, as asserted by Beck, Beck and Bauman (2000), Giddens (1998) and other notable sociologists, pushes the issue much further. The basic tenets of individualization theory, as advanced by these authors, all relate to family, at least indirectly:

- Each individual is forced to ceaselessly make choices about new steps in his/her life (in contrast to the past, including the first stage of modernization, where an individual's life course was determined in advance by external forces life (work as employment or otherwise/, marriage, schooling and place of residence,

2002, 46);

- The manner of life becomes frequently interrupted by travel (by car, or air plane), including 'mental' travel: envisaging other modes of life'
- Decision making by the individual is 'reflexive', not exactly the result of long, deep meditation, also not on the basis of absolute certainty about the correctness of decisions taken; basically, decisions are speedy reactions to daily changes in situation;
- Customs and tradition cease to extend support, while religious belief is shallow or absent;
- One lives simultaneously in numerous places;
- Personal partnerships are uncertain and unstable, as these relationships may be organised in any manner by partners, fitting their needs and wishes, regardless of custom limitations; the family is unstable and conflictual, because of constant negotiation and renegotiation (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 2002, 101-118);
- Youth individually directs its path to adulthood, this journey being dissected into various paths and being also reversible;
- Cases of failure are numerous and are interpreted psychologically (as lack of individual endeavor and individual characteristics, including personality traits), social and welfare security are

diminishing (risk is individualized);

- Women attain parity with men;
- The motto is to become independent, one's own master;
- Instead of family, 'private life' becomes central (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim designate it 'self politics', 2002, 45);
- Bauman adds that social networks experience a demise, along with all social 'solids' (2000, 4).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim also reason along these lines, concluding that in the most developed European countries, setting the trend, a point has been reached where 'individuals have to invent or find their own social setting, love become[ing] the central meaning to their lives' (1995, 170). Thus, Giddens finds the family to be 'a shell institution' ('emptied of content', 1999, 19), while Beck and Beck-Gernsheim consider it 'a zombie institution' (2002, 203); none of these scholars gives the family any credit (and even less for the future).

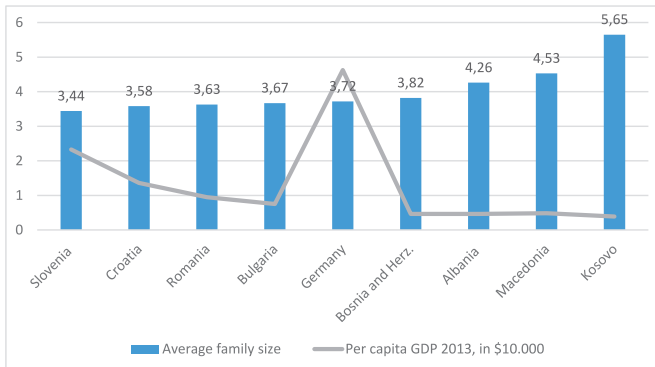
In this section, we will tackle comparatively youth within family life, youth in the process of gaining independence and youth aspirations as to personal and family life.



## 2. Youth life in the family

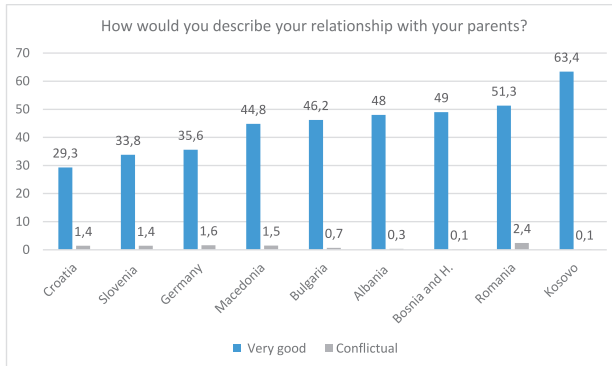
Family and household size are fundamental in to an understanding of the family. The data below are indicative, since family size is sometimes taken as a proxy for family structure, particularly in the analysis of traditional family life.

Figure 1: Average family size and GDP



In Figure 1 above, one is confronted by little variation in family size among the countries, except for Kosovo, where the average family is significantly larger, a finding indicative of the recent demise of the extended family in rural areas, of high fertility and generally of a youthful society. Of course, it also indicates the lag in Demographic transition that can be found generally within a late stage throughout Europe. In the Macedonian sample, which also shows a significantly above-average family size, this is also related to the presence of ethnic Albanians ( $M = 5.38$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ , very close to the Kosovo datum), in contrast to ethnic Macedonians ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = .97$ ). However, we do not find such a differentiation within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Figure 2: Relationship with parents



In the above figure, relationship indicates the subjective response to the situation within the family from the respondent's point of view. Relationship with parents was assessed by respondents ranging from 'very good' on one end, to 'conflictual' on the other. There is great variation among answers: in the two most developed countries studied, and in Germany, the number of those answering 'very good' indicates the low point, below two-fifths, whereas the numbers are significantly higher in other samples, with the answer reaching the absolute majority in Romania, and particularly in Kosovo, where respondents seem to be getting along extremely well with their parents. We may surmise that the satisfaction in Romania and Kosovo may pursue from a general liberalization of relations and from greater parental permissiveness in the recent period, an abrupt innovation. In most samples age does not predict the assessment of relations with parents, whereas in gender, female gender is predictive of somewhat better relations, but in the Slovene and Croat samples, it is vice versa. It could be hypothesized that the less favorable assessments in Slovenia and Croatia result from the perceived unfavorable general social situation of youth, and also related to permissiveness and non-pathological narcissism (Flere et al., 2013). In any case, it is almost counter-proportional to the independence these two youth groups have in comparison to the others, who are more satisfied.

When respondents claim to take decisions ‘alone’ (within the question considered below), in all samples this accompanies better relations with parents (‘very good’) more frequently than in the case of other answers, with the exception of Bulgaria, where no significant difference was found. This means that at least a perception of independence is needed in the contemporary situation.

One of the important transitions is the residential one: transferring from the parental home to living on one’s own. Residential transition, associated with the transition to taking an active economic role, is known to vary historically and in Europe, spatially. Early transitions are common in Northern Europe and Britain, historically, whereas late ones, with a ‘subprotective’ parental attitude towards mature children, is typical in southern Europe. Most recently, this transition has been postponed, owing to the difficulties and impossibilities of attaining a breadwinning role in the proper sense. It has been replaced by ‘flexibility’, precariousness and ‘casual’ work (see, Furlong, 2013). In our analysis in Table 1, results are presented as to frequency of living with parents among respondents of legal age.

*Table 1: Residential status of young people*

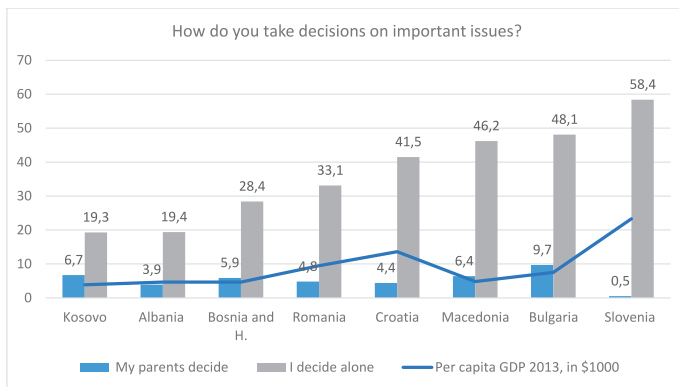
<b>Country</b>	<b>Percentage living with parents</b>
Slovenia	84
Albania	85
Croatia	78
Romania	76
Bulgaria	69
BiH	81
Kosovo	93
Macedonia	91

*Note: Figures indicate percentage in total sample. Only respondents aged 18 and over were considered. Both situations, where the respondent lives with one or both parents were taken into account.*

Our respondents live, by and large, with parents; in the analysis living with a single parent was included. Living with parents is usually higher for males and diminishes with age, although the differences for age are not always significant. The difference as per gender has usually been attributed to earlier maturation of females, but Furlong has demonstrated (2013), owing to historical variation, that the pattern is socially constructed and open to change (Mulder, 2009, 205). Living with one's parents is almost universal in Kosovo and Macedonia, among the least developed countries studied. In Macedonia, ethnicity is not of relevance here.

In all samples, females live with parents less frequently (with the exception of Croatia and Romania, where no difference was detected): Romania 76:76, Croatia 78: 78, Kosovo 93:89, Slovenia 85:80, Macedonia 94:89, Bulgaria 74:67, B&H 74:78, Albania 90:80, the only one indicating a sharp difference, possibly due to early marriage.

*Figure 3: Independence in decision making.*



*Note: other answers, including 'joint decision making by respondent and parents' are omitted.*

Respondents were posed a non-specifically worded question on how they take 'major decisions'. Of course, 'major decisions' can differ in nature, but the wording allowed respondents to ponder on their own

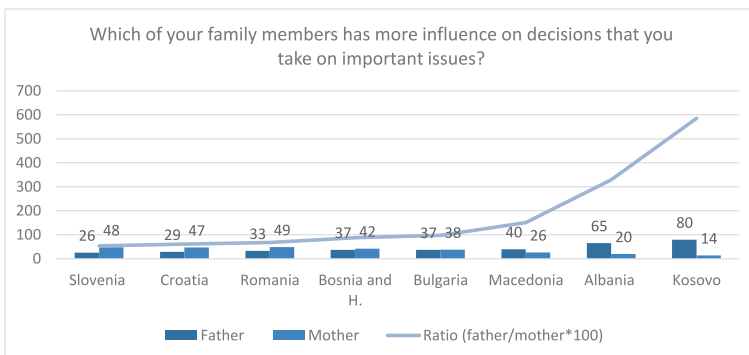
and particularly to express how independent they are of their parents in decision making. In this way, the question effectively reflects the ideas of individualization theory, since taking decisions alone, not being bound by family, customs or institutions, goes to the very core of the concept. GDP per capita source: World Bank data for 2013.

The range of answers varies hugely, with what we may consider the exposure to western culture at an informal level and national per capita GDP. The correlation between net independent decision making in country (attained by subtracting parental decision making from independent decision making) and GDP is also very high ( $r = 0.719$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This practically confirms individualization as an important criterion of change in family life in contemporary circumstances, replacing not only the patriarchal, but also the modern, Parsonian family.

Independent decision making uniformly rises with age in all samples. However, in Kosovo, only among the 25-year-olds is there a marked difference.

Independent decision making also relates to the respondent's gender, although not in the same manner in all country samples: in Slovenia 60% of females and 57% of males take decisions independently, in Croatia 48% females and 54% males, in B&H 51% males and 49% females, in Bulgaria 49% females and 51% males, in Macedonia 53% and 47%, in Romania it is 32% and 34%, in Albania 19: 19%, and in Kosovo 7:6 %.

Figure 4: The relative influence of mother and father.



Data in Figure 4 are indicative more of the presence and absence of patriarchy than of individualization itself. One should bear in mind that the late modern family is, if not mother-centered -- since the 'revolution' in equalizing coupledom members has 'stalled' (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang, 2012; Cabrera, Fagan, Wight and Shadler, 2011) – in any case, with the unstable coupledom situation, the father's presence is less frequent and intensive. The processes of parenting are concentrated with the mother, owing to numerous factors, including the instability of coupledom and the instrumental role of men aggravated by contemporary circumstances etc.

Thus, it would be natural from the emotional and family structure point of view that the mother has a greater say in young people's decision making. Contrariwise, if we are dealing with a patriarchal situation, the father's word will predominate. Slovenia, Croatia and Romania definitely belong to the first group, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo to the second, with Bulgaria being in between. A more precise and nuanced picture of the contrast between patriarchy and the post-modern, mother centered family transpires from the ratio indicated by the curved line in Figure 4 above. It corresponds to the basic fault lines indicated by Klanjšek and Flere, 2013 and earlier by Erlich, 1977.

### **3. On the way to independence**

Youth is by definition a transition toward adulthood in which individuals act autonomously, without the tutelage of elders. The issue of the transition has been discussed at length in current scholarship, and numerous disagreements have emerged concerning 'emergent adulthood', multi-path transitions, reversibility of transitions, difficulty in achieving transitions, and even the 'Brazilianization' of European youth (see, Furlong, 2013). We have addressed only a few aspects of this transition.

*Table 2: How would you prefer to live?*

How would you prefer to live?	I would live with parents, as it is the simplest solution	I would like to live alone, if financial conditions permitted	I would like to live alone, but my parents would not consent
Slovenia	15	61	4
Albania	61	20	3
Croatia	40	34	2
Romania	49	28	3
Bulgaria	39	36	1
BiH	52	25	2
Kosovo	76	15	2
Macedonia	31	18	7

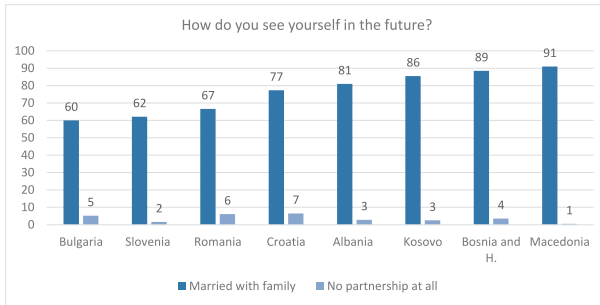
Note: Only respondents aged 18 and over were considered. Other answers to the question were omitted.

Table 2 depicts the ‘preferences’ of respondents of legal age as to how to reside. It clearly indicates Slovene youth as being individualized, with only one-seventh opting to live with their parents. In all other samples, this option attains much higher rates, with Macedonia, somewhat surprisingly, being second. In BiH, Macedonia and Kosovo, absolute majorities opt for such a solution. However, parental consent is not the major obstacle; it never receives more than one-thirteenth of the answers, and the numbers are mostly insignificant.

The inability to achieve independence for economic reasons is thus the major obstacle to the triumph of individualization, at least in the respondents’ perceptions.

Living with parents as an option declines with age, even in this age group. Boys are more likely to consent to live with parents than girls, for example in the Slovene, Romanian, Albanian, and Bulgarian (very steep line) samples; in Macedonia, there was no regularity found (in this question, there may have been an imperfection in translation, as transpires from the English data set edition).

Figure 5: The will to get married.



The above question pertains to the future in terms of marriage, informal coupledness or staying single. At issue is marriage as institution, an imposed and unquestioned status and part of the social order, as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim note (2002). The wording of the question concerns how respondents 'see themselves'. But behind this 'perception, there is the issue of whether marriage is an imposed choice, as it was traditionally, when partners had little say, or somewhere in the continuum to the opposite, 'pure relations'. Our questioning is not fine enough to uncover all the niceties, but one may conclude that in the cultures of BiH, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania, marriage is still very much the social standard. This may be so in parts of all other samples, as well.

Figure 6: Appropriate age for marriage.

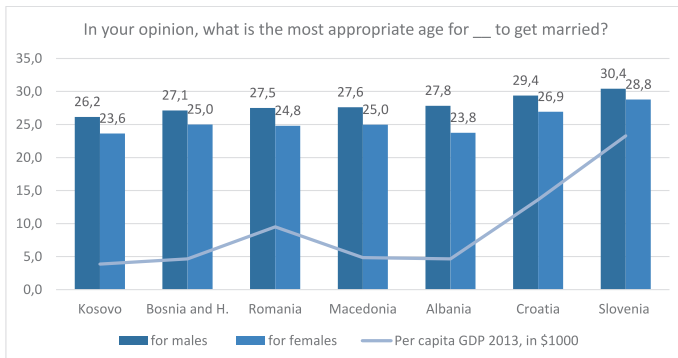




Figure 6 presents the perceptions by respondents of the proper age for entry into marriage, by males and females. One should bear in mind that entry into marriage in some of these societies is not an imposed and unquestioned status at all. The basic issue with this question reflects the contemporary trend towards entering marriage later (Furlong, 2013; Arnett). In line with this, proper ages rise with the development level of the countries in question. In all cases, significant differences occur in perceptions of entry into marriage by males (later than females). Figure 6 well illustrates the trend to later entry into marriage that is typical of contemporary Europe, Slovenia being most affected, whereas marriage is considered appropriate earlier in other countries, Kosovo being at the other end.

*Table 3: Points of reference in choosing a spouse*

'In your opinion, how important are the following factors for the choice of marriage partner?'

	<i>Family approval</i>	<i>Virgin-ity</i>	<i>Reli-gion</i>	<i>Eco-nomic status</i>	<i>Educa-tion</i>	<i>Physical Appearance</i>	<i>Com-mon inter-ests</i>	<i>Region-al origin</i>	<i>Per-sonal-ity</i>
Slovenia	23	3	14	15	29	73	13	4	91
Albania	84	21	17	42	78	68	84	24	84
Croatia	44	10	43	37	53	73	88	23	87
Romania	46	24	40	46	64	86	78	20	85
Bulgaria	60	21	39	44	57	75	90	23	91
BiH	69	32	68	34	58	65	86	43	84
Kosovo	87	75	85	44	83	51	88	29	89

*Notes: Respondents declining any form of coupledness in the expected future were excluded from analysis. Only respondents aged 18-25 were considered in all samples. The percentage of answers was entered when stating the criterion was 'important' or 'very important'. Responses to criteria were not mutually related, each could be assessed individually.*

Other answers in national samples: Romania: Nationality, 35%, Croatia: Nationality: 33%, Slovenia: Nationality 3%, Bulgaria: Nationality: 40%, Bosnia and Herzegovina: Nationality 50%. These questions were not administered in Macedonia.

Data in Table 3 are very indicative both of individualization, and of patriarchal traditionalism, as well as of other socially relevant criteria for 'choosing' spouse, both as per family life and as per youth life.

In the region under consideration, we are confronted by great diversity in this respect. From the point of view of individualization, the only factor that should receive a high mark in deciding whether one will choose someone as a spouse, is personality, since personality enables the 'pure relations', of which Giddens writes, i.e. relations freed of economic concerns and of wider family concerns. Partners form coupledness for coupledness's sake, for enjoyment of each other only. True, personality as an answer attains high marks in all samples, but only when no other criterion comes close is it a true indicator of individualization. The closest to it may be the criterion of physical appearance, which also has much to do with how one perceives and possibly experiences one's partner. In Slovenia, all other criteria values are conspicuously low, including ascribed criteria of religion, nationality and geographic origin. Although family approval in the Slovenian sample attains less than one-fourth of answers, in Slovenia we are still not dealing with an individualization ideal type. Thus, although individualization may prevail in Slovenia, pockets of traditionalism do persist.

In contrast, we have some traditionalistic, patriarchal situations, although not those of the Balkan extended family, in the strict sense. (there was no question but that the family would choose one's future spouse). Kosovo is an almost ideal, typical contrast to Slovenia. Although personality also attains a high mark there, on a practical test, it is bound to vanish when confronted with family approval, virginity and religion being considered. We are not able to discern how much of this belongs to traces of the traditional Albanian rural family (*fis*) and how much to the fact that Kosovo remains a divided society, divided into Albanians and Serbs, primarily.

Common interests may sound promising for marital harmony, and this criterion generally achieves high scores. However, for individualization and 'pure relations', it is not necessary. Each partner is free to undertake his/her own 'interests'.

Judging by this question, Slovenia is the only environment in which we may consider individualization to prevail, or to have gone a long way in assertion. Still, parental approval would need to disappear in a fully individualized situation. All other environments are distant from Slovenia, although Croatia is closest. Probably, we are confronted by very differing situations within Croatia. It is also interesting that in Bosnia and Herzegovina physical appearance, education and economic status attain relatively low values, when one might expect that the young would view these as relevant to escaping the dire general economic situation. However, we did not find that religion intervened in any systematic way.

There is huge variation as to the criterion of virginity. Kosovo overtakes all other countries observed, including a wide gap with respect to Albania, which reported a much lower value.

## 4. Conclusions

All these societies need to be observed as departing from the traditional family and coupledom establishment and the traditional family operation model. However, the road to 'pure relationships' is still a long one, regardless of whether we consider it to lead to personal happiness and fulfilment, but as an objective trend towards the ordering of family and personal life.

Slovenia is definitely the society farthest on the way, differing from the others, both as to the position of youth and the formation of family. Croatia is lagging behind at a distance. Possibly, further analysis would indicate sharp differences among Croatian regions (Provincial Croatia being closer to Slovenia). In most cases, Bulgaria and Romania are in between the two groups of countries. Undoubtedly, stratification analysis would uncover significant differences. Bosnia and Herzegovina is closer to the traditionalist model, although least integrated in it. Its functioning as a divided society contributes to its slower pace of undertaking individualization processes. Macedonia, Albania and particularly Kosovo form the traditionalist, patriarchal group of societies in terms of youth position and family organization, although change is well underway there, too.

The most compelling indicators are to be found in the questions on taking decisions and on criteria for choosing a spouse. When related to societal indicators of development, they correlate highly.

Our study could not 'confirm' the individualization theory, but it did indicate its critical relevance in the study of contemporary family in the region. On the other hand, our instruments fell short of assessing the presence of Daly's contradictions in the contemporary family, with the exception of respondents' assessments on dissatisfaction in relations with parents in Slovenia and Croatia, which may transpire from the unstable family.

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## C. Youth in Education Across South East Europe

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### 1. Introduction

Education is undoubtedly one of the central pillars of modern societies. Its importance in Europe has been rapidly increasing especially since the World War II, as children were increasingly seen as the responsibility of the state, which invests in their education, in order to improve the national well-being by developing future citizens (e.g. Kassem and Garret, 2009, 11). From the point of view of youth, it is clear that institutional education occupies an expanding part of young people's lives today. It has become, at least in Europe, a central and universal societal means of preparing youth for adulthood (Flere and Tavčar Krajnc, 2011, 97).

The increasing social importance of education can be traced, among other indices, in the steep rise in the number of young people entering higher education worldwide. While only one percent of the relevant global age cohort was studying at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this number grew to about 20 percent by its end (Schofer and Meyer, 2005, 3), and to 26 percent by the year 2007 (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley 2009).

Europe has been the leader in these trends. However, there have also been substantial differences between European countries. The most important factor dividing Europe during the last few decades is undoubtedly the presence of communist regimes after the Second World War in some countries. Mateju and Rehakova (1996, 158), for instance, pointed out that decades of communism deeply eroded the principles of meritocratic stratification, which led to a substantial lag behind the advanced industrial societies, also in terms of the importance of (higher) education. They also showed that, at least in the case of the Czech Republic in the early 1990s, higher education was returning as a strategy for the

life success of individuals. Research shows that the case was similar in other post-communist countries. Flere and Lavrič (2003, 283), for instance, noted that in Slovenia, the number of higher education students rose by 2.5 times during the 1990s, in contrast to the stagnation of the previous two decades. These changes in (at least some) post-communist countries of Europe were so sharp that some authors (e.g. Kwiek, 2008, 91) identified this passage from elite to mass higher education as one of the major specific challenges for post-communist countries in general.

The countries of the SEE that we are dealing with in this paper are all post-communist countries, thus undergoing, to different extents, the described changes. Further, since the fall of communist regimes, many of these countries have experienced severe social unrest, especially ethnic tension and even war. It is important to stress that education has often been regarded as an important vehicle for peace and stability. The World Bank's regional strategic paper from 2000, for instance, makes the following statement:

*"Education of today's youth in the SEE countries will be essential for laying the foundations for tomorrow's peace and prosperity... A well-trained population which values diverse, multicultural, democratic systems, supports their peaceful interaction and cooperation, is needed that Stability Pact's objectives of peace, stability and prosperity may become reality in the region."* (World Bank, 2000, 88).

The same report further stresses that a good education is essential for economic development. In this sense, education is often regarded as an investment in human capital (see: Becker, 1975). Following this line of thought, the European Union set out *to become 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world'* (European Council, 2000, para. 5).

There seems to be a substantial political will among the SEE countries to reform their educational systems in line with the basic EU guidelines. In 2000, for instance, the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) was established, based on a Memorandum of Under-



standing signed by the Ministers of Education, Science and Research of the SEE countries. Its mission statement follows the basic approach of the EU by way of '*promoting knowledge based, competitive and socially cohesive societies in Europe*'. Further, ERI SEE: "...aims at fostering shared European standards in education and training for a rapid integration of its member countries into a wider European area of education" (Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe, n.d.).

In this chapter we approach the issue of education in the relevant SEE countries from a specific angle. We did not enter into the institutional and organizational arrangements of education, but rather analysed educational systems and their effects through the perceptions of young people included in education. Clearly, this approach cannot provide a whole picture of the issue. However, it can highlight some important and sometimes overlooked aspects of education.

## Methodological notes

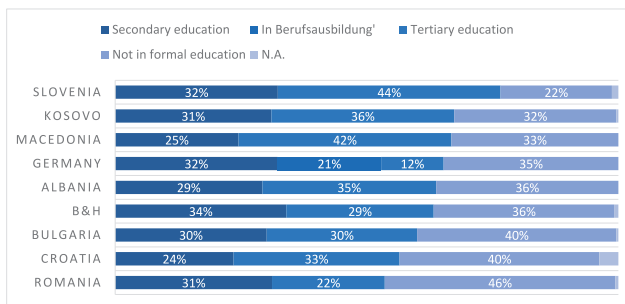
All the analyses in this chapter are based on the age group 16 to 25 years, since this was the best option to assure comparability of results across all the given SEE countries and also results from the German Shell Study (2010). As a rule, results in the tables and figures are presented in such a way that countries are ranked according to the measure employed. These rankings are usually compared with the general socio-economic development of the given countries, as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI). In cases where the gathered data allowed, Germany was also included in the analyses. On the other hand, in some cases certain SEE countries could not be included because of missing or not comparable indicators.

## 2. Enrollment in formal education

Given the very optimistic views on the transformative power of education, higher levels of inclusion of young people in education should be understood as something positive from the point of view of socio-eco-

conomic development: One could expect them to be related to general socio-economic development.

Figure 1: Enrollment in formal education



According to our data, however, **there is no clear relationship between school enrollment and socio-economic development.**

We do not find Germany, as the most developed country in our sample, at the top of the country table. Moreover, one needs to take into account the special category of 'Berufsausbildung', which refers to enrolment in dual vocational training. In such programs, young people typically spend one or two days a week at a vocational school (called a Berufsschule) and the other three or four days at a company. Thus, these young people are practically more included in the labor market than in institutions of formal education. Although we do not have exact data, we can be quite certain that the enrolment rates in dual vocational training are much lower in all the other countries observed. As Eichhorst and collaborators (2010, 5-7) observe, vocational education and training (VET) in Southern European countries plays only a marginal role, and is largely school-based. They also note that in the transition countries a shift has occurred towards a school-based system characterized by a clear distinction between education and work, although some elements of the dual system remain in some countries. Thus, the figure of 21 percent of German youth in 'berufsausbildung' should, for comparative reasons, be approximately cut in half. In such a case, Germany would fall towards the bottom of the ladder, somewhere between Croatia and Romania. Further, if we were to compare only enrollment rates in tertiary

education, Germany would convincingly take last place, with only 12% of young people enrolled.

On the other hand, Slovenia has by far the highest proportion (76%) of young people included in formal education, and the highest share of young people in tertiary education (44%). This result is not a surprise, since several studies continuously place Slovenia among the EU countries with the most intense expansion of (especially higher) education and consequently among the countries with the highest enrolment in formal education (see: Flere and Tavčar Krajnc, 2011; Tavčar Krajnc, Flere and Lavrič, 2014).

Some studies (e.g. Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009, vii) suggest that the European post-communist countries witnessed a disproportionately large expansion of higher education during the last decade of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st century. The reasons for this disproportionate rise are diverse and debatable. At the general level, however, it seems quite clear that post-communist countries tried to catch up with western European countries in terms of socio-economic development and saw an increase in educational enrollment as an important vehicle for achieving this goal. Furthermore, a strong political stimulation for the post-communist EU member states came from the Lisbon strategy, which targets at least 40 percent of 30-34 year olds to hold a university degree or equivalent in all EU countries by 2020 (Downes, 2014, 18). We can also reasonably assume that the increasing enrolment of the youth cohort in education tends to alleviate employment pressure and reduce youth unemployment. All this leads to the conclusion that political decisions probably played a crucial role in the expansion of HE, and that market mechanisms of supply and demand for graduates played a less important role.

This interpretation helps us to explain the absence of correlation between the enrolment rates and HDI. It could be argued that the described political reasoning was most influential in Slovenia, followed by the group of four less developed countries in our sample: Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### 3. Perceptions of life in school

#### 3.1 Willingness to attend school

Respondents in the SEE countries from our sample were asked how willing they are to attend school. It turned out that this willingness tends to be highest among the countries with lower levels of HDI. For instance, in the less developed Kosovo, the share of (very) willing respondents reached 75%, compared with much lower scores in Slovenia (38%) and Croatia (37%), as the two most developed countries in the sample.

*Table 1: Shares of respondents reporting themselves 'very willing' or 'willing' to attend school<sup>2</sup>.*

Romania	Croatia	Slovenia	Macedonia	Bulgaria	Albania	BH	Kosovo
29%	37%	38%	48%	53%	56%	57%	75%

At the level of countries, the Pearson correlation between HDI and the willingness to go to school was high and statistically significant ( $r = -0.710$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, Spearman's rho coefficient confirmed a very strong and significant ( $\rho = -0.857$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) correlation of ranks of countries. Thus, **there is a strong tendency that in less developed SEE countries, young people tend to be more eager to attend school.**

At first glance, this finding might look somewhat surprising. One might, for instance, expect that in more developed societies, students would get stronger family support and encouragement for their education and that they should therefore be more eager to go to school. Obviously, this is not the case.

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<sup>2</sup> In Kosovo and Macedonia the wording of the question about school differed slightly from other countries, as it referred to 'motivation' rather than to 'willingness' to attend school.

Furthermore, one could try to interpret the attained result by speculating that in less developed countries, school tends to be less demanding of students, who therefore are more eager to attend it. Yet, as subsequent analyses will show, this is not the case either.

Another line of inquiry might go in the direction of family relations, hypothesizing that young people from more traditional/patriarchal families tend to be more willing to attend school. The first clue in this direction is the fact that countries with the most school-enthusiastic youth (Kosovo, Albania, BH and Macedonia) are at the same time the countries with the highest levels of traditional and patriarchal relations within families (see the relevant chapter on youth and family).

We decided to conduct a few tests of this hypothesis within one country. We chose Bulgaria, because it is somewhere in the middle of the countries regarding traditional family patterns, as well as with regard to the willingness to attend school. It turned out that young Bulgarians from families where the father has a greater say tend to go school much more willingly (72%) than those from families where the mother has a greater say (51%).

Moreover, there is a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.357$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) between willingness to attend school and the quality of relations with parents. This relationship is also, at least to some extent, reflected at the level of countries: On the one side, we find Kosovo with extremely good relations between young people and their parents and extremely high willingness to go to school, and on the other side, we find Slovenia and Croatia with the opposite situation.

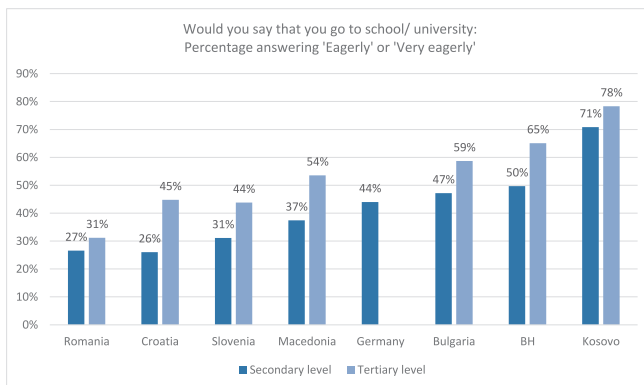
Another important indicator of traditional views on family life is the importance of marriage. It turned out that those young Bulgarians who intend to get married are substantially more eager to go school (57%) than those who do not (50%). Again, a similar pattern appears at the level of countries, with Macedonia, BH, Kosovo and Albania being most traditional in this sense.

Without going into further detail, we can conclude that **traditional, patriarchal and firm family relations are related to higher motivation to attend school.**

Another aspect of the explanation for these differences could be sought in the idea that **young people in less socio-economically developed environments tend to see school more as a space of stability and order, and most of all, as a path offering at least a chance for a better future.** This notion is partly supported by data in Albania, where data on the material status of families were available. Respondents from poorer families expressed a higher level of motivation to attend school ( $r = 0.118$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Further, similar test in Slovenia showed no significant correlation between family material status and motivation to go to school. This points to the conclusion that the tested pattern of greater school enthusiasm due to unfavorable conditions at home is indeed to a larger extent characteristic of socio-economically less developed countries. This finding helps to explain the higher levels of willingness to attend school in these countries.

Of course, this does not mean that factors within the educational system are not important as well. Within our data, we were able to test only the effect of the level of education. By presenting the secondary and tertiary levels separately, we were also able to include the data from Germany, where only students at the secondary level were asked this question.

*Figure 2: Willingness to attend school.*



The first important conclusion from the above figure is that the rankings of countries do not change significantly depending on whether we observe the secondary or tertiary level. More importantly, it is very clear that, **at least on an everyday level, young people are much more motivated to attend tertiary than secondary education.** One possible explanation for this finding is that young people who generally like going to school tend to continue their education at the tertiary level. Additionally, students at the tertiary level are much freer to study the discipline of their choice, which increases the likelihood that they enjoy the content of their education.

### 3.2 Stressfulness of life in school

There are considerable differences between the observed countries with regards to the perceived level of stress in school. However, unlike the case of motivation to attend school, these differences are obviously not correlated with the HDI.

*Table 2: Shares of respondents reporting life in school to be 'Very hard and stressful' or 'Hard and stressful'.*

Bulgaria	Macedonia	Romania	Croatia	B&H	Kosovo	Slovenia	Albania
12%	12%	19%	29%	29%	31%	32%	34%

Somewhat surprisingly, the correlation between willingness to go to school and the perceived stressfulness of everyday life in school appears to be positive, at least at the level of countries (see Table 2), where correlational analysis yielded a moderately strong positive, although not statistically significant, correlation ( $r = 0.289$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Most notably, Albania, Kosovo and BH are countries that combine relatively high levels of both willingness to go to school and levels of stress in school.

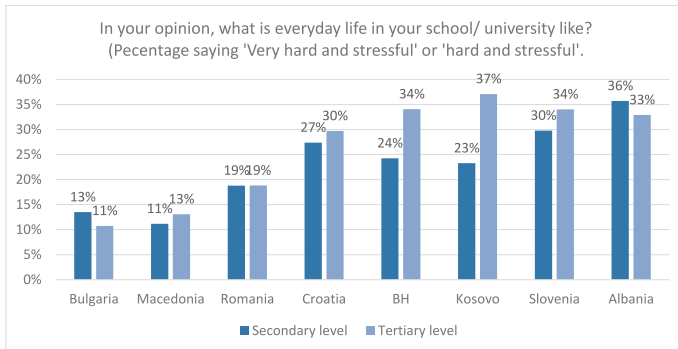
On the other hand, rather the opposite is the case at the level of individuals within countries. In Croatia ( $r = - 0.201$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), Bosnia and Herzegovina ( $r = - 0.250$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Slovenia ( $r = - 0.201$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ),

for instance, the willingness to school and perceived stress in school are negatively correlated. In some other countries, like for instance Bulgaria, the correlation between the two concepts is not significant.

This findings point to the conclusion that in these three countries (Albania, Kosovo and BH) a specific cultural background might play a crucial role. A cultural background that stimulates students to perceive, more than in other countries, stress in school as something natural and to be expected.

In general, higher education tends to be more stressful as compared to the secondary level. The difference is especially sharp in Kosovo, where 37% of students at the tertiary level perceive high levels of stress, as compared to only 23% at the secondary level. On the other hand, in two countries, Bulgaria and Albania, the opposite is the case.

*Figure 3: Stressfulness of everyday life in school.*





### 3.3 How many hours a day do students study?

In order to measure the amount of time that students devote to studying at home, a simple question with five possible options was applied. To make comparisons more interesting and effective, we computed average values of estimated hours studying for all the countries observed<sup>3</sup>.

*Table 3: Estimated average daily hours studying.*

Slovenia	Croatia	Bulgaria	B&H	Romania	Macedonia	Kosovo	Albania
1.52	1.73	1.78	2.02	2.05	2.14	2.20	2.31

Interestingly, a very strong correlation with levels of HDI ( $r = -0.923$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) emerges. **In economically less developed countries, students tend to devote substantially more time to studying at home.** This pattern, however, does not repeat itself at the level of individuals within countries. We tested the relationship between material wealth of the family and hours studying in Slovenia and Albania, where adequate indicators for family material status were directly available, and found no significant correlation.

Thus, we cannot argue that material deprivation causes students to work harder in school. The pattern is limited to the societal level alone.

Interestingly, as in case of the perceived stress and the willingness to go to school, we find Albania and Kosovo at the top of the list. These two countries are at the same time the ones with the lowest HDI scores in our sample and can thus be taken as exemplary of a more general tendency that **poorer countries tend to combine high levels of hard work in school and at home with relatively high levels of motivation to go to school.**

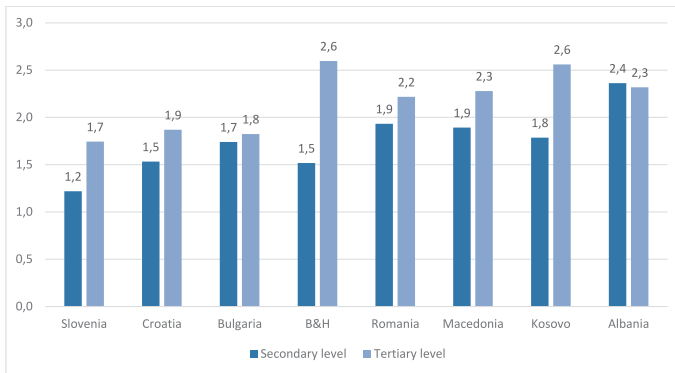
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<sup>3</sup> We assumed a value of 0.7 hours for the answer ‘up to one hour’ and a value of 5 for ‘more than four hours’. For other answers, a middle point of offered intervals was used. A slight exception to this is Macedonia, where the wording of the possible answers was slightly different, and values had to be adjusted accordingly. Consequently, the data on Macedonia are less reliable.

Thus, young people in poorer SEE countries appear to be highly motivated for education and prepared to study relatively hard. This leads to the simple and important conclusion that *education should remain at the center of attention when dealing with social inclusion of youth in the region, but also with wider questions of democratization and socio-economic progress of the region.*

With regard to the level of education, the anticipated pattern of more time devoted to studying at the tertiary level generally emerges. However, there are some very interesting cases.

*Figure 4: Average hours studying at home, by level of education*

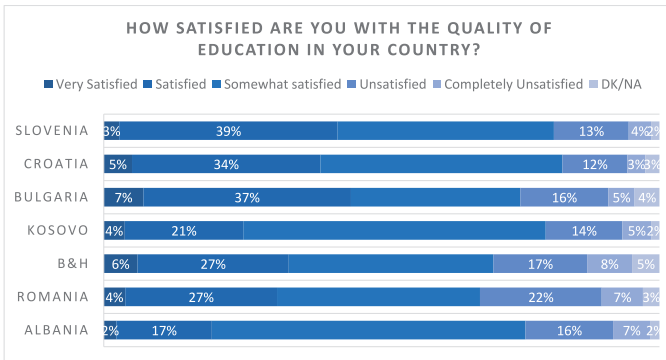


In Albania, for instance, the secondary level appears to be more demanding than the tertiary. And this is not due to the relatively low stringency of the tertiary level; it is precisely because Albanian secondary education stands out from all other countries in terms of its demands. Quite the opposite is the case in BH and partially in Kosovo, where tertiary education appears to be extremely time-consuming, whereas the secondary level falls below the average for the eight countries. Finally, a special case is Slovenia where students devote less time than in other countries for studying at both levels of education, with secondary education being especially non-demanding in comparative perspective.

### 3.4. Perceived quality of education

Perception of quality of education appears to be positively correlated with the HDI ( $r = 0.743$ ,  $p = 0.056$ ). Unfortunately, this concept was measured in a substantially different way in Macedonia, so this country could not be included in our analyses. This made our sample even smaller and probably contributed to the fact that the correlation is only near the generally accepted margin for statistical significance ( $p = 0.05$ ).

Figure 5: Perceived quality of formal education.



Note: Countries are ranked according to average values of answers (1='Completely unsatisfied'; 5 = 'Very satisfied').

This finding comes as no surprise, since more developed countries tend to invest more resources (in absolute terms) in education, and tend to have a longer tradition of education, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels.

A more interesting finding is that the perceived quality of education correlates strongly and negatively with the amount of time students spend studying at home ( $r = -0.877$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that **students in less developed countries tend to study more, to a large extent because of the lower quality and inefficiency of educational systems in these countries.** Of course, this is by far the only possible

explanation, and this thesis definitely needs further examination with other methodological approaches.

Interestingly, the comparison of satisfaction with the educational system at different levels of education (secondary vs. tertiary) yielded no significant differences. This suggests that the quality of the educational system as a whole determines to a large extent the quality of all individual levels, which further suggests that countries should deal with the educational system in a holistic manner, rather than manage individual levels of education separately.

### 3.5 Perception of corruption in education

The perceptions of corruption were measured in only seven countries, since such perceptions were estimated as negligible by the researchers from Slovenia. Nevertheless, a quite strong negative correlation with the HDI emerged at the level of countries ( $r = -0.679$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). There is little doubt that this correlation would be statistically significant if Slovenia were also included in the sample.

*Table 4: Countries by the level of perceived corruption in the education system*

Croatia	Bulgaria	B&H	Romania	Kosovo	Macedonia	Albania
23%	29%	36%	38%	68%	72%	84%

*Note: Respondents were asked: 'Do you think that grades and exams can be/are being bought at your school / university?' Table presents percentages of those answering 'Yes, often' or 'Yes, sometimes'.*

Not surprisingly, a very strong negative correlation at the level of countries emerged with the perceived quality of education ( $r = -0.829$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). A much more interesting finding is that *there is an extremely strong tendency for students to study more in countries with higher perceptions of corruption in education* ( $r = 0.964$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This leads to the conclusion that in some cases teachers might place high demands on students in order to create pressure leading to potential corrupt ac-

tivities. Nonetheless, these findings suggest that *corruption in education is widespread, and this has serious implications for the whole system in most SEE countries, while Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo stand out as by far the most problematic.*

#### 4. Practical orientation of education and transition to the labor market

Respondents in all the countries, except Romania, were asked if they had ever participated in a practicum or internship.

*Table 5: Percentages of respondents who have participated in a practicum or internship during or after their schooling.*

BiH	Croatia	Albania	Kosovo	Slovenia	Macedonia	Bulgaria	Germany
17%	18%	19%	25%	31%	35%	37%	48%

Not surprisingly, we found no statistically significant correlations with the previously analyzed concepts (including the HDI) at the level of countries. Thus, it seems that the level of practical orientation of an educational system depends on specific policies, which are generally not dependent on wider macro-economic circumstances.

We further asked those who were studying (at secondary or tertiary level) about their optimism regarding the likelihood that they would be able to find job after graduation. Unfortunately, this question was not asked in Macedonia and Germany. Despite that, there is a strong correlation between the perceived likelihood of getting a job and the practical orientation of education ( $p = 0.771$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). The lack of statistical significance ( $p = 0.072$ ) would very likely be overcome if the three missing countries (Germany, Macedonia and Romania) were included in the analysis.

*Table 6: Percentages of students not expecting to find a job for a long time after graduation.*

Romania	Bulgaria	Kosovo	Slovenia	B&H	Albania	Croatia
14%	15%	23%	25%	29%	30%	31%

Further, it is clear that general socio-economic development of a country has a huge influence on perceived employment prospects for young people. For this reason, we ran a partial correlation between the likelihood of getting a job and the practical orientation of education, controlling for the levels of HDI. The result was an almost perfect correlation between the two concepts ( $p = 0.977$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This leads to the conclusion that **practical orientation of education (in terms of internship, apprenticeship, and the like) is strongly related to the, at least perceived, employability of young people.**

## 5. Conclusions

The comparative analysis of young people in education across the eight countries of SEE and Germany yields several conclusions:

1. There is no clear relationship between school enrolment and socio-economic development. It appears that specific policy decisions, rather than market mechanisms involving supply of and demand for graduates, in the past two or three decades have played a crucial role in the rate of expansion of tertiary education in individual countries.
2. There is a strong tendency that in less developed SEE countries, young people tend to be more eager to go to school. Notably, differences between countries are considerable, from 29% of highly motivated students in Romania to 75% in Kosovo. We can at least partially explain this by the idea that young people in less socio-economically developed environments tend to see school more as a space of stability and as a chance for a better future. Analyses further showed that traditional, patriarchal and firm family relations, which are more characteristic of less developed countries, might also play an important role.
3. Young people throughout the SEE region are much more motivated to attend tertiary than secondary education. This is probably because those young people who generally like school are the ones continuing their education at the tertiary level, but also because students at the tertiary level are much freer to study the discipline of their choice.
4. In economically less developed countries, students tend to devote substantially more time to studying at home. If we combine this and the previous finding, it becomes clear that poorer countries tend to combine high levels of hard work in school and at home with relatively high levels of motivation to go to school. This leads to a simple and important conclusion that education should remain at the center of attention when

dealing with social inclusion of youth in the (especially) less developed parts of the SEE region.

5. However, these highly motivated and hardworking students tend to evaluate their countries' educational systems rather negatively. This might lead to the conclusion that students in less developed countries tend to study more to a large extent because of the lower quality of those education systems. Further analysis even showed that there is an extremely strong tendency for students to study more in countries with higher perceptions of corruption in education.
6. Corruption in education, or at least the perception of its existence, is widespread in the SEE region and has serious implications for the whole system in most SEE countries. The data even offer a scary interpretation that in some cases teachers might be making high demands of students precisely in order to create pressure leading to potential corrupt activity.
7. The practical orientation of education (in terms of internship, apprenticeship, and the like) is strongly related to the perceived employability of young people. Thus, it seems to be a good strategy for SEE countries to promote internships, apprenticeships and other forms of practical training within formal education.

These conclusions, of course, are far from providing a comprehensive picture of the educational systems in these countries. Instead, they are a selection of the most important and interesting findings that can be extracted from the series of FES-sponsored youth studies in these countries. In this sense, they represent an important and interesting contribution to the whole picture, which needs to be extended through analysis of other sources.



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# D. Youth (Un)employment and the Economic Situation of Youth in South East Europe

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## 1. Youth (un)employment

### 1.1. EU Labor Markets at a Glance – Weak Recovery with Lower Security

Amidst global competition, a volatile macroeconomic situation and unfavorable Demographic trends, Europe is encountering forces that are radically changing its labor market, giving rise to new challenges. This includes the issue of youth (un)employment and the transition of youth from education to employment, which has generally been one of the most active areas of youth studies (Furlong, 2013, 73).

During recent decades, and especially after the onset of the global financial crisis, the problem of youth (un)employment, including the issue of youth transition to labor markets, became one of the most pressing issues burdening Europe.

*“Youth unemployment is a particularly serious problem. The youth unemployment rate stood at an unprecedented 23 percent in the euro area in mid-2014, well above the rate in 2007. This reflects a combination of sharp increases in unemployment during the crisis, together with persistently high levels of unemployment...” (IMF, 2014).*

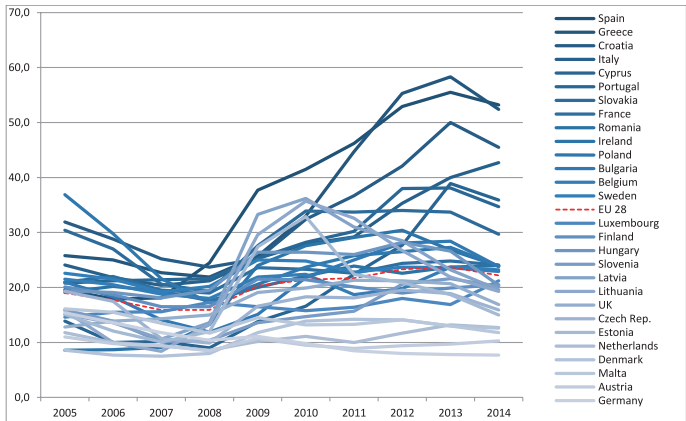
While the youth unemployment rate remains high – the youth unemployment rate of 21.7% (2014) is more than twice as high as the adult unemployment rate of 9.0% (EC, n.d.)<sup>4</sup> – the transition to work also takes longer and is much less certain. Unsurprisingly, some authors (e.g., Furlong and Kelly 2005) even doubt the justification for the term “transition”, since for an increasing portion of the population, stable employment is simply unattainable even in the long term. In addition, for many who are long-term unemployed, the idea of having a job is something that is becoming fuzzier. In other words, it seems that more and more young (and not so young) Europeans have the experience of what it means to live in a “risk society” (Beck 1992), in a structure of “liquid modernity” (Baumann 2000). Nevertheless, the picture across Europe is quite varied, both in terms of unemployment rate and in terms of the stability of employment (Figures 1, 2, & 3)<sup>5</sup>.

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4 The age gap in the labour market started to appear as a systematic pattern in Western societies in the early 1980s, following the recession in the USA and Western Europe (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Furlong (2013) identified two basic reasons for higher unemployment rates among young people: a) the young are typically in transition from school and therefore seeking jobs, thus affecting youth unemployment rates, especially in times when employers cease recruitment; b) youth are more likely to be in temporary employment and are thus more likely to be laid off in times of crisis.

5 The main aim of Figures 1, 2 & 3 is to indicate the variability of and general trends in the EU, since the sheer wealth of the data clearly limits readability of the results for a particular country.

Figure 1: Youth unemployment rate (up to 25 years, %), annual averages, EU, 2005–2014



Note: Lighter color indicates a lower level of youth unemployment rate.  
 Source: Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)

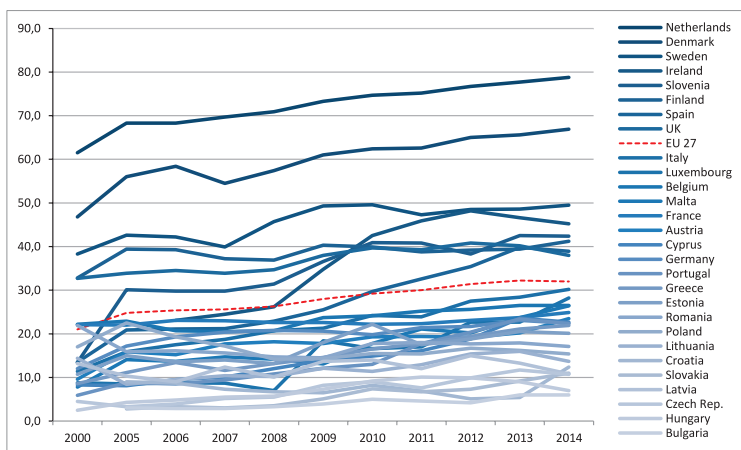
Specifically, Eurostat data indicates that before 2008-9, youth unemployment was falling in almost all member states and that the variance across countries (regarding the unemployment rate) was relatively small

when compared with the post-crisis period (i.e., from 2008 onwards), when differences in rates between countries increased.

A similar increase in variance can be observed when looking at the percentages of youth employed part-time (Figure 2), although this increase is something that is happening from the year 2000 onwards (and possibly earlier)<sup>6</sup>, and also includes the increase of the rate itself.

<sup>6</sup> Results from earlier periods were omitted not only because this would further worsen the readability of results, but also because of the missing data.

Figure 2: Part-time employment rate (15–24 years, as % of total employment), annual averages, EU, 2000–2014



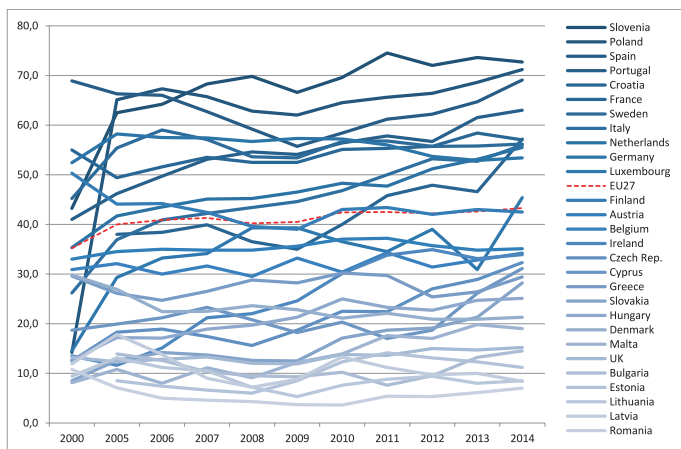
Note: Lighter color indicates a lower share of those working part time.  
 Source: Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)

As indicated by the dotted line, **the percentage of youth in EU 27 who are employed part time is steadily increasing** (from 21% in 2000 to 32% in 2014), where this increase can, at least partly, be attributed to the increasing share of those who stated that the main reason for working part time was the inability to find a full-time job. Specifically, the share of youth (15-24), living in the EU 15<sup>7</sup>, who indicated this as the main reason for part-time employment, increased from 18.9% (2000) to 28.5% (2014). Furthermore, the share of those who (among all part time employed) are involuntarily part-time employed also increased – from 24.2% in 2006 to 29.2% in 2014.

Similar trends (although less pronounced) were found regarding temporary employment (Figure 3).

7 There is no data for EU 28, EU 27 or similar for the pre-2005 period.

Figure 3: Temporary employment rate (15–24 years, as % of total employment), annual averages, EU, 2000–2014



Note: Lighter color indicates a lower share of those temporarily employed.  
 Source: Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)

**The share of youth who were temporarily employed in the EU 27 increased from 35.% (2000) to 43.3% (2014).** Again, the share of youth that stated that the main reason for their temporary employment was the inability to find permanent employment also increased (EU 27: from 30.4% in 2006 to 37.5% in 2014). Lastly, **the share of youth (18-24) who are in work, but at risk of poverty, also increased – from 9.7% in 2005 to 11.4% in 2013 (EU 27).**

In sum, most European countries have been facing and continue to face quite radical changes in the labor market. On the one hand, the youth unemployment rate is still quite high (especially in some countries, e.g., Greece, Spain, Croatia and Italy, with unemployment rates reaching 40 percent and above), on the other, **traditional forms of (permanent) employment are increasingly being replaced by less secure and more flexible forms of employment** (with notable differences between countries). And although these trends hold for the whole population, the data suggests that they tend to be more pronounced among the young. Some authors even speak about the “age-segregation of the

labor market” (e.g., Ignjatović and Trbanc 2009), characterized by disproportionately high levels of unemployment and temporary employment among youth.

The implications of labor market age-segregation are not insignificant. As indicated by past research, age-segregation leads to greater uncertainty regarding employment stability, which in turn affects the possibility for “full economic and social emancipation” (Ignjatović and Trbanc 2009, 40), as well as major life decisions, including about starting a family. Speaking generally, past research also indicated that temporary employment is positively associated with poverty (i.e., the poverty rates are higher among those who are temporary employees than among those with permanent jobs; Koch and Fritz 2013, 194-199; Dietz 2012) and with various health-related problems (e.g., Virtanen et al. 2005; Pirani and Salvini 2015). As indicated, temporary employment leads to greater job insecurity, which in turn is an evident work stressor with a well-established negative impact on health and well-being (Höge et al. 2015; Van Zyl et al. 2013). Specifically, higher levels of stress are associated, for example, with diabetes (Lloyd, 2005), high blood pressure (Vrijkotte et al. 2000), and frustration, which, as indicated by Chen and Spector (1992), is strongly associated with aggressive actions (interpersonal aggression, general hostility). Last, but not least, individuals holding less secure jobs will tend to be more conservative in their spending, taking/accessing loans etc. (Benito 2006); they will also have a worse bargaining position, consequently accepting lower pay:

*“By making it easier to fire workers these contracts aim to take the worry out of hiring. By making workers’ positions more fragile they cut bargaining power.” (The Economist, 2015).*

Both factors lead to lower aggregate demand, which is often what is identified as a key factor in anemic economic recovery (and employment growth) in Europe (e.g., Onaran 2015). In other words, job insecurity, brought on by continuous demands for greater labor flexibility (to boost competitiveness), has important ramifications both for the individual and for the society as a whole.

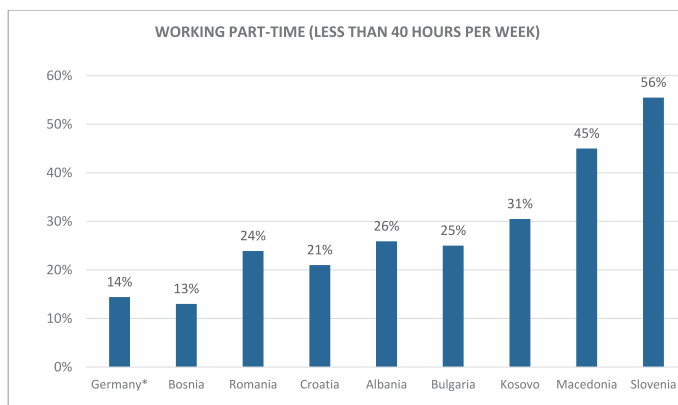


## 1.2. Labor Markets in South East Europe – Similar Trends, Greater Challenges

Since the countries of Southeast Europe (SEE) are part of Europe (although not all are EU member states), it is not surprising that they face similar challenges, including youth unemployment. **The majority of SEE countries face high unemployment rates, above the EU average,** which have, as is the case for practically all of Europe, risen considerably since 2008. But even in SEE, significant differences between countries exist. For example, if looking only at the EU member states of SEE, Eurostat data (2014) reveal that youth unemployment was extremely high in Greece and Croatia (above 45%); that it was slightly above the EU 28 average (22%) in Romania and Bulgaria (24%), and that it was slightly below the EU average in Slovenia (20%; see Figure 1). In non-member SEE countries (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia & Herzegovina) the youth unemployment rate was above the EU average, ranging from 30 percent in Albania, to 56 percent and 59 percent, respectively, in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Eurostat 2015).

Similarly, differences could also be observed regarding the share of those working part-time and of those who are employed temporarily. In this regard, Slovenia ranks first in the SEE (see Figures 2 & 3), indicating that, although youth unemployment in Slovenia is relatively low, the majority of youth are finding themselves inside a more “precarious” work arrangement. This is also mirrored in Figure 4 which, based on FES survey data, shows the percentage of youth (16-25) working part-time by specific SEE country.

Figure 4: Youth (16-25) working part time  
(among employed, in %), by country



Note: \* Germany was included for the purposes of illustration and because there is comprehensive survey data available (Shell Youth Study)

Source: FES Youth Survey Data, \*Shell Youth Study.

In line with Eurostat data, Slovenia exhibits the highest share of those working part time (56%), while other SEE countries trail Slovenia by a significant margin. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the share of youth who work part time is as low as it is in Germany (13% vs. 14%), while the share in the second ranking Macedonia (45%) is more than 10 percent lower than in Slovenia.

Although it is virtually impossible to explain all the differences between these countries, it is possible to explain the Slovenian case. As has been previously argued (e.g., Klanjšek and Lavrič 2011), one of the key factors in why such a large share of Slovenian youth works part time, can be attributed to the fact that there is a special arrangement of “student work”<sup>8</sup>, which is widely used, both by students and employers. It pro

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8 According to the Eurostudent SI 2007 survey, in 2007 student work was performed by 65% of students in Slovenia, with 57% of them performing on average more than five hours of such work each week.

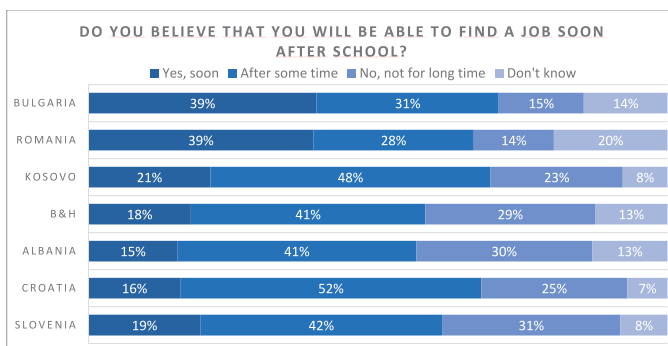
vides cheap, low-tax and flexible labor (which is relatively well educated) for employers. It also offers students the prospect of additional earnings, work experience and the creation of social networks that are important for their continuing career path. In addition, it also lowers u employment figures<sup>9</sup>.

Nevertheless, such a “parallel” hiring system also has negative side effects which, in the long run, actually worsen the economic situation of young people. Besides being a system that benefits youth only as long as they are enrolled, that generates less tax revenue often gets abused by employees and often serves as a mechanism that actually gives young people incentives to cheat the system by prolonging their enrolment (which is thus often fictitious), it also promotes disloyal competition on the labor market. Namely, the hardships that are faced by all those who are seeking a “regular”, full time job, including young graduates, are being strengthened by this parallel, extremely flexible hiring system that squeezes out permanent, full-time employment possibilities and thus forces young people to accept lower-paid temporary work arrangements more and more. In other words, the relatively favorable position of Slovenia (regarding youth unemployment) can be seen as a result of the high school enrollment rate (achieved with the help of state subsidized food, housing and transport at all levels of tuition-free education) and part-time work, which is accessible via the former. This is clearly reflected in Figure 5, which demonstrates that Slovenian youth is not less concerned about the ability to find a job after school than their counterparts from other SEE countries (as their lower unemployment rate might suggest).

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9 It is important to point out the effect of how unemployment is defined. The Labor Force Survey, on which the data are based, defines an unemployed person as someone who “in the last week (from Monday to Sunday) prior to the survey did not work even one hour for payment (in money or in kind), profit or family prosperity, but who in the past four weeks was actively seeking work and is willing to take work within two weeks. Unemployed persons also include those that have already found work and will begin that work after the survey.”

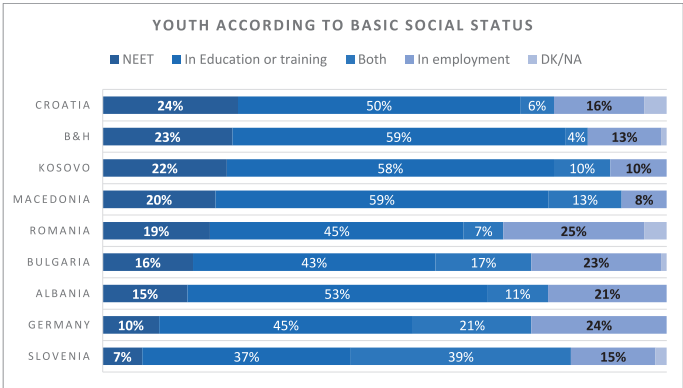
Figure 5: Prospect of finding a job, by country



Source: FES Youth Survey Data

Almost one out of three young Slovenians (31%) thinks that he or she will not be able to find a job after he/she leaves school. This is almost twice as high as in, for example, Romania and Bulgaria. It thus seems that observed differences in youth unemployment rates can be, at least partly, attributed to how a particular country tries to adapt to the global trends outlined in the introduction. Whether the path found in Slovenia is the right one is hard to say, although as Figure 7 suggests, it was able to “produce” the lowest share of NEETs (youth neither in education nor training, nor employed, i.e., they could be termed “lost souls”) in the analyzed group.

Figure 6: Social status of youth (16-25) in eight SEE countries and Germany

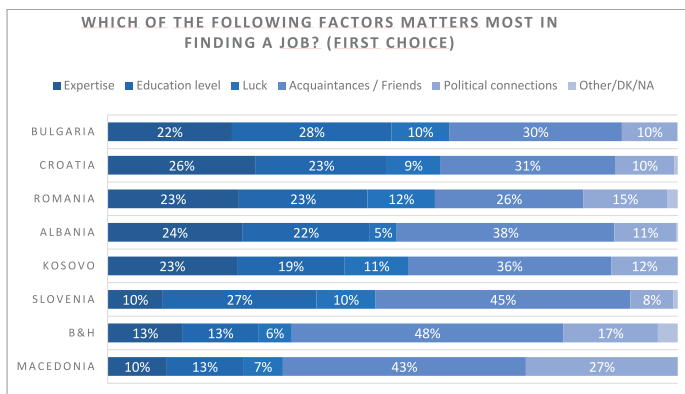


Note: NEET – not employed and not in education or training.  
 Source: FES Youth Survey Data, Shell Youth Study.

Specifically, while in Croatia the percentage of those who are neither employed nor in education or training (NEETs) hovers around 24 percent, the percentage of NEETs in Slovenia stands at only 7 percent (which is even lower than the figure for Germany; EU 28 average 2014: 17.2%). But this is not unexpected, since almost 80% of Slovenian youth aged between 16 and 25 years are involved in some sort of education or training (which puts Slovenia at the very top in the EU), but only 15 percent are employed (which is below the group average of 17.2%)<sup>10</sup>. Still, as can be discerned from Figure 6, in all the given countries, only a minority of youth aged from 16 to 25 is employed (meaning here that they have a permanent, full time job). In other words, in all these countries the majority of youth is involved in some sort of education or training (or both), although youth in all countries believe that political connections are more important for getting a job than either education or expertise (Figure 7).

<sup>10</sup> This further corroborates the argument about why Slovenia “looks good” in terms of youth unemployment (as many of those in training or education do actually work by the Labor Force Survey standard), but poses serious challenges not only in terms of fiscal sustainability and quality of education and training itself (see e.g., Flere and Tavčar-Krajnc 2011, 97-130).

Figure 7: Which factors matters most in finding a job, by country



Source: FES Youth Survey Data

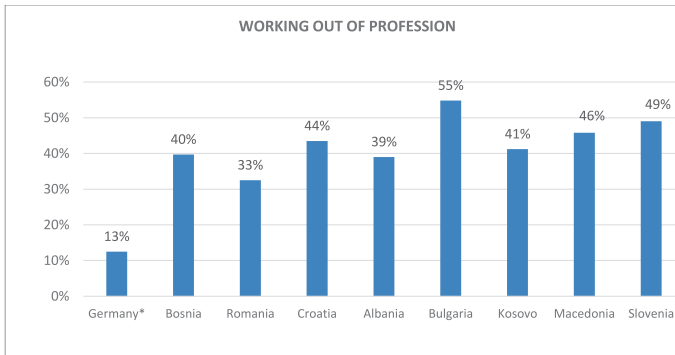
Using the average rate, less than half (40%) of the young believe that expertise and education are the most important factors in finding a job. In other words, **the prevalent perception is that getting a job is not primarily based on merit, but on factors that are related to the**

**individual's position in the social structure, with the individual's social network.** Specifically, results indicate that this is especially true for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, where less than 30 percent see education and expertise as being the most important factors in finding a job.

Acknowledging the fact that various studies have indicated the importance of social networks in the labor market (Rees 1966; Granovetter 1973, 1995), one might conclude that youth, at least in this regard, is being quite realistic.

Another indicator, which can be understood as an indicator of workforce flexibility, is the share of those who work outside of their profession and preparedness to move in order to secure a job. Results for these two factors are presented in Figures 8 and 9.

Figure 8: Percentages working out of profession, by country

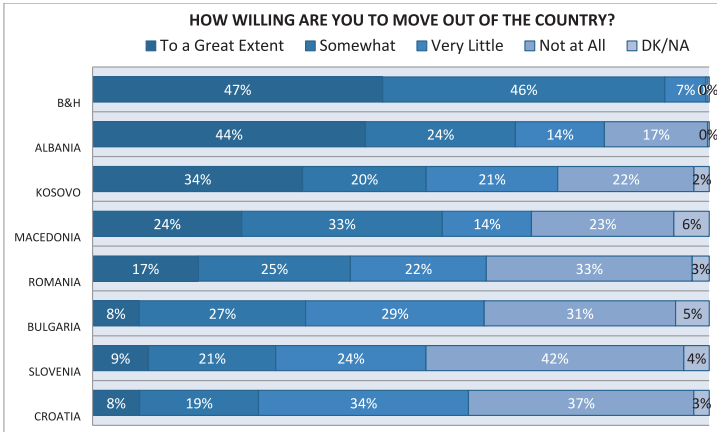


Source: FES Youth Survey Data, \*Shell Youth Study.

The highest percentage of youth working outside their profession was found in Bulgaria, followed by Slovenia. And although there is some variation between SEE countries, results point to the fact that the share of those who work outside their profession is much higher in selected SEE countries than, for example, in Germany (SEE average: 43%, Germany: 13%). Besides indicating high levels of flexibility, these results can also be interpreted in the context of skill mismatch, i.e., **a big share of young people living in Southeastern Europe is not able to find a job that would employ and strengthen the skills they acquired during their schooling.** Furthermore, this also suggests that “return on investment” (in terms of education) is lower in all SEE countries than in Germany.

If working out of profession is rather common for all youth in SEE, this is not the case when it comes to preparedness to move out of their home country. Namely, the differences between selected SEE countries in this regard are much bigger. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the percentage that is prepared to move out of the country reaches a rather staggering 93 percent, while in Slovenia and Croatia this share does not go beyond 30 percent (Figure 9).

Figure 9: How willing are you to move out of the country?



Source: FES Youth Survey Data

As indicated by various studies (e.g. Nwalutu 2013), factors that nurture the desire of individuals to migrate from their countries of origin include poverty, overpopulation, unemployment, environmental degradation, war, and natural and man-made disasters. Having limited data and only a small sample of eight countries, we tested for the effect of unemployment, level of economic development and poverty.

Results indicated that **the willingness to move out of the country correlated most strongly with the level of economic development** (GDP per capita;  $r=0.87$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and the general unemployment rate, which was close to being statistically significant ( $r=0.67$ ;  $0.05<p<0.1$ ). Interestingly, the poverty rate proved to be statistically insignificant.<sup>11</sup>

At the individual level, the most commonly selected reason for leaving the country (among nine available, including “other”) was the potential for improving the economic standard of living/financial reasons.

<sup>11</sup> This might be related to how poverty is measured in Europe (via median income, which essentially assesses income inequality).



Specifically, in all analyzed countries this option was selected by more than 50% of those willing to leave (Croatia being the only exception with 40%, but even there this was the main reason to move out of the country).

Although greater willingness to move out of the country of origin indicates higher work force flexibility, many point to the undesirable effects of youth mobility, including “brain drain”. A good example of this can be seen in recent developments in southeastern Europe, where great numbers of talented and highly educated young people have moved to more prosperous regions as a means of securing better-paid careers. Such an outflow of young people can lead to social degradation, with children or parents left behind. Moreover, this is troubling for the economies of regions experiencing an exodus of skilled workers, especially for sectors depending on highly-skilled labor, like health or research (Rossi 2013; Brusselmans 2009). Furthermore, although the mobility of people can have positive effects on the well-being of individuals and society as a whole--mobility enables an individual to acquire the knowledge and skills currently demanded by the global labor market (e.g., knowledge of foreign languages, open-mindedness, tolerance, preparedness for intercultural dialogue, and the capacity for cross-border cooperation) (Klanjšek 2011, 401), it has been found that foreign-born youth do face significant labor market disadvantages (higher unemployment, lower job security) (Eurostat 2015a).

## 2. Economic Situation of Youth in Southeast Europe

### 2.1. Introduction

The category “economic situation” is often understood and used as one of the indicators of the position that an individual or a group hold in a social structure. Since the question of social stratification, of what determines one’s position in the social structure, of how that position influences individual lives, lifestyles and worldview lies at the core of the social sciences, it is not surprising that economic situation is one of the most frequently analyzed categories/dimensions of social life. Consequently, there is an abundance not only of literature which deals with an issue of social structure and stratification, but also of studies that hypothesizes some sort of relationship between the individual’s social (class) position, developmental outcomes, lifestyles, world views, etc.

The question of economic and (speaking more broadly) socioeconomic situation is, unsurprisingly, of paramount importance when thinking about youth. Specifically, (socio)economic situation is often associated with the formation of youth values and attitudes (e.g. Lewis, 1959, 1961), with problem behaviors (e.g., Merton 1968; Cohen 1955; Cloward and Ohlin 1961; Miller 1958), differences in school success (e.g., Bourdieu and Boltanski 1981; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bernstein, 1971; Boudon 1974) etc.. The issue of differences in school success is of special importance, since it is often argued that in modern societies the (socio)economic position of individuals is largely seen as something that is heavily dependent on educational achievement. In other words, the (socio)economic situation of youth is seen as an important factor in school achievement (Considine and Zappala 2002; Graetz 1995), which then exerts an influence on youth’s own social position<sup>12</sup>. In sum, the (socio)economic situation of youth matters for great many reasons.

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12 Of course, the issue of whether schools function as “just” systems that award those that are most hard working, or whether they are merely mechanisms that enable social reproduction and legitimize social inequality (Apple 1992) is still hotly debated.

Methods for assessing youth socioeconomic situation do vary, but most studies focus on poverty rates among youth, disposable income (and its primary sources) and then on the factors that determine the level of that income and their correlates. Regarding the last one, the emphasis falls most frequently on categories such as employment status and level of educational qualifications, although it is not possible to get around issues associated with access to the labor market and education, mobility, housing and social policies, social protection, and so forth. In this light, the economic and social status of youth is closely associated with policies relating to the labor market, welfare state measures, education, family, social and other policies. Within this framework, most studies also include indicators of household income, where strong emphasis is placed on parents' social, cultural and material capital. The current chapter, using official and survey data, will look at some of these factor.

## **2.2. Rising Poverty and Income Inequality amidst Economic Growth**

First, to assess the economic situation in selected SEE countries, some basic background data, including GDP per capita, HDI rank, poverty and income inequality were analyzed (Tables 1 & 2).

Table 1: Background data – GDP per capita, HDI, and Poverty Rate in SEE countries and Germany

	GDP per capita (PPP) 2013 Index (EU28 = 100) /HDI rank*	GDP per capita (PPP) (constant 2011 international \$) 2013 /pct change in 10 yrs.**	Poverty rate <sup>1</sup>  Total Pop. (min/last) <sup>*/**</sup>	Poverty rate <sup>1</sup>  Youth (16– 24) (min/ last) <sup>*/**</sup>
<b>GERMANY<sup>2</sup></b>	122/6	42.884 (+15)	10/ <b>16</b> (2000/2013)	14/ <b>18</b> (2000/2013)
<b>SLOVENIA</b>	82/25	27.368 (+11)	11/ <b>15</b> (2000/2013)	8/ <b>14</b> (2009/2013)
<b>CROATIA</b>	61/47	20.049 (+12)	18/ <b>20</b> (2003/2013)	17/ <b>21</b> (2003/2013)
<b>ROMANIA</b>	54/54	18.184 (+50)	17/ <b>22</b> (2000/2013)	20/ <b>31</b> (2000/2013)
<b>BULGARIA</b>	46/58	15.695 (+45)	14/ <b>21</b> (2000/2013)	18/ <b>21</b> (2000/2013)
<b>MACEDONIA</b>	36/84	11.609 (+36)	—/ <b>24</b> (2013)	—/ <b>30</b> (2012)
<b>BOSNIA &amp; H.</b>	29/86	9.387 (+35)	—/17 (2011)**	—
<b>ALBANIA</b>	28/95	9.961 (+59)	—/14 (2012)**	—
<b>KOSOVO</b>	—	8.599 (+38)	—/30 (2011)**	—
<b>EU<sup>3</sup></b>	100	34.295 (+8,7) <sup>3</sup>	16/ <b>17</b> (2005/2013)	20/ <b>23</b> (2005/2013)

Note: <sup>1</sup> The poverty rate is expressed as the percentage of persons living in households with disposable equivalent income below the threshold of poverty risk (60 % of median disposable income per equivalent member)<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Germany is included for illustrative reasons and because there are comprehensive data regarding youth (Shell 2010 Study).

<sup>3</sup> For the first column, EU 28 was used; for GDP per capita change, World Bank data was used, where no information was given about which countries were included; for poverty rates, EU 27 was used.

Sources: \*Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>),  
\*\*World Bank  
(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.KD>)

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13 Disposable equivalent income or disposable income per equivalent member is obtained by first calculating for each household the annual disposable net income (all net incomes from all household members are added up: from employment, including reimbursement for food and travelling to work, from self-employment, pension, unemployment benefit, reimbursement for sick leave, stipends, family and social benefits, interest, dividends, cash transfers received from other households, credit for the use of a company car for private purposes and part of the proprietary production of self-employed persons – the value of products transferred to the household from one's own workshop, company or shop; transfers paid to other households and property tax, including compensation for the use of building land) are deducted from this. Then, for each household, disposable net income per equivalent member is calculated using the OECD adjusted equivalence scale. The scale gives the first adult member a weighting of 1, the second member aged 14 or over a weighting of 0.5, and children under 14 a weighting of 0.3. A four-member household of two adults and two children will thus have 2.1 equivalent adult members (calculation:  $1 * 1 + 1 * 0.5 + 2 * 0.3 = 2.1$ ). Income per equivalent member of household is calculated by dividing annual disposable net income of the household by the number of equivalent members of the household.

Table 2: Background data – Gini Index in SEE countries and Germany

	Gini (min/last) Social transfers excluded (2005-2013)	Gini (min/ last) Social trans- fers included (2005-2013)	Severe materi- al depriva- tion rate Total Pop. (2006-2013)	Severe material deprivation rate Youth (15-24) (2006-2013)
<b>GERMANY</b>	33→36	26→30	5—5	6—6
<b>SLOVENIA</b>	31 -- 31	24→25	5→7	5→7
<b>CROATIA</b>	--/37	30→31	--/15	--/17
<b>ROMANIA</b>	37--37	31→34	--/28,5	--/31
<b>BULGARIA</b>	35→38	25→35	58→43	56→44
<b>MACEDONIA</b>	--/41 (2012)	--/38	41	43
<b>BOSNIA &amp; H.</b>	--	--/29	--	--
<b>ALBANIA</b>	--	--/29	--	--
<b>KOSOVO</b>	--	--	--	--
<b>EU</b>	34→36	31--31	10--10	12--12

Sources: Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)

Although data for some countries are missing, some initial conclusion can still be drawn. First, when it comes to level of economic development and HDI rank, the differences between selected SEE countries are (again) quite pronounced. Specifically, at one extreme, Slovenia reaches around 80 percent of the average EU 28 GDP *per capita* and ranks as high as Finland and Italy in terms of HDI. At the other, Albania reaches around 30 percent of average EU GDP *per capita*, and ranks 95th in HDI ranking (which puts Albania between Jamaica and Algeria).

Second, although all countries of SEE and Germany (as with the EU as a whole) have made economic progress in the past ten years, the differences between countries in this regard are again quite marked. For example, Slovenia achieved only an 11 percent increase in its GDP *per capita*, while Albania tops the group with a 59 percent increase, followed by Romania and Bulgaria with a 48 and 44 percent increase, respectively. However, **in all selected countries of SEE and Germany, poverty increased for both the general population and youth, which as a group is always at higher risk of poverty** (except in Slovenia). This also holds for the EU 27 as a whole.

Third, income inequality (before social transfers) increased or stayed the same in all countries analyzed. As expected, social transfers always lowered income inequality; **however, the increase in income inequality was more pronounced after social transfers, indicating that in the past eight years the effect of social transfers on income inequality has weakened.** One possible explanation for this effect could be tied to post-crisis policies (i.e., austerity), which in the face of fiscal imbalances tightened social transfers, affecting income inequality less than previously.

Fourth, in the 2006-2013 period, severe material deprivation also increased or stayed the same, except in Bulgaria, but there almost a half the population in 2006 experienced severe material deprivation. Again, in comparison to the general population, youth is relatively more exposed to severe material deprivation. Moreover, as can be discerned from Table 2, significant differences regarding severe material depriva-

tion exist between countries. Specifically, in Slovenia the rate of those severely materially deprived (youth) is comparable to the rate found in Germany (and is below the EU average, which in 2013 stood at 12%), while in Bulgaria or Macedonia this rate exceeds 40 percent.

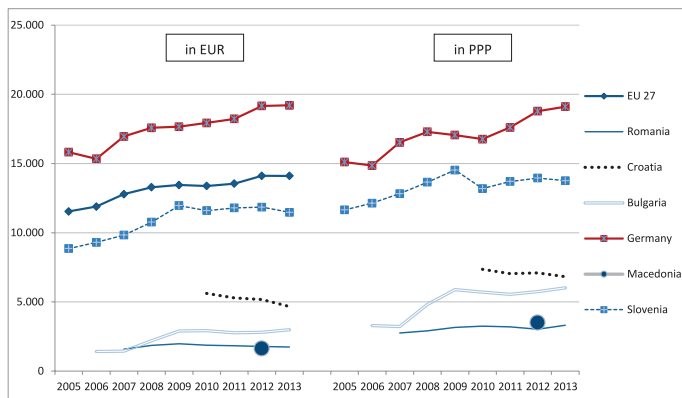
These large differences are consequently clearly reflected in the level of disposable income and living conditions, which also indicate how misleading official poverty rates can be (i.e., by effectively measuring income distribution, they mask the realities of how people actually live).

### **2.3. Youth Disposable Income - Stagnating or Falling Behind**

A longitudinal analysis of Eurostat data (Figure 10) indicates that in 2005 the average annual equivalent net disposable income of young people (aged 16–24) in the EU 27 was approximately 30 percent higher than the income of young people in Slovenia, who trailed the EU 27 average the least. By 2009, the gap had shrunk to around 11 percent. However, from 2009 onward the gap has begun to widen again. Similar trends can be seen for other SEE countries for which the data exist, and are even more pronounced when compared with the trends exhibited by the current “star of Europe”, Germany.



Figure 10: Average annual equivalent disposable net income of youth (16-24), expressed in EUR and in PPP\*\*, by country, 2005–2013



Notes: \* The basis for the calculation is the annual equivalent disposable net income of households that participated in the survey of income and living conditions (SILC) on the basis of which the disposable net income per equivalent member is computed. This provides the basis for calculating average income for Slovenia overall, and by specific age groups. Average income is thus not calculated on the basis of income received by persons at a certain age, but on the basis of the equivalent income of persons of a certain age (which depends on the income of the household in which the persons live). The (weighted) equivalent income of persons in the age group is added up and divided by the number of persons (weighted) in the age group.

\*\* PPP – purchasing power parity (excludes the effect of price differences).

Source: Eurostat – Population and social conditions/Living conditions and welfare/Income and living condition/Income distribution and monetary poverty

Specifically, it seems that the disposable income of German youth was virtually unaffected by the global economic crisis, while this certainly was not the case for the selected SEE countries. In addition, the divergence in trends is even more pronounced when controlled for price differences (PPP), although the differences between disposable incomes itself are somewhat smaller. In sum, it could be argued that the global economic crisis had a very diverse effect on particular countries (regarding individual disposable income), and thus on youth. It can also be argued **that**

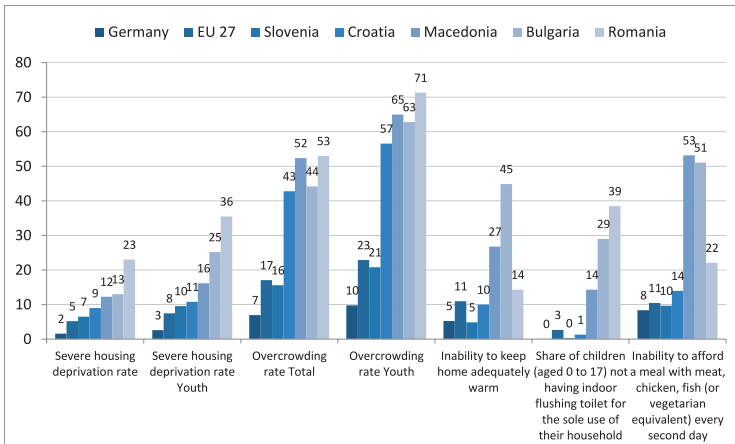
empirical evidence suggests that Europe as a whole exited the economic crisis more divided, not only internally (rising income inequality), but also externally, in the sense that the North-South gap widened.

## 2.4. Living Conditions and Home-leaving /-staying – Great Diversity Continues

### 2.3.1. Living Conditions

As previously indicated, living conditions can be assessed via various indicators. We focused on a few that are most commonly used (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Severe housing deprivation rate, overcrowding, and other indicators of poor living conditions, 2013, by country



Notes: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Kosovo were excluded as no available data for selected indicators exist.

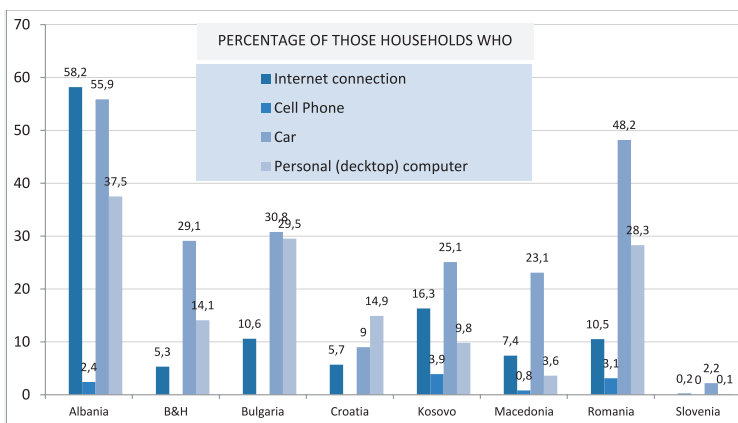
Sources: Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)

Results indicated that, if on average only 8 percent of European youth experiences severe housing deprivation, this share is much higher in the least developed SEE countries. For example, in Romania this share rises above 20 percent, and even above 70 percent when it comes to overcrowding (EU 27 average: 10%). In addition, almost 40 percent of children (aged between 0 and 17) in Romania do not have an indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of their household. In more economically developed countries this share is much lower: in Germany and Slovenia, for example, it is actually 0.

Another stark difference was found in regard to being able to keep the household adequately warm and in the ability to afford a proper meal. Specifically, in Bulgaria, almost half of young people live in households that are unable to properly heat themselves (in Germany and Slovenia, for example, this share is around 5%) and are also unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or the vegetarian equivalent) every second day (EU 27 average: 11%).

Correspondingly, the relatively higher level of economic development is also reflected in the items owned by households in a particular country (Figure 12).

Figure 12: What do households (HH) in SEE countries own?



Source: FES Youth Survey Data; \*Shell Youth Study.

For example, almost all Slovenian youth live in households that own a car, television set, mobile phone, refrigerator, and personal computer. Only 0.1 percent of households have no personal computer; this percentage is much higher in Croatia and Kosovo (14.9 and 12 percent, respectively; see Figure 12).

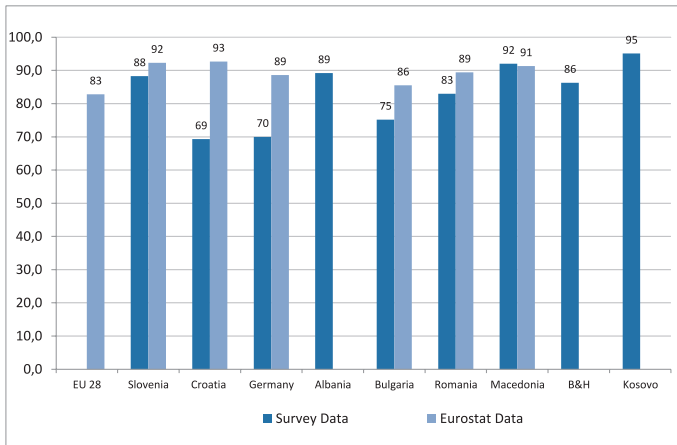
### 2.3.1. Home-leaving/-staying

Some studies have suggested that homeleaving was functional, for example, in terms of protecting young people from a heavily segmented labor market and from poverty (Nagode, Smole and Boljka 2009); however, there is a body of literature that indicates its dysfunctional side. Namely, the transition to an independent household is frequently understood in the literature and in public debate as one of the key markers of the transition to adulthood. As Mulder (2009) finds, the transition coincides with the taking on of adult roles, such as running your own household, and making independent decisions about financial matters, consumption, spending of leisure time etc., and is also usually accompanied by a change in the relationship between children and their parents.

Although Mitchell (2000) reported that young adults have been increasingly delaying their homeleaving, research indicates that there are substantial differences between societies. As Mulder (2009) finds in her analysis of the most economically well-developed societies, the greatest differences lie on the north-south axis: young people leave their parents' home earliest in Northern Europe (led by young people from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark) and North America, and latest in Southern Europe (Italy, Spain). For example, during the 1980s, 90% of Italian males, aged between 20 and 24 lived with their parents, compared with only 26% in Denmark.

When it comes to SEE countries, various studies have indicated that this is a region with high percentages of youth who still live with their parents (the percentage is higher for men and lower for young women; Mandič 2009; Choroszewicz and Wolff 2010; Lavrič and Klanjšek 2011). The latest Eurostat data and findings from the current study largely confirm findings from previous studies (Figure 13).

Figure 13: The Percentage of Youth (16-24) Living with Their Parents



Source: FES Youth Survey Data, Shell Youth Study (Germany).

Although significant discrepancies between Eurostat and the Survey data do exist, results indicate that [the share of youth living in SEE countries that live with their parents tends to be higher than the EU 28 average.](#)

Choroszewicz and Wolff (2010) listed the following potential factors that explain the differences between countries. These include the following:

- Material opportunities for creating independent households; in this respect, the key factors are access to suitable employment and real estate market conditions;
- Inclusion of youth in education; higher inclusion percentages correlate with remaining in the parental household longer;
- Moving necessitated by education or job; the small size of the country, whereby youth can drive to school/university or work in larger towns, appears to be a factor in prolonging their stay at the parental home. The objective living situation in the parental

home is also important. The better it is (e.g., a larger home), the lower the interest in moving out. The (modest) accommodations in university and secondary school dormitories have a similar effect;

- Cultural factors, such as the importance of the nuclear family and adjustments by the family of origin with respect to providing independence for youth at home, can have a significant impact on motivation to leave home;
- The percentage of youth who cohabit in a partnership relationship; the formation of cohabitation partnership relationships increases the likelihood of moving away from the parental home earlier.

Although all these factors play a role, we will briefly look at only the two suggested as being the most important. The first is related to the economic, the second to the cultural domain. Various studies have indicated that material factors such as regular employment, income, housing prices and rents are a key factor in why youth decide to leave the parental home (cf. Nillson and Strandh 1999; Vertot 2009; Choroszewicz and Wolff 2010). Given that the percentage of fully employed youth has decreased, and that the percentage of temporarily employed youth has increased (i.e., the position of youth on the labor market during the last decade has worsened with regard to stability and employment security), even more so in SEE countries, it could be argued that this is one of the main factors in why youth in SEE countries tend to stay and live with their parents longer. This is supported by the findings of Lavrič and Klanjšek (2011), who found a significant relationship between employment and the likelihood of leaving the parental home. Specifically, their study shows that youth who were employed in a permanent position were more likely to live alone than those who were without permanent employment, demonstrating that employment encourages youth to move away from home if there are spatial pressures and if one's employment

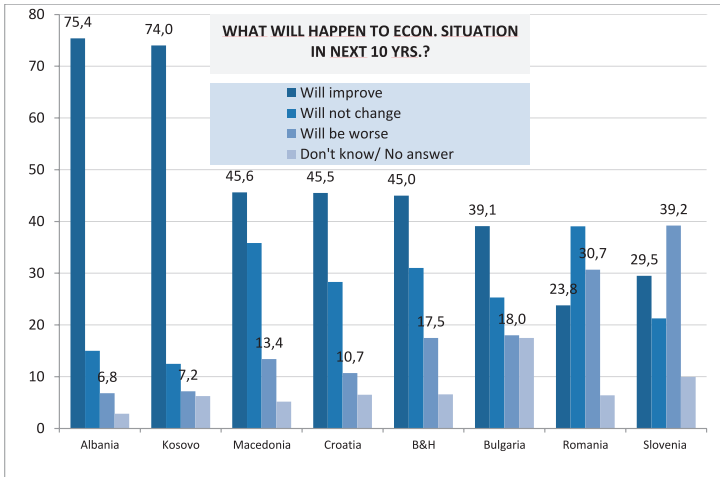
generates a sufficiently high income (which enables renting a flat or paying off a housing loan).

Next, as indicated, cultural factors may also play a role in explaining differences between countries, which often materialize in a north-south pattern (Mulder 2009). Aassve, Iacovou, and Menzinger (2006) offer interesting insight into why this might be so. In countries with more liberal models of adult transition, the risk of poverty for youth who do not live with their parents is substantially higher than for those that stay at home. In countries with a sub-protective (Mediterranean) transition model, these differences are nearly nonexistent. The authors suggest that this pattern can be explained purely through cultural factors. Thus, in countries with a liberal model of transition, the period of risking poverty and social exclusion (including the risk of this period extending throughout one's lifetime) is acceptable and might actually be understood as a particular kind of youth initiation. Perhaps it is even desirable. In countries with the sub-protective (Mediterranean) model, youth are typically more risk-averse and prefer the shelter of the parental home for longer periods. In other words, it seems that there is an important difference not only in how youth perceive risk/security, but also in how they value individual freedom versus security, although we were not able to test these hypotheses, it undoubtedly indicates the path for future research efforts.

## 2.5. And What about The Future?

Lastly, we were interested in how youth perceived the future, specifically, in their attitude toward the economic situation.

Figure 14: Perception of Economic Future



Source: FES Youth Survey Data

Interestingly, the most hopeful and optimistic young people live in the economically least developed region of SEE. For example, while in Albania only 7 percent think that the economic situation will be worse in the next ten years, in Slovenia (which ranks first, both in GDP per capita and HDI), this share reaches almost 40 percent. In other words, it seems that youth who live in more challenging surroundings feel that it cannot get any worse, while those who enjoy relatively higher levels of material wellbeing are more anxious about the possibility of losing what they currently have. Considering the constant push for a more flexible labor market (i.e., a recipe for competitiveness), for less social security (considered necessary to curb budget deficits and public debt), that is accompanied by growing income inequality, it is certainly not unexpected that youth in more well-off countries have these anxieties.



# Summary & Conclusions

Based on the data reviewed, it is possible to point out some of the key findings:

- Europe as a whole is still facing high unemployment rates, and while the largest contractions in economic activity as a result of the global financial and economic crisis were recorded in 2009, unemployment continued to increase in 2010 and beyond. The trend reversed after 2013, but not in every country, and while some progress could be observed, the unemployment rate in the EU 28 (10.2 percent; 2014) is still far off its lowest point (7.0 percent; 2008).
- Youth unemployment rates were around twice as high as the overall unemployment rate in the EU and in the Countries of Southeast Europe. Specifically, more than one fifth (22.2 %) of the EU-28's labor force aged 15–24 was without work in 2014 (compared with 15.8 % at the start of the crisis in 2008). The situation in SEE was even worse: the average youth unemployment rate in eight SEE countries (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovenia) stood at almost 40 percent. Inclusion of Greece would make this number even higher.
- Although experiences vary, the labor market is getting less and less secure in terms of providing permanent, full-time jobs. Specifically, even those who are employed, are paid lower wages that are also less secure. This is also true for SEE countries. In addition, a big share of young people living in Southeastern Europe is not able to find a job that would employ and strengthen skills they acquired during their schooling. This can be seen as a result of continuous demands for greater labor flexibility (to boost competitiveness and hence growth), but as various studies suggest, this has important negative ramifications, both for the individual and for the society as a whole, and might even impact growth itself ("race to the bottom").

- Although Europe has recently been experiencing economic growth, it is often accompanied by a rise in both poverty and inequality. As is the case for the labor market, youth tend to be at higher risk of poverty than the total population. Same pattern emerges when indicators of material and housing deprivation are used. The latter is especially troubling, as in some less economically developed countries of SEE (e.g., Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia), the share of youth experiencing severe material and housing deprivation is many times higher than the EU 28 average.
- Although social transfers have significantly lowered inequality, the effect of social transfers on Gini weakened in all societies, indicating that the welfare state is under strain, which could be seen as the effect of the current mode of globalization (deregulation, liberalization and “flexibilization”).
- Empirical evidence suggests that Europe as a whole exited economic crisis more divided, not only internally (rising income inequality inside nation states), but also externally, in the sense that that the North-South(East) gap only widened.
- Results indicated that the willingness to move out of the country correlated most strongly with the level of economic development, consequently indicating that the best way to “combat immigration” with which Europe has great issues, is to help countries to build their own sound economic (and political) foundations that would enable youth to find opportunities in their home countries. This would also help youth to move away from their parents, since results indicated that the share of young people living with their parents tends to be higher in SEE than the EU 28 average. Thus, since the economic situation in SEE is more adverse, it limits the opportunities for young people to leave the parental home.
- Finally, based on evidence that tapped into youth’s “visions of future”, one may conclude that Europe as whole needs to strengthen

policies that would alleviate anxieties (and lack of trust in politics) that currently trouble youth (and public in general). Specifically, Europe should reorient itself back to the foundations that in the past always helped to support social peace and stability, e.g., strong middle class, secure employment, strong regulation of markets (especially its financial part, which should include fighting tax heavens and the introduction of Tobin's tax), even if for the price of lower competitiveness and slower growth. For what is growth when compared to health, stability, or war? Or did Europe already forget?

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## Editors and Authors

**Sergej Flere**, Professor Emeritus of Sociology,  
Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor

**Klaus Hurrelmann**, Professor of Public Health and Education,  
Hertie School of Governance, Berlin, Germany

**Rudi Klanjšek**, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Faculty of Arts,  
University of Maribor, Slovenia

**Miran Lavrič**, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Faculty of Arts,  
University of Maribor, Slovenia

**Haley Reibold**, Master of Public Policy,  
Hertie School of Governance, Berlin, Germany

**Dane Taleski**, PhD Political Sciences from Central European University  
Budapest, reseacher and consultant, Skopje, Macedonia

**Michael Weichert**, Regional Dialogue South East Europe,  
Friedrich Ebert Foundation







## **Links to the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation Youth studies in SEE**

Datasets with the questionnaires on the website of the project in the University of Maribor  
<http://projects.ff.uni-mb.si/cepss/index.php/youth-studies/>

### **Albania**

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/10056.pdf>

Bosnia and Herzegovina

<http://www.fes.ba/files/fes/pdf/publikationen/2014/2015/YOUTH%20STUDY%20BAH.pdf>

### **Bulgaria**

[http://www.fes.bg/files/custom/Young\\_People\\_in\\_European\\_Bulgaria.pdf](http://www.fes.bg/files/custom/Young_People_in_European_Bulgaria.pdf)

### **Croatia**

[http://www.idi.hr/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/mladi\\_uv\\_k\\_eng.pdf](http://www.idi.hr/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/mladi_uv_k_eng.pdf)

### **Kosovo**

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kosovo/09782.pdf>

### **Macedonia**

[http://www.researchgate.net/publication/268390111\\_Macedonia\\_Youth\\_Study\\_2013](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/268390111_Macedonia_Youth_Study_2013)

### **Romania**

[http://www.fes.ro/media/2014\\_news/Report-FES-Romanian\\_Youth.pdf](http://www.fes.ro/media/2014_news/Report-FES-Romanian_Youth.pdf)

### **Slovenia**

<http://www.fes.hr/E-books/pdf/Study-final%20web.pdf>