



Vision of Europe through the eyes of young people from the states of the Visegrad Group

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• Visegrad Fund
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This publication has been prepared by usage of different sources during implementation of the “Vision of Europe through the eyes of young people from the states of the Visegrad Group” financed from the International Visegrad Found.

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Introduction

The Visegrad Group, which is often known as the V4 is a noninstitutionalised cooperation between 4 states in Central Europe. It was created 26 years ago (February 15, 1991) by then three newly independent states (Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland) to “work together in a number of fields of common interests within the all-European integration”¹. Today the V4 is constituted by the Czech Republic (CZ), Hungary (HU), Poland (PL) and Slovakia (SK). For many years the main objective of V4’s member states was to integrate with the EU and the NATO. When all states became members of these western institutions in 2004 there were a serious discussion about future possibilities of cooperation within the V4, and the new declaration in Kroměříž was signed².

Despite lack of institutional bodies, specific mechanism of multilevel consultations during periodical meetings of states representatives, and differences between member states’ interests the V4 has serious and ambitious objectives. Today the V4 is going to contribute to building the European security architecture, but the security and defence issues are not the only ones within the V4. Since the very beginning of the V4, the cooperation in other areas as culture, education and science, tourism, transportation and energy were among top priorities of the V4 Presidencies. The V4 has been treated as a forum for political consultations on these topics on the highest level of regional cooperation. To do this before the European Council or the Council of the European Union, high-level meetings between respectively Prime Ministers or Foreign Ministers are held. Moreover, the “Visegrad+ formula” is developed and encompass coordination meeting and information sharing with the Benelux Group, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and states within the EU’s Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans³.

At the same time the V4 was also a place of exchange of information and best practices’ sharing between local NGOs mainly in the fields of culture, education, research and sport. As a result of their activity in the last 26 years the relationship between the four societies had been built with strong, mutual trust, based on the common culture and values, with the aim of common engagement in building the wealth and stability of the region. Youth cooperation is

¹ More information at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/about>.

² More information at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/visegrad-declarations/visegrad-declaration-110412-1>.

³ More information at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/about/cooperation>.

especially important here, because as noted René Kubášek, “it proves that Visegrad is connected not only by its historical traditions and events, but also a certain cultural closeness that makes young people from our four countries want to work together”⁴.

Between July 2016 and June 2017 Poland was hold the Presidency of the Visegrad Group fifth time. During this period a lot of discussions were focused on an in-depth reflection on to-date achievements as well as current issues in the Central Europe region. According to the “Programme of the Presidency” continuation of the common work within a well-known brand is major factor to represent the added value to the European integration. In the same time the V4 states could play a very important role in solving difficult challenges and problems that united Europe is facing with. The main objective of this research was to gather information about opinion of young people from Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Czech Republic about the topics, which are currently most popular and widely discussed in the EU countries. All these topics were presented in the „Programme of the Presidency” and include 4 topics: migration crisis and related challenges; the questions related to the United Kingdom’s EU membership (Brexit) and its importance for the future of European Union; economic slowdown and macroeconomic disparities undermining EU’ competitiveness; and last but not least future positions of V4 states and their role in EU⁵.

⁴ R. Kubášek, *A quick glimpse of V4 youth initiatives*, in *The Visegrad Group – A Central European Constellation*, A. Jagodziński (ed.), Bratislava 2006, p. 156.

⁵ See more at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs/pl-v4-pres-2016-17>.

Methodology

The objective of the study and research tools

The main objectives of the research was to gather information about opinion of young people from Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Czech Republic about the topics, which are currently most popular and widely discussed in the EU states. Opinion of young people were gathered, analysed and then published in the form of publication – available for all interested people and organizations.

Taking into account the objective of the research a quantity method (*questionnaires filled in by young people*) was used. Quantity methods give opportunity to examine phenomena/features which are well-known and pre-determined. In quantity methods the answers are listed and respondents choose one of them, what gives the possibility to pre-define examined areas, as well as to develop strict hypothesis and look for information confirming or denying these clear hypothesis. This technique also makes it possible to gather non-standard data, to view an analysed concept/problem from different perspectives.

That is why this method was chosen within research conducted under this project. The goal was to gather opinions, but these opinions should be gathered within defined and limited frames and areas. The aim of the research was to receive opinion of young people about some aspects of given issues (like an opinion about influence of the Brexit on future of the EU, or an assessment of the appropriateness of the decision about Brexit; but for example not about the influence of Brexit on the foreign policy of Spain).

As a research tool, experts prepared the online questionnaire, containing 53 questions grouped into 4 thematic blocks (one block for one area: topic 1: 14 questions; topic 2: 16 questions; topic 3: 11 questions; and topic 4: 12 questions). Only closed questions were used. In most of the questions respondents could chose only one response, but there were 3 multiple choices questions. Questionnaires were filled in on-line platform (MachForm); invitation links were sent earlier. Answers to questionnaires were gathered and stored into the MachForm program, through which the results was then transferred into Excel file and analyzed with usage of this program.

Description of a research group

A non-random sampling method was applied in the survey - that is sampling techniques based on subjective decisions, familiar subjective data referring to the knowledge of the structure of an audited population rather than randomization.

Target screening was used in the survey – that is the most typical example of a non-random sampling. It is a subjective method of selecting participants of a survey, which, in turn, provides the broadest and the most comprehensive information. As a target group of this survey, there were selected young people who can be described as active young people in the society (for example participants of the EU Erasmus+ programs).

Only one respondent group was selected for the survey. So, taking the main aim of the project into account – the only target group, taking part in the research were young people. The age limit was not determinate in the project documentation, however it was decided that due to the areas of research these should be people in the 17-30 age range. The reason for that is these people are old enough to have their own opinion about political issues and events currently going in EU, but also not too old to be still considered as young people.

The questionnaire was translated from English into national languages. The wide group of young people from all countries received link to the questionnaire through social media, websites of partner organizations, and other available channels.

The young people answering the questions were usually between 17 and 33 year old (for example over 93% in Czech Republic and almost 90% in Poland. Regarding the level of education most of young people indicated higher education (from almost 51% in the Czech Republic to over 82% in Slovakia). About half of all respondents live in a big city (more than 100 000). Finally, the respondents were mainly females (from 58,2% in the Czech Republic to more than 75% in Slovakia).

Opinion of young people from V4 states about current migration situation in EU

The migration crisis was one of the key areas subjected to the strengthened coordination between the V4 states to create a “strong voice” in the EU level (1st priority of the Polish Presidency. Regarding the latest agreement within the V4 leadership – 15 December 2016, Brussels –, the Joint Statement settles about seeking for a common understanding, reacting on the recent migration trends in the European Union.

“The Visegrad countries appreciate important efforts of the Slovak Presidency to broaden consensus concerning the application of the principles of solidarity and responsibility in the context of migration policy. They recognize that good progress has been made in the convergence of views on various aspects, including the external dimension of migration and the protection of EU external borders. At the same time, further effort is needed to reach consensus on the internal dimension of the migration policy. The Visegrad countries are ready to continue working towards this objective. They believe that any new European migration policy can only be built for a common area where full control of external borders is ensured and migratory pressures can therefore be resisted effectively.”⁶

The opinion of youths from the V4 member states regarding the issue of migration can be widely examined, and specified through many relevant subtopics. There were 14 questions in this section of the questionnaire, for example:

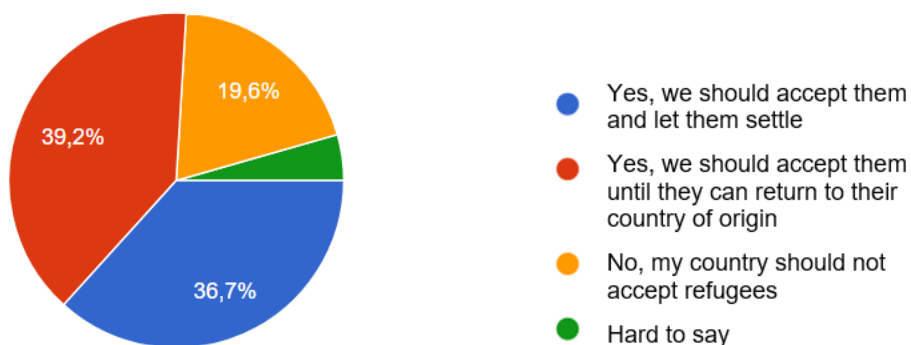
- Should your country accept refugees from countries affected by armed conflict?
- Have you noticed more refugees in your local area due to the migration crisis?
- Has the increased number of refugees negatively affected the youth’ sense of security?
- In relation to the migration crisis, what direction have the economic status of respondents’ family changed?
- Is the youth concerned about the dangers connected with religion of incoming refugees? Which religions are young people most concerned about?
- Should local authorities help refugees to enter the labour market?
- Are you ready to live in the neighbourhood with refugees?

⁶ See more at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/joint-statement-of-the-161215-1>.

- Are you ready to integrate with refugees arriving to your country? (for example, through cultural and traditional events)
- Would you be able to accept in your house a person who is in refugee / refugee status or someone with a status of subsidiary protection for a certain period? (for example, until he/she finds a place to stay)?

Czech Republic

In this part of the survey Czech youths expressed their preference to accept refugees from countries affected by armed conflict (80,3% answered yes, 13,6% no, 4 young people did not know).



Graph 1. Do you think your country should accept refugees from countries affected by armed conflict?

Vast majority of Czech youths did not notice and increase in refugee numbers in their area (83,3%). Additionally, 62,2% of Czech youths responded that the increase in the number of refugees did not negatively affect their sense of security. 98,1% of Czech youths indicated that the economic situation of their family has not changed. The majority (78,6%) also wants the authorities to help refugees to work in the Czech Republic if there is no Czech national willing to work for a particular position.

However, regarding the concern about the dangers connected with religion of incoming refugees 71,5% of Czech youths were afraid of increase in the cultural and religious tensions, followed by increased criminality (52,8%) and terrorist attacks (44,3%). 55,6% of Czech youth cares about the culture of the incoming refugees and the religion Czech youths are most afraid of was in 53,8% Islam.

Less than a half of the respondents were ready to live in a neighbourhood with refugees (46,3%). However, majority were ready to integrate with the refugees through e.g., cultural

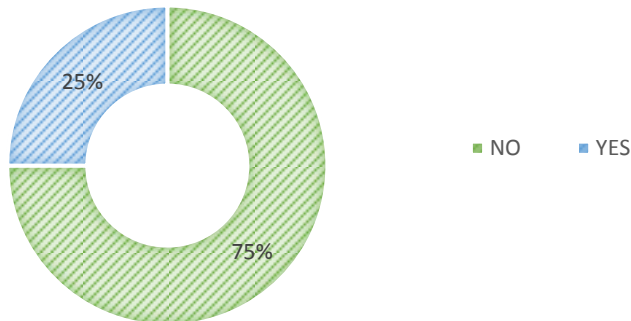
and traditional events (57,2%). However, it would be acceptable to host a refugee at home by 37,1% of the respondents and unacceptable by the same percentage (37,1%).

62,7% of all Czech respondents indicated that they agree that their country should take action to improve the quality and living conditions of refugees. 74,8% agree that local authorities should help refugees to enter the labour market.

On a positive note, 55,5% of Czech youths indicated that as a positive impact of the arrival of refugees in their area can result in an increase in tolerance for different cultures. However, 29% responded that they see no positive aspects.

Hungary

One of the most determinative answer was received for the issue of the sense of security connected to migration. Since 2015 – start of migration crisis in Hungary – the question of security regained some new understandings. Before looking into the phenomenon based on other studies, it is important to see what the Youth’ opinion is.

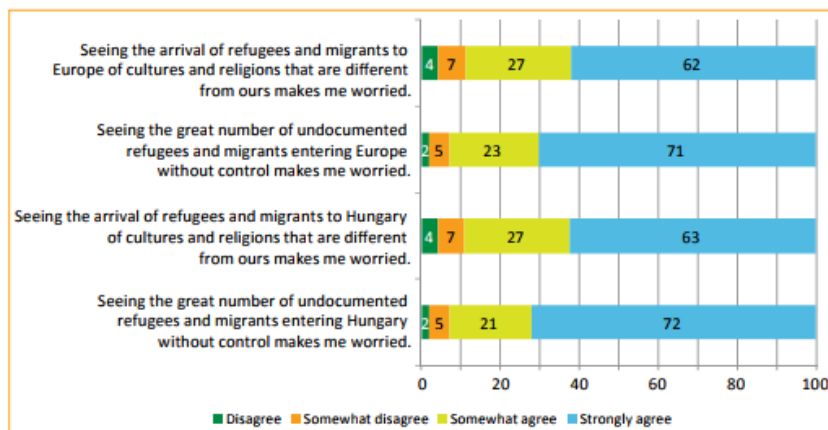


Graph 2. Has the increased number of refugees negatively affected the youth’ sense of security?

75% of the respondents said, the migration issue did not affect their sense of security. However, it is still a largely growing phenomenon not just in social media but in the society as a whole. Finding a proper explanation is a challenge, besides not the goal of this research, although it worth looking into a current, relevant data.

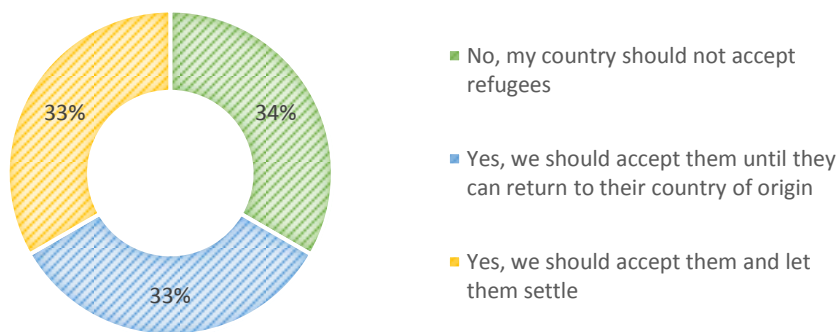
According to the research of TÁRKI – Hungarian Social Research Institute, an independent, employee-owned research organisation that specialises in policy research in the fields of social policy and the social consequences of economic policies – in September 2015, during the escalation of the migration crisis, almost 50% of the EU28 society considered the

issue of migration one of the most major problem.⁷ Obviously the sense of security and fear is strongly connected to the fact, how much the society is actually concerned about the ongoing changes in the country. Based on the research of TÁRKI, the migration-related fear contains two major components: realistic and symbolic threat. Here are the results:



Graph 3. The different aspects of the perceived threat towards the current migration flow into Europe and Hungary ($N = \text{cca } 980$, per cent).⁸

It is clearly visible that these given results lead to certain expectations towards the political space, which makes it important to highlight one more result of the survey.



Graph 4. Should Hungary accept refugees from countries affected by armed conflict?

Thus, regarding the opinion of Youth in Hungary, the answer for the question, whether should the country accept refugees or not, is very diverse. Expectations towards the government for such complex problems based on factors, like generational differences, traditions, or the given social security system. As a paradox, for the question “should local authorities help refugees to enter the labour market?” the answer was 67% yes, so even

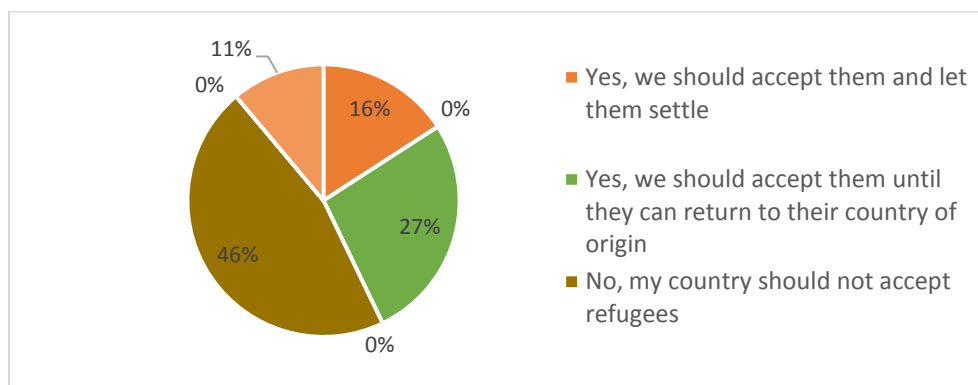
⁷ http://www.tarki.hu/hu/news/2016/kitekint/20160330_refugees.pdf

⁸ http://www.tarki.hu/hu/news/2016/kitekint/20160330_refugees.pdf p.60

though the society is not completely convinced about the solution for the issue of refugee crisis, if the country decides to support help, then seek for a comprehensive, deep understanding of the problem and react on the relatively best way possible.

Poland

After analysis of the first part of the survey it seems that young people were almost equally divided whether to accept refugees from countries affected by armed conflict (43%) or not (46%). The question for readiness to live in the neighbourhood with refugees, likewise, share Youths into equal halves (43% - I'm not ready; 41% - I'm ready, 16% - I don't know).



Graph 5. Do you think Poland should accept refugees from countries affected by armed conflict?

However, it could be mainly consequence of debates, taken place in the public sphere, because vast majority of Youths in Poland did not notice more refugees in their local area (75%). There is also no change in the economic status of Youths families as it was confirmed by 95% of respondents. Moreover, half of youth people added that the increase in the number of refugees did not negatively affect their sense of security. However, the power of media discourse is so strong, that 66,7% of young people indicated that there is no positive aspects connected with the arrival of refugees.

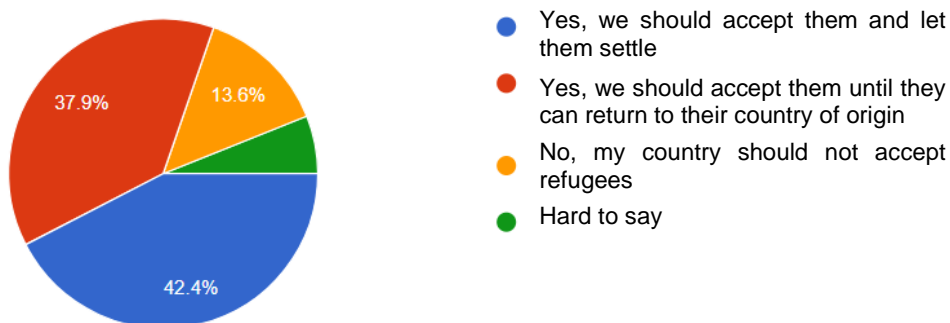
In case of a question about the influx of refugees to Poland, young people are mainly afraid of cultural and religious tensions (82,5%), followed by increase in crime (65,1%) and terrorist attacks (58,7%). This result quite well correspond with popular among Youths opinion, that the culture of incoming population has a matter. So far young respondents in Poland are not afraid of economic consequences of the migration crisis – only 6,3% of all respondents are concerned about salary reductions or problems with finding/losing a job (12,6%).

Because of the origin of the migrants, Islam was chosen predominately (73%) as a religion people are mostly afraid of. Nevertheless, almost half of respondents (49,2%) are ready to integrate with refugees through cultural or traditional events. However, it would be acceptable to host a refugee at home for a certain period of time, only by 15,9% of respondents, while for 55,6% it would be unacceptable.

The last set of questions were connected with roles of the authorities (both national and local) in the migration crisis. Most of respondents (54%) wants the authorities to help refugees to work in Poland if there is no Polish employee willing to work for a particular position. However, among Poland’s youth positions dominate (44,4%) opinion that Poland should not take actions to improve the quality and living conditions of refugees. Only 30% think that this is mainly the task of national authorities. Regarding the tasks of local authorities, opinions are more equally divided – 40% of respondent were in favour of an opinion that local authorities should help refugees to enter the labour market, while 36,5% disagree with this statement.

Slovakia

Young people wants Slovakia to accept refugees from countries affected by armed conflict (80,3% answered yes, 13,6% no, 4 young people did not know).



Graph 6. Do you think your country should accept refugees from countries affected by armed conflict?

The majority (85,1%) also wants the authorities to help refugees to work in Slovakia if there is no Slovak person willing to work for a particular position. There is no negative impact on young people family situation.

Young people did not notice more refugees in the area where they live (only 16,7% answered yes) and are mostly ready to live in a neighborhood with refugees (59,7%) and integrate with them for example through cultural and traditional events (82,1%). However to accept a refugee at home is an option only for 23,9% of young people. Most of them (44,8%) would not accept refugee at their home and about a third does not know.

On the other hand young people are mostly afraid of cultural and religious tension (65,7%) followed by problem of the distribution of migrants in the city and increase in crime. Most of the young people think that the culture or religion of the incoming population does not matter to them. However for 15,2% culture represents an issue and about the same number is not sure if the culture might matter or not. Because of the origin of the migrants, Islam was chosen predominately as a religion people are mostly afraid of.

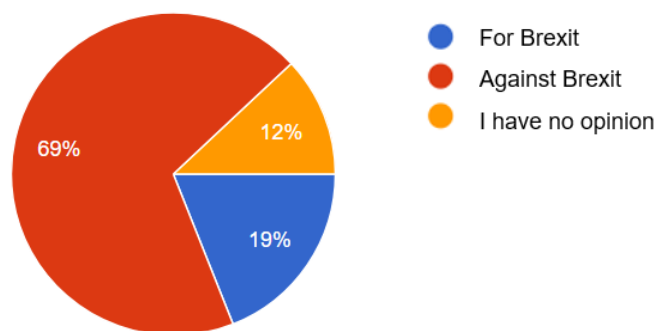
The most positive aspect connected with arrival of refugees is increase in tolerance for different cultures.

Opinion of young people from V4 states about Brexit

The United Kingdom’s planned exit from the European Union (Brexit), which follow the 2016 referendum vote (51,89% for and 48,11% against) significantly affected, together with the migration crisis, the European political context of Polish as well as Hungarian V4 Presidencies. As the terms of UK’s withdrawal have not yet been negotiated, one of the main objective for present Hungarian Presidency is “defining and representing our common interests while maintaining the unity of the EU-27”.⁹ In this part of the questionnaire there were 16 questions concerning both consequences of the Brexit process for the future of the European integration and Youth’s life, as well as the process of negotiations itself.

Czech Republic

Czech youths expressed predominantly that they would vote against Brexit, if they could vote in the referendum:



Graph 7. If you could attend the Brexit referendum, what would your vote be?

Despite being largely opposed to the Brexit referendum result, 55,4% of Czech youths expressed that the British government has a duty to carry out the wishes of the British people and leave the EU. 20,1% supports the Brexit decision and thinks the British government should guarantee the UK leaves the EU. 17,5% of Czech youths thinks the British government should ignore the Brexit referendum result or it should try and overturn it in a second referendum.

Vast majority of Czech youths also expressed their preference for the UK to stay as a part of the single EU market (81%). Additionally, 67,3% also expressed their preference for giving

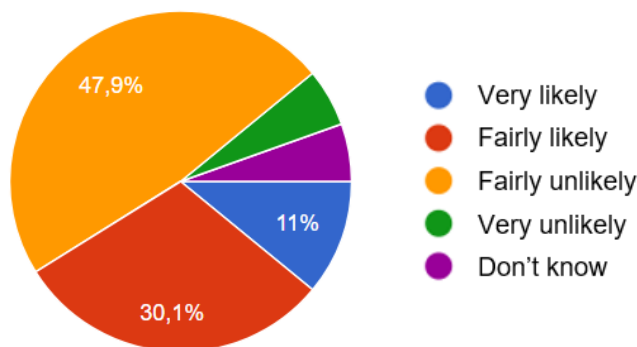
⁹ See more at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs/hungarian-v4-presidency>.

the UK enough time to negotiate the terms of their divorce from the EU. Only 12,2% wanted the divorce process to be quick and hard. Interestingly, 20,2% of the Czech respondents in the survey had no opinion.

50,7% of Czech youths think that the UK should try to agree on having full trade access to the rest of the EU, in exchange for allowing EU citizens to live and work in Britain. 19,3% expressed their preference for the UK to try to reverse the referendum decision and stay in the EU. 76,6% of Czech youths would prefer the UK to have free access to trade with EU and having to allow EU citizens the right to live and work in Britain. Only 11,3% would prefer the EU to have full control over immigration from Europe but no longer having free access to trade with the EU. Similarly, 80,1% of Czech youths expressed their preference for a „soft” Brexit (i.e., not involving leaving EU single market and customs union), and only 9,6% expressed their preference for a „hard” Brexit.

57,3% of Czech youths also think that Brexit will, to a small extent, impact on their lives, while for 31,8% of them Brexit will not affect their lives in any way.

More than a half of the Czech respondents had no idea about how well or badly the EU representatives are doing at negotiating Britain’s exit from the EU (54,8%). 19,9% thought the negotiators are going fairly well and 18,5% thought the negotiators were doing fairly badly. However, 63,6% of Czech youths expressed that EU negotiators should be prepared to compromise while approaching the Brexit negotiations. 23,6% thought the EU negotiators should take a strong line.



Graph 8. If Britain votes to leave the EU, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that other countries will also choose to leave?

Czech youths’ opinions on whether the UK or the EU has the stronger hand in negotiations over the terms of Brexit, opinions varied extensively. 25% of Czech respondents

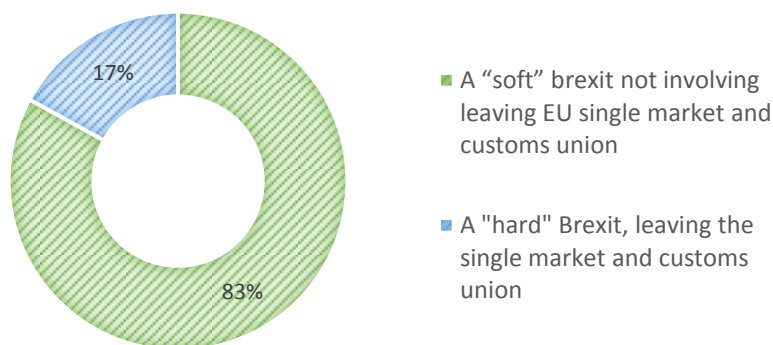
thought both sides are quite evenly matched in the negotiations. 34,2% thought the EU has a stronger hand and 20% thought the UK has a stronger hand in the negotiations.

Regarding the future of the EU scenarios the Czech youths expressed the following preferences:

- 30,4% expressed their preference for scenario 4: “Doing less more efficiently.”
- 20,7% expressed they would like the future of the EU to be guided by scenario 5: “Doing much more together.”
- Equal number of people as above, i.e., 20,7% expressed that scenario 1: „Carrying on” Would be most preferable for them.
- Scenario 3 (Those who want more do more.) was most preferable for 16,3% of Czech youths, followed by the least preferred scenario 2 (Nothing but the single market) with 11,9%.

Hungary

The issues of United Kingdom leaving the European Union may provide a better opportunity for a debate about the future of the region than the issue of migration. Based on the survey results, it is already proven, that Youth has concrete opinion on the issue of Brexit. The fairly chosen “I do not know” answer shows, that young people in Europe are already interconnected to the closest economic-political decisions, seek to gain information, besides further on also wish to act on it and influence those current international events, which may affect their personal life. Answering to the related question in the survey, 67% of the participants thought, that Brexit will affect their life, at least in a small extent.



Graph 9. Do you prefer a ‘hard’ Brexit, leaving the single market and customs union, or a ‘soft’ Brexit, not leaving the single market and customs union?

83% of the respondents would have vote against Brexit and just a small minority supports the decision which had been made. However, 67% of them still supports UK remaining the member of the Single Market and think that it would be the European Union’s responsibility to support that.

Regarding the fact, how the process of Brexit should work, 83% of the respondents think, a “soft” Brexit would be beneficial from the Hungarian perspective. What does that really mean? First, United Kingdom after leaving the European Union still would stay the part of the Single Market and customs union, to make sure the major priorities of V4 region can be preserved, as the integrity of the common market, the defence of the “four freedom rights” – free movement of goods, services, capital and people –, and the digitalization of the economy. Second, Brexit will lead to the change of the political, economic status quo within Europe, which may could be less radical providing the opportunity to Britain to stay part of the custom market¹⁰. Based on the conclusion towards a “soft” Brexit, 66% of the respondents also supported the less radical approach of negotiations, thus voted for “the EU negotiators should be prepared for compromise”.

The secession of United Kingdom from the European Union is going to change major perspectives for the Visegrad Countries on many fields as going to hold challenges towards the region as well. The hope for a more outstanding role within the EU is going to require aligned policies from all four countries, strong alliances and a very determined Presidential role of Hungary from July 2017 - June 2018.

Poland

According to a summary of the latest public opinion pulls carried out in August 2017 by institutes from the V4 states (CVVM SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i., CBOS, TÁRKI and FOCUS) Poland is the most well-disposed towards the European Union with the score of 88% of respondents for this opinion¹¹. Therefore, almost 59% of Poland’s youth would vote against Brexit, while only 22,2 % would support the decision made by British society. Youth in Poland are almost equally divided about Brexit’s impact on their lives – 44,4% think that

¹⁰ <http://visegradinsight.eu/brexit-and-the-visegrad-countries/>

¹¹ See more at <http://www.rp.pl/Unia-Europejska/170819576-Sondaz-Polacy-najwiekszymi-euroentuzjastami-w-Grupie-Wyszehradzkiej.html#ap-1>.

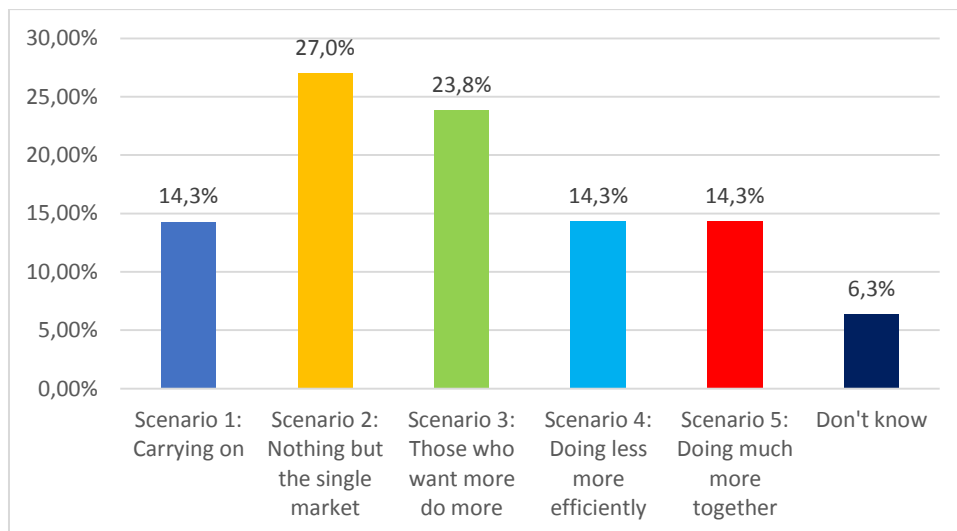
Brexit will not affect their life while 55,6% answered affirmatively. However, only 23,8% of all respondents pointed out that the government should ignore the result of the referendum or seek to overturn it in a second referendum, while most of them maintain that the UK's government has a duty to carry out their wishes and leave the EU.

Despite the fact that Brexit will not seriously affect their life Youth in Poland vast majority (79,4%) expressed their support for a “soft” version of Brexit, which will not involve leaving the EU Single Market and customs union. Consequently, strong majority of young people (61,9%) indicated that the British government should have time to prepare for its negotiations on leaving the European Union, and the EU negotiators should approach the Brexit negotiations with more focus on being prepared to compromise (76,2%) than on taking a strong line (only 15,9%). However, a lot of Poland's youths (57,1%) do not have enough knowledge to make an assessment of this process. Likewise, more than 60% of respondents don't know, whether to change anything in the positions and actions undertaken so far by EU negotiators or not. In consequence their opinions on which side of negotiation over the terms of Brexit (the EU or the UK) has the stronger hand are equally unfolded: 33,3% of all respondents thought the EU has a stronger hand, 30,2% thought both sides are quite evenly matched , while 28,6% pointed that the UK would prevail in this negotiations.

Most of young people in Poland would partially support the UK's expectations presented by David Cameron in his letter to the president of the European Council in November 2015¹². Firstly, 54% of all respondents said that if the UK would like to try to remain a member of the Single Market, which means no trade barriers, contributions to the EU budget and free movement, the EU should agree with that. Similarly, over 60% of Youths indicated that the UK should try to make a wider deal with the rest of the EU, which would give Britain full trade access to the rest of the EU, in exchange for allowing EU citizens to live and work in Britain. Secondly, vast majority (63,5%) of young people in Poland would agree the United Kingdom's government to restrict access to benefits for EU migrants, as they prefer Britain having free access to trade with the EU but having to allow EU citizens the right to live and work in Britain.

¹² See more at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-reform-pms-letter-to-president-of-the-european-council-donald-tusk>.

The last part of this section was applied to the future of European integration process. Youths in Poland are quite reserved in this issue, however, most of them (58,7%) expressed it is likely (very or fairly) that other states will also chose to leave the EU.

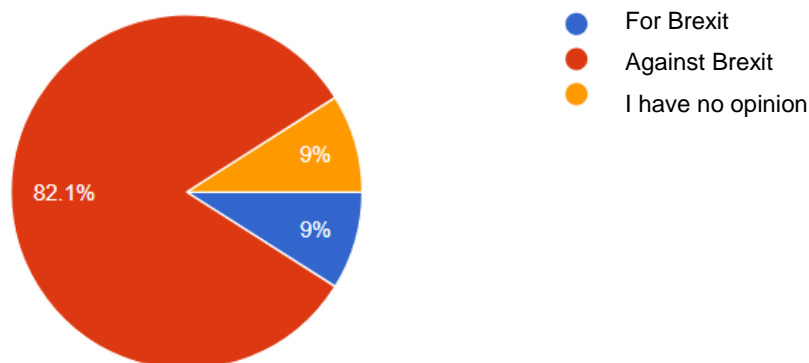


Graph 10. Which of the options of the future of the EU proposed in the White Paper is most likely to you?

Two most popular scenarios for the future of the EU are scenario no. 2: “Nothing but the Single Market” with support of 27% and scenario no. 3: “Those who want more do more”, which was indicated by 23,8%. Three other scenarios received equal number of people (14,3%).

Slovakia

Young people in Slovakia would vote predominantly **against Brexit** (82,1%, 9% for Brexit, 9% have no opinion).



Graph 11. If you could attend the Brexit referendum, what would your vote be?

They are divided into the question of the impact of Brexit on their life. One half thinks that Brexit will affect their life, but to a small extent. Around 40% thinks that the vote will not affect their life.

Most of the young people (68.2%) think that Britain should have time to prepare for its negotiations on leaving the European Union versus young people who would prefer the process to be quick and hard. Relatively significant number of young people (21,2%) do not have an opinion. We assume that the question might be too technical for some of the young people and not having an opinion on it is not a surprise for us.

One half of the young people wants Britain to try to make a wider deal with the rest of the EU, giving Britain full trade access to the rest of the EU, in exchange for allowing EU citizens to live and work in Britain. Interestingly about a third of young people want Britain to try to reverse its decision and stay in the EU. We have seen similar pro-EU preference in our sample already in the very first question in this section of the survey, where more than 80% of young people would vote against Brexit.

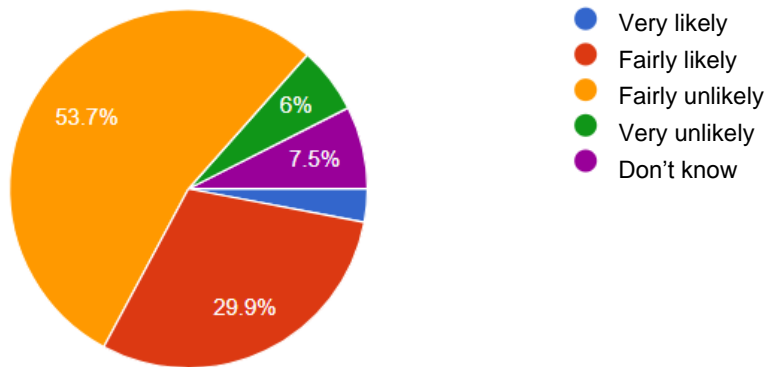
Two most popular scenarios (both 26,2%) for the future of EU are:

- Scenario 1: Carrying on. This scenario assumes that staying the course will involve small, smooth changes to the functioning of the EU.
- Scenario 5: Doing much more together. Here the EU 27 go “further than ever before in all domains” – code for a federal EU.
- The least popular scenario (12,3%) is:
- Scenario 2: Nothing but the single market. Here the Commission focuses on the achievement with the broadest base of support: its single market.

Young people would in majority prefer Britain having free access to trade with the EU but having to allow EU citizens the right to live and work in Britain as well as “soft” Brexit not involving leaving EU single market and customs union.

Towards the EU citizens the young people prefer Britain to negotiate with other EU countries to allow the EU citizens to stay as long as British citizens currently living elsewhere in the EU are allowed to stay or confirm that the EU citizens will be allowed to remain in Britain once we leave the EU.

One half of the young people do not see Brexit as an example for other EU members to leave the block. About one third however thinks, that it is fairly likely, that other countries will also choose to leave.



Graph 12. If Britain votes to leave the EU, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that other countries will also choose to leave?

Most of the young people (40,3%) see **EU in stronger negotiating position** compared with 29,9% who see both EU and UK in **even position** or 14,9 % who see UK having stronger hand in negotiations over the terms of Brexit.

Opinion of young people from V4 states about economic situation in the EU

The economic situation differs between the four Visegrad states. The opportunities provided for youth as well as threats for youth policy development also are specific (especially when they are compared to solutions in the Western Europe. Consequently, the situation of young people differs regarding the youth unemployment, transitioning from education to work, and risk of poverty¹³. The approach towards employment between young people shows a different behavioural structure, based on the willingness to move for work. This factor alone influences the judgement of the economic situation within European Union by young people. On the other hand, the V4 states, like other EU members, must face up to the new challenges arising in the context of economic slowdown, macroeconomic disparities and EU cohesion policy. Therefore 11 questions were used in this section of the survey to investigate youth opinion concerning their awareness of economic slowdown, disparities between EU member states and the general position of the EU in the world economy. As the Hungarian Presidency stated „it is in Europe’s fundamental interest to make Member States and European market actors more competitive”¹⁴.

Czech Republic

In this part of the survey, 53,6% of Czech youths have never heard of the concept of economic slowdown and macroeconomic disparities undermining EU’ competitiveness and 20,7% does not know whether they have heard of it, amounting to a total of 74,3% of Czech youths unfamiliar with this concept. Only 11,4% of Czech respondents indicated they were familiar with the concept. Nevertheless, 35,3% of Czech youths thought that they could agree with the statement that EU slowly overcomes the economic slowdown and that things are getting better and in the future European economy will develop much faster. However, 26,6% of Czech youths thought that the EU slowly overcoming the economic slowdown is only a temporary situation.

¹³ See more in E. Krzaklewska, *Visegrad Youth: Comparative review of the situation of young people in the V4 countries*, Warszawa 2013 available at http://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/2013_Visegrad_Youth_Eng.pdf.

¹⁴ See more at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs/hungarian-v4-presidency>.

Regarding the competitiveness, 50,7% of Czech youths thought that Asian countries are quite a realistic threat for European companies at the international market. However, 39,3% of Czech youths think that EU economy is strong, stable, innovative and is still developing and can compete with other big economies. 28,1% expressed their opinion that the EU is strong enough to compete with other economies but it has to develop more effectively to keep up with more innovative and growing economies.

Czech youths were also optimistic regarding their opinion on whether the EU has developed effective mechanisms to compete with other world economies. 39,6% think that EU is prepared to compete with other economies but a lot still needs to be done in some areas. 11,2% think that the EU has developed mechanisms and solution which prepared its companies and organizations to compete with other big economies. 27,6% has no opinion. 21,6% think that economic mechanisms and solutions existing in EU are not enough to let it compete with other big economies.

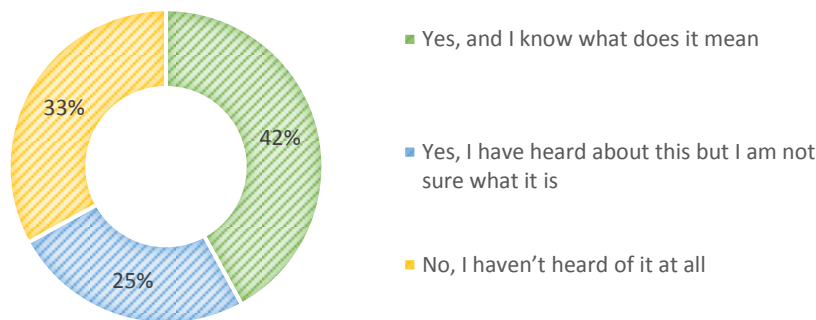
With reference to EU's internal situation 88,7% of Czech youths think there is a clearly visible economical division between EU states. 36,8% think that economical differences between EU states hinder the development and competitiveness of the EU economy on the international stage and 32,4% think that macroeconomic disparities between EU states affect the ability of EU economy to be competitive to other world economies – but not in very huge extent. Similarly, 44% of Czech youths think that EU authorities are aware of existing situation where there are such big macroeconomic disparities between member states and make decisions tailored to the realities EU' economic policy is properly tailored to situation. However, almost the same number of Czech youths (40,5%) think that despite EU authorities are aware of existing situation but the economic policy of EU is not tailored to existing reality.

Almost half of Czech youths (48,5%) think that there are some states which are slowing down the EU's economic development and that the EU should help these countries. 28% think that there are countries slowing down the EU's economic development but that the EU should not waste its resources to help them.

Majority of Czech youths (52,6%) think that if rich countries help poorer countries wisely (investing, not giving) it will be advantageous in the long-term. 27,1% think that if the rich countries help the poorer ones it will contribute to compensate macroeconomic disparities between countries.

Hungary

The survey focused on question measuring how much the youth is aware of the ongoing economic situations within the European Union. The first question was focusing on the economic slowdown, as presented in the following graph.



Graph 13. Are you familiar with the concept of economic slowdown and macroeconomic disparities undermining EU' competitiveness?

While on an international scale, youth also had an opinion. Answers for the question “do you think that dynamic development of Asian countries will have influence on economic situation in EU countries?” are very good example. All Youths in Hungary (100%) thought that Asian countries are quite realistic threat for European’s companies at the international market. Thus, it is obvious, that Hungarian youth does have an opinion about the global economic situation and also seek to own the knowledge to it. For the question that is there economical division between EU countries, 58% of the respondents said “Yes, it is easily visible”, while 42% answered as “Generally yes, but these differences are getting less visible since past few months “.

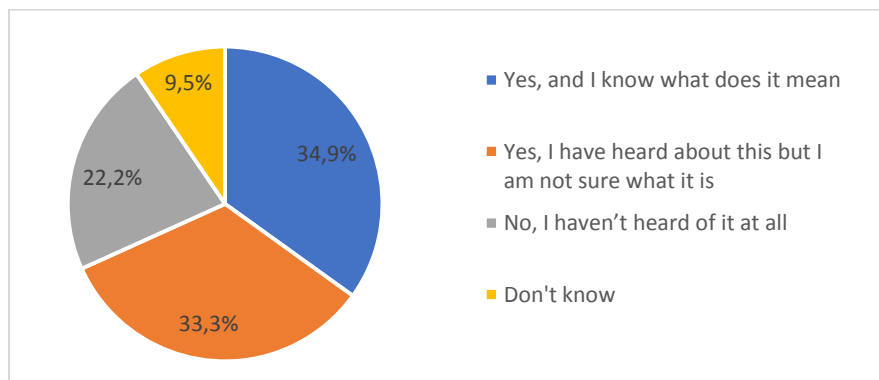
The region is interested in an economically stable European Union. Thus, as the digitalized new generation grow, these aims are just going to become more relevant and became one of the main structure of the Hungarian Presidency (“Digital Visegrad”)¹⁵.

Poland

This trend was already visible in the Polish Presidency Priorities for the V4 cooperation and was connected with the preparation of a common position towards the review of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020. The V4 common position should prevent the

¹⁵ See more at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs/hungarian-v4-presidency>.

European integration process from economic fragmentation¹⁶. It seems that Youths in Poland are quite well educated in terms of economic slowdown and macroeconomic disparities undermining EU's competitiveness as 68,2% of respondents said that they are familiar with these concepts.



Graph 14. Are you familiar with the concept of economic slowdown and macroeconomic disparities undermining EU's competitiveness?

However, young people in Poland are not unequivocally convinced of so optimistic future of the whole EU's economy like this presented in the latest economic prognosis by the European Commission (Spring 2017 Economic Forecast)¹⁷. Only 20,6% of respondents agreed with the statement that the things are getting better and in the future European economy will develop much faster, while 25,4% of them thought that this forecast is too optimistic. 30,2% indicated that this is just temporary situation, while 23,8% do not have any opinion. This hesitancy could be connected with an opinion shared by the majority of respondents (68,2%) that current unstable political situation in the EU (migration crisis, the Brexit) is not good for the EU economy and could lead in the future to the next slowdown.

As regards the issue of global competitiveness majority of Poland's youth (60,3%) indicated that EU economy (as a whole) is still competitive to other big world economies, however, the EU member states have to develop more effectively their economies to keep up with more innovative and growing economies. The main challenge probably will come from Asian states – this is also very popular opinion among Youths as 50,8% of them thought that Asian countries are quite realistic threat for European's companies at the international market. Moreover, subsequent 39,7% indicated that they definitely will influence European economy.

¹⁶ See more at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs/pl-v4-pres-2016-17>.

¹⁷ See more at https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-performance-and-forecasts/economic-forecasts/spring-2017-economic-forecast_en.

Consequently, more than half of examined young people (57,1%) stated that in general the EU is prepared to compete with other economies, although according to majority of them there is still a lot needs to be done in some areas.

A higher level of economic convergence among the EU member states certainly would contribute to more balanced functioning of the internal market as well as to increase the competitiveness of the whole Union by reducing existing differences in the level of development. This phenomenon is confirmed by almost 75% of Youths, who stated that economic disparities affect the ability of EU economy to be competitive to other world economies. Economic division between EU states is easy visible for 93,6% of young people, however 35% of them noticed that these differences are getting less visible since past few months.

Moreover, slightly more than half of young people in Poland (55,6%) thought that there are brakeman states in the EU, which are slowing down the EU's economic development and the EU should help them because this will contribute to strengthening of the EU economic position. Nonetheless, only 11,1% of Youngs indicated that the EU authorities are aware of a huge macroeconomic disparities and make decisions tailored to the realities, while 31,8% thought that, despite the EU authorities are aware of existing situation, the economic policy of the EU is not tailored. On the other hand, 44,4% of them pointed out that if the rich states help the poorer ones it will contribute to compensate macroeconomic disparities between them. As a consequence, the competitiveness of the whole EU will not be reduced, mainly because it helped to increase the purchasing power of poorer countries and their converging economies.

Slovakia

Firstly it should be noticed that more than a half of the young people in Slovakia are not familiar with the concept of economic slowdown and macroeconomic disparities undermining EU competitiveness. Consequently, all the following answers needs to be viewed with this in mind.

Young people are slightly more optimistic in the question of EU slowly overcoming the economic slowdown (61,2 % yes, 16,4 % no). About one half of young people see Asian countries as quite realistic threat for European's companies at the international market. On the other hand about the same number of young people expressed opinion, that EU economy is

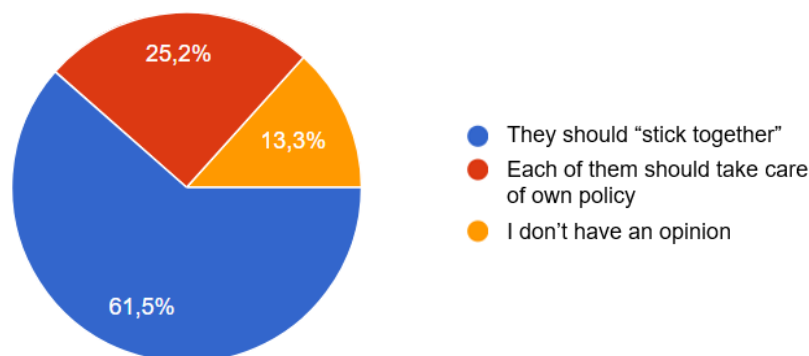
strong enough to compete with other economies but it has to develop more effectively to keep up with more innovative and growing economies. The economic differences between EU countries are easily visible for the young people and almost 70% stated, that this economic disparities affect the competitiveness of the EU against other world economies and the EU should help poorer countries. About one half thinks such a help is happening, another half thinks economic policy of EU is not tailored to existing reality. Most of the young people (51,6%) think, that current situation is not good for the EU economy, but it may also turn into challenge which can make EU economy stronger and more competitive.

Opinion of young people from V4 states about position and future of the Visegrad Group

The last part of the questionnaire was devoted to explore the opinion of Visegrad’s Youths about present position and future of the Visegrad Group. The main aim of 12 questions was to examine previous efforts of the V4 Presidencies in the promotion of the idea of the Visegrad cooperation among the societies of the V4 countries. These steps should be continued in the future to foster mutual awareness and improve mutual perceptions inside the V4.

Czech Republic

82,3% of Czech youths have heard of the V4 and know what it stands for. Also, a majority of them thought that the V4 states should “stick together” in the EU, as was showed at graph no. 15.



Graph 15. Should the V4 countries "stick together" in the EU, or should each country pursue its own policy?

Most of Czech youths (39,7%) think institutionalization of the V4 would strengthen position of V4 countries on the international scene. However, 27,5% of them think there is no need for V4 institutionalization and 21,4% of the Czech respondents think the V4 position would be worsen if institutionalised.

47% of Czech respondents expressed that V4 should extend their cooperation to new areas and that this would will lead to strengthen of the voice of V4. 24,2% think there is no need to extend the cooperation. Similarly, 41,7% of Czech youths think that V4 countries should agree on a common position to present in public but only in issues important for these

countries. 26,5% think V4 countries should agree on a common position in all areas. 12,9% think there is no need for this.

43,2% think that V4 should be more active on the EU scene and that this will guarantee that their position will be stronger and their voice will be listened. 31,1% think should be more on the EU scene but only in areas which are very important for V4. 9,8% think the current V4 activity on the EU scene is enough.

The strongest side of the V4 cooperation, according to respondents in Czech, was mainly joint history as a base for working on joint solutions and opinions (34,4%). 27,2% of them indicated that joint opinion about the most important issues (discussed first and then announced publicly, thanks to what they have strong voice, and according to 16,8%, lack of formal structures.

Slightly more than a half of Czech youths (50,4%) pointed out that, regarding the weakest side of the V4 cooperation, there are still differences in opinions about very important issues which causes lack of homogeneous opinions. 16% of them was standed for the statement that there are still too many differences internally which may cause disintegration of the V4.

45,5% of Czech youths think that in order for V4 countries to strengthen their position in EU they should try to overcome differences and work out unified voice in most important issues. 20,3% think that the V4 should tighten cooperation in more areas in order to strengthen their position in EU. 14,6% think that the V4 countries may strengthen their position in the EU provided that they are able to maintain close co-operation and present themselves as a unified group.

28,8% Czech respondents think that future role of V4 countries in EU will be stronger in coming years but only if the V4 countries will start a closer cooperation. 22% think the future role of V4 will be the same as it is now. 16,7% think the V4 position in the EU will not be much stronger than it is now. 9,1% think the V4 has no potential to play a stronger role in the EU.

37,8% of Czech youths think the refugee crisis will not strengthen the V4 position in the EU. 24,4% does not have an opinion about this and 24,4% thinks the refugee crisis may strengthen the V4 position in the EU but only if the V4 tightens their cooperation.

Among the most important threats for the future of V4 most of young people in Czech (41,7%) thought that changing interests and situation in each state may lead to changes in the directions of their policy, and lack of a common goal can lead to a weakening of the

relationship. At the same time 30,7% of them indicated that differences in opinion about important issues (like entering euro zone).

Hungary

The Hungarian Youth's opinion about the current mentioned topics is highly diverse. However, it is certain that young people between the age of 17-33 has an interest in the future of the European Union and the V4 countries. The respondents group showed interest in the EU programs, and role of the new generation, civil society for better future. The question which focused on the possible threats for the V4 countries the survey results also provides very various answers. 12% of the responders felt that Polish and Hungarian tendencies may dominate the future of the group, as threatening the common work within the four countries. 48% answered, believing that the most important threat is "changing interests and situation in each country may lead to changes in the directions of their policy and lack of a common goal can lead to a weakening of the relationship", which means the alliance within the group is not satisfying and aligned enough. Although it is also very important to see, how much risk the bureaucracy can result, as 40% answered, that "Not successful attempts to develop organizational structures may lead to too much bureaucracy - which may delay efficient actions".

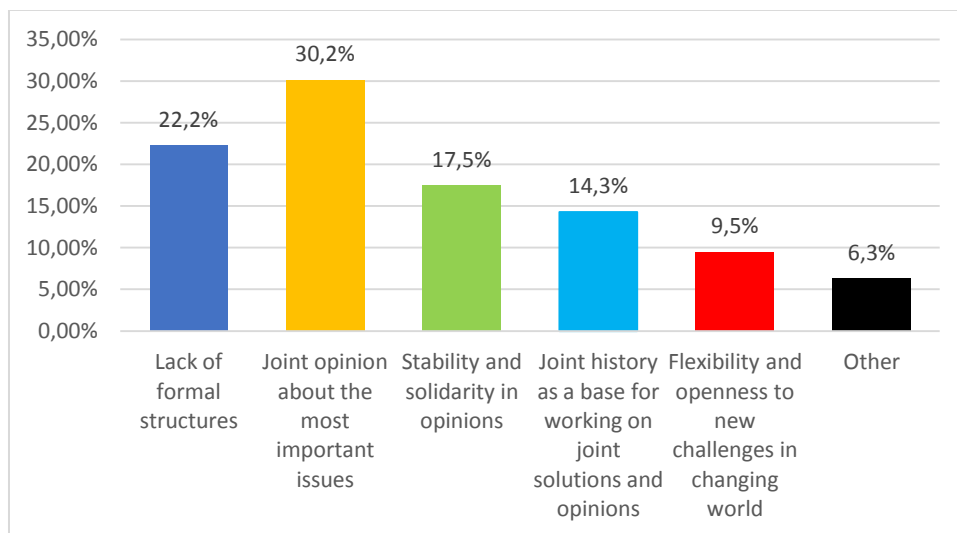
Poland

Young people in Poland are generally aware of the V4 existence and only 6,4% of them have never heard about this regional cooperation initiative. The Polish Youths connect the V4 regional cooperation with the wider European project. According to them the V4 states should "stick together" in the EU (77,8%). Besides, 42,9% of Youths indicated that the V4 states should extend their cooperation to new areas because common position in more areas would lead to strengthen of their voice. This is not so obvious for 30,2% of respondents and slightly more than a quarter (26,9%) don't have an opinion in this area.

Regarding the level of the V4 states' activity at the EU scene – 68,3% though that generally it would strengthen their position will be stronger, but slightly more than a half of them indicated that this would be proper way only in areas which are very important for these states. Having this in mind, it should be of no surprise to the reader, that most of young people

in Poland (36,5%) indicated the V4 states should previously discuss common position before presenting this position to the public, but only in issues important for these countries. This attitude comes from conviction that discussing all issues may lead to unnecessary disagreement as the V4 states are still different. Moreover, almost 40% of respondents said that, in order to strengthen the V4's position in the EU, the decision makers ought to try to overcome differences and work out unified voice in most important issues. If this policy succeeds, more than 60% of Youths are hold with the opinion that a future role of the V4 states in the EU will be stronger in coming years.

The last set of questions was dedicated to the analysis of the strongest/weakest side of the V4 cooperation as well as the most important threats for the future. As graph no. 16 shows young people in Poland indicated that, joint opinion about the most important issues (but firstly discussed and then announced publicly) together with lack of formal structures are the strongest side of the V4 cooperation. Without bureaucratic structures the V4 could act more effectively, so there is no need to institutionalize the Visegrad Group, however, the same per cent of Youths said that the institutionalization would help to strengthen position of the V4 on the international arena (both answers have received 36,5%).



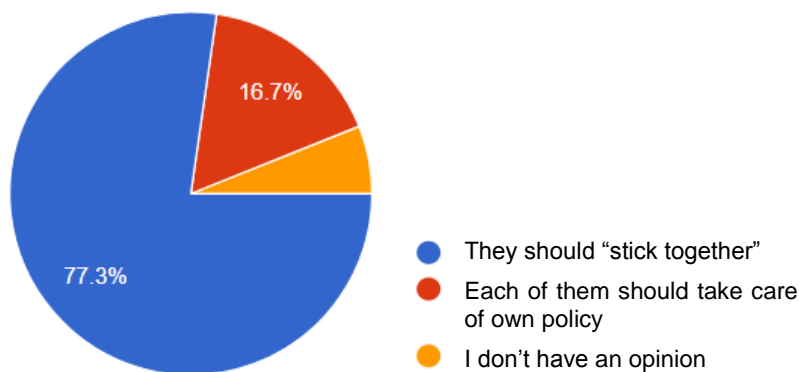
Graph 16. What, in your opinion, is the strongest side of the V4 cooperation?

The Polish Youths' opinion on the weakest side of the V4 cooperation was more diversified, as the most often chosen answer have received only 17,5% - young people in Poland thought that differences in opinions about, for example entering the euro zone or attitude towards Russia, i.e. very important issues causes lack of homogeneous opinions. And then, according to almost 40% of respondents, this constituted the most important threat for

the future of the V4. They also noticed that lack of formal structures and policies of Poland and Hungary, which try to get leading position in the V4 could weaken the Visegrad Group (both answers have received 14,3%). On the other hand, if the V4 states tighten their cooperation on very important challenges (like Brexit and migration crisis), for 57% it certainly would lead to strengthening their position.

Slovakia

Young people in Slovakia know what the Visegrad Group is (93,9%). Most of the young people (77,3%) believes, that V4 countries should “stick together” versus 16,7% who thinks, that each of the country should take care of own policy.



Graph 17. Should the V4 countries “stick together” in the EU, or should each country pursue its own policy?

Some young people (41,8%) like the ideas of institutionalization of the Visegrad Group, some do not see the need for it (29,9%). Most of the young people (67,2%) think, that V4 countries should extend their cooperation to new areas, which will lead to strengthen of the voice of V4 countries. Young people expressed their interest in more Visegrad cooperation also in other questions. Most of the young people think that V4 countries should discuss common issues and only after that talk about this in public (64,6%) and 84,6% think V4 countries should be more active at the EU scene.

Around one half of the young people mostly think that the future role of V4 countries in the EU will be stronger. One third think it will remain the same. We see this as a wish of young people to belong to a region which is strong on its own not only as part of Europe. Brexit or migration crisis does not affect the future position of V4 countries according to one

half of the young people. Similar number of them see as the biggest threat changing interests and situation in each country.

Three strongest characteristics of V4 countries are according to the young people common history, common opinions about the most important issues, and non-formal structures. Three weakest characteristics, on the other hand, are different opinions about some important issues, too much talking and not enough joint acting, and internal differences.

To strengthen the position in the EU young people in Slovakia liked mostly the following ideas: try to overcome differences and work out unified voice in most important issues, and tighten cooperation in more areas.

Conclusions

The present Hungarian Presidency in the Visegrad Group is going to provide a great opportunity to have a strong leadership role within the V4 countries, where also the youth's opinion can represent a major motivation for future change. As the official statement declares:

“Regarding youth and family policy, the Hungarian Presidency concentrates on the sharing of expertise and good practices of the V4 countries as well as the discussion on common challenges.”¹⁸

After analysis of the results of the survey, which included the opinions of young people from all the V4 states, some conclusions may be drawn.

Firstly, majority of youths in Czech and Slovakia expressed their acceptance towards refugees and thought that the authorities should help them to integrate in the society. This opinion was not so popular within young people in Hungary and Poland.

Secondly, strong majority of the V4 youths also expressed that they would vote against Brexit if they had voted in the UK referendum. This view was common for all young population, similarly they indicated that the UK government is obliged now to leave the EU.

Thirdly, Youths in all examined states indicated that the economic differences between EU states are easily visible, and consequently this disparities affect the competitiveness of the EU, mainly in comparison with Asian states.

Lastly, majority of youths also expressed that the V4 states should “stick together”. In the same time, the answers regarding the strengths/weaknesses of, and the main threats for the Visegrad cooperation are very diverse.

All in all the answers showed that young people who have taken part in this questionnaire generally support the European Union and the Visegrad cooperation. However, the reader must be conscious of particular experience of respondents. There is a risk that the answers are quite specific for the groups, youth organizations taken part in this project have worked with. This young people have showed interest in civil society, civic engagement, EU programs, education abroad, and non-formal learning etc. Having this in mind it would be interesting to compare the answers with their peers without this particular experience.

¹⁸ See more at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/2017-2018-hungarian/20172018-hungarian>.

Project team

Project Leader



<http://www.eds-fundacja.pl>

European Meeting Centre- Nowy Staw Foundation

was established in 1993. We do supports all social initiatives that aim at building civil society, cooperation and solidarity between nations. We support the labour market participants with the special concern of the most vulnerable ones. And we promote and enhance the entrepreneurship and innovation, mainly of the young generation. We also support the processes of democratic change in Eastern countries as well as Poland's mature membership in the European Union.

In all our activities we keep Christian values. Through education of all generations, we intend to strengthen the idea of democracy, self-government, social market economy, solidarity between nations and cultures of the agreement beyond all borders.

Main aims of the Foundation:

- Promotion of citizenship attitudes
- Support Eastern European countries in their efforts towards democracy and building civil society
- Mobilization of citizens, especially the young generation to social activity and to taking responsibility for their own communities
- Substantive and organizational support to institutions working for the local labor market, activation of the unemployed, particularly in rural areas
- Promotion of the idea of a society based on knowledge, using modern tools and multimedia techniques
- Work for a conscious and active membership of Poland in the European Union

We invite all who identify with the objectives of the Foundation to cooperate with us. During our daily activities we implement many projects and actions both national and international, which leads us to fulfill our aims.

In these activities we are constantly looking for people and organizations, both country and Europe wide, which can accompany us in our activities and make them be more effectively

Project Partners



<http://eycb.eu>

European Youth Centre Břeclav is non-profit nongovernmental organization founded by young people for young people on 15 March 2007. Our organisation was founded with the financial support of Vodafone foundation and its seat is in the building of the Grammar school Břeclav, which had a big share in its creation.

Our main aims and activities are informing young people about EU and its educational programmes, supporting self-realization and personal development of youth through educational programmes of the EU and developing non-formal education, intercultural dialogue, international cooperation and active civil society.

Since EYCB was established we have sent more than 850 youths to over 340 projects in 42 countries. You can have a look at our project map to see where all these projects took place. Since 2007 we have also organised 8 projects (youth exchanges and training courses) in the Czech Republic that were supported by the Youth in Action and Erasmus+: Youth programmes. Since 2013 we have also been active as a European Voluntary Service sending organisation - so far seven young people took part as volunteers in NGOs abroad. We also fully funded and coordinated a three-month project in which we sent a volunteer-health worker Jana Ondrejková to the Ghanian OSDA organisation.



<http://culturalrelations.org>

The Community of Institute for Cultural Relations Policy has four organisational levels. ICRP Community consist of ICRP administrative structures (officers and members of Advisory Board), supporting members and volunteer staff (interns). Since the foundation in 2012, the Institute for Cultural Relations Policy helped in forming a continuously growing community committed to foster scientific research, education and cooperation regarding cultural relations and diplomacy. ICRP administration along with the members of the Advisory Board and staff is responsible for carrying out diverse range of tasks and missions in order to give more visibility to cultural diplomacy as well as our visions.



<http://www.mladiinfo.sk>

Mladiinfo Slovensko was established by former EVS volunteers in 2010 in Bratislava, Slovakia. It is a well established non-profit organization promoting education and youth mobility. Mladiinfo supports young people with information about various educational and mobility programs, internships, trainings, conferences, volunteering, Erasmus+ program and other opportunities abroad and in Slovakia. Internet, consultations with young people and various info events are used as the main tool to spread success stories, to motivate for participation and to promote active citizenship. Mladiinfo mission is “Helping to inform young people about the educational opportunities around them.” Mladiinfo office is located in Bratislava Mlynska dolina, which is the largest complex of student dormitories in Slovakia with around 8 000 students. Mladiinfo is an active EVS sending organization in Slovakia and active EVS hosting and coordinating organization in Bratislava. Mladiinfo Slovensko is member of Eurodesk Slovensko, an observer member at Youth Council of Slovakia and a member of registered European network Mladiinfo which is a co-operating organisations of European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA).