

It's Your Turn for Social Changes



Research on
Youth Policies and Learning Awareness



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Publisher:
Europe House Slavonski Brod
Antuna Barca 30
35000 Slavonski Brod
t + 385 35 415 190
f + 385 35 265 189
e-mail: europski-dom@sb.t-com.hr



For publisher:
Božica Sedlić

Cooperators:
Iva Sedlić
Dunja Brljević
Cihad Ozer
Teodora Kaleynska
Slavco Kirkovski

Arranged by:
Danijel Župan

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The present survey results are realized within the framework of the transnational youth project called "It's Your Turn for Social Changes", implemented under the European Erasmus+ program.

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Methodology

The survey was conducted by Europe House Slavovski Brod, in association with partners from Turkey (Konya Metropolitan Municipality Kilicarslan Youth Center), Bulgaria (European Information Centre Veliko Tarnovo) and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (MHD UMKA Skopje) between 15th of May and 15th of August 2015.

A total of eight hundred respondents (N=800)¹ from different social and demographic backgrounds², aged 15 onwards were interviewed via questionnaire designed by EHSB.

The questionnaires consisted of six sections: *National realities*, *European realities*, *EU opportunities for young people*, *Youth work*, *Non-formal education* and *Personal information*³.

The information from the questionnaire was collected, analyzed and converted into percentages for each of countries.



¹ N=800 – the survey sample is small considering the total population of countries, there were around 200 respondents from each partner country

² Since the questionnaire was shared via online channels, most respondents are sympathizers of related NGOs

³ Personal information include age, gender, education level and employment status

Introduction

The present survey results are realized within the framework of the transnational youth project called “It’s Your Turn for Social Changes “, implemented under the European Erasmus+ program.

European institutions are aware of democratic deficits⁴ and understand the importance of overcoming them. Therefore, the aim of this project is to deepen the understanding of Active European Citizenship, to raise awareness about the importance of positive social change and to increase the level of youth competence as well as their level of active participation.

Previous experiences show that young people in the four partner countries lack competencies necessary to identify the problems in their local communities, as well as to engage in a dialogue with policy-makers on all levels, thus becoming active citizens. Experience also shows that young people often do not understand the mechanisms of the policy-making process, which is a big obstacle to their active participation.

Therefore, this survey was conducted in order to examine the knowledge and attitudes of young people towards national and European youth policies as well as their awareness about EU opportunities. The survey also examines their knowledge and awareness regarding work opportunities and non-formal education.

The questionnaire was divided into five main sections plus an additional section about personal information, each examining certain issues connected to the topic and the respondent's opinion on the following:

- 1) **National realities** – this section examined the awareness of national youth policies and youth programs, the most important challenges young people face in different countries, the effectiveness of national youth policies, and how national youth policies meet the needs of young people.
- 2) **European realities** – this section examined the effectiveness of European youth policies, the most important challenges young people face in Europe, areas where European youth policies are more or less effective, and the implementation of European youth policies in different countries.
- 3) **EU opportunities offered to young people** – this section examined the awareness of mobility and training opportunities, familiarity with EU learning program(s), satisfaction with information concerning EU programs for young people and the benefits young people gain from these opportunities.
- 4) **Youth work** – this section examined familiarity with terms “youth work “and “youth worker “, awareness of various youth organization(s) and their impact on supporting and empowering young people as well as society in general.

⁴ Although the term „democratic deficit“ usually refers to „EU institutions and their decision-making procedures (which) suffer from a lack of democracy and seem inaccessible to the ordinary citizen due to their complexity“, (source: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/democratic_deficit.html), here it also relates to the lack of political knowledge and activity among young people.

5) Non formal education – this section examined the familiarity with non-formal learning; how non-formal learning influences the development of skills and competences, youth empowerment, the improvement of young people's position in the labor market and the support of vulnerable youth; recognition of skills and competences gained through non-formal education at national and European level.

1. National realities

Firstly, respondents stated their awareness and knowledge about the national youth policies of their respective countries. The situation between countries varies regarding official documents governing youth policies and programs.

Bulgaria has been a full member of the European Union since January 1st, 2007. Bulgaria has a *National youth strategy 2010-2020*, which proscribes that the state should care for the development of competent and assertive youth and guide them to an active social life because “*the care for young people is the most important national cause, in order to provide European Development of Bulgaria.*” Also, the youth law (2012) “*determines the main principles, management and financing of the activities conducted for implementation of the state youth policy.*” It covers youth work, youth organizations, volunteering, youth policy and information.

Croatia became a full member of the European Union on July 1st, 2013. The *National Youth Action Program* from 2003, underpinned by the *National Youth Program (2014-2017)* provides a social, educational, cultural, material and political framework for the development of youth opportunities.

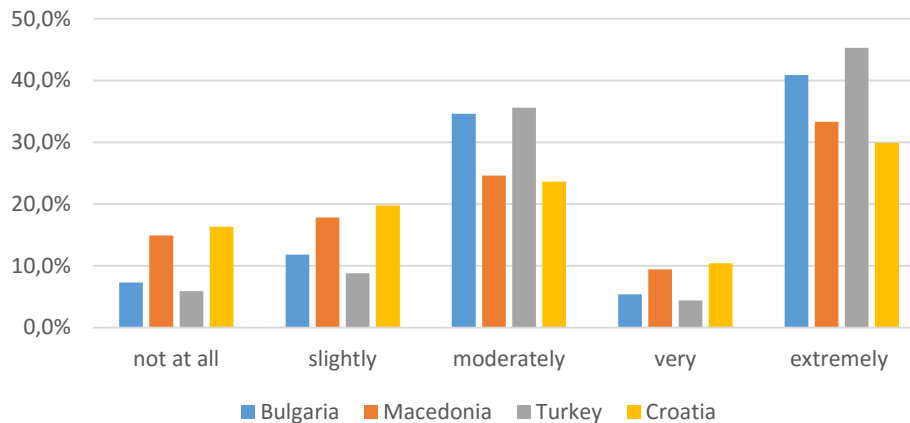
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been a candidate for EU accession since 2005 but has not yet entered into accession negotiations. However, they have developed relevant policies like the *National Youth Strategy* and the *Action plan for implementation of the National Youth Strategy of The Republic of Macedonia*. The national strategy was reviewed in 2010 and 2011. The strategy focuses on four “action priorities”; education, employment, quality of life and participation.

Turkey also has a national youth policy from 2013, under *The National Youth and Sports Policy Document*, stating that Turkey has the highest percentage of young people (in the general population) in Europe. However, the document does not contain specific measures nor does it define the financial resources necessary for their implementation.

Considering existing national youth policies in the countries participating in the survey, the position of young people varies from country to country, depending on the strength of the national strategies, their implementation and the overall relationships between EU member states.

Respondents were initially asked (Q1) to express their level of awareness regarding national youth policies and youth programs. The results show that 11, 1% of respondents are completely unaware of any national youth policies and actions, 14, 8% is only slightly aware while 29, 6% of them are moderately aware of national youth policies. Furthermore, 7, 4% of respondents are very aware while most of them (37%) are extremely aware of national youth policies and programs.

Q1: Are you aware of national youth policies and actions for young people?



Even though almost half of the respondents (those who are very and extremely aware) are aware of national youth policies and programs, a large number of those who are moderately aware of national youth policies are simply familiar with their existence, but usually do not fully understand them.

Sociodemographic data for Q1:

Gender	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Male	6,2%	6,1%	12,7%	4,2%	16,8%
Female	4,9%	8,7%	16,9%	3,2%	20,2%
Age	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
15-17	4,3%	4,2%	5,5%	1,3%	0,7%
18-25	3,1%	5,2%	19,4%	2,4%	11,9%
25-30	2,2%	2,3%	4,2%	3,2%	15,1%
30+	1,5%	3,1%	0,5%	0,5%	10,4%
Education	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Primary school	3,9%	2,4%	1,1%	0,4%	0,2%
High school graduate	3,3%	3,5%	14,3%	2,1%	14,8%
Trade/Technical/Vocational training	2,1%	2,5%	1,1%	0,8%	1,5%
Bachelor's degree	0,9%	2,1%	6,4%	1,1%	0,5%
Master's degree	0,6%	3,1%	5,4%	2,9%	14,9%
Doctorate degree	0,3%	1,2%	1,3%	0,1%	5,1%
Employment status	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Employed (paid work)	4,6%	5,3%	3,1%	1,3%	2,7%
Self-employed	1,1%	2,3%	3,4%	0,4%	7,8%
Unemployed / looking for work	0,8%	3,2%	4,1%	1,2%	5,7%
A student	4,1%	3,2%	18,3%	3,7%	19,7%
Unable to work	0,5%	0,8%	0,7%	0,8%	1,1%

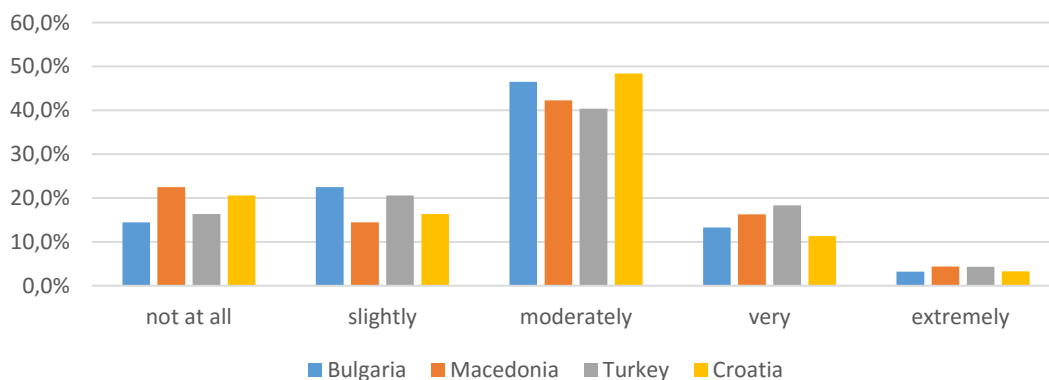
Sociodemographic data indicates that female respondents are more aware of national youth policies and programs than their male counterparts.

According to the age variable, older respondents are generally more aware of national youth policies and programs; those aged 25-30 are more aware than those aged 18-25, who are, in turn, more aware than people between 15 and 17 years of age.

Depending on their level of education and employment status, high school graduates and college students are in the lead when it comes to knowledge about youth initiatives, policies and programs. This is probably because the said programs affect them directly. Respondents who are employed (working for wages) most likely lack time to research all the options available to young people.

For the second task (Q2), respondents were asked to determine how successful their national governments had been at recognizing youth issues and needs. 18, 5% do not think that youth policies of their country meet the needs of young people, while another 18, 5% think that national policies only slightly meet youth needs. The majority of respondents (44, 4%) think that national youth policies moderately meet youth needs. Still, 14, 8% of them are very satisfied with the way national policies meet youth needs, while 3, 7% are extremely satisfied with the current state of affairs in their country.

Q2: Do you think youth policies implemented at a national level meet the needs of young people in your country?

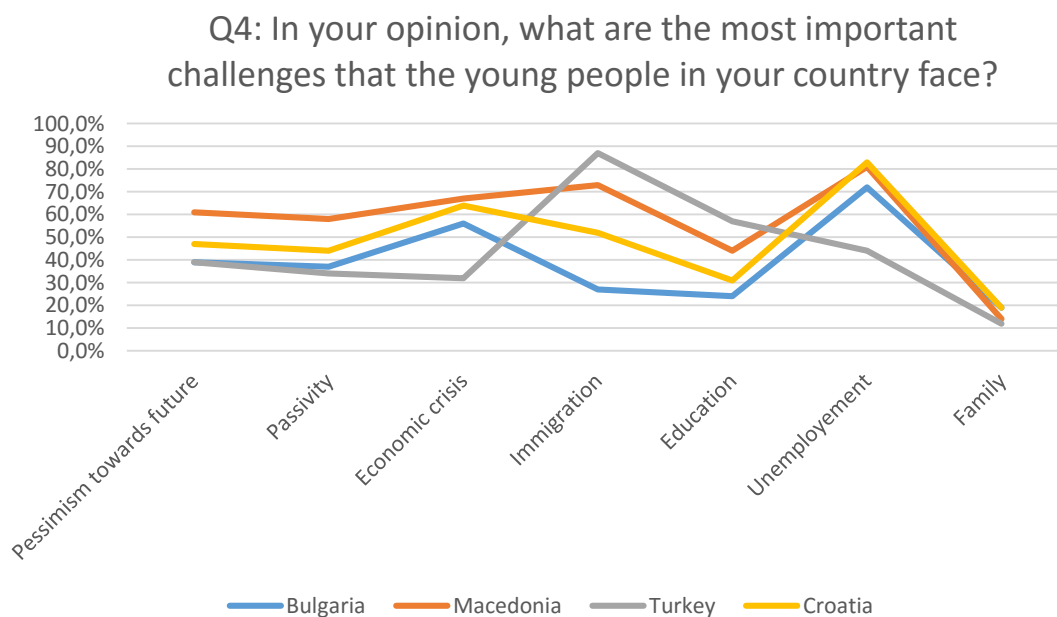


A large number of respondents (44, 4%) had declared that national youth policies are only a moderate response to youth needs. Some sectors (e.g. sports, volunteering, education, culture, social inclusion, youth mobility, foreign language learning) are recognized as relevant youth needs, while others still need to be acknowledged. Specific measures and actions must be taken to incorporate them into a youth policy document⁵.

⁵ Youth employment for instance is an area covered by national policies, but negative youth employment trends are not improving

When asked to provide an example (Q3) of areas where national youth policies are most effective, respondents from Bulgaria listed education, social inclusion, youth volunteering and access to information and services. Macedonians⁶ selected youth participation, culture and youth information as areas most effectively covered by national youth policies. Respondents from Turkey identified education, life-long learning, culture, art, free time and sports as areas where youth policies have been most effective. Croats defined youth mobility, sports and culture as most effectively covered by youth policies.

Regarding current issues (Q4) and challenges young people face in each country, respondents were asked to select among the following categories: *Family, Unemployment, Education, Immigration, Economic crisis, Passivity and Pessimism towards the future*. Results are provided in the following chart:



Bulgarians, Macedonians and Croats consider unemployment to be the most important challenge of their everyday lives. Respondents from countries exposed to the current migrant wave (Turkey, Macedonia, and Croatia) identified immigration as one of the challenges of today's world. What all the respondents have in common is that they consider family the least important challenge young people face, possibly because of delayed childbearing and marriage due to an unfavorable economic environment in their countries.

When asked to identify the domains (Q5) where national youth policies are least effective, respondents from Croatia and Macedonia chose education (especially practical educational opportunities) and unemployment (especially when it comes to finding work within one's original field after graduation)⁷. Macedonians also identified healthcare and social mobility as the least effective domains. Respondents from Bulgaria decided youth employability was the area where youth policies were least effective, followed by economic activity and entrepreneurship. Turkish respondents identified employment, entrepreneurship, vocational

⁶ Respondents from Macedonia listed that they still do not have really strategic approach to certain issues so they cannot determine specific areas

⁷ What they want to do is connect the labor market and the educational system.

training and social inclusion as the domains where youth policies are least effective. There are some similarities among all four partner countries which participated in the survey.

This section of the report will offer respondents suggestions to bodies governing youth policies. Respondents stress the importance of educational reforms, specifically, the increase of practical activities and internships, to help students expand and apply their knowledge. They also suggest boosting the number of youth programs.

There are some direct demands to reduce nepotism, exterminate corruption and to generally increase political transparency. Respondents from Bulgaria suggest a decrease of bureaucracy (red tape), an increase in frequency and quality of NGO vs. government communication and the decentralization of funds (related to government budgets). Macedonians stress the need for educational reform, especially related to realistic labor market needs. They also identify the extermination of corruption and the simplification of bureaucratic procedures as important for the improvement of youth opportunities their social status. Croatian respondents advocate the elimination of job discrimination (especially when it comes to hiring based on political affiliation), as well as a general social climate oriented towards the future, instead of past events (e.g. wars, ethnic tension etc.). Turkish respondents believe that young people are the driving force of democratic changes in their country.

Participants were also asked to suggest precise measures which should be taken in order to improve the status of young people. According to the results, respondents were able to determine a certain issue, but not sure how to propose specific measures to be conducted by the government and implemented in reality.

2. European realities

The *European Union Youth Strategy*⁸ sets out a framework for cooperation for the period between 2010 and 2018. It has two main objectives:

- To provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and on the job market
- To encourage young people to actively participate in society.

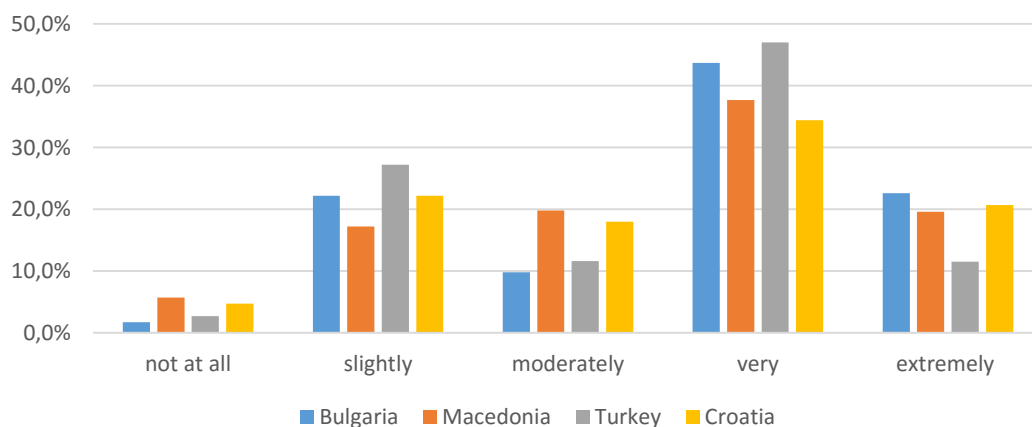
These two main objectives are being achieved through a dual approach containing specific youth activities (non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information) and cross-sector initiatives ensuring youth issues are taken into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other fields which significantly impact young people, such as education, employment, health and well-being in general.

Initiatives proposed by The EU Youth Strategy are divided into eight main chapters:

- Education and training
- Employment & entrepreneurship
- Health & well-being
- Participation
- Voluntary activities
- Social inclusion
- Youth & the world
- Creativity & culture

When it comes to European involvement (Q7), 18, 5% believe that the EU is extremely involved in combating the challenges young people face while 40, 7% is very satisfied on that matter. However, only 3, 7% have a totally negative opinion on EU involvement in resolving youth challenges.

Q7: Do you believe the EU is actively involved in combating the challenges young people face?

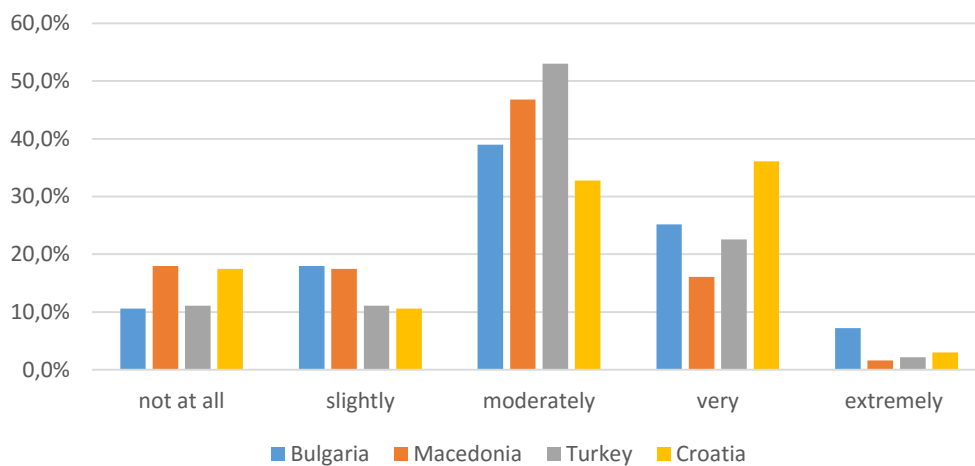


⁸ EU Youth Strategy is a main document governing youth policies

Considering that only 3,7% of respondents do not see any European Union involvement in combating youth challenges, we can conclude that, overall, the European Union is dealing with youth issues well, but there is still some room for improvement. Compared to results regarding respondents' attitudes towards national youth policies, it is clear that respondents trust EU policy makers more than the policy makers in their respective countries.

When it comes to judging the effectiveness of European Youth Policies (Q8), a great number of respondents thinks that the policies are moderately effective (42, 9%). There is also 3, 6% who find the policies extremely effective and 14, and 3% who find them completely inefficient.

Q8: In your opinion, how effective are European youth policies?



Almost half of the respondents (42, 9% who opted for “moderately”) are unsure if there is any room for progress when it comes to EU regulations and laws governing youth policy.

Sociodemographic data for Q8:

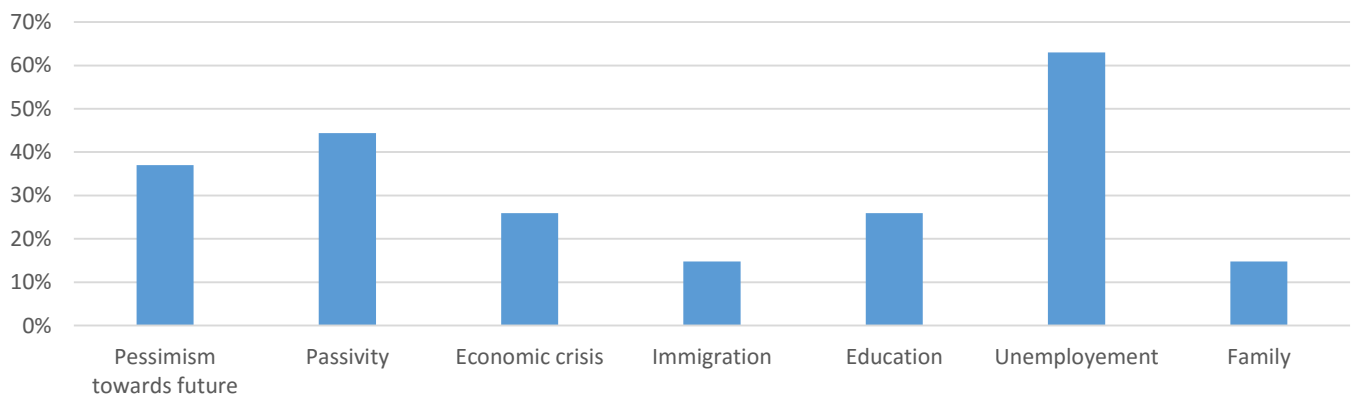
Gender	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Male	7,9%	7,3%	19,3%	11,4%	0,2%
Female	6,4%	7,0%	23,6%	13,6%	3,4%
Age	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
15-17	3,1%	2,1%	4,8%	5,8%	0,2%
18-25	5,4%	3,2%	21,5%	9,6%	2,3%
25-30	4,2%	5,2%	8,1%	8,7%	0,8%
30+	1,6%	3,8%	8,5%	0,9%	0,3%
Education	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Primary school	1,3%	3,1%	2,4%	0,8%	0,4%
High school graduate	3,5%	4,7%	19,5%	9,5%	0,8%
Trade/Technical/Vocational training	2,4%	1,6%	2,1%	1,7%	0,2%
Bachelor's degree	3,1%	0,6%	1,8%	4,4%	1,1%
Master's degree	2,8%	3,1%	15,9%	4,8%	0,4%
Doctorate degree	1,2%	1,2%	1,2%	3,8%	0,6%

Employment status	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Employed (working for wages)	2,7%	3,4%	6,1%	4,3%	0,5%
Self-employed	0,5%	2,6%	5,9%	5,2%	0,8%
Out of work and looking for work	4,7%	1,6%	6,1%	2,2%	0,4%
A student	5,5%	5,7%	24,1%	13,1%	0,5%
Unable to work	0,9%	1,0%	0,7%	0,2%	1,4%

According to data, female respondents have more faith in the effectiveness of EU Youth Policies than their male counterparts. People aged 18-25 tend to experience the effects of European Youth Policies more than others, probably because they have already heard or learned something about the policies and still have enough time to use their benefits. Still, the unemployed and those looking for work mostly do not find the policies effective; probably due to their employment status (since they feel youth initiatives should enable them to find work).

When asked about the most important challenges young people in Europe face (Q9), 63% chose “unemployment “. The second most popular answer was “passivity “(44, 4%) and the third one was “pessimism towards the future “(37%). „Economic crisis “and “education “(25, 9% for both) were in the fourth, and “immigration “and “family issues “(14, 8% for both) were in the fifth place.

Q9: In your opinion, what are the most important challenges that the young people in Europe face?

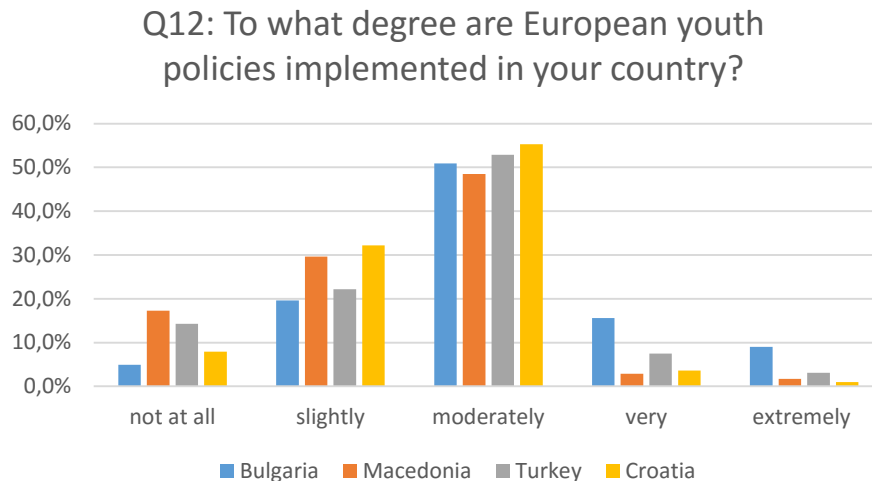


When we compare these results to those relating to national realities, some similarities surface; both identify unemployment, passivity and pessimism towards the future as the most prominent youth challenges.

When asked to select the areas where European youth policies are most effective, respondents listed education, youth mobility, foreign language learning and volunteering. The least effective areas, according to respondents, are youth employment and entrepreneurship, a discrepancy between the knowledge and skills provided by educational

institutions with those required in the labor market (sometimes referred to as a “skills gap⁹”), the economic crisis, and immigration policies.

Next, respondents were asked to estimate (Q12) to which extent are European youth policies implemented in their countries.

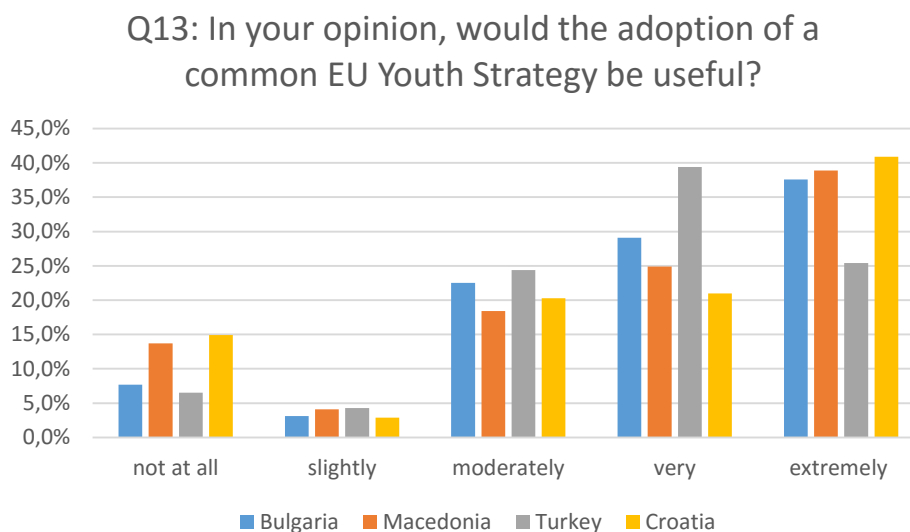


Results show that 11,1% have not experienced any influence of European and their national youth policies, 25,9% felt a slight influence, while most of them, 51,9% reported a moderate implementation of European policies in their countries. Only a small percentage (7, 4% selected “very “and 3, 7% selected “extremely “) believes that European youth policies are truly implemented in their countries.

Various reports imply that the EU Youth Strategy has become a reference point for the development of national youth strategies. National frameworks use the same principles, set similar goals and courses of action. Bulgarian respondents (15, 6%) believe that European youth policies are implemented in their country quite successfully; almost 9 % of them consider that implementation outstanding. These results are probably due to the fact that Bulgaria has been an EU Member State since 2007, which is longer than other partner countries in this survey. Also, Bulgarian respondents believe the EU Youth Strategy has to some extent triggered a shift in their national youth policy.

⁹ „The difference in the skills required on the job and the actual skills possessed by the employees is called as skill-gap“. (source: <http://www.mbaskool.com/business-concepts/human-resources-hr-terms/2134-skill-gap.html>)

Regarding the implementation of European youth policies, participants were asked about the usefulness of a common European Youth strategy.



A great number of them (35, 7% opted for „extremely “and 28, 6% for “very “) believe that there should be a common European Youth Strategy. Around a quarter (21,4%) of the respondents opted for “moderate “, while 10,7% do not think that a common European Youth Strategy for would be useful, which is a bit strange since only 3,7% believed European youth policies are truly implemented in their countries. A large number of participants approved of the adoption of a common European Youth Strategy probably because it would support equality and transparency between Member States and equalize their starting positions regarding youth laws and regulations.

When asked to give suggestions to EU policy makers, most respondents pointed out education was a priority and obligation, not only an option. However, we should consider that there are differences between various EU Member States when it comes to the implementation of these programs-

Furthermore, respondents pointed out there was a growing gap between educational policy makers and students. Therefore, Member States should support a framework that enables and ensures the engagement of students in the decision-making process within the school system. Respondents also stressed the need for educational reform. They believe policy makers should use the advantages of non-formal learning and incorporate them into the regular school system, since education is out of sync with the rapid changes of the modern world.

Furthermore, respondents mentioned the need for quality civic education, which would enable them to understand policies and engage in political activities. According to them, youth policies should be conducted in collaboration with local NGOs, and the entire process must be sustainable and transparent. It is also mentioned that policy makers on all levels should continuously support an open political culture of communication using multiple

youth-targeted methods in order to increase the transparency and accountability of the decision making process.

Youth work is an important tool for fostering political participation based on values of diversity, human rights, democracy and critical thinking. As such, it should be provided with the necessary resources, support structures and formal recognition.

In order to involve young people in political processes and to enable easy and sustainable collaboration between all relevant stakeholders, the EU institutions and Member States should develop a coordinated cross-sectoral communication on all levels.

To summarize, respondents emphasize the need for transparent, accessible and collaborative policies based on effective communication between stakeholders; NGOs and those who are most affected by those policies – young people.

3. EU opportunities for young people

The Erasmus Program was launched in 1987, today it is known under the name Erasmus+. The new Erasmus+ program combines EU's current educational, training, youth and sports projects, including the *Lifelong Learning Program* (e.g. *Erasmus*, *Leonardo da Vinci*, *Comenius*, *Grundtvig*), *Youth in Action* and five international programs (*Erasmus Mundus*, *Tempus*, *Alfa*, *EduLink* etc.).

Erasmus+ provides opportunities for young people to experience learning mobility in Europe and beyond. It enables youth workers to develop their interpersonal skills and improve their employment prospects through training and networking opportunities in Europe and beyond.

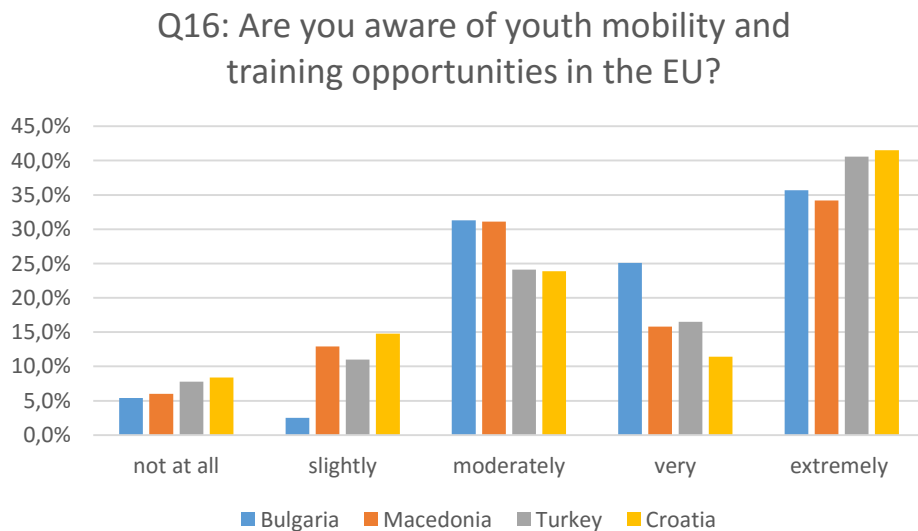
Opportunities for young people include:

- Youth exchanges
- Voluntary service
- Large scale EVS projects

Who can participate?

- Young people aged between 13 and 30
- Youth organizations based inside and outside the EU
- Other stakeholders with an active interest in youth issues

In this section respondents were initially asked about their awareness of European mobility and training opportunities for young people:



Results show that a large portion (37, 9% opted for “extremely “and 17, 2% for “very “) is aware of certain youth mobility and training opportunities in the EU while around 17% (10, 3% selected “slightly “plus another 6, 9% who said “not at all “) is not very familiar with the

subject. Around a quarter of the respondents (27, 6%) are moderately aware of such mobility and training opportunities.

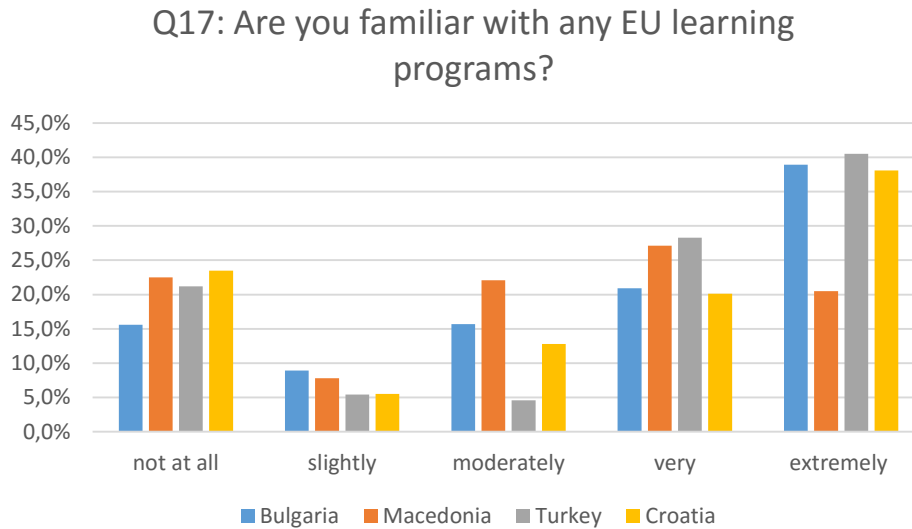
Sociodemographic data for Q16:

Gender	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Male	5,5%	8,8%	16,2%	9,2%	6,3%
Female	1,4%	1,5%	11,4%	8,0%	31,6%
Age	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
15-17	3,1%	5,2%	3,2%	3,1%	1,4%
18-25	0,9%	2,5%	12,4%	11,5%	14,7%
26-30	0,7%	2,1%	5,2%	2,1%	16,9%
30+	2,2%	0,5%	6,8%	0,5%	4,9%
Education	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Primary school	3,1%	1,6%	2,3%	0,6%	0,4%
High school graduate	2,1%	3,5%	11,4%	7,6%	13,4%
Trade/Technical/Vocational training	0,2%	2,7%	3,5%	1,2%	0,4%
Bachelor's degree	0,4%	2,2%	4,6%	2,2%	1,6%
Master's degree	0,8%	0,1%	3,7%	5,3%	17,1%
Doctorate degree	0,3%	0,2%	2,1%	1,3%	4,1%
Employment status	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Employed for wages	2,1%	3,2%	3,6%	1,1%	7,0%
Self employed	1,2%	2,2%	2,5%	1,8%	7,3%
Out of work and looking for work	0,8%	1,4%	3,1%	0,4%	9,3%
A student	2,5%	3,1%	16,2%	12,9%	14,3%
Unable to work	0,3%	0,4%	2,2%	1,0%	0,1%

Results show that female respondents are more aware of mobility and training opportunities than their male counterparts¹⁰. Depending on age, respondents aged 15-17 are slightly less aware than those aged 18-25, while the best informed group are those aged 26-30. When it comes to education and employment factors, high school graduates are most aware of mobility and training opportunities in the EU.

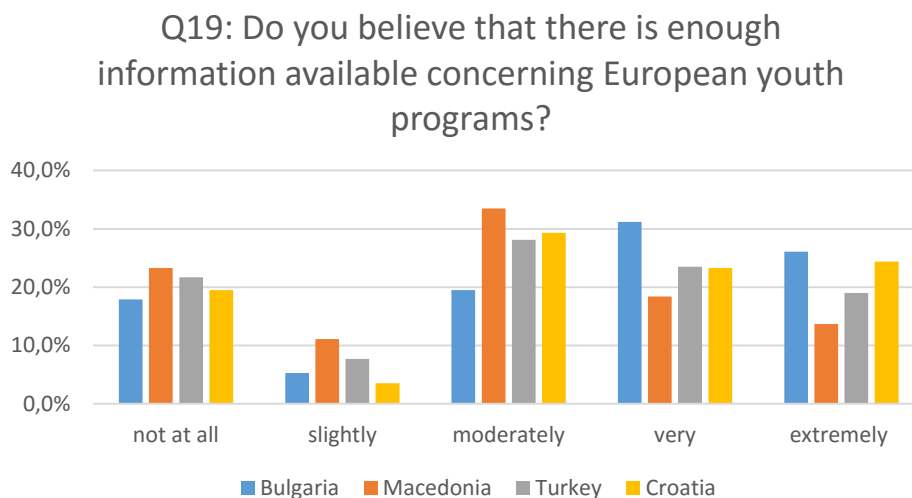
¹⁰ Only 6,3% of males consider themselves extremely aware while the number of females who are extremely aware is 31,6%

The next question (Q17) aimed to explore young people's familiarity with EU learning programs:



There are similarities between the following numbers and the previous chart (Q16). Almost half of the participants (34, 5% opted for “extremely “and 24, 1% selected “very “) is familiar with at least one EU learning program. However, 20, 7% are not familiar with any EU learning opportunities. We can conclude that information concerning learning programs should be more specific and more available. Those who had heard of EU learning programs mostly listed *Erasmus+* then *EACA*, *Youth in Action*, *ASIS*, *Lifelong Learning Program*, *Leonardo da Vinci* and *Jean Monet*.

Next, we asked the participants to express their satisfaction with the availability of information regarding EU youth programs:



Results show that slightly more than a fifth (20, 6%) is not satisfied with the availability of information regarding European youth programs, while 20, 8% is extremely satisfied. Still, data shows that more than half of the participants is either *very* (24, 1%) or *moderately* (27, 6%) satisfied with the availability of information.

We can conclude that, even though a great number of respondents are mostly satisfied with the information and aware of learning and mobility opportunities, there is still room for improvement when it comes to informing the public about European youth programs in a simple and accessible way.

Sociodemographic data for Q19:

Gender	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Male	15,3%	2,2%	16,8%	10,2%	1,5%
Female	5,3%	4,7%	10,8%	13,9%	19,3%
Age	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
15-17	5,3%	4,1%	3,4%	2,8%	0,4%
18-25	4,7%	1,3%	10,3%	11,1%	14,6%
26-30	4,7%	0,2%	9,1%	7,6%	5,4%
30+	5,9%	1,3%	4,8%	2,6%	1,4%
Education	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Primary school	2,1%	1,1%	3,3%	0,9%	0,6%
High school graduate	9,5%	1,9%	9,4%	8,3%	8,9%
Trade/Technical/Vocational training	1,2%	0,7%	3,4%	1,6%	1,1%
Bachelor's degree	2,2%	0,4%	5,2%	1,7%	1,5%
Master's degree	4,3%	2,1%	5,4%	9,1%	6,1%
Doctorate degree	1,3%	0,7%	0,9%	2,5%	2,7%
Employment status	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Employed (paid work)	5,1%	2,1%	6,4%	0,9%	2,5%
Self employed	3,2%	1,6%	7,4%	2,5%	0,3%
Unemployed and looking for work	4,7%	1,1%	4,3%	0,4%	4,5%
A student	6,4%	1,7%	7,9%	19,6%	13,4%
Unable to work	1,2%	0,4%	1,6%	0,7%	0,1%

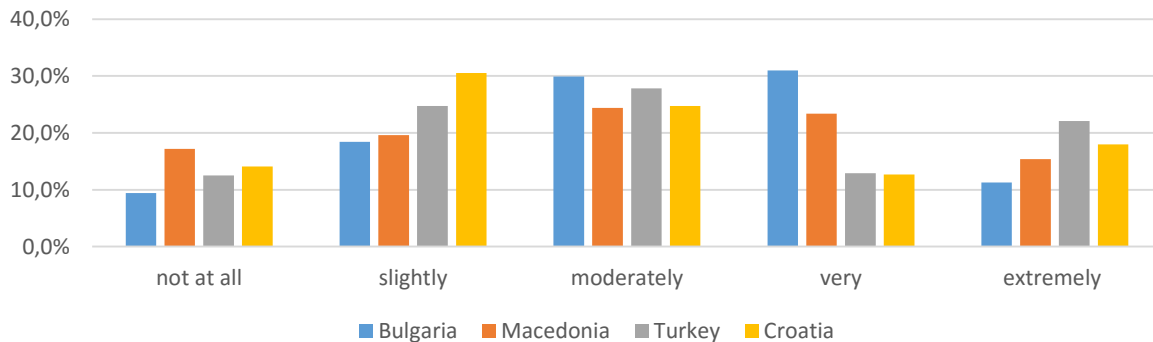
The results indicate 15, 3% of all male respondents are completely unsatisfied with information concerning European youth programs, while only 1, 5% is extremely satisfied. All age groups almost unanimously agree that information about EU youth programs could be more satisfactory. Interestingly enough, students are most satisfied with available information, probably because they are very interested in participating in youth programs.

Respondents were then asked to provide some ideas of ways in which information about European youth programs could become more accessible. They advocated the implementation of youth programs in all EU Member States and candidate countries. They also think that there more information should be available on social media¹¹, in newspapers and in magazines. Member States should ensure trainings on such tools are provided for teachers and other professional youth workers. Another thing that was mentioned is that universities should partake in the sharing of information regarding European youth programs. Respondents also noticed that there should be more sponsorship programs NGOs can apply for, like funds for youth exchanges, training courses etc.

¹¹ Online tools for political participation

When asked about their opinion on benefits (Q22) young people in Europe gain from opportunities provided by youth programs, respondents answered:

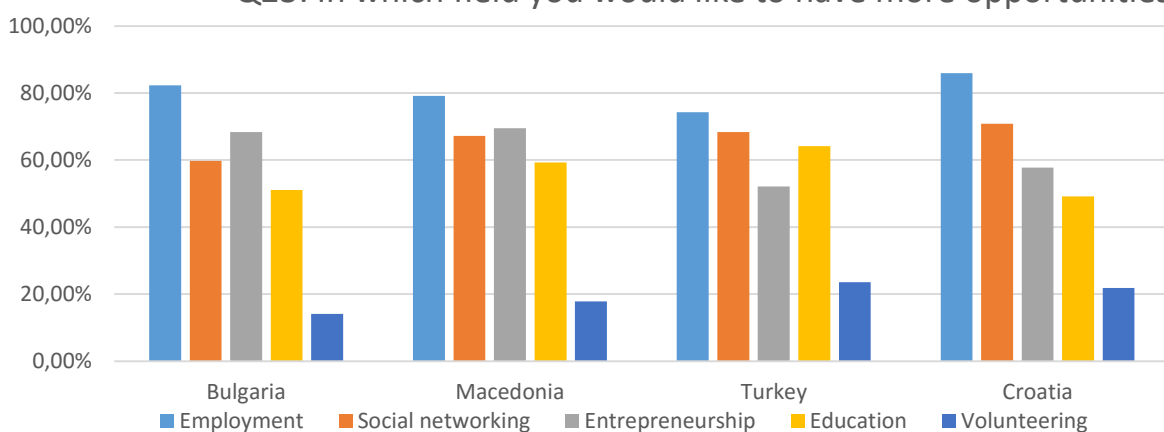
Q22: Do you think young people in Europe benefit from these opportunities?



More than a third of all respondents opted for “very “(20%) and “extremely “(16, 7%) while half of the participants claimed that benefits from EU opportunities affect them “slightly “(23, 3%) or “moderately “(26, 7%). Only 13, 3% of see absolutely no benefit from these opportunities.

Respondents see at least some benefits from participation in opportunities offered by the EU in fields of youth mobility, learning and training. These benefits can be direct (e.g. learning) or indirect (e.g. meeting different cultures, becoming more open-minded etc.) and this can explain why almost everyone experiences some improvement in their lives after participating in a project. Fields in which respondents would like to have more opportunities are “employment “(80, 4%) and “social networking “(66, 5%) mostly followed by “entrepreneurship “(61, 9%) and “education “(55, 9%). Finally, 19, 3 % opted for “volunteering “.

Q23: In which field you would like to have more opportunities?



Considering the high rates of youth unemployment these days, it is logical that employment opportunities are seen as the most common answer in all four countries. „Entrepreneurship “and “social networking “are connected to employment so they fall in the second place. According to the results, “education “and “volunteerism “are well developed fields, with plenty of opportunities.

4. Youth Work

The EU Council Resolution on youth work from 2010 gives the following definition:

“Youth work takes place in the extracurricular area, as well as through specific leisure time activities, and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation. These activities and processes are self-managed or managed under educational or pedagogical guidance by either professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and can develop and be subject to changes caused by different dynamics. “

Youth work can be organized in different ways: through youth-led organizations, organizations for youth, informal groups or youth services and public authorities. Youth work is interdisciplinary in nature. Nevertheless, activities related to youth work can be grouped into some “main “categories:

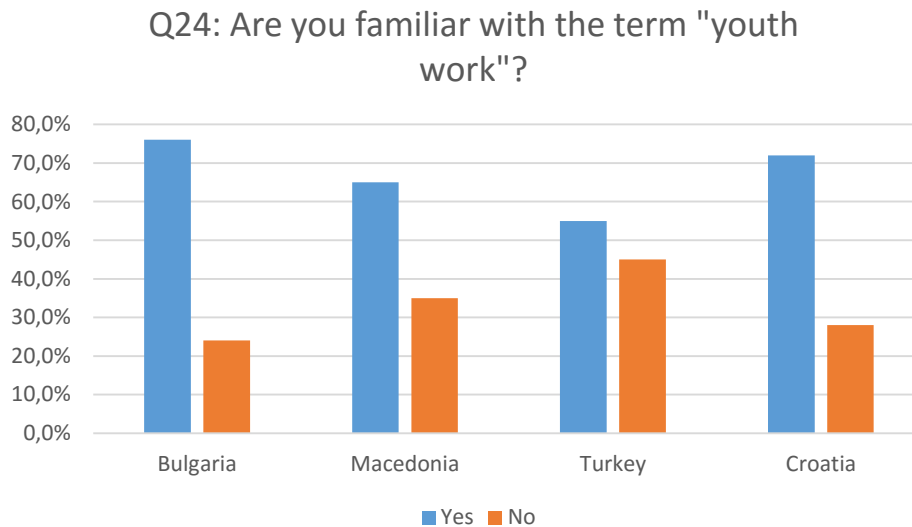
- Awareness raising and campaigning
- Information and counseling
- International development and civic volunteering
- Leisure-based courses and activities
- Project activities (self-organized)
- Street work and outreach work

These activities can be implemented in numerous areas like arts, culture, crafts, environmental care, cultural heritage preservation, sports, politics, and citizenship, human rights and human rights issues.

One of the main aims of these activities and youth work in general is helping young people reach their full potential. It encourages personal development, autonomy, initiative and participation in society. Those who are directly involved with young people in youth working process are called youth workers. It is interesting that there is no such thing as a “typical “youth worker. Youth workers come from a diverse range of educational and occupational backgrounds and are involved in different activities. Youth workers guide and form young people through non-formal learning, and help them reach their potential.

In order to understand the impact of youth work, it is important to establish the parties affected by youth work and what kind of effect it has on them. Studies imply that young people develop certain skills and competences, strengthen their social network and change certain behaviors under the influence of youth work.

So, when it comes to youth work, firstly we examined the respondents' familiarity with the term "Youth work", and the results are provided in the chart:



More than two thirds (67%) are familiar with the term and the rest of them (33%) are not quite familiar. When it comes to differences between countries, statistics state that 75,8% of the respondents from Bulgaria, 64,3% from Macedonia, 55,4% from Turkey and 71,2% of respondents from Croatia are familiar with the term "youth work". However, 24,2% of Bulgarian respondents, 35,7% of Macedonian respondents, 44,6% of Turkish respondents and 28,8% of Croatian respondents are not familiar with the term "youth work".

Respondents who selected "Yes" (67%) as an answer then tried to define term "youth work". Here are some of their definitions:

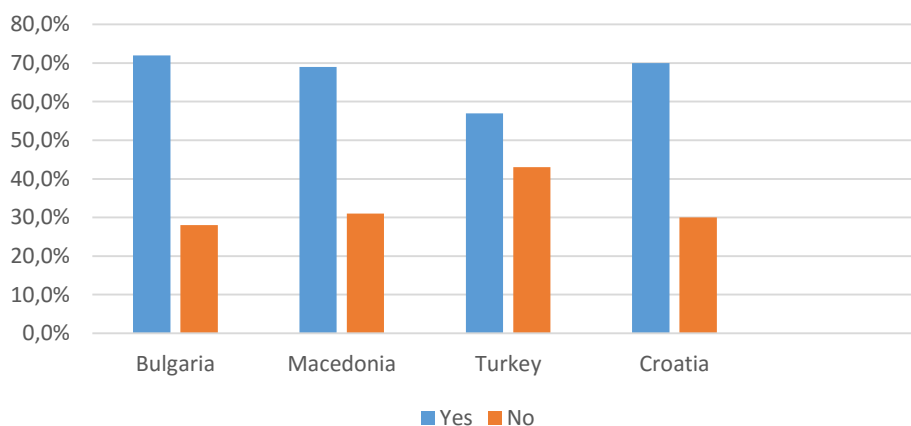
- *Working with young people in a non-formal education environment.*
- *Young people learning from older people how to work in other countries.*
- *I think it's when young people are involved in an exchange with another country or learn practical skills.*
- *Youth work includes a broad range of social, cultural, educational, sports-related and political activities conducted by and for young people through non-formal and informal learning.*
- *Engaging young people with different informational activities related to education, employment and self-development.*
- *Youth work helps solve youth problems on a local, national or EU level and also serves as youth advocacy.*
- *Youth work provides out-of-school education, as well as leisure activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders.*
- *Youth work is an activity, aimed at helping young people by working with them on different topics through non-formal means of training and education.*
- *"Youth work" is a planned education program used to enhance the personal and social development of young people through their voluntary participation. It complements their formal, academic, or vocational education and training; primarily through voluntary youth work.*

- *Youth work is a type of job where the employed person promotes the ideas of young people and engages them to create better and bigger ideas. Also, youth workers help young people understand their rights and what EU (in this case) has to offer (youth policies, learning programs etc.).*

When we compare definitions given by respondents to those from the EU Council Resolution on youth work from 2010¹², it is clear those two definitions are quite similar, which means our participants understand the term well¹³.

Afterwards, respondents were asked to express their familiarity with the profession of “youth worker “:

Q26: Are you familiar with the profession "youth worker"?



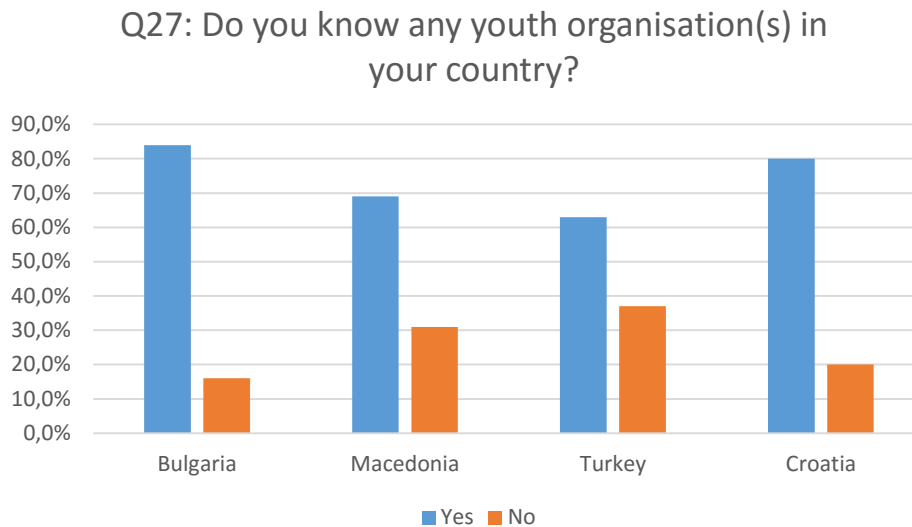
In this case, 72,5% Bulgarians, 69,1% Macedonians, 56,3% respondents from Turkey and 70,0% Croatian respondents claimed to be familiar with the profession of “youth worker “. Relating to the chart from Q: 24¹⁴, we can conclude that people who were familiar with the term “youth work “are also familiar with “youth worker “.

¹² http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/117874.pdf

¹³ The cites definitions are given by respondents from different sociodemographic backgrounds

¹⁴ Q24: „Are you familiar with the term youth work?“

Next field of examination was knowledge of existing of any youth organization(s) in respondents' countries:



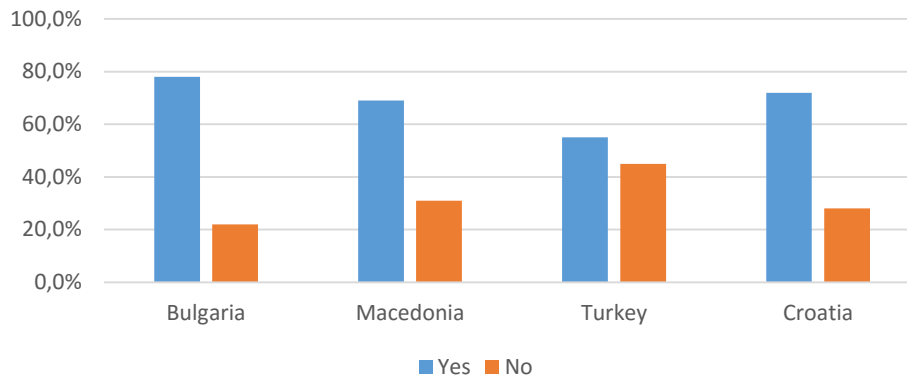
Really great deal of respondents from all four countries state that they are familiar with at least one youth organization from their homeland (Bulgaria: 83, 2%, Macedonia: 68, 6%, Turkey: 62, 4%, Croatia: 79, 9%).

Those respondents who know at least one youth organization were then asked to provide example(s):

- Organizations from **Bulgaria**: *Bulgaria Youth Alliance for Development, European Information Centre Veliko Tarnovo, CL "Podkrepa", Ideas Factory Association, Inspiritus, Young Citizens United*
- Organizations from **FYROM**: *YMCA, MKC, NGO Sfera Macedonia, CET platform Macedonia, Rasody Travel and Events Macedonia, ACA Taksirat Skopje*
- Organizations from **Turkey**: *Konya Metropolitan Municipality Kılıçarslan Youth Center, Shades of Youth, Mensin Metropolitan Municipality, Konyouth, Young Ideas Workshop Community*
- Organizations from **Croatia**: *Europe House Slavonski Brod, Mladiinfo Croatia, Volim Volontirati "VoVo" Zagreb, C.S.F Zagreb, Udruga mladih "Device", The Hive*
- Other: *AIESEC, AEGEE, ROOD*

Afterwards, respondents were asked to state their opinions on the impact of youth organizations on youth empowerment:

Q29: Do you believe that the activities of youth organizations have a substantial impact on youth support and empowerment?



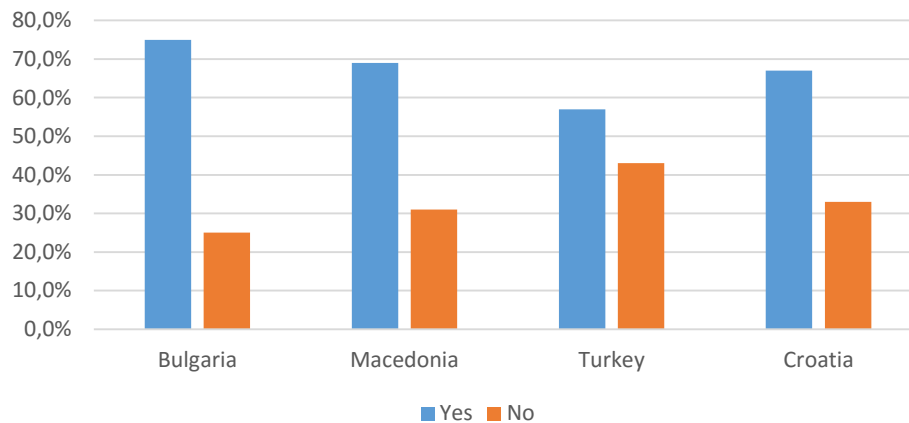
On the one hand, 68,5% of respondents believe that work of youth organizations has a substantial impact on supporting and empowering young people. Respondents believe that youth organizations help young people fulfill their potential. They also mentioned that youth organizations help young people gain practical experience. Also, participating in youth exchanges and training courses helps young people increase their confidence and build character.

On the other hand, 21,8% of Bulgarians, 30,9% Macedonians, 44,3% Turkish respondents and 27,6% respondents from Croatia do not believe that the activities and work of youth organizations has a substantial influence on supporting and empowering young people. Respondents mentioned that the impact of youth organizations is only temporary and disappears after once they finish participating in youth organization activities. Some participants mention that they sometimes feel their contribution can be minor and not very relevant.

In general, most respondents agree that the impact of youth organizations on the support and empowerment of young people is relevant, but some of them do not agree that the impact is truly substantial.

Later on, respondents were asked to share their involvement and participation in youth activities in their local area:

Q31: Have you participated in any youth activity in your area?



As Q31 chart shows, slightly more than three quarters (75, 1%) of respondents from Bulgaria, 69, 3% of Macedonian respondents and 56, 5% from Turkey, as well as 67, 2% of Croatian respondents have participated in some local youth activity. There is around 32, 9% of respondents who have not participated in any youth activities. So we can see that there are twice as many respondents who have participated in youth activities than those who have not.

Furthermore, those 67, 1% who have participated in youth activities in their area were asked to describe those activities. Some activities mentioned were EVS, volunteering in general, European Youth Antennae Network – “Europe 2020”, all kinds of youth exchanges and training courses related to education, employment and youth tolerance and GLOW Leadership Academy. Other activities included meditation, yoga, cycling, and youth festivals, planting and dancing. They also mentioned fundraising campaigns, conducting interviews and video production.

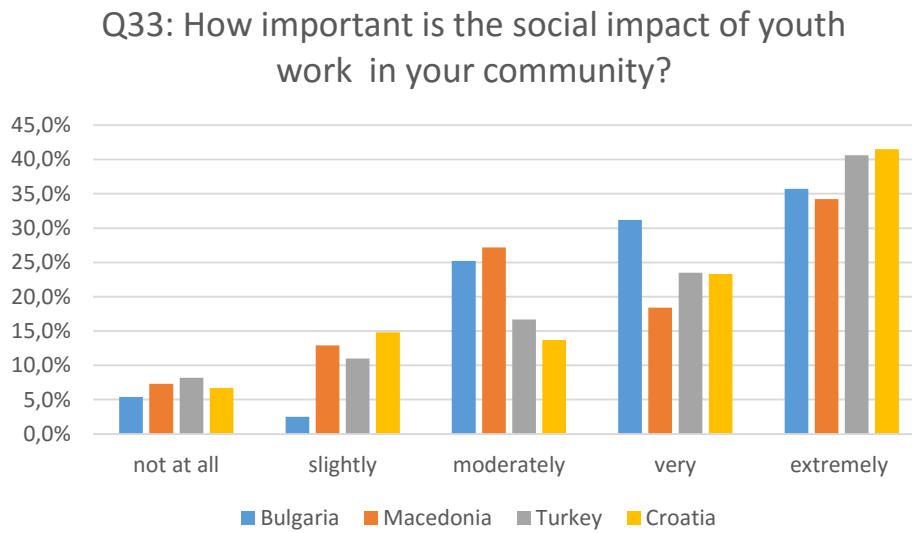
Sociodemographic data for Q31:

Gender	Yes	No
Male	21,4%	24,6%
Female	45,7%	8,3%
Age	Yes	No
15-17	7,3%	8,7%
18-25	28,5%	13,5%
26-30	19,4%	7,6%
30+	11,9%	4,1%

Education	Yes	No
Primary school	3,4%	4,6%
High school graduate	24,1%	13,9%
Trade/Technical/Vocational training	5,7%	2,3%
Bachelor's degree	9,5%	1,5%
Master's degree	19,3%	5,7%
Doctorate degree	5,1%	2,9%
Employment status	Yes	No
Employed for wages	9,2%	7,8%
Self employed	8,3%	6,7%
Out of work and looking for work	9,8%	5,2%
A student	37,9%	11,1%
Unable to work	1,9%	2,1%

Like in previous chapters, female respondents claim to have participated in youth activities more than their male counterparts. Also, participation seems to increase with age. People with a higher level of education are also more active in youth activities. In relation to employment status, unemployed people and students are more likely to have participated in youth activities, due to more free time. As far as employment status is concerned, the more free time someone has, the more likely they are to take part in youth activities.

Next we examined the social impact of youth work on the respondents' communities:



More than half of the respondents agree that it is either extremely (38,5%) or very (19,2%) large, 23,1% of them believe it is moderate, while only 7,7% believes youth work has no impact on their community. There are similarities between respondents from all four countries.

When asked to explain their answers, respondents claimed that participation in youth programs increases awareness regarding future opportunities. Most participants consider youth work a positive impact of the community, while only around 5 % believe it has no influence on society whatsoever.

5. Non-formal Education

... is intentional but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations, not intended only for teaching and training. These environments and situations may be temporary, and the activities or courses may be conducted by professional facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned, but are seldom structured conventionally. They usually address specific target groups, but rarely document or assess learning outcomes or achievements in traditional ways.

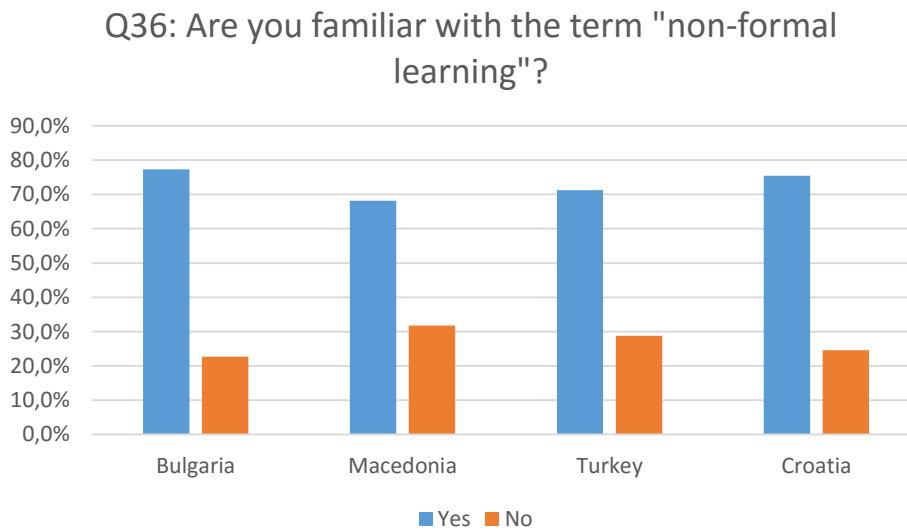
Non-formal education gives young people the possibility to develop values, skills and competences outside the framework of formal education. Those skills (also called 'soft skills') include a wide range of competences such as interpersonal, organizational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organizing, co-ordination and practical problem solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility. What is special about non-formal education is that participants are actively involved in the education/learning process. The methods aim at giving young people the tools to further develop their skills and attitudes. Learning is a continuous process, specifically aimed towards 'learning by doing'. Youth organizations offer non-formal learning through their programs at the same time non-formal learning experiences can be organized within the work place.

Furthermore, non-formal education refers to any planned program of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal curriculum.

Non-formal education as applied by many youth organizations and groups and can be described as:

- Voluntary
- Accessible
- Organized, including planned activities and educational objectives
- Participatory and learner-centered
- About learning life skills and preparing for an active citizenship
- Based on experience and action
- Based on participant needs

Respondents were asked to express their familiarity with the term “non-formal learning “:



More than two thirds are familiar the term, without any significant differences among participants depending on their country of origin. Secondly, the 73, 1% who are familiar with the term were asked to give a definition of non-formal learning. Here are some examples:

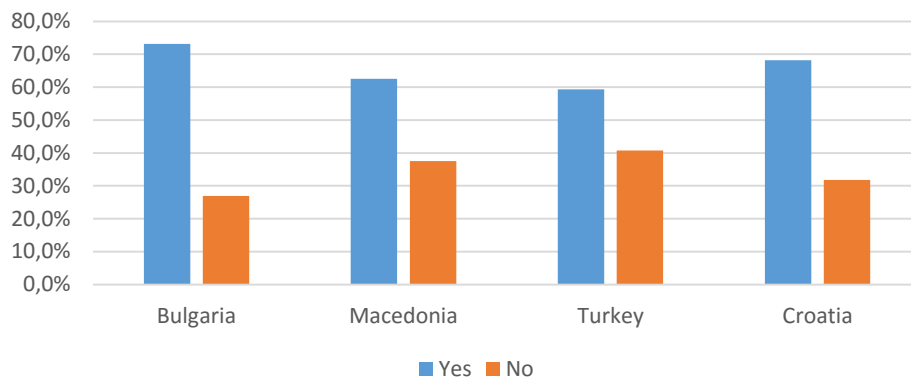
- *Learning that takes place in a diverse range of situations, not intended only for teaching and learning. This type of learning does not have the level of curriculum, accreditation and certification associated with 'formal learning'.*
- *Learning outside of the regular school system.*
- *Non-formal learning is a type of learning that doesn't have a curriculum or an accreditation, but it's still organized.*
- *It's a form of education using non-formal methods of learning such as trainings, workshops, role plays, etc.*
- *Non-formal education is the type of learning which is absolutely better than those we have been exposed in school and college.*

Respondents gave good definitions of non-formal learning. Most of their opinions were concentrated on the essence of what non-formal learning truly is (voluntary, does not have a curriculum, outside of school system, organized etc.) but only a small number of them mentioned the impacts of non-formal learning.

Next question is going to provide statistic about respondents' participation in workshops, seminars or training courses that used non formal learning methods and tools:

The next section was aimed towards gathering participants' feedback regarding participation in workshops, seminars and training courses through non-formal learning:

Q38: Have you ever participated in any workshops/seminars/training courses, etc. which used non-formal learning methods and tools?



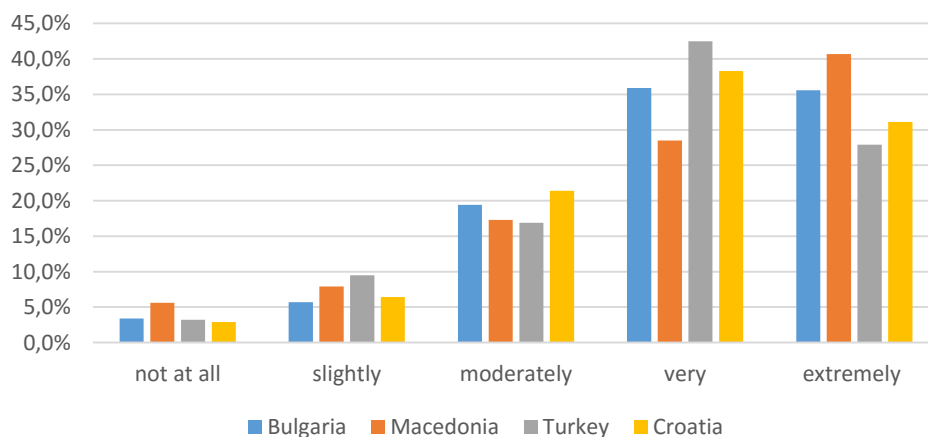
In general, data shows that two out of three respondents (65, 8%) have participated in some form of non-formal learning (workshop/seminar/training course, etc.). Such a high percentage is not surprising since answers on Q16¹⁵ and Q31¹⁶ were overall positive.

Participants were also asked to briefly describe their experience with non-formal learning. They mentioned various team-building activities, theatre, storytelling and video-making performances, roleplaying and team games, simulation games, problem solving, educational and interactive workshops, brainstorming experiences, working in pairs, outdoor activities such as sports or learning how to swim, daily evaluation groups, etc.

The next group of questions focused on evaluating the extent of the influences of non-formal learning on youth life, skills and competences.

Respondents were asked to estimate how much non-formal learning improves skills and competences, how it influences youth empowerment, if it improves young people's position in the labor market etc.

Q40: Development of skills and competences:

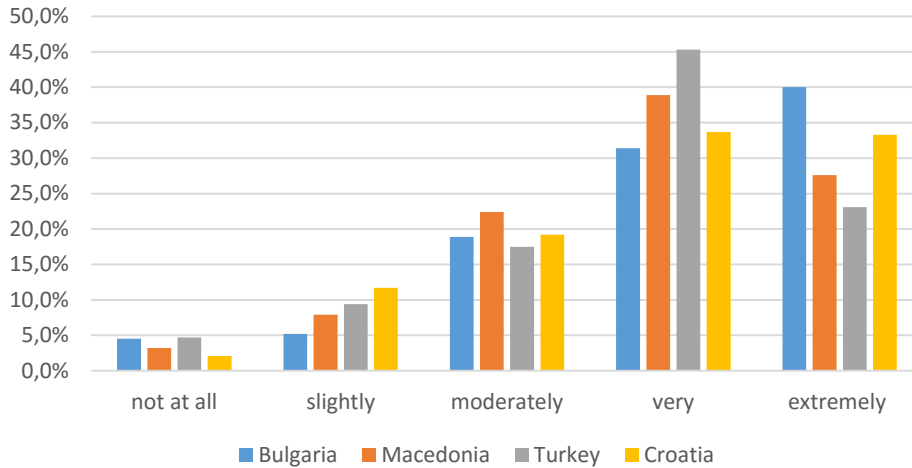


¹⁵ Q16: Are you aware of youth mobility and training opportunities in the EU?

¹⁶ Q31: Have you participated in any youth activity in your area?

Respondents estimate that non-formal learning greatly contributes to the development of skills and competencies; 33, 8% respondents consider it extremely and another 36, 3% as very influential. Furthermore, they think that formal education, especially higher education, focuses on knowledge acquisition, rather than practical skills. Non-formal education, on the other hand, is often much more skill-oriented.

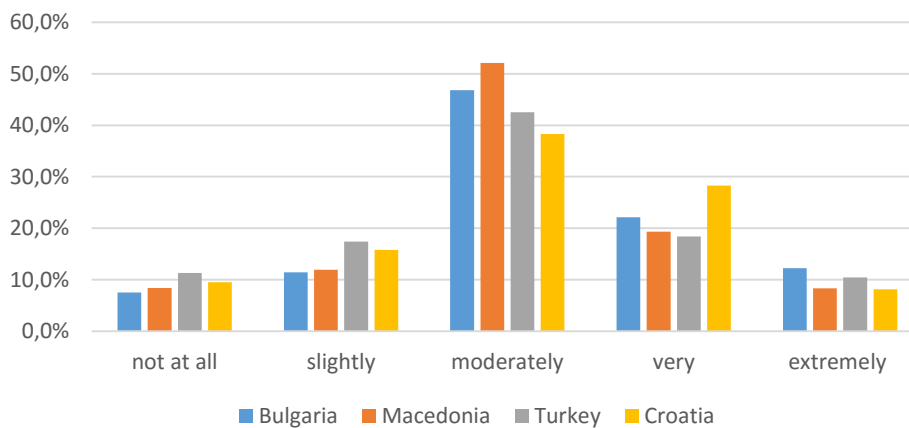
Q41: Youth empowerment:



When it comes to the relationship between non-formal learning and youth empowerment, more than half of the respondents say that there is an extremely significant (31%) or very significant (37,3%) correlation. Only 3, 6% of the respondents say that there is no contribution at all. In general, non-formal education empowers young people to develop their values, to define their role in society and to become active in general. Non-formal education makes it possible for young people to take initiative and involve others in making small steps towards a better world.

Youth unemployment is one of the biggest challenges not only for these four countries, but for Europe in general. Respondents were asked to estimate the contribution of non-formal learning on the improvement of young people's position in the labor market:

Q42: Improvement of young people's position in the labour market:

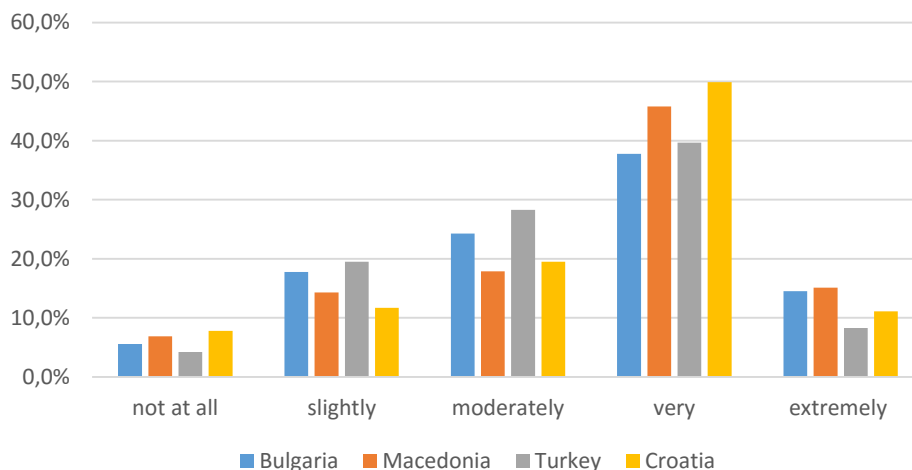


Most respondents suggest that the contribution of non-formal learning to the improvement of youth in the labor market is only moderate (44, 9%). Almost the same number of respondents states that the position of young people on the labor market has not improved at all (9, 2%) or has improved only slightly (9, 8%).

There are two possible reasons for such diversity of answers. Firstly, accreditation provided by formal education does not necessarily reflect knowledge and skills. This is why different platforms of organizations and European institutions develop different tools to support the recognition and the visibility of the skills and competences acquired through non-formal education. Secondly, even though there are instruments called *Youthpass*¹⁷ and although the prevailing opinion is that non-formal education really contributes to several aspects of youth life, there still is not enough recognition from employers and labor market in general.

In Europe we tend to praise our cultural diversity and appreciate individualism. However, even in countries generally seen as tolerant, it is still a serious problem for some groups to achieve social integration.

Q44: Support of disadvantaged youth:

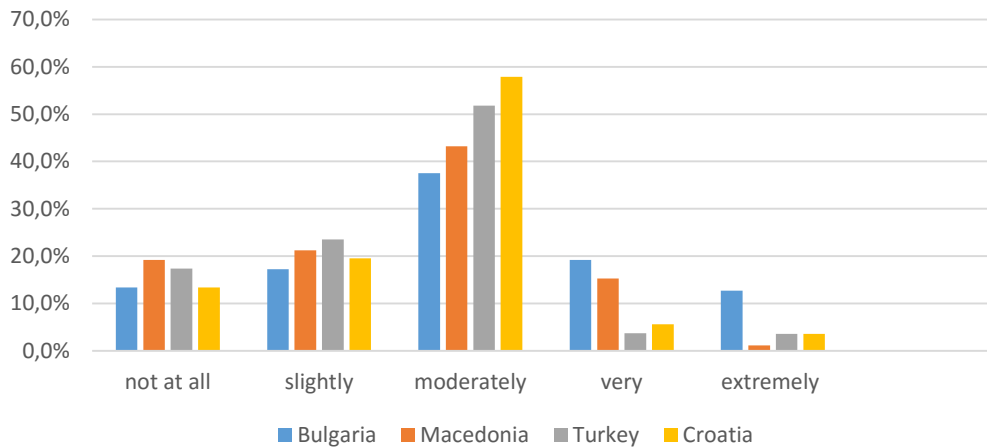


Exclusion mostly relates to minorities - ethnic, religious, sexual or other; as well as people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, e.g. from poor families or people with disabilities. There are 43, 3% who claim that non-formal learning can be very supportive, plus another 12, 3% who claim it can be extremely supportive for disadvantaged youth. Only 6, 1% claims there is no support whatsoever. Half of the respondents consider non-formal education as a perfect environment for getting to know people better and eliminate prejudice. It can be a perfect starting point for disadvantaged young people. Participation in a project that uses non-formal learning can be defining factor for some of them. It can also teach them values and show them how to live.

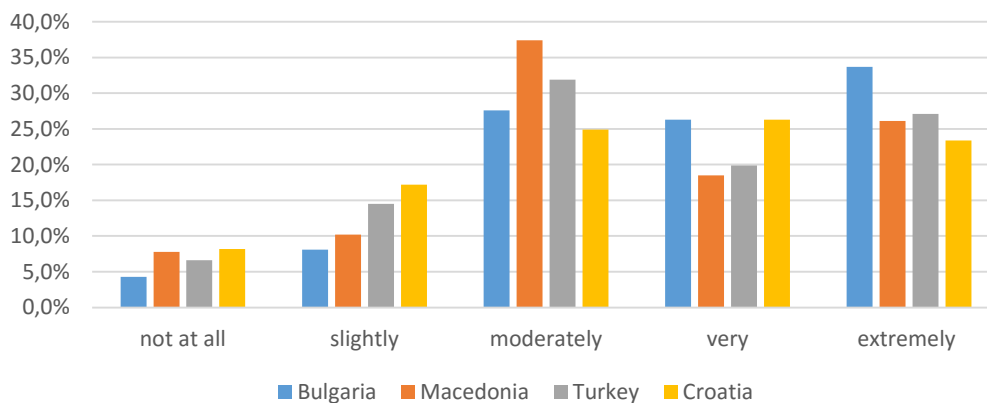
¹⁷ *Youthpass* is a European recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth work.

Next, we asked the participants to which extent are skills and competences acquired through non-formal learning recognized at a national / European level. The results are as follows:

Q45: To what degree are skills and competences acquired through non-formal education recognised at a national level?



Q46: To what degree are skills and competences acquired through non-formal education activities recognised at a European level?



Learning – whether formal, non-formal or informal - is part of a social system in which intrinsic motivation (such as curiosity) and extrinsic motivation (such as employability or social status) interact and influence each other. Learning becomes socially relevant because its' results are recognized as valuable in society. This is where recognition and flexibility mechanisms play an important role.

Results regarding the national level show that only a small number of respondents thinks that the skills and competences acquired through non-formal education are “very “(11%) or “extremely “well (5,3%) recognized. There is 20,4% who are only “slightly “satisfied on that

matter and 15,9% of are not at all satisfied with recognition of non-formal education skills and competences at national level. According to an OECD report, there are 5 steps of a certificate validation process; some European countries adopted several steps, but only a few have completed the whole process. Although young people acquire accreditation, these certificates do not always prove to be useful in the labor market.

As a response to rising demands for the recognition of non-formal education and non-formal learning outcomes, based on the previously mentioned initiatives, communications and programs, the EU has developed the following tools: *Europass*¹⁸, *Youthpass*¹⁹ and *The European Qualification Framework (EQF)*²⁰. When we compare the results obtained on this question (Q46) with the previous one regarding national recognition, there are five times more respondents who are extremely satisfied with the recognition of skills gained through non-formal learning (27, 6%). Only 6, 7% thinks that there is no recognition of skills gained through non-formal learning on a European level.

All in all, respondents recognized the importance of non-formal learning; their national governments are just beginning to recognize it, while recognition is already advanced on a European level. and has certification already.

Respondents bring up the need to promote the importance of non-formal learning to government, educational systems, institutions and finally parents. They think that there should be more awareness that what young people know and are good at does not depend on diplomas or formal education.

¹⁸ <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/hr/home>

¹⁹ <https://www.youthpass.eu/hr/youthpass/about/>

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f%5B0%5D=im_field_entity_type%3A97

CONCLUSIONS

- National realities

- Half of the respondents are aware of national youth policies.
- National policies meet almost all of needs of young people, but in some areas they are more effective while in other really important areas (employment, entrepreneurship) they are not that successful.
- Most important challenges for youth today are unemployment, passivity and pessimism towards the future.
- Respondents know how to determine certain issues, but they do not know how to propose specific measures could be conducted by the government.
- Female respondents are generally more aware of policies than males.
- People become more aware of youth policies as they age.

- European realities

- People believe that EU is actively involved in combating youth challenges, even more than their national governments.
- The European Youth Policy is good and effective but there is still some rooms for progress, respondents say that the most effective areas of EYP²¹ are education and foreign language learning while employment and entrepreneurship are less effective.
- The most important youth challenges in Europe today are unemployment, passivity, pessimism towards the future, the economic crisis and education.
- Only a small number of participants believe that EYP are truly implemented in their countries.
- Half of the participants think that a common European youth strategy should be adopted.
- Respondents suggest that policy makers should support youth initiatives, quality civic education and an open political culture of communication.

- EU youth opportunities

- Half of the respondents are aware of youth mobility and training opportunities in the EU.
- Around 60% of respondents are familiar with at least one EU learning program, even though they claim that information on this topic could be more accessible, especially on social media.

²¹ European Youth Policy

- A third of the respondents believe that young people in Europe have huge benefits (directly and indirectly) from mobility and training opportunities.
- Respondents would like to have more employment social networking and entrepreneurial opportunities.

- Youth work

- Two out of three respondents are familiar with the term „Youth work “as well as with the profession of a 'youth worker'.
- Around 70% of all respondents can name at least one youth organization.
- Most respondents believe that youth work has a substantial impact of on youth empowerment.
- There are twice as many respondents who have participated in any youth activity than those who have not.
- More than half of the respondents agree that the social impact of youth work in their communities is either extremely (38, 5%) or very (19, 2%) large.

- Non-formal education

- More than two thirds of respondents are familiar with non-formal learning.
- Data shows that two out of three (65, 8%) have participated in some form (workshop/seminar/training course, etc.) of non-formal learning.
- Respondents evaluate that non-formal learning greatly contributes to the development of skills and competences.
- When it comes to the contribution of non-formal learning to youth empowerment, more than half of the respondents claim that it is extremely significant (31%) or very significant (37,3%).
- The improvement of the labor market role of non-formal education is only partial or moderate (44, 9%).
- Half of the respondents claim that non-formal education can be extremely supportive for underprivileged youth.
- Skills and competences acquired through non-formal education are poorly recognized on a national level since there is almost no certification and valuation while at the European level they are recognized on a legal level, not so much among employers.

We wish to thank the people throughout Europe who have given their time to take part in this survey. Without their active participation, this study would not have been possible.

