

University Students from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovakia believe in value of European cooperation, of democracy and in their own participation in public life of their respective countries, surveys carried out by MESA10 from Slovakia and CEAS from Serbia say. They also declared that security provided and prosperity protected by NATO is useful, and that populism and extremism are threats to democracy.

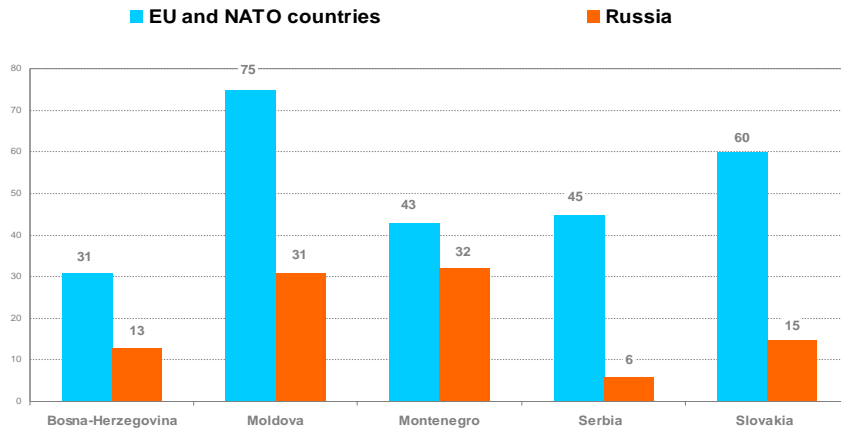
The surveys were undertaken at seven universities located in five countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovakia), as part of a University Students Debates' project aimed at promoting universal values and principles through independent and critical thinking. In December 2016 (fall semester), 1753 students were polled, and in April 2017 (spring semester), 1644 students were polled in all five countries. Most of the questions were repeated in both surveys. Slight modifications in April 2017 reflected the recent developments in world politics or addressed new issues.

Main themes of the survey were:

1. Students prefer liberal democracy and the West

As the surveys show, **students gave clear preference to democracy, prosperity and social welfare as these are represented by the EU and NATO countries.** 52% said these are the values, which make EU and NATO countries attractive to them. Only 17% students are attracted by Russia's democracy, prosperity and social welfare. Furthermore, for 44% of students, Russia is not attractive at all, while 39 % of students are attracted by Russia's political and military strength. About a quarter of respondents (26%) do not see any attractiveness of the EU and NATO countries, similar percentage (22%) value their military and political strength. The strongest attraction by EU and NATO's democracy, prosperity and social welfare is felt in Moldova (71%), the weakest in Bosnia and Herzegovina (31%). Out of the countries of the Western Balkans, Montenegro results show the most balanced composition of opinion between EU and NATO countries on one side (43%), and Russia on the other (32%), in favour of the former.

Q: Are EU and NATO countries/Russia attractive to you because of democracy, prosperity, social welfare? (April 2017 survey)

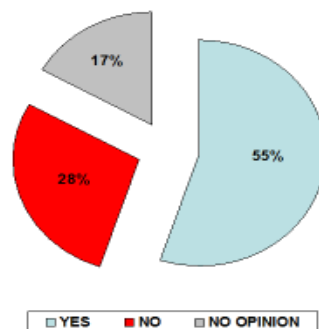


2. European Union is an ultimate goal for majority of the students

Out of five countries included in the project only Slovakia is an EU member state. The other four countries are recently at different stage of integration process. Nevertheless, **EU membership is an attractive objective** - most of the students **would like to sustain or to achieve it**. Clear majority – **55%** expressed this view. However, students expressed more skeptical views in answering the question if they believe the Western Balkan countries will ever join the EU – 37% of respondents (in both surveys) responded negatively whereas 39% gave positive response. 24% had no opinion.

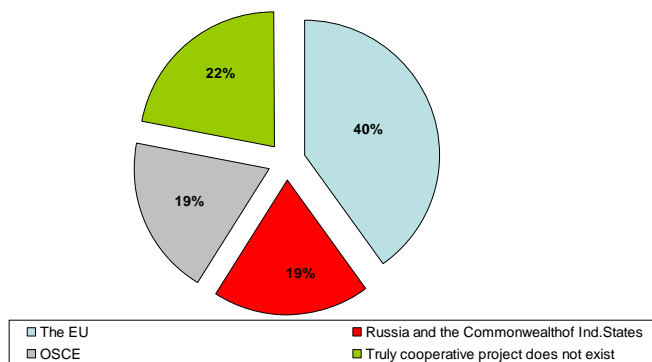
Q: Do you want your country to remain or to become a member of the European Union? (all five countries, responses in %, April 2017 survey)

Graph 9: Do you want your country to remain or to become a member of the European Union? (all five countries, responses in %)



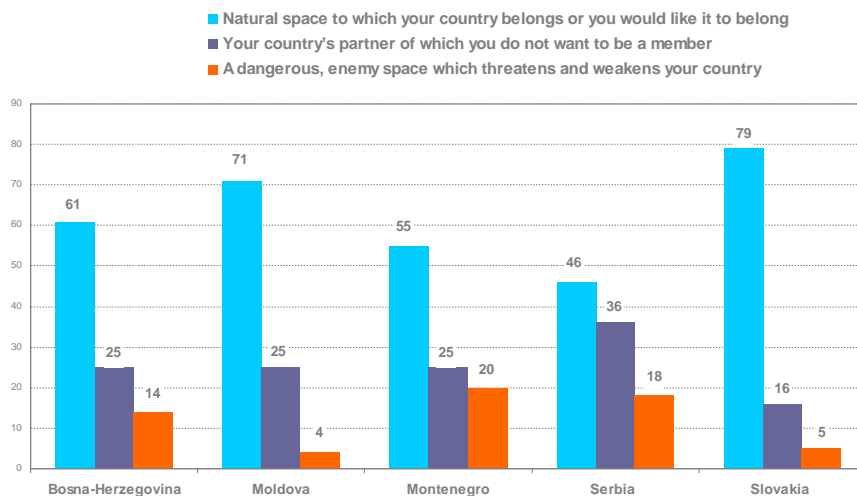
Based on the surveys, according to 40% of students, the **European Union represents the most prosperous and efficient cooperation project on the European continent**. Other options were selected by significant less respondents, namely: 19% said Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States represent such project; the same percentage opted for OSCE. However, more than one fifth said that there is none truly cooperative project in Europe. This opinion must be taken seriously. Highest percentage of these skeptical views were in Serbia -29%.

Q: The most prosperous and efficient European cooperation project is today represented by (all five countries, responses in %, April 2017 survey)



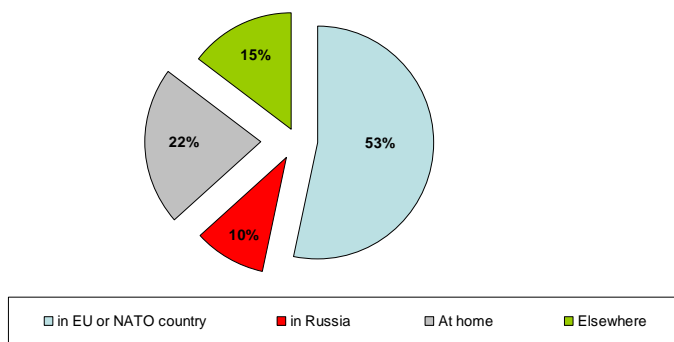
Overall, **60 %** of students consider the EU to be a **natural space** to which their country belongs or they would like is to belong. The strongest pull is felt in Slovakia (79%), followed by Moldova (71%), the weakest in Serbia.

Q: In your opinion, the European Union is: (all five countries, responses in %, April 2017 survey)

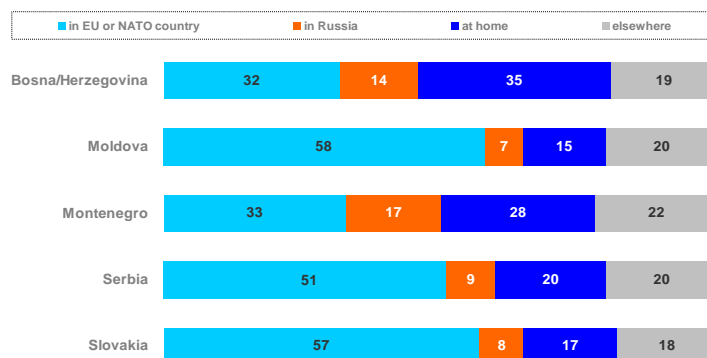


Also, the EU countries are „pull factor“ **for job and study of 53% of students**. The strongest drive for studying or working in the EU can be found among the students in Moldova (58%) and Slovakia(57%) , but also in Serbia (51%), whereas in Montenegro it was at 33% and in Bosnia and Herzegovina at 32%- there staying at home (35%) is the most frequent response.

Q: If you had a scholarship or could pay for your education, where would you complete your studies? (all five countries, responses in %, April 2017 survey)



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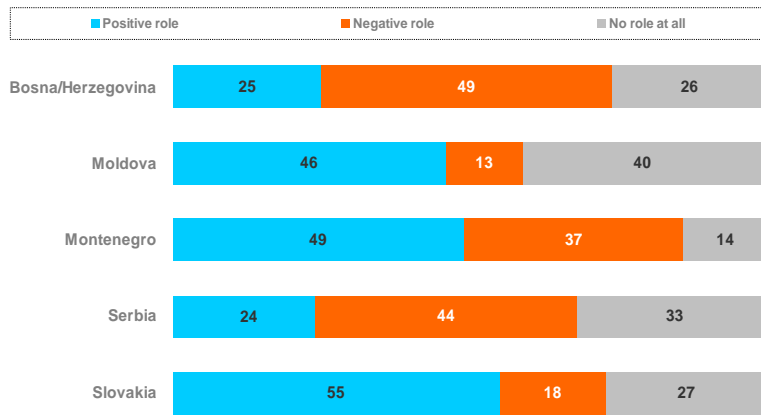


3. NATO means security

In spite of reservations against NATO, the overall picture is positive and encouraging – **46%** of respondents said „**Security provided and prosperity protected by NATO is useful**“; 28% shared the opposite view. However, it is less than in December 2016, when it reached 36%. Similarly to other questions, there are differences among the groups of students – on the positive pole, mostly Slovakia (58% of affirmative responses), on the negative pole, mostly Serbia – with just 29%.

Out of Western Balkans countries, it is in Montenegro, where the highest number of students believe that NATO plays a positive political and economic role in their country (49%).

Q: In the political and economic development of your country, NATO plays: (responses in %, April 2017 survey)

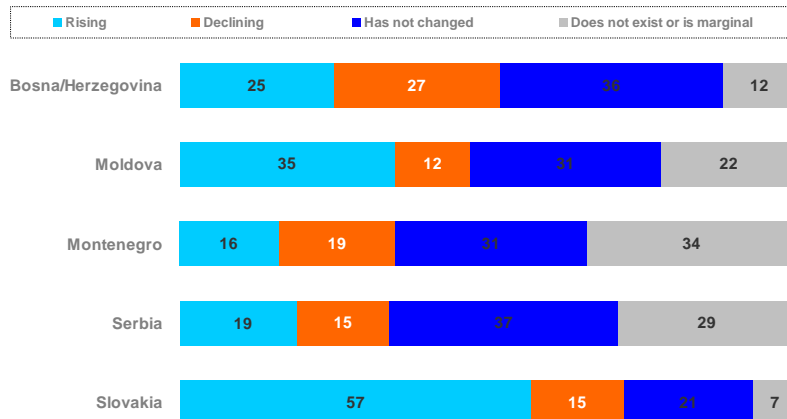


4. Populism and extremism are threats to democracy

Students are aware of threats to democracy. **Almost two thirds of students see extremism as rising** or staying about the same, only 20% said it does not exist and 16% saw it on decline. Rising extremism is a phenomenon in Slovakia (a clear majority - 57% of Slovak respondents said).

In December 2016 survey, the students were asked if they believe that the rise of extreme, euro-sceptic, and populist parties and political leaders across the EU was a threat to EU cooperation and integration - all in all, roughly 60% responded agreeably.

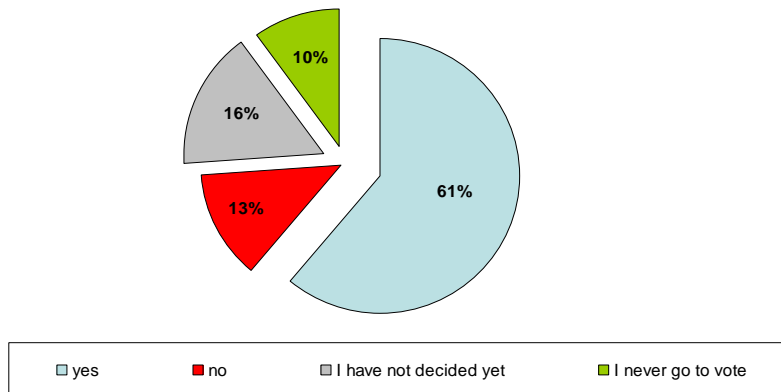
Q: In your opinion, extremism in your country is: (responses in %, April 2017 survey)



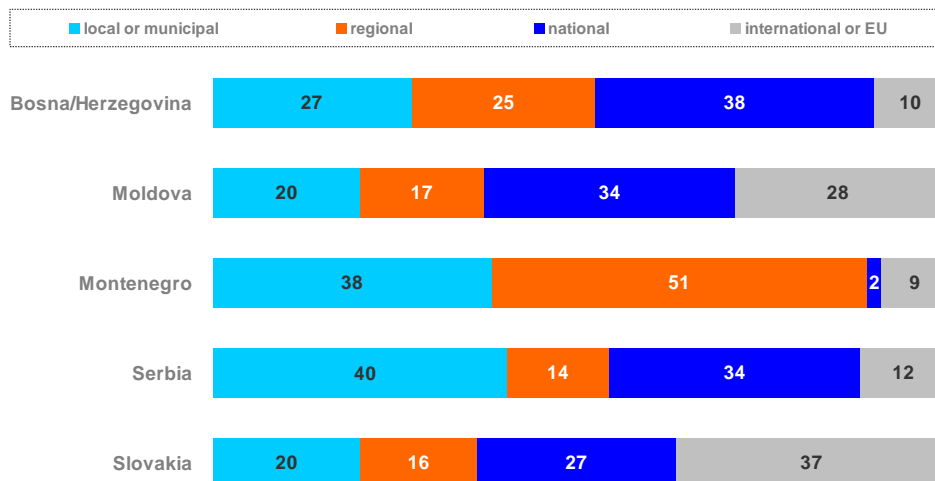
5. Students and the public life

The students tend to be active citizens. On average, **61% of students would vote and 26% would run for an elective office**. The levels they would run at are almost evenly distributed between local, regional, national and transnational. This is a very optimistic picture of participation potential for the future of all five countries

Q: In the next parliamentary elections in your country, are you planning to vote? (all five countries, responses in %, April 2017 survey)



Q: Imagine that you are a candidate in an election. At which level would you run? (responses in %, April 2017 survey)



The surveys were a part of a University Students Debates' project aimed at promoting universal values and principles through independent and critical thinking. The project is implemented jointly by MESA10 (Slovakia) and CEAS (Serbia). Debates among seven university teams took place on December 8, 2016 and April 26, 2017.

More detailed results of the surveys can be found [here](#).

<http://mesa10.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017-JUNE-SURVEY-DEC-APR-FINAL.pptx>

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