

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ORDER

SO SIMILAR AND YET, SO DIFFERENT

A comparison of urban and rural youth in 10 Eastern European countries based on certain aspects of socio-political characteristics

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The youth from countries with a higher percentage of rural populace display greater levels of trust in their families than those from countries with a lower percentage of rural populace.



Out of all the considered countries of South-eastern Europe, both the urban and rural youth in Slovenia and Croatia display the most liberal characteristics.



The urban youth of Montenegro are the most satisfied with their lives, while the least satisfied are the urban youth of Slovenia. Among the rural youth, the highest level of life satisfaction is expressed by those from Kosovo, while the youth of Slovenia is again the least satisfied.

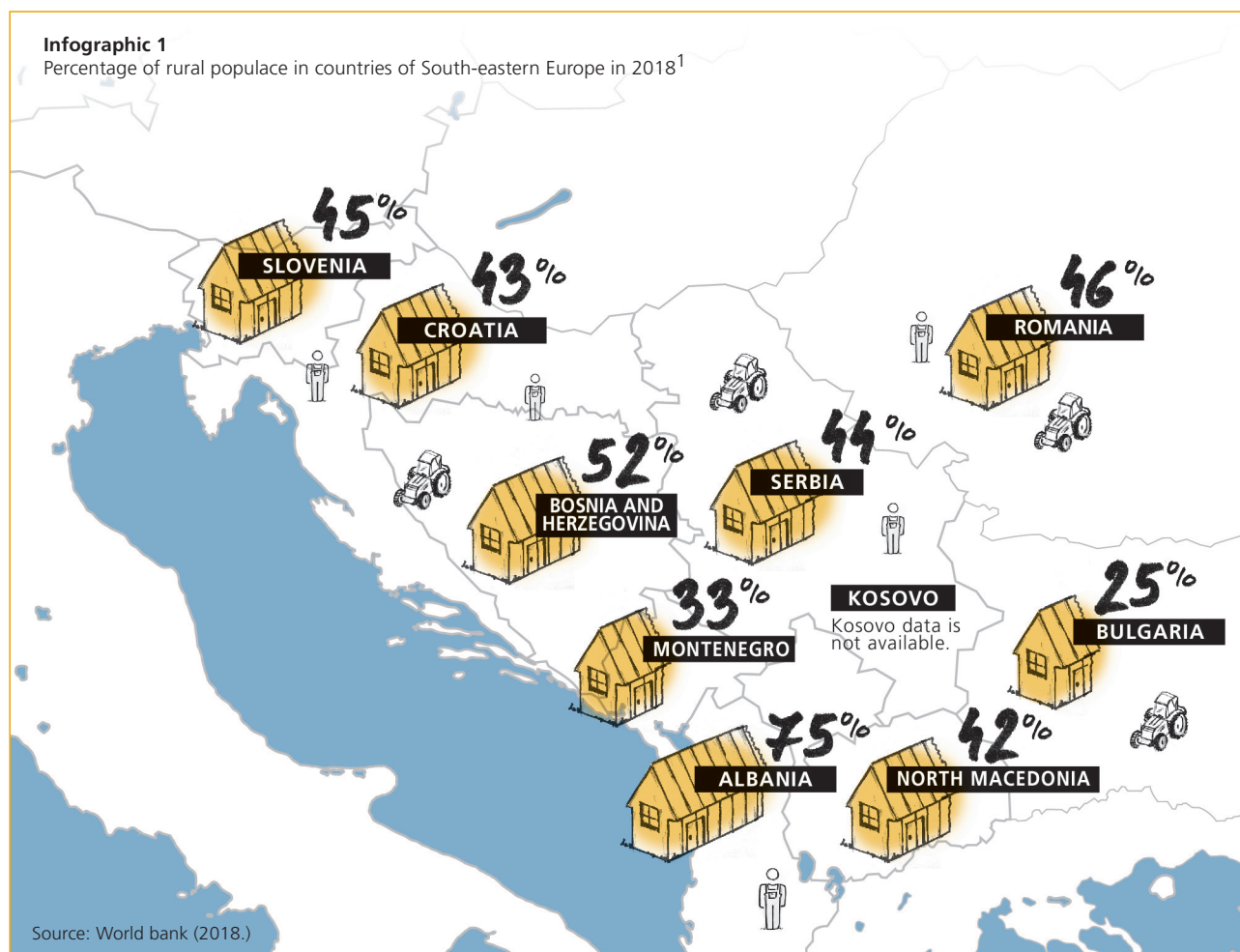
INTRODUCTORY – ON THE POLITICS AND SOCIETY OF SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

The relationship between the urban-rural continuum and its influence on certain socio-political components and groups is one of the aspects lacking in research data in the literature on South-eastern Europe. It would be wrong to say that rural sociology did not contribute to the study of societies of the region. Vlado Puljiz, in his work in 1989, writes that “studying the villages of Yugoslavia has a long-standing tradition. It intensified in the 19th century, when national consciousness arose in our peoples (...)”, continuing that “the first rural sociological studies were conducted by Cvetko Kostić (1912 – 1984)”, and concludes that “rural sociology differentiated as a separate discipline in the late fifties and early sixties, during a time when the strong influence of industrialisation caused an intensive change in rural areas and the traditional rural structure was starting to fall apart”. In the late 20th and early 21st century, rural sociology continues to add contributions to sociology, primarily by studying rural spaces through four dimensions: sociocultural, which focuses on folk culture and tradition, rituals and ceremonies, superstitions and religion; developmental, which emphasises the existing natural reserves of resources needed by the economy; economic,

which looks at the continuous renewal of resources; and ecological, which explores rural spaces expressed through the ecological approach to production and preserving biodiversity (Cifrić, 2003). However, the question arises of how relevant is the relationship between urban and rural in a world that resembles a global village, marked by the processes of globalisation, glocalisation, cosmopolitanism and liquid modernity (Bauman, 2001; Giddens, 1999). Is there a place for the conceptualisation proposed by Tönnies (2012), in which the village is a community, one characterised by organic will, friendship, blood relationships and neighbourhoods, mutual acquaintances, a focus on religion and custom, where the main resource is the land, and the city is a society, one characterised by egocentric will and the development of material and spiritual goods, in contemporary considerations of sociology and political science? Is Woods’s explanation that the meanings we attach to the concepts of urban and rural “are so ingrained in our cultural consciousness that their differentiation is one of the instinctive ways of ordering the world around us” (Woods, 2005). In other words, is there still a need for the rural-urban dichotomy? And if yes, which empirical indicators show the relevance of the rural-urban continuum? Is the high percentage of rural populace in the countries of the region (Figure 1) an indicator of differences in populace with regard to their residential status?

Infographic 1

Percentage of rural populace in countries of South-eastern Europe in 2018¹



¹ Kosovo data is not available.

Keeping that in mind, but also taking into account the limitations of a text such as this one, this study aims to try and apply the differences between urban and rural populations to certain characteristics of South-eastern European societies. Specifically, we are interested in particular segments of political behaviour, certain values and attitudes. As we pointed out earlier, sociology, political sociology and political science in South-east Europe generally neglect the connection between the rural-urban continuum and certain aspects of politicalness. This deficit is especially visible in youth research. Namely, although there is no lack of sociological literature on youth in individual countries of South-eastern Europe (Kovačić, 2018; Ilišin, 2014), there is a discernible lack of empirical papers viewing certain characteristics of youth behaviour, values and attitudes through the prism of the urban-rural relationship.

The youth, a heterogeneous social group characterised by the transition from childhood to adulthood, trying to adapt to social situations while leaving their mark on their surroundings, are an important aspect of studying any society. Studying the youth in South-eastern Europe is especially significant because most of them go through the so-called double transition. Namely, all youth go through “the universal transition from childhood to adulthood, but secondly, this process takes place in a society that is itself in the process of transitioning” (Ilišin, Radin, 2002). Ilišin and Spajić Vrkaš (2017) remind us that, keeping in mind “the global trends, which are generating insecurity on all levels and making the future of youth increasingly uncertain, are also coinciding with the social and political transformation of former socialist countries.” These two authors add that “we can therefore claim that the risks to which the youth are exposed in contemporary society are additionally expanded and intensified in transition societies – in comparison both to the youth in developed countries and to the previous generations of youth in socialist countries” (ibid.).

Speaking of the urban-rural continuum and youth, in the literature we can find the theory that youth migration, especially those with higher education and marked professional aspirations, is the main cause of population decline in rural areas (Theodori, 2014). One of the few papers from South-eastern Europe on rural youth builds on this, and the author V. Ilišin (1998) explains that “one of the most important tendencies [implicating differences between rural and urban youth] is the continued population decline of Croatian villages. Despite certain infrastructural improvements, rural areas haven’t become attractive locations for young people, especially not to those with higher professional qualifications and an experience of the urban lifestyle. Such adverse social structure of villages certainly contributes to the delayed modernisation of rural areas.”

This is precisely why it was expected that researchers will be more interested in characteristics and aspects of rural youth, however, if we contextualise this subject to the South-eastern region of Europe, the amount of research dealing with the relationship between urban and

rural youth remains low. When we speak of existing papers focusing on the youth, they mostly analyse how rural youth spend their free time (Ilišin, 1990; 1998; Badrić, Prskalo, Šilić, 2011), the economic aspects of rural revitalisation through youth and their entrepreneurial, agrotouristic or agricultural aspirations (Šarović, 2012; Tutinić, Bokan, 2008), or youth satisfaction with rural life (Vukotić, 2011). Of course, this doesn’t mean that there is no place for youth in other papers dealing generally with certain characteristics of the rural populace, but they are mostly not presented as a distinct phenomenon, much less as a foundation for comparison with their peers from urban areas. Interestingly, there are almost no existing papers from the fields of political science or political sociology dealing with the relationship between urban and rural youth². This study will attempt, to some extent, to correct this deficiency in the political science literature.

METHODOLOGY NOTES

The research question is whether there are differences between rural and urban youth in South-eastern Europe in respect to certain aspects of their political behaviour.

To answer this question, we used a database from earlier research of South-eastern youth in 2018, ordered by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Almost 10 000 young people aged 14 to 29, in ten countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, and Serbia) replied to a wide array of questions dealing with education, employment, political participation, family relations, free time, ICT use, but also attitudes, values and behavioural patterns. It should be noted that the research in question was modelled on the German Shell Youth Studies and that it was conducted by researchers from universities or public scientific institutes in order to ensure the required level of quality. Concerning the research question, this study selected individual tested aspects and compared their average values in different countries, principally using Welch’s one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) because the variances are unequal (Jim, 2020), wherein the binary variable of urban-rural was independent. The presented results are relevant for $p < 0.000$.

² The author allows that there was an oversight during this analysis, and that there are existing papers on the differences in attitudes, values and political behaviour of rural and urban youth. However, during the thematic analysis of available literature in English and Croatian, with the geographical focus on South-eastern Europe, no papers dealing with that specific topic were found.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before we focus on the similarities and differences between youth in different countries of South-eastern Europe, here is a very short overview of the empirical findings from two waves of youth research in order to illustrate the social-political-economic context of this social group.

The empirical research of South-eastern Europe youth 2012/2013 (Flere et al., 2015) revealed that most young people do not believe that political institutions and/or their heads care about their interests. The study also revealed that the entire South-eastern region of Europe fails at providing young people with a solution for their frustration and resignation, i.e. that adverse economic indicators force the youth into apathy, indifference and privacy. The reasons why only a fraction of that youth engages in politics and social initiatives are revealed by other empirical studies (for example Kovačić, Dolenc, 2018), which have shown a striking difference between western youth and those in Eastern Europe in respect to political participation. Namely, as these authors claim, shortage policies and the continuous neglect of youth policy implementation in semi-peripheral European countries have resulted in 50 percent lower rates of youth political participation in Eastern Europe when compared to the rates of participation of their western peers. In connection with this, it should be pointed out that in 2013 the youth unemployment rate in South-eastern Europe, in all countries except for Slovenia, was much higher than the EU average (Flere et al., 2015: 111). All this is linked to a relatively high percentage of youth living in their parental households (EU average for subjects aged 16-24 is 83 percent, while the South-east European average in 2013 was 90 percent).³ Besides political participation, Flere et al., (2015) also analysed young people's trust in institutions, which was revealed to be very low (unlike trust in family and close friends), and furthermore, it was shown that the notion of meritocracy in South-eastern Europe is much less important than the social structure position and social capital, and that young people believe there is a high incidence of corruption in education.

The empirical study which served as the basis for this paper, conducted in 2018, is thematically and methodologically similar to the study from 2013, making a comparison possible. Incidentally, the results do not greatly differ from those in 2013, i.e. they show that the social-political-economic situation of South-eastern European youth is still quite unfavourable. As the authors Lavrić, Tomanović and Jusić (2019) have shown, youth unemployment rates are still very high, and even when employed, they usually find menial jobs. The variables of accepting informal ways of

achieving employment, perceiving corruption in education and parental home dependence have increased in relation to the study five years earlier. Furthermore, the youth still feel that their voice is not heard, that they are ignored by political elites and the level of their social and political participation remains very low (ibid.).

The data clearly show that rural youth differ from urban youth.

In order to reveal any differences between youth in certain attitudes, values and behaviours, with regard to their country of origin, we employed the urban-rural continuum as an independent variable. The analysed data clearly show that rural youth differ from urban youth.

LIFE SATISFACTION

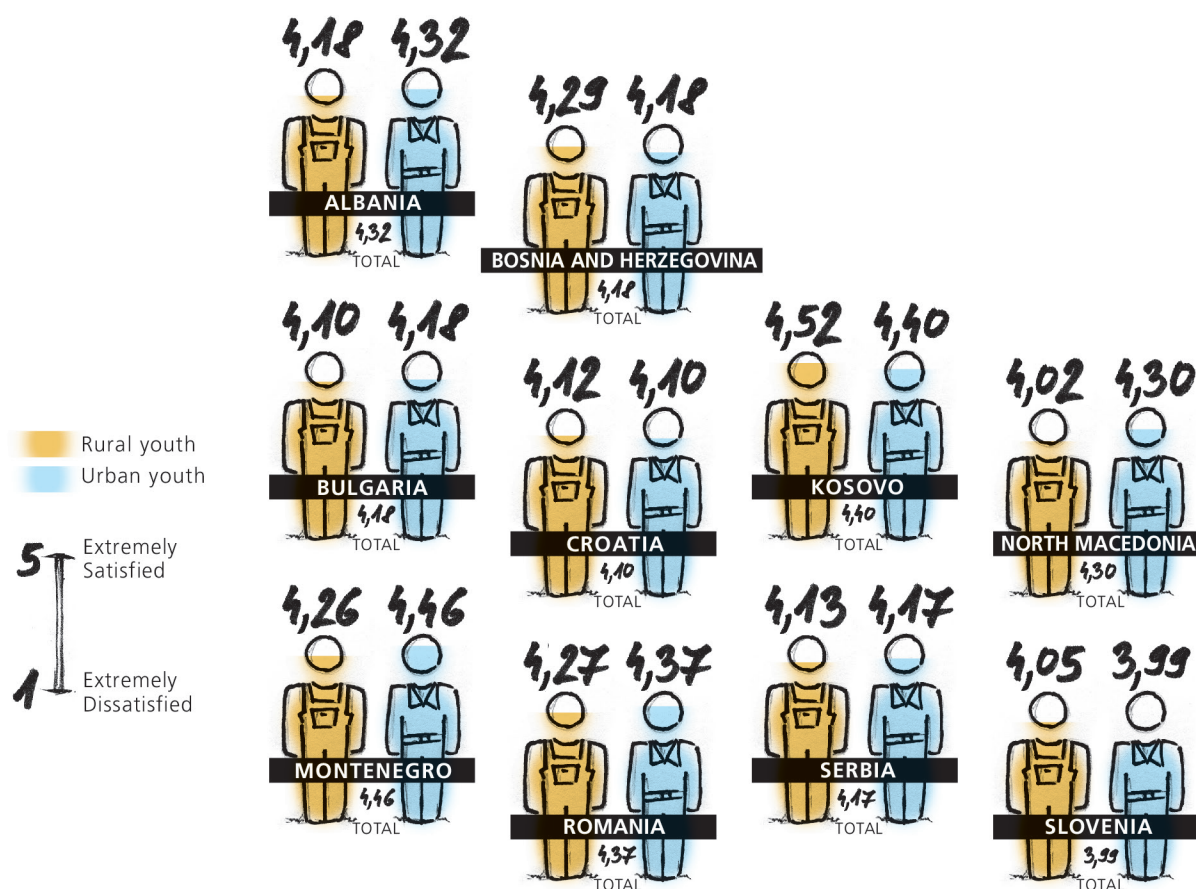
The results show that Montenegrin youth are the most satisfied with their lives, while Slovenian youth occupy the opposite end of the spectrum. Of all the subjects, Slovenian urban youth are the least satisfied with their lives.

To get a general insight into life satisfaction among youth, they were asked to rate their satisfaction on a scale from 1 to 5; with 1 representing complete lack of satisfaction, and 5 representing complete satisfaction. Table 1 presents the descriptive results of this question which show that both the urban and the rural youth on average rate their life satisfaction as very good. Only North Macedonia has a standard deviation larger than 1, suggesting a greater heterogeneity of answers. The results also clearly indicate that the Montenegrin youth are most satisfied with their lives, while Slovenian youth occupy the opposite end of the spectrum with an average life satisfaction rating of 3.99. Regarding rural youth, the highest rating for life satisfaction is found in Kosovo, while the lowest score is recorded among Slovenian youth. The situation among the urban youth shows the highest ratings for life satisfaction among the youth is in Montenegro, while again, Slovenian youth show the lowest rate of life satisfaction. To summarise, these results show that regional youth are generally satisfied with their lives. Differences among states, although present, are almost negligible and the data apparently show that despite the prevalent notion that life in South-eastern Europe is hard, young people manage to find enough factors of happiness and fulfilment in their lives, which is certainly positive for themselves but also for the societies as a whole.

³ This is Eurostat data for EU member states and candidate states in 2013, which does not include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania or Kosovo – countries where young people traditionally live with their parents until they are 30 years old.

Infographic 2

Life satisfaction in countries of South-eastern Europe in 2018

**ATTITUDES ON SELECT SOCIAL PHENOMENA**

Young people show an inclination towards conservative attitudes.

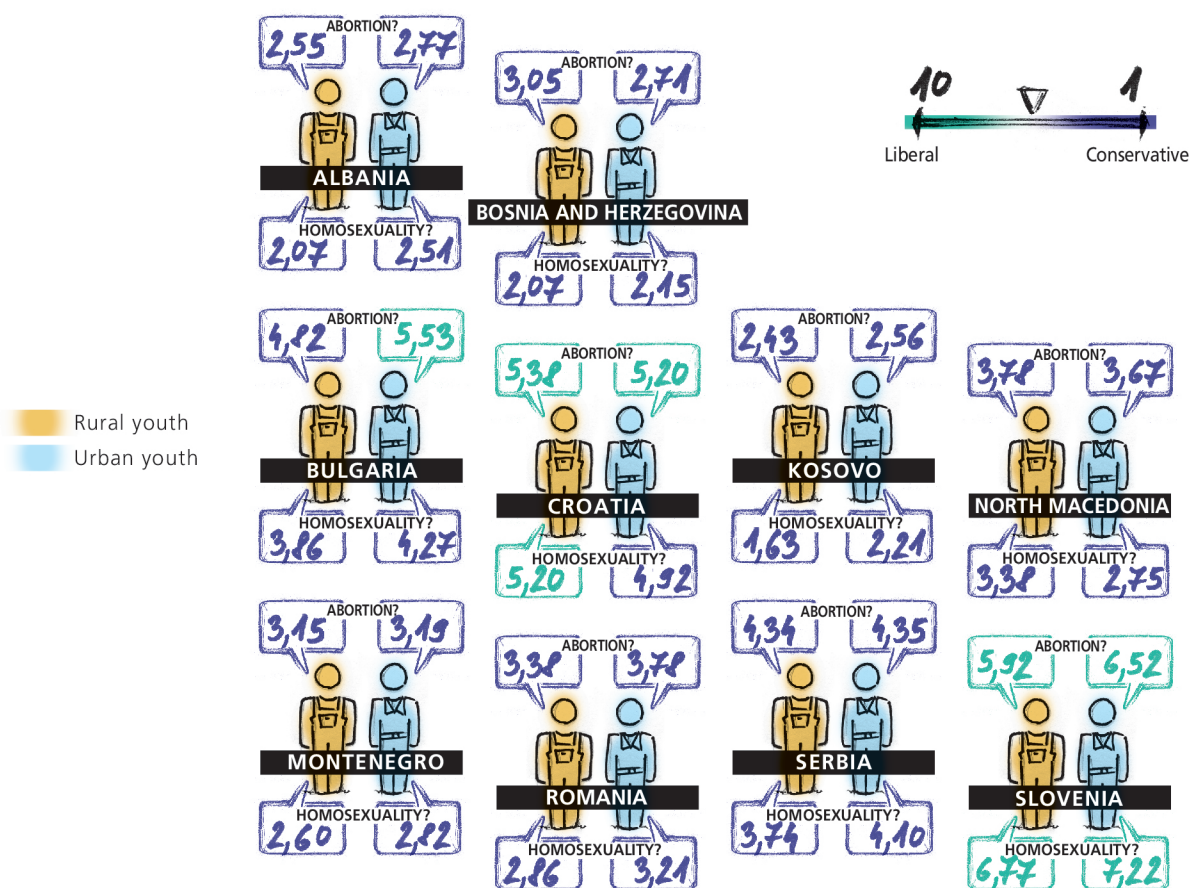
Besides life satisfaction, we were interested in what the attitudes of young people were towards select, socially controversial topics in South-eastern Europe. We chose three variables to illustrate their set of social values: attitudes towards abortion, homosexuals, and bribery. Table 2 presents the average values (M) with corresponding standard deviations (SD) of youth attitudes separated by country and residential position. We can see that on a scale of 1 to 10, wherein the value 1 represents the attitude that the phenomena in question are never justified, while 10 represents the opposite, young people expressed that they mainly do not justify abortion (average value of 4.18 for urban youth and 3.93 for rural youth). This finding very clearly illustrates the prevalence of conservative attitudes, but it also opens the issues of discrepancy with the stance of the European Court of Human Rights which has clearly stated that abortion must be legal. Regardless, the fact remains that if the tendency of the Government, as well as human and women's rights organisations, is to deepen the public awareness on abortion, it requires investing in a quality system of health education with a distinct reproductive rights component.

Concerning homosexuality, we also see the youth displaying mainly conservative attitudes, rating the justification of the phenomena with 3.89 in the case of rural youth and with 3.48 in the case of urban youth. The issue of LGBTIQ rights has become one of the mainline social phenomena in the past decade. Conservative movements in many European countries have (un)successfully introduced provisions blocking homosexual marriage into state laws and constitutions, increasing the stigmatisation of the LGBTIQ populace and reducing the scope of their rights.

The youth consider bribery unjustifiable while they show more tolerance towards nepotism when it comes to their own employment. The issues of corruption, rule of law, cronyism and nepotism are inevitable within the context of South-eastern Europe. Although often all these negative phenomena are uncritically attributed to this European region, that doesn't mean they are not present. In this respect, it is necessary to be cautious about generalising because studies (Ilišin et al., 2019) show that young people do not justify corruption, stating that they would not participate in corruptive activities. It is definitely necessary to keep in mind the social desirability of answers, however, the data suggest that in perceiving corruption and corruptive actions it is advisable to take age into account as an independent variable which could offer a more refined insight into societies facing this and other similar problems.

Infographic 3

Youth attitudes on select social phenomena in countries of South-eastern Europe in 2018



The analysis shows that Slovenian rural youth are the most liberal in comparison to rural youth from other South-east European countries..

We were also interested in comparing attitudes on these social phenomena in different countries⁴.

It turns out that the **rural** youth in Albania are statistically significantly less approving of abortion than their peers in Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. The rural youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina also display more conservative attitudes than the rural youth in Croatia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Slovenia when it comes to abortion. On the other hand, Bulgarian rural youth are statistically significantly more conservative only in comparison with Slovenian rural youth. The youth from Croatian rural areas are more liberal towards abortion than all other rural youths from the considered countries, while the Kosovo rural youth are the least approving of abortion among all youths from rural areas of the considered countries. The North Macedonian rural youth are more liberal than Albanian and Kosovo rural

youth, while being more conservative than Bulgarian, Croatian or Slovenian rural youth. In Montenegro, rural youth are less tolerant towards abortion than in Bulgaria, Croatia or Slovenia, while the youth in rural Serbia are more liberal than the youth in the rural areas of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo. The analysis has revealed that the Slovenian rural youth are the most liberal in comparison to rural youth from other South-east European countries.

Urban youth in Serbia are the third most liberal, with only the urban youth from Croatia and Slovenia showing more liberal attitudes, while the urban youth from Slovenia are the most liberal out of the ten compared societies of South-eastern Europe.

The **urban** youth express their attitudes on the justification of abortion in the following manner: Albanian youth are more conservative than Bulgarian, Croatian, North Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian or Slovenian, while young people in urban areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina are also more conservative than their peers in mentioned countries when abortion is discussed. Bulgarian urban youth show a statistically significant difference from all other countries, except for Croatia and are, with the exception of urban Slovenian youth, more liberal. The same can be said for Croatia. On

⁴ Rural: Welch's F(9, 789.743)=82.148, p=0.000; Urban: Welch's F(9, 2389.758)=126.368, p=0.000

the opposite end of the (non)justification spectrum is the urban youth from Kosovo, who express the most traditional attitudes out of all of the statistically significant comparisons. The urban youth in North Macedonia are more tolerant towards abortion than the youth from Albania, Kosovo or Bosnia and Herzegovina, but less than their peers from Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia or Slovenia. At the same time, the youth in Romania are more tolerant of abortion than their peers in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo, and less than those in Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia or Slovenia. Urban youth in Serbia are the third most liberal, with only the urban youth from Croatia and Slovenia showing more liberal attitudes, while the urban youth from Slovenia are the most liberal out of the compared societies.

These results are not surprising because, similarly, the results of the European Value Survey revealed the tendency of Slovenian and Croatian society to be significantly more liberal about social values than other societies from South-eastern Europe.

Moving on to the issue of homosexuality⁵, the distribution by countries reveals that the youth in **rural** areas of Albania are less prone to accepting homosexuality than those in Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia, and especially Slovenia. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina reveals that the youth there are statistically significantly more conservative towards accepting homosexuality than the youth in rural areas of Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia or Slovenia. The youth in Bulgaria express higher rates of approval towards homosexuality than the rural youth in Kosovo or Romania, but lower than the rural youth in Croatia. On the other hand, the rural youth in Croatia are more liberal than all other countries except for Slovenia, while the youth in rural areas of Kosovo are more conservative towards homosexuality than the mentioned youth in Bulgaria and Croatia, but also in North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. Besides the mentioned data, the rural youth from North Macedonia are less accepting of homosexuality than their peers in Slovenia, and the same is true of the youth in rural areas of Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

As far as **urban** areas are concerned, young Albanians are less approving of homosexuality than their peers in Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia or Slovenia. The urban youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina express more conservative tendencies than the youth in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia or Slovenia. Bulgarian urban youth are more liberal than all the considered South-eastern European societies, except for Slovenia. The same is true of Croatia. Besides the already mentioned data for Kosovo, it should be pointed out that the youth in urban areas of Kosovo are less approving of homosexuality than the youth in Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. The situation is similar with the youth of North Macedonia who are more conservative than Serbian and Slovenian youth, and the same is true of the youth in Montenegro and Romania, while the urban youth in Serbia, besides the already men-

tioned data, are more conservative than Slovenian youth. Comparisons of Slovenian urban youth with all other countries are statistically significant, showing that Slovenia is the most liberal area in the whole region.

Slovenian youth are the most approving of homosexuality in comparison to their peers across the region.

The third variable in this set of values referred to the justification of accepting and giving bribes. Table 2 presents an overview of the significance of comparing the rural and urban youth of different countries⁶. We can see that the rural youth in Albania are less approving of bribery than their peers in Croatia and Montenegro, while the urban youth are more approving than those in Kosovo and North Macedonia, but less than those in Montenegro. The youth in rural areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina are statistically significantly less approving of bribery than Croatian and Montenegrin youth, but more approving than those in Kosovo. The situation in urban areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina is such that they approve of bribery more than the youth in Kosovo, but less than those in Montenegro. As far as the youth in Bulgaria are concerned, in rural areas they are more supportive of bribery than those in Kosovo, while in urban areas their support for bribery exceeds approval in both Kosovo and North Macedonia. The Croatian rural youth find bribery more acceptable than those in Kosovo, North Macedonia, Romania and Slovenia, while those in urban areas find it more acceptable than their peers in North Macedonia and Kosovo. Besides the already mentioned situation in Kosovo, the results reveal that among the country's rural youth there is less tolerance of bribery than among their Montenegrin, Serbian and Slovenian peers, while the urban youth of Kosovo are less tolerant than Romanian, Montenegrin, Serbian and Slovenian youth. Both the urban and rural youth of North Macedonia are less approving of bribery than the youth of Montenegro, while the urban youth are also less approving than Romanian youth.

TRUST

It is noticeable that rural youth tend to rate their trust towards close family higher than their peers in cities in every country considered in this study.

In her overview of the literature on (political) trust, A. Gvozdanović (2014) explains that "political trust is one of the main components of citizen affiliation which is perhaps the foundation of political and citizen participation". Political trust concerns youth attitudes toward democratic institutions. It in turn indicates the legitimacy of youth towards those institutions and affects the formation of youth politi-

⁵ Rural: Welch's F (9, 760.227)=171.633, p=0.000 Urban: Welch's F (9, 2412.957)=133.202, p=0.000

⁶ Rural: Welch's F (9, 772.612)=31.186, p=0.000; Urban: Welch's F (9, 2476.512)=19.484, p=0.000

cal identity (ibid.). The second kind of trust is the social kind, or as Gambetta puts it: “When we say we trust someone or that someone is trustworthy, we implicitly mean that the probability that he will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental to us is high enough for us to consider engaging in some form of cooperation with him” (1988).

With the aim to understand the relationship of urban and rural youth towards certain institutions, but also to clarify horizontal relationships, i.e. trust in social groups, we selected three social trust variables and three political trust variables. Table 1 provides an overview of the descriptive data on youth trust in South-eastern Europe.

Table 1

Youth trust in South-eastern Europe
ranging from 1 (don't trust at all) to 5 (greatly trust)

Country	Who	Close family		Friends		Neighbours		Political parties		Media		EU	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Albania	Rural youth	4,96	,246	3,31	1,151	2,11	1,179	1,77	1,134	2,55	1,333	3,41	1,470
	Urban youth	4,92	,380	3,55	1,153	2,20	1,264	1,63	,906	2,43	1,194	3,30	1,349
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Rural youth	4,69	,775	4,05	,727	3,58	,891	1,83	1,125	2,70	1,129	3,13	1,152
	Urban youth	4,75	,706	4,07	,709	3,54	,810	1,95	1,122	2,72	1,105	2,98	1,169
Bulgaria	Rural youth	4,87	,440	4,23	,800	3,47	1,153	2,14	1,143	3,02	1,305	3,56	1,150
	Urban youth	4,80	,576	4,18	,791	3,02	1,116	1,88	1,044	2,87	1,126	3,50	1,193
Croatia	Rural youth	4,57	,751	4,14	,845	3,34	,891	2,09	1,073	2,79	1,053	2,95	,967
	Urban youth	4,60	,760	4,24	,806	3,15	1,002	1,90	1,044	2,80	1,064	2,97	1,057
Kosovo	Rural youth	4,92	,345	3,54	1,055	2,88	1,203	1,69	,988	2,35	1,090	3,16	1,409
	Urban youth	4,90	,394	3,76	1,084	2,89	1,237	1,77	,983	2,57	1,144	3,12	1,317
North Macedonia	Rural youth	4,68	,744	3,76	1,050	2,67	1,176	2,07	1,200	2,35	1,090	2,77	1,312
	Urban youth	4,77	,600	3,73	1,089	2,64	1,227	1,98	1,143	2,32	1,195	2,71	1,420
Montenegro	Rural youth	4,96	,199	4,05	,941	2,68	1,106	1,92	1,022	2,05	,982	2,46	1,361
	Urban youth	4,86	,491	4,02	,995	2,58	1,189	2,03	1,309	2,30	1,294	2,53	1,458
Romania	Rural youth	4,76	,601	3,48	1,042	2,75	1,181	1,69	1,025	2,54	1,276	2,96	1,268
	Urban youth	4,75	,631	3,66	,978	2,83	1,156	1,63	,905	2,59	1,314	2,74	1,303
Serbia	Rural youth	4,88	,346	4,15	,877	2,78	1,108	1,75	1,031	2,19	1,114	2,30	1,281
	Urban youth	4,78	,607	3,95	,936	2,64	1,086	1,65	,928	1,94	1,037	2,18	1,215
Slovenia	Rural youth	4,66	,721	4,21	,850	2,71	1,148	2,06	,988	2,38	1,017	2,77	1,128
	Urban youth	4,66	,711	4,19	,864	2,49	1,111	1,98	,931	2,29	1,028	2,65	1,149

As the table illustrates, young people show high levels of trust in their close family in all the considered countries. Also, it is noticeable that the rural youth generally express higher levels of trust in their close family than their urban peers. Namely, trust rates, rated on a scale from 1 to 5, are in the category “greatly trust” in all the considered countries. If we compare, based on this criteria, the countries between themselves⁷, it is revealed that among the rural youth the statistically significant differences in trust towards family were distributed so that the level of trust is higher in Albania (in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and North Macedonia), in Bulgaria (in relation to Slovenia and Croatia), in Kosovo (in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia and Slovenia), in Montenegro (in relation to Croatia), in Romania (in relation to Croatia) and in Serbia in relation to Croatia. The same variable among urban youth reveals that higher levels of trust in their own family is expressed by the urban youth in Albania (in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia), in Bosnia and Herzegovina (in relation to Croatia), urban Bulgarian youth in relation to Croatia, urban Kosovo youth in relation to Croatia and Romania, and those in North Macedonia, Serbia, Romania and Montenegro when compared to Croatia. Based on this data we correlated the level of the rural populace with the level of trust, resulting in positive correlation, which means that both the urban and the rural youth of those countries with a higher percentage of the rural populace (such as Albania or Bosnia and Herzegovina) express higher levels of trust in their family than in countries with a lower percentage of a rural populace. Also, we noticed a division based on EU membership, with EU member countries generally recording a lower level of trust in the family than non-member countries.

On the other hand, the total average score of trust in political parties is very low, at 1.92 (on a 1 to 5 scale) for rural youth, and at 1.82 for urban youth. This illustrates that the youth in South-eastern Europe have little trust in political parties which are a rather crucial element of the democratic political system, which points to a potential crisis of trust towards elites, which has been a subject of numerous papers in political science (Meer, 2017; Merkel, 2014). A comparison of the level of trust in political parties in the considered countries⁸ shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the levels of trust between any of the countries, whether rural or urban youth are considered.

Trust in the media among rural youth is rated with an average score of 2.58 while the urban youth of South-east

Europe rate their trust in the national media with a score of 2.48. As was the case with the issue of trust in political parties, we compared the indicators between countries, but there were no statistically significant comparisons neither with urban nor with rural youth.

As far as trusting the European Union is concerned, it is relatively solid in all the considered countries, with the average being slightly higher among rural youth – 3.01 than among urban youth – 2.89 (rated on a scale of 1 to 5). Comparing trust towards the EU between different countries⁹ provided no statistically significant differences. We can therefore conclude that there are no differences in political trust between the countries of South-eastern Europe, namely that the level of political trust is more or less uniformly distributed among the countries of the region. This finding speaks to the relative homogeneity of the region, or in other words, it reveals that the youth trust patterns are relatively similar in both rural and urban areas of South-eastern Europe. In order to get a deeper insight into the politicalness of youth in regard to their residential status, and inspired by the results of the trust question, we questioned the young people’s interest in politics.

INTEREST IN POLITICS

Interest in politics is an important variable in youth research because it reveals how strongly youth are interested in administration, and the potential to change their communities. Besides, interest in politics often corresponds to political and social participation, but can also be used to extrapolate the youth relationship towards political elites. In order to ascertain how young people relate to politics, we divided interest into three variables: a general interest in politics, interest in national politics and interest in EU politics. The relationship of youth towards politics is illustrated in graph 1. As we can see, the youth are not all that interested in politics, as their interest graded on the Likert scale never goes beyond the level of “I’m not interested”. If we look at the results of the comparison between countries, the data show¹⁰ that Croatian rural youth are more interested in politics than the youth in Albania or Kosovo, while the rural Montenegrin youth are more interested than the rural youth in Albania, Kosovo or Romania. Concerning the statistically significant differences between urban youth in South-eastern European countries, such a difference was present in the comparison of North Macedonia to Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with North Macedonian youth being more interested in politics, as were Slovenian youth when compared to those in Albania.

⁷ Rural: Welch’s F (9, 914.355)=30.650, p=0.000; Urban: Welch’s F (9, 2560.710)=20.858, p=0.000

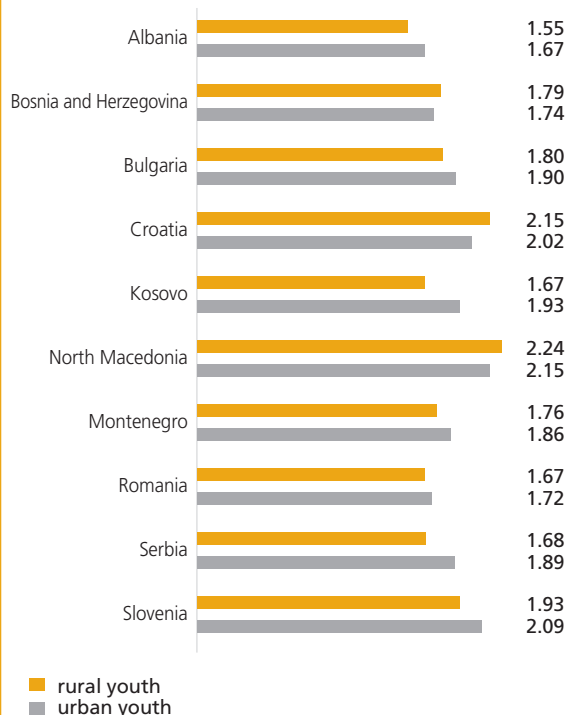
⁸ Rural: Welch’s F (9, 914.355)=30.650, p=0.000; Urban: Welch’s F (9, 2560.710)=20.858, p=0.000

⁹ Rural: Welch’s F (9, 688.695)=17.909, p=0.000; Urban: Welch’s F (9, 2328.449)=69.744, p=0.000

¹⁰ Rural: Welch’s F (9, 806.377)=11.825, p=0.000; Urban: Welch’s F (9, 2540.407)=13.130, p=0.000

Graph 1

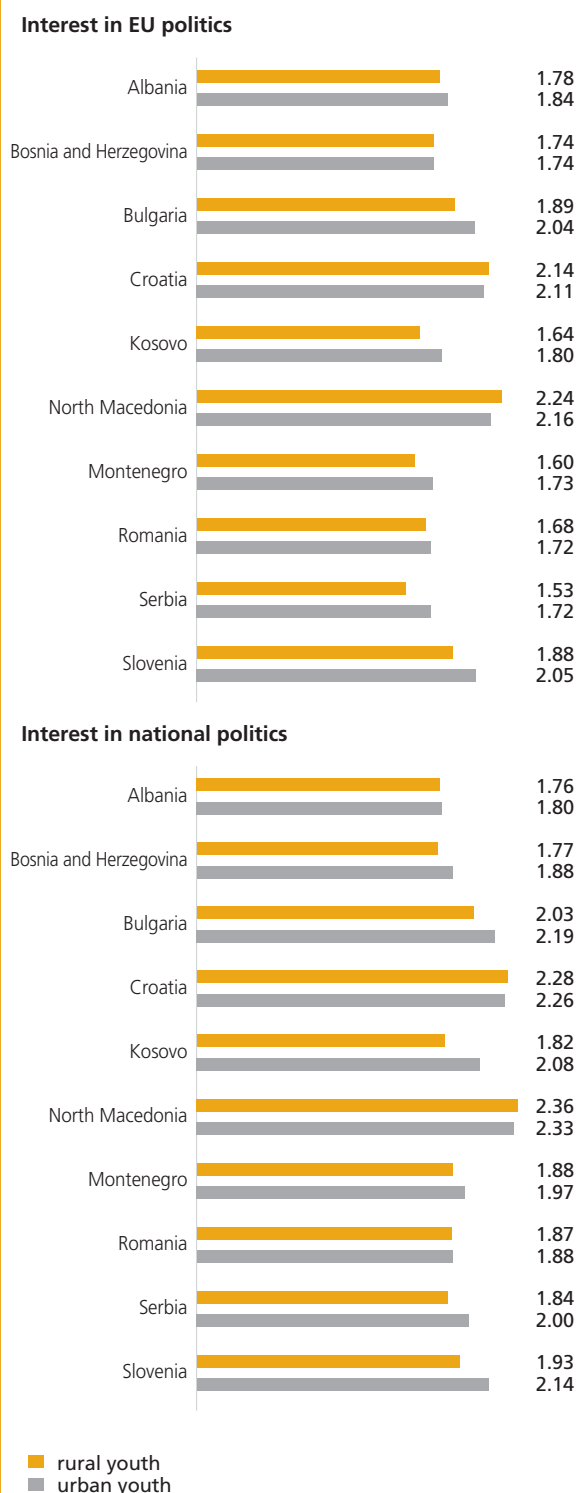
Youth general interest in politics
on a scale from 1 (not interested at all) to 5 (very interested)



Graph 2 illustrates the comparison of rural and urban youth based on their expressed interest in EU politics and national politics. The mean of rural youth interest reveals that on average they express an interest in EU politics of 1.86 and 1.97 in national politics. In the case of urban youth, their interest in EU politics is on average rated 1.89 and 2.05 for interest in national politics. It is interesting that statistical significance¹¹ was found only in the comparison of rural Croatian youth who are more interested in politics than their peers in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo, while the rural youth of North Macedonia are more interested in politics than their peers in rural Bosnia and Herzegovina. Concerning urban areas, the youth in Bulgaria express greater interest in EU topics than their peers in Albania, the youth in Croatia more than those in Albania and Romania, and the youth in North Macedonia more than their peers in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Romania.

Graph 2

Comparison of interest in EU politics and national politics
on a scale from 1 (not interested at all) to 5 (very interested)



¹¹ Rural: Welch's F (9, 791.146)=10.647, p=0.000; Urban: Welch's F (9, 2529.591)=15.508, p=0.000

RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

Next we look at the relationship towards democracy, exploring whether there exist any democratic deficit among the youth or to what extent do young people have authoritarian tendencies. This construct was operationalised through two questions: (1) democracy is a good form of governance; (2) in certain circumstances, dictatorship is a better form of rulership than democracy. Table 4 provides an overview of agreement with these statements. Both the rural and urban youth in South-eastern Europe generally agree that democracy is a good form of governance, with the average rate of agreement for rural areas being 3.78, and 3.85 in urban areas. As far as statistically significant differences¹² between urban and rural youth based on their country of origin is concerned, the data illustrate that the youth in Albania are more prone to justify democracy than rural youth in Serbia and Slovenia, the youth in Bulgaria more than rural youth in Slovenia, as well as the rural youth in Croatia. In urban areas of South-eastern Europe, Albanian youth find democracy more justifiable than their peers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia; Bulgarian youth more than the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia; Croatian youth more than their counterparts in Romania and Serbia; urban youth in Kosovo more than the urban youth in Romania and Serbia; youth in North Macedonia more than those in Serbia, as well as the youth in Montenegro who also find it more justifiable than the youth in Serbia.

From the data in table 2, we can also conclude that neither rural nor urban youth in South-eastern Europe think that dictatorship is ever justifiable. Namely, the average rate of agreement that dictatorship is justifiable in rural areas was 2.50, while the urban youth rate their degree of agreement with dictatorship at 2.37.

Looking at statistically significant differences in the issue of agreeing that dictatorship is justifiable¹³, we find that the rural youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina more often agree than their rural peers in Albania and Montenegro, while the significant difference in urban areas is that the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina are more prone to justifying dictatorship than the youth in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia and North Macedonia, which also speaks in favour of authoritarian tendencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina youth. Also, the youth in Montenegro are more prone to justifying dictatorship than the urban youth in Bulgaria and North Macedonia.

Table 2
Relationship towards democracy and dictatorship¹⁴

Country	Who	Democracy		Dictatorship	
		M	SD	M	SD
Albania	Rural youth	4,18	1,166	2,19	1,488
	Urban youth	4,16	1,143	2,36	1,521
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Rural youth	3,72	1,019	2,82	1,244
	Urban youth	3,65	1,048	2,84	1,274
Bulgaria	Rural youth	4,09	1,010	2,24	1,258
	Urban youth	4,07	1,053	2,15	1,254
Croatia	Rural youth	3,88	,979	2,57	1,273
	Urban youth	3,98	1,010	2,26	1,213
Kosovo	Rural youth	3,80	1,344	2,41	1,375
	Urban youth	3,98	1,187	2,26	1,267
North Macedonia	Rural youth	3,77	1,171	2,09	1,277
	Urban youth	3,92	1,259	2,17	1,380
Montenegro	Rural youth	3,98	1,308	3,18	1,634
	Urban youth	3,80	1,355	2,67	1,605
Romania	Rural youth	3,78	1,276	2,54	1,391
	Urban youth	3,61	1,262	2,50	1,300
Serbia	Rural youth	3,40	1,306	2,36	1,359
	Urban youth	3,40	1,226	2,35	1,377
Slovenia	Rural youth	3,52	1,150	2,50	1,209
	Urban youth	3,58	1,143	2,49	1,302

¹² Rural: Welch's F (9, 680.990)=10.696, p=0.000; Urban: Welch's F (9, 2327.546)=31.435, p=0.000

¹³ Rural: Welch's F (9, 671.831)=9.018, p=0.000; Urban: Welch's F (9, 2255.564)=13.939, p=0.000

¹⁴ The subjects were asked to express, on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), their attitudes about the following claims: democracy is, generally speaking, a good form of governance; in certain circumstances, dictatorship is a better form of governance than democracy.

CONCLUSION

This study has answered some but also opened new questions on the youth position in South-eastern Europe. The differences in political attitudes, values and interests between urban and rural youth is one of the insufficiently researched phenomena of sociology and political science. Although all South-eastern European countries have around 30 percent of the rural populace, not enough attention is dedicated to analysing this phenomenon, especially from a youth research perspective. The results of the research conducted in ten South-eastern European countries have empirically confirmed some of the assumptions which can often be heard in public discourse.

This study has therefore shown that in half of the considered countries the rural youth on average rate their life satisfaction higher than their peers in urban areas. As we questioned the youth attitudes towards certain social phenomena, this study also showed that there is a statistically significant difference between urban and rural youth, namely that young people in rural areas are generally more conservative than those in urban areas. Also, it is interesting that in more than half of the considered countries, urban youth are more prone to justifying nepotism in finding employment. Trust in institutions and social groups is a key determinant of democratic societies and the study undoubtedly shows that rural youth express greater trust towards their family than their urban peers. The youth in EU member countries express lower levels of trust in their family than the youth in non-member countries. As far as the European Union is concerned, the trust in EU policies is slightly higher than the trust in national policies, while differences between countries with regard to the urban-rural continuum weren't significant. Previous studies (Ilišin et al., 2013; Flere et al., 2015) have shown that youth interest in politics is relatively low, and that was confirmed by this study, also offering a more detailed elaboration of differences between countries with regard to residential status. The final concept examined was attitudes towards democracy and dictatorship, which has revealed a relatively stable democratic pattern among rural and urban youth. The only exception being youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who have shown a greater degree of benevolence towards dictatorship in comparison to their urban and rural peers from the other countries in South-eastern Europe.

In conclusion, what has this study shown? We were primarily interested in seeing whether there are any statistically significant differences between countries in regard to the urban-rural continuum and focusing on the youth population. The results of the study are not monolithic, that is to say, we cannot form a general conclusion saying that there are great differences between countries in regard to urban and rural youth. Although some 60 percent of the analysed variables proved significant when the dis-

tinction in democratic potential between EU member countries and non-member countries was taken into account, this study is in no way complete. In other words, the urban-rural relationship among youth needs to be further studied in order to provide a clear answer to the question: is this continuum truly relevant for understanding political phenomena in South-eastern Europe?

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SO SIMILAR AND YET, SO DIFFERENT

A comparison of urban and rural youth in 10 Eastern European countries based on certain aspects of socio-political characteristics



This publication aims to research the distribution of certain attitudes and values of youth in the countries of South-eastern Europe in regard to their residential status. The results of the empirical quantitative study of youth implemented in 10 countries of South-eastern Europe illustrate that rural youth on average rate their life satis-



faction higher than their peers in urban areas. Furthermore, there is a statistically significant difference between urban and rural youth in view of the conservativeness of certain attitudes, i.e. rural youth are typically more conservative than those in urban areas. The text shows that the urban youth have greater trust in their family when



compared to their peers in urban areas, while the youth in EU member states recorded a lesser degree of trust in their family than the youth in non-member states. The presented study has undoubtedly illustrated the need for a more detailed insight into youth attitudes, values and behaviours in regard to the urban-rural dichotomy.

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