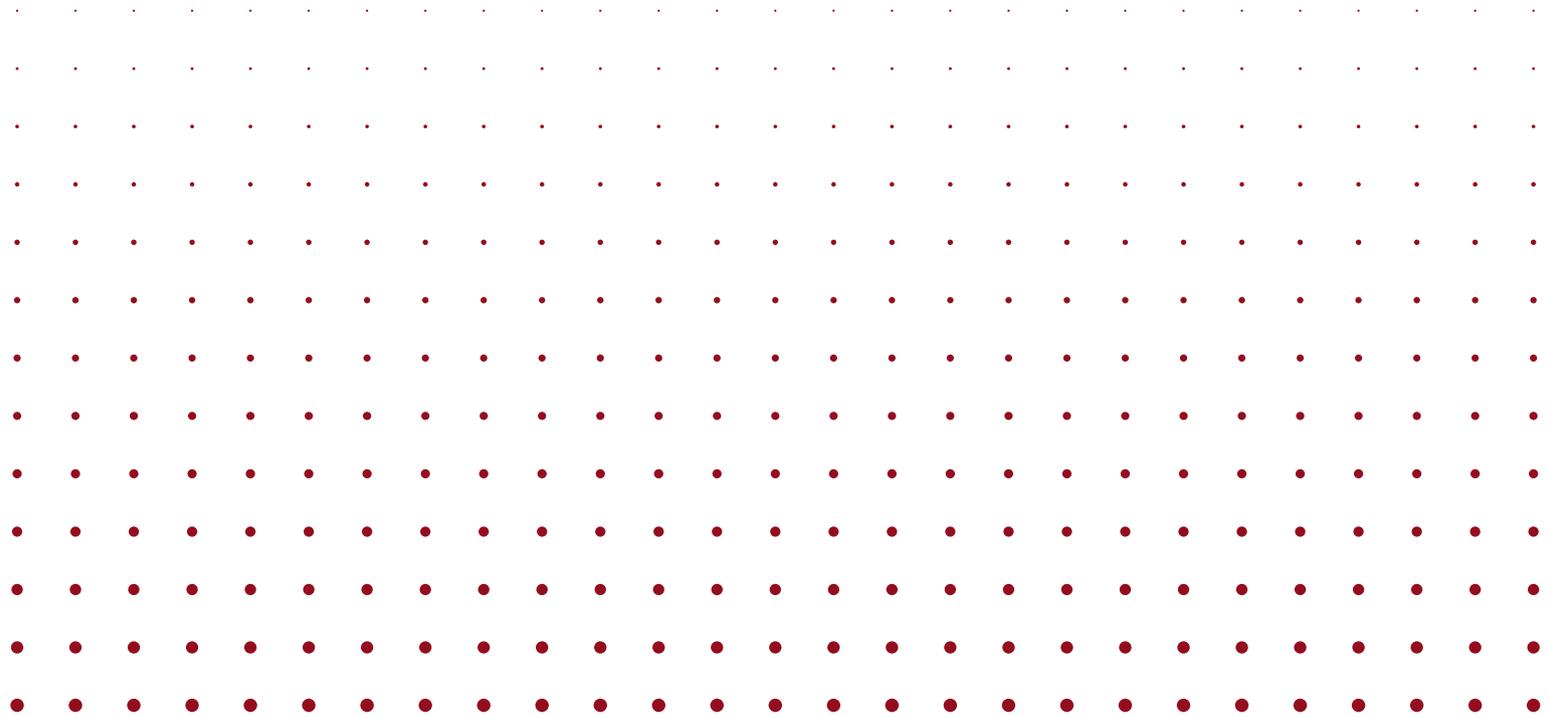




**#TheSocialMatters**

# The Excluded Generation

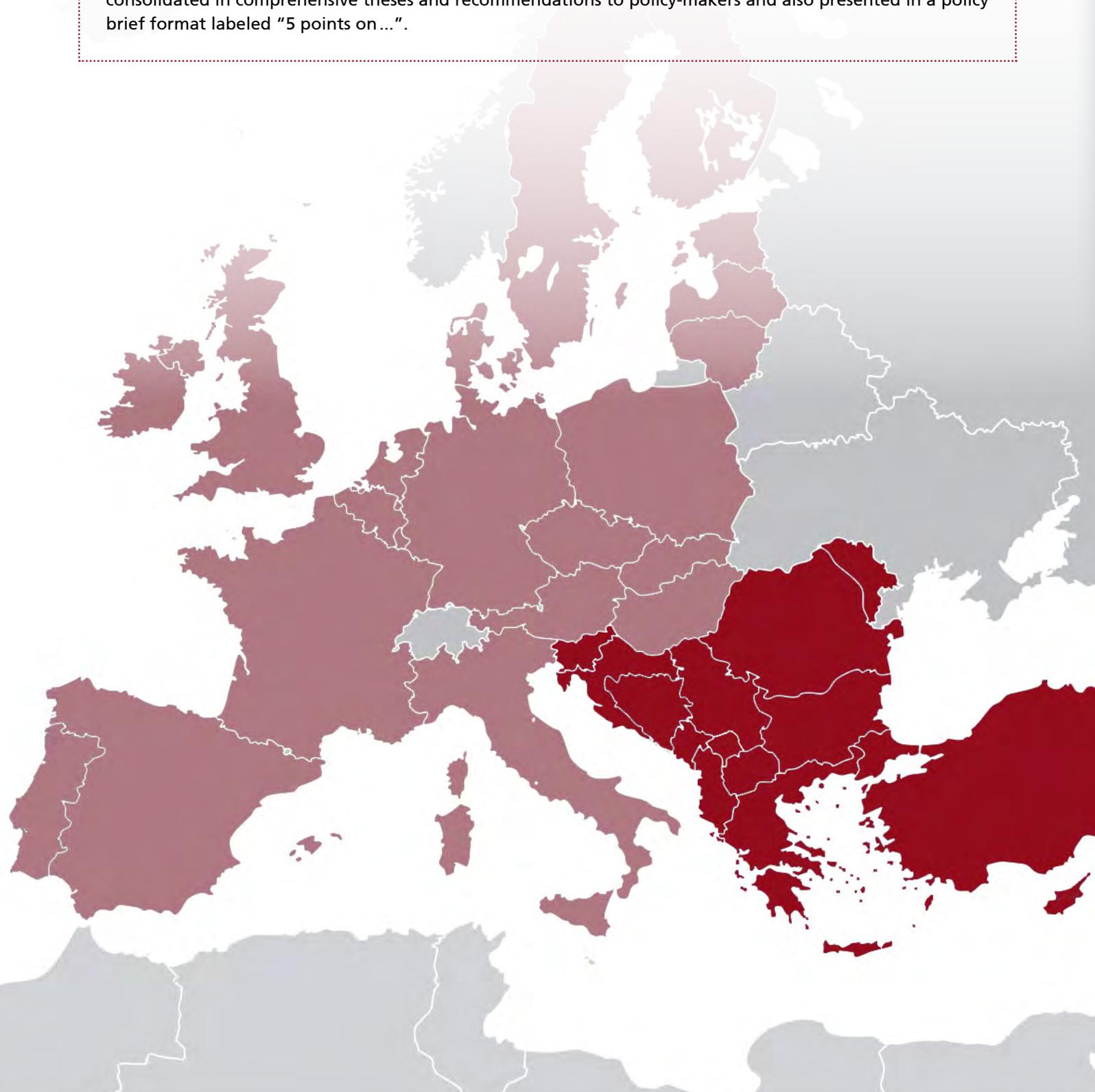
Youth in Southeast Europe



## #TheSocialMatters

AN FES DIALOGUE SOUTHEAST EUROPE PROJECT 2016–2018

The FES Dialogue Southeast Europe (Dialogue SOE) is expanding the research component of our work by critically assessing issues related to socio-economic challenges in the countries of southeastern Europe. Dialogue SOE strongly believes that comparing cases from different countries is necessary to provide an informed perspective on interdependence and commonality in the region. Further work in this direction is necessary to nurture an open, common regional space in southeastern Europe defined by a shared interest of the people. The two-year project (May 2016–December 2018) is set to deliver two regional studies per year, communicating why “the Social matters”. The studies will be based on in-depth empirical research and well-delivered information especially useful for our political efforts on the national and regional levels. Core results are consolidated in comprehensive theses and recommendations to policy-makers and also presented in a policy brief format labeled “5 points on...”.



**Mirna Jusić / Amar Numanović**

# **The Excluded Generation**

Youth in Southeast Europe

**Sarajevo 2017**



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# Preface

At the eighth Aspen Southeast Europe Foreign Ministers Conference in May 2017, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel warned that high unemployment rates were causing the emigration of well-educated youth from the region. This emigration, he cautioned, was robbing Southeast Europe precisely of the agents of change needed to address negative trends such as economic stagnation, nationalism, corruption, and political gridlock.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) has been undertaking representative studies on the values, attitudes, perceptions and political participation of youth in Southeast Europe since 2011. The research confirms that not only the tendencies to emigrate but also political disillusionment and the lack of civic engagement on the part of youth have been growing. Meanwhile, the EU accession process has proven lengthy and challenging, which has led to flagging enthusiasm about the prospect of membership. As Gabriel notes, the benefits of EU membership have become rather oblique – particularly to the young, elderly, and underprivileged, none of whom have experienced many direct or visible gains from the integration progress to date.

The 2017 establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), however, is one such tangible outcome, which has cemented youth as a cornerstone of formal integration in the region. With its promise of promoting reconciliation and cooperation between youth, RYCO is already considered

one of the Berlin Process's major success stories. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has attempted to prepare and integrate youth into (in)formal democratization and reform processes across the Western Balkans through long-running training programs, educational exchanges, and policy development workshops.

Still, working with the region's 'excluded generations' and, ultimately, improving existing policies to integrate youth into Southeastern Europe's economic and political transformation processes requires reliable data and analysis. This is why these Youth Studies are so important. While we are awaiting new data for the year 2018, this current volume is an edited and comparative analysis of the existing studies the FES undertook between 2011 and 2015 both on the national and regional levels.

The survey results show troubling trends in young people's perceptions of their wider social, economic, and political contexts. The study lays bare the need to invest in the education, future prospects, and political engagement of youth, which syncs with both the FES' and RYCO's commitment to re-energizing youth activism and representation in the region. There is arguably no more important field in which to reaffirm the EU's relationship with and commitment to Southeastern Europe's development. Quite simply, youth are the region's future, and all of our collective efforts depend on their full-spectrum commitment to and participation in the processes of European integration.

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*Dialogue Southeast Europe*

*October 2017*



# Executive Summary

This study offers a comparative overview of findings of youth surveys conducted between 2011 and 2015 by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in nine countries of Southeast Europe (SEE). Survey results are indicative of young people's perceptions of their wider social, economic and political contexts and the ways in which such contexts impact their transitions to adulthood.

Although there are differences between the countries, results show that young people in SEE tend to espouse rather conservative values. This is reflected in their traditional attitudes towards marriage and coupledness and generally high levels of religious belief; moreover, in some of the countries, respondents show intolerance towards homosexuality and conservative attitudes towards abortion. Potentially indicative of their wider social milieu – including a lack of institutional trust – young people generally demonstrate low levels of social trust, except for in close-knit networks of family and relatives. They generally display high levels of social distance, especially towards minority groups. Their reliance on their family is also manifested in high rates of cohabitation with parents, which is related to unfavorable financial conditions that may not allow for independent housing.

Survey results furthermore point to a considerable lack of social, economic and political integration of young people in SEE countries. While the level of satisfaction with educational systems varies between countries, results signal a lack of practical orientation of education, as the majority of youth have not participated in an internship; this may subsequently limit their chances of finding employment. In fact, youth in SEE have rather meagre employment outlooks: many respondents

are skeptical of their ability to find a job quickly after graduation, and with youth unemployment rates rampant in most countries, it is not surprising that young people see unemployment as the most pressing social issue, and in some countries (most notably Albania and Kosovo), also express a high willingness to leave their country for economic reasons. Surveys point to a relatively high percentage of youth in some countries (between 21–24 percent in BiH, Kosovo, Macedonia and Romania) who are neither employed nor in education. Workforce flexibility and structural mismatches between educational systems and industry needs are demonstrated in the substantial cohorts of SEE youth working outside of the professions for which they were educated. Young people's disillusionment with political systems is reflected in their distrust in political institutions and low levels of political participation.

Research results call for a paradigmatic shift in young people's integration in SEE societies, as they signal a failure of current models and policies towards youth. Such a shift should address the failure of educational systems to provide young people with the knowledge and skills that will allow them to become independent, and ensure easier access to education for disadvantaged youth. Comprehensive macroeconomic policies to increase labor force demand should be coupled with activation programs targeting unemployed and inactive youth that enhance employability. While youth mobility should be encouraged, emigration should be approached strategically through policies that seek to encourage young people to stay in their home countries. Promoting education that fosters tolerance, understanding and knowledge of other cul-

tures, social groups and political views is key for building social trust. Finally, there is a need for a systematic approach to civic education, combined with opportunities for civic engagement and mechanisms to encourage substantial involvement of youth in decision-making processes.

# 1 Introduction

Between 2011 and 2015, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) conducted representative youth surveys in nine countries of Southeast Europe (SEE) – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. The surveys focused on young people’s beliefs, attitudes and values, as well as their perceptions of and involvement in different spheres of life, such as politics, family, leisure, education and employment.<sup>1</sup> The results were presented in nine country studies and a regional study.<sup>2</sup>

Drawing upon the FES youth studies and surveys, this study integrates and interprets empirical findings in a comparative perspective.<sup>3</sup> It aims to understand how SEE youth are shaped by and respond to their wider context, marked by ongoing economic, political and social transitions. Such an overview may provide insight into the current development and the future prospects of these societies, resting on the idea that “...the attitudes and value orientation of the young people

can be considered an early indicator which ultimately reveals the future tendencies prevalent in an entire society.”<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, understanding the heterogeneity in youth values, behaviors and experiences, which can be influenced by structural factors such as gender, social class or place of residence, might help shed some light on differences of opportunity and how to address them. The study also highlights policy implications of the findings, which may be useful both to national actors involved in policy-making and international actors seeking to understand individual country circumstances.

Results point to young people’s dissatisfaction with their wider social context, as they express anxieties about existential issues, demonstrate low levels of social and institutional trust, do not feel adequately represented in politics, and in many countries, also express a high willingness to leave their country for economic reasons. Results also point to differences in values, and experiences and opportunities that are associated with structural factors.

In order to be able to appreciate the survey findings, the first section provides a conceptual framework for understanding the phenomenon of youth in a transitional context. It is followed by sections on social attitudes, values and beliefs, social trust and distance, education, employment, political participation and future prospects. A conclusion includes a set of broad recommen-

1 Based on a template of Germany’s 2006 *Shell Youth Study* survey questionnaire, the surveys were modified to respond to individual country circumstances. For more, see Flere, Sergej et al, “Introduction and Methodology of FES Youth Studies,” *Lost in Democratic Transition? Political Challenges and Perspectives for Young People in South East Europe: Results of Representative Surveys in Eight Countries*. Eds. Klaus Hurrelmann and Michael Weichert (Sarajevo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Regional Dialogue SEE, 2015), pp. 11–14. See also Annex 1 on methodology in this study.

2 Published in 2015, the study featured and interpreted results from eight countries (without Serbia, where research was conducted in 2015). See: Klaus Hurrelmann and Michael Weichert, eds, *Lost in Democratic Transition?*

3 The study provides analysis of the survey data for the 16–27 age cohort encompassed by the nine surveys. For analytical purposes, an integral database of survey results was created, and was used as the basis for this comparative report. For more information, see Annex on methodology.

4 Klaus Hurrelmann, “Foreword,” *Kosovo Youth Study: Forward Looking, Grounded in Tradition* (Prishtina: IDRA Kosovo, 2012), p. 4; Mark Cieslik and Donald Simpson, “Introduction,” *Key Concepts in Youth Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 2013), p. xii.

datations for policy actors and future researchers, which were also informed by inputs received from a stakeholder workshop organized in Skopje in April 2017.<sup>5</sup>

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5 The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Skopje Office and the Regional Dialogue Southeast Europe organized a validation workshop on April 22, 2017 to discuss and present the comparative study "An Excluded Generation: Youth in Southeast Europe" to youth policy experts, representatives of national youth councils and academia and harness their inputs for recommendations featured in the study.

## 2 Conceptualizing Youth

Youth as a concept is not easy to grasp. While there are attempts to define it in terms of age of majority,<sup>6</sup> as a demographic group,<sup>7</sup> or in terms of adolescence as a developmental phase,<sup>8</sup> youth is generally seen to be “a socially constructed intermediary phase that stands between childhood and adulthood,” and that cannot be linked to a specific age range, activity or behavior.<sup>9</sup> It is usually conceptualized as a transition, a period of so-called “semi-dependence” that will ultimately vary between different countries and across time.<sup>10</sup> As a result of social changes, such as bleaker job prospects or rising housing costs,<sup>11</sup> such a transition to adulthood is becoming difficult to operationalize and is less likely to be linear. Young people are spending protracted periods of time in education, may stay at their parents’ home longer, or may go back and forth from education to work and from living alone to living with parents.<sup>12</sup>

As the nature of transition changes, one of the key dilemmas is expressed through the dichotomy between structure and agency: To what extent young people can “navigate” their lives and shape their own destiny and to what extent the latter is predetermined by structural factors, including social class, ethnicity or gender.<sup>13</sup> Postmodern perspectives have stressed individual agency and traits such as resilience or motivation,<sup>14</sup> especially in light of the erosion of the institutional framework<sup>15</sup> shaping traditional life courses like marriage and parenting, rather than the generally more normative and deterministic view of structural approaches.<sup>16</sup> A common framework used is one of individualization<sup>17</sup> (and individualized transition) or the disassociation from a particular collective, where youth are seen to actively and “reflexively” choose their paths (or biographies) in light of uncertain and changing circumstances of what Beck termed “the risk society”.<sup>18</sup> In an uncer-

6 The legally defined age of majority varies from country to country. For more, see Walter R. Heinz, “Youth transitions in an age of uncertainty,” *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New perspectives and agendas*, ed. Andy Furlong (Oxon, Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 4.

7 For example, the range for youth the youth cohort is 15–24 for statistical purposes, according to the United Nations. Focal Point on Youth, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Definition of Youth,” Fact sheet, 2013, p. 1. However, ranges vary between organizations and countries.

8 Andy Furlong, *Youth Studies: An introduction* (Oxon, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 2.

9 Ibid, p. 1.

10 Ibid, p. 2–3.

11 See, for example, Cieslik and Simpson, “Introduction,” p. xiii.

12 Andy Furlong, “Reconceptualizing youth and young adulthood,” *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, p. 1. Furlong, *Youth Studies*, p. 4.

13 Furlong, *Youth Studies*, p. 7.

14 Furlong, *Youth Studies*, pp. 7–8.

15 Sergej Flere, “Introduction,” *Slovenian Youth 2013: Living in times of disillusionment, risk and precarity* (Zagreb: Center for the Study of Post-Yugoslav Societies and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014), p. 16.

16 Furlong, *Youth Studies*, p. 8.

17 Beck (1992) defined individualism as “the variation and differentiation of lifestyles and forms of life, opposing the thinking behind the traditional categories of large-group societies – which is to say, classes, estates and social stratification.” Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 88.

18 Flere, “Introduction,” p. 16. See also: Beck, *Risk Society*; Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002); Manuela du Bois-Reymond, “Models of navigation and life management,” *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, p. 31.

tain context, young people are seen to live in an “extended present”, where short-term, rather than long-term plans are their “navigation” or coping strategy.<sup>19</sup>

However, reliance on agency posits a challenge for those who, due to structural obstacles such as poverty and a lack of access to proper employment or education, have few strategies to deploy.<sup>20</sup> Structural approaches remain essential to understanding transitions, as empirical research points to numerous ways in which individuals remain constrained by conditions such as changing labor markets or cultural norms in their ability to make choices, next to factors such as economic advantage and gender.<sup>21</sup> Thus, structural and agency perspectives are increasingly combined to relay the notion of individualized transitions that take place in a context of social inequalities.<sup>22</sup> Heinz sees transitions as being dependent on and linked to “complex interactions between individual decisions, opportunity structures, and social pathways with more or less institutionalized guidelines and regulations.”<sup>23</sup>

For instance, the resources that young people have at their disposal can shape their aspirations, the formation of their attitudes and values, but also their behaviors and opportunities in life, including education, work, and the ability to become independent.<sup>24</sup> Social class is seen to significantly structure the opportunities that young people will have, next to factors such as the type of institutional environment (e.g. school or labor market), other structural and intersecting factors (including gender, ethnic origin, place of residence, etc.) and individ-

ual agency.<sup>25</sup> According to Klanjšek, “the economic and social statuses of youth are closely associated with policies relating to the labor market, welfare state measures, education, family, and other social policies.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the resources of a young person’s household are shown to predict their work destinations.<sup>27</sup> Those who come from families and contexts with higher levels of social, economic or cultural capital – the later indicated, for instance, by the educational level of their parents<sup>28</sup> – are shown to do much better in the educational system than children with lower levels of such capital in their family.<sup>29</sup> In turn, it may also aid a young person’s ability to find employment and afford independent housing.<sup>30</sup> According to Furlong, “these capitals can be seen as a class-based resource and as a dimension of the process through which social divisions are reproduced.”<sup>31</sup>

Thus, despite a common experience of historical conditions, as well as “universal technological and social influences on youth,”<sup>32</sup> young people cannot be considered a single, recognizable group with a distinct “world view.”<sup>33</sup> Youth is by no means a homogeneous group sharing attitudes and values or denoting a uniform culture,<sup>34</sup> given divisions along the lines of gender, ethnicity, race, disability, sexual orientation, place of residence or social class<sup>35</sup>; many times, such divisions may intersect and breed further inequality and potential social exclusion.<sup>36</sup>

- .....
- 19 Smiljka Tomanović and Dragan Stanojević, *Young people in Serbia 2015: Situation, perceptions, beliefs and aspirations* (Belgrade: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and SeCons, 2015), p. 7. See also Julia Brannen and Ann Nilsen, “Young People’s Time Perspectives: From Youth to Adulthood,” *Sociology* 36, no. 3 (2002), pp. 517–518.
- 20 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young people in Serbia 2015*, p. 7.
- 21 See Cieslik and Simpson, “Introduction,” xiii; Furlong, “Introduction,” pp. 8–9.
- 22 Heinz, “Youth transitions in an age of uncertainty,” p. 7. For more, see concept of “bounded agency”, Karen Evans, “Concepts of bounded agency in education, work, and the personal lives of young adults,” *International Journal of Psychology* 42, no.2 (2007); or the concept of “structured individualization,” Karen Evans and Walter R. Heinz, eds, *Becoming Adults in England and Germany* (London: Anglo-German Foundation, 1994).
- 23 Heinz, “Youth transitions in an age of uncertainty,” p. 4.
- 24 For more, see Rudi Klanjšek, “Living Conditions and Socio-Economic Situation of Youth,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 31. Vlasta Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis: First IDIZ-Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Youth Survey* (Zagreb: Institute for Social Research and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013), p. 15, Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young people in Serbia 2015*, p. 17. See also Brannen and Nilsen, “Young People’s Time Perspectives,” p. 532.

- .....
- 25 Ilišin et al, *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 15. Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young people in Serbia 2015*, p. 17. See Also Lois Weis, “Social class, youth and young adulthood in the context of a shifting global economy,” *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, p. 50.
- 26 Klanjšek, “Living Conditions and Socio-Economic Situation of Youth,” pp. 31–32.
- 27 Furlong, *Youth Studies*, p. 30.
- 28 Sergej Flere and Rudi Klanjšek, “Conclusion – Slovenian youth in precarious times,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 261.
- 29 Furlong, *Youth Studies*, p. 34; Ilišin et al, *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 15; Also see du Bois-Reyomond, “Models of navigation and life management,” p. 34; Pierre Bourdieu, “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction,” *Knowledge, Education and Social Change: Papers in the Sociology of Education*, ed. Richard. Brown (Tavistock, UK: Tavistock Publications, 1973).
- 30 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young people in Serbia 2015*, p. 17. Flere and Klanjšek, “Conclusion”, p. 261. For more on the impact of parental cultural capital on children’s educational prospects, see Bourdieu, “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction.”
- 31 Furlong, *Youth Studies*, p. 34.
- 32 Flere, “Introduction,” p. 19.
- 33 E.g. see Ilišin et al, *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 13.
- 34 Furlong, *Youth Studies*, p. 24. Flere, “Introduction,” p. 15, 16.
- 35 Furlong, *Youth Studies*, pp. 24–25. Also see Weis, “Social class, youth and young adulthood in the context of a shifting global economy,” p. 56. Cieslik and Simpson, “Introduction,” p. xv.
- 36 Furlong, *Youth Studies*, p. 41.

Contextual factors in individual countries shape the nature of youth transition in as much as “modern societies differ in their institutional arrangements concerning life transitions: education and training provisions, labour market regulations, exclusion mechanisms, social assistance rules, and the extent to which there is an explicit youth policy.”<sup>37</sup> In SEE, the social, economic and political risks faced by youth are numerous. The context of transition from socialist regimes towards democracy and a market economy in the nine SEE countries studied poses an additional challenge to young people’s own transitions to adulthood. However, the countries are at different stages of transition, with some having joined the EU and achieved significant progress in terms of democratization<sup>38</sup> and economic development, while others are still devastated by political turmoil, corruption, a weak economy and labor markets. In any case, differences in context ultimately matter in terms of young people’s standard of living, the opportunities they have to access quality education and employment, as well and other aspects of life.

Generally speaking, most previous research in the region points to a precarious socio-economic position of young people, especially in terms of employment prospects and reliance on their family for support.<sup>39</sup> For example, speaking for Croatian youth, Ilišin et al (2013) conclude that “the current generation of young people has been growing up in a society marked by the traumas of war and modest economic development, and maturing in circumstances of economic regression and significant personal uncertainty and insecurity.”<sup>40</sup> According to Flere (2014), Slovenia’s youth is labeled the “independence generation”, as their future is shaped by the institutional changes that occurred after the country’s break from Yugoslavia, but also the “economic depression generation”, having experienced a major economic downturn that has significantly impacted their prospects for reliable employment.<sup>41</sup>

Tomanović and Stanojević (2015) situate youth in a context of “anomic post-socialist transformation”, which results in major structural obstacles to their social, political or economic integration in Serbia, as corroborated by previous research.<sup>42</sup> Serbian youth are described as “navigating” through or “coping” with uncertainties in their lives by developing strategies that may not allow for long-term planning, where they “mostly rely on their own competencies, resources and action, as well as the resources, support and help from informal networks, mainly parents and friends”<sup>43</sup>. Social stratification – for example through education as a mechanism of social reproduction – has also been noted as a problem in some of the countries studied.<sup>44</sup>

In further sections, we take a closer look at SEE youth from the perspective of their attitudes, perceptions, behaviors and overall experiences tied to different spheres of life. Unfortunately, as there is no similar comparative research for the region, it is difficult to discern continuity or change in the extent to which youth compare to earlier cohorts and are shaped by certain factors.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, as the study relies on surveys rather than biographical research, it cannot draw conclusions regarding “the balance of individual agency, opportunity structures, and institutional regulations.”<sup>46</sup> The focus here is, rather, on the structural factors that may influence youth pathways.

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37 Heinz, “Youth transitions in an age of uncertainty,” p. 6.

38 For an overview of democratization progress in the region, see Dane Taleski, Haley Reimbold and Klaus Hurrelmann, “Building Democracies in South East Europe: Youth as an Unwilling Agent? *Lost in Democratic Transition?* pp. 18–19.

39 E. g. see a review in: Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young people in Serbia 2015*, p. 9. See also Petar-Emil Mitev and Siyka Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria. A Sociological Portrait 2014* (Sofia: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014), pp. 9–10. Flere and Klanjšek, “Conclusion”, p. 257. However, Flere and Klanjšek point out that, despite the precarious work and lower or stagnating incomes, the social position of youth in Slovenia cannot be seen as deteriorating, given high levels in tertiary education, relatively favorable economic conditions and family relations. Ibid, p. 258.

40 Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 11.

41 Flere, “Introduction,” p. 19.

.....  
42 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young people in Serbia 2015*, p. 8. Authors refer to a 2012 study by Tomanović et al.

43 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young people in Serbia 2015*, p. 9. Authors refer to a 2012 study by Tomanović et al.

44 Ibid, p. 8; Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 189.

45 For some countries, comparable former studies are available (e.g. Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia), and country reports showcasing youth survey results offer insights into trends.

46 Heinz, “Youth transitions in an age of uncertainty,” pp. 4–5.



## 3 Social Attitudes, Values and Beliefs

A value is “a permanent belief according to which one style or purpose of life is individually or socially more acceptable than the opposite style or purpose.”<sup>47</sup> According to Flere (2014), values are considered relatively stable and have been found to vastly affect behavior and impart it with meaning.<sup>48</sup> The attitudes and the values young people express and potentially adopt are also seen as important signposts of the context shaping them. They speak to the level and nature of socialization and may or may not signal a drive towards individualization in young people’s transitions. Thus, as described by Mitev and Kovacheva (2014), the main questions have to do with whether or not “[...] young people feel capable and ready to actively seek to achieve their goals, and to reflect on their choices; and are those choices free from or limited by the structuring influence of the traditional social norms based on gender, ethnicity, and religion.”<sup>49</sup>

However, with respect to values as reflected in youth transitions, it is important note that the line between the “old” and the “new” (in this case: detraditionalization or destandardization) is not quite clear-cut nor is it, as du Bois-Raymond (2009) states, either or. As she notes, “one must realize that the ‘old’ is never the same old as it was but changes content and form under the pressure of general change.” Thus, a life course in line with the more traditional norms cannot quite be equated with the experiences of earlier generations.<sup>50</sup>

Given that earlier research has pointed to a prevalence of traditional values among SEE populations in general and youth in particular,<sup>51</sup> it is especially important to consider whether young people continue to support such values or lean more towards more post-modern ones related to individualism.

Youth surveys included questions on general values and attitudes, attitudes towards homosexuality and abortion, marriage and coupledness, and religious beliefs. Results show that – with some notable country exceptions – they generally attest to the prevalence of traditionalism and “a conservative outlook.”<sup>52</sup> Differences among youth that signal an exception to the predominant responses are usually associated with socio-demographic traits such as educational level, parents’ cultural capital, place of residence or wealth.

### General Attitudes and Values

In line with norms supported in their immediate milieu, SEE youth perceive traits and behaviors linked with self-representation, independence and

47 Rokeach (1973), cited in Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 97.

48 Sergej Flere, “Anxieties and aspirations,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 183.

49 Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 50.

50 Du Bois-Reymond, “Models of navigation and life management,” p. 37.

51 E. g. see Duško Sekulić, “Vrijednosno-ideološke orijentacije kao predznak I posljedica društvenih promjena,” *Politička misao* 48, no. 3 (2011); Jelena Pešić, “Persistence of traditionalist value orientations in Serbia,” *Sociologija*, XLV III, no. 4, (2006); Mirjana Ule and Metka Kuhar, “Orientations of Young Adults in Slovenia toward the Family Formation,” *Young 16*, no. 2 (2008), pp. 165–166. Mitev (2005), discussed in Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 34; Smiljka Tomanović and Suzana Ignjatović, “Attitudes on Transition to Adulthood among Young People in Serbia,” *Sociologija* XLVIII, no. 1 (2006); Simonida Kacarska et al, “20 Years After 1991: The tale of two generations,” *Opinion paper*, Supporting Policy Development Paper Series, 1/2012 (Belgrade: European Fund for the Balkans).

52 Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann, “Building Democracies in SEE,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 52.

education as being especially “fashionable” or “in”: in all countries, *looking good*, *having a career*, *being independent*, and *completing university* were ranked the highest. On the other hand, *using drugs (marihuana)*, *being active in politics or civil initiatives* were ranked the lowest.

A factor analysis identified four factors that are linked to the above traits: independence, self-presentation, traditionalism and activism.<sup>53</sup> Analysis at the regional level showed that young women, youth who have completed higher levels of education and with parents with higher educational attainment, those whose households are materially better off, and with lower levels of religious belief are more likely to embrace traits under independence.<sup>54</sup> A perception of independence as being “in” may signal pragmatism and a desire for individualization.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, more traditional values, such as having a family, are less pronounced. Analysis showed that younger persons, women and youth in better-off households, those who are more religious, have lower levels of completed education and with parents with lower educational attainment espoused traditionalism more.<sup>56</sup> Materialistic traits linked to the desire to “build a certain image”<sup>57</sup> were negatively correlated with age and positively with household wealth and respondents’ extent of religiousness.<sup>58</sup>

While civic and political participation were ranked low across the countries, it is interesting to note that youth, on average, find it more fashionable to participate in civic initiatives than politics, which could be interpreted as falling in line with the trends “in developed parts of the world [where] youth are usually taken to be rather more distanced from formal politics in favor of civil society organizations and initiatives.”<sup>59</sup> At the regional level, activism was positively correlated with age, respondents’ level of completed education and father’s educational attainment, and negatively with lower levels of religious belief and material well-being.<sup>60</sup>

As a value they personally embrace, youth picked personal dignity most frequently: cumulatively, 72,1 percent picked it as first, second or third choice. Other popular values included correctness (47,6%), tolerance (40,3%) and competitive spirit/grit (37,1%), while wealth (23,6%) and innovative spirit (16,7%) ranked the lowest (Figure 3.1).

These values can be interpreted in various ways. For example, Tomanović and Stanojević (2015) see personal dignity, wealth, and correctness to indicate mainly traditional and materialistic values, emphasizing material security, status and personal stability, whereas innovation, altruism, tolerance and grit are more in line with the modern and post-modern values of universality and individuality.<sup>61</sup> However, personal dignity – as well as independence and grit – can also be seen to denote “the emancipation of the individual from traditional groups.”<sup>62</sup> The generally lower ranking of acquisition of wealth and prestige may signal a lower materialistic orientation of SEE youth.<sup>63</sup> Sta-

53 Factor *independence* pertains to variables of ‘being independent’, ‘finishing university studies,’ ‘having a career’, with a somewhat weaker positive correlation with ‘being responsible’; factor *self-presentation* pertains to ‘looking good’, ‘wearing designer clothes’, and with a somewhat weaker positive correlation with ‘eating healthy’; factor *traditionalism* pertains to ‘being loyal’, ‘responsible’, ‘getting married’ and ‘not smoking marihuana’, with a somewhat weaker positive correlation with ‘eating healthy’; factor ‘activism’ pertains to ‘engaging in politics’, ‘engaging in civic initiatives’, with a somewhat weaker correlation with ‘smoking marihuana.’ Similar analysis was conducted in the 2013 Slovenian youth study – for more, see: Kirbiš and Tavčar Krajnc, “Leisure and Lifestyle,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, pp. 97–98.

54 Correlations with independence: (r=0.043, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho) for women; for mother’s (r=0.131, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho) and father’s (r=0.162, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho) educational attainment; wealth index (r=0.162, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho); extent of religiousness, inverted scale (r=0.088, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho). For Kosovo and Albania, no data is available on parents’ educational attainment – thus, all correlations with this variable in further text exclude Kosovo and Albania.

55 Also see Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, pp. 89–90.

56 Correlations with traditionalism: age (r=-0.069, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho); female gender (r=0.094, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho); wealth index (r=0.025, p<0.05, Spearman’s rho); extent of religiousness, inverted scale (r=-0.12, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho); education (r=-0.033, p<0.05, Spearman’s rho); for mother’s (r=-0.085, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho) and father’s (r=-0.039, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho) educational attainment. Data on parents’ education not available for Kosovo and Albania.

57 Also see Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, pp. 79–80.

58 Correlations with self-presentation: age (r=-0.069, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho); wealth index (r=0.057, p<0.001,

Spearman’s rho); extent of religiousness, inverted scale (r=-0.089, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho). At individual country level, women chose traits under self-representation more in Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo and Slovenia; in BiH, it was men that did. No significant correlations in other countries.

59 See Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 80. For an overview of international studies on conventional vs. unconventional forms of youth participation see: Andrej Kirbiš and Barbara Zagorc, “Politics and Democracy,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 215

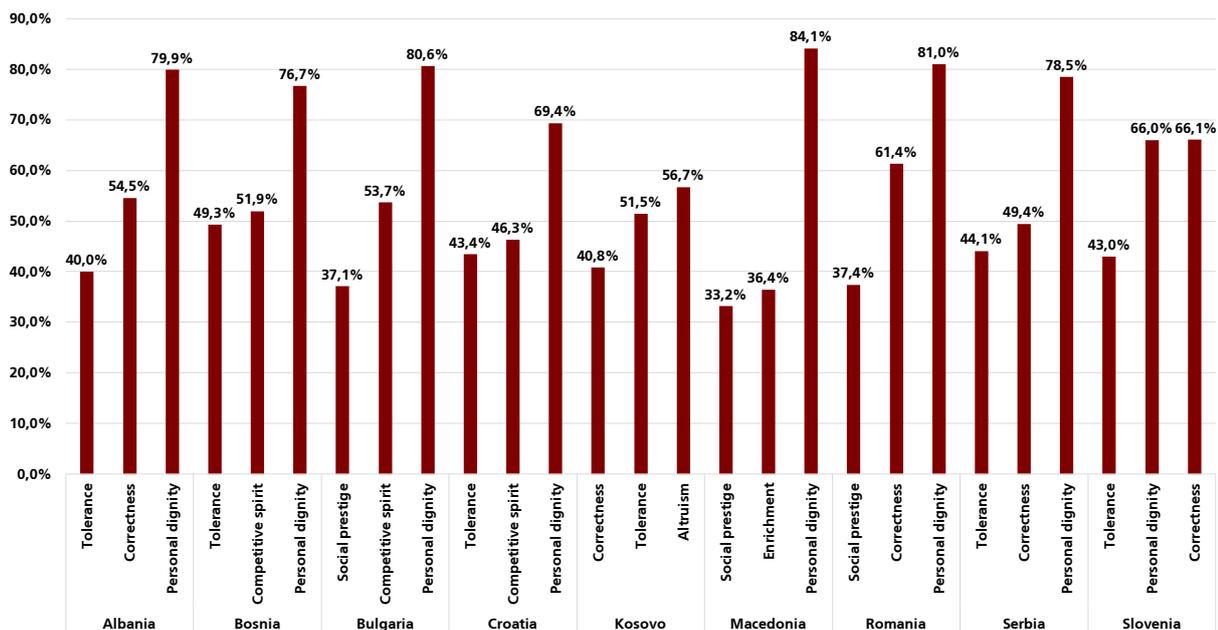
60 Correlations with activism: age (r=0.053, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho); level of completed education (r=0.078, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho); extent of religiousness, inverted scale (r=-0.10, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho); wealth index (r=-0.036, p<0.01, Spearman’s rho); father’s educational attainment (r=0.038, p<0.001, Spearman’s rho). While not correlated with the mother’s educational attainment at the regional level, individual country-level correlations show a positive significant correlation between activism and mother’s education in Romania and Slovenia.

61 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 83.

62 Flere, “Anxieties and Aspirations,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 184.

63 See Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 98.

Figure 3.1: Top three values per country



tistical analysis showed that persons who are from materially worse off households pick wealth as important more often, as do persons who have lower levels of completed education and with parents with lower educational attainment.<sup>64</sup> In Bulgaria, where material values were emphasized by a share of the respondents, Mitev and Kovacheva (2014) see youth as embracing a mix of material security as an indicator of the “culture of survival”, and self-affirmation as an indicator of the “culture of self-expression”<sup>65</sup>, which signals a potential drive towards individualization.<sup>66</sup>

### Attitudes towards Homosexuality and Abortion

In five countries, specific questions on attitudes towards homosexuality and abortion as important social issues were posed. Despite their high appreciation for tolerance as a value, youth exhibit low levels of tolerance towards homosexuality, indicating a prevalence of conservative, heteronormative values and little acceptance of diversity (Figure 3.2).

<sup>64</sup> Correlations with wealth as value: wealth index ( $r=-0.067$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho); level of completed education ( $r=-0.071$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho); mother’s ( $r=-0.042$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho) and father’s ( $r=-0.054$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho) educational attainment.

<sup>65</sup> Authors refer to a typology by Welzel and Inglehart (2009), in: Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 52

<sup>66</sup> Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 54.

On the other hand, youth attitudes towards abortion vary among these countries, with Bulgarian youth more accepting of abortion than youth in other countries, where conservative views predominate (Figure 3.3).

Regional analysis pertaining to these countries shows that homophobia correlates positively with religiousness and residing in rural areas, and negatively with age, level of completed education of respondents, the educational attainment of their parents, their socio-economic status, as well as full-time or part-time employment. Moreover, women are less homophobic than men.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, tolerance towards abortion increases with age, respondents’ level of completed education and the educational attainment of their parents, and is negatively correlated with religiousness and living in rural areas; again, women have greater tolerance towards abortion than men.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Correlations with homophobia: Extent of religiousness, inverted scale ( $r=-0.173$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho); life in urban areas ( $r=-0.090$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho); female gender ( $r=-0.170$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho); age ( $r=-0.119$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho); level of completed education of respondent ( $r=-0.143$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho); educational attainment of mother ( $r=-0.186$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho) and father ( $r=-0.161$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho); wealth index ( $r=-0.057$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho); part-time or full-time employment ( $r=-0.052$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho).

<sup>68</sup> Correlations with tolerance towards abortion: respondents’ level of completed education ( $r=0.047$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho), mother’s educational attainment ( $r=0.144$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho), father’s educational attainment ( $r=0.081$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho), female gender ( $r=0.046$ ,  $p<0.01$ , Spearman’s rho), urban residence ( $r=0.122$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho), age ( $r=0.07$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho), extent of religiousness, inverted scale ( $r=0.269$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho).

Figure 3.2. Attitudes on acceptability of gay men and lesbian women (%)

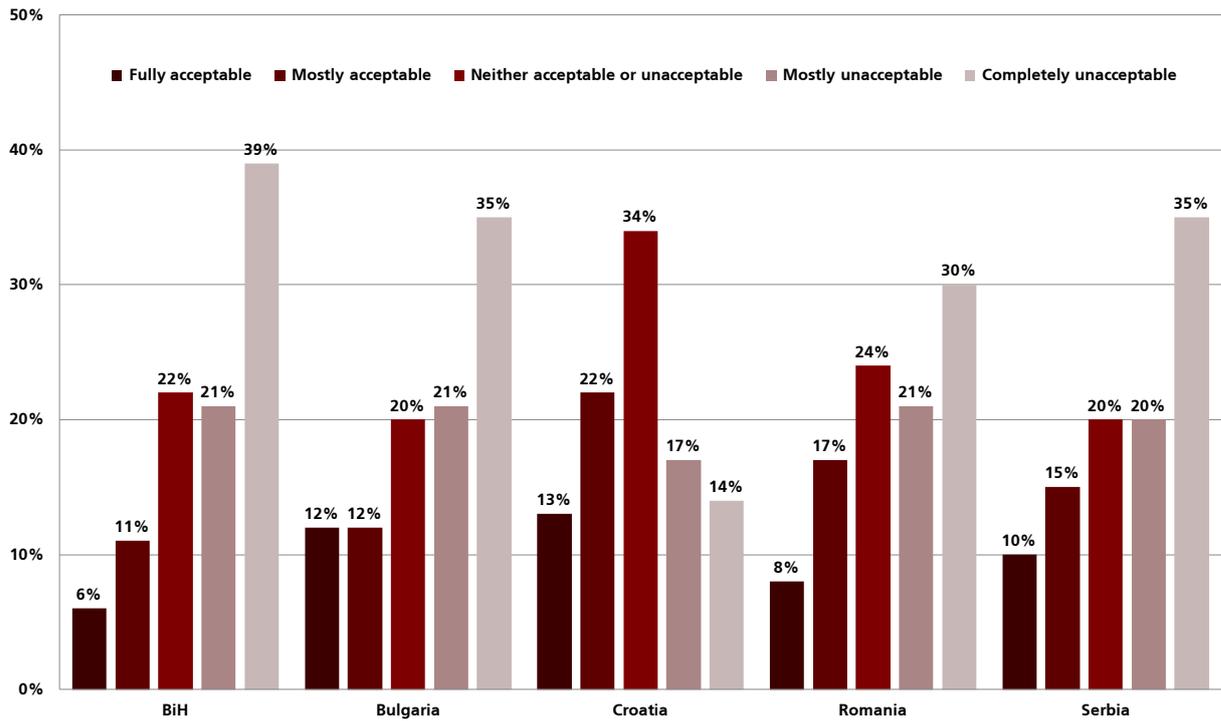


Figure 3.3: Attitudes towards abortion (%)

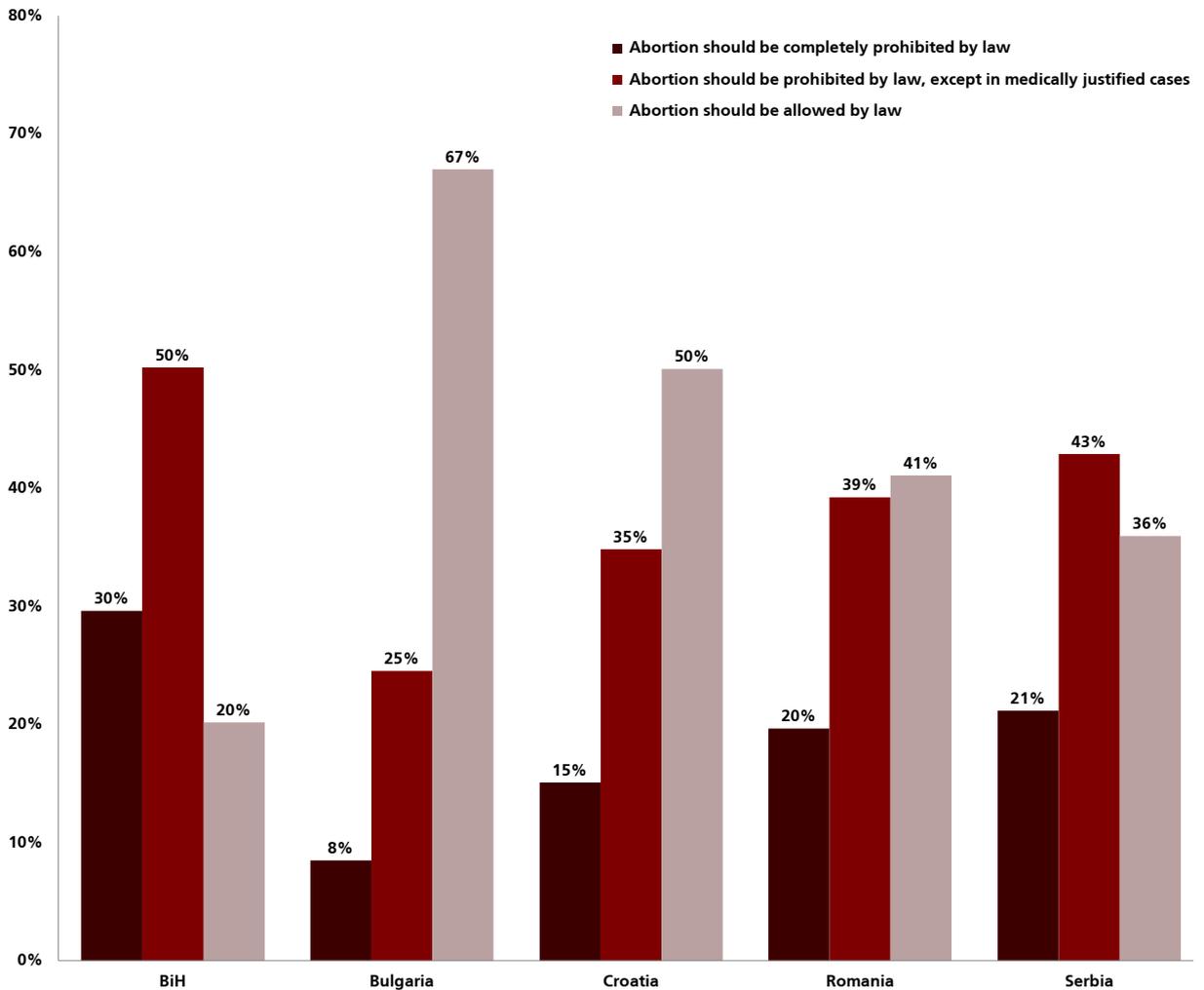
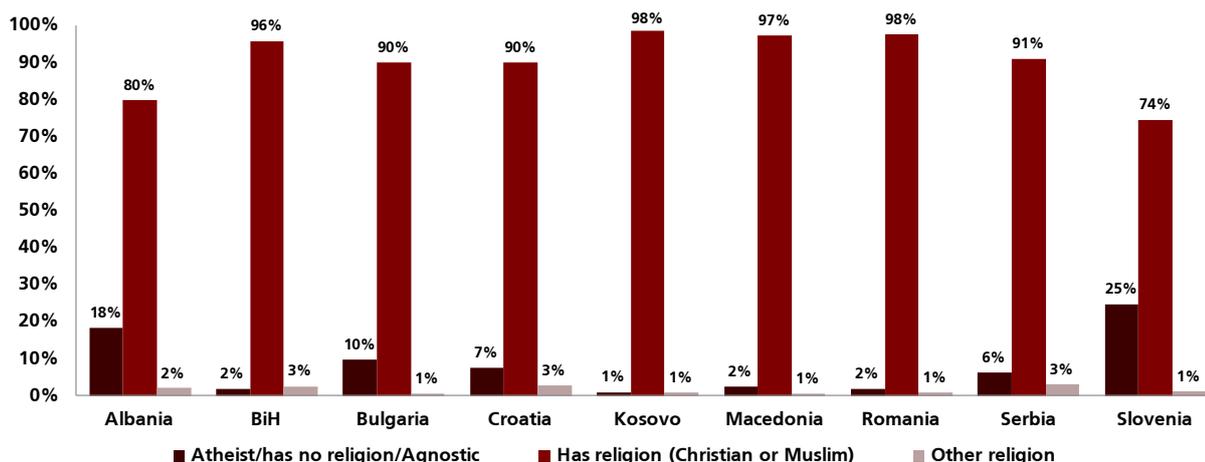


Figure 3.4. Religious denomination of youth (%)<sup>72</sup>



### Religious Beliefs

Religiousness is considered an element of traditionalism,<sup>69</sup> an important marker of identity,<sup>70</sup> and is seen to have a significant impact on values, attitudes and behaviors.<sup>71</sup> The great majority of young people in SEE report belonging to a religious denomination (Figure 3.4).

However, in countries where such a question was posed, it is evident that a lower percentage of young people show support for different religious dogmas than they report belonging to a religious denomination. However, there are some stark differences between the countries, with youth in BiH and Romania showing the greatest support for dominant religious beliefs (Figure 3.5).

Statistical analysis at the regional level shows that belonging to a religion is negatively correlated with respondents' level of completed education and parents' educational attainment.<sup>73</sup> At the level of individual countries, in Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia, there is also a negative correlation between belonging to a religious

denomination and living in urban areas. Moreover, analysis for the countries where the question on beliefs was posed shows that there is positive correlation between a lower level of religiousness as expressed through belief<sup>74</sup> and the educational attainment of parents, as well as life in urban areas. Women are more religious than men.<sup>75</sup>

Respondents' engagement in various religious practices appears to lag behind their religious identification and belief.<sup>76</sup> An exception is the celebration of religious holidays, a "part of tradition for many families and the wider community"<sup>77</sup> (Figure 3.6).

At the regional level, statistical analysis shows that women, as well as respondents from urban areas, tend to attend service and pray more often, while persons whose mothers have a higher educational attainment attend service and pray less often.<sup>78</sup>

Results point to differences between countries in terms of the role of religion in youth identity. While youth in some countries, such as BiH, may be deemed more traditional based on religion, in others, such as Slovenia or Bulgaria, religion may take on a less important role. Lavrič and Boroja (2014) consider the results to be reflective of a trend towards seculariza-

69 Sekulić (2011), discussed in: Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 104

70 Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," *Lost in Transition?* p. 28.

71 For an overview of literature in this field, see Amer Osmić, "Sociodemographic and socioeconomic status of youth," *Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014* (Sarajevo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, 2015), pp. 42–43.

72 In some countries, the option agnostic was also added. This is combined with options 'Don't practice' or 'Atheist' in Figure 3.4. In some countries, such as Slovenia, the answer was phrased as "don't belong to any religion".

73 Correlations with religious denomination: level of completed education of respondents ( $r=-0.129$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho), mother's ( $r=-0.103$ ,  $p<0.001$  Spearman's rho) and father's educational attainment ( $r=-0.034$ ,  $p<0.01$ , Spearman's rho), female gender ( $r=0.047$ ,  $p<0.001$  Spearman's rho).

74 Cronbach Alpha analysis was done, according to which four variables (religious beliefs) may be combined into a variable that relates to the extent of religiousness ( $\alpha=0.918$ ).

75 Correlations with religiousness, inverted scale: mother's ( $r=0.190$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho) and father's educational attainment ( $r=0.127$ ,  $p<0.001$  Spearman's rho); urban residence ( $r=0.106$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho); female gender ( $r=-0.082$ ,  $p<0.001$  Spearman's rho).

76 Similar to the findings of Kacarska et al. (2012), discussed in: Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," *Lost in Transition?* p. 28.

77 See Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 107.

78 Regional analysis without Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. Correlation with female gender ( $r=0.035$ ,  $p<0.01$ , Spearman's rho), urban residence ( $r=0.106$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho) and mother's educational attainment ( $r=-0.025$ ,  $p<0.05$ , Spearman's rho).

Figure 3.5. Religious beliefs (most frequent answer, %)<sup>79</sup>

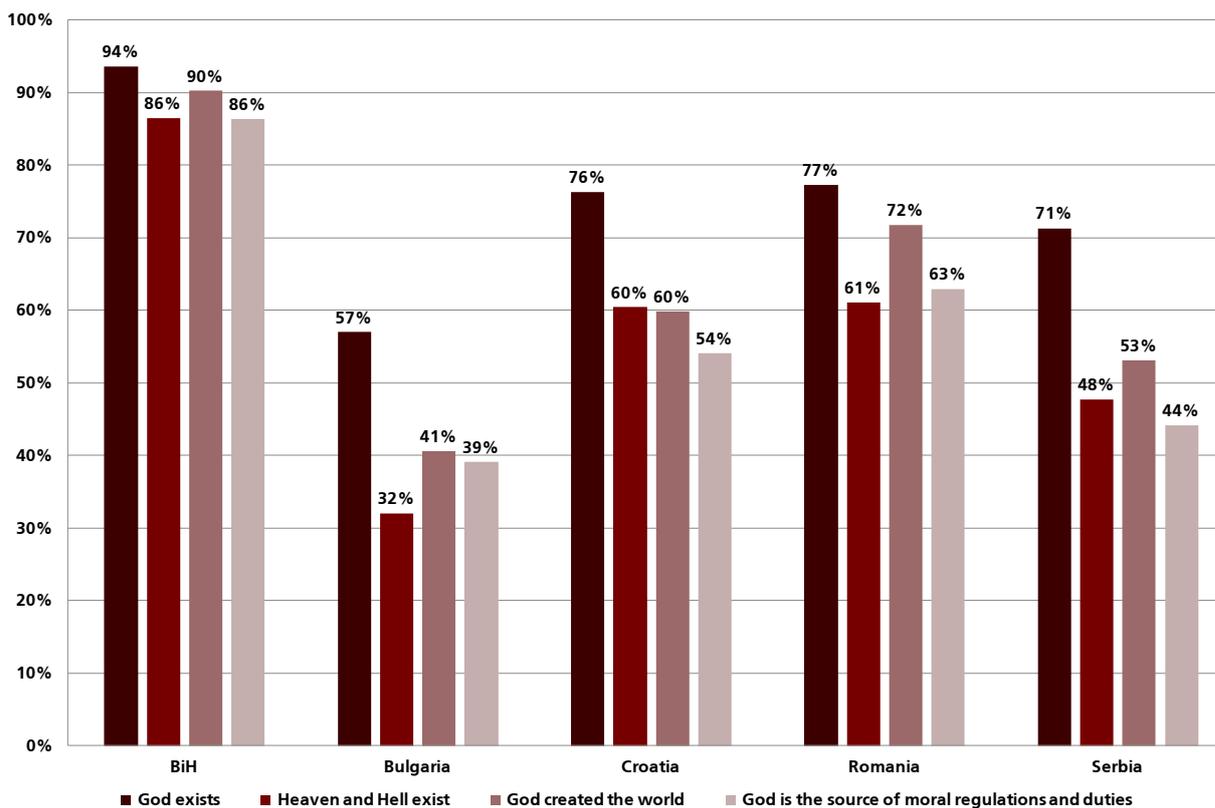
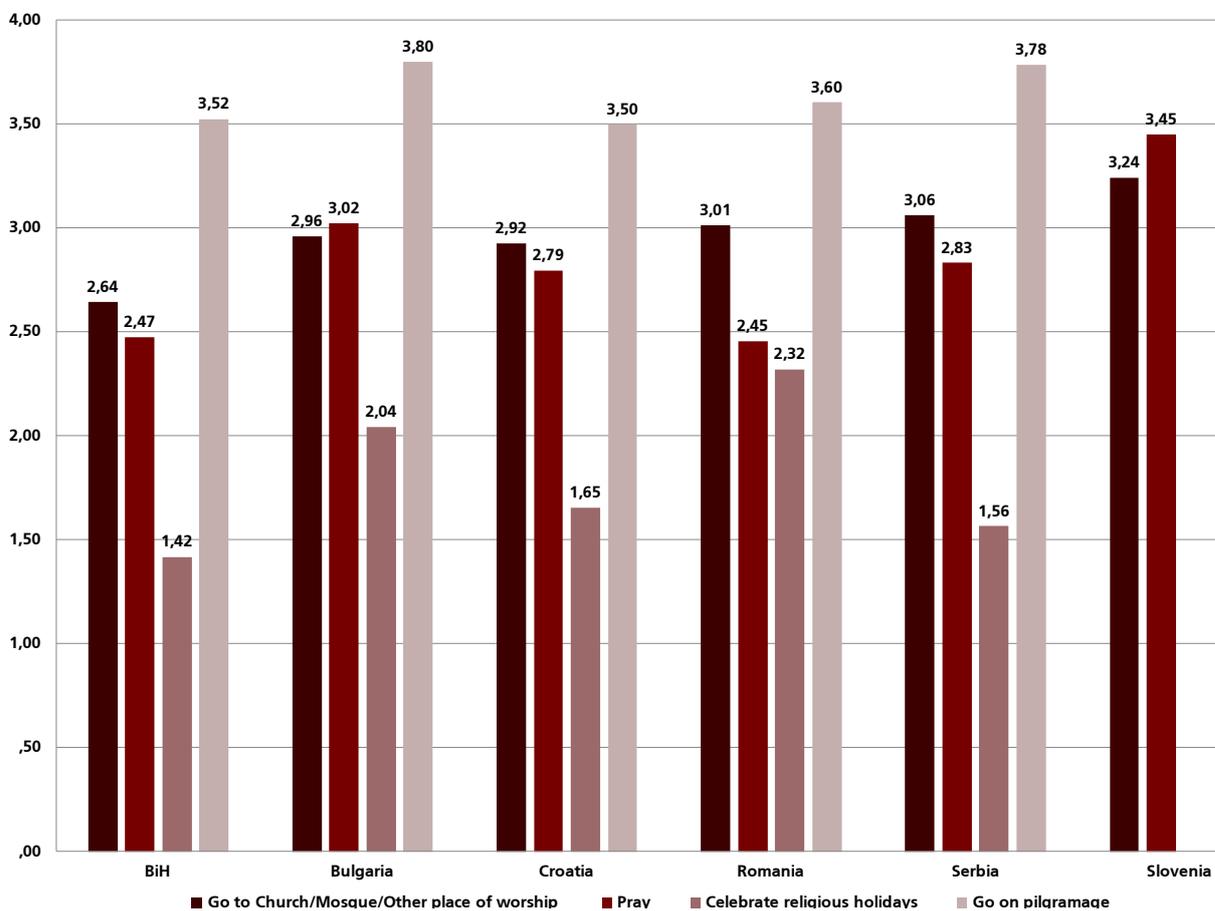


Figure 3.6. Regularity of specific religious practices (1=regularly, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=never)<sup>80</sup>



tion, where “religion remains mainly at the level of tradition, while a deep faith in God and the moral influence of religion appear to decline.”<sup>81</sup> Mitev and Kovacheva (2014) connect a lack of belief and low intensity of practice to a lack of trust in religious institutions and leaders in Bulgaria and see the results attesting to “a more individualistic attitude towards religion and a low level of acceptance of the church as a community and way of communion with God.”<sup>82</sup> Sandu (2014) notes that youth in Romania have become more detached from religious institutions and its canons over the last decades, but remain very attached to Christian faith and values.<sup>83</sup>

### Attitudes towards Marriage and Coupledness

In the context of modernization and the move away from more traditional, patriarchal family forms, many sociologists seek to explain different attitudes towards coupledness through the process of individualization. This entails, *inter alia*, a drive towards independence, “reflexive” decision-making about one’s own choices, including family formation, less certain and stable personal partnerships, the non-linearity of the path to adulthood, and greater parity between men and women.<sup>84</sup> Given the non-compulsory nature of family life, today’s move to one’s own household may entail contemporary lifestyle patterns, including living alone or with friends, cohabiting with or living apart from a partner or spouse.<sup>85</sup> In fact, a number of trends

have had major implication on family forms, including a trend towards living alone, a decline in fertility and a decline in marriage rates.<sup>86</sup>

The move from a parental to an own household is considered an important part of youth transition to adulthood.<sup>87</sup> However, different factors may prolong dependence and reduce young people’s ability to make long-term plans, including difficult access to stable income from employment or affordable housing, prolonged education, low geographic mobility for work or education, a lack of adequate social policies, cultural norms and expectations, etc.<sup>88</sup> SEE countries have undergone significant social transformation, changes in traditional norms, as well as structural circumstances such as high youth unemployment. These in turn have had an impact on young people’s ability to become independent.<sup>89</sup> Tomanović and Stanojević (2015) see a transition to independent living in Serbia as taking place in “an unsupported institutional environment,” placing a greater burden on family resources;<sup>90</sup> young people in Bulgaria and Slovenia face a similar situation.<sup>91</sup> Cohabitation may also be reflectant of more traditional norms: Mulder (2009), for instance, emphasizes the north-south divide in Europe, where young people in South Europe cohabit with parents longer than their peers in North Europe, and there is “a strong connection of leaving home with marriage.”<sup>92</sup> She attributes such trends both to differences in the type of welfare state and to cultural factors.<sup>93</sup>

In line with Eurostat data for the region,<sup>94</sup> which show that the majority of young people in SEE countries cohabit with their parents, SEE

79 A comparable question on belief was posed in five countries. A large percentage of persons in Bulgaria (between 9–14 %) chose the no answer / don’t know option.

80 In Slovenia, the options of celebrating religious holidays, going on a pilgrimage or to confession were not provided. Question on specific religious practices was not posed in Kosovo and Macedonia, but rather a question on how regularly respondents practice religion in general. An equivalent scale on religious practice also shows rather low general religious practice of 2,05 in Kosovo and 1,88 in Macedonia, on average.

81 They also see the results providing more evidence on religion’s declining role in young people’s lives in this country in comparison to previous research. Miran Lavrič and Tjaša Boroja, “Trust and Belonging,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, pp. 204–205.

82 Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 74.

83 Daniel Sandu, “Religion and Spirituality,” *Romanian Youth: concerns, aspirations, attitudes and life style* (Bucharest: Center for Urban and Regional Sociology and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Romania, 2014), p. 119.

84 Sergej Flere, “Youth and Family in South East Europe,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 69. Also see Marina Tavčar Krajnc, Sergej Flere and Miran Lavrič, “The Family,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 163.

85 For an overview of literature in this field, see Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 43. Also see Mary Daly, “Changing family life in Europe: Significance for state and society,” *European Societies* 7, no. 3 (2005), pp. 380–384.

86 Ibid, pp. 380–382.

87 Clara H. Mulder, “Leaving the parental home in young adulthood,” *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, p. 203.

88 See, for instance, Choroszewicz and Wolff (2010), discussed in: Rudi Klanjšek, “Living conditions and socioeconomic situation of youth,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, pp. 45–46; See Teresa Toguchi Swartz and Kristen Bengtson O’Brian, “Intergenerational support during the transition to adulthood,” *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, p. 217. Also see Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 7; p. 44.

89 See Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, pp. 77–78; Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 43.

90 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 44.

91 Kranjc, Flere and Lavrič, “The Family,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 173; Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 78.

92 Mulder, “Leaving the parental home in young adulthood,” p. 206.

93 Ibid, p. 206.

94 E.g. see share of young adults aged 18 to 34 living with their parents by age and sex in 2014, EU-SILC survey, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database>. No data for Albania, BiH and Kosovo.

youth survey data display a similar trend. While a vast majority lives with their parents, others mainly live with their partners or spouses, while a small percentage lives alone (Croatia and Romania being an exception) or in other arrangements (Figure 3.7).

Youth from rural areas tend to live with their parents more often. Living with parents also increases with the material status of the household, signaling a prolonged dependence on material resources of the household. Not surprisingly, at the regional level, respondents' employment and higher levels of education correlate with living alone or with someone other than parents.<sup>95</sup> There is a large difference between the genders, as a higher share of young men cohabits with parents than young women, in line with Eurostat trends for the SEE region.

Youth that live with their parents predominantly said they do so because it was the most adequate option for their family (Figure 3.8). A very different principal reason was provided by the vast majority of youth in Slovenia, who would choose to live alone if financial resources allowed it. However, economic reasons appear to be a substantial obstacle to independent housing in other countries as well. Statistical analysis shows that youth that preferred to live alone but could not do so because of financial reasons embraced the traits under traditionalism less, had a higher level of completed education, had parents with higher educational attainment, were older and were employed.<sup>96</sup>

When it comes to their attitudes towards partnership, SEE youth can be said to generally

strive towards marriage as a traditional family institution, as it plays a big part in the way they see themselves in the future (Figure 3.9). Cohabiting with a partner is only desirable by a substantial share of youth in Slovenia and Bulgaria. Findings correspond with the South-European type of family transition,<sup>97</sup> characterized not only by prolonged cohabitation with parents and women leaving the parental home earlier to get married, but also with a low prevalence of alternative family forms, such as cohabitation with a partner.<sup>98</sup> Such paths of family transition in most countries (except Slovenia) are in line with what Tomanović and Stanojević (2015) describe as going "from one's own family to one's chosen family, without alternative ways of life."<sup>99</sup>

On the other hand, there is great variety in the traits that youth desire in their marriage partners across countries (Figure 3.10), making it difficult to generalize across the region.

Despite some limitations to how the question was posed,<sup>100</sup> if considering the extent of individualization as opposed to more traditional, patriarchal norms, personality as a trait may be considered to be best in line with the premises of Giddens' (1992) idea of "pure relationships"<sup>101</sup> unbound by such norms.<sup>102</sup> Thus, the importance of personality may signal an inclination towards individualization if it weren't for the high value attached to more traditional norms such as family approval in a majority of countries, as well as virginity, national or religious affiliation in some. In BiH, the dominant presence of ethno-nationalist values in choosing a spouse may be deemed a consequence of deep ethnic divisions. The preference for partners of the same religious and ethnic background is in line with previous research conducted in the Western Balkans.<sup>103</sup> The claim that youth is inclined towards a depar-

95 Correlations with: Male gender ( $r=-0.096$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). At country level, correlation significant in all countries except for Albania and Macedonia. Rural residence ( $r=-0.054$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). At country level, correlation significant in Albania, BiH, Kosovo and Serbia. Wealth index ( $r=0.136$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). At country level, correlation significant in all but Macedonia and Slovenia. Level of completed education of respondents ( $r=-0.142$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). At country level, correlation significant in all but Macedonia and Albania. Employment ( $r=-0.215$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). This correlation was confirmed at the level of individual countries as well.

96 Correlation of the preference to live alone in case of better financial conditions with: Traditionalism ( $r=-0.101$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). Correlation significant at country level in Albania, BiH, Bulgaria and Kosovo. Level of completed education of respondents ( $r=0.117$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). Correlation significant at country level everywhere except Kosovo. Educational attainment of mother ( $r=0.047$ ,  $p<0.01$ , Spearman's rho) and father ( $r=0.054$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). At country level, significant correlation in Bulgaria for mother and father, in Croatia for father. Age ( $r=0.187$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). At country level, correlation significant in all countries. Employment status ( $r=0.143$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho). At the country level, correlation significant in all countries except Albania. Analysis excludes Macedonia, because equivalent question not posed.

97 Iacovo (2002), discussed in: Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 43.

98 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 10.

99 Ibid., pp. 54–55.

100 For example, Tavčar Krajnc, Flere and Lavrič note that given that survey respondents were not asked to rank the criteria, personality as a trait does not provide much insight, as it is generally accepted as important. Ibid, "The Family," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 171.

101 The idea of pure relationships is one of consensual relations where enjoyment and satisfaction of partners takes center stage, rather than traditionally imposed norms dictating the nature and course of coupledom. Giddens (1992), discussed in Tavčar Krajnc, Flere and Lavrič, "The Family," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 164.

102 Flere, "Youth and Family in South East Europe," *Lost in Transition?* p. 80.

103 Kacarska et al., "20 Years After 1991: The tale of two generations," p. 28, integral study.

104 Macedonia's survey worded question options differently and is therefore excluded from graph.

## Social Attitudes, Values and Beliefs

Figure 3.7. Living arrangements of youth in SEE countries (%)

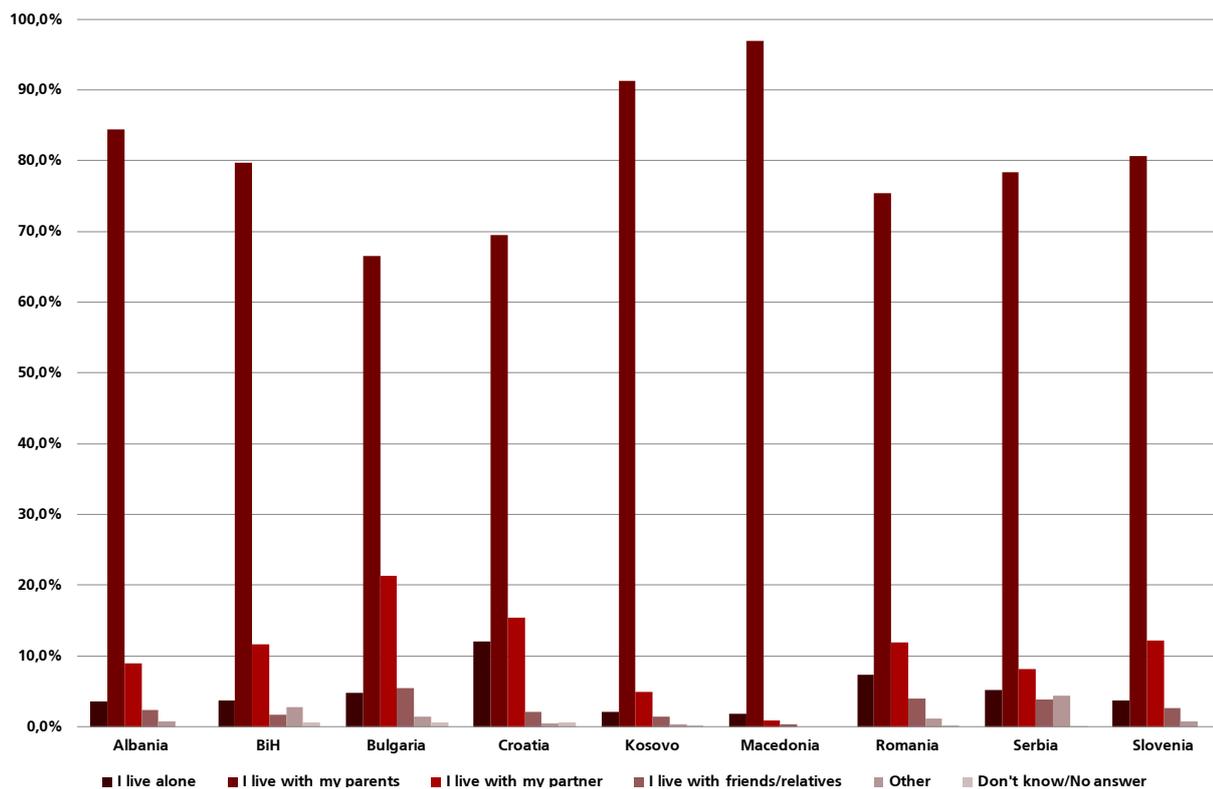


Figure 3.8. Reasons for living with parents (%)<sup>104</sup>

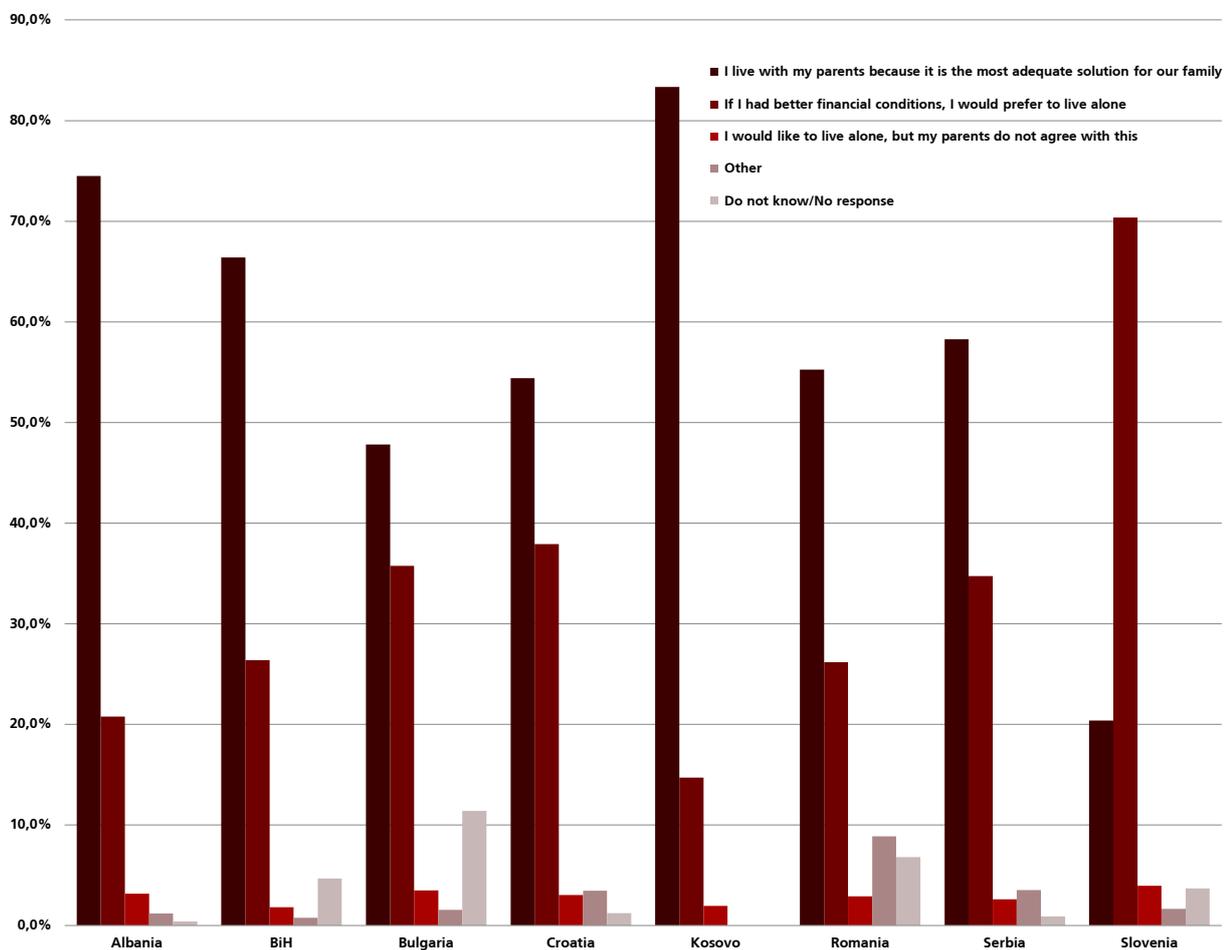


Figure 3.9. How youth see themselves in the future (%)<sup>105</sup>

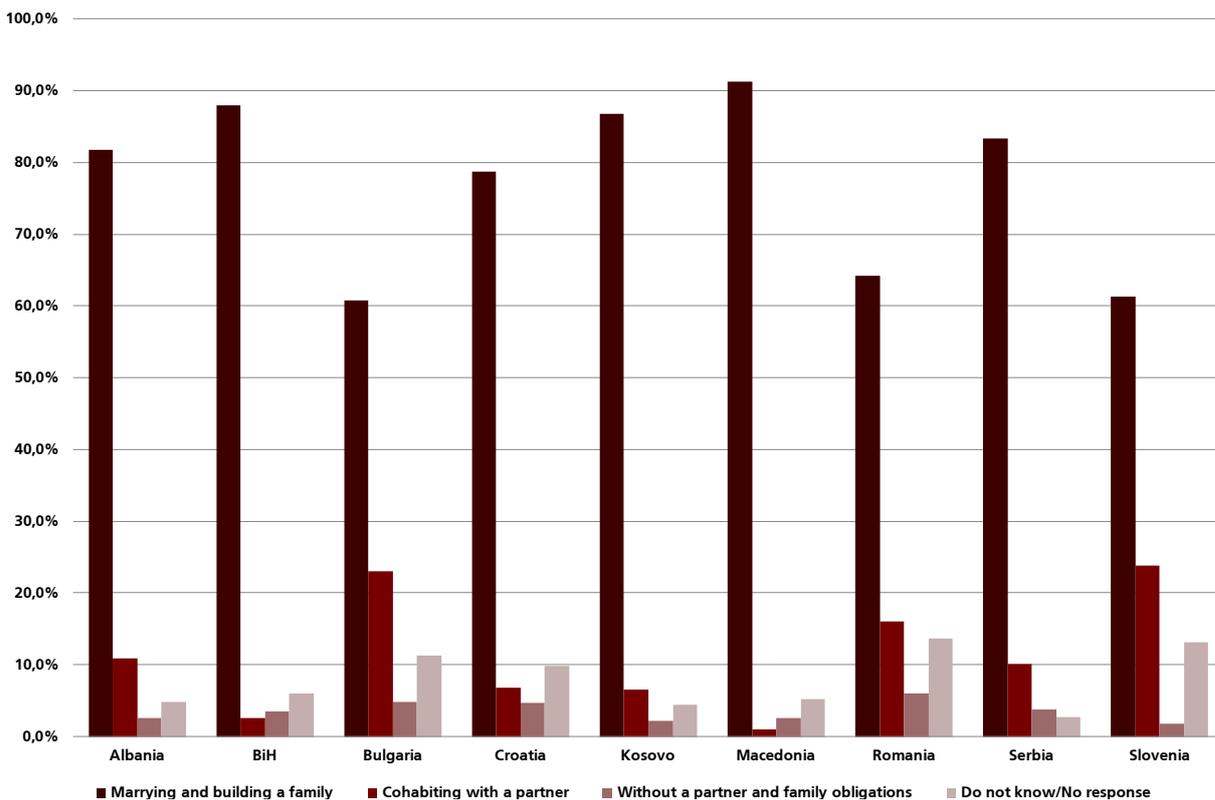


Figure 3.10. Important traits in a spouse (answers: "very important" and "important", %) <sup>106</sup>

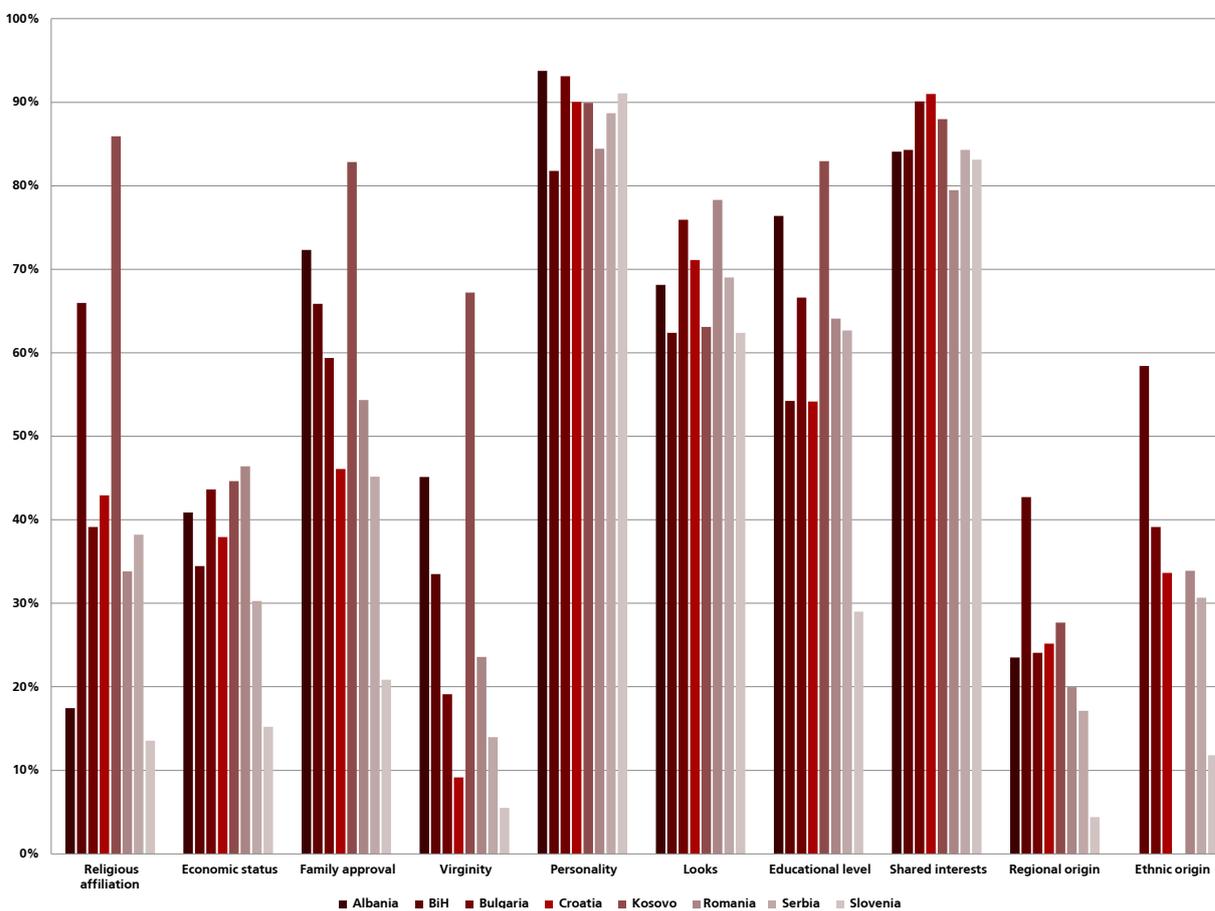
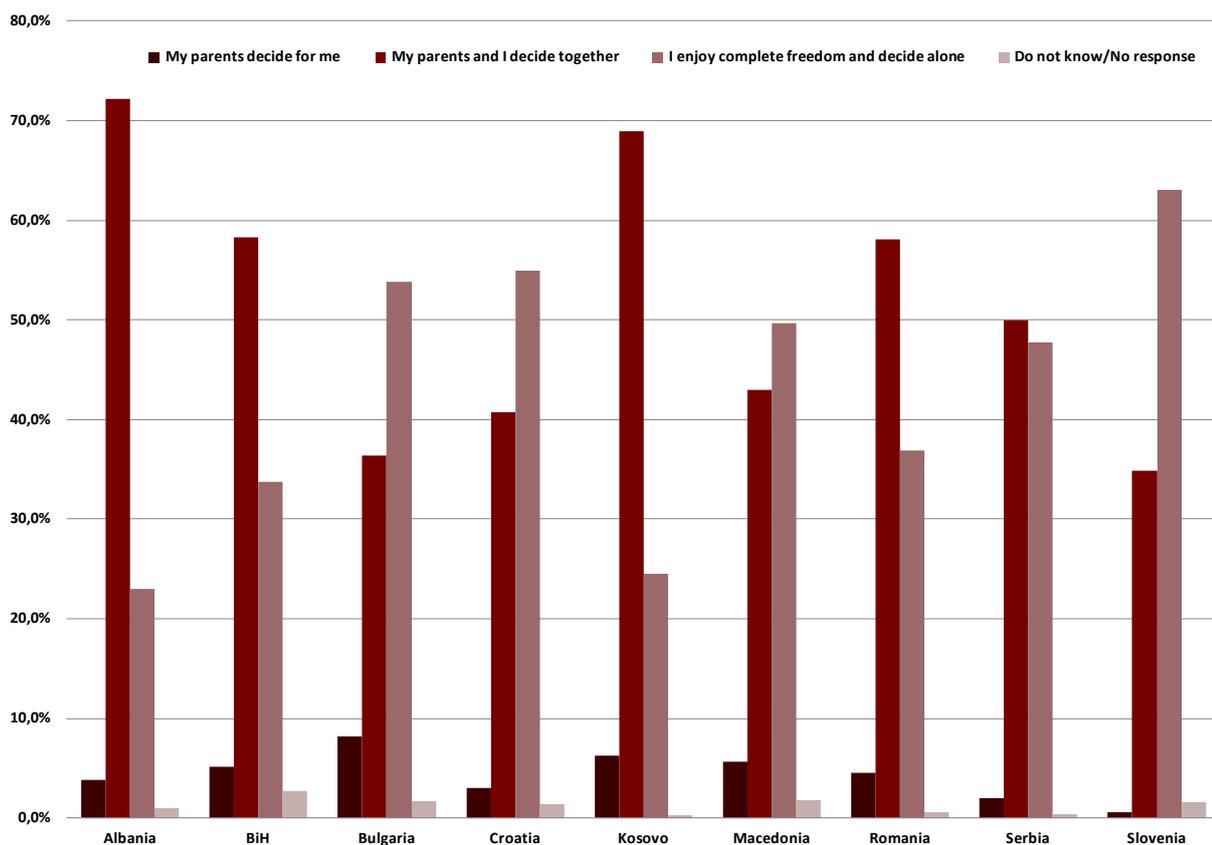


Figure 3.11. How youth make important decisions (%)



ture from more traditional values may thus only be made for Slovenia,<sup>107</sup> where the lack of importance given to economic standing, family approval or education, “opens the door toward [...] choosing one’s spouse from a variety of different backgrounds.”<sup>108</sup> Youth in Serbia and Bulgaria<sup>109</sup> also incline towards less traditional attitudes; in Serbia, Tomanović and Stanojević (2015) point out that such results correspond to previous research, indicating a trend of detraditionalization when it comes to partner and family relations among young people from urban areas and with high cultural capital.<sup>110</sup>

Although not directly reflective of youth attitudes, a question on young people’s independence in decision-making “effectively reflects the ideas of individualization theory, since taking decisions

alone, not being bound by family, customs or institutions, goes to the very core of the concept.”<sup>111</sup> Results may signal a greater incline towards individualization in Slovenia, for example, in comparison to Albania, Kosovo, or BiH (Figure 3.11).

Statistical analysis shows that persons who are employed have greater freedom in decision-making. Freedom of decision-making is also positively correlated with age, respondents’ level of completed education, educational attainment of their parents, and lower levels of religious belief. On the other hand, respondents who live with their parents tend to have decisions made by parents, or tend to co-decide with parents more often.<sup>112</sup>

105 Option “other” (where provided) not included in graph.

106 Question was not asked in Macedonia.

107 However, according to Flere (2015) in relation to Slovenia, family approval would need to disappear in a situation of full individualization. Flere, “Youth and Family in South East Europe,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 81.

108 Tavčar Krajnc, Flere and Lavrič, “The Family,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 171.

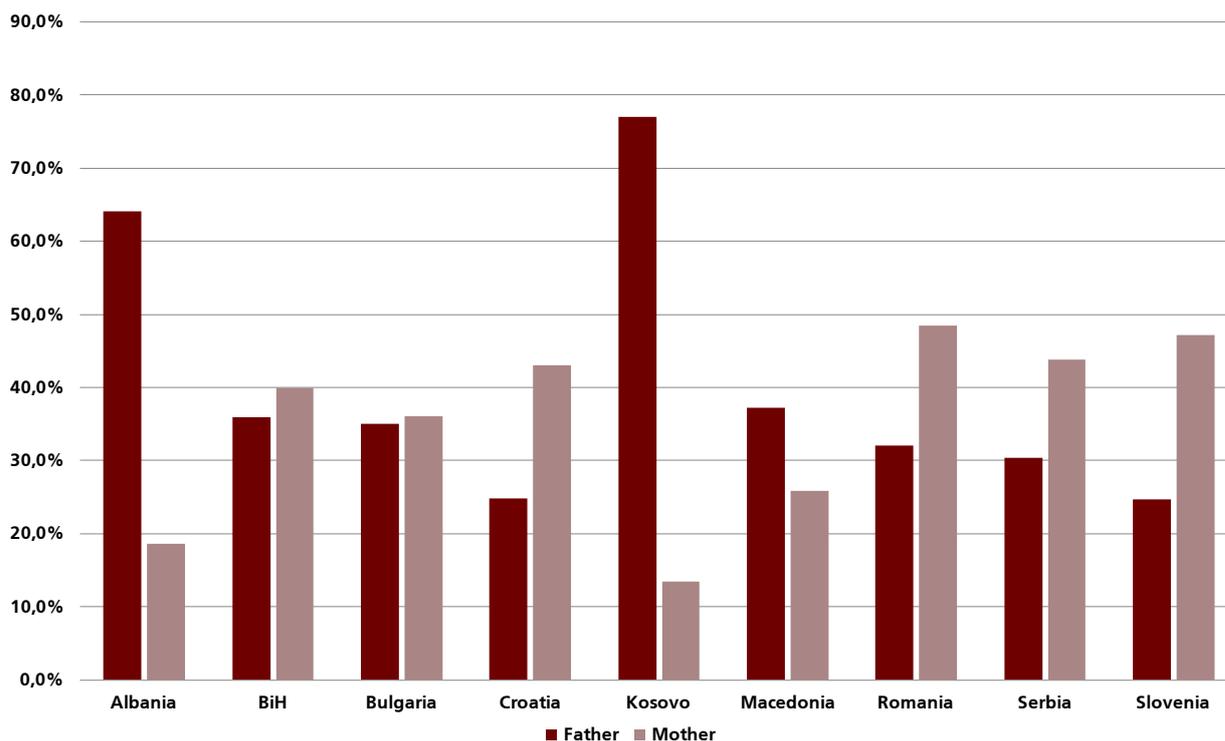
109 Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 95

110 Here, authors refer to research by Tomanović (2012). Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 52.

111 Flere, “Youth and Family in SEE,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 73.

112 Correlations with: Employment ( $r=0.280$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho). Significant positive correlation also demonstrated at individual country level in all countries. Age ( $r=0.347$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho). Demonstrated at country level in all countries except one. Level of completed education of respondents ( $r=0.214$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho). Confirmed at the level of individual countries. Mother’s ( $r=0.050$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho) and father’s ( $r=0.021$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho) educational attainment. At individual country level, correlation also holds in Bulgaria and Croatia for one of the parents. Extent of religiousness, inverted scale ( $r=0.120$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho). Data not available for Albania. Confirmed in individual countries, except in Croatia. Living with parents ( $r=-0.326$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman’s rho). Confirmed in individual country-level analyses for all countries.

Figure 3.12. The relative influence of parents in youth decision-making (%)



The greater influence of fathers as opposed to mothers in the decision-making of youth is considered to signal a patriarchal rather than a liberal model of family relations.<sup>113</sup> The modern family is considered to be marked by the greater centrality of the mother figure in parenting.<sup>114</sup> Here, one can again observe a marked difference between Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia on the one hand, where the father is perceived as more influential than the mother, and the other countries (Figure 3.12).

Unfortunately, continuity or change in terms of young people's values cannot be observed here as there are no comprehensive points of comparison. However, youth survey responses indicate a prevalence of support for conservative values in almost all countries, and are generally in line with earlier youth research conducted in SEE. Whereas young people, in their rankings of general values, show an inclination towards a mix of both traditional and modern values, a significant part of youth in SEE display low tolerance towards homosexuality and abortion, dominantly espouse religious identity and belief, and embrace traditional views of coupledom and family life.

113 Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 84.

114 Flere, "Youth and Family in SEE," *Lost in Transition*, p. 76.

## 4 Social Trust and Social Distance

Social trust, usually defined as “the basic feeling that others will not deliberately do us harm, at worst, or will try to look after our interests, at best,”<sup>115</sup> may be explained as a product of early childhood socialization; an outcome of an individual’s self-interest or function of their life chances; or a collective trait of social interactions, shaped by society and its institutions.<sup>116</sup> Social trust is considered to be linked with institutional trust, as some studies show the latter to be the predictor of the former.<sup>117</sup>

Social trust is considered a key element of social capital, defined by Putnam (1995) as “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.”<sup>118</sup> Societies with wide networks of solidarity – mainly through formal or informal associations – and with universalistic values are considered to have high levels of social and institutional trust. In contrast, societies where solidarity is primarily embedded in family and narrow social ties appear to have less trust, stronger particular interests and weaker universalistic norms.<sup>119</sup> This is also tied to the idea of bridging and bonding social capital. Bridging capital – marked by gener-

alized or thin trust – denotes more inclusive social relationships embracing individuals belonging to heterogeneous social groups and lifestyles, which allows access to external resources. Bonding capital – marked by particularized or dense trust – is a more exclusive kind, bringing together homogeneous groups and depending on strong in-group solidarity and internal mobilization of resources.<sup>120</sup> As Putnam’s notion of social capital is, *inter alia*, to be manifested in the extent of active membership of individuals in voluntary associations or political life, social trust may be fostered through inclusion in social institutions.<sup>121</sup>

Previous research in the region points to low levels of social and institutional trust among the general population.<sup>122</sup> Some research, as in Slovenia, shows that the integration of people in institutions and social networks has bolstered trust at the local level, but “has not proven to be a significant casual factor of generalized trust.”<sup>123</sup> Previous

115 Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton, “Social trust: Global pattern or nordic exceptionalism?” WZB Discussion Paper, no. SP I 2004-202, p. 4.

116 Ibid, p. 3.

117 See for example, Mannemar Sønderskov and Peter Thisted Dinesen, “Trusting the State, Trusting Each Other? The Effect of Institutional Trust on Social Trust,” *Political Behavior* 38, issue 1 (March 2016), pp. 179–202.

118 Robert D. Putnam, “Bowling alone: America’s declining social capital.” *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1995), p. 67.

119 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 75.

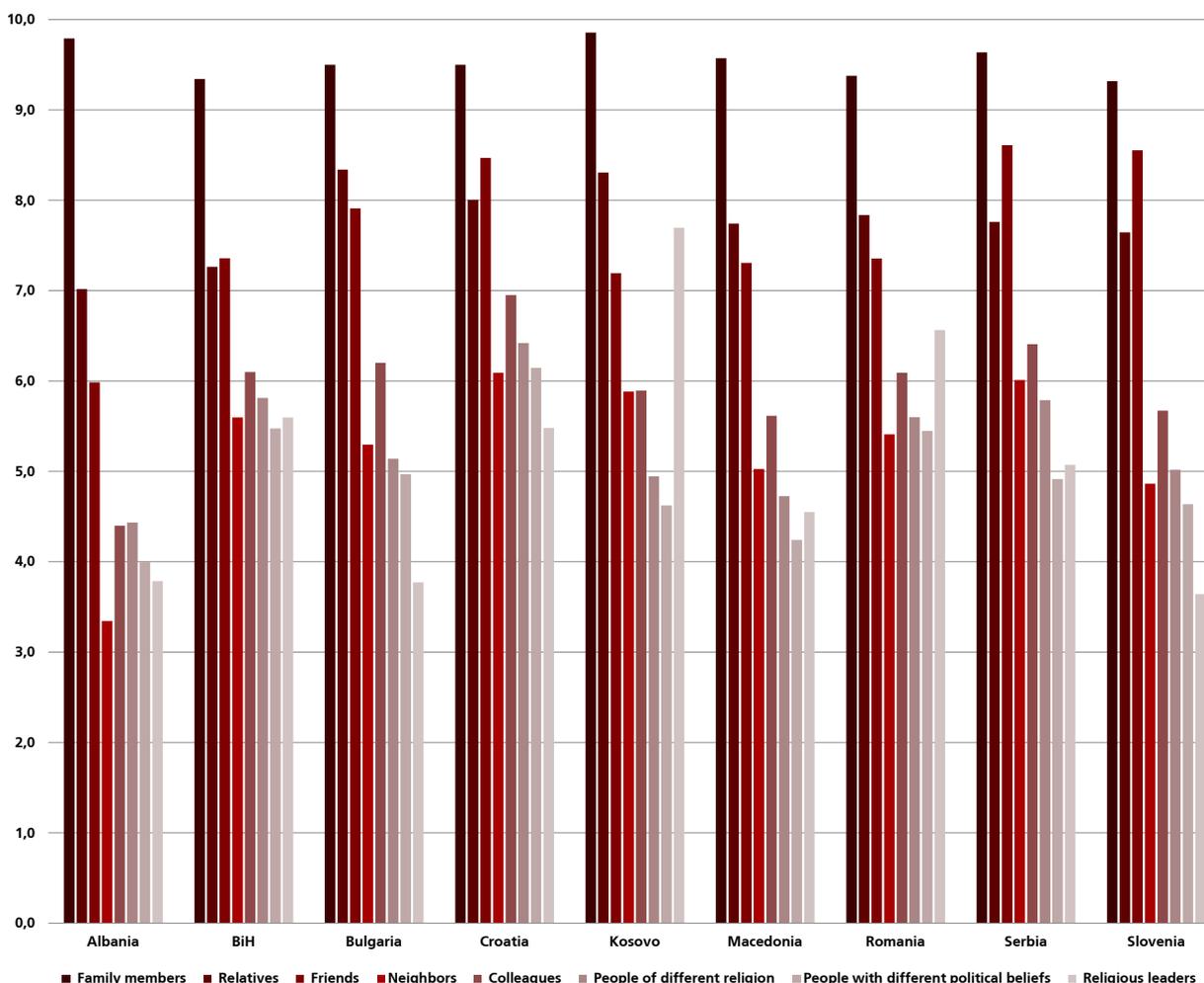
120 Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2000) pp. 22–23. Also see Cherylynn Bassani, “Young people and social capital,” *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, p. 75.

121 Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 138–139. Also see Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 63; Miran Lavrič and Tjaša Boroja, “Trust and belonging,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 197; Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 95.

122 E.g. for Bulgaria, see an overview in: Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, pp. 61–62. See also: UNDP BiH, *The Ties that Bind: Social Capital in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: UNDP BiH, 2009); Dragan Stanojević and Dragana Stokanić, “Between Sicilia and Lombardy: relation between trust, civil norms and social participation among citizens of Serbia,” *Sociologija* LVI, no.2 (2014), pp. 181–200.

123 Igljić (2004), discussed in: Lavrič and Tjaša Boroja, “Trust and belonging,” p. 197.

Figure 4.1. The extent of trust on a 1–10 scale



research in the Western Balkans also shows that youth have the highest level of trust in family and friends, while they generally do not trust those from neighboring countries, or persons of different ethnic background living in their country.<sup>124</sup>

Survey results confirm very low levels of social trust among young people in SEE. If we look at trust aggregately across countries, young people afford the highest trust to members of their family, and have relatively high levels of trust in relatives and friends. Trust in neighbors and colleagues is, on average, moderate to low. Tellingly, people of different religious or political beliefs earn very low trust in all countries (Figure 4.1).

Based on the data, overall social trust<sup>125</sup> is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

<sup>124</sup> Kacarska et al. (2012), discussed in: Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 28.

<sup>125</sup> A variable that measures overall trust was generated for the purpose of statistical analysis so that all responses are combined to amount to 100 percent. Such a variable is justified on the basis of analysis of Cronbach Alpha coefficients for each country ( $\alpha=0.869$ ). See also Lavrič and Boroja, "Trust and belonging," p. 199.

Ilišin et al. (2013) see the degree of bridging social capital as "best reflected in the relationship towards the 'other,'" i.e. the "level of expressed tolerance, in the narrow sense of a distance towards certain social or ethnic groups."<sup>126</sup> To capture social distance, young people were asked how they would feel if certain types of families became their neighbors (Figure 4.3). Albeit there are differences between countries, the expressed degree of tolerance appears to be generally low, especially towards homosexual couples and the Roma. The highest level of acceptance, on average, is towards students and families from Western Europe.

Given the results above, Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann (2015) conclude that SEE youth "might not be the best agents for advocating pluralism and social diversity."<sup>127</sup> It is indeed uncer-

<sup>126</sup> Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 92.

<sup>127</sup> Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 24.

<sup>128</sup> Bulgaria and Romania did not include an equivalent question.

## Social Trust and Social Distance

Figure 4.2. The extent of “overall trust” on a 0%–100% scale

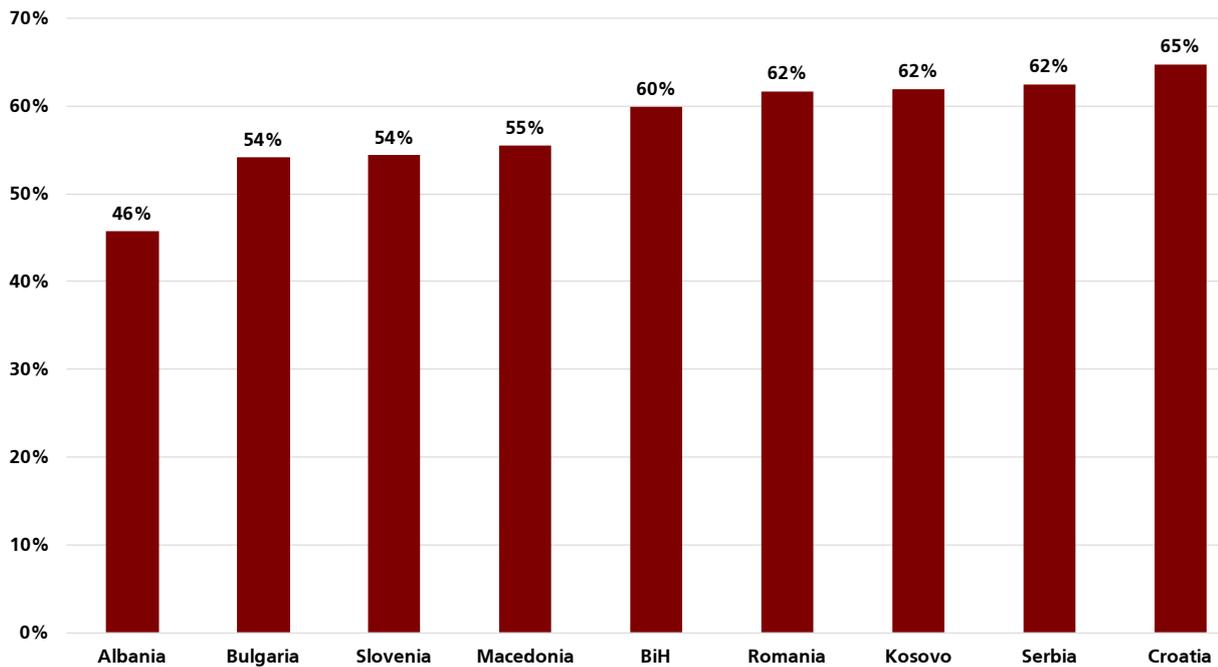
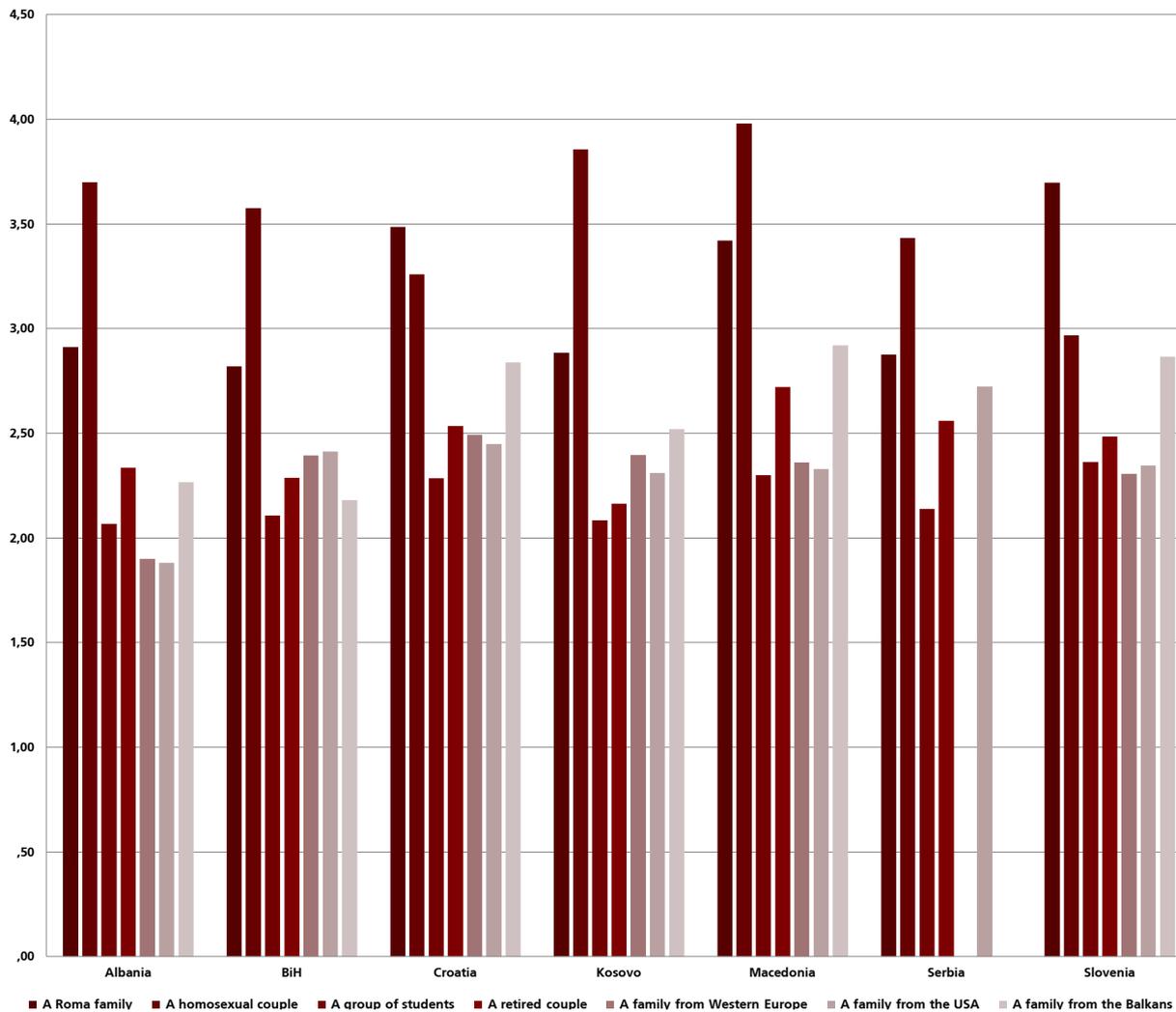


Figure 4.3. Sentiment towards different families as neighbors (1=very good, 5=very bad) (averages)<sup>128</sup>



tain to what extent mutual cooperation and trust are possible with higher levels of social distance,<sup>129</sup> given that analysis at the regional level shows a negative correlation between social distance and social trust.<sup>130</sup>

Results signal more bonding rather than bridging social capital. According to Ilišin et al (2013), considering respondents' age, the greater prevalence of dense trust is to be expected "due to the important role of primary groups, in particular the family, which facilitates the transition to adulthood in circumstances marked by insecurity and risk."<sup>131</sup> Tomanović and Stanojević (2015) point out that young people in Serbia appear to be "largely locked into their primary social networks."<sup>132</sup> Bassani (2009) stresses that the family "acts as the primary (influencing) group, while 'the school' tends to be the main secondary group." Its influence is seen to diminish in favor of other (peer) groups as youth age,<sup>133</sup> which is also in line with the positive correlation that was found at the regional level between age and trust.<sup>134</sup> Results are not surprising as young people are also dependent on their families' resources, as shown above. However, there may also be potential negative implications of strong bonding capital within families or communities, where youth may become too "closed off" from outside groups.<sup>135</sup> According to Mitev and Kovacheva (2014), the tendency towards a mobilization of resources, trust and influence in the family may create an exclusive type of social capital that may limit the ability of youth to investigate new opportunities.<sup>136</sup>

Results also raise the question of whether and to what extent there is potential for bridging capital, considered to be inherent to a democratic society,<sup>137</sup> to develop. Lavrič and Boroja (2014) link low levels of trust among youth in Slovenia to low levels of generalized trust among the wider population, as well as a breakdown in

institutional trust.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, statistical analysis at the regional level confirms a positive correlation between social and institutional trust (explored in Chapter 7).<sup>139</sup>

129 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 81.

130  $r=-0.085$ ,  $p<0.001$ .

131 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 93.

132 Ibid, p. 90.

133 Cherylynn Bassani, "Young people and social capital," p. 76.

134 Correlation between trust and age ( $r=0.033$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman rho).

135 Empirical research in this realm usually shows such negative implications of strong bonding capital in the case of marginalized groups. For more, see Bassani, "Young people and social capital," pp. 75–76.

136 Kovacheva (2004), discussed in: Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 101.

137 See Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 92.

138 Authors refer to research by Iglič (2004) and the Centre for Public Opinion Research (2013). Lavrič and Boroja, "Trust and belonging," p. 199.

139  $r=-0.197$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Spearman's rho. Correlation is negative because reverse scales for the two types of trust were applied.

## 5 Education

The formal educational system has become an essential institutional framework through which young people are prepared for adulthood.<sup>140</sup> Education takes up an increasing part of young people's lives in contemporary societies,<sup>141</sup> and is by far the most important mechanism of social reproduction and mobility.<sup>142</sup> It is thus not surprising that there is globally a rapid increase in the number of young people entering the higher education system, growing from 1 percent of the relevant age cohort at the start of 20<sup>th</sup> century to over 20 percent in the early 2000s.<sup>143</sup>

Education is expected to ensure competences and skills needed for employment, the achievement of an adequate standard of living, and personal and professional fulfillment and development. However, young people from less well-off families or belonging to minority groups are seen to have a more difficult time in accessing education, especially higher education.<sup>144</sup> Research from Serbia, for instance, has shown the chances of finishing university of youth with parents who have elementary

school degrees to be significantly lower in comparison to young people whose parents who have a university degree.<sup>145</sup> Inequalities in access to education can, *inter alia*, be attributed to factors such as scarce financial support from the state and lack of possibility to combine work and study.<sup>146</sup> At the same time, the educational system itself may reproduce inequalities: as Furlong and Cartmel (2009) point out, "higher education is stratified in a variety of ways, all of which ensure that traditionally advantaged groups derive the greatest benefit," for example through the separation of youth from different socio-economic backgrounds into academic and vocational streams.<sup>147</sup> As a consequence of a lack of access to education, low-skilled youth have smaller chances of improving their social position, and may thus remain trapped in a vicious circle of inequality.<sup>148</sup>

When looking across SEE countries, statistical analysis shows that there is no relationship between development of countries, as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI),<sup>149</sup> and the level of

140 This chapter focuses on formal education; however, it is important to note that in the context of increasingly uncertain futures, marked by the wide spread of flexibility and precariousness of labor and the unpredictability of the connection between education and employment, informal learning has taken on an increasingly important role in young people's lives. Johanna Wyn, "Educating for late modernity," *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, pp. 98–99.

141 Miran Lavrič, "Youth in Education Across South East Europe," *Lost in Transition?* p. 85.

142 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 27. Also see Klanjšek, "Living Conditions and Socioeconomic Situation of Youth," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 31.

143 Schofer and Meyer, 2005, in Lavrič, "Youth in Education Across South East Europe," *Lost in Transition?* p. 85.

144 Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel, "Mass higher education," *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, p. 121.

145 Stanojević, 2012: discussed in Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 17.

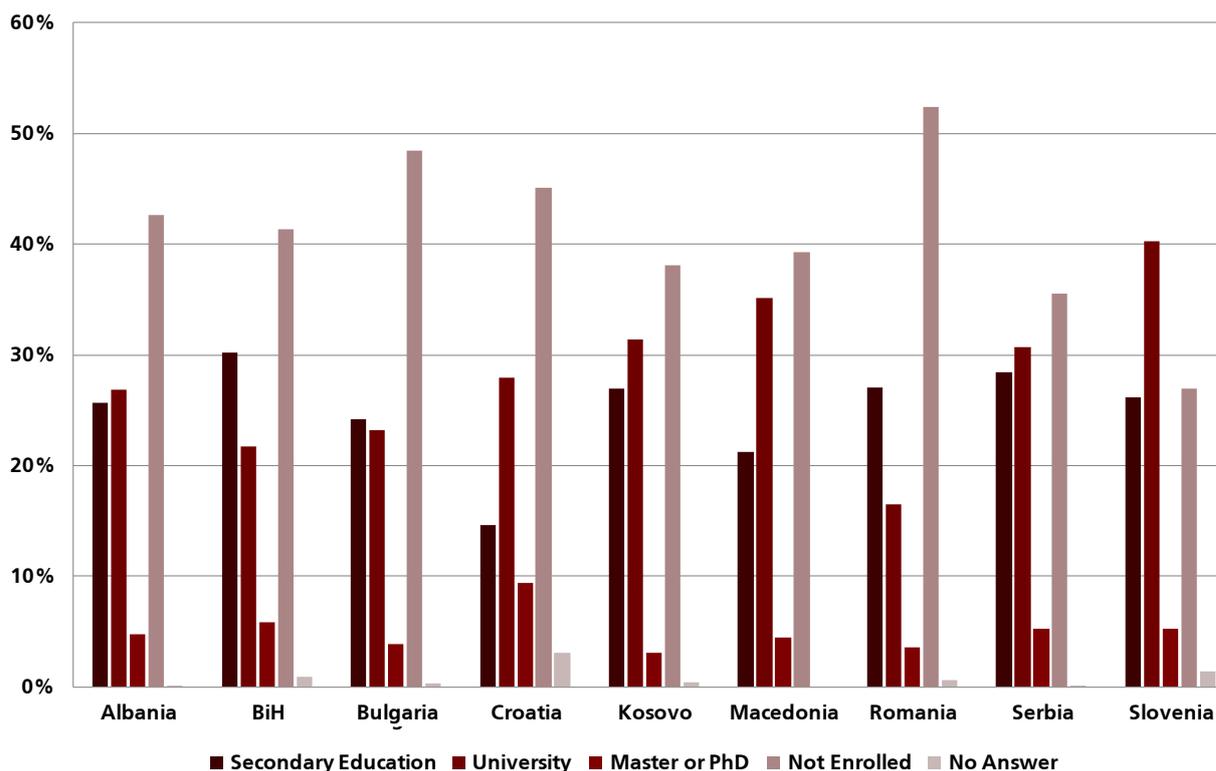
146 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 27.

147 Furlong and Cartmel, "Mass higher education," p. 121.

148 E.g. see Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 7.

149 United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI) is an indicator of development, a summary index pertaining to a country's average achievement with respect to what are considered to be key dimensions of human development, namely "a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living." UNDP, Human Development Index, available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

Figure 5.1. Enrollment in education (%)



school enrollment.<sup>150</sup> This might point to the efforts of less developed countries in the region to encourage broader participation in the education system as a means of catching up with neighbors, especially with Western European countries, the strategy of a number of post-communist countries according to some studies.<sup>151</sup> Another reason for large-scale enrollment in education might be an attempt by these countries to “alleviate employment pressure and reduce youth unemployment”<sup>152</sup> in general. Hence, this may suggest that market demand plays a less important role in this respect, as such decisions are largely politically motivated.<sup>153</sup>

The highest youth enrollment is in Slovenia, followed by Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia. According to Klanjšek (2014), mass inclusion of youth in the formal educational system in Slovenia is a factor that provides “an indirect net against youth poverty”, especially through subsidized food and transport, access to state grants and student labor.<sup>154</sup>

150  $r=0.112$ ,  $p>0.05$ . Also see Lavrič, “Youth in Education Across South East Europe,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 88.

151 E. g. Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009), in: Lavrič, “Youth in Education Across South East Europe,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 89.

152 Lavrič, “Youth in Education Across South East Europe,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 89.

153 Ibid.

154 Rudi Klanjšek, “Living conditions and socioeconomic situation of youth,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 34.

Survey results also point to a higher willingness to attend school among youth in countries with lower, as opposed to those with higher HDI. For example, 75,1 percent of youth from Kosovo said they were very willing or willing to attend school, in comparison to 40,3 percent in Slovenia and 38,6 percent in Croatia, two countries with the highest HDI in the sample.<sup>155</sup> One possible explanation is that in less developed countries, young people see education as an important mechanism for ensuring stability and upward social mobility.<sup>156</sup>

Youth surveys point to a connection between levels of education and important structural factors, which may result in inequalities. Statistical analysis at the regional level shows that there is a positive correlation between respondents’ level of completed education and the material situation of respondents’ households, their parents’ educational attainment, and living in urban areas.<sup>157</sup> Thus, educational systems in SEE, as they are currently set up, appear not to properly address the problem of exclusion from education, thus contributing to the perpetuation of social inequality.

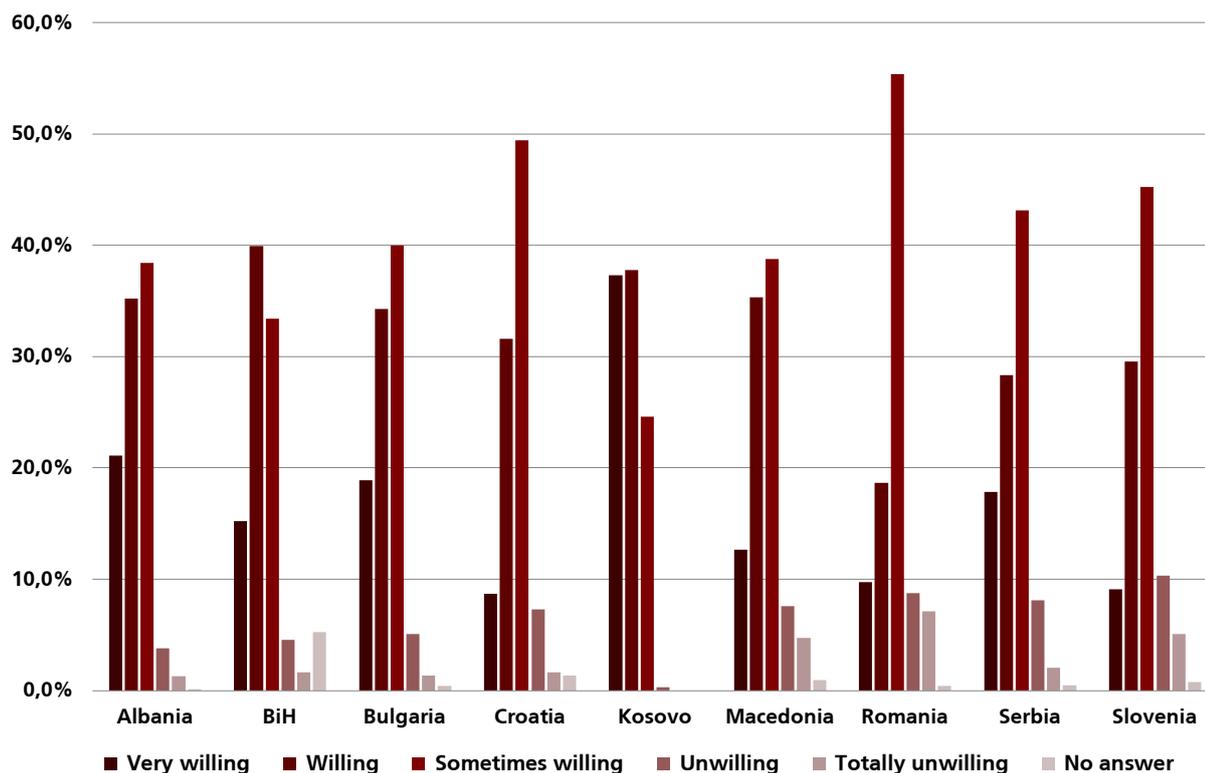
155 See Lavrič, “Youth in Education Across South East Europe,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 90.

156 Ibid, p. 92.

157 Correlations with: Wealth index ( $r=0.066$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The correlation also holds at the individual country level in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Romania. Life in urban areas ( $r=0.102$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Educational attainment of mother ( $r=0.109$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and father ( $r=0.255$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

## Education

Figure 5.2. Willingness to attend school in SEE (%)



Beyond access, another important aspect of education is its quality, considered one of the fundamental preconditions for economic development,<sup>158</sup> and understood as an investment in human capital.<sup>159</sup> Quality education is expected to ensure a smooth transition from education to employment, which requires educational programs that include the knowledge and skills needed by the market. As Weis (2009) emphasizes, it is important to focus “carefully on who gets what kind of knowledge, in what context, toward what end, and under what conditions.”<sup>160</sup> Not all young people within one country have access to quality education, and there are significant differences between countries. The consequences of such differences are manifold, but one of the most severe involves a lack of access to employment for those who were unlucky to receive substandard education, thus severely limiting their life opportunities.

When asked about their satisfaction with the quality of education in SEE, differences between countries can be noted. Whereas in some countries, such as Albania, Kosovo or Macedonia, respondents express a rather neutral view (‘somewhat satisfied’), the greatest levels of outright satisfaction (‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’) are expressed in Bul-

garia, Slovenia and Croatia and the least in Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and BiH (Figure 5.3).

In addition, the 2015 regional FES youth study previously demonstrated that there is no difference in satisfaction with education among the share of youth enrolled in different levels of education (secondary vs. university), also confirmed by our analysis, including Serbia.<sup>161</sup> This is why Lavrič (2015) suggests that the level of quality of education is a systemic issue, and the improvement of the education system probably requires a holistic policy approach, rather than separately focusing on specific levels of education.<sup>162</sup>

Differences in the quality of education between countries translate into differences in their overall competitiveness on the global market, thus perpetuating and even increasing the gap between developed and undeveloped countries. This ultimately diminishes young people’s chances to find employment, as less competitive countries suffer from weaker demand. In that context, whether the

<sup>158</sup> Wyn, “Educating for late modernity,” p. 98.

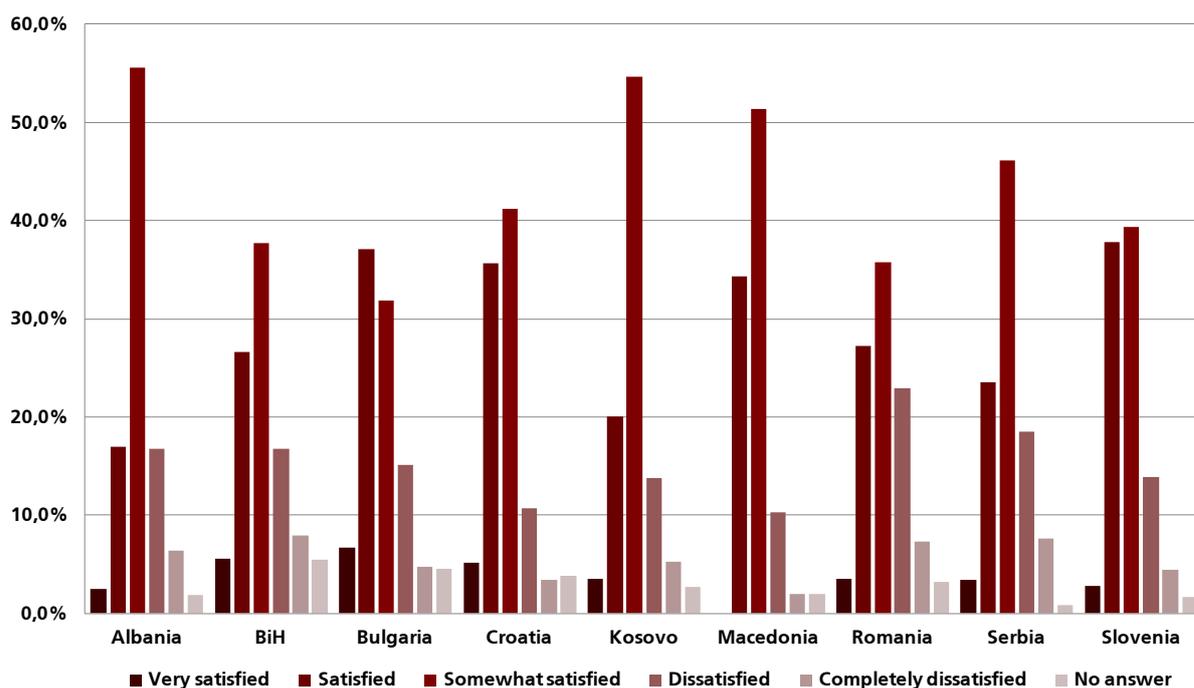
<sup>159</sup> Becker (1975), discussed in: in Lavrič, “Youth in Education Across South East Europe,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 86.

<sup>160</sup> Weis, “Social class, youth and young adulthood in the context of a shifting global economy,” p. 52.

<sup>161</sup>  $U=3548662.5$   $p>0.05$ . At individual country level, our analysis showed that the differences were statistically insignificant in all countries, except in Serbia where high school students were more satisfied with education than those attending undergraduate studies ( $U=20832.00$   $p<0.05$ ). In BiH, this difference was marginally significant in the opposite direction: high school students were more satisfied with education than university students ( $U=41189.5$   $p=0.057$ ).

<sup>162</sup> Lavrič, “Youth in Education Across South East Europe,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 98.

Figure 5.3. Satisfaction with quality of education in SEE (%)



educational system offers youth the possibility to take on internships may impact the ability of young people to gain skills sought by the labor market and find employment. The majority of youth in all SEE countries have not participated in an internship, signaling that educational systems do not have a practical orientation (Figure 5.4).

A statistically significant correlation with regard to HDI of the studied countries and the practical orientation of education was not found.<sup>163</sup> What that might suggest is that the practical orientation of an educational system does not depend on market demand and the macro-economic situation, but is rather related to general orientation of the educational policy in each country.<sup>164</sup> This is also consistent with the findings on overall enrollment in education in these countries.

Moreover, respondents are rather skeptical of their ability to find a job quickly after graduation (Figure 5.5).

Although the questions are not equivalent, a 2016 EU youth survey attests to a different sentiment among EU youth, where 59 percent of respondents across the EU agreed that their national education system was well-adapted to the present 'world of work'. The same research showed that such sentiment, however, was not shared by a majority of young people from SEE countries that are

members of the EU: Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and Croatia.<sup>165</sup>

Not surprisingly, at the regional level, there is a positive correlation between the belief of finding a job and the experience of having had an internship,<sup>166</sup> signaling the importance of a practical orientation to education. Similarly, persons who have had an internship are more likely to be in employment,<sup>167</sup> a correlation shown at the individual country level as well.<sup>168</sup>

Finally, surveys show that an overwhelming majority of students believe that exams can often or very often be bought in their school in Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo, potentially pointing to a

<sup>163</sup> Correlation:  $r=0.489$   $p>0.05$ , calculation without Romania.

<sup>164</sup> As originally suggested by Lavrič, "Youth in Education Across South East Europe," *Lost in Transition?* p. 99.

<sup>165</sup> Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, Directorate-General for Communication, European Parliament, *European Youth in 2016: Special Eurobarometer of the European Parliament* (Brussels: European Union, 2016), pp. 5–6.

<sup>166</sup> Correlation:  $r=0.132$   $p<0.01$ . Excludes Romania, where data on internships was not available and Macedonia, where the question on prospects of finding a job was not posed in an equivalent manner. At the level of individual countries, this correlation is significant in all countries except BiH, Serbia and Kosovo.

<sup>167</sup> Correlation:  $r=-0.200$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Same relationship also shown in the comparative study, which did not include Serbia. "Youth in Education Across South East Europe," *Lost in Transition?* p. 100.

<sup>168</sup> Except for Romania, where no data was available.

<sup>169</sup> Question not posed in Romania.

<sup>170</sup> Question was posed only to enrolled students in BiH, Serbia and Slovenia, while it was posed to all respondents in the remaining countries. An equivalent question was not posed in Macedonia. In Slovenia, there was a Don't know/I hope answer option, here shown under Don't know.

## Education

Figure 5.4. Experience of participation in an internship/practicum (%)<sup>169</sup>

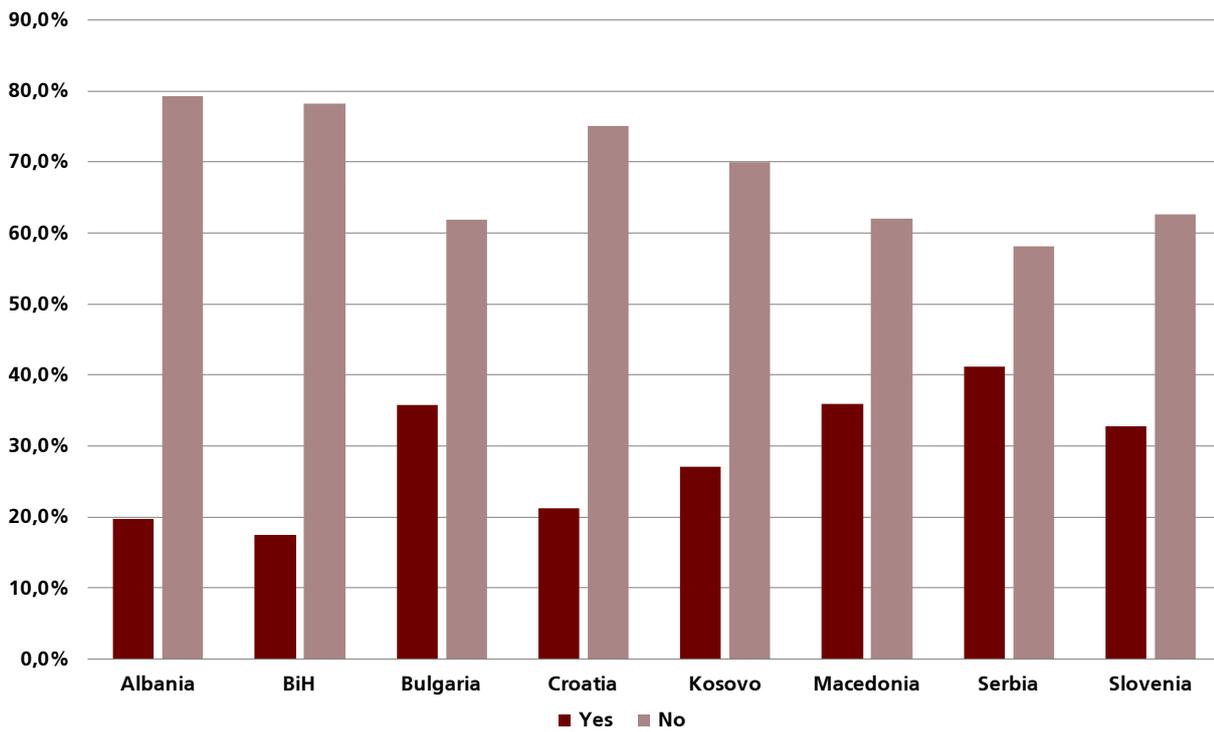


Figure 5.5. Perceptions of likelihood of finding a job after graduation (%)<sup>170</sup>

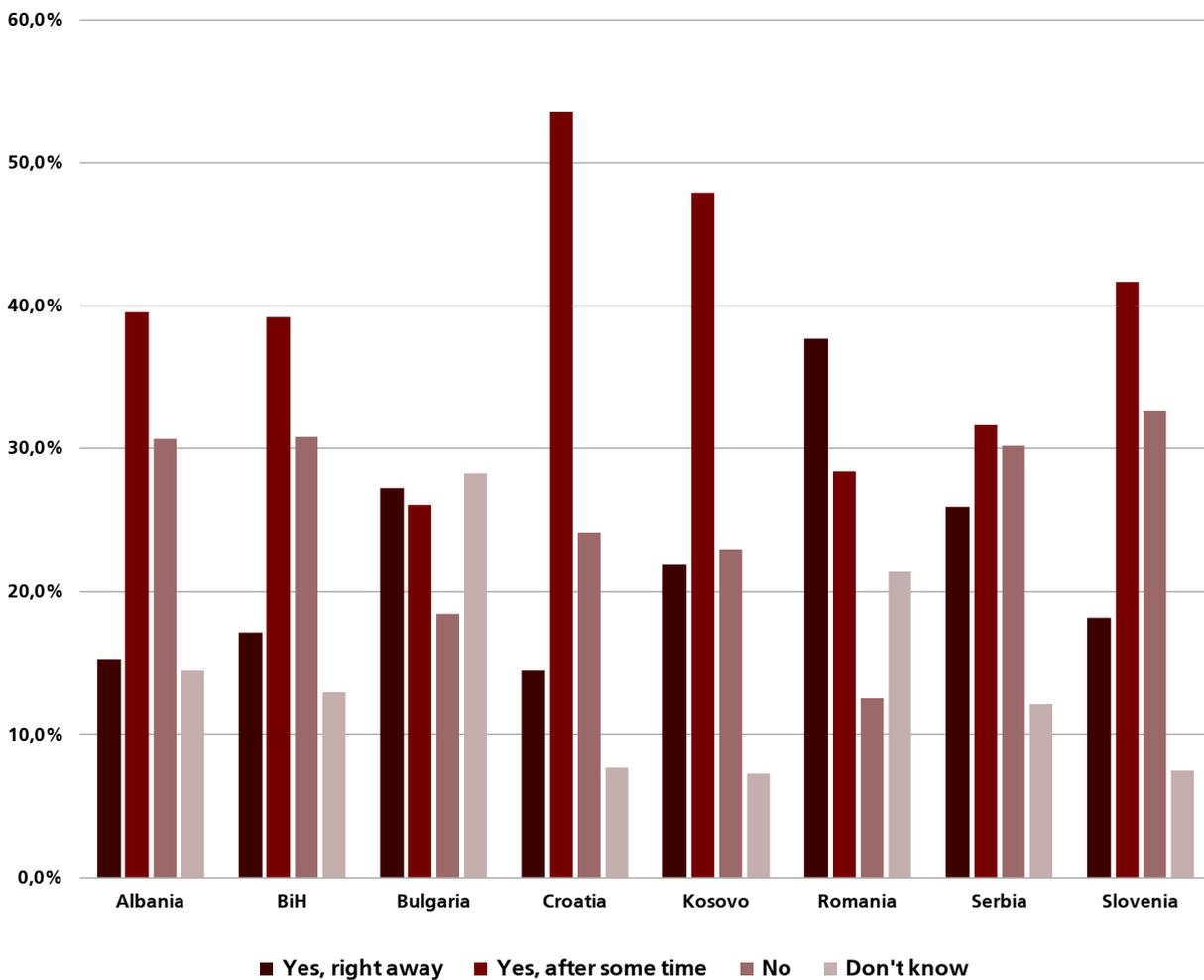
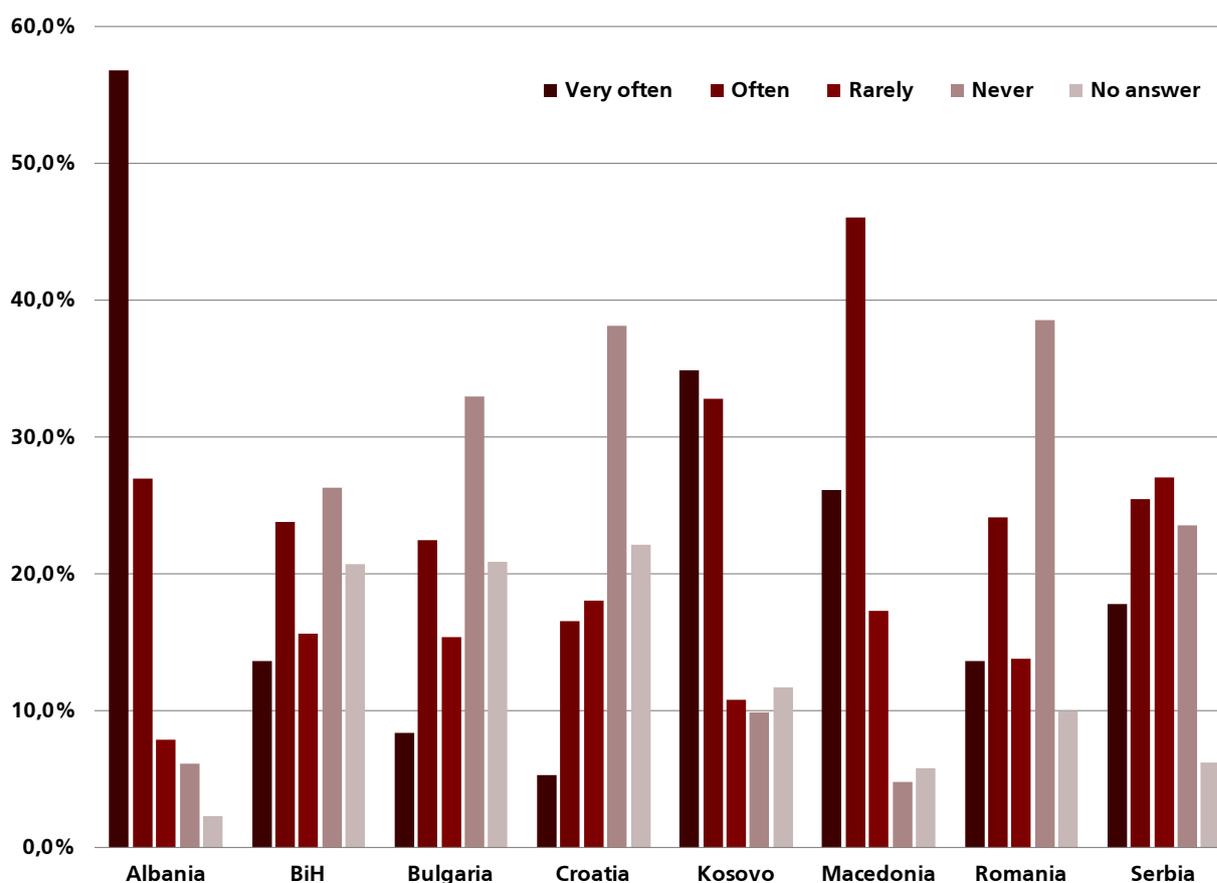


Figure 5.6. Perceptions of whether grades can be bought in school in SEE (%)<sup>171</sup>

serious problem with corruption in the educational systems in some SEE countries, and more so in those that are assessed as being of a lower quality by students<sup>172</sup> (Figure 5.6).

Our analysis confirmed a significant negative correlation at the regional level between the perception of corruption and the perceived quality of education, which was earlier also demonstrated by Lavrič (2015).<sup>173</sup> Moreover, at the individual country level, this correlation was significant in all countries except for Slovenia, where the corruption question wasn't asked. As a consequence of a potentially serious problem with corruption in education, countries with lower quality education may further undermine their education systems through corrupt practices, creating a vicious cycle of deterioration of quality in comparison with countries where such practices are not common and that already have more advanced education. This may ultimately

<sup>171</sup> Question not posed in Slovenia.

<sup>172</sup> Lavrič, "Youth in Education Across South East Europe," *Lost in Transition?* pp. 98–99.

<sup>173</sup> In the youth study, the correlation was  $r=-0.829$ ,  $p<0.05$  – this score does not include Serbia. Lavrič, "Youth in Education Across South East Europe," *Lost in Transition?* pp. 98–99. Our correlation was  $r=-0.171$ ,  $p<0.001$ , including Serbia.

place youth in these countries in a less advantageous position on the global market.

Overall, youth surveys attest to the difficulties that young people face in terms of both access to education and its quality. Structural factors appear to play an important role in terms of access to education, as regional statistical analysis points to a significant positive relationship between respondents' levels of completed education and their material situation, their parents' educational attainment, and an urban place of residence. Such factors, combined with the availability of state support for education, may have a bearing on the possibility of young people to access education on an equal basis and may, as a consequence, further perpetuate inequalities as disadvantaged youth face difficulties in the labor market. Education systems in SEE, moreover, do not appear to provide for a smooth transition employment, as a majority of youth have not participated in internships and many express skepticism concerning their ability to quickly find a job after graduation. Young people's high perception of corruption in educational institutions in Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo furthermore points to potential problems in accessing quality education in these countries.

## 6 Employment

Youth unemployment is one of the main socio-economic challenges that Europe, and SEE in particular, faces today. Although there have been some positive trends in reducing youth unemployment in EU and SEE in recent times, this issue persists, especially after the global financial crisis that began in 2008. The inability to find proper employment prolongs the transition from education to employment for young people.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, as Tomanović and Stanojević (2015) point out, high unemployment posits a serious structural impediment to the social integration of youth and represents a risk of social exclusion.<sup>175</sup>

The youth unemployment rate is usually double or more than double when compared to general unemployment in EU countries.<sup>176</sup> Such a trend is also present in SEE countries. While youth unemployment rates in Bulgaria and Romania are close to the EU28 average and slightly below the EU28 average in Slovenia, these rates are much higher in Albania, BiH, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia (Figure 6.1). However, as pointed out by Lavrič (2014), the high rate of enrollment in formal education in Slovenia in the past decade has likely prevented the rate of youth unemployment from increasing even further.<sup>177</sup>

In addition to high youth unemployment, other negative trends regarding youth in SEE labor markets, such as the growth in part-time, precarious work arrangements at the expense of full-time jobs, as well as an increase in temporary jobs have also been identified.<sup>178</sup> Such trends across Europe negatively affect the socio-economic emancipation of youth. According to Heinz, (2009) “standard employment has been replaced by flexible work and precarious careers, a development which makes it difficult to individually coordinate the multiple transitions which mark the route to adulthood and require special programmes for preventing the social exclusion of disadvantaged youths.”<sup>179</sup> The inability to plan ahead and gain independence are some of the burning issues that young people face, and that may be considered a consequence of the current employment-related context in SEE.

Figure 6.2 shows the level of full-time or part-time employment among the 16–27 age cohort.

Statistical analysis at the regional level shows that men are more likely to be employed than women, either full-time or part-time,<sup>180</sup> which is also in line with the gender gap in employment as shown in employment statistics for the region.

Also interesting are variations between countries when it comes to youth that is in both in education and is economically active – for example in Slovenia, where such a high incidence is linked

174 E.g. Du Bois-Reymond and Chisholm (2006), discussed in: Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 7.

175 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 11.

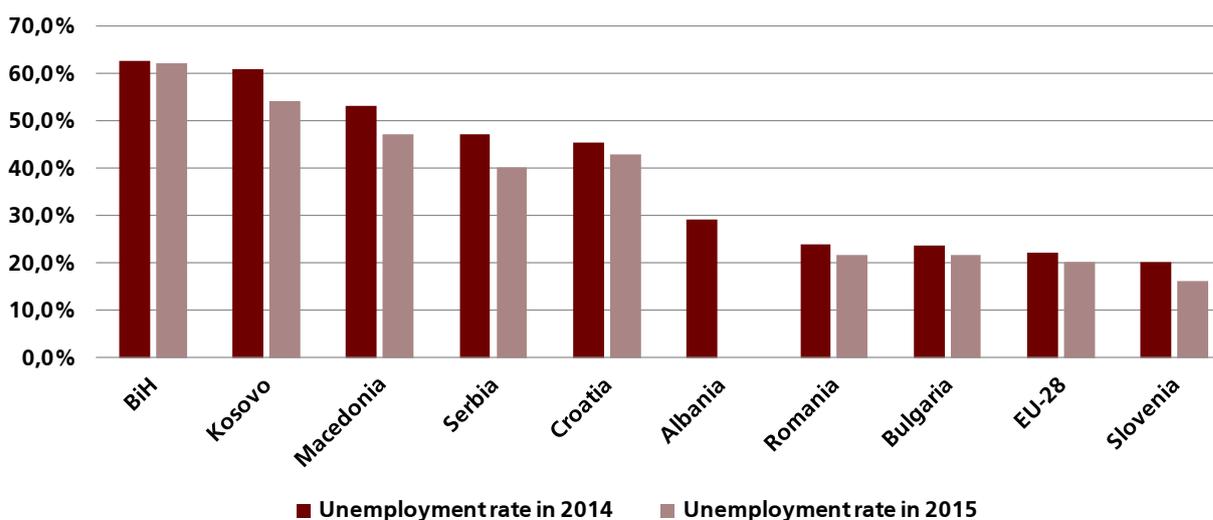
176 Source: EUROSTAT, “Unemployment statistics”, 2015, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics).

177 Miran Lavrič, “Employment and Mobility,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 61. This is also in line with Furlong (2013), according to whom increased participation in education has prevented youth unemployment from increasing sharply in some European countries. Furlong, *Youth Studies*, p. 78.

178 E.g. see: Rudi Klanjšek, “Youth (Un)employment and the Economic Situation of Youth in South East Europe,” *Lost in Transition?* p. 108, 111–112. See Mojić (2012), discussed in: Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 35.

179 Heinz, “Youth transitions in an age of uncertainty,” p. 3.

180  $r=0.048$ ,  $p<0.001$ . At the individual country level, such a correlation is significant in Albania, BiH and Kosovo, and is not statistically significant in the other countries.

Figure 6.1. Youth unemployment rates in EU28 and SEE countries in 2014 and 2015 (%)<sup>181</sup>

Sources: EUROSTAT, World Bank, national labor force surveys

to the phenomenon of student work. Moreover, results highlight the relatively high percentage of youth in some countries who are not in education or employment, with BiH (24%), Kosovo (24%) and Romania (23%) performing worst in that respect (Figure 6.3). Such results suggest that Slovenia may have more adequate policies than the other countries on including a large cohort of youth in the educational system and the labor market.

Although the recession has had a great influence on youth employment and employability, roots of the existing situation can be found in the institutional and economic setups of SEE countries. Tremendous structural imbalances regarding professions shaped and supplied through the formal education system and labor market demand are evident. An average of 43 percent of employed respondents in SEE countries are working outside of the profession for which they were educated,<sup>182</sup> with the highest percentage (53%) of such youth to be found in Bulgaria (Figure 6.4). For the sake of comparison, only 13 percent of young persons were working outside of their profession in Germany in 2010.<sup>183</sup> Such data suggests a low level of harmonization of formal education with industrial trends in SEE countries, while, on the other side, the German education system follows the needs and demands of the country's labor market. Such data also suggest higher labor force flexibility of youth in SEE,

considering their willingness to reorient careers in line with labor market demand.<sup>184</sup> Statistical analysis at the regional level shows that respondents with lower levels of completed education are more likely to be employed in a profession not directly related to their educational background.<sup>185</sup>

Given the circumstances, respondents' low expectations regarding formal education in terms of possibilities for employment are not surprising. Thus, only 39 percent of respondents, on average, are perceiving education and professional abilities as primary factors in finding jobs.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, on average, social connections and political affiliations, as non-merit based approaches to employment, are recognized as important factors in SEE countries by 36,4 percent and 14,8 percent respondents, respectively, especially in Macedonia and BiH, where such an attitude was present in more than two-thirds of responses (Figure 6.5).

There is no statistically significant link between the perception of social or political connections as being important for finding work and HDI at the regional level.<sup>187</sup> However, statistical analysis points

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup>  $r = -0.141$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

<sup>186</sup> Also see Klanjšek, "Youth (Un)employment and the Economic Situation of Youth in South East Europe," p. 116.

<sup>187</sup>  $r = -0.121$ ,  $p > 0.05$  and  $r = -0.557$ ,  $p > 0.05$ , respectively.

<sup>188</sup> Respondents were asked whether they were employed (either part-time or full-time).

<sup>189</sup> In terms of the specific 'not in education or employment' category, two variables based on survey questions on enrollment and whether young people are full- or part-time employed were combined. These questions were posed to all respondents, irrespective of whether they are actively seeking for a job or not. In other words, the category 'not in employment or education' pertains to persons who perceive themselves to be both outside of education and outside of work.

<sup>181</sup> Eurostat, "Unemployment statistics;" The World Bank, "Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15–24) (modeled ILO estimate)", <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>; statistical agencies of respective countries.

<sup>182</sup> Also see Klanjšek, "Youth (Un)employment and the Economic Situation of Youth in South East Europe," p. 117.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p. 117

## Employment

Figure 6.2. Full-time or part time employment (youth 16–27, %) <sup>188</sup>

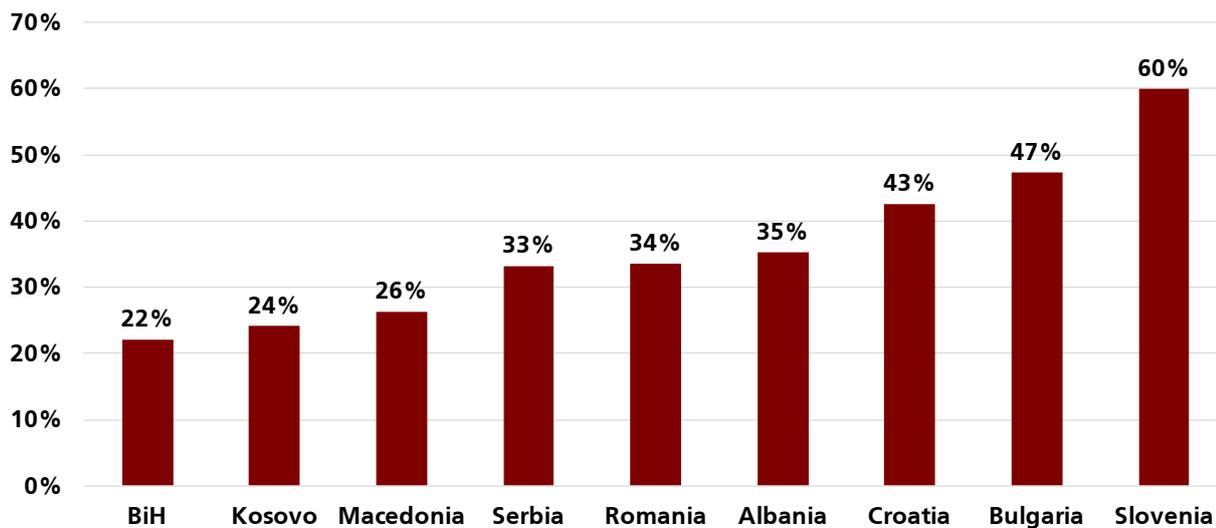


Figure 6.3. Socio-professional status of youth in SEE (%) <sup>189</sup>

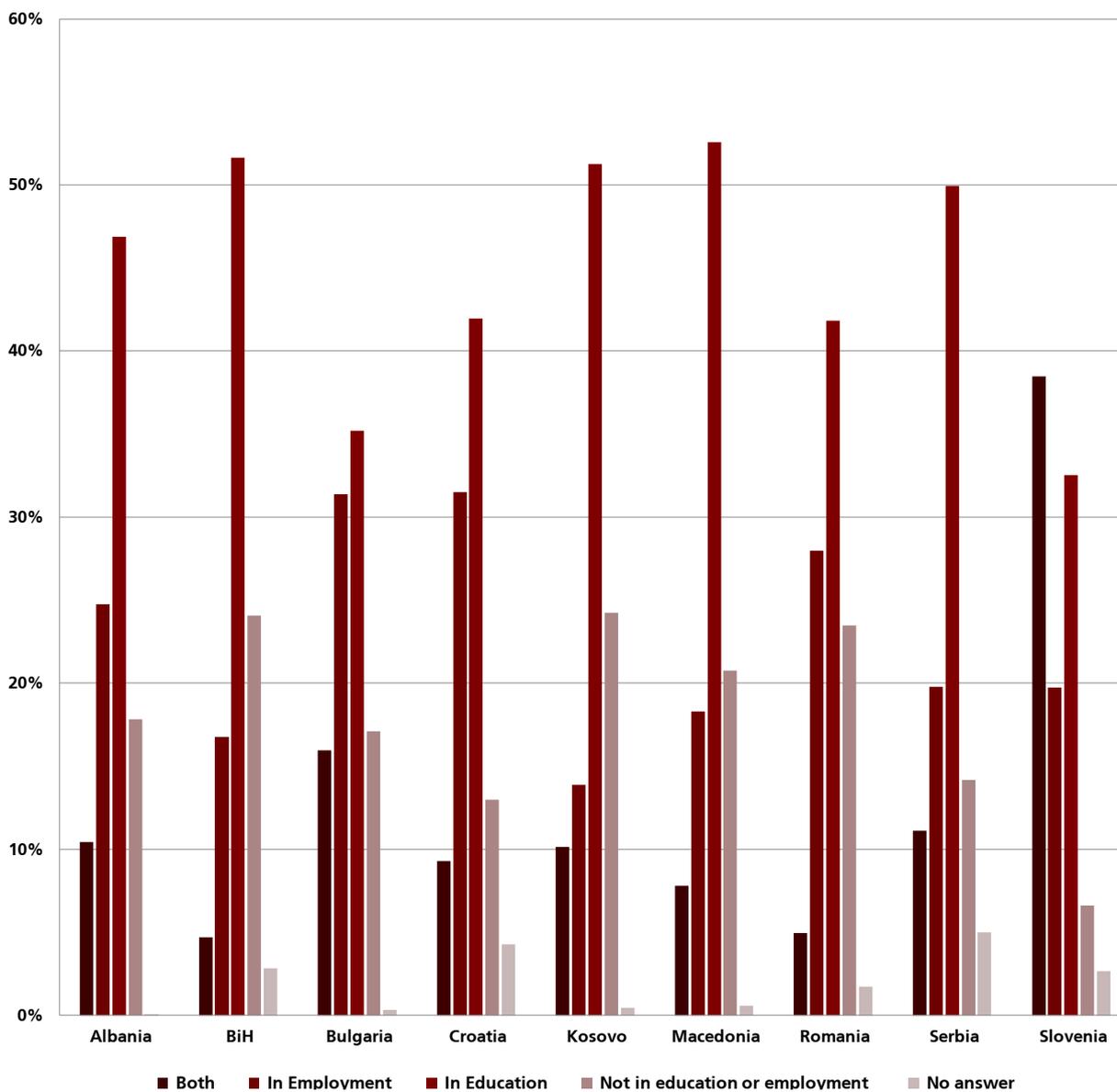


Figure 6.4. Respondents who are working outside of their profession (%)<sup>190</sup>

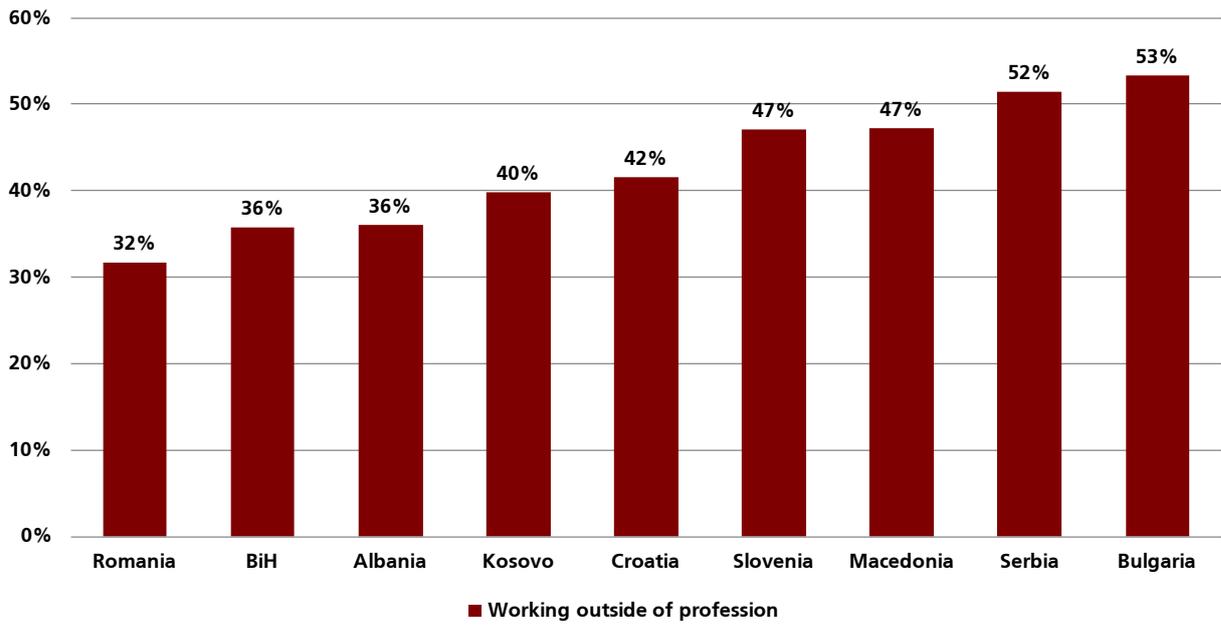
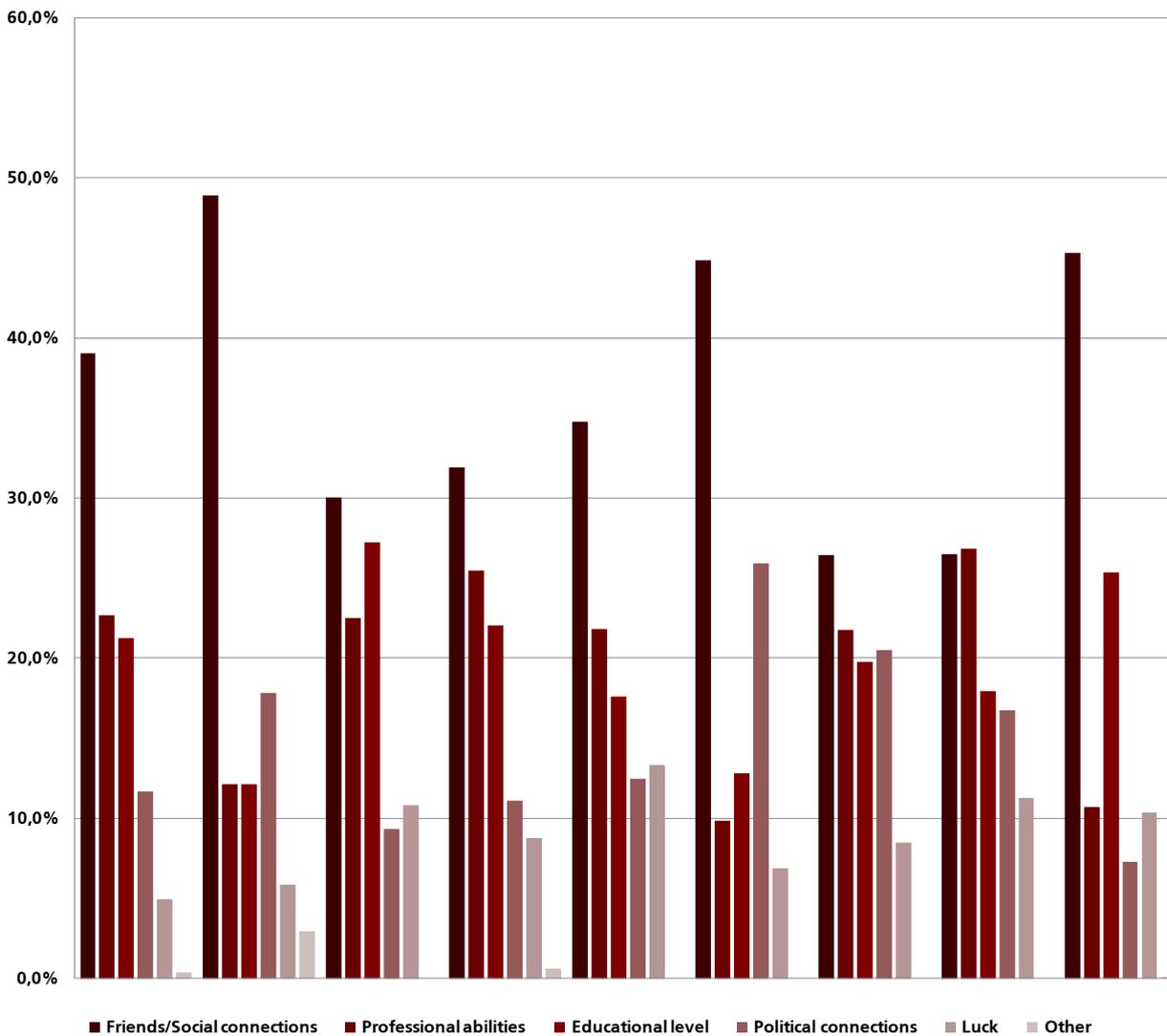
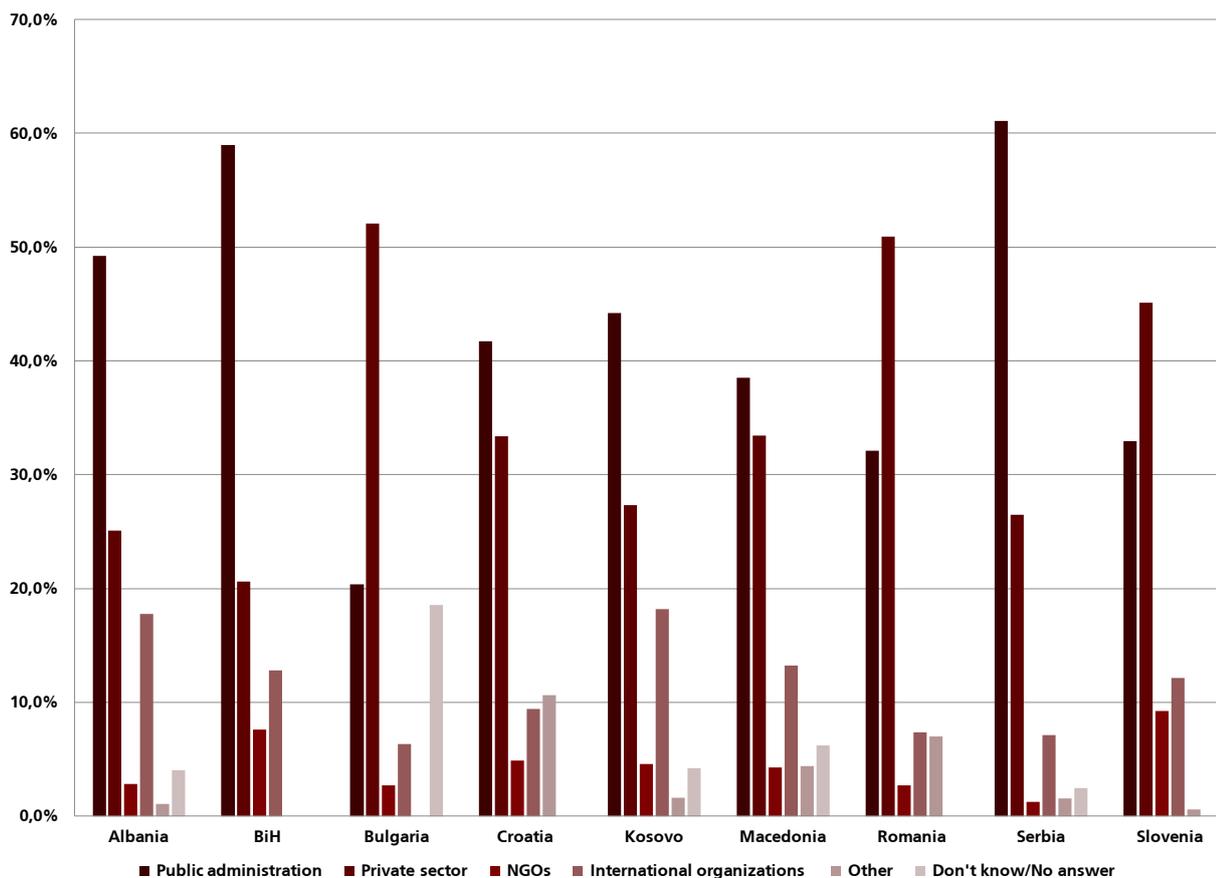


Figure 6.5. The most important factor for employment (%)<sup>191</sup>



## Employment

Figure 6.6. Preferred employment sectors (%)



to a link between perception of corruption in education and the belief that political connections are crucial for employment: the greater the perception of corruption, the more respondents chose political links as a primary factor for finding a job.<sup>192</sup>

The prevalence of such perceptions can partially be explained by the above-mentioned discrepancy between formal education systems and industrial needs of these economies, whereby the conviction that formal education leads to employment is lost. Also, large public sectors and underdeveloped private sectors in a number of SEE countries can be recognized as factors influencing such a perception. In other words, if the private sector is insufficiently developed and the main engine of employment is the public sector, employment criteria are not necessary merit-based and can be led by rent-seeking behavior, political influence and similar factors. In fact, statistical analysis at the

regional level shows that those who are seeking employment in the public sector perceive political capital as a factor of crucial importance for employment more frequently than those who are oriented towards jobs in the private sector.<sup>193</sup>

In fact, a significant part of young persons in SEE would like to be employed in public administration rather than in private companies - especially in countries where the private sector is less developed. In all countries except for Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria, young people prefer public to private sector employment (Figure 6.6).

Statistical analysis shows that those who prefer employment in the public sector rank 'job security' as the most important factor for the acceptance of employment in contrast to those who prefer jobs in the private sector,<sup>194</sup> which certainly may be an important part of the explanation of the large-scale interest in public sector employment.

<sup>190</sup> Answer options relating to working outside of profession. Other answer options included working in profession, or not having obtained any profession.

<sup>191</sup> Respondents had the option of ranking factors according to their importance. In this graph, the percentage of persons that ranked the given factors as their first option is shown.

<sup>192</sup>  $r = -0.058$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . This correlation was also confirmed at the level of individual countries in Albania, Bulgaria and Croatia. In Slovenia, the question on corruption was not posed.

<sup>193</sup>  $U = 4480377$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The same relationship was found at individual country level in Albania, Bulgaria and Croatia.

<sup>194</sup>  $U = 4465450$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . At the individual country level, this comparison is significant only in Croatia and Macedonia; in Bulgaria, respondents who are employed in the private sector rank job security as an important factor in accepting jobs much more frequently. In other countries, statistically significant correlations were not shown between the two variables.



## 7 Political and Civic Engagement

For young people, participation through democratic institutions is particularly important in order for them to become fully acquainted with the role of politically active citizenship and to develop an understanding of democratic values.<sup>195</sup> Political participation can have a positive impact on the formation of young people's identities and their overall relationship towards democracy.<sup>196</sup> Young people's views on politics can help identify potential obstacles to their integration in a democratic society. Their lack of political participation and distrust towards political institutions can signal the existence of fundamental problems that can endanger the future of democratic political systems, especially in countries without a democratic tradition.<sup>197</sup>

Factors that have been identified as important for the level of political participation of youth are the influence of education, parents, teachers and friends and the media.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, political views and political behavior are considered to be conditioned by the broader social context.<sup>199</sup> This is especially important for youth in new democracies, like the ones in SEE, which are mostly character-

ized by unfinished democratic consolidation.<sup>200</sup> In fact, democratization in the SEE region has faced numerous obstacles, including weak institutions, an undeveloped civil society, rule by authoritarian parties in some of the countries, and a general lack of democratic tradition.<sup>201</sup>

Studies show that, in recent years, there has been a steady trend of weakening political participation among citizens in general and youth in particular through the conventional channels, such as voting in elections or membership in political parties.<sup>202</sup> According to the 2015 EU Youth Report, "over the last three years, deterioration in the working and living conditions of many young people in Europe has gone hand in hand with a growing detachment from political life and waning engagement in traditional civic activities."<sup>203</sup> These trends may be indicative of alienation from and dissatisfaction with traditional institutional forms of politics<sup>204</sup> and distrust in political elites and political institutions in general.<sup>205</sup> Research to date points to the presence of such trends in the SEE region as well.<sup>206</sup>

195 Damir Kapidžić, "Politics, development and democracy," *Youth Study BiH*, pp. 121–122; Andrej Kirbiš and Barbara Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 211.

196 E. g. see Constance Flanagan, "Young people's civic engagement and political development," *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, p. 293. For a review of literature in this area, also see Kirbiš and Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 212.

197 Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 110.

198 For a literature overview with respect to these factors see: Kirbiš and Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 212.

199 Anderson, Heath (2003), discussed in: Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 110.

200 Merkel (2007), discussed in Kapidžić, "Politics, development and democracy," *Youth Study BiH*, pp. 120–121.

201 E. g. see Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 18.

202 Norris (2003), discussed in: Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 103.

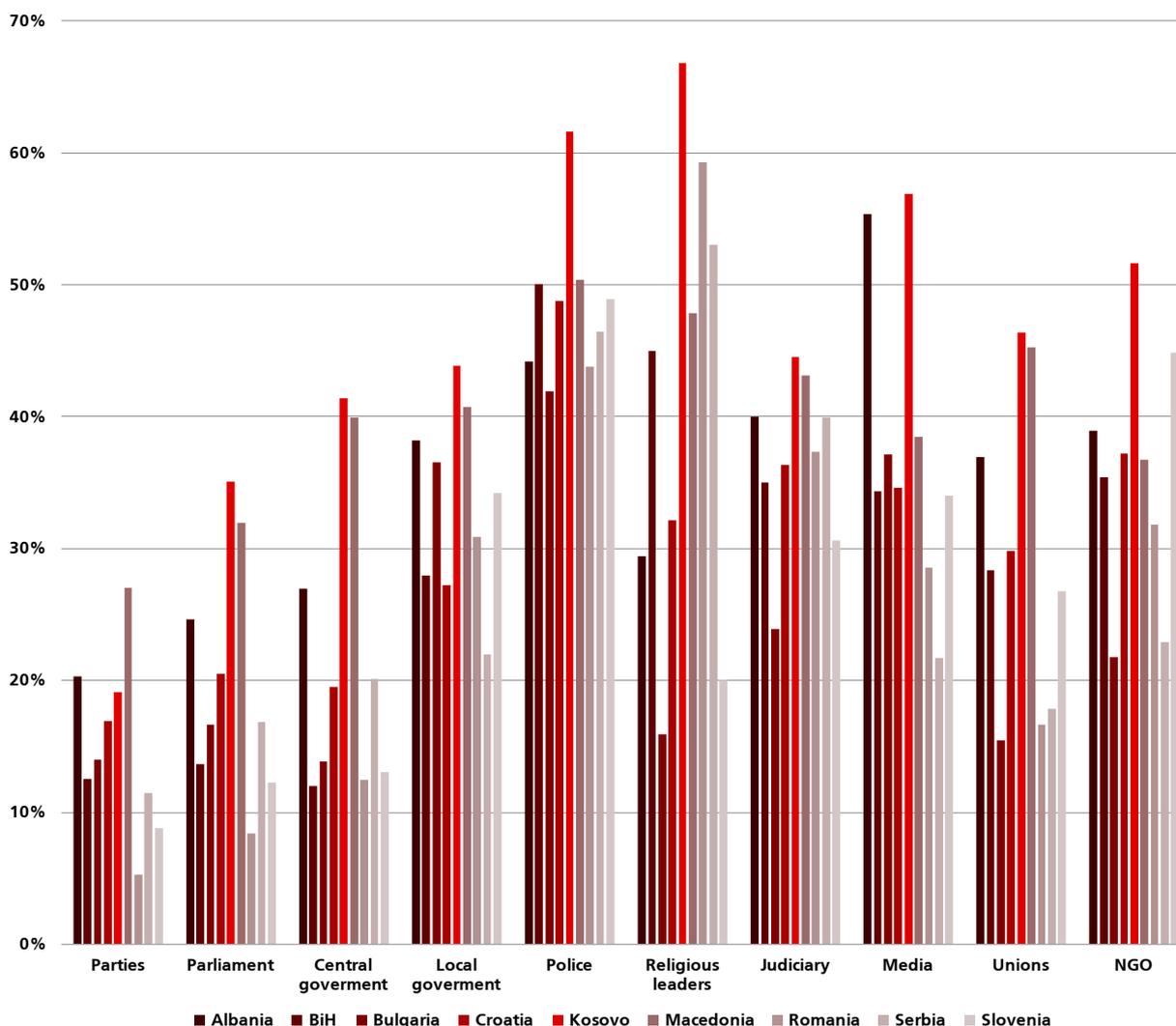
203 European Union, *EU Youth Report 2015* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016), p. 159.

204 Kapidžić, "Politics, development and democracy," *Youth Study BiH*, pp. 121–122; Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, pp. 110–111.

205 Henn et al. (2005) and Schwirtz (2007), discussed in: Kirbiš and Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 212.

206 For a review of literature in this realm, see Kirbiš and Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 212.

Figure 7.1. Trust in institutions / organizations (answers 'very' and 'somewhat', %, age 16–27)



As youth survey results demonstrate, skepticism towards the willingness and ability of their governments to address important political issues is common among SEE youth. Across nine SEE countries, trust in different institutions is generally low. Among the most trusted are institutions and organizations that perform control functions,<sup>207</sup> such as law enforcement agencies, media and NGOs. In BiH, Kosovo and Romania, religious institutions also enjoy high levels of trust among youth. On the other hand, there is almost universal distrust towards political parties and executive and legislative branches of governments across the region<sup>208</sup> (Figure 7.1). The low levels of trust in political institutions and parties among the general and youth population is in line with previous international

<sup>207</sup> Also, Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 31.

<sup>208</sup> Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," pp. 28–29; Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*.

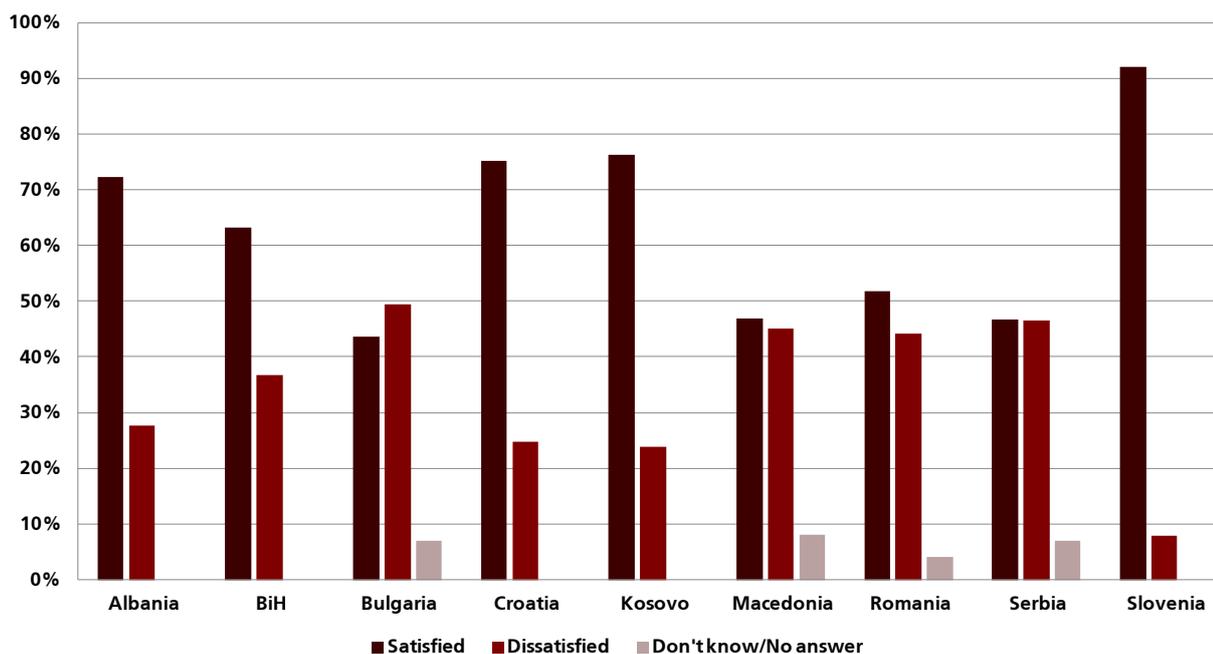
and regional studies in this realm.<sup>209</sup> For instance, previous research from the Western Balkans region shows that youth have the least trust in government and parliament, while they express the most trust in the police, the army and in religious institutions.<sup>210</sup>

Given the low levels of trust in formal state institutions and political actors engaged in electoral processes, it is not surprising that in some of the countries, a significant portion of youth expresses moderate to high levels of dissatisfaction with the state of democracy, with 34 percent of respondents dissatisfied on average across the region (Figure 7.2).

<sup>209</sup> Kirbiš and Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 226. Also see Stanojević, Stokanić (2014), discussed in: Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 75. See research conducted among the general population in the Western Balkans region: <http://pasos.org/pasos-project-poll-trust-in-public-institutions-declines-in-western-balkans/>.

<sup>210</sup> Kacarska et al., 2012, discussed in: Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 37.

Figure 7.2. Satisfaction with democracy (% , age 16–27)



Significant differences exist between countries with respect to the interest of youth in national politics. There appears to be somewhat greater interest in national politics in aspiring EU countries (except BiH) in comparison to countries which are already EU members (Figure 7.3).<sup>211</sup>

Survey results also point to a worryingly low participation in elections by young people in SEE, with only 28,6 percent, on average, having voted in all elections in which they were eligible to vote (Figure 7.4).

Statistical analysis at the regional level shows that the higher youth perceive the quality of education to be, the higher is their declared participation in elections. Respondents' level of completed education was also positively correlated with voting behavior.<sup>212</sup> Moreover, those with greater trust in institutions were more likely to vote,<sup>213</sup> a link corroborated in other empirical research.<sup>214</sup>

211 Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 32.

212 Kam and Palmer (2008) see higher education as a proxy for pre-adult experiences and influences, which in turn contribute to greater participation. Discussed in: Kirbiš and Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 221.

213 Correlations with participation: perception of quality of education ( $r=0.034$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). In individual countries, correlation is significant in Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia, with a small effect size. With level of completed education of respondents ( $r=-0.238$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Correlation is significant in all individual countries, with moderate effect sizes on average. Correlation with institutional trust ( $r=0.022$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

214 For an overview of literature in this realm, see Kirbiš and Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 225.

Not surprisingly, young people feel inadequately represented in politics in their countries, with 60 percent or more stating that they feel not to be adequately represented by youth who are active in politics across all countries<sup>215</sup> (Figure 7.5). This is in line with previous international and regional research on the perceptions of youth representation in politics.<sup>216</sup>

A majority of young people also feel powerless with respect to their ability to exert influence on state-level institutions through voting (Figure 7.6), whereas they feel they can exert some more influence at the local level.

According to Kirbiš and Zagorc (2014), numerous empirical studies have corroborated the link between having a sense of political efficacy or one's ability to influence politics to make them responsive to citizen demands and political participation.<sup>217</sup> Survey data demonstrating the general sense of powerlessness potentially sheds a light on young people's general dissatisfaction with, and low participation in politics in SEE. Statistical analysis shows that where young people feel powerless and underrepresented, they also tend to vote less,<sup>218</sup> and

215 Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 33.

216 E.g. see Kirbiš and Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 224.

217 For an overview of literature in this realm, see Kirbiš and Zagorc, "Politics and Democracy," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 225.

218  $r=0.293$ ,  $p<0.001$ . This correlation was also shown at the level of all countries, with small to moderate effect sizes.

Figure 7.3. Interest in national politics (% , age 16–27)<sup>219</sup>

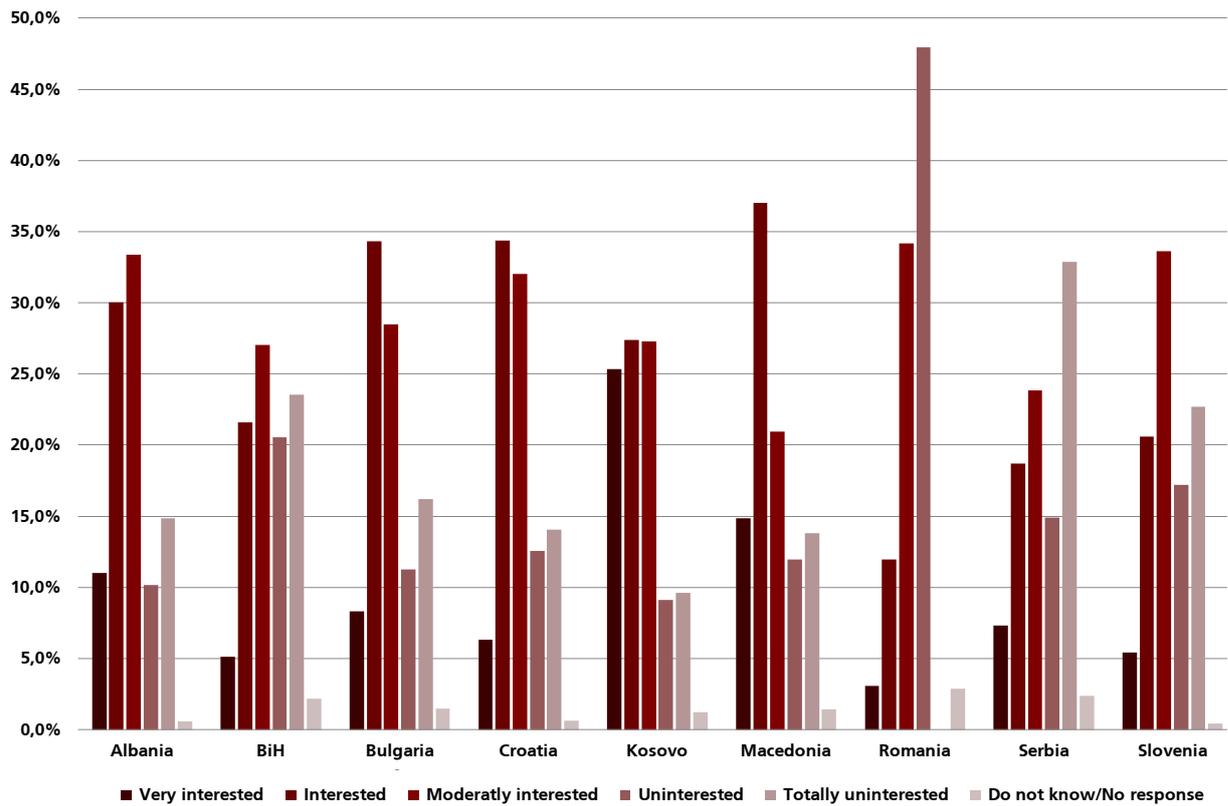


Figure 7.4. Voting (answer – ‘all elections’ / ‘all elections eligible to vote’) (% , age 18–27)

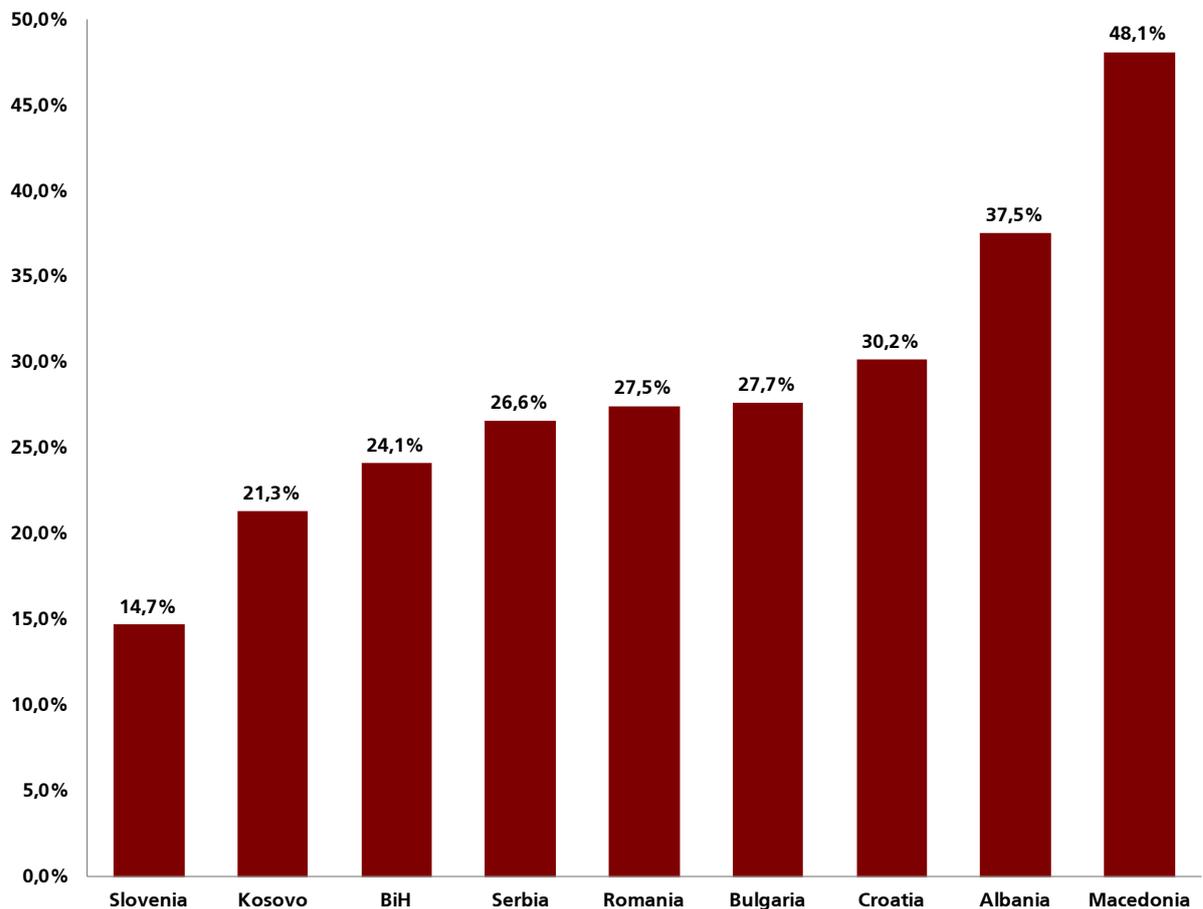
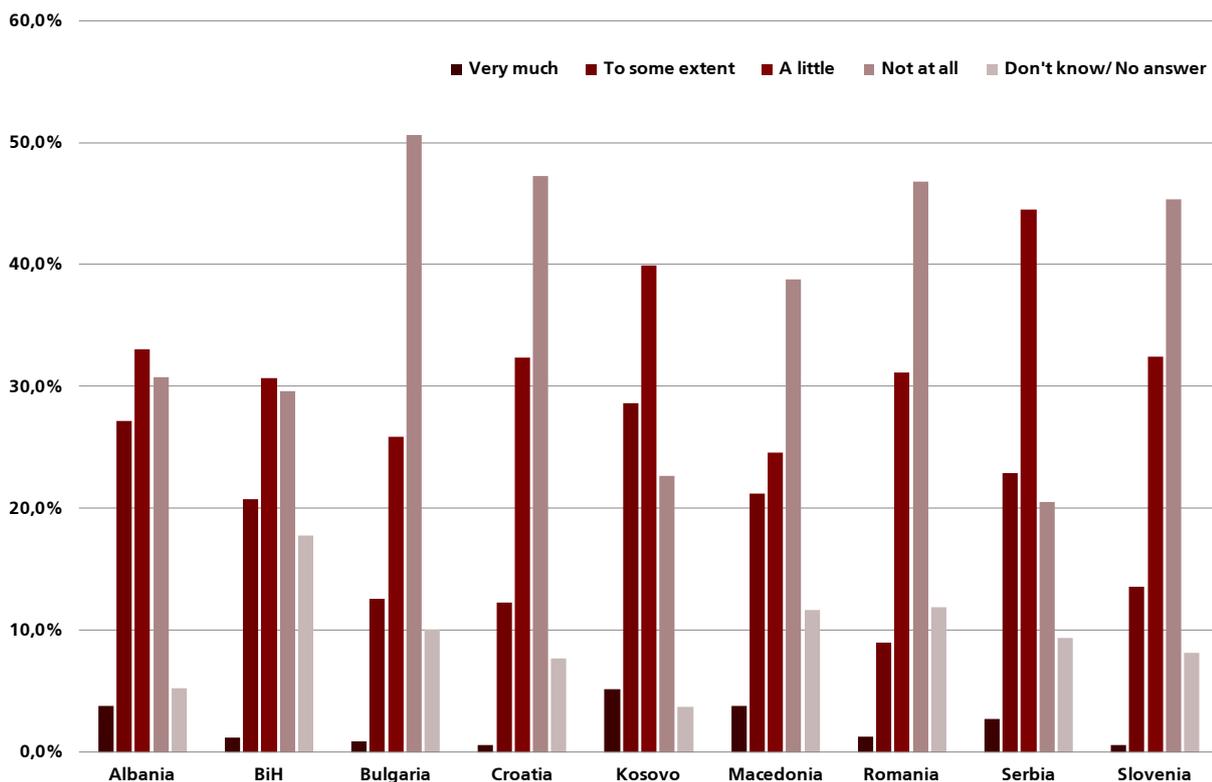


Figure 7.5. Perception of being represented by youth in politics (% , age 16–27)<sup>220</sup>



have lower levels of political trust<sup>221</sup> and overall institutional trust.<sup>222</sup> Such results paint a rather bleak picture of youth participation, especially with respect to traditional institutions of representative democracy.

On a more positive note, international research shows that there is an increasing interest among youth in alternative forms of civic engagement – such as petitions, street protests and the occupation of public spaces – that focus on broader issues, such as human rights protection, the environment, local community development or cultural issues.<sup>223</sup> At the same time, young people’s political engagement is becoming more individualized and

informal, reflecting their personal political interests.<sup>224</sup> Recent studies have also recognized the increasing importance and potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) for boosting young people’s political participation, given the substantial amount of time they tend to spend using these technologies in their daily activities.<sup>225</sup> This trend appears to be particularly present among educated, urban youth, and although more common in established democracies, it is increasingly evident in post-communist countries as well.<sup>226</sup>

Unfortunately, a question about alternative forms of political engagement of youth was asked only in Romania, which doesn’t allow for drawing comparisons with international trends or among SEE countries. Results point to considerable interest in non-traditional forms of political participation, as 52 percent of youth in Romania are likely to join protests over issues that are relevant for them.<sup>227</sup>

However, youth surveys did include questions on volunteering as a form of civic engagement. Re-

219 In Romania, the question was formulated as interest in politics without specifying the country, unlike in other countries.

220 In Albania, Croatia, Slovenia, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia and BiH, respondents were asked to what extent they felt represented by young people who are active in politics, while in Serbia, they were generally asked to what extent the interests of young people in Serbia are represented in politics.

221 Political trust pertains to trust in state institutions linked to the electoral process, including political parties, parliament and central and local government. Correlation:  $r=0.336$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Correlation also shown at the level of all individual countries, with moderate effect sizes on average.

222  $r=0.291$ ,  $p<0.001$ .

223 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 103; Norris (2004), discussed in: Kapidžić, “Politics, development and democracy,” pp. 121–122; Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, pp. 110–111; EU, *EU Youth Report 2015*, pp. 11–12;

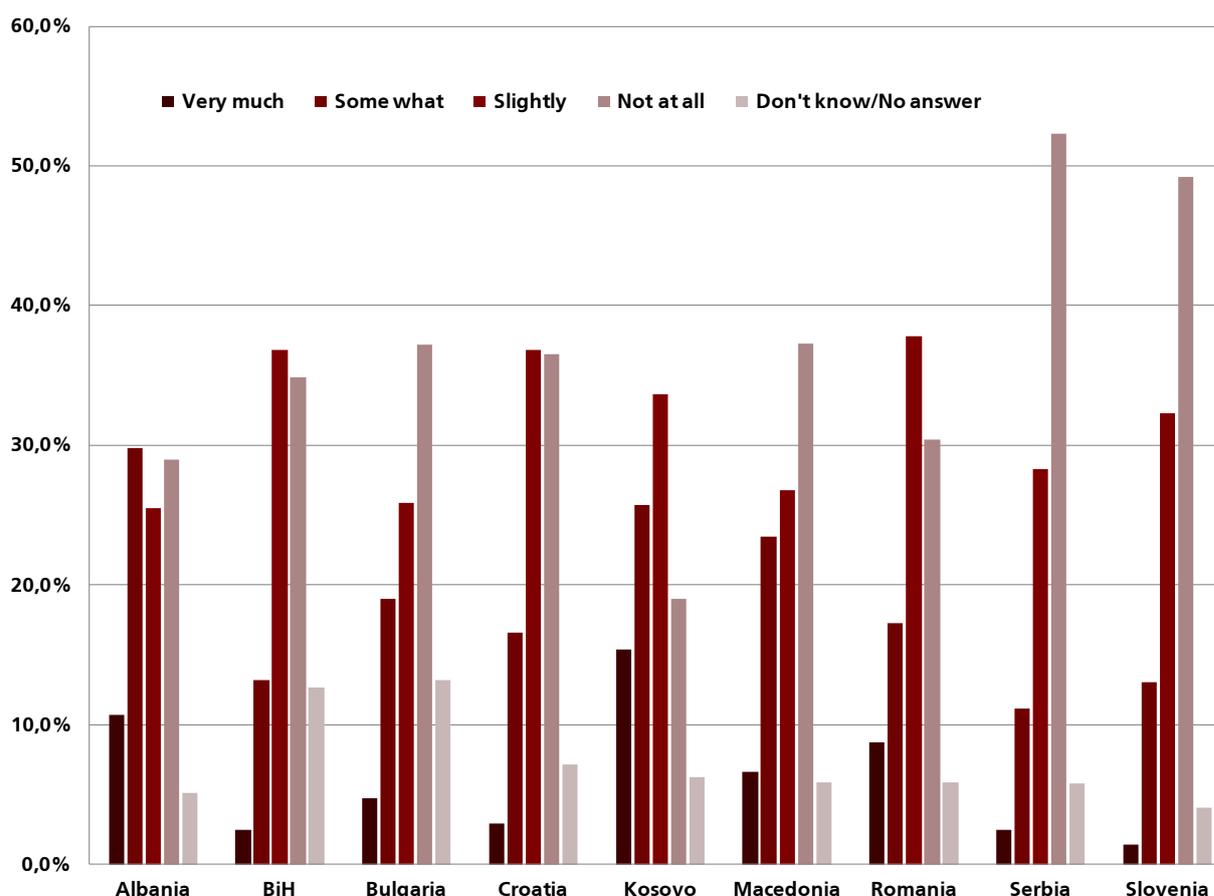
224 Council of Europe (2013), discussed in Kapidžić, “Politics, development and democracy,” *Youth Study BiH*, pp. 121–122.

225 For a review of literature, see: Kirbiš and Zagorc, “Politics and Democracy,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 213.

226 Vukelić and Stanojević (2012), discussed in: Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 103.

227 See: Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann, “Building Democracies in SEE,” pp. 34–35.

Figure 7.6. Percentage of youth who believe they can influence central/national institutions (% , age 16–27)



sults point to an uneven presence of volunteering across the region. In most countries, except for Slovenia and Serbia, the experience of volunteering among youth is low (Figure 7.7).<sup>228</sup> Such results corroborate previous research from the region, which shows generally low levels of volunteering among youth.<sup>229</sup>

Statistical analysis at the regional level shows that volunteering is positively correlated with parents' educational attainment, the material well-being of the household and negatively with respondents' age.<sup>230</sup> At the level of four countries, it is positively correlated with respondents' level of completed education.<sup>231</sup> Interestingly, in BiH, Bul-

garia and Romania, young people from urban areas tend to volunteer more often, while in Slovenia, it is youth from rural areas that volunteer more.<sup>232</sup>

The most commonly reported types of volunteer activities across countries include public works in the community – such as cleaning of public areas, maintenance of green areas or construction work – followed by assistance to seniors, persons with disabilities or vulnerable groups. According to Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann (2015) “this shows that the young people who are socially active have a sense of community duty and want to improve social inclusion.”<sup>233</sup> Across countries, the level of volunteering of young people through NGOs was ranked rather low, which may imply that the NGO sector is underdeveloped, with insufficient opportunities to volunteer through such organizations.<sup>234</sup>

<sup>228</sup> Volunteering appears to be the most prevalent in Serbia, but Tomanović and Stanojević note that this is largely due to young people's involvement in helping with flood relief at the time the survey was conducted. Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 75.

<sup>229</sup> E.g. for Croatia, see Mendeš (2006), discussed in: Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 95. For BiH, see UNICEF BiH, *Voices of Youth*, 2012, pp. 34–35.

<sup>230</sup> Correlations with volunteering: mother's ( $r=0.107$ ,  $p<0.001$  Spearman's rho) and father's ( $r=0.079$ ,  $p<0.001$  Spearman's rho) educational attainment; wealth index ( $r=0.082$ ,  $p<0.001$  Spearman's rho); age ( $r=-0.045$ ,  $p<0.001$  Spearman's rho).

<sup>231</sup> BiH, Croatia, Kosovo and Macedonia.

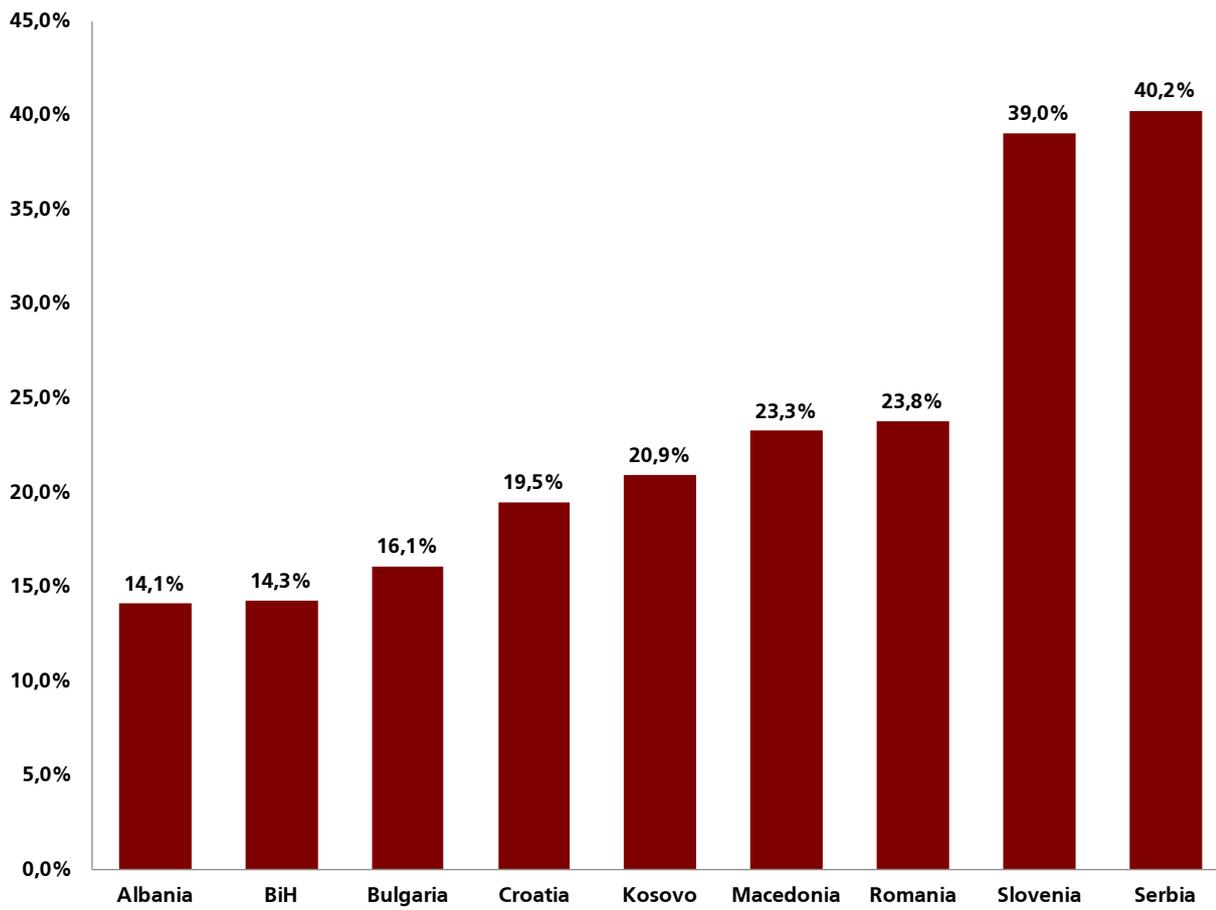
<sup>232</sup> There was no statistically significant correlation between place of residence and volunteering in other countries.

<sup>233</sup> Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, “Building Democracies in SEE,” p. 26.

<sup>234</sup> Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 76. Earlier studies in Croatia also pointed to an underdeveloped and territorially unevenly distributed NGO sector as one of the potential reasons for the lack of volunteering. See Bežovan (2004), discussed in: Ilišin et al, *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, p. 95.

## Political and Civic Engagement

Figure 7.7. Engagement in unpaid voluntary work over the last 12 months (% , age 16–27)





## 8 Hopes, Fears and Future Prospects

Given the multiple challenges that SEE youth face in a transitional context, it is important to explore young people's attitudes towards such challenges and their future prospects. When SEE youth are asked about what they perceive to be the most alarming problems in their countries, unemployment (73,9%), poverty (68,3%) and job insecurity (56%) receive the highest average marks. In general, material, existential problems are deemed more alarming than other, more global threats such as climate change, terrorist attacks or the spread of HIV. Such perceptions are not surprising, as they reflect the prevalent socio-economic state of individual societies and their public discourse,<sup>235</sup> both infused by the effects of the recent economic crisis that was still very much felt at the time the surveys were carried out in individual countries. A lack of rule of law or fight against corruption are also frequently chosen as alarming problems in some of the countries, which may point to youth's awareness of life in a society not based on meritocratic principles, but rather informality and clientelism.<sup>236</sup>

Except for youth in Albania and Kosovo, who appear to look towards the future of their country with great hope, young people in other countries are mildly optimistic to skeptical and pessimistic towards the notion that the economic situation in their countries will improve (Figure 8.1).

Klanjšek (2015) points out that the most optimistic youth appear to come from the economically least developed part of SEE, which they feel cannot get any worse, while the ones who are relatively bet-

ter off in economic terms are more anxious about the option of losing what they have.<sup>237</sup>

A poor socio-economic environment and living standards, particularly reflected in high youth unemployment and narrow labor market opportunities, accompanied with other factors such as political instability, result in a high level of willingness of young persons from some SEE countries to leave. The willingness of youth to leave their country differs in the region: from rather high in Kosovo and Albania, to relatively low in Slovenia, Romania or Croatia (Figure 8.2). This is generally in line with previous research, which has shown that 43 percent of BiH youth are interested in emigrating, with the percentage somewhat lower in Kosovo and Albania (35%), and somewhat higher in Serbia (45%) and Macedonia (46%).<sup>238</sup>

Statistical analysis at the regional level shows that youth who are not in full-time or part-time employment are more willing to leave than those who are.<sup>239</sup> On the other hand, respondents who perceive that they will be able to find employment right after graduation are showing a lower level of desire to leave.<sup>240</sup> Respondents who live in urban areas have a greater desire to leave than respondents from rural areas.<sup>241</sup>

237 Klanjšek, "Youth (Un)Employment and the Economic Situation of Youth in SEE," *Lost in Democratic Transition?* p. 134.

238 Kacarska et al. (2012), discussed in: Taleski, Reimbold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 44.

239  $r=0.091$ ,  $p<0.01$ . In individual countries, this correlation was confirmed in Albania, Croatia, Macedonia and Romania, while in Slovenia, it is the other way around – respondents who are employed express greater desire to leave.

240  $r=-0.048$ ,  $p<0.01$ . Not significant at the individual country level.

241 Correlation between living in rural areas and willingness to leave ( $r=-0.035$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). At the individual country level, significant in Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia.

235 Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young People in Serbia 2015*, p. 92

236 Ibid., p. 111.

Figure 8.1. Youth perceptions of the economic prospects of their country in 10 years (%)<sup>242</sup>

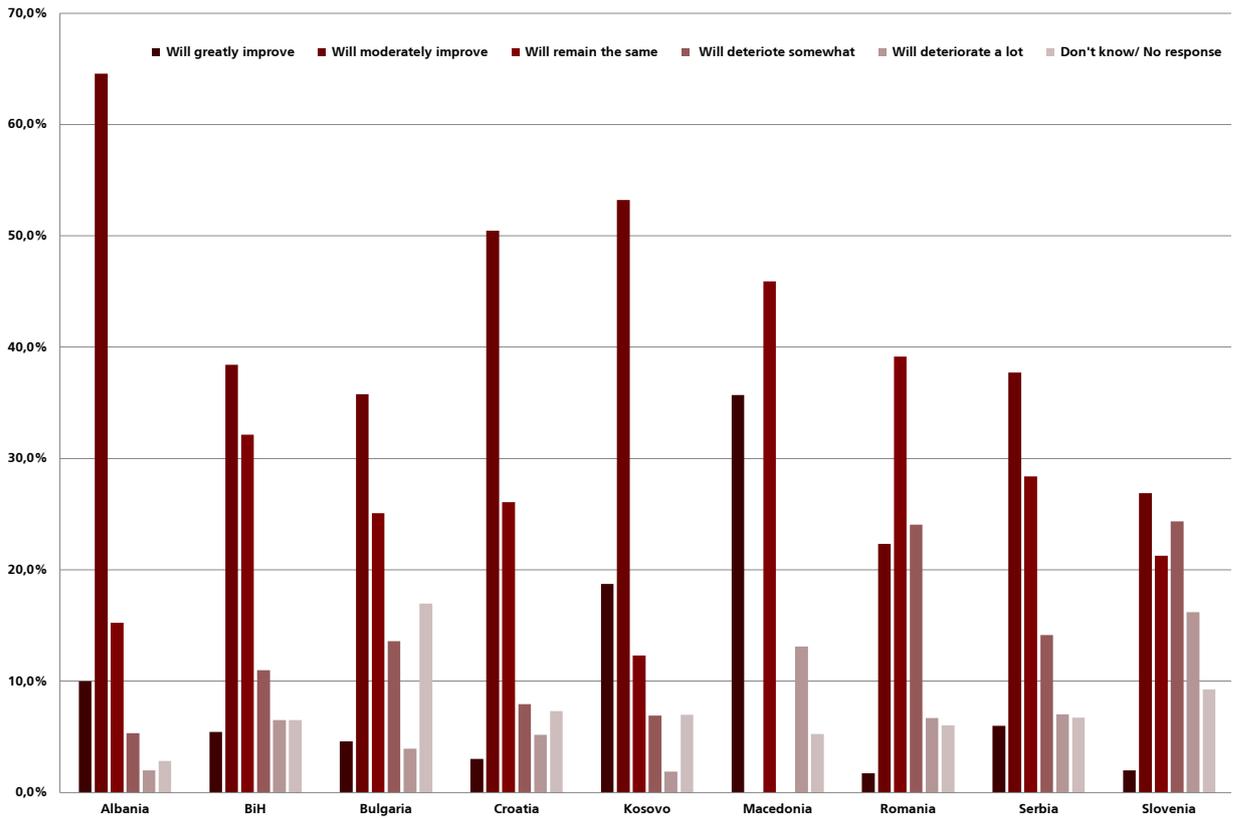


Figure 8.2: Willingness/desire to leave the country (%)<sup>243</sup>

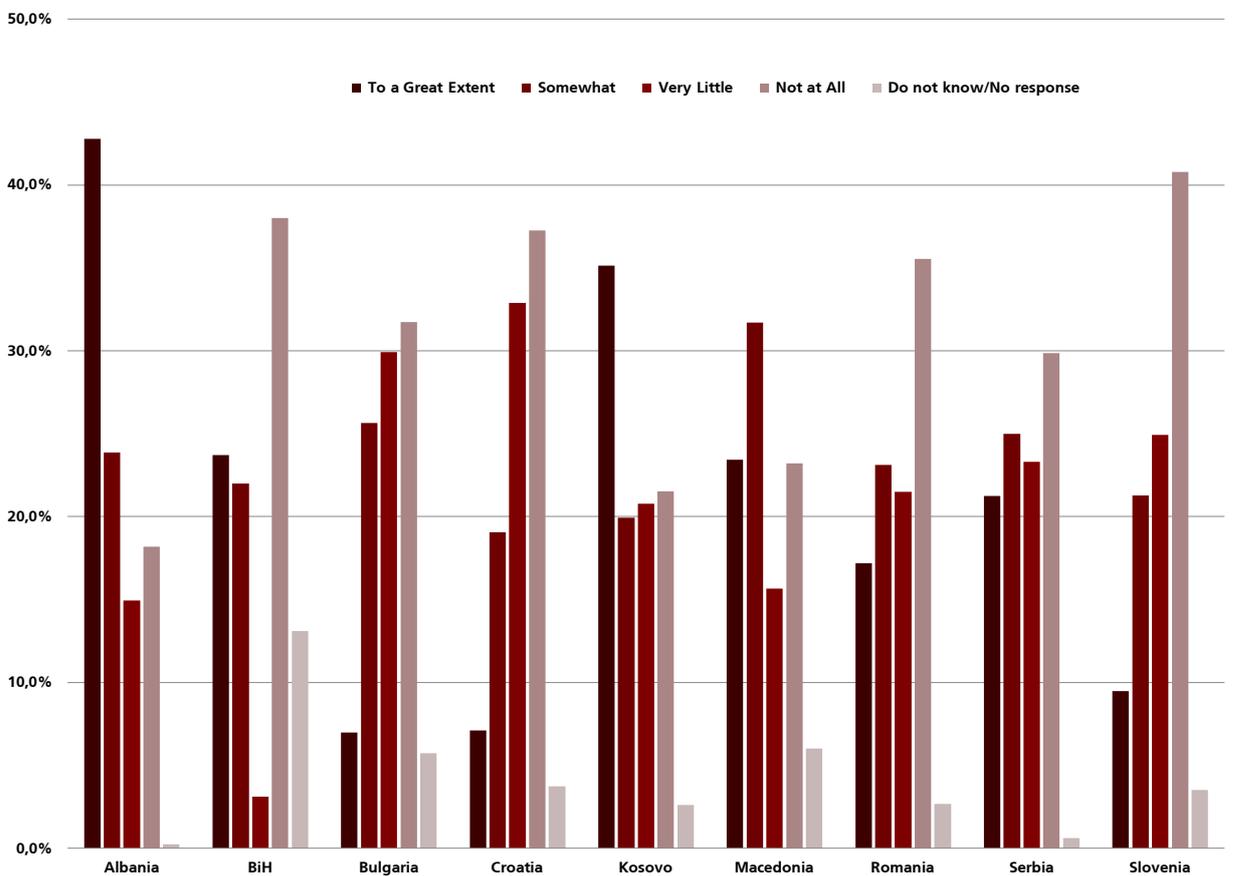
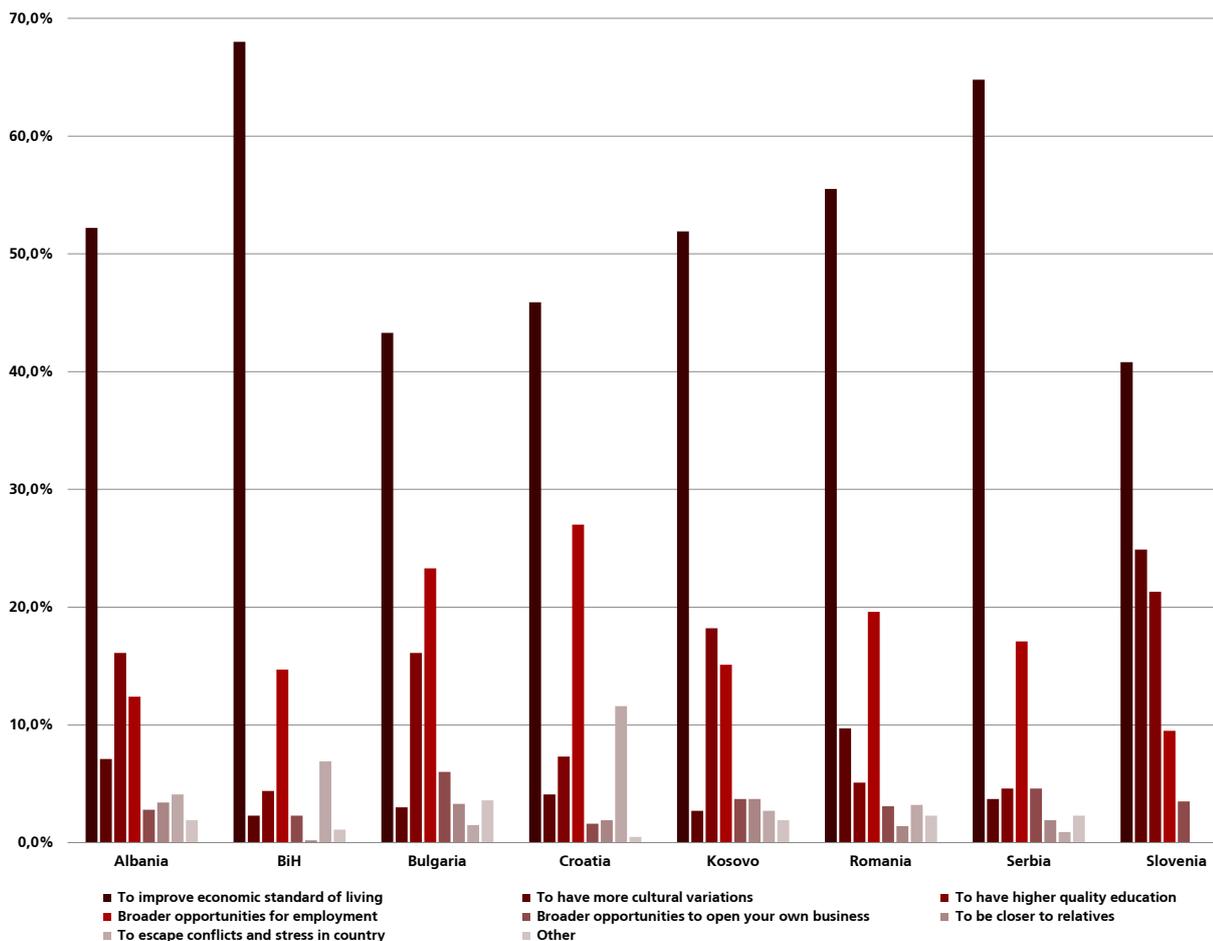


Figure 8.3. Reasons for leaving country (%)<sup>244</sup>



Young people in SEE countries most frequently chose the improvement of living standards as the reason for leaving, followed by broader opportunities for employment (Figure 8.3).

A trend of emigration can affect the economies of individual countries in a negative way, considering that the loss in human capital can exacerbate structural gaps in the labor market (e.g. outflow of professions that may be in shortage in the future) and become an obstacle for further economic development (e.g. expertise drain). Finally, emigration of the labor force is a considerable cost having in mind that the possibility of return on investment in formal education of workers in such a scenario is lost. However, it is also important to consider that youth mobility – or

temporarily living abroad for the sake of education, volunteering, work, cultural exchange or other reasons – may allow for the acquisition of sought-after knowledge and skills and better integration and opportunities in the global labor market.<sup>245</sup>

Emigration as a trend is especially alarming in the Western Balkans countries, where “brain drain” has become an important issue in the past few years. However, it seems that policies and instruments to encourage the return of workers who have emigrated, and who could be an important lever for capital and knowledge inflow, are still undeveloped, while the wider socio-economic contexts of these countries are not encouraging youth to stay and seek employment at home.<sup>246</sup>

Given their pessimistic outlook about own countries, and generally higher levels of desire to leave among youth from non-EU countries, it is not surprising to find that support for the EU among youth from the Western Balkans countries is rather high, except for Serbia. It is especially significant

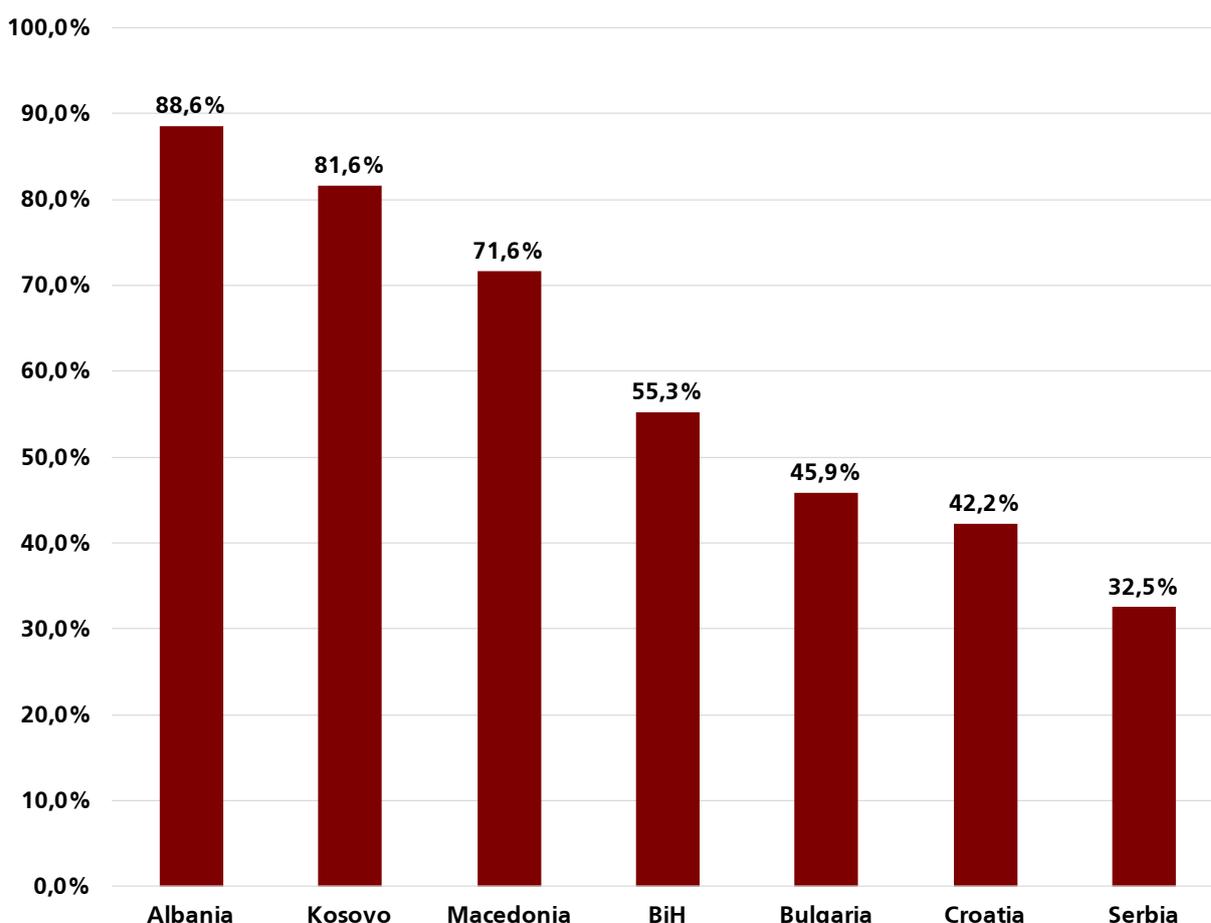
<sup>242</sup> Macedonia survey used a four point scale and was recoded; moreover, they used several instead of 10 years.

<sup>243</sup> Whereas respondents in other countries were asked about the extent of their desire or willingness to leave their home country, in BiH, respondents were first asked whether they would like to move to another country and, in case they responded in the affirmative, how strong their desire was to do so. In Figure 7, responses to both questions for BiH are combined.

<sup>244</sup> In Macedonia, answer responses differed and couldn't be included in the graph. However, “financial reasons” were cited as the reason for leaving by 65 percent of respondents.

<sup>245</sup> For more, see Miran Lavrič, “Employment and Mobility,” *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 72.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Figure 8.4. Percentage of youth that support EU integration (based on Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann, 2015)<sup>247</sup>

in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, and somewhat lower in BiH (Figure 8.4).<sup>248</sup>

While young people in aspiring EU member states hope that the EU will bring economic opportunities and free movement,<sup>249</sup> youth in SEE countries that are members are more disillusioned with EU accession. Youth surveys results show that many young people appear to be disappointed with their living standards, and consider that there are

<sup>247</sup> Question on EU attitudes combines differently worded questions, in line with the 2015 comparative youth study: In Albania, BiH, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia, the question was to what extent youth support their country's accession to the EU (responses 'Yes' in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia; combination of responses 'completely' and 'mostly' in BiH, Croatia and Serbia). In Bulgaria, youth was asked to what extent they see EU integration as positive or negative (combination of responses 'entirely positive' and 'positive'). A similar question was not posed in Romania. Figure 8.4. leaves data for Slovenia out because the question posed there was on whether the country should leave the EU. See Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 39.

<sup>248</sup> For previous research on youth support for EU integration in SEE, see Kacarska et al., 2012, discussed in Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 41.

<sup>249</sup> Also shown in Kacarska et al (2012) for the Western Balkans region, discussed in: Taleski, Reibold and Hurrelmann, "Building Democracies in SEE," p. 41.

negative consequences of EU membership for their countries. For example, in Slovenia, an overwhelming majority of youth consider European integration to have negatively affected the economy and the political system.<sup>250</sup> This is in stark contrast with the perceptions of young Slovenian adults aged 18–30 in 2003, 81 percent of whom thought that joining the EU would benefit the country.<sup>251</sup>

As suggested by Ilišin et al (2013) and Mitev and Kovacheva (2014), one can assume that the rise in Euroscepticism among youth in new member states is to be expected once they become disillusioned by the absence of substantial change in their socioeconomic prospects after EU accession.<sup>252</sup> The above results may also point to a possible lack of knowledge of youth about the prospects and benefits of the EU, which can then result in great optimism before accession, followed by deep disillusionment after a country becomes a member.

<sup>250</sup> Rudi Klanjšek, "Governance and Development," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, pp. 251–253.

<sup>251</sup> Toš et al. (2003), discussed in: Klanjšek, "Governance and Development," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 253.

<sup>252</sup> See Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*, pp. 130–131; Mitev and Kovacheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*, p. 153.

## 9 Conclusion and Recommendations

The countries of SEE have witnessed significant systemic changes over the past twenty years. Cohorts of young people growing up in these societies today therefore not only face 'standard' transitions with respect to education, employment, independent living and other aspects of their lives, but experience such transitions in challenging contexts.

Indeed, results of SEE surveys paint a rather bleak picture regarding the future of SEE societies from the perspective of the challenges that their young cohorts face. Youth appear to be disillusioned, and in many ways, failed by their societies. This is, *inter alia*, reflected in low levels of social trust, low levels of tolerance and high levels of social distance. Moreover, it is reflected in questionable access to quality education, especially manifested in potentially high levels of corruption in education as perceived by youth in some of the countries, as well as a lack of a practical orientation in education, which casts a shadow on young people's employment prospects. Such prospects are meagre indeed, given high unemployment rates in most countries, flexible working arrangements, and in some instances, high levels of social and economic exclusion. Low political participation and low political and institutional trust among youth demonstrate exclusion from democratic life in general.

Young people are generally anxious about their societies' economic prospects and identify existential matters as the most alarming problems that have befallen them; in many countries, they express a high willingness to leave their countries for economic reasons (especially in Kosovo and Albania).

Moreover, in all countries, young people are also faced with inequalities in accessing better livelihoods, which, as shown in this study, can be linked to important structural factors, including material status of households, their parents' cultural capital, educational attainment, gender, place of residence and others. These factors, coupled with the wider social, economic and political context, appear to play a significant role in shaping the different pathways and opportunities that young people have.

In general, young people in SEE appear to be a victim of inadequate policies and institutional practices that would ease their integration and their ability to prosper in different spheres of life. An important point to be made is that young people face similar challenges whether they live in countries that are members of the European Union or not.<sup>253</sup>

What can governments in the region do to ease youth transitions and curb youth disenchantment? This is not an easy question to answer, primarily because there appear to be a myriad of interconnected issues that need to be addressed, at least according to the experiences and perceptions of young people as recounted by the youth surveys. It is, however, apparent that something needs to be done as the widespread "frustration and resignation" among SEE youth may result not only in emigration,<sup>254</sup> but in further weakening of the political systems and economies of SEE states.

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<sup>253</sup> Klaus Hurrelmann and Michael Weichert, "Preface," *Lost in Democratic Transition?* p. 10.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

Indeed, exclusion, disillusionment, distrust and a sense of powerlessness deprives young people of a future and undermines the very fabric of SEE societies. This calls for urgent and comprehensive measures that will go beyond mere technocratic interventions at the level of individual policies. After all, the results of youth surveys show that SEE countries must undergo a paradigm shift with respect to the policies they deploy to address the needs of their young population in order to be able to prosper as societies, both in terms of economically competing with other countries and maintaining and strengthening their democracies. To that end, a set of broad recommendations that aim to contribute to such a shift in thinking are offered underneath:

### On Education

- An important precondition for building empowering educational systems is to tackle inherent inequalities in access to education. One way to do so is to improve the social safety net of students by providing them with adequate support schemes.
- A practical orientation to education is needed for an easier education-to-employment transition. More specifically, closer cooperation between educational institutions and the business sector may ensure that young people have the opportunity to gain experience, and may introduce a practical orientation in curricula. However, if such programs are to be implemented properly, there is a need for clear criteria to ensure their usefulness for internship participants in terms of obtaining new skills. Furthermore, capacity-building programs should be introduced targeting both educational institutions and employers to help them establish meaningful internship programs.
- Educational systems should provide youth with advice on career choices and work opportunities as to ensure a faster and better transition from school to work. Career guidance programs should be introduced at the high school and university level.
- Given rapid automatization and introduction of information and communication technologies in all spheres of life, educational curricula need to be modernized and adapted to respond to such trends.

### On Working Opportunities and Conditions

- Activation policies for unemployed and inactive youth are needed as to enhance their employability. More specifically, training programs that are responsive to contemporary market needs should be introduced. In addition, job search assistance and career guidance programs are essential to help young people enter the labor market. However, for this to be feasible, significant capacity building of public employment services is needed.
- Through policies such as tax and contribution subsidies, employers should be encouraged to offer longer-term employment for young workers.
- Moreover, comprehensive macroeconomic policies to increase demand for a youth labor force should be developed by states in the region.
- Policies targeting different groups facing difficulties in accessing the labor market, especially low-skilled youth and women, need to be introduced.
- A positive impact on young people's livelihoods would stem from measures to reduce the precarity of their working arrangements.
- Young people should have a voice in the formulation of employment policies and programs, and be able to advocate for an easier entry into the labor market and improved working conditions and rights. To that end, their representative bodies – such as youth councils and associations – should be included in social dialogue mechanisms.

### On Politics and Civic Participation

- Developing civic education may increase young people's civic and political participation. Civic education should be a part of the formal educational system and should be contemporary in terms of issues covered by such programs.
- Governments and other actors – such as public and private educational institutions – should actively work on creating opportunities for civic engagement by mainstreaming civic par-

## Conclusion and Recommendations

ticipation in formal education and forging a link between educational institutions and the civic sector. Mobility schemes should be introduced, as they are crucial for broadening horizons, cultural exchange, and fostering ideas among youth.

- To increase young people's sense of political efficacy and trust, mechanisms for exerting substantial influence on decision-making processes need to be put in place, for example through youth advisory bodies and the mandatory engagement of youth organizations in policy-making.
- Moreover, self-organizing of young people in own representative bodies – such as youth councils, youth associations and labor unions – should be systematically encouraged. For example, capacity-building programs and funding opportunities may be introduced for such initiatives.

### On Social Trust

- Greater emphasis on education that fosters tolerance, understanding and knowledge of other cultures, social groups and political views is crucial for building social trust.
- Programs that facilitate exposure of young people to diverse social groups, especially through educational exchange programs and engagement in the civic sector, should be developed.

### On Mobility and Migration

- Mobility among youth – or the temporary movement abroad in order to engage in educational, work and other opportunities – should be encouraged by states in the region, for example by engaging in existing mobility programs or developing new mobility schemes, by simplifying the recognition of educational degrees obtained abroad, etc.
- Emigration or permanent leave should be dealt with strategically through policies that seek to encourage youth to stay in their home countries and that incite those who have emigrated to return as to curb the detrimental effects of losing talent and expertise. However,

given research results, such policies inevitably depend on overall demand for youth labor in the country, their general socio-economic status and opportunities to obtain quality education at home.

- Moreover, given high levels of migration from SEE countries, states in the region need to formulate their interests towards and engage in transnational dialogue with countries that are the recipients of youth migration. For example, migration could be understood, shaped and promoted as a circular motion, where notifications should be passed on about which sectors in European and other countries are in demand of labor for a specific time, which young people from the region could use to travel there, gain work experience, and return once the labor market is satisfied. Such sectoral circular migration of young people may then be agreed upon for specific time periods between countries.
- To address this truly transnational issue, a more comprehensive understanding of the profiles of people seriously willing to emigrate needs to be achieved. To that end, data-gathering and monitoring of youth migration dynamics is vital as to inform policies in this realm.



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## Annex: Methodology

This report relies on FES youth surveys, implemented by research institutions and teams in nine countries of SEE.<sup>255</sup> In each country, surveys relied on representative samples of young people, structured along key socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, place of residence, type of settlement, socio-professional status, educational level, etc.<sup>256</sup> In most countries, survey results were complemented with biographical face-to-face interviews with and/or focus groups with young people as to gain in-depth information on specific issues, and were presented in country studies.<sup>257</sup> This study relies on the surveys, limiting the sample to the age cohort of 16–27 for the sake of comparability (See Table 1).

For the purpose of analysis, answers to comparable questions from the surveys were taken into account and results from databases from individual

countries were unified into one integral database.<sup>258</sup>

For statistical analysis, SPSS 19 and SPSS 21 were used. Since most of the variables were on a nominal and ordinal scale of measurement, nonparametric statistical analysis was conducted. To test relationships between variables, Spearman's rho was used, and for testing differences between groups, Mann-Whitney U test was performed. For an extraction of factors, orthogonal (varimax) or oblique (promax) factor analysis was used, depending on whether the input variables are correlated or not. Statistical significance was interpreted at the confidence levels of 95 percent or 99 percent.

In this study, only significant correlations have been reported. The analysis highlights whether correlations were performed at the regional level (including all countries for which data was available) or at the level of individual countries. Unlike regional correlations, individual country-level correlation coefficients are not shown in the report, but are available upon request.

A specific note to be made is that a wealth index was constructed as an indicator of material wealth of youth in this study. Data on youth incomes, usually used in research when considering the socio-economic status of youth, were not gathered by surveys in most countries and thus could not be used. Data on monthly consumption of households was also not gathered in all countries and there are also inherent limitations to such

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<sup>255</sup> Albania: Çela, Alba et al., *Albanian Youth 2011: "Between Present Hopes and Future Insecurities!"* (Tirana: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and IDRA Research & Consulting, 2011); BiH: Žiga et al., *Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014* (Sarajevo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, 2015); Bulgaria: Mitev and Kovatcheva, *Young People in European Bulgaria*; Croatia: Ilišin et al., *Youth in a Time of Crisis*; Kosovo: Pasha, et al., *Kosovo Youth Study: Forward Looking, Grounded in Tradition* (Prishtina: IDRA Kosova, 2012); Macedonia: Topuzovska Latković et al., *Youth Study Macedonia 2013* (Skopje: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013); Romania: Umbreş, Radu et al., *Romanian Youth: concerns, aspirations, attitudes and life style* (Bucharest: Center for Urban and Regional Sociology and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Romania, 2014); Tomanović and Stanojević, *Young people in Serbia 2015*; Slovenia: Flere et al., *Slovenian Youth 2013: Living in times of disillusionment, risk and precarity* (Zagreb: Center for the Study of Post-Yugoslav Societies and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014).

<sup>256</sup> "Introduction and Methodology of FES Youth Studies," in *Lost in Democratic Transition?* p. 11.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>258</sup> Individual country databases in SPSS format and survey questionnaires that were used for analysis in this report are available on the website of the Center for the Study of Post-Socialist Societies from Ljubljana, one of the research institutions implementing the FES Youth studies, at the following link: <http://projects.ff.uni-mb.si/cepss/index.php/youth-studies/>.

a question given that youth are reporting on their monthly household consumption, but may not be knowledgeable of all household expenses. The wealth index as an indicator of the material status of the household is based on the available information on items in possession of a household in individual countries (e.g. cars, computers, phones, different electronic appliances, etc.). There were differences in collected data on items in each individual country; for the purposes of creating the index, available variables were used and for each

country and an indicator was subsequently made, which ranks respondents according to the level of wealth within each country. A factor analysis for each country was then performed. Using oblique promax rotation, factors were extracted for each factor individually and consequently added up to make up a common factor that refers to wealth in a given country. A final, common factor was furthermore divided up into five equal parts (quintiles) where the first represents the poorest, and the last the wealthiest households.

**Table 1: Youth research conducted in 9 SEE countries and sample used in this report**

	Year survey conducted	Sample size	Age cohort	Sample size used in report (age 16–27)
<b>Albania</b>	2011	1,200	16–27	1,199
<b>BiH</b>	2014	1,004	15–27	955
<b>Bulgaria</b>	2014	1,018	14–27	889
<b>Croatia</b>	2012	1,500	14–27	1,347
<b>Kosovo*</b>	2012	1,000	16–27	1,073
<b>Macedonia</b>	2013	1,065	15–29	858
<b>Romania</b>	2014	1,302	15–29	1,047
<b>Serbia</b>	2015	1,186	15–29	981
<b>Slovenia**</b>	2013	907	16–27	907

\* In Kosovo, a representative, random sample of 1000 respondents was complemented with a booster sample of additional 80 respondents, of Serb ethnicity, included to have a statistically significant subgroup for analysis. In this report, both are used for analysis. Pasha et al, *Kosovo Youth Study*, p. 10.

\*\* In Slovenia, due to technical issues, a stratified quota sample, rather than a random sample was used. For more information, see Sergej Flere and Marko Divjak, "The Study and its Operationalization," *Slovenian Youth 2013*, p. 23.

## The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Southeast Europe

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