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YOUTH STUDY GROWING UP IN CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE

**AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF THE LIVING
CONDITIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN CZECH REPUBLIC,
HUNGARY, POLAND AND SLOVAKIA**

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CONTENT

1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	MAIN FINDINGS	6
3	METHODOLOGY	12
4	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS	14
5	EDUCATION	20
6	WORK AND MIGRATION	28
7	FAMILY	36
8	GENERAL VALUES, ATTITUDES AND WISHES	44
9	POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND INVOLVEMENT	52
10	CONCLUSION	68
11	FOOTNOTES	70
12	BIBLIOGRAPHY	72
13	LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	78
14	ABOUT FES YOUTH STUDIES	82

1

INTRODUCTION

This report is part of broad-based and internationally oriented youth studies initiated and coordinated by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. The focus of the research is on today's young generations growing up of in Europe, Asia and North Africa.

This study focuses on young people in the Central Eastern European countries known as the Visegrád Group¹ made up of Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. These countries are united not only by their post-Soviet past, which continues to have an impact on the everyday lives of young people today but also by the Visegrád Alliance, which cooperates in particular on European policy issues and celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2021. The activities in this open union of the four states show how omnipresent the dividing as well as connecting elements are between Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Especially in view of current events in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the motives for a union between those countries at that time seemed all the more topical. The goal of the Visegrád countries in 1991 was to secure their own newly won sovereignty by joining NATO and the EU. Today, this loose association provides financial support for a wide range of projects and scholarships and coordinates action at the European level. Although these agreements do not always lead to a uniform opinion, they do form the basis for close cooperation between the four countries (Beribes, 2021, S. 2f.).

The basis for this study is the representative survey of 6,000 young people between 15 and 29 years of age from the four countries named, which was conducted in 2021 using quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The aim is to present the current life situations and attitudes of young adults in five central thematic areas of focus: education, work and migration, family, general values, attitudes and desires as well as political attitudes and political involvement. For this purpose, regional comparative analyses are primarily carried out, which are supplemented at significant points by representing national specifics and make it possible to work out development processes and trends. In addition to the phenomena of globalisation, climate change and an ageing population, (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018) Covid-19 is also affecting the lives of many young people in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.

Furthermore, after a comprehensive review of all data, the final question is how this new generation of young people can be described in general terms and whether they are distinct from their parents' generation. Szlendak (2020) points out in his analysis of young Polish people that despite all the search for intergenerational difference, the lifestyle of young people alone is the separating component of two generations. This needs to be examined.

2

MAIN FINDINGS

EDUCATION

- Young people in Central Eastern Europe show high educational ambitions in all four countries studied. Almost every second person between the ages of 25 and 29 holds a university degree.
- Young women in Central Eastern Europe are more successful in education than their male peers. They show a high commitment and invest more time in their education.
- Education-related effects of origin are clearly visible in all four countries. In particular, access to tertiary education is significantly more often denied to young people from educationally disadvantaged families and families with an intermediate level of education. This is particularly evident among young Slovak people.
- The education systems in the respective countries are viewed critically by young people. In Hungary, Poland and Slovakia in particular, there is a fundamental dissatisfaction with the quality of education.
- Suspicions of corruption against educational institutions are expressed in all four countries – especially strongly in Slovakia.

WORK AND MIGRATION

- There is a precarisation of certain groups of young people in the world of work: on the one hand, the exposed position of well-educated young male people in permanent employment, on the other, a gender gap among young people in unemployment. With an overall youth unemployment rate of about 20%, significantly more young females are affected by unemployment. However, this gender gap evens out as the country's economic strength increases.
- Just under one quarter of all young people have a strong to very strong desire to migrate.
- Around one-third of all young people who wish to migrate would like to return to their home country after their migration. In comparison, these homecomers come more often from the Czech Republic, have a stronger sense of national as well as local affiliation, and more often assume a good status of human rights and individual liberties in their home country.
- Just under one-fifth of the young people with the desire to migrate can imagine migrating for more than twenty years and thus permanently. In particular, young Polish people and young people with a less strong sense of national as well as local affiliation are among these expatriates.
- One's own as well as country-specific economic situation influence the actual migration experience. The poorer the young people and the worse the economic situation in the country, the more often the young people migrate.

FAMILY

- The majority of young people in Central Eastern Europe grow up in traditional family structures. The nuclear family is still the most common form of family life. This is most common in Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.
- The majority of young people express a high level of satisfaction with their own family.
- The socio-economic situation is a decisive factor in determining how people judge their own family: the more precarious the financial situation within the family, the more stressful the relationship with parents is assessed yet with clear differences between the countries in terms of the level.
- The reasons for staying longer in the parents' home among young people in Central Eastern Europe are not so much based on convenience and securing comfort, but rather, it is their own financial situation that prevents them from moving out.
- Starting a family of one's own is a central goal in life for the vast majority of all young people interviewed across all countries surveyed. The majority of them are oriented towards traditional family concepts.
- The desire to have children is stronger than to marry.
- Among the members of the Visegrád Group, child planning is most often postponed among the following youth generation in Poland.
- When it comes to starting a family, an urban-rural divide is apparent. The desire to get married and have children is significantly less pronounced among young people in urban structures than in rural regions.

GENERAL VALUES, ATTITUDES AND WISHES

- The majority of young people in Central Eastern Europe are satisfied with their own lives.
- Young people's subjective sense of well-being depends on how comfortable they feel within their own family and circle of friends, how satisfied they are with their own education and what financial resources they have.
- Young people are positive about the future. Three quarters believe that the personal situation in 10 years will generally look better than the current one.
- The personal future forecasts of young females are more positive than those of their male peers in all the countries studied. Young females in Hungary are particularly confident.
- The view of the development of society as a whole is much more pessimistic. A relative majority of 15 to 29 year olds believe that society is more likely to drift apart and develop negatively.
- With regard to value concepts, clear individualisation tendencies are recognisable. Self-realisation and one's own career are at the centre of life planning. This is flanked by the demand for a good life and a sense of personal well-being.
- Intolerance towards social, ethnic and religious groups is not uncommon, at least among some young people in Central Eastern Europe.

POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND INVOLVEMENT

- Only 6 per cent of young people in the Visegrád countries are very interested in politics, and a further 21 per cent are somewhat interested. By contrast, 19 per cent are not at all interested, and 23 per cent are not very interested, showing a difference of magnitude between those who are interested and those who are not.
- More than four-tenths of young people in the Visegrád countries rarely discuss political issues, while only 4% do so very often. Therefore, most of them live in an environment where public and political issues are not part of everyday communication.
- Young Hungarians agree with their parents the most, but they are also the least aware of their parents' political views. In comparison, the political conformity of young people in the other three countries shows similar rather than divergent characteristics.
- Half of 15-29-year-olds in the region feel that political elites do not sufficiently represent their interests. Only 1-2% think that young people's interests are well represented in politics. The proportion of young people with a very negative opinion varies from country to country, with 8% per cent of Czechs and Slovaks, 17 per cent of Poles and 20 per cent of Hungarians giving a mark of 1 on the 5-point scale.
- Slovak young people are the most likely to want to participate in a future parliamentary election (81%), followed closely by Polish and Czech 15-29-year-olds (79-79%), while Hungarians are the least likely to vote (71%).
- The most common form of protest used by young people in the region is signing a petition, followed by boycott and civic activism. While the former was done by 37 young people in the V4 countries, the latter two forms were done by around a quarter. Online activism is a less popular form of participation. Overall, party work has the lowest prevalence (6%).
- There are significant differences in the participation of 15-29-year-olds in each country. Regardless of the form of the involvement, it is clear that the political participation and willingness to participate of Hungarian 15-29-year-olds is far below their peers in the V4 countries. On the other hand, Polish young people show outstanding activism in several types of participation.
- Based on the averages of the ideological scale, young people in the Czech Republic take the most right-wing position of the four countries, with an average score of 5.71, but this is still actually in the middle. They are followed by young Hungarians (5.45) and then by Slovaks (5.41). More than a quarter of Slovak and Hungarian young people cannot or do not want to place themselves on the left-right scale. Unknown ideological orientation is the highest-scoring category for Slovak young people.
- Among young people in the four countries, Polish people are the most polarised in left-right self-definition, with the highest polarisation index (0.65), two to three times higher than in the other three countries. Czech 15-29-year-olds are the least divided, i.e. they place themselves in the centre. Moreover, the polarisation of young Hungarians and Slovaks, measured by ideological self-classification, is close and relatively moderate.
- Among the V4, Hungary is the only country where more people support basic income than reject it. Introducing a basic income is not a popular idea in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

- Young people in the Visegrád region trust the armed forces and international alliances (NATO, EU), and least trust in political institutions and the media.
- In all Visegrád countries, young people consider democracy to be a good system and want more say in politics, but in none of the countries do young people consider themselves politically informed.
- Low wages and pensions are seen as the biggest problems for the next ten years. In addition to other material issues (poverty, quality of public services, emigration and unemployment), corruption and climate change are also seen by many as significant problems.
- The majority of young people in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia are anti-immigrant. Young Poles are the most tolerant and least nationalistic in the region. National pride is strongest among Czech and Slovak young people.
- The vast majority of young people in the V4 would stay in the EU. The EU is a strong positive reference point for all four countries, with only a tiny minority considering leaving the EU.

3

METHODOLOGY

The empirical basis of the present study is a quantitative survey in an ex-post facto arrangement and a cross-sectional research design with one time of data collection. This was then supplemented by qualitative surveys with young people in order to delve deeper into individual topics covered. The aim of the study is to capture the living conditions of young people in Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary from their perspective and through their eyes, and to make corresponding comparisons. The study was based on representative samples taken in all four countries (see the chapter “Demographic characteristics and trends”).

The final survey took place simultaneously in all four participating countries between April and July 2021 and was conducted by the IPSOS Institute. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews were not used, and the study was conducted by means of an online survey instead.

A quantitative survey instrument was developed in the first step to realise the study objectives. This is a standardised questionnaire with mostly closed indicators. The questionnaire is based on a previously validated instrument used in the FES Youth Studies in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and Central Asia. This was adapted to the living conditions in Central Eastern Europe and supplemented with country-specific questions. The 120 or so questions on which the overall questionnaire is based comprise a total of about 500 items, which are broken down into eight thematic topics. These are: “Values, Religion and Trust”; “Family”; “Migration/Mobility”; “Education”; “Employment” and “Politics”. These thematic blocks were completed by socio-demographic questions and a country-specific module. Implementing country-specific issues served to take into account the respective national interests and needs. The structure of the closed response requirements was in most cases realised by using either a three- or five-point Likert scale. The standardised questionnaire was used in all seven participating countries to enable a regional and, from a perspective, longitudinal comparison. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was subjected to a pre- and back-translation in a double-blind procedure before the field phase. This means that the questionnaire was translated from English into the respective national languages and checked for accuracy and clarity by back-translation into English.

The statistical programme SPSS was used to evaluate available quantitative data. Uni- and bivariate analysis procedures were carried out and significance tests were performed to test statistically relevant correlations. Chi²-based test methods were the modus operandi. Within this framework, it is examined the extent to which the empirically observed value distribution deviates from a theoretically assumed value distribution that would be expected in the case of statistical independence of the characteristics considered. The distribution of values to be assumed for the case of statistical independence of the characteristic variables is determined with reference to the distribution conditions of the entire study sample (cf. e.g. Backhaus et al. 2008).

4

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS

At the time of the study in 2021, a total of 10.36 million young people² between the ages of 15 and 29 form the basic population. Poland is the most populous country with 37.86 million inhabitants. Slovakia is the least populated country with 2.79 million inhabitants (cf. Fig. 1)

The proportion of young people in the total population is 16 per cent (+/-1 per cent) in all participating countries. During the quantitative study, a representative sample of n = 6,000 young people was drawn. This allows conclu-

sions to be deduced about the population. A sample of 1,500 young people was drawn in all four countries. Socio-demographic aspects such as age, gender, region of residence or level of education played a central role in the composition of the sample. In the following, Table 1, essential characteristics within the sample are addressed. In addition, in some places reference is made to related phenomena and trends in the population as a whole. Many of these socio-demographic factors influence the well being and room for manoeuvre of young people.

FIG. 1: TOTAL POPULATION AND SHARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN A COUNTRY COMPARISON
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in millions

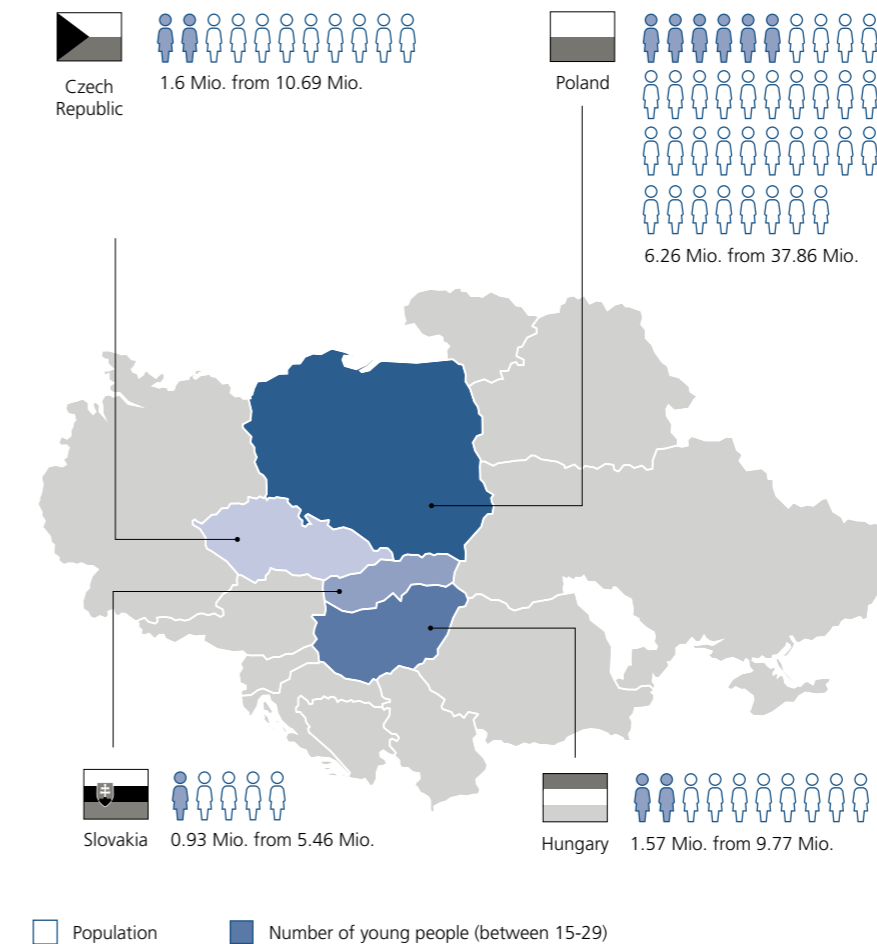


Table 1: **BREAKDOWN OF THE SAMPLE ACCORDING TO SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND REFERENCE TO NATIONAL AFFILIATION**

Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in absolute numbers and in (%)

Socio-demographic characteristics	Countries (Absolute frequencies. Percentages in brackets refer to the respective country)				Total
	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia	
Total	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	6.000
Age					
15–18 years	336 (22,4 %)	399 (26,6 %)	283 (18,9 %)	240 (16,0 %)	1.258 (21,0 %)
19–24 years	568 (37,9 %)	617 (41,1 %)	647 (43,1 %)	613 (40,9 %)	2.445 (40,8 %)
25–29 years	596 (39,7 %)	484 (32,3 %)	570 (38,0 %)	647 (39,3 %)	2.297 (38,3 %)
Highest education level...					
Low Education ³	316 (21,1 %)	411 (27,4 %)	274 (18,3 %)	214 (14,3 %)	1.215 (20,3 %)
Medium Education ⁴	845 (56,3 %)	764 (50,9 %)	834 (55,6 %)	800 (53,3 %)	3.243 (54,1 %)
High Education ⁵	339 (22,6 %)	325 (21,7 %)	392 (26,1 %)	486 (32,4 %)	1.542 (25,7 %)
Gender of the respondents ...					
Female	728 (48,5%)	807 (53,7 %)	792 (52,8 %)	805 (53,7 %)	2.868 (47,8 %)
Male	772 (51,5 %)	693 (46,2 %)	708 (47,2 %)	695 (46,3 %)	3.132 (52,2 %)
Type of settlement...					
urban ⁶	863 (57,5 %)	861 (57,4 %)	853 (56,9 %)	636 (42,4 %)	1.959 (32,7 %)
in-between	225 (15,0 %)	182 (12,1 %)	195 (13,0 %)	226 (15,1 %)	828 (13,8 %)
rural ⁷	412 (27,5 %)	457 (30,5 %)	452 (30,1 %)	638 (42,5 %)	3.213 (53,6 %)
Economic Situation					
We don't have enough money for basic bills (electricity, heating...) and food.	42 (2,8 %)	15 (1,0 %)	77 (5,1 %)	55 (3,7 %)	189 (3,2 %)
We have enough money for basic bills but not for clothes and shoes.	195 (13,0 %)	83 (5,5 %)	176 (11,7 %)	111 (7,4 %)	565 (9,4 %)
We have enough money for food, clothes and shoes but not enough for more expensive things (fridge, TV set, etc.)	430 (28,7 %)	296 (19,7 %)	527 (35,1 %)	407 (27,1 %)	1.660 (27,7 %)
We can afford to buy some more expensive things but not expensive as a car or a flat, for instance.	605 (40,3 %)	813 (54,2 %)	609 (40,6 %)	660 (44,0 %)	2.687 (44,8 %)
We can afford whatever we need for a good living standard.	228 (15,2 %)	293 (19,5 %)	111 (7,4 %)	267 (17,8 %)	899 (15,0 %)

AGEING SOCIETY

In the first step, the sample takes into account the age structure of the population. Accordingly, a total of 1,258 (21.0%) young people aged 15 to 18 years, 2,445 (40.8%) aged 19 to 24 years, and 2,297 (38.3%) aged 25 to 29 years were included in the survey (for detailed documentation cf. Table 1). These young people represent the 16% of the total population. Looking ahead, the proportion of young people in the total population will continue to fall, as it has in recent years, according to the European Commission's calculations⁸. This is also accompanied by a declining representation of youth interests and needs in society. In general, the ageing of the population is a relevant demographic trend in all participating countries. This development also implies many challenges for policy-makers, especially in the areas of healthcare, social security and pensions.

PRECARISATION DUE TO LOW CULTURAL CAPITAL ACROSS GENERATIONS

With the help of the standardised survey, it was possible to trace the heterogeneous picture of young people with regard to their access to education. One-fifth (20.3%) have no or only a primary school certificate. One-fourth (28.3%) of this group with a low level of education are aged 19 and over and who can be assumed to have left the education system with or without a primary school certificate. The lower the level of education of the young people, the higher the proportion of young people living in rural areas⁹, the economic situation is significantly worse¹⁰ and the educational level of their mother¹¹ and father¹² is significantly lower. This means that young people from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to acquire less cultural capital and are thus more likely to be affected by poverty.

INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE DEGREE OF URBANISATION IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND NATIONAL ORIGIN

Basically, it is evident that life for young people is increasingly taking place in urban areas. More than half (53.6%) of the participants live in urban settlements. At 58.2%, the portion of 25 to 29 year olds is significantly higher¹³ than the percentage of young people aged 15 to 18, which is 49.7% of all young people in this age group. This confirms the assumption of many studies that young people increasingly move to urban areas as they get older especially for work and pursuing higher education.

However, clear differences can be seen in the country comparison. In the Czech Republic, across all age groups, even more young people (57.4%) live in urban areas and the portion of young people between 25 and 29 years of age is even two-thirds (66.1%). In Slovakia, on the other hand, there is an equal distribution of young people in urban and rural areas, regardless of age. In this country, about 42% each live in rural and urban areas.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY DUE TO THE ECONOMIC STRENGTH OF A COUNTRY

To find out about their economic status and possible situations of poverty, young people were asked what they or their families could afford. 189 youth respondents (3.2%) fall below the absolute poverty level¹⁴ and cannot afford enough food, heating or electricity. Just under 10% lack the financial means to buy clothes or shoes. A majority of just under 60% (59.8%) of young people are economically well off, have a corresponding purchasing power and are able to afford luxury goods. Although there is a general decline in the number of people who fall below the poverty level (cf. Pillök 2021 and Dezenter 2022), the general economic conditions for young people are decisive for their own financial situation. In particular, young people in Hungary, which has the second lowest GDP per capita in a country comparison¹⁵, 16.8% of young people report not being able to afford clothes and shoes

(total of all countries = 12.6%). Among the young people who fall below the absolute poverty line, Hungary represents a portion of 40.7%. Pillók (2021, p. 101) supports this picture with his description that more than two-thirds of the Hungarian population have already experienced not being able to afford necessary things. The Czech Republic, the economically strongest country in a country comparison, manifests the assumption about the economic interdependence of the financial situation of young people and economic strength of a country. In this country, only 1% cannot afford enough food, electricity or power and almost three quarters (73.7%) (total of all countries = 59.8%) who can also access luxury goods. By comparison, the rate in Hungary in this respect is 48%.

5

EDUCATION

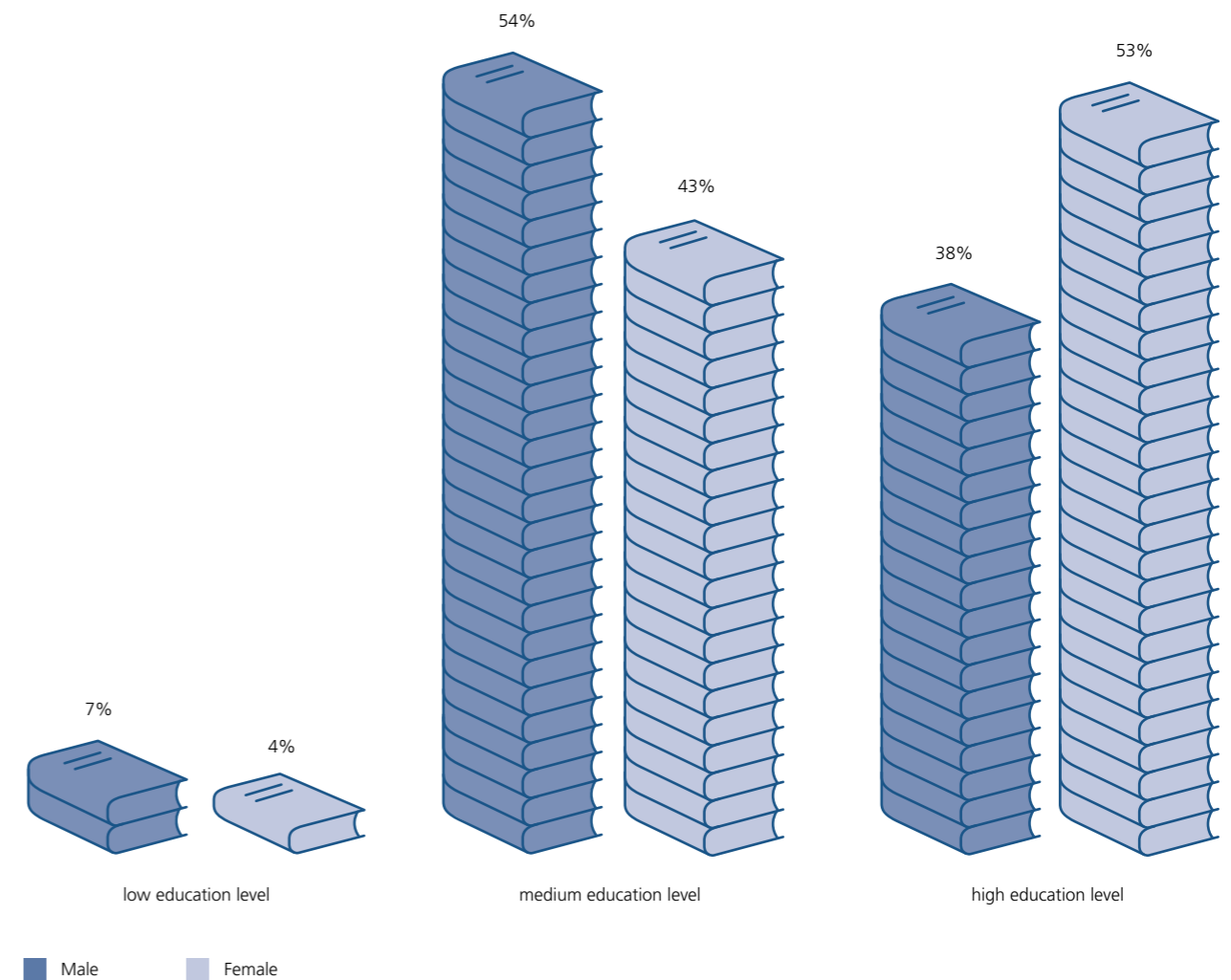
LEVEL OF EDUCATION

For young people, school education and the certificates that go with it represent, more than almost any other area, a central starting point for shaping biographical trajectories. It is both a resource and an entry card not only for the transition to working life but also for social, societal and cultural integration and participation (cf. e.g. Harring et al. 2022). This is true for the young generation all over Europe. In the countries of Central Eastern Europe, too, a trend towards higher school education among young people can be observed over the past two decades (cf. OECD 2022; OECD/UNESCO 2021; UNESCO 2010).

In the representative study presented here, high educational ambitions are also evident among the young people surveyed: across the entire population, one in four young persons (25.7%) has a high level of education¹⁶, more than one in two (54.1%) has a medium level of education, and one in five (20.3%) has little or no education.

This trend becomes even more visible if one controls the age of the young people and takes into account that a university degree can generally only be obtained at the end of the young phase during the transition to adulthood.

FIG. 2: EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF 25–29 YEAR OLDS BY GENDER
Young people aged 25 to 29, n=2,297; figures in %



Accordingly, almost every second person aged 25 to 29 (45.5%) already has a very high level of education. Only a very small proportion of 5.5% have not completed schooling. Accordingly, one can assume a highly qualified generation of young people in the Visegrád countries for whom education is an important asset – classically in Bourdieu’s sense (1982) a capital, an investment in one’s own future, with which at best the hope of social advancement processes is linked. This would be an optimistic reading. Realistically, this is ‘merely’ a reaction to the demands of the labour market and, pessimistically, a massive competition and displacement process that requires the next generation to have higher qualifications in order to at least maintain the standard of living of their own family of origin.

At the same time – and this represents a further trend – young women have now clearly surpassed their male peers in terms of the level of education they have achieved. 53.0% of female adolescents aged 25–29 have completed higher education and hold a university degree. Among young men in this age group, this is a significantly lower proportion at 38.4%. The majority of them can be found in the medium education sector. The enormous willingness of girls and young women to achieve can also be seen in the time they invest in their education: on average, they spend 2.76 hours a day on studying after school. For 42.7% of all young females surveyed in Central Eastern Europe, studying outside of school is even a part of an everyday routine with more than three hours per day. In comparison, this applies to only every third boy or young man (32.3%). The vast majority of them (67.6%) spend less than two hours after school doing homework and catching up on or preparing for schoolwork.

However, these educational advancement processes of young women do not necessarily manifest themselves in their professional status. Rather, gender-specific breaks can be seen above all in the transition from school or university education to the labour market. Young men continue to have a clear competitive advantage when entering the workforce (see chapter 6 for more details).

SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND EDUCATIONAL FAILURE/SUCCESS

Not all young people benefit to the same extent from the educational expansion observed in Central Eastern Europe. Rather, access to education and educational qualifications is unequally distributed and determined above all by the social position of the family of origin. Educational decisions are thus made less on the basis of rational criteria but are rather the result of a cross-generational socialisation process that is accompanied by primary and secondary effects of origin (Boudon 1974). Whether a higher school-leaving qualification is the goal and ultimately achieved depends essentially on a) the financial means of the parents and b) the educational level of both parents. The mother’s educational attainment is particularly striking.

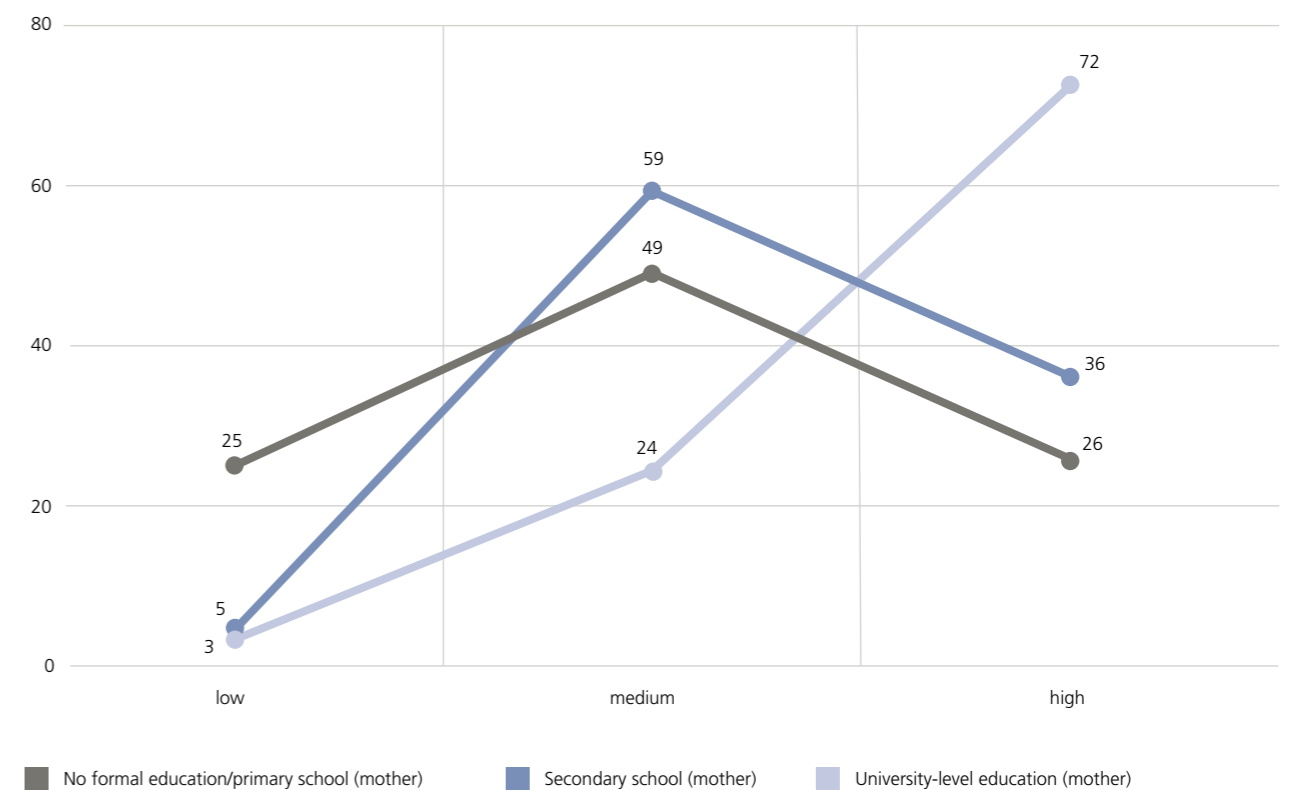
In order to be able to realistically capture the correlation due to origin, only young people in the 25–29 age group have been included in the calculation, as only they can go through the entire final career and have a final degree. The results paint a clear picture that confirms the previous findings of broad-based international school performance surveys, such as PISA or IGLU, for the Visegrád countries: 72.4% of all 25 to 29 year old young people whose mother had acquired a university degree were also able to achieve this high level of education themselves. Only 3.3%, who come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds did not acquire a school-leaving qualification. In contrast, only one quarter of all young people (25.9%) whose mother does not hold a school leaving certificate make the transition to higher education. For another quarter (25.0%), a ‘heredity’ of the educational level can be stated. According to this, the risk of not graduating from school is particularly high for young people in educationally disadvantaged families. However, just under half of these young people (49.1%) still obtain a secondary or vocational qualification.

Educational advancement processes between the parent-child generation can thus be seen on the curves of Figure 3 however, they are rather moderate and primarily affect the middle level of education. In particular, access to tertiary education is significantly more often denied to young

people from educationally disadvantaged families and families with an intermediate level of education. In other words: The chances of a child whose parents have gone through university education and obtained a university degree to reach even the highest level of education are three times greater than those of a child who grew up in a home where parents did not complete schooling.

The result of these multiple educational self-recruitment effects can be seen in all four countries studied. However, the manifestations vary.

FIG. 3: EDUCATION-RELATED EFFECTS OF ORIGIN – EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE AS A FUNCTION OF THE MOTHER’S EDUCATION LEVEL
Young people aged 25 to 29, n=2,206; figures in %



A comparison between the four countries is shown in Figure 4 is made. This shows the education-related effects of origin as measured by the correlation between the mother's highest education level attained and the educational success of the 25 to 29 year olds included in the study at the national level. The Slovak education system in particular seems to be selective with regard to the educational background of the pupils. In 8 out of 10 cases, young people from educationally oriented families, where at least the mother (and in most cases also the father) has acquired an academic degree, go through university themselves and achieve a university degree. The likelihood of other educational careers being pursued by this group of young people is thus extremely rare in Slovakia. In comparison, these origin-related automatisms do not seem to take effect to the same extent in Hungary. However, this is only to be seen in relation, as educational

success in Hungary also seems to depend significantly on social background. These effects can also be seen in educational upward mobility (cf. Fig. 5)

If we look explicitly at those young people who grow up in educationally disadvantaged families, upward mobility between generations and a comparatively greater permeability in the education system – if one can speak of it at all – can only be observed in the Czech Republic and Hungary. In Poland, on the other hand, there seems to be a much greater selectivity based on origin, where the educational success, or in this case the educational failure, of the parents shapes the educational careers and ultimately the life courses of the next generation of young people. Thus, it seems to be particularly difficult for these young people to break out of existing structures and defy social inequality.

FIG. 4: EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT IN THE FOUR COUNTRIES USING THE EXAMPLE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A MOTHER'S LOW LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS OF 25 TO 29 YEAR-OLDS

Young people aged 25 to 29, n=2,206; figures in %

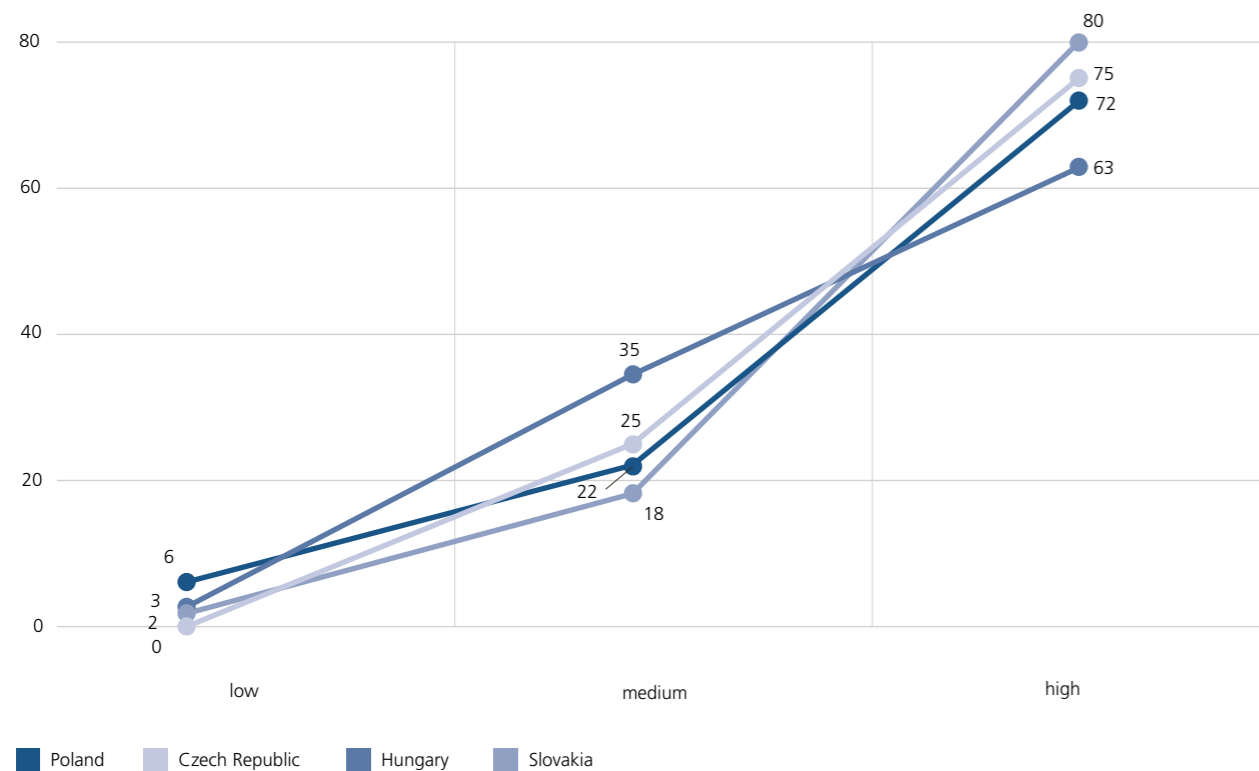
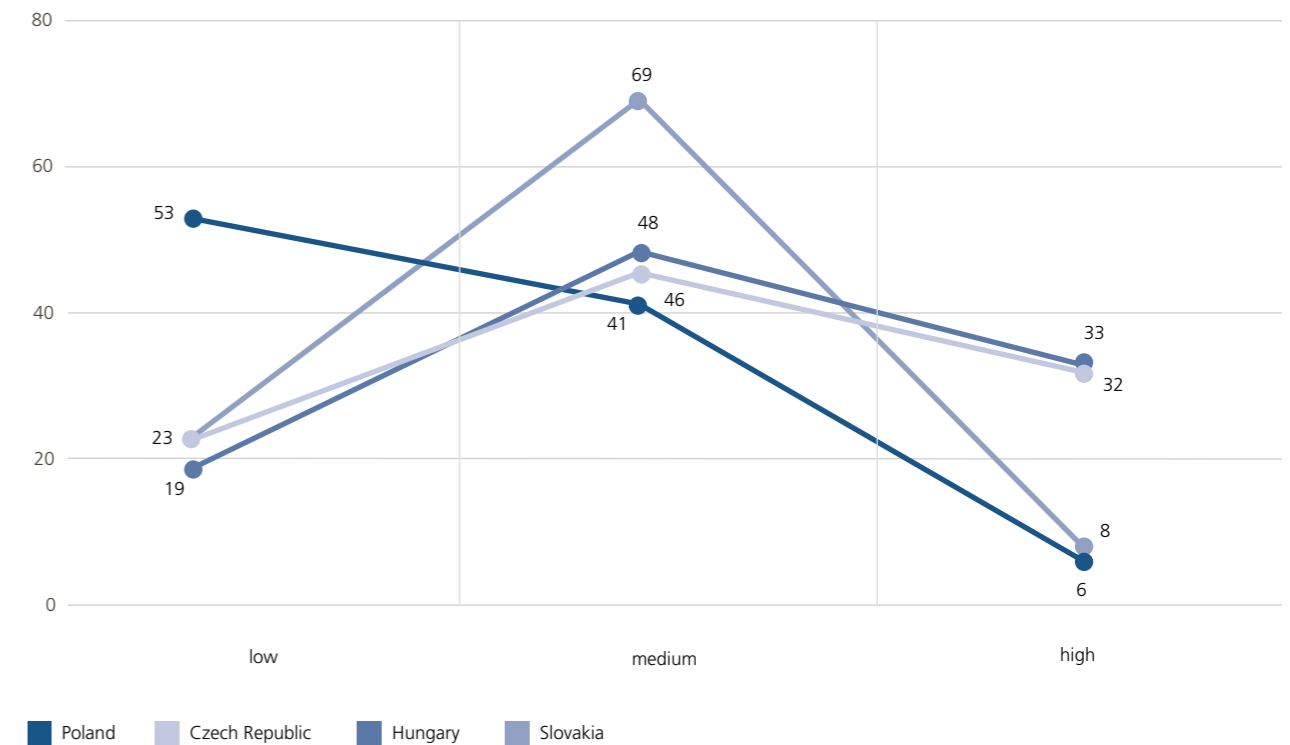


FIG. 5: EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT IN THE FOUR COUNTRIES USING THE EXAMPLE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A MOTHER'S LOW LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS OF 25 TO 29 YEAR-OLDS

Young people aged 25 to 29, n=2,206; figures in %



(DIS-) SATISFACTION WITH THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Against the backdrop of the multiple selection processes described above, it is hardly surprising that young people in Central Eastern Europe view the education systems in their respective countries with a certain scepticism. In Hungary in particular, every second person (47.5%) is dissatisfied with the quality of education (Figure 6). Another third (33.8%) take an ambivalent stance on this. Less than one in five Hungarians (18.7%) is completely or at least mostly satisfied with the education they receive in their own country. In Poland and Slovakia, the situation is only slightly different. Dissatisfaction with the quality of education also prevails in these two countries.

In contrast, the picture is different among young people in the Czech Republic. The majority of them have a positive attitude towards the educational institutions in their country. 39.7% are mostly or even completely satisfied

with the education system, 'only' one quarter (27.3%) of the young people are dissatisfied.

However, the dissatisfaction observed in the majority among the young people in Central Eastern European interviewed is additionally underlined by a low level of trust in the educational institutions and their actors.

Almost every second young person in Central Eastern Europe (47.2%) assumes that the education system in their own country is riddled with corruption (Figure 7). Especially in Slovakia, this opinion is widespread and corresponds with the findings on social educational disadvantage at the national level. Here, two out of three of the young people (64.4%) express the suspicion that final exams and grades are regularly bought. How realistic or unrealistic, how close or far from the truth this may be, is a moot point; the decisive factor is rather the subjective perception that fuels a collective mistrust within a society and thus creates a need for action.

FIG. 6: SATISFACTION WITH THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN A COUNTRY COMPARISON
 Young people aged 15 to 29, n=5,850; figures in %

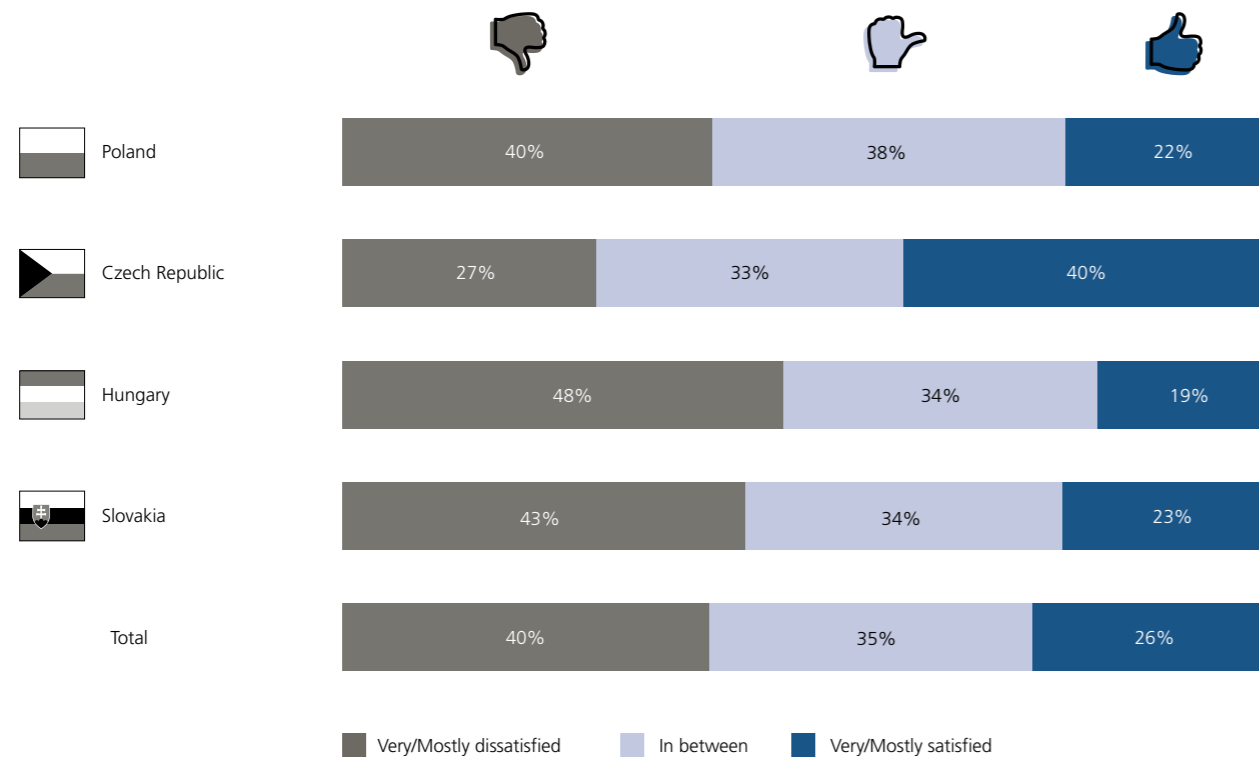
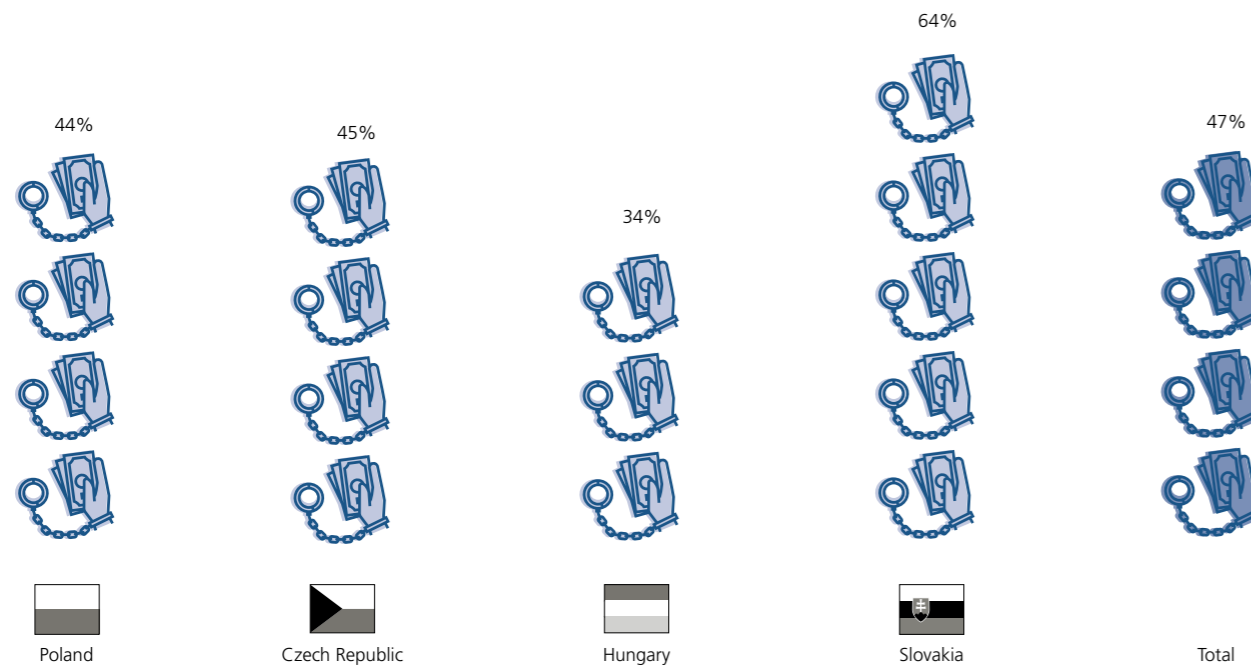


FIG. 7: CORRUPTION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN A COUNTRY COMPARISON
 Young people aged 15–29, n=5,261; very/mostly statements; figures in %



6

WORK AND MIGRATION

GENERAL INSIGHTS INTO BUSINESS AND WORK

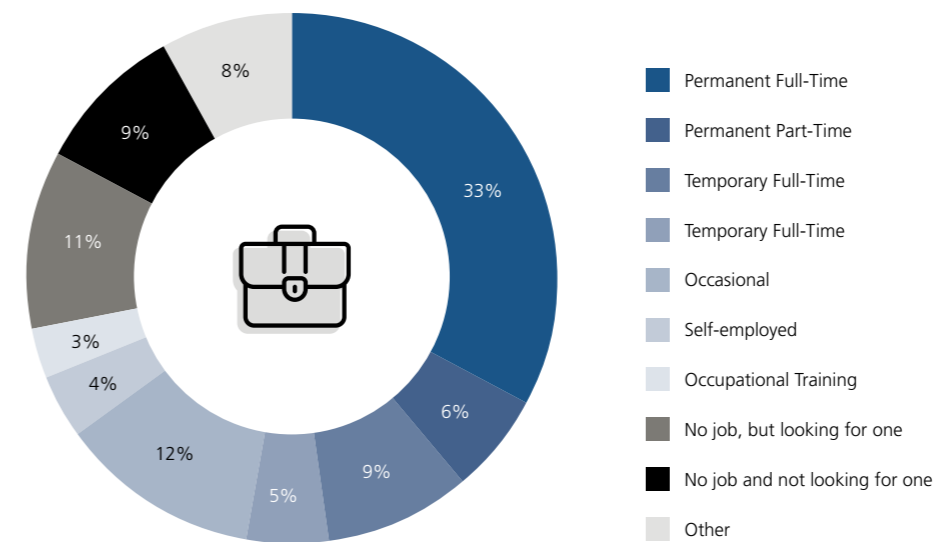
In principle, despite the effects of Covid 19, an increase in the general level of prosperity can be assumed in the four Visegrád states. In an EU comparison, all four growth rates of the respective GDP are above the EU average of 1.6% (cf. Busch 2021)¹⁷. Nevertheless, bankruptcies, rising inflation, inflation in transport costs and uncertainties in supply chains as well as in energy supplies, especially due to the Covid 19 pandemic and now the war in Ukraine, have a strong negative impact on people's economic situation (cf. Decenter 2022 and Plöciennik 2020). This situation is exemplified by the descriptions of Plöciennik (2020) who refers in particular to the precarious situation of self-employed and short-term workers. Generally, the proportion of adolescents and young adults is higher in such employment relationships. Expanding international trade in both exports and imports increases these uncertainties. When comparing transformation indicators, such as monetary and fiscal stability, socio-economic development level or sustainability, within the Central and Eastern European states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia show an exposed

position. Hungary, on the other hand, ranks last in all categories. Poland is in the middle of this indicator comparison (cf. Busch 2021, p. 53). Other reforms and decrees with a far-reaching impact on society and the economy are particularly evident in Hungary and Poland. The Polish Law and Justice programme 'Prawo i Sprawiedliwość' - PiS', for example, focuses on the expansion of state-centralised power through the transformation of state and economy (cf. Richter 2021). General corruption and authoritarianism are spreading in Orbán's power structure (cf. Dalos 2020, p. 230ff.). Young people in particular, who have yet to integrate into the world of work, are a highly sensitive group to such economic changes.

PRECARISATION OF SPECIFIC GROUPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE WORLD OF WORK

A look at the employment relationships of young people in the countries studied reveals a differentiated picture (cf. fig. 8)¹⁸.

FIG. 8: CURRENT EMPLOYMENT
Young people aged 19 to 29, n=4,742; figures in %



In the following analysis, the participants were assigned to one of a total of three groupings: (I) young people in permanent employment, (II) young people in temporary employment and self-employment, and (III) young people in unemployment¹⁹. The comparison shows significant differences especially with regard to education and gender:

I. THE EXPOSED POSITION OF WELL-EDUCATED MALE YOUTH IN PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT

In general, this first group includes 39% of all young people who are in permanent full-time or part-time employment. In a country comparison, young Hungarians are most often in such stable employment relationships with 45.8% – young people in the Czech Republic only one-third of the time (33.0%). Young men are much more likely to be among the permanent employees across all countries and the level of education is also significantly higher compared to the other two groups of temporary employees/self-employed and the unemployed respectively. For example, 40% say they have a BA degree or higher, while in the group of unemployed people not even one in five (18.9%) has a high level of education. The presence of well-educated workers in permanent jobs is reinforced by the fact that education generally improves opportunities in the labour market. This is also confirmed by the young people themselves when asked which factors are key when looking for a job. Expertise (76.8%) and education level (69.1%) are the two most important factors for young people when looking for a job. This is followed by personal contacts in private lives (62.7%) and with people in positions of power (51.0%)²⁰. Furthermore, a job's fit increases with the level of education. For example, two-thirds (67.8%) of 19-29 year old respondents with a high level of education say that they work in their actual occupational field or a very closely related field, whereas only 43.7% of age-matched young people with a low level of education made the same claim.

II. DIFFERENTIATED PICTURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

One-third (33.7%) of young people are in temporary employment, self-employment, occasional employment or vocational training. Especially many young people from the Czech Republic are in such rather insecure employment relationship. Here the rate is 43.9%, whereas the rate in Hungary is only 22.4%. In addition, the accuracy

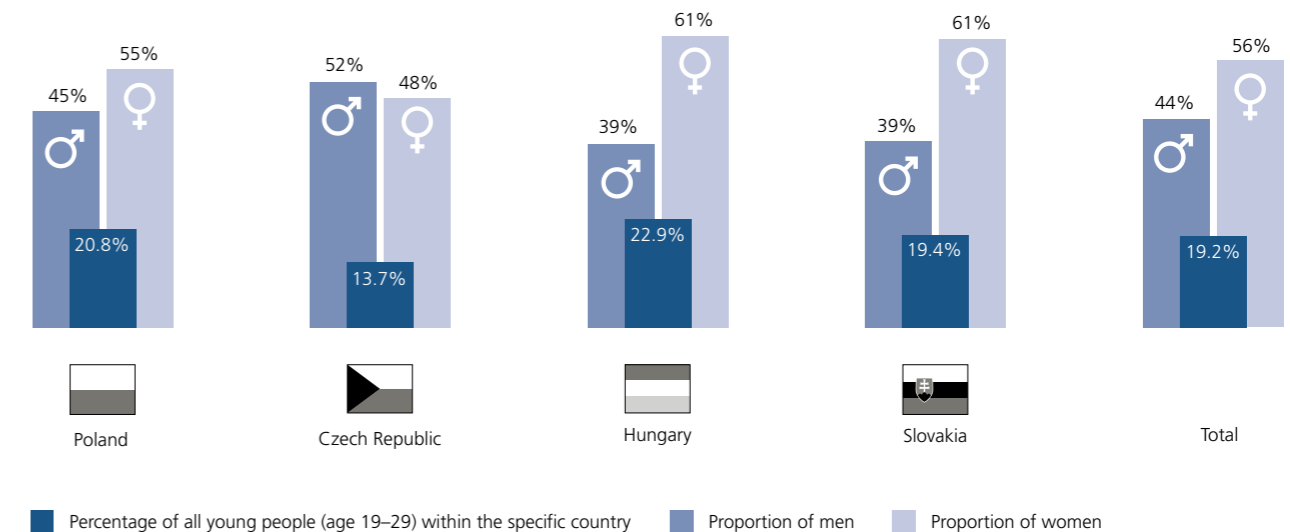
of fit between training and occupation decreases in this group. While more than half of the permanent employees (56.3%) 19 to 29 year olds state that they work in their actual occupational field or in a very closely related field, only 42.7% of the group of temporary employees/self-employed persons state that they work in a very closely related field.

III. GENDER GAP AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN UNEMPLOYMENT

Just under one-fifth (19.3%) of the young people surveyed are unemployed. In comparison, the unemployment rate for the population as a whole is only just under 4%²¹. These young people, who are also called NEET young people in the international context²², make it clear on closer examination that unemployment is a particularly high and much more frequent burden for young people. With a view to Fig. 9 also shows that unemployment is not only a problem specific to young people but that young women in particular are much more affected by it.

The Czech Republic is a clear exception in the country comparison. As the economically strongest country with EUR 20.64 GDP per inhabitant (Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg, 2022) not only is the NEET rate here clearly below average at 13.7%, but an almost equal ratio of men and women in unemployment can also be documented. In contrast, Poland (EUR 13.73 GDP) and Hungary (EUR 14.70 GDP), the economically weakest countries, have the highest unemployment rates, and the gender gap is much more evident. Thus, the economic strength corresponds with comparatively low unemployment rates among the young people surveyed and a strengthening of women in employment.

FIG. 9: NEET YOUNG PEOPLE IN A COUNTRY COMPARISON
Young people aged 19 to 29, n=916; figures in % per country²³



GENERAL MIGRATION FACTORS AND IMPACTS

The political and social positions on migration are multi-layered, of great difference, and are also reflected in their diversity in today's young generation. Nevertheless, common guidelines among the Visegrád countries can be discerned. In the case of immigration, a fundamental distinction must be made between two areas of migration for these four countries. On the one hand, the migration of refugees from non-neighbouring countries and, on the other hand, migration from the Western Balkans and other neighbouring countries to the West and East. All four countries demonstrated a clear stance against accepting refugees, especially during the refugee crisis in 2015. Here they refused to accept refugees on the basis of EU quotas. On the other hand, an accommodating migration policy can be seen in all countries with regard to the Western Balkans and other neighbouring countries to the West and East, which can be seen, for example, in the many scholarships awarded to Albanian women and men (Beribes, 2021, S. 4ff.).

With regard to the migration of young people, the picture is changing. For a long time, the Visegrád states in particular were considered by many Western European countries to be nations from which care workers and other workers from the low-wage sector came. Now the picture is changing and migrants from countries further away, such as Ukraine, are migrating to Poland or Hungary to take up work in designated sectors (cf. Arak 2020). It is questionable whether these developments are also reflected in the emigration of young people in the Visegrád states. Moreover, the year 2004 marks a turning point in out-migration in all four countries. This year marks the country's accession to the EU²⁴ and with it a gain in privileges of freedom of movement. High visa requirements and costs gave way to simplified intra-European migration and an increasing demand for EU labour. Although this development can be seen as a gain in freedoms, an increase in emigration with a simultaneous ageing of society and a fundamental shortage of skilled workers also means a major challenge for the respective countries (cf. Mierina 2020; Blažytė 2020). The aim of this section is to collect young people's views on migration. The following questions were a guide for action: How great is the desire to migrate? What are the motives for migration?

GENERAL DESIRE TO MIGRATE VERSUS PLANNED TIMING OF MIGRATION

Available data show that only a quarter (26.8%) of young people cannot imagine migrating for more than six months. The desire to migrate decreases with increasing age. This is due, for example, to the fact that these young people have more often already started their own family and are permanently employed.

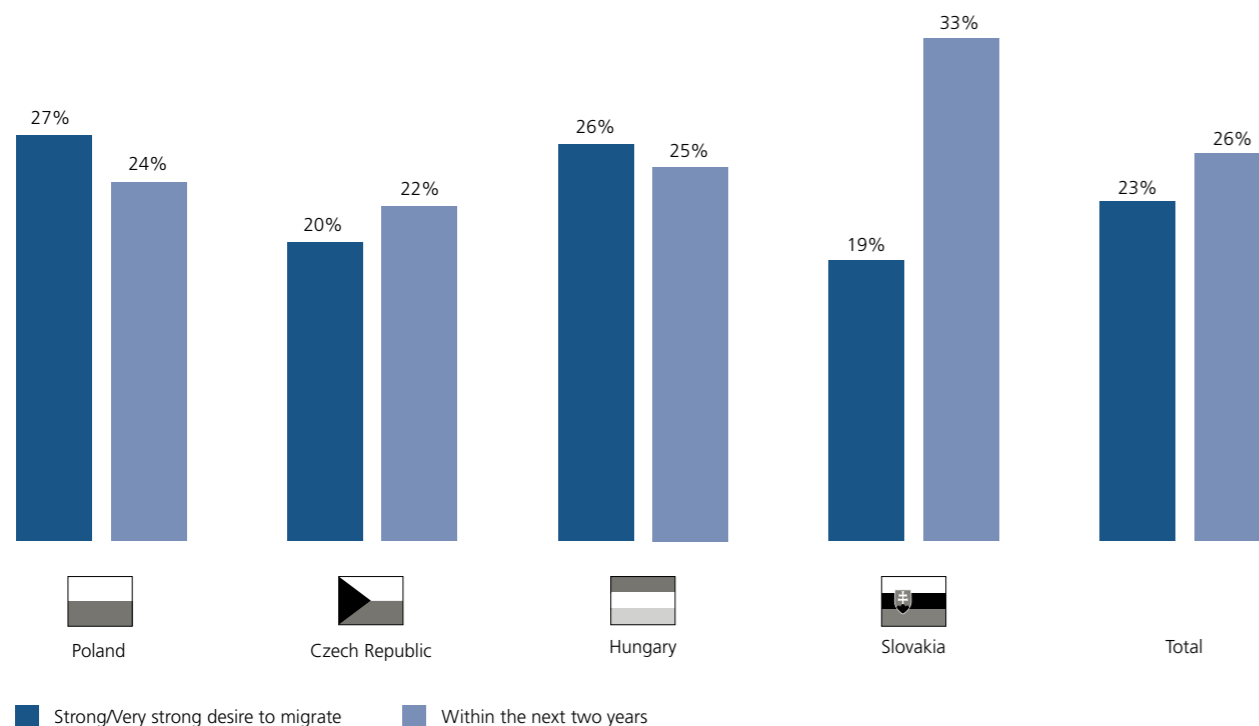
Just under one quarter (22.9%) of all young people, on the other hand, have a strong to very strong desire to migrate (cf. fig.10). As the above statements indicate, these are more often younger young people²⁵ who have not yet started their own family or taken up permanent employment.

The desire to migrate is particularly strong among young people in Poland (26.9%). The proportion of young people who have a strong desire to migrate is comparatively low in Slovakia (18.6%).

However, the figure also shows that a high number of young people who have a strong desire to migrate does not mean that they actually want to migrate in the near future. This means that although comparatively few young people in Slovakia have a strong desire to migrate, it can be assumed that these young people are much more likely to realise this desire in the near future. One-third (33.3%) of Slovak young people with a strong desire to migrate would also like to do so within the next two years. Whereas Poland has comparatively the highest proportion of young people with a strong desire to migrate, only 23.8% of these young people actually plan to migrate in the next two years.

FIG. 10: PROPORTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A STRONG DESIRE TO MIGRATE AND TIME OF MIGRATION IN A COUNTRY COMPARISON

Young people aged 15 to 29, n=1,375; figures in %



NATIONAL IDENTITY AND SATISFACTION AS INDICATORS OF MIGRATION DURATION

In order to obtain a more differentiated picture of migration, a distinction is made between the following between two types: (I) the homecomers and (II) the expatriates. What both types have in common is that they can basically imagine migrating. According to the figures presented, this is just under 70% of all young people surveyed. The distinguishing feature for this classification is the intended duration of the possible migration.

(I) THE HOMECOMERS

Homecomers are young people who can basically imagine emigrating but not for more than five years. They want to return home. Basically, slightly more than one-third (38.5%) of all young people can be described as homecomers. In Fig. 11 shows which young people only want to migrate in the short term.

In a country comparison, it is especially young people from the Czech Republic (31.5%) who are homecomers. Thus, it is once again the Czech Republic, as the economically

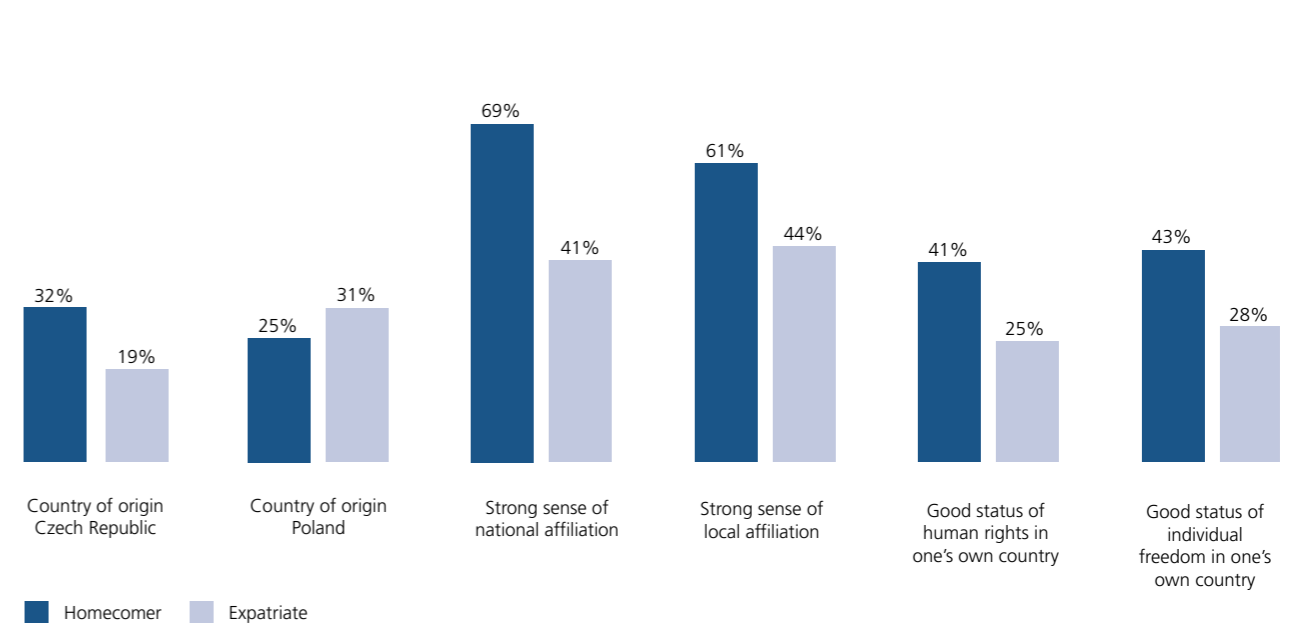
strongest country, that binds young people permanently, despite possible migration. Identification with national and local affiliation is also particularly high among homecomers. Over two-thirds (69%) of all homecomers say they have a strong sense of national affiliation. At the local level, almost two-thirds (60.9%) confirm this.

(II) THE EXPATRIATES

Overall, just under one-fifth (18.6%) of the young people surveyed with the desire to migrate can imagine migrating for more than twenty years and thus permanently. Expatriates include in particular Polish young people (31.3%) (cf. Fig. 11). Their sense of national as well as local affiliation is significantly lower than that of young people who only want to migrate for a shorter period of time. In this group of expatriates, compared to homecomers, the conviction that human rights are respected in their country of origin is particularly low. For example, only about one quarter of the young people surveyed with a permanent desire to migrate state that human rights in general (24.6%) and the protection of individual freedom (27.6%) have a good and solid standing in their home country. Comparatively, more than 40% of homecomers are of the opinion that human rights and individual freedom are highly respected in their country of origin.

FIG. 11: YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS – HOMECOMERS VS EXPATRIATES

Young people aged 15 to 29, n=4,258; figures in %



INTERDEPENDENCE OF YOUTH MIGRATION EXPERIENCE AND ECONOMIC STRENGTH

Finally, the question arises as to who is really migrating? Naturally, in a survey that was reduced to the respective national borders, those who are currently abroad could not be interviewed. However, the question was asked who already had migration experience. Exactly this type is now described in a little more detail: overall, it is just under one-sixth (14.6%) of all young people who have already been abroad for more than six months. In principle, the gender ratio is quite evenly distributed with regard to one's own migration experience. Poland is an exception. Here, it is about two-thirds of men and only one-third of women who have spent time abroad.

The poorer the young people, the higher the probability that they have already migrated. Thus, just under one-third (29.6%) of all young people in poverty say they have already been abroad. Among the young people who state that they can freely own luxury goods, the share is 13.1%. In accordance with the connection between the lives of young people and the economic strength of the respective countries already presented, it then also becomes apparent that among the young people with migration experience, there are proportionately more young people from Hungary (28.9%) and Poland (29.5%), whilst the proportionate values for the Czech Republic with 19.1% and for Slovakia with 22.8% are significantly lower.

The factors that were decisive for the length of a possible stay abroad, such as local as well as national affiliation, do not show any notable differences among the young people who have actually migrated compared to the young people who have no experience abroad. In summary, it can be said that national affiliation and respect for human rights clearly contribute to young people feeling comfortable in their home country or seeking a way out through migration, for example. Ultimately, however, the financial situation of the young people is decisive for their actual migration.

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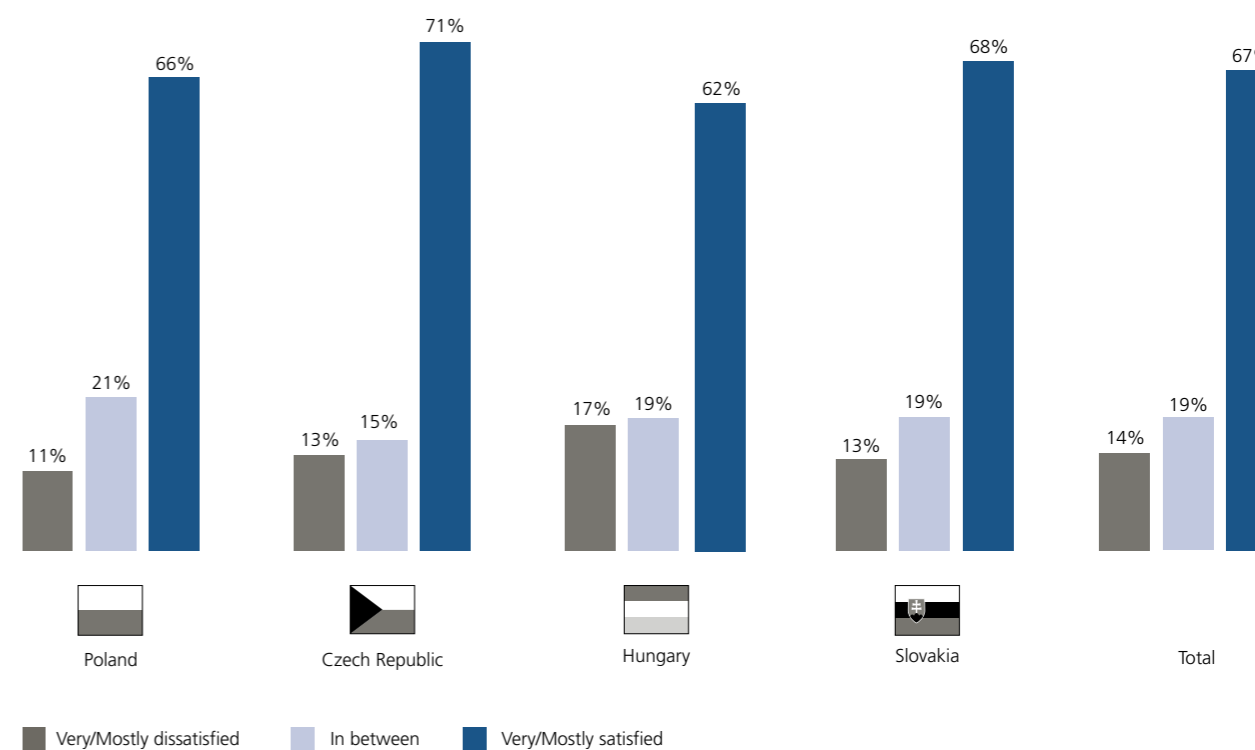
FAMILY

SATISFACTION

For most young people in the Visegrád countries, family represents security, continuity and stability. The majority of them express a high level of satisfaction with their own family. Two-thirds (66.8%) of young people say they are very or mostly satisfied with their family life. The majority also report a participatory form of decision-making at home. On the other hand, this does not apply to all young people. For some of them, family is not a safe haven. Rather, they describe their relationships with their own family members as either ambivalent or even conflictual. Thus, 18.5% of the young people state that they have

a differentiated attitude towards their own family. One in eight young people (13.6%) is even either completely or mostly dissatisfied with life in their own family. There are small but statistically significant differences between the genders. Thus, young males (15.4%) tend to be more dissatisfied with the family than their female peers (11.9%). In contrast, neither the age nor the region of residence of the young people surveyed plays a significant role in the assessment of family cohabitation. The values remain constant across all age groups as well as in the distinction between young people growing up in urban and rural structures.

FIG. 12: SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY LIFE IN A COUNTRY COMPARISON
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %



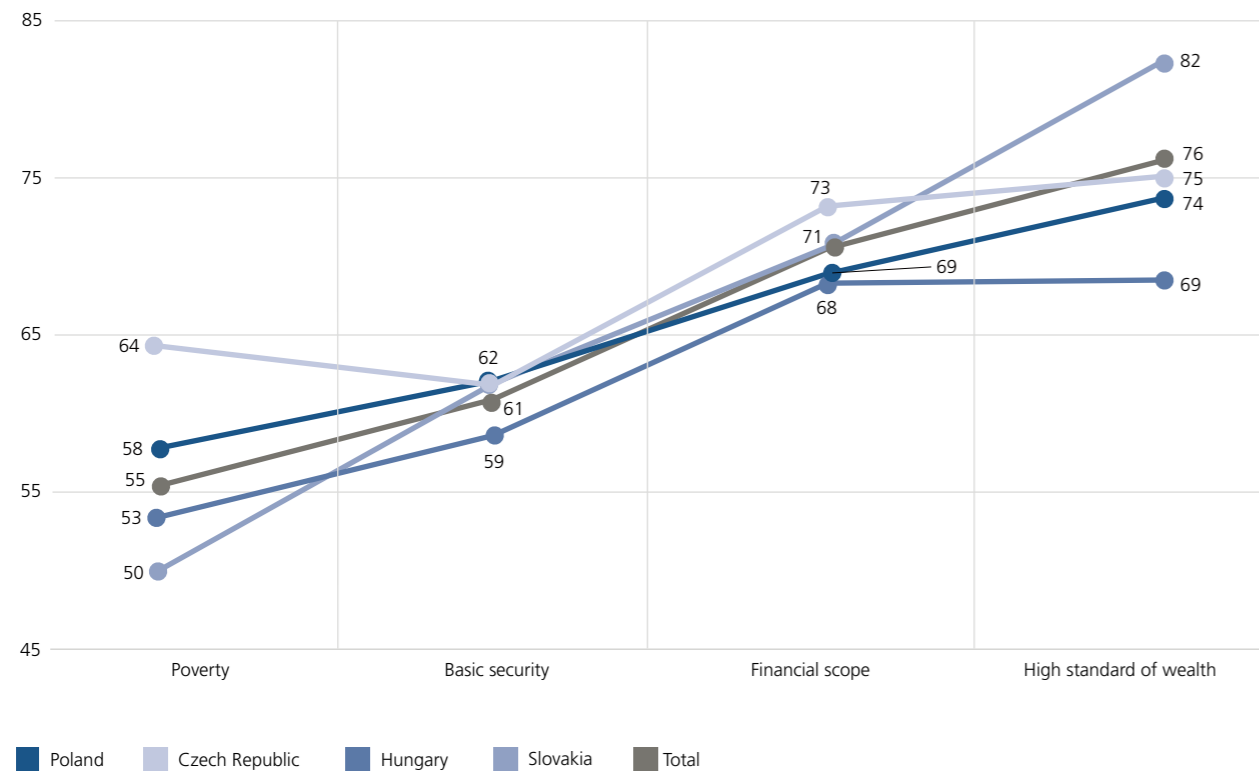
However, when comparing the young people according to their countries of origin, some obvious and statistically relevant differences become apparent. According to the survey, young people in Czech Republic are most satisfied with their own family life. This is true for seven out of ten (70.7%) of them. In Hungary, the corresponding approval ratings, also in comparison to all other countries, are significantly lower at 62.4%. In Poland, there is also a disproportionately high percentage of young people who have an ambivalent attitude towards their own family.

More than one in five Polish young people state that, in addition to harmonious and positive experiences, there are also tensions and conflictual negotiation processes within the family.

In all four countries of Central Eastern Europe, well-being depends on social status. Thus, the socio-economic situation also decisively determines how one's own family is assessed. The trend is always clear:

FIG. 13: SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY LIFE IN RELATION TO THE FINANCIAL SITUATION IN A COUNTRY COMPARISON

Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; answers: very/mostly satisfied; figures in %



Legend on financial situation (young people's self-assessments): Poverty = "We don't have enough money for basic bills (electricity, heating...) and food"/"We have enough money for basic bills and food, but not for clothes and shoes"; Basic security = "We have enough money for food, clothes and shoes but not enough for more expensive things (fridge, TV set, etc.)"; Financial scope = "We can afford to buy some more expensive things but not as expensive as car or a flat, for instance"; High standard of wealth = "We can afford to buy whatever we need for a good living standard".

The more precarious the financial situation within the family, the more stressful the relationship with parents is assessed. Especially the everyday life of young people who are affected or threatened by poverty seems to increase the likelihood of tensions and differences of opinion within the family. On the other hand, young people who have a high material standard also enjoy a higher sense of satisfaction in the family context. This connection is particularly pronounced in Slovakia. In no other country is the gap between rich and poor so pronounced when it comes to assessing family life. In the Czech Republic, the differences are also present but are much more moderate. In any case, the interrelationships in the individual countries vary in size and level. Whereas in the Czech Republic the approval rating of 64.4% is comparatively high even among young people from precarious backgrounds, in Hungary (53.2%) and Slovakia (50.0%) only every second person gets along well with their parents. Moreover: A non-negligible proportion of Hungarian young people (17.4%) disproportionately often state that they basically do not get along with their parents, often argue, or are in recurring arguments compared to their peers in all other countries. The stress can have different facets and, starting

from financial hardship, originate in cramped housing conditions and lack of support services, which increase the likelihood of tensions and conflicts.

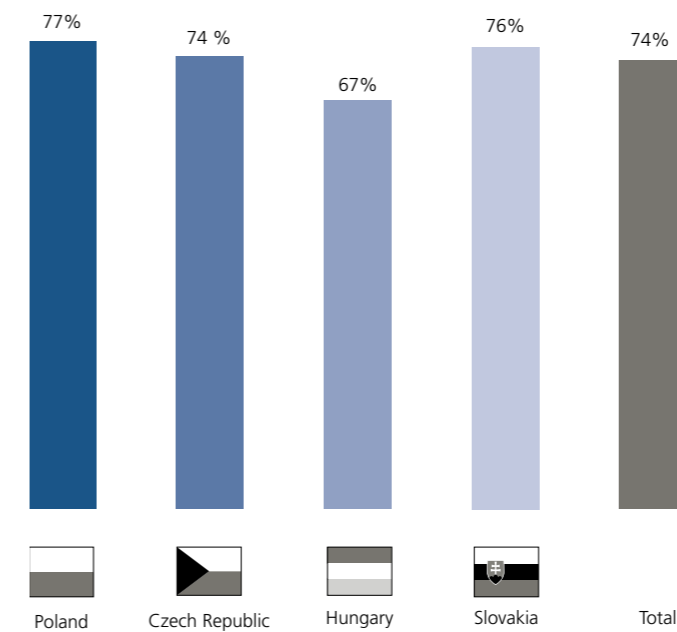
FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS

Growing up in Central Eastern Europe means above all growing up in families. Despite all the pluralisation, individualisation and globalisation processes that permeate and have a lasting impact on people's lives in these countries as well, the classic nuclear family is still the dominant variant. As long as they have not yet moved out of the parental home, a clear majority (73.5%) of young people in all the countries surveyed live with both parents. However, a closer look reveals clear regional differences.

Whereas in Poland (76.6%), in Slovakia (75.7%) and in the Czech Republic (74.1%) three out of four of the young people who still live at home state that they share a household with both their mother and father, in Hungary (66.9%) only two out of three young people live with both parents under one roof.

FIG. 14: MOTHER-FATHER-CHILD(REN) CONSTELLATION IN COUNTRY COMPARISON

Young people aged 15 to 29, n=3,209; figures in %



The corresponding figures naturally change with the age of the young people. Thus, a creeping spatial detachment process from parents takes place in all seven countries studied. Whereas in the group of under 18 year olds about 83.9% of all young people still live at home, this applies to slightly more than half (59.8%) of the 19 to 24 year olds. Among the 25–29 year old respondents, only less than one-third (30.2%) still form a joint household with their parents. At the same time, the proportion of young people who move in with their partner is growing.

Interestingly, the spatial separation of parents seems to be completed earlier in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic than in Slovakia. In the 25–29 age group in the Czech Republic, for example, only 21.9% say they live with their parents. The proportion is slightly higher among young people in Hungary (25.6%) and Poland (28.9%). In contrast, 41.6% of 25 to 29 year old Slovakian young people still live at home. Convenience thus plays a rather subordinate role for them. In fact, for almost two-thirds of them (60.4%), financial reasons are what prevent them from moving out. Only one in five young people in Slovakia (22.3%) say that they live with their parents because it is the easiest and most comfortable solution. Insufficient financial resources are also a decisive obstacle to independent living for the 25–29 age group in the other countries of Central Eastern Europe. Four out of ten of the adolescents in Poland (41.5%) and in the Czech Republic (41.0%) as well as almost half of the Hungarian adolescents (47.2%) say that they would like to live alone if their financial circumstances allowed it.

STARTING A FAMILY

The fact that family has a high priority in the lives of young people is shown not least by the fact that, despite all individualisation and career aspirations, it is always considered when planning one's own biography and with a view to one's own future.

Starting a family of one's own plays a key role for the vast majority of all young people surveyed across all countries studied. Family is thus primarily thought of as being based on a classical traditional set of values: More than half of all respondents (58.7%) see their future in the combination

of marriage and children. However, when considering the two issues separately, a differentiated picture of young people's ideas about the future in relation to starting their own family can be drawn. Accordingly, having children is considered more important than getting married. Whereas about half of all young people (55.4%) state that they want to marry at a later date, the desire to have children is an important or very important goal for at least six out of ten (59.2%). This gap is particularly evident among Czech young people. In Poland, on the other hand, the picture tends to be reversed. In the country traditionally shaped by the Christian faith and the Roman Catholic Church, marriage (55.3%) still ranks ahead of having children (50.2%). In an international comparison, this ratio represents a unique feature when it comes to the specific orientation of family formation. However, this relationship in Poland cannot be attributed exclusively to the high relevance of marriage but rather is reinforced by the fact that the aspiration to have children is articulated less frequently. More than one-fifth of Polish young people (21.8%) plan to not have children of their own also irrespective of the partner constellation. In addition, there is a high proportion of unexplored persons (19.7%) who pursue the desire to have children only to a limited extent. Taken as a whole, Poland represents the country among the Visegrád Group in which child planning is most often postponed among the up-and-coming young generation.

When asked about starting a family, a significant urban-rural divide is evident for all four countries studied. The desire for marriage and children as a central goal in shaping one's own biography is significantly less pronounced among young people in urban structures than among their peers in rural regions. Furthermore, the view of marriage and the desire to have children is determined by the subjective satisfaction with the family of origin in which the young people are currently growing up (cf. Tab 2).

FIG. 15: MARRIAGE AND THE DESIRE TO HAVE CHILDREN IN A COUNTRY COMPARISON
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; answers: very important/important; figures in %

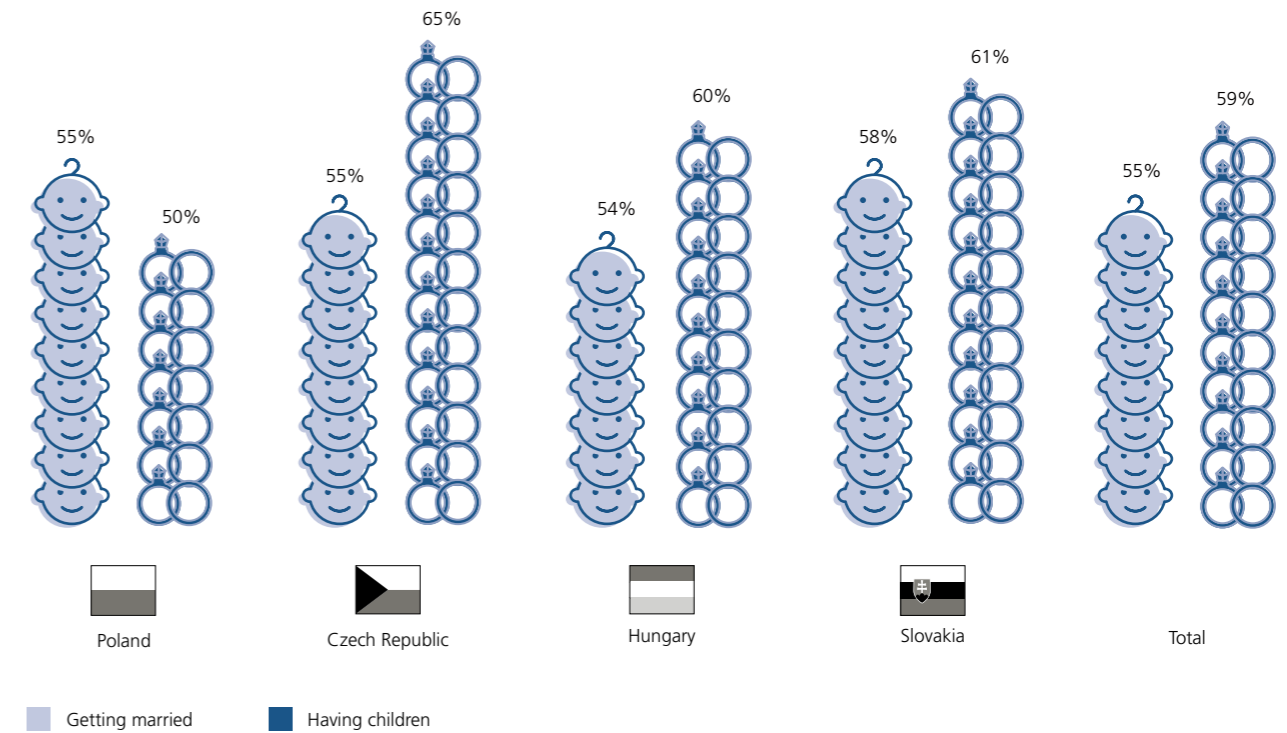


TABLE 2: FAMILY PLANNING AND SATISFACTION WITH FAMILY OF ORIGIN
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %.

Satisfaction with family of origin	getting married			having children		
	important/very important	partly	not important/not at all important	important/very important	partly	not important/not at all important
very/mostly satisfied	61.5	19.0	16.2	65.6	15.7	14.1
partly	44.4	26.4	24.5	47.7	24.3	22.8
very/mostly dissatisfied	42.5	21.7	32.9	46.4	18.2	30.9

Thus, in all four countries studied, those young people who express a high degree of satisfaction with their own family of origin are far more open-minded about getting married, for example. For 61.5% of all young people interviewed who give their family a positive rating, marriage is an important to very important goal in the further course of their biography. For those who perceive recurring conflicts in their family, this is true in one-third of all cases. A more comparable picture with an even clearer discrepancy emerges when looking at the desire to have one's own children. Two-thirds (65.6%) of the young people who are satisfied with their family of origin would also like to raise children themselves at a later date. Only 14.1% would answer this with a negative response.

Accordingly, the orientation towards traditional family values can be seen as a central characteristic of the current young generation in the Visegrád countries, which is passed on from generation to generation through family socialisation processes. In other words: if young people perceive their own family in which they grow up as a place where affection, support, security, continuity and stability occur and participatory forms of negotiation and decision-making become possible in daily communication with parents and other family members, the likelihood that they will start a family themselves at a later stage also increases.

TABLE 3: DESIRE TO HAVE CHILDREN BY AGE GROUP IN COUNTRY COMPARISON
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %

Countries					
Age groups	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia	Total
up to 25 years	27.3	24.2	22.4	21.3	23.7
26–28 years	33.6	40.0	33.4	36.8	36.1
29–30 years	27.9	27.0	29.4	29.6	28.5
31 years and older	11.2	8.9	14.9	12.2	11.7

If we look at the actual time of starting a family, the process seems to be increasingly delayed, which is a development that has already been observed in Western European countries for several decades. The reasons for this are primarily financial obstacles as well as individualisation efforts, such as personal educational ambitions and career planning. The reported average age for starting a family, measured by when the intention is to have the first child, is 28 across all countries surveyed.

A look at the corresponding distribution of age groups in the individual countries underscores the initial impression and at the same time allows for a differentiated view. For example, young people in Poland tend to be willing to start family planning earlier than is the case in all other countries. More than one-fourth (27.3%) plan to have their first child before the age of 25. This desire becomes virulent for the majority of young people in the Czech Republic between the ages of 26 and 28. 40% aim for this age when planning a family. In contrast, the birth of the first child in Hungary is expected at a relatively late date. Just under one-third (29.4%) expect to do so at the age of 29 or 30, and a further almost 15% do not intend to do so until after their own 30th birthday. In both cases, the value is disproportionately high by international standards.

Clear differences can also be seen in how many children the young people surveyed would specifically like to have. However, only two-thirds of all respondents even dared to make a forecast at all. Among those who gave corresponding information, the average number is 2.16 children. There are no notable differences between the sexes. In contrast, the difference between young people growing up in the countryside and in the city is much more significant.

This confirms the trend that was already visible in the basic desire to have children: young people in rural regions are not only generally more open to family planning as a whole compared to their peers growing up in urban structures but are also willing to raise more children.

Even in a comparison of countries, small but quite subtle differences can be discerned. Young Poles tend to plan to have more children over the course of their lives than youth in other Visegrád countries. For example, young Poles are overrepresented in the group of young people who would like to have a family with four or more children of their own. On the other hand, a contrary trend can be observed in the countries of Central Eastern Europe, especially in the Czech Republic, where young people comparatively seldom mention the desire to have more than two children.

TABLE 4: DESIRED NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN A COUNTRY COMPARISON
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %

Countries					
Number	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia	Total
1 child	12.4	12.3	16.2	14.2	13.8
2 children	63.1	69.6	59.3	62.2	63.7
3 children	18.6	14.1	21.2	18.7	18.0
4 and more children	5.9	4.0	3.3	4.9	4.5

8

GENERAL VALUES, ATTITUDES AND WISHES

SATISFACTION

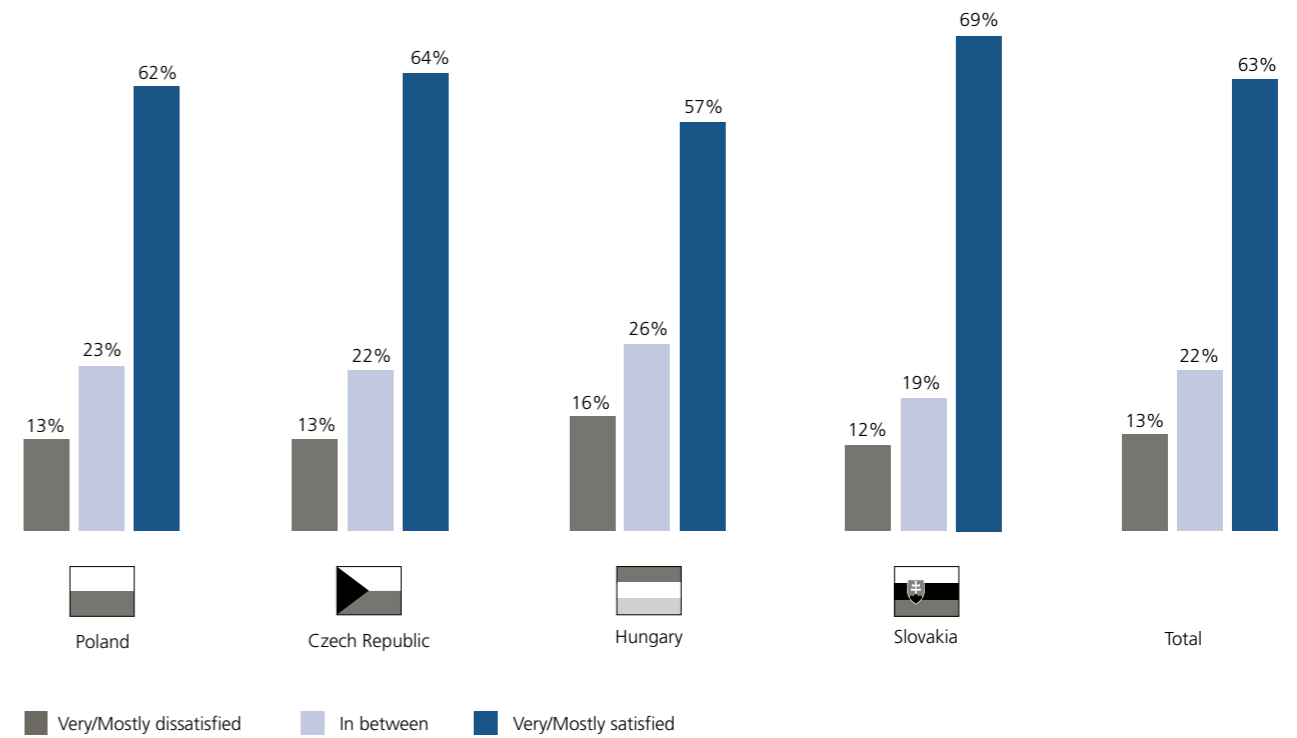
The majority of young people in Central Eastern Europe are satisfied with their own lives. Almost two-thirds of all young people surveyed (62.9%) – also irrespective of age, gender or region of residence – express this general satisfaction. At the same time, however, more than one in five state that this is not always the case and one in seven is even fundamentally dissatisfied with their current life situation.

In a country comparison, the Slovaks in particular show themselves to be especially satisfied. This is true for more than three quarters (68.9%) of them. They are also the ones who are least likely to have an ambivalent attitude or be completely dissatisfied. In contrast, the situation among the current generation of young Hungarians tends to be different. They have a much more critical view of their current life: Only just under one in two young persons in Hungary (56.9%) is satisfied with their own lives. This is

the lowest value in an international comparison. In addition, the proportion of young people who are either very or mostly dissatisfied is higher among Hungarian 15–29 year olds than in the other Visegrád countries, at 15.9%.

This raises the question of what factors general life satisfaction depends on. In order to be able to answer this question, a distinction was made between the social, cultural and economic chapters in the analyses following Bourdieu's theoretical construct (cf. Bourdieu 1974, 1982, 1983, 1992), and stepwise regression models were used to test how the three types of capital affect the general life satisfaction of young people under the control of socio-demographic characteristics. The social chapter is measured by satisfaction (a) with one's own family and (b) with one's circle of friends. Cultural capital is determined by satisfaction with one's own education, whilst economic capital is derived from the current financial situation of the family of origin.

FIG. 16: GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH ONE'S OWN LIFE
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %



The analyses reveal two key findings: on the one hand, it becomes apparent that all three of the capital resources available to the young people are already individually decisive in determining their life satisfaction. In other words: the subjective sense of well-being depends on how comfortable one feels within one's own family and circle of friends, how satisfied one is with one's own education and what financial resources one has. Moreover, the types of capital have a reciprocal relationship to each other and are mutually dependent. On the other hand, the three types of capital also have different effect sizes. The influence of social and cultural capital on general life satisfaction is higher than that of economic capital. This means that life satisfaction is determined less by the socio-economic situation in which young people grow up and much more by how stable and reliable as well as harmonious social relationships are within the family and the peer group. A positive assessment of one's own educational situation as a whole also has a greater effect on life satisfaction than whether one lives in affluent, financially secure or poverty-stricken circumstances.

FUTURE FORECASTS, AMBITIONS AND VALUES

The current generation of young people in Central Eastern Europe is generally positive about the future at least in terms of individual opportunities. Three quarters (74.6%) believe that the personal situation in 10 years will generally look better than the current one. Only 4.8% expect the situation to worsen compared to today and one in ten expect it to remain unchanged.

In all the countries surveyed, the forecasts among young females are consistently more positive than those of their male peers. Young females in Hungary are particularly confident. More than eight out of ten of them (83.1%) are hopeful about their own future. In Poland, on the other hand, young people are much more pessimistic. 'Only' three quarters of the female youth (65.3%) come to a comparable assessment – the lowest value among all youth in the Visegrád countries. This contrast is particularly interesting against the background of the political developments, in some cases even upheavals, that have taken place in the two countries in recent years, from which the respective young people have quite obviously drawn different conclusions with regard to their personal future.

FIG. 17: PERSONAL FUTURE IN 10 YEARS ACCORDING TO GENDER
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %

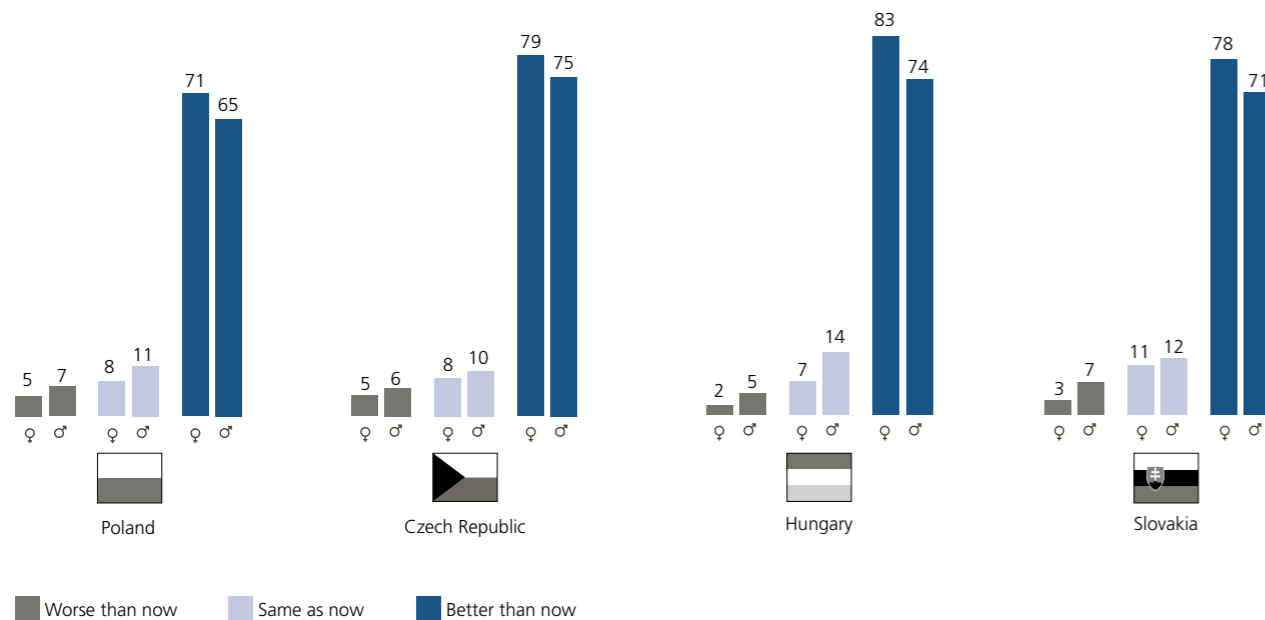
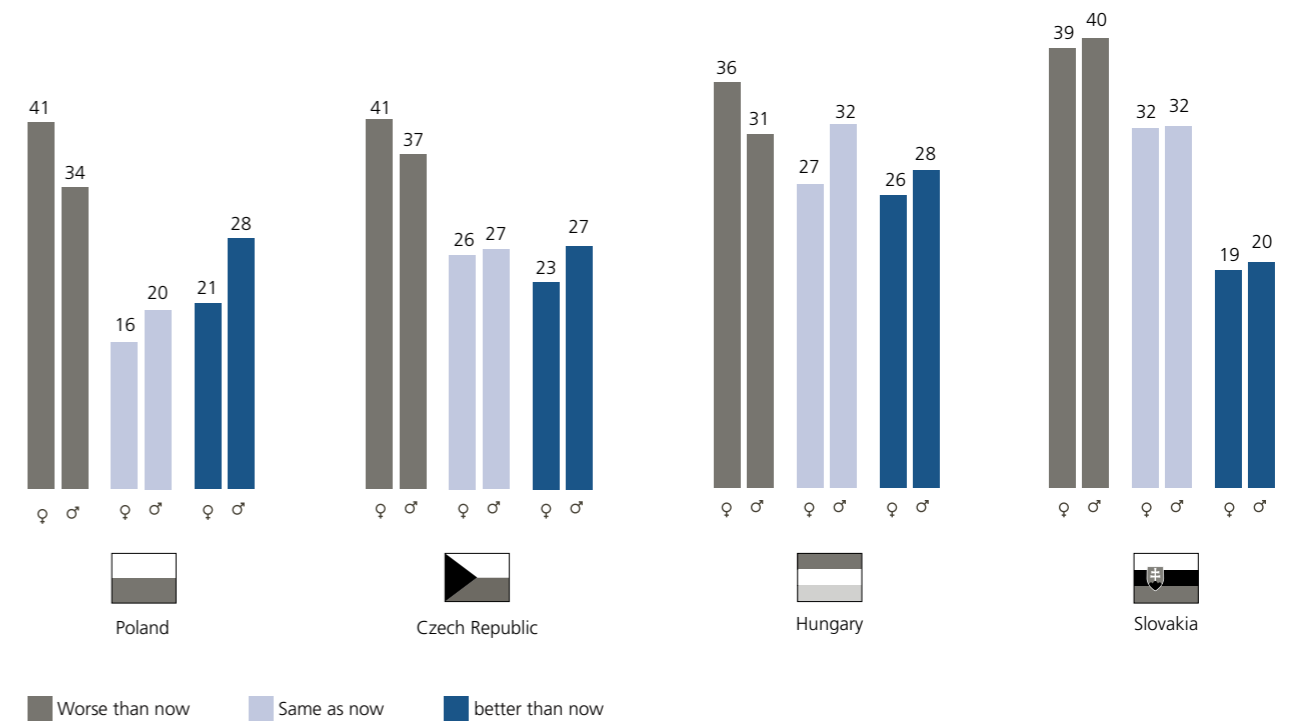


FIG. 18: FUTURE OF SOCIETY AT HOME BY GENDER
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %



A completely different picture emerges if one moves away from the individual level to the macro level and looks at the development of society as a whole from the perspective of young people. Whilst an overwhelming majority of Central Eastern European youth were optimistic about their own personal future, the view of the social future of their own country has recently become more pessimistic. A relative majority of 37.4% of 15 to 29 year olds in all four countries believe that society is more likely to drift apart and develop negatively. One in four (26.5%) sees no development at all and only another quarter (24.0%) assume that society in their own country will develop for the better in the future. Statistically relevant differences between the individual countries cannot be identified at this point. Rather, young people across all national borders come to similar assessments and forecasts with regard to the future overall structure of society. However, it is striking that one in every five young person in Poland (20.1%), and thus twice as many as in the other three countries, does not trust themselves to make a predic-

tion from today's perspective about the direction in which society will move in their country. This can be taken as a sign that the perceived changes that have taken place politically in Poland in the recent past, for example with regard to the abortion law or the concentration of political power and stronger control of the judiciary and the media, bring with them a dynamic that makes it impossible for at least some of the young Polish people to formulate predictions about whether and how society will change.

Furthermore, it can be seen that the 15 to 29 year old Polish women are clearly more critical of society and its potential development than their male peers: 40.7% believe that society will experience a negative trend in the coming years in relation to today. Among male Poles, only one in three (33.5%) makes this assumption. Young females in the Czech Republic and Hungary also come to comparable assessments. In Slovakia, on the other hand, there are no significant differences between the genders on this question.

TABLE 5: SIGNIFICANT VALUES AND GOALS IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE
Young people aged 15–29, n=6,000; “very/mostly important”– responses; figures in %

Opinions & Attitudes	Countries				Total
	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia	
Self-development					
Taking responsibility	87.4***	76.7***	82.3	78.8*	81.3
Being independent	85.9***	79.1	73.0***	77.6	78.9
Having a successful career	84.5***	71.4***	78.2	70.1***	76.1
Traditional markers of transition into adulthood					
Graduating from university	57.6***	51.9*	47.2***	56.0*	53.2
Getting/being married	55.3	54.9	53.5	57.8*	55.4
Having children	50.2***	65.1***	60.4	61.1	59.2
Well-being					
Looking good	74.6***	59.4	69.0***	44.4***	61.9
Doing sports	66.5***	62.6	62.1	57.1***	62.1
Healthy eating	68.8	62.7***	70.4*	64.5*	66.6
Materialistic approach					
Wearing branded clothes	20.4	14.9	22.1***	10.6***	17.0
Getting/being rich	62.8***	46.5***	56.3***	35.0***	50.1
Socio-political activity					
Participating in civic actions/ initiatives	39.7***	24.5***	30.7**	21.2***	29.0
Being active in politics	22.8***	26.1***	18.1	10.4***	19.4

Significance level: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

With regard to the values and concrete goals that the young people want to achieve in life from today’s perspective, a clear attitude can be read from the data:

The current young generation in Central Eastern Europe shows clear tendencies towards individualisation. Self-realisation and one’s own career are at the centre of life planning. This is flanked by the demand for a good life and a sense of personal well-being. Marriage and family planning are of secondary importance. This is only important for every second young person in the Visegrád countries. Collective and socio-political activities even take a back seat for the majority. These trends can be observed in all four countries involved in the study, even if some differences in the attitudes of young people in the individual countries are certainly discernible in detail. For example, the tendency towards individual self-development and the achievement of professional and private stability is certainly anchored in the entire generation growing up in Central Eastern Europe but seems to be particularly pronounced among young Poles. This mainly concerns the desire for independence (85.9%), taking on responsibility (87.4%), and building a successful professional career (84.5%). In these areas, young Poles once again clearly stand out from their peers in the other countries. Being rich or becoming rich is also very important or important for two-thirds of all young people in Poland (62.8%). In comparison: in Slovakia, it is a goal that is formulated by just one-third of all young people (35.0%). This is also comparatively less common among young Czechs. 46.5% attribute great importance to wealth in life. It is possible, however, that the starting points for the young people are very different, so that these different attitudes merely reflect the possibilities and opportunity structures and can be traced back to rational assessments of options on the part of the young people.

In addition to the clearly emerging individualised and self-referential attitude, interestingly, collective patterns of participation and socio-political involvement are also discernible here, especially in Poland. So both seem to go hand in hand. For 39.7% it is important to very important to be involved in civic actions or political initiatives. This is the highest value among all Visegrád countries. For one quarter of all young people in Poland (22.8%), political involvement is also an important basic attitude in life. This is only seen more frequently by young Czechs as more

than one quarter (26.1%) hold this opinion in this aspect. In Slovakia, on the other hand, political involvement is highly relevant for only one in ten (10.4%).

(IN-)TOLERANCE TOWARDS SOCIAL, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS

In order to work out the attitude patterns of Central Eastern European young people with regard to certain social, ethnic and religious population groups that form minorities in the four countries from a socio-demographic point of view, the young people in the present study were asked how their attitude towards neighbours would turn out if they had a certain characteristic. We asked the young people to focus on five selected population groups. These are: (a) the group of LGBTQIA+ persons, people with a (b) Jewish or (c) Islamic religious affiliation, (d) persons who exhibit drug addiction, and (e) the Roma ethnic group.

The greatest intolerance is articulated towards people addicted to drugs: 8 out of 10 of the 15 to 29 year-old respondents take a thoroughly negative stance. Living together with Roma families is also viewed very critically by the majority. 39.5% cannot imagine this at all, another 35.5% expressed at least reservations.

Clear disintegration tendencies can also be observed towards religious groups. Muslims in particular experience a low level of acceptance. One-third of the Central Eastern European young people (29.4%) would reject them as neighbours. Another third (37.7%) express mixed feelings at best about this group. Especially among young people in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, negative attitudes towards people with an Islamic religious affiliation are more pronounced.

Although anti-Semitic tendencies play a rather minor role in comparison, they still represent a firmly anchored body of thought in at least part of the population. Almost one in two people in Poland (43.3%) and Slovakia (47.8%) have ambivalent feelings about their Jewish neighbours. For 12.0% of Polish, 9.9% of Slovakian, and 15.1% of Hungarian young people, the idea of living in the immediate vicinity of Jews is even completely absurd.

TABLE 6: INTOLERANCE TOWARDS SOCIAL, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS
Young people aged 15 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %

Opinion about neighbours	Countries				Total
	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia	
LGBTQIA+ person or couple					
bad/very bad	12.4	7.5***	18.4***	17.4***	13.9
in between	32.9	18.2***	28.5	40.6***	30.1
Roma family					
bad/very bad	23.1***	45.7***	45.0***	44.3***	39.5
in between	40.3***	35.7	29.9***	36.1	35.5
Drug addicts					
bad/very bad	64.5***	86.8***	81.7	85.5***	79.6
in between	21.1***	8.9***	9.3	10.1	12.4
Jewish people					
bad/very bad	12.0	7.1***	15.1***	9.9	11.0
in between	43.3***	23.9***	33.3*	47.8***	37.1
Muslims					
bad/very bad	22.7***	35.3***	29.2	30.4	29.4
in between	40.5	33.3***	34.6	42.3***	37.7

Significance level: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

Homophobic attitudes are disproportionately common among youth in Central Eastern Europe, especially in Hungary and Slovakia but significantly less common in the Czech Republic.

Group-related misanthropy (cf. e.g. Heitmeyer 2008; for Europe: Zick et al. 2011) is thus also a phenomenon that cannot be neglected among the upcoming young generation in Central Eastern Europe, which is not limited to 'political fringe groups' but can rather be observed in the middle of society. Therefore, despite all the liberali-

sation that has been observed in recent decades and the increase in the willingness of the European population to be tolerant, there is a need for socio-political efforts, constant sensitisation and concrete measures. Not least the migration crisis in 2015 or the passing of laws that, for example in Hungary, support or even legitimise homophobia in the population, make it clear that a breeding ground for intolerance and the spread and consolidation of prejudices against social, ethnic and religious minorities still exists, even in the middle of Europe, and is always threatening to reignite.

9

POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND INVOLVEMENT

There is no need to prove that the Central European countries share a common history. They have always been so-called „ferry countries“, situated on the border between East and West, between great empires (Holy Roman Empire, Habsburg Empire, Russia, Ottoman Empire). This shared past became even more tangible after 1945, when, following the agreement between the United States of America, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe became part of the Soviet sphere of interest and moved towards so-called socialist development. There is also a similarity in that the political and economic regime changes and the adoption of capitalism and democracy took place at roughly the same time, between 1989 and 1991. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined NATO together (1999) and then the European Union in 2004, including Slovakia.

It is reasonable to assume that the imprint of a common historical past and tradition can also be seen in the functioning of political socialisation mechanisms (Voinea 2014). These may be the problems of political re-socialization, the legacy of state socialism, the asymmetric relationship to politics, or the prevalence of direct, top-down socialisation processes (Szabó-Falus 2009, Mierina 2011, Voinea 2014). In 2021, more than 30 years after the regime changes of 1989/1991, in the shadow of the Covid-19 epidemic, this chapter examines to what extent empirical findings pointing to typical patterns of political socialisation are present. We investigate to what extent young people in Central Europe are similar or whether it is worthwhile to nuance and revise the conclusions drawn from the past.

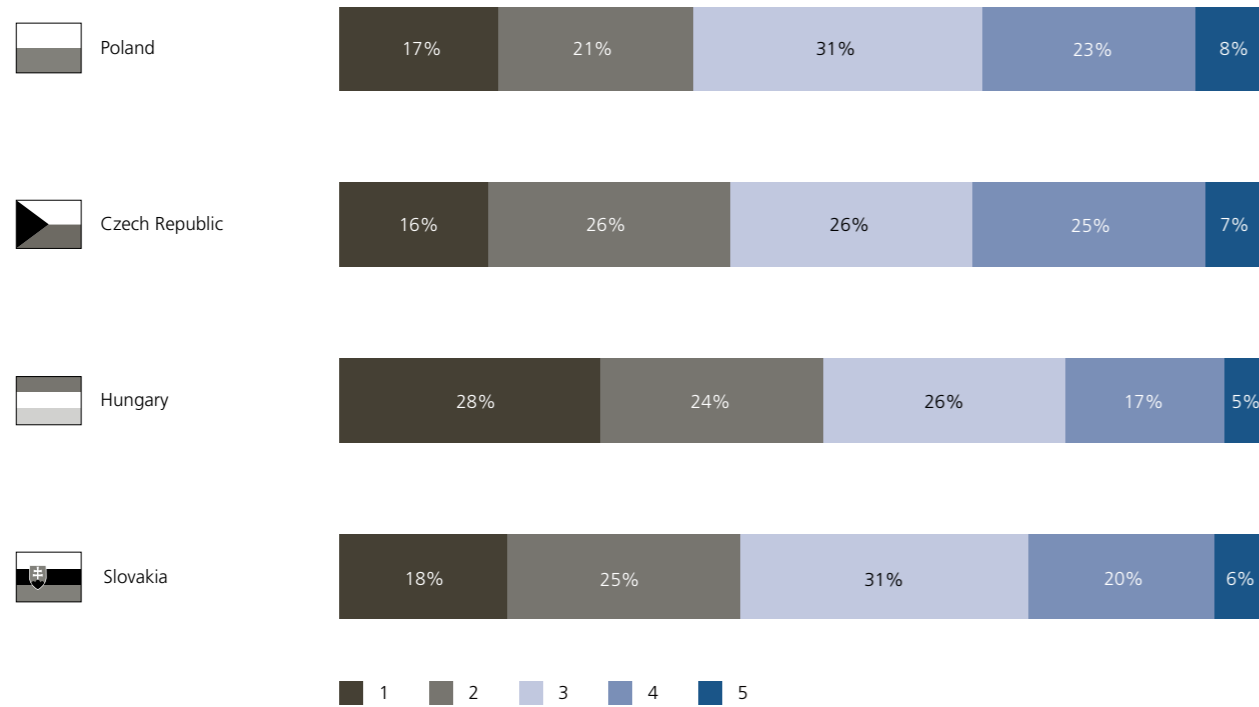
YOUNG HUNGARIANS HAVE THE LOWEST POLITICAL INTEREST AMONG THE VISEGRÁD COUNTRIES, WHILE POLES HAVE THE HIGHEST

Undoubtedly, political interest is an inseparable source of attitudes towards the political system, actors and institutions (Prior 2019). The more one is interested in politics, the deeper one's political knowledge and the more likely one's opinions are based on cognitive and affective components. Therefore, the study of political interest is a central, if not the most important, topic in political sociology.

Only 6 per cent of young people in the Visegrád countries are very interested in politics, and a further 21 per cent are somewhat interested. By contrast, the proportion of those not at all interested is 19 per cent and those not very interested is 23 per cent, i.e. a difference of magnitude between those who are interested and those who are not.

Of the four countries surveyed, the Poles are the most interested in politics, with only 36 per cent of Poles not interested (scores 1 and 2) in public life, compared to 30 per cent interested (scores 4 and 5, figure 19. Personal interest in politics. Furthermore, the least interested in politics are Hungarians aged 15-29, with exactly half of them choosing values 1 and 2, compared to only one-fifth of those interested. The averages for political interest confirm this difference: the average interest score for young Hungarians is 2.47, which is below the average scores for Slovaks (2.69), Czechs (2.81) and Poles (2.85). In a Central European comparison, the main difference between the indicators of Hungarian young people and those of the other three countries is the extremely high proportion of those who choose the category “not at all interested” (28%).

FIG. 19: **PERSONAL INTEREST IN POLITICS**
Young people aged 14 to 29, n=6,000; 1=low interest to 5= high interest; figures in %



Political interest is higher among men (2.86) than women (2.54) and among those aged 18 and over than in the even younger age group. The political interest of young people in the V4 countries differs significantly along the lines of Bourdieu's cultural capital (mother's education, own educational attainment). The higher the mother's education level and the more schooling the young person has completed, the higher their political interest will be.²⁶

ONLY ONE IN SIX 15-29-YEAR-OLDS OFTEN TALK TO THEIR PARENTS OR FRIENDS ABOUT POLITICS

The correlation seems that the more one talks about politics, the more one becomes involved in the subject. After a while, one naturally becomes more interested in politics (Kroh-Selb, 2009). This is no different among young people in Central Europe. Of those who never talk about politics at home - or among friends - 72% are not interested in it. In this case, we are talking about an under-socialized family environment (Jennings-Stoker-Bowers,

2009). In contrast, 30 per cent of young people who often talk about politics in a family environment or with friends will be somewhat interested, and 55 per cent will be very interested. The correlation is therefore almost linear and holds in all countries.

More than four-tenths of young people in the Visegrád countries rarely discuss political issues, while only 4% do so very often. Therefore, most of them live in an environment where public and political issues are not part of everyday communication.

Overall, on a five-point scale, the V4 countries have a conversation average of 2.65. It is lowest for young Hungarians (2.52 points) and highest for young people in the Czech Republic and Poland (2.71-2.72 points).

Some sociodemographic and sociocultural factors further demonstrate the close correlation between political interest and political discourse. The children of graduate mothers, highly educated youngsters, and those living in a mainly urban environment are not only more interested in politics but also have a much higher frequency of political discussions.

ON POLITICAL ISSUES, YOUNG PEOPLE IN V4 TEND TO TAKE A MORE CONFORMIST STANCE

The primary function of family political socialisation is to pass on to their children the values, norms, preferences and views of the political system they represent. The more effective the transmission of values through political socialisation, the more likely young people will adopt an ideology and norms in line with family patterns. From the family's point of view, it is ideal if the child assumes 100% of the family patterns, i.e., maximally conformist.

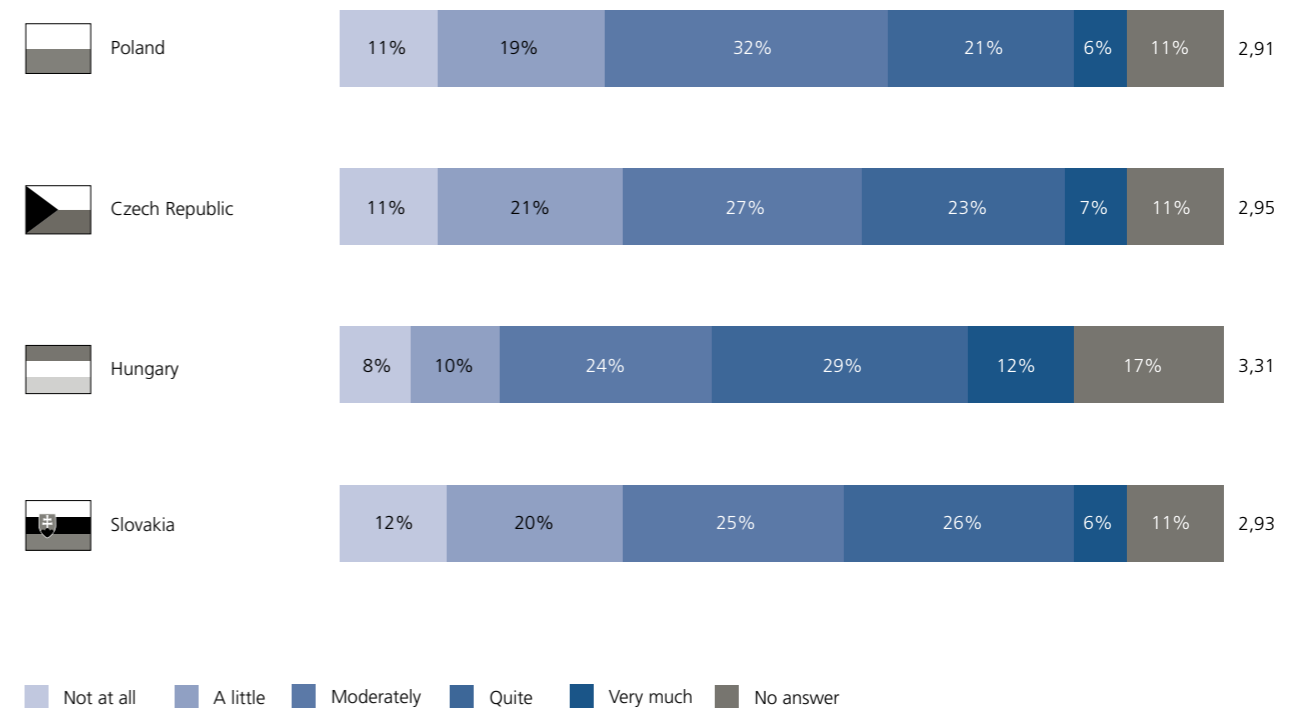
One-third of young people in Central Europe fully agree or quite agree with their parents on political issues, while 28% somewhat disagree or entirely disagree (Figure 20). So this is far from being full conformity. The adoption of family patterns varies across the V4 countries. Compared to their Czech, Polish and Slovak peers, Hungary has the lowest nonconformity rate. Perhaps the most exciting

data is how much more young Hungarians are unaware of their parents' political views and beliefs (17%) than young people in other countries (11-11%). This is linked to lower political interest and lower levels of political communication between children and parents.

Among the Visegrád countries, young Hungarians are the most likely to agree with their parents, but they are also the least aware of their parents' political views. In comparison, the political conformity of young people in the other three countries shows similar rather than divergent traits.

Women, the youngest (15-18-year-olds), those living in more urban areas, those whose financial situation is more favourable and young people with more cultural capital tend to agree with their parents on political issues. In all four countries, the mother's education and the subjective perception of their financial situation show a statistically significant correlation with conformity, but gender and age do not.

FIG. 20: **POLITICAL CONFIRMATION IN THE V4 COUNTRIES**
Young people aged 14 to 29, n=6,000; data in %, question: "To what extent are your political views and beliefs in line with your parents?"



HALF OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE VISEGRÁD STATES FEEL THAT THEY ARE NOT REPRESENTED BY THE POLITICAL ELITE

The literature on Hungarian youth (Szabó–Oross 2021, Bíró-Nagy–Szabó 2021) draws attention to the exclusive behaviour of the Hungarian political elite and the sense of exclusion of young people from politics.

Half of 15–29 year olds in the region feel that political elites do not sufficiently represent their interests. Only 1-2% think that young people’s interests are well represented in politics. The proportion of young people with a very negative opinion varies from country to country, with 8-8 per cent of Czechs and Slovaks, 17 per cent of Poles and 20 per cent of Hungarians giving a mark of 1 on the 5 point scale.

Overall, the least negative opinion is held by Czech 15-29-year-olds (2.52 points on a scale of 1 to 5), followed by Polish and Slovak young people (2.45-2.45 points). The most negative opinion is held by Hungarians (2.38 points). Hungarian young people are not only the most apolitical and the most conformist but also the least satisfied with their political representation. If a section of society feels that their interests are not represented, i.e., no one takes up their values, they will take little interest in public issues. This is a vicious circle, however, because the more apolitical they are, the less ‘interesting’ and important they become to politics, and at the same time, the more they feel this, the more they may withdraw from public affairs.

The perception of political representation is less a function of sociodemographic or sociocultural factors than political interest and ideological affiliation. Those who rate themselves as more right-wing in all four countries are more satisfied with the political representation of young people, while left-wingers tend to have a more pessimistic view. As for political interest, except for Slovakia, moderately or somewhat interested seem to be the most positive. Those who are not interested in politics are the most negative about representation in all four countries. Among the young people in the four countries with varying

political interests, Hungarian young people with no political interest have the most negative attitudes towards the quality of representation (1.98 points).

YOUNG HUNGARIANS HAVE THE LOWEST PROPENSITY TO VOTE IN THE REGION, WHILE SLOVAKS HAVE THE HIGHEST

Our research has also looked at different forms of political activity that require individual involvement and resources. Electoral activity (participation in the previous and next elections), political office-taking, and various forms of democratic citizenship participation, from signing petitions to participating in the work of political parties, NGOs, and demonstrations.

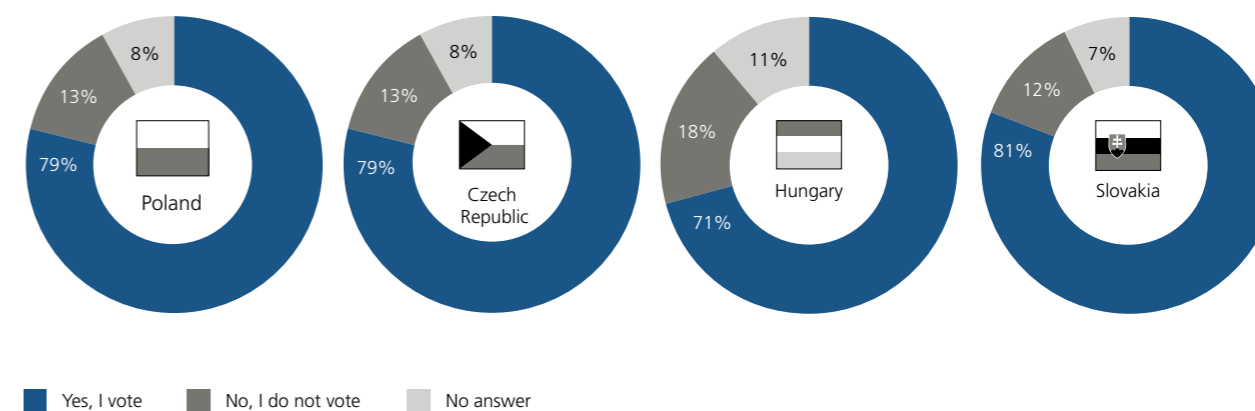
It is methodologically challenging to justify comparing the participation of young people from the V4 countries in previous elections, as the elections were held in different years. Retrospective recall of elections held at various times can cause significant bias. Slovakia had an election in 2020, Poland in 2019, Hungary in 2018 and the Czech Republic in 2017.²⁷ Overall, 49 per cent of young people in the V4 countries self-reported having participated in the previous election, and 16 per cent did not participate, although they had the right to vote.

In contrast, three-tenths did not have the right to vote and therefore could not have participated in the previous parliamentary elections. As we look at the responses of young people about voting in past elections, we find a ranking in reverse order of the chronological order of the elections held: the highest for Slovaks (60%), followed by Poles (51%), Hungarians (43%) and the lowest for young people in the Czech Republic (41%). Understandably, the proportion of young Czech respondents who did not have the right to vote is the highest (37%).

The question of future willingness to participate in the elections is methodologically more justifiable (Figure 21). We can speak of hypothetical, theoretical participation unless the research is conducted during an election campaign.

FIG. 21: WILLINGNESS TO VOTE IN THE V4 COUNTRIES (IF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WERE HELD AND YOU WERE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE)

Young people aged 14 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %



Young people in Slovakia are the most likely to want to participate in a future parliamentary election (81%), followed closely by young people aged 15-29 in Poland and the Czech Republic (79-79%), while Hungarians are the least likely to vote (71%).

The participation of young people in the three countries is thus broadly similar. Hungary has the highest proportion of those who refuse to participate in the elections (18%) and more undecided voters than the other Visegrád countries.

Among 15-29-year-olds in the V4 countries, participation is higher than average among those living in metropolitan areas, those in good financial positions and those with high levels of cultural capital. Among the low-educated Central Europeans, just under 80 per cent said they would participate. In comparison, the proportion of those in the high-educated category reached 90 per cent, a trend that holds for all countries. An increase in the mother’s education level is associated with higher participation in three out of the four countries. However, in Poland, maternal education is not significantly related to electoral activity among 15-29-year-olds.

Traditional forms of political participation (Theocharis-van Deth, 2017) include taking political office. The demand

for it is low in all countries, and there is little difference in responses. A slightly higher proportion of young people in Slovakia would be happy to take up political office than those aged 15-29 in other countries (13% versus 9-10%).

Currently, 1% of young people in Central Europe hold political office, while on average, a third categorically reject it (highest in Poland, 36%). There is a clear gender gap in the potential acceptance and rejection of political office in all four countries surveyed. Men are much more open to political roles than women. 42% of young female respondents and 28% of men said they would not hold any office, with 8% and 14% respectively showing openness. Unlike in previous political questions, there is no statistically significant correlation between the respondent’s level of education and acceptance or rejection of political office.

However, an important aspect is that right-wing 15-29 year-olds are the most likely to be open to political office in all four countries. 16% of 15–29 year olds aged 15–29 in the Czech Republic (mark 8–10 on a scale of 1–10), 22% in Hungary and 23–23% in Poland and Slovakia would like to hold a political office. The “enthusiasm” is lower on the left: 9, 12, 10 and 21 per cent of young people in the countries mentioned above, respectively.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY BEYOND THE ELECTIONS IN POLAND, THE LOWEST IN HUNGARY

Due to the closures and restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 epidemic, the possibility of organising street demonstrations, protests and even signature-gathering actions has been reduced in most European countries from the beginning of 2020. From autumn 2021 onwards, harsh restrictions on rights, including fundamental human rights such as freedom of movement and assembly, were gradually lifted, and protests against significant conditions were held in several countries. Importantly, however, these protests were organised after the June-July 2021 data collection period.

Our research examined participation (actual participation) and willingness to participate (potential participation) in six forms of democratic activism.²⁸ It did not narrow participation down to the last 12 months but asked about a broad range of activities that had ever taken place in the past. These are:

- signed/supported an online petition (see „petition“), a letter of protest, a political declaration
- participated in a demonstration (see „demonstration“)
- volunteered or participated in the activities of NGOs, associations, foundations (see „civic activism“)
- been active in a political party or other political organisation (see „worked in party“)
- has stopped buying a product or service for political or environmental reasons (see „boycott“)
- participated in an online political initiative/group (see „online participation“)

Not surprisingly, given the pandemic situation, the most common form of protest among young people in the region is signing a petition, followed by boycott and civic activism (Figure 22). While the former was done by 37 young people in the V4 countries, the latter two forms were done by around a quarter. Contrary to expectations, online activism is a less popular form of participation. Overall, party work has the lowest prevalence (6%).

There is a clear order not only of actual participation but also of potential participation. Civic activism is the most

popular choice (30%), followed by demonstration (26%). The lowest possible participation can be recorded for party work, petitions and boycotts (all three at 20%).

However, there are significant differences in the participation of 15-29-year-olds in each country. Regardless of the form of the involvement, it is clear that the political participation and willingness to participate of Hungarian 15-29-year-olds is far below their peers in the V4 countries. On the other hand, Polish young people show outstanding activism in several types of participation.

There is no participation where actual and potential involvement is not the lowest among young Hungarians. This is shown in Figure 23, which also indicates that when participation rates are summed up, one-third of Hungarian 15-29-year-olds had absolutely no political activity. In contrast, political passivity levels range between 10% and 18% in the other countries. The activism of Polish youth stands out in terms of demonstrations, civic activism and online participation. Boycott activity is the highest among Czech youth (28%), while there is no significant difference in the responses for working in political parties (5-7%).

IDEOLOGICAL ATTITUDES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN VISEGRÁD

In our research, young people in the V4 countries placed themselves on a classic left-right ideological „thermometer“. At one end of the scale (value 1) is the extreme left, and the other is the extreme right (value 10).

Figure 24 shows that young people in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia are more similar than significantly different in terms of left-right value orientation. Indeed, most of them place themselves in the middle, choosing a category 5 or 6 (35%). Except for Polish young people, around 15-18% are on the left side of the scale (categories 1-4), while 18-25% are on the right (7-10).

Based on the averages of the ideological scale, young people in the Czech Republic take the most right-wing position of the four countries, with an average score of 5.71, but this is still actually in the middle. They are

FIG. 22: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE V4 COUNTRIES
Young people aged 14 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %

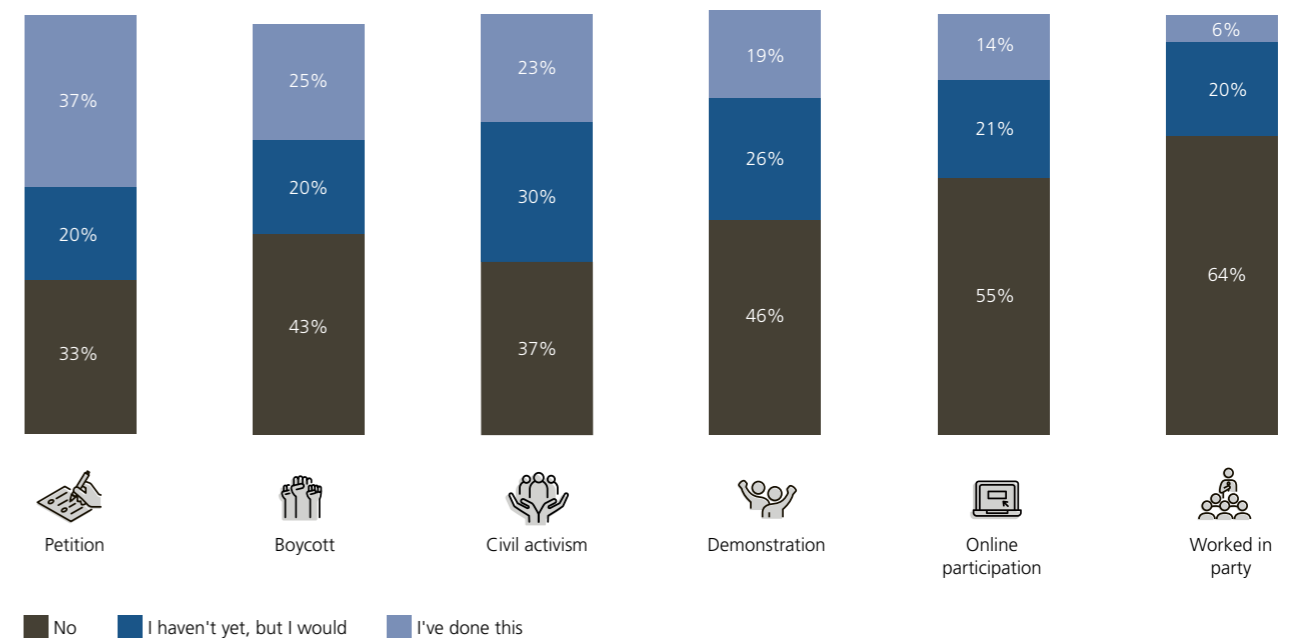
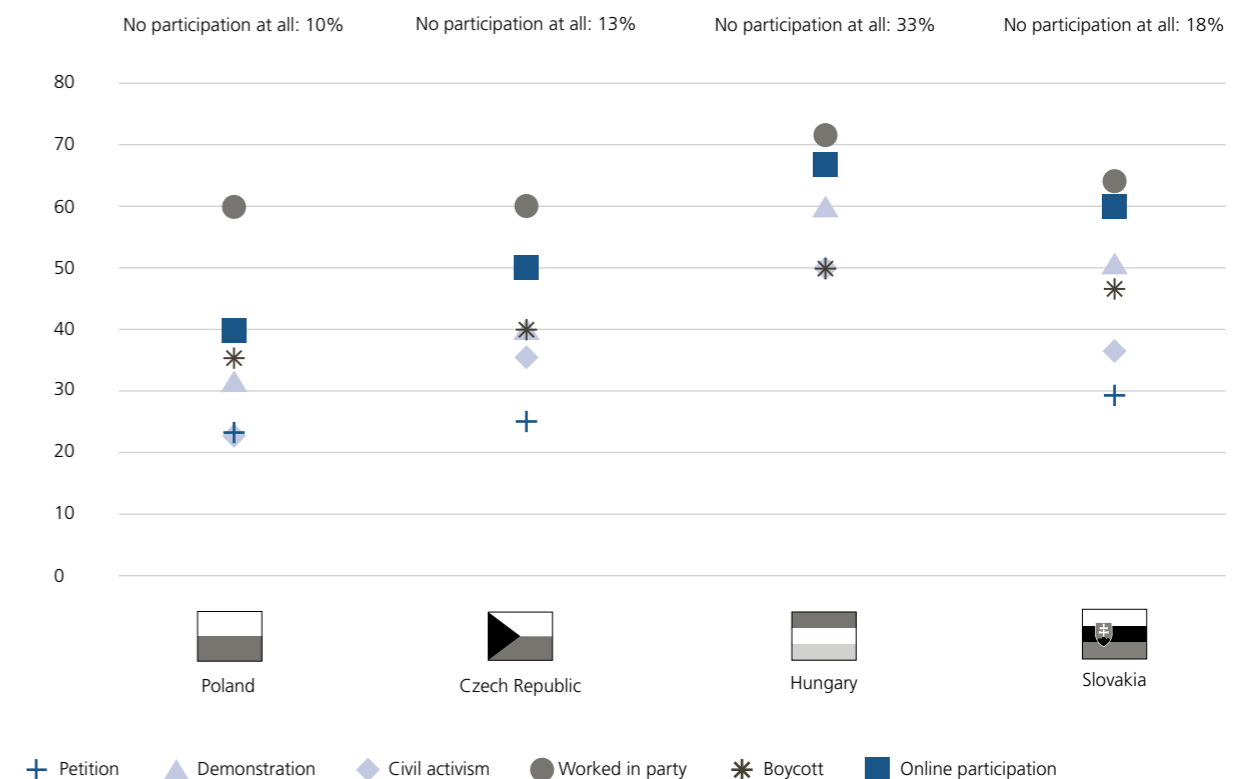


FIG. 23: LACK OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN V4 COUNTRIES. DISTRIBUTION OF „NOT INVOLVED“ CATEGORY
Young people aged 14 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %



followed by young Hungarians (5.45) and then by Slovaks (5.41).²⁹ More than a quarter of Slovak and Hungarian young people cannot or do not want to place themselves on the left-right scale. Unknown ideological orientation is the highest-scoring category for Slovak young people.

The ideological character of Polish young people is worth mentioning, as it is slightly different from the other three countries. One-third of the young Poles in the sample are left-wing, 29% are centrist, and one-fifth are right-wing (average on a scale of 1-10): 4.98). Thus, according to the FES 2021 survey, Polish 15-29-year-olds are relatively the most left-wing.³⁰

The relationship between positions on the ideological axes can be used to determine the political polarisation of a given society or the strata of societies under study, in this case, young people. In other words, the extent to which 15-29 year olds with different ideological characters are sharply separated and distanced from each other. The polarisation index (Table 7) measures the ratio of extreme

to centrist positions (Gerő-Szabó 2015). The value of the polarisation index is low if there are many in the centre and few at the edges, i.e. society is firmly, dominantly drawn towards the centre, while the closer the polarisation index is to 1, the more highly divided the social stratum is.

As shown in Table 7, among young people in the four countries, Polish people are the most polarised in left-right self-definition, with the highest polarisation index (0.65), two to three times higher than in the other three countries. Czech 15-29-year-olds are the least divided, i.e. they place themselves in the centre. Moreover, the polarisation of young Hungarians and Slovaks, measured by ideological self-classification, is close and relatively moderate.

FIG. 24: IDEOLOGICAL AFFILIATION IN V4 COUNTRIES
Young people aged 14 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %

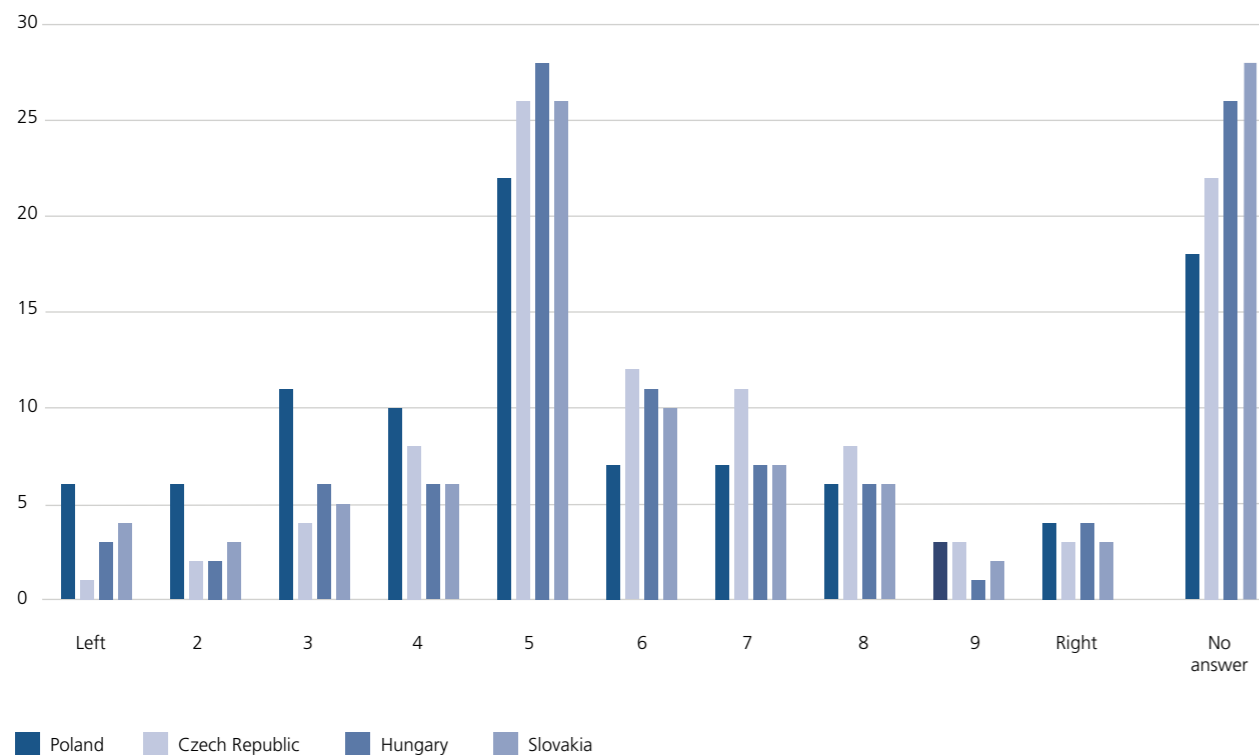


TABLE 7: SLEFT-RIGHT IDEOLOGICAL SELF-CLASSIFICATION IN THE V4 COUNTRIES
Young people aged 14 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %

	Country			
	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia
Left pole (1+2)	15	4	7	8
3 + 4	25	16	16	16
Centre position (5+6)	35	49	52	50
7 + 8	17	24	18	18
Right pole (9+10)	8	7	8	8
Total	100	100	100	100
Poles total	23	11	15	16
Missing data	18	22	26	28
<i>Polarisation index (poles/centre)</i>	<i>0.65</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>0.29</i>	<i>0.32</i>

Note: 1 means that exactly as many people are at the centre as at the poles. If below 1, society is oriented towards the centre. Above one means that there are more people at the poles of the scale than at the centre, i.e. society is more polarised.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE VISEGRÁD REGION WANT MORE REDISTRIBUTION, BUT WITHOUT AN INCREASING ECONOMIC ROLE FOR THE STATE

Among the different redistributive policies, the development of social safety nets has the highest support in all Visegrád countries. The highest proportion of young people in all four countries agreed that the government should take more responsibility for ensuring that everyone is adequately cared for (Figure 25). 72% in Hungary and Slovakia, 67% in Poland and only 51% in the Czech Republic agreed.

There appear to be more significant differences between the four countries regarding whether income inequality should be reduced. Many young people (70%) identify

with this left-wing public policy position in Hungary. In contrast, in the other countries, the number of those who agree with it is much lower (17-32 percentage points). In Slovakia, a slight majority (53%) still agree that income inequality should be reduced, but in the Czech Republic (47%) and Poland (38%), the proportion of those agreeing is below 50%.

At the same time, young people in the Visegrád region are highly sceptical about the economic presence of the state. Of the four countries, Slovakia is the most open toward an increased state involvement (36%), but this is also a minority view. Only a fifth of young people in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary think that increasing government ownership of businesses and industries is good.

Young people in Hungary are particularly supportive of basic income in the region (Figure 26). Almost half of the young Hungarians (47%) agree with introducing an unconditional basic income, and only one fifth (22%) are against it. In contrast, the relative majority of young people in the other countries reject basic income.

Young people in the Czech Republic are the most strongly opposed to a basic income (41%, with only 24% in favour), but only one in four in Poland would introduce it (26%, with 37% against). Young people in Slovakia are only slightly opposed to a basic income (37% opposed, 34% in favour).

Among the V4, Hungary is the only country where more people support basic income than reject it. Introducing a basic income is not a popular idea in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

FIG. 25: SUPPORT FOR REDISTRIBUTION POLICIES IN THE V4 COUNTRIES
Young people aged 14 to 29, consideration of answers with strong to very strong agreement, n=6000; figures in %.

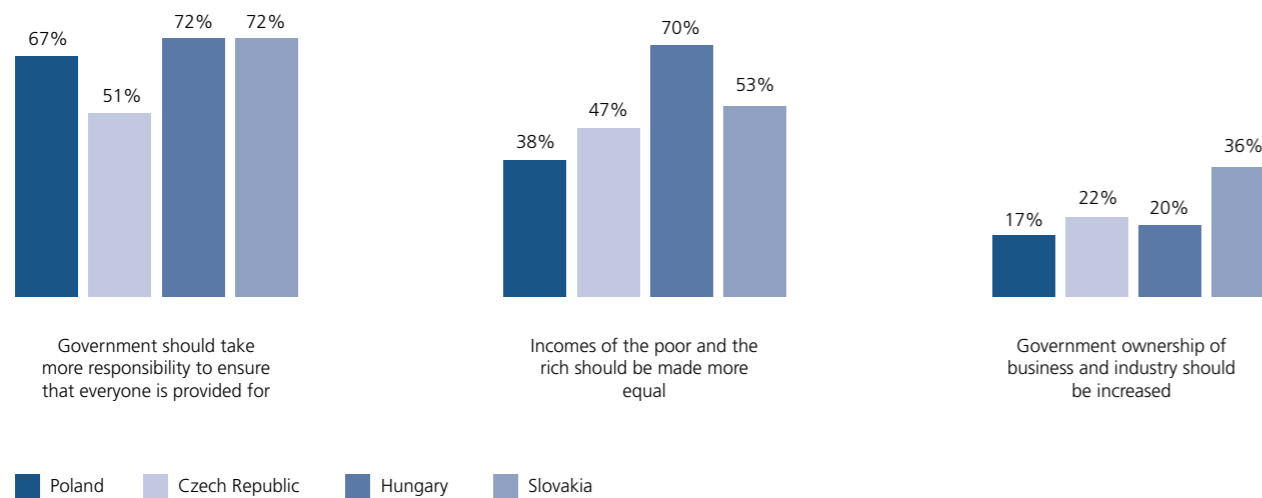
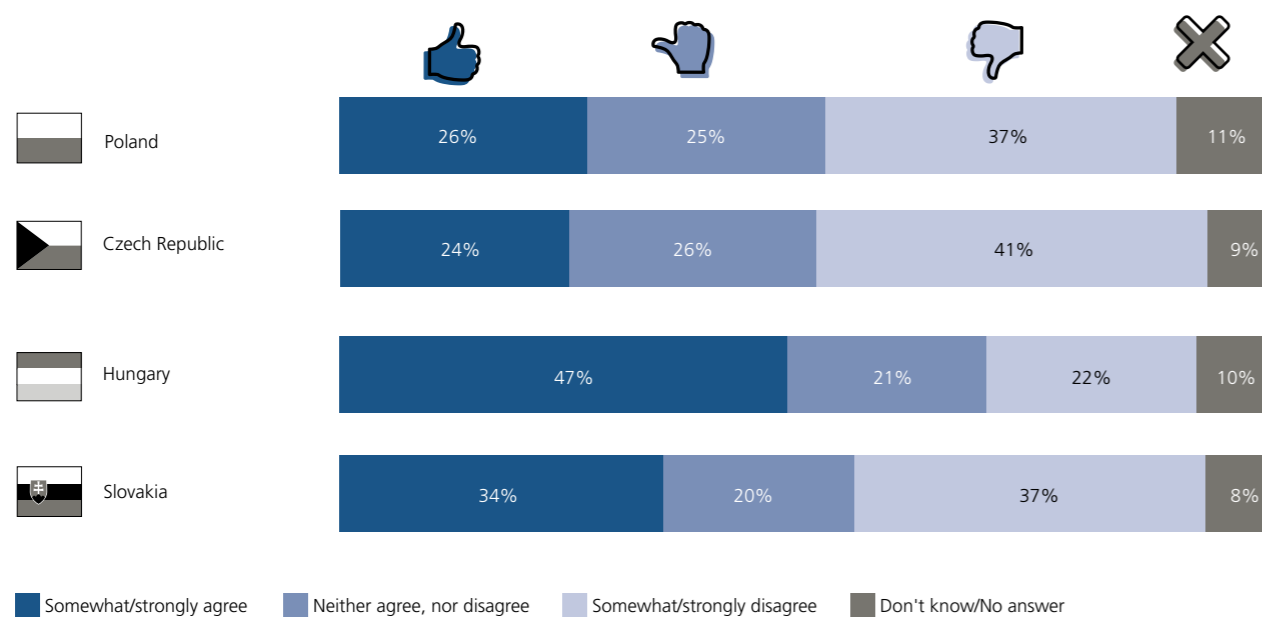


FIG. 26: SUPPORT FOR BASIC INCOME IN THE V4 COUNTRIES
Young people aged 14 to 29, n=6,000; figures in %



INSTITUTIONAL TRUST AND PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

Institutional trust is seen by many as one of the pillars of effective governance. European data suggest that higher institutional trust is associated with higher interpersonal trust at the micro-level and higher economic performance at the macro level. In the “fresh democracies” of East-Central Europe, trust levels are lower and more volatile (Boda-Medve-Bálint 2012).

A general trend is a high level of trust in the army and police in the four countries, with a high level of confidence in the international alliance system of the Visegrád countries (NATO, EU). Trust in the judiciary, and civil society organisations is also relatively high, especially compared to political institutions and the media. Very few young people in the Visegrád Group have confidence in the national government, political parties and parliament (young Poles have the least confidence in the national government). The level of trust in church institutions can also be considered low, even in Poland, where the church is otherwise firmly embedded compared to the other Visegrád countries.

Young people in the Visegrád region have the most trust in the armed forces and international alliances (NATO, EU) and the least trust in political institutions and the media.

It is important to note that most people believe that democracy is a good form of governance in all the Visegrád countries. The Czech Republic has the highest level of agreement (64%), but the other three countries are not far behind (53% in Poland, 56% in Hungary and 58% in Slovakia). Consequently, few people think that dictatorship can be better than democracy in certain circumstances. Hungary has the lowest proportion of people who think this way (14%), but the Polish figure (21%), the highest in the region, is not extraordinarily high either. Thus, while young Hungarians do not want a dictatorship either, the majority (57%) think the country needs a strong leader. This is an outstanding figure among the Visegrád countries, with 22-28 percentage points fewer in the other three countries (Slovakia 29%, Czech Republic 31%, Poland 35%) who think a strong leader is needed.

Many young Poles (63%) consider voting a civic duty. This is 15 to 21 percentage points higher than the perception

of voting among young people in the rest of the Visegrád Group. Young people in the four countries have a moderately positive view of voting, but they are more convinced that young people need to have a stronger voice in politics. Again, young people in Poland agree with this the most (70%). It follows naturally from the earlier data on political participation that young Hungarians are the least likely to think they need to have a say in politics (54%). So, the situation for young Hungarians is that they do not believe that they need to have a say in politics, and they are also very passive when it comes to meaningful political participation. However, at the same time, they are dissatisfied with the way politics represents their interests.

It is essential to point out that, although all the Visegrád countries consider democracy to be a good system and would like to have a more significant say in politics, young people in none of the countries think they know much about politics. Only one in five young people in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia consider themselves politically informed, and only one in four in Poland.

In all Visegrád countries, young people consider democracy to be a good system and want to have more say in politics, but in none of the countries do young people consider themselves politically informed.

MANY SEE MATERIAL ISSUES, CORRUPTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE AS LONG-TERM PROBLEMS

In all four Visegrád countries, the issue of low wages and pensions tops the list of problems facing young people, with an average of four in ten citing it as one of the three most significant long-term challenges (38% in the Czech Republic, 40% in Poland, 42% in Hungary and 45% in Slovakia). There also seems to be a strong consensus in three out of four countries that corruption is a severe long-term problem (the only country not to make the top three is Poland, where it came 9th on the list of problems). Climate change is also one of the top three issues for young people in three out of four Visegrád countries - the exception being young Hungarians, who ranked it only 5th on the list of problems. Nevertheless, climate change was at the top, together with low wages and pensions in the Czech Republic.

Many young people in Visegrád are also concerned about the poor quality of public services, including education and health. This is considered the second most significant problem in Poland, but it is also in the top half of the list of problems in the other three countries. The same is true for several material issues: poverty and unemployment also finished in the top half of the list in three countries. The issue of poverty came second in Hungary, and unemployment was fourth in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

Low wages and pensions are seen as the biggest problems for the next ten years. In addition to other material issues (poverty, quality of public services, emigration and unemployment), corruption and climate change are also seen by many as significant problems.

Despite the trends in Poland and Hungary, few people in both countries mentioned democratic backsliding. Immigration and terrorism are not ranked among the most critical issues in any country (terrorism was ranked in the bottom three in all four countries).

The possible loss of national identity and the weakening of Christian and traditional values are not important issues for young people: no country did more than 10% of respondents mention either of these two options. It is also important to note that the fourth industrial revolution is still perceived as a severe threat by very few young people: automation and robotisation of jobs were only cited as a significant problem by 5-6% in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, and only in the Czech Republic was it mentioned as a long-term problem by a significantly higher number of young people (15%).

STRONG ANTI-IMMIGRANT FEELINGS, FIRMLY PRO-EU YOUTH

The nativist ideology, whose message is the preference of native-born people over immigrants, is an increasingly dominant phenomenon in US and European politics, with the rise of nativist forces shaping party systems in Western countries (Davis et al. 2019). It is not an unknown phenomenon in the Visegrád countries either, and it has been mainly on the rise in the Visegrád countries since

the migration crisis of 2015. The anti-immigration narrative has perhaps been most strongly present in Hungary in recent years, with the Hungarian government building its communication strategy on this issue in the second half of the 2010s (Bíró-Nagy 2021). The long-term result of this intensive campaign is that nearly two-thirds of young Hungarians (63%) disagree that the country should accept more immigrants. This is the highest figure in the region, although young people in the Czech Republic and Slovakia hold similar views.

The majority of young people in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia are anti-immigrant. Young Poles are the most tolerant and least nationalistic in the region. National pride is strongest among Czech and Slovak young people.

Polish young people are the least anti-immigrant in the region (39% reject the idea of accepting immigrants), and several other questions show that Polish young people are generally the most tolerant and least nationalistic of the Visegrád countries. Only 20% of young Poles agreed that only genuine Polish citizens should live on Polish territory. 27% thought that immigrants should adopt Polish traditions and values. In both cases, this was the lowest proportion in the region.

Young people in the Czech Republic and Slovakia have very similar views on these issues and a more nationalistic outlook than Poles. Half of the young people in the Czech Republic and half of the young people in Slovakia think immigrants should adopt their traditions and values. Half of the young people in these two countries also have some form of national pride, while the proportion is more than ten percentage points lower among Hungarians (40%) and Poles (39%). At the same time, young Hungarians are the most likely (30%) to think that it would be best if only Hungarians lived in their country.

When asked to rate the situation of different values at the national and EU levels, we found that, in general, the EU is a positive reference point in all countries, against which domestic developments are perceived as worse. The positive perception of the EU's economic performance is vital in all countries. At the same time, on the issue of security, the domestic situation is rated up compared to the overall EU situation (young people in the Czech Republic consider the security situation there to be better

than in the EU). Slovakia has the least favourable view of the EU's economic performance, but this relatively lower score does not mean that young people in Slovakia are not fundamentally pro-EU.

Majorities in all four countries are pro-EU. Only a tiny minority raises the idea of leaving the EU. Slovakia has the highest rate (17%), while Hungary has the lowest (12%). It is worth mentioning that there are many pro-EU Czech young people compared to the overall figures for Czech society.

The vast majority of young people in the V4 would stay in the EU. The EU is a strong positive reference point for all four countries, with only a tiny minority considering leaving the EU.

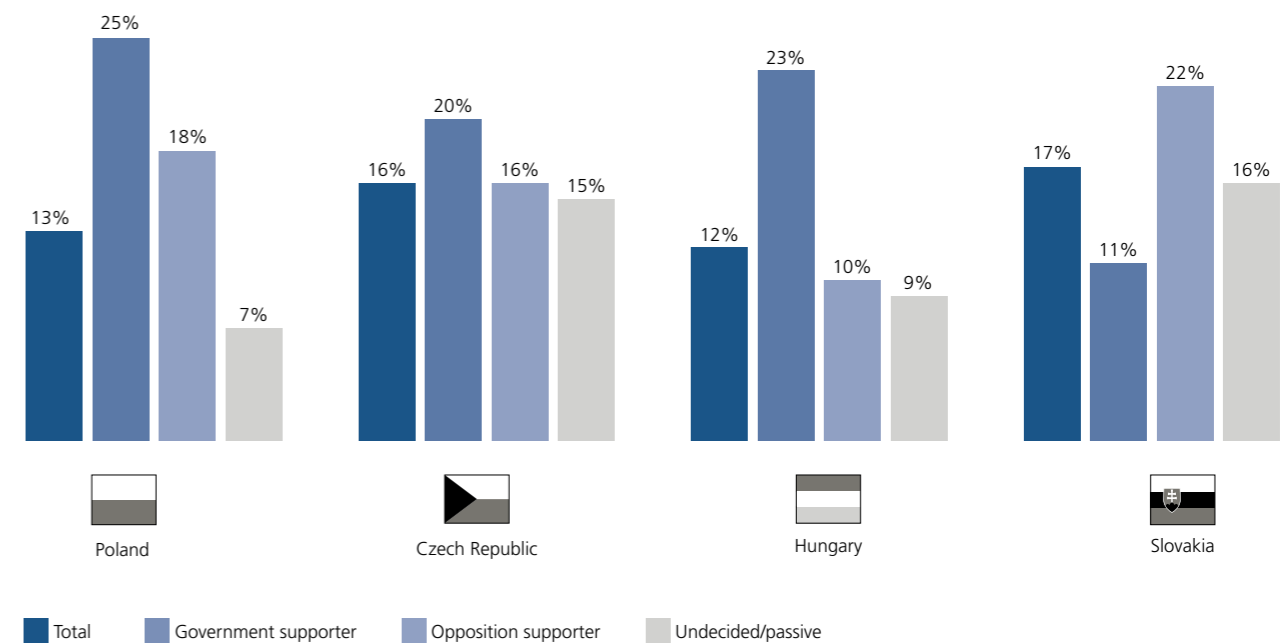
The political breakdown of the question shows an interesting pattern (Figure 27). The biggest difference between political sides is in Hungary. More than twice as many Fidesz voters (23%) are in favour of leaving the EU (23%) than in the opposition camp (10%). There are more hard Eurosceptic, pro-exit voters among the supporters of the Hungarian, Polish, and the previous Czech government (the last Czech election took place after the data was collected). At the same time, in Slovakia, we see that twice

as many opposition voters would leave the EU as pro-government voters (22% vs 11%).

Our study used a specific question to examine the spatial aspects of identity patterns among young people in the Visegrád countries. Specifically, the extent to which they are attached to their home country and how much they feel European and citizens of their localities. The exact question was, "How much do you see yourself as a (CO) ian, European, and citizen of my home town". The question was answered on a scale of 1 to 5, where one meant "Not at all" and 5 meant "Completely."

Czechs and Slovaks are the most likely to see themselves as citizens of their nation (4.02 and 3.98, respectively). At the same time, their following identity, which could be European or local, is slightly weaker (Figure 28). The specific situation of Polish 15-to 29-year-olds is that they tend to identify most with the identity of their local environment (3.68 points), followed by nationality (3.62 points) and European identity (3.58 points). However, the average points for these three identities are very close. Hungary is the only country in the V4 where 15-to 29-year-olds consider themselves as much Hungarian as European (3.92), while their local identity is slightly weaker (3.72).

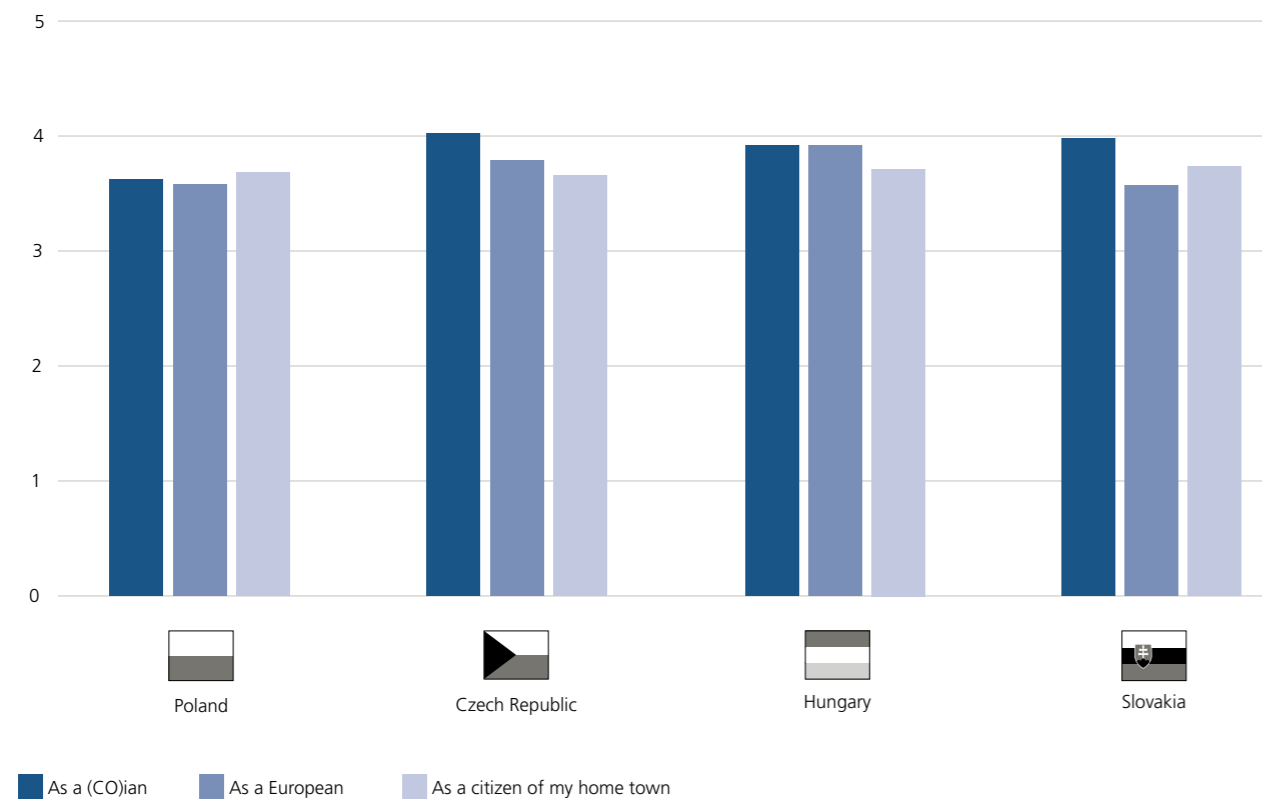
FIG. 27: SHARE OF THOSE WHO SUPPORT THEIR COUNTRY TO LEAVE THE EU
Young people aged 14 to 29, n=6000; figures in %



Age is an exciting segmentation of the identity patterns of young people in Central Europe: while national identity is above average for those aged 25 and over, European identity is above average for those under 19. An ANOVA analysis of the responses reveals that European identity is highest among young people living in large cities (3.83 mean score) and lowest among those living in a purely rural environment (3.58). Therefore, the traditional cultural divide is visible, but national and local linkages are not reversed. Indeed, young people's responses in the four countries show that national identity is also highest among those living in a purely urban environment

(3.96 average scores). The local identity is above average for those who choose the "more urban than rural" category. An important lesson is that the better the financial situation of a young person in Central Europe is, the more characteristic their identity structure is. More specifically, this means that those who rate their financial situation as 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 have the strongest national, European and local identities. However, the low income background seems to be leading to identity crises: disadvantaged young people in central Europe do not really embrace local, national or European identity either.

FIG. 28: IDENTITY. COMPARISON OF MEAN VALUES
Young people aged 14 to 29



Source: FES Youth Study Central and Eastern Europe, 2021

CONCLUSION

The analyses reveal that growing up in Central Eastern Europe today has to be seen against the background of an increasingly complex postmodern society. Pluralisation and individualisation processes have given rise to heterogeneous situations in life that are characterised by non-linear biographies and an unequal distribution of opportunities.

In summary, three central factors can be identified that determine how young people grow up in Central Eastern Europe:

- The precarisation of certain groups of young people as a result of low cultural capital across generations.
- Young people's experience of poverty due to a country's initial economic situation, reflected in the disintegration of many young people in the world of work. One phenomenon to be observed in this context is the gender gap in unemployment.
- Individualisation efforts that confer agency and, at the same time, developments in society as a whole that convey the power to act. Symbolic of this are the positive personal prognoses for the future versus the scepticism of society as a whole. This is also confirmed by the adherence to family ties and self-image of starting one's own family.

As a result, living and dealing with contradictions is part of the developmental process of adolescence in Central Eastern Europe. However, adolescents are not only offered room for decision-making and experimentation but are also forced to make decisions at the same time. This applies to the time of one's own financial and spatial independence just as much as to the choice of a job or with regard to access to education. Apparent degrees of freedom are thus blurred against the background of social disparities. Accordingly, youth – conceived of as a space for protection or experimentation, accompanied by a sense of security and risk-free experimentation – represents the reality of life for only a minority. Rather, an increasingly widening gap between young people within a generation can be assumed. What for some can be seen as a privilege with all the potential that comes with it for personal development, for others increasingly represents a pressure situation that goes hand in hand with an awareness, which sets in early and continues to develop over the course of one's biography, that one is treading water and that social advancement processes seem virtually impossible.

These developments are also related to the formation of political opinions and are expressed in the ambivalent attitudes and values of young people. This becomes evident, among other things, in the distance adopted to active politics and in a high level of mistrust towards political institutions and elites. On the other hand, the European Union represents an important and positive point of reference for the vast majority. The values of democracy, tolerance and respect for human rights are generally understood as important cornerstones yet are counteracted in their concrete implementation by at least some of the young people. Thus, the evidence of group-based misanthropy, which manifests itself in intolerance towards social, ethnic and religious minorities, certainly leaves behind the question of inclusion and exclusion. In other words: Who is seen by young people as being part of society, who is allowed certain privileges associated with democracy, who is seen as competition, sometimes even as a threat to their own existence? These are all questions that need to be looked at more closely in future research in order to gain a comprehensive picture of patterns of attitudes among young people and any potentially emerging ambivalences in this regard.

Current global crises, such as the Covid 19 pandemic, the war on the European continent with all its consequences, also of an economic nature, harbour the danger of increasing insecurity and division. The long-term consequences are to date difficult to see. It is therefore necessary to focus not only on the obvious and currently clearly visible trouble spots in the world but also on the regions that are hardly visible in geopolitical terms and in the public consciousness. The young generations growing up in these regions form the Europe of tomorrow. To perceive them, to see their needs, and to support them, is a necessary investment in the future of Europe.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 The heads of government of Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary met at Visegrád Castle in Hungary in 1991 and since then have formed a close circle that consults and cooperates on many political decisions (Lippert, 2020).
- 2 Within the participating countries, the following proportions of young people in the total population have been assumed (rounded values in 2020/21, number in brackets = proportion of total population): 6.26 million (16.5%) young people in Poland (Statistical Offices Poland, 2020); 1.6 million (15%) young people in the Czech Republic (Czech Statistical Office, 2021); 1.57 million (16%) young people in Hungary (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2020); 0.93 million (17%) young people in Slovakia (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2021).
- 3 Low education: No formal education or primary education
- 4 Medium education: vocational, technical secondary or secondary education
- 5 High education: BA degree or higher than BA degree (Master/PhD)
- 6 Urban = young people who describe their place of residence as "Urban (city)" or "More urban than rural"
- 7 Rural = young people who describe their place of residence as "Rural (village)" or "More rural than urban"
- 8 According to calculations by the European Commission, which draws up a European comparison of population trends from 2016 to 2080, all four countries must expect a population decline. The following figures are provided for the population development 2019–2080 for the four countries participating in this study: Czech Republic (-7.2%), Hungary (-11.8%), Slovakia (-13.0%), Poland (-23.6%) cf. Loew (2019, S. 11).
- 9 Young people with a low level of education are more likely to live in urban areas, at almost 50% (48.1%). As the level of education rises, the proportion of young people living in urban areas increases. For example, 60.4% of young people with a high level of education say they live in cities.
- 10 15.7% of young people with a low level of education do not have enough money to buy clothes or shoes. Whereas among young people with a high level of education, the figure is 6.7%. $Chi^2 = 111.430$; $df = 8$; $p = 0.000$; (level of education/economic situation).
- 11 $Chi^2 = 441.707$; $df = 14$; $p = 0.000$ (own level of education / mother's level of education)
- 12 $Chi^2 = 189.425$; $df = 14$; $p = 0.000$ (own level of education / father's level of education)
- 13 $Chi^2 = 37.639$; $df = 4$; $p = 0.000$ (age/settlement structure)
- 14 Definition of absolute poverty: "is a state in which a person cannot afford to satisfy their basic economic and social needs. Relative poverty describes poverty in relation to a person's respective social environment" (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, 2022).
- 15 GDP per inhabitant in euro in a country comparison according to the State Agency for Civic Education Baden-Württemberg (2022): Poland (13.37), Hungary (14.7%), Slovakia (17.27), Czech Republic (20.64).
- 16 As the education systems in the four countries studied are organised differently, a standardisation was carried out in the sense of comparability with regard to educational attainment. According to this, a low education level exists if there is no completed school education or only a primary school education. A medium education level is defined as a qualification obtained after secondary school and/or vocational training. The category 'high education level' includes university degrees (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate).
- 17 Annual average change in real GDP from 1999 to 2019, in per cent: Poland (3.8%), Czech Republic (2.9%), Hungary (2.6%), Slovakia (2.4%) – for EU 28 (2013–2020) with 1.6%.
- 18 Within the following consideration of the current employment situation, only young people between the ages of 19 and 29 are considered, as the majority of young people between the ages of 15 and 18 are still in school and/or training.
- 19 A small part of 8% of the young people are on maternity leave, receive a pension or are otherwise employed and could not be allocated to any of the three groups.
- 20 Percentages of relevant factors in the job search calculated by combining "Very important" and "Mostly important".
- 21 Unemployment rates for total population for all participating countries: 6.4% Slovakia, 3.7% Hungary, 2.9% Poland and 2.1% Czech Republic (see Statistica 2022).
- 22 NEET = Not in Employment, Education or Training.
- 23 Absolute number of NEET young people: 245 Slovakia, 279 Hungary, 242 Poland and 151 Czech Republic.
- 24 Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary were all admitted to the EU in 2004 (cf. Federal Foreign 2022) Office.
- 25 28.7% of 14-18 year olds, 23.4% of 19-24 year olds and 17.8% of 25-29 year olds have a strong desire to migrate. $Chi^2 = 183.808$; $df = 8$; $p = 0.000$ (desire to migrate/age).
- 26 Testing the effect of the above sociodemographic and sociocultural variables on political interest in a linear regression model, it is found that, in order, gender, own educational attainment, mother's highest level of educational attainment, subjective income position and type of residence have the greatest influence on the level of political interest. $R^2 = 0.040$, $F\text{-test} = 32,974$, $sig = 0.000$. Multicollinearity zero.
- 27 Since the data was collected, parliamentary elections were held in autumn 2021 in the Czech Republic and spring 2022 in Hungary.
- 28 The exact wording of the question: "There are different ways of getting involved in politics. Have you done or would you do any of the following?".
- 29 Note that the arithmetic means on a scale of 1 to 10 is 5.5 points. Young people in the Czech Republic are only slightly to the right of the mean, while young Hungarians and Slovaks are very close to the norm, just a thin hair to the left. We argue that they would be centrist rather than characteristically left or right-leaning.
- 30 However, it is worth checking this finding with other research, as there is little support from previous European Social Survey (ESS) data. Indeed, in waves 7 and 8 of the ESS, the Polish 15-29 age group - although with a low number of items - was more right-wing than left-wing.

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LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES

- PAGE 16** Table 1: Breakdown of the sample according to socio-demographic characteristics and reference to national affiliation
- PAGE 41** Table 2: Family planning and satisfaction with family of origin
- PAGE 42** Table 3: Desire to have children by age group in country comparison
- PAGE 43** Table 4: Desired number of children in a country comparison
- PAGE 48** Table 5: Significant values and goals in the lives of young people
- PAGE 50** Table 6: Intolerance towards social, ethnic and religious groups
- PAGE 61** Table 7: Left-right ideological self-classification in the V4 countries

FIGURES

- PAGE 15** Fig. 1: Total population and share of young people in a country comparison
- PAGE 21** Fig. 2: Educational level of 25–29 year olds by gender
- PAGE 23** Fig. 3: Education-related effects of origin – educational attainment of young people as a function of the mother's education level
- PAGE 24** Fig. 4: Education-related effects of origin in the four countries using the example of the relationship between a high level of education of the mother and the educational success of 25 to 29 year olds
- PAGE 25** Fig. 5: Educational advancement in the four countries using the example of the relationship between a mother's low level of education and the educational success of 25 to 29 year-olds
- PAGE 26** Fig. 6: Satisfaction with the quality of education in a country comparison
- PAGE 26** Fig. 7: Corruption in the education system in a country comparison
- PAGE 29** Fig. 8: Current employment
- PAGE 31** Fig. 9: NEET young people in a country comparison
- PAGE 32** Fig. 10: Proportion of young people with a strong desire to migrate and time of migration in a country comparison
- PAGE 33** Fig. 11: Young people with migration aspirations – homecomers vs expatriates

PAGE 37	Fig. 12: Satisfaction with family life in a country comparison
PAGE 38	Fig. 13: Satisfaction with family life in relation to the financial situation in a country comparison
PAGE 39	Fig. 14: Nuclear family in country comparison
PAGE 41	Fig. 15: Marriage and the desire to have children in a country comparison
PAGE 45	Fig. 16: General satisfaction with one's own life
PAGE 46	Fig. 17: Personal future in 10 years according to gender
PAGE 47	Fig. 18: Future of society at home by gender
PAGE 54	Fig. 19: Personal interest in politics
PAGE 55	Fig. 20: Political confirmation in the V4 countries
PAGE 57	Fig. 21: Willingness to vote in the V4 countries (if parliamentary elections were held and you were eligible to vote)
PAGE 59	Fig. 22: Political Participation in the V4 countries
PAGE 59	Fig. 23: Lack of political Participation in V4 countries. Distribution of „not involved“ category
PAGE 60	Fig. 24: Ideological affiliation in V4 countries
PAGE 62	Fig. 25: Support for redistribution policies in the V4 countries
PAGE 62	Fig. 26: Support for basic income in the V4 countries
PAGE 65	Fig. 27: Share of those who support their country to leave the EU
PAGE 66	Fig. 28: Identity. Comparison of mean values

ABOUT FES YOUTH STUDIES

This publication is a part of the FES International Youth Studies. Starting in 2009 FES has conducted numerous Youth Studies around the globe. Since 2018, Youth Studies focus specifically on Southern Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia, Eastern Central Europe and the Baltic States. Further studies are being planned for the Middle East and Northern Africa as well as in individual countries around the globe. The International Youth Studies are a flagship project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in its endeavour to research, shape and strengthen the democracy of the future. It strives to contribute to the European discourse on how young generations see the development of their societies as well as their personal future in a time of national and global transformation. The representative studies combine qualitative and quantitative elements of research in close partnership with the regional teams aiming a high standard in research and a sensitive handling of juvenile attitudes and expectations.

A dedicated Advisory Board (Dr Miran Lavrič, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Marius Haring, Daniela Lamby, András Bíró-Nagy and Dr Mārtiņš Kaprāns) supports the methodological and conceptual design of the Youth Studies. The Board consists of permanent and associated members and provides essential expertise for the overall project.

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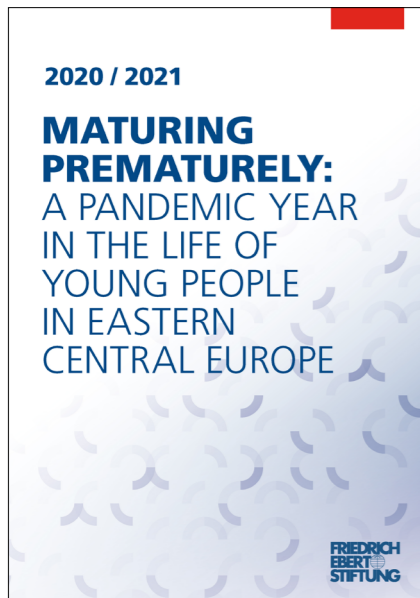
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OTHER YOUTH STUDIES PUBLICATIONS

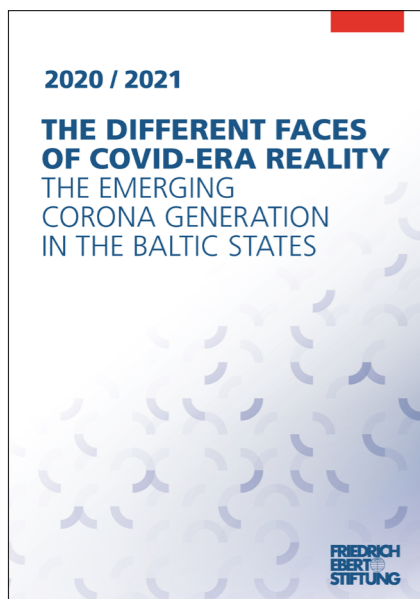


The coronavirus pandemic has been a great shock to societies in Central Europe. The restrictions it has brought about are extensive, and must have been particularly new for the young generation that cannot remember the eras before the democratic regimes were established in this region. In this report youths' experiences of the first year of the pandemic were studied in four countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted in each country, in which young people talked about a variety of topics and issues that had impacted their lives. In the study, it is argued that in areas like healthcare, inter-generational relationships, and education young people were pushed into becoming like adults, that is, into maturing prematurely.



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The goal of this research report is to explore the life of youth in the Baltic States during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021). The report focuses on how young people perceive and make sense out of social as well psychological changes caused by pandemic and how they position themselves in terms of these changes. The focus of this study lies on young people between the age of 14 and 29. The report is based on online interviews with 30 respondents that were conducted in April 2021 via the platform MS Teams. Ten respondents were interviewed in each of the Baltic States.



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