

CENYR

Central European Network of Youth Research

***The Central European Dimension
of Youth Research***

Trnava 2005

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© Styl editing: Jamie Greenan

© Cover: Peter Repka

Printed by: VEDA, Bratislava, Slovakia

450 exemplars

ISBN: 80-89220-14-2

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Introduction

The political changes in Eastern Europe in 1989 provided the opportunity for a new era of intensive cooperation and collaboration between Austria and Slovakia with respect to political agendas. Thus, there were demonstrations for the fall of the Iron Curtain and the opening of the border in both countries as well as support for the economic and democratic development in Slovakia.

In youth policy the last decade in the 20th century also saw the exchange of experiences and common activities between the ministries (youth departamenst) and especially between the regional administrations in the Western Slovakian area and Eastern Austria.

In youth research productive contacts were established between Slovakia and Austria when in 1990 Ladislav Machacek (Bratislava) became treasurer of the Research Committee 34 (sociology of youth) of the International Sociological Association and Sylvia Trnka (Vienna) became the secretary.

At the same time, first exchanges between the Slovak Sociological Society – section of youth - and the Austrian Institute for Youth Research in Vienna took place.

In 2003 Ladislav Machacek (Centre for European and Regional Youth Research, Trnava) and Reingard Spannring (Austrian Institute for Youth Research, Vienna) founded the Central European Network for Youth Research (CENYR).

Common activities between the two institutions had already taken place within the framework of the two European research projects „Youth and European Identity“¹ and „Political Participation of Young People in Europe“² as well as the youthwork project „The Youth Dimension in the

¹ 2001-2004, funded by the European Commission, <http://www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/youth/>;

² 2003-2005, funded by the European Commission, <http://www.sora/EUYOUPART/>;

Development of Civil Society in the Region of Central Europe“ (24.4.-26.4.2003 in Trnava) in collaboration with regional administrations of Lower Austria, Vienna, Burgenland, Bratislava and Trnava.³

In November 2005 CENYR⁴ was enlarged by youth researchers from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. A symposium (11.11.2005 in Bratislava) was held for the public to inform about the histories of (national) youth research traditions and youth studies carried out by the CENYR partners.

The aims of this network are to (see www.ucm.sk/cerys.)

- 1. develop a scientific community of youth researchers in the region of Central Europe; i.e. to improve networking and cooperation*
- 2. increase the visibility of Central European youth research in the international youth research community*
- 3. develop more comparative research projects in this region*
- 4. provide information for youth policy and youth work in this European region*

The presentations given at this symposium are now available in this edition. The studies introduced in this book focus on the topics life and value orientations, political participation, knowledge and attitudes, as well as education. The contributions in the second part of the book portray the development of youth research in the national contexts as well as the Central European context from an institutional perspective as well as with regard to the content.

Bratislava – Vienna 31.12.2005

³ 2003, funded by the Youth for Europe NAFYM IUVENTA in Bratislava (www.iuventa.sk)

⁴ 2005, funded by the ASO - Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office

STUDIES

Life and Value Orientations of Contemporary Youth: The Challenge of Change

Ule Mirjana

The end of utopia in the era of globalization

During the past fifty years youth studies have proved to be a good indicator of the relevance of new social trends. While social science offers theoretical proof of the changes in the social order, it has been youth that has provided empirical proof of these changes in past decades. The social formation of youth has been closely connected with modernization. The 20th century was undoubtedly the century of youth. It was in this century that it first became established as a social group rather than an age group. Young people have become the prime agents of innovation and progress in a majority of areas of life. Youth movements of the 20th century undeniably played a part in the ideology of progress – evident in the firm connection between social and critical awareness on the one hand, and the utopian social projects produced by these movements on the other.

Globalization changed this and broke the link between youth and progress. The implications of this rupture are likely to become increasingly serious over time. As a result, at the beginning of the new millennium it seems that the prominent role of young people that characterized the whole of the previous century is coming to an end. The process has come full circle, and young people are returning to the shelter of an extended childhood from which they seemed to have escaped in the 1960s and 1970s. The innovative and critical potential of autonomous youth cultures and new social movements seems to have been exhausted. The significance of youth has been decreasing in the demographic (and primarily social) sense.

When attempting to describe the young generation at the turn of the 21st century, researchers now find themselves in a predicament. All of a sudden the young generation again appears to be undefined socially, culturally and in terms of lifestyle. Viewed from the demographic point of view, children and young people in the new century seem to have lost ground in demographic/generational terms, since the demographic share of the younger generation, with respect to the older generation, has been on the decrease. This same trend will continue in the future. The segment is increasingly on the demise, and comprises young people whose lifelong pressures have been a mixture of apprehension about the future and all

kinds of parental investment into children. Yet it is not solely demographic trends that are responsible for the reduced share and value of young people in comparison to other population groups. Another important factor of the social marginalisation of young people is the narrowing of the “space for youth”, which has come to be limited to the spheres of privacy and leisure time.

The common denominator of young people across the Europe of today is a growing uncertainty about the transition to adulthood, dubbed by some “the ontological vacuum of growing-up”. Social and economic statuses continue to determine life courses, but their influence is less visible and less direct because collective traditions have been weakening and individualistic strategies exerting increasing pressure (Chisholm, Buchner, Kruger, Bois-Reymond, 1995). A number of research studies on young people in Slovenia in the 1990s have shown that the scope and weight of the problems faced by young people at the end of the century have been increasing, as have the risks associated with attempts to solve these problems (Miheljak, Ule, 2002). The local of the sources of these problems has also changed. They are increasingly more difficult to pinpoint, hidden within the dispersed network of local and global circumstances on which the individual has very little influence. On the other hand, individuals are compelled to take steps to avoid shouldering the burden of consequences.

Young people respond differently to these changes in line with their possibilities and local circumstances. While those who do not have economic or socio-cultural capital end up as drop-outs, most young people work their way through, coping with varying degrees of severity of these problems (prolonged economic dependence combined with ever-earlier psycho-social independence and the fragmentation of referential frameworks that could enable them to assess their own experiences against the backdrop of the wider context). Consequently, young people see the social world as incomprehensible, unpredictable and full of risks. The new feature is that they perceive these risks as individual crises rather than as the effects of processes outside the reach of their influence (Ule, Renner, 2001). The loss of one’s job therefore appears as an individual failure, failure at school as the lack of effort or skills, and youthful deviations as the lack of firm family upbringing or values. But these are incomplete stories, even though they are offered as the only likely explanations.

Life and value priorities of the young people of today

After decades of relative liberalization of the transition from adolescence into adulthood, in the last decade we have again witnessed the sharpening of options for entering adulthood (Zinnecker, 1991). The fundamental controversies that young people of today have to resolve are:

- the contrast between an increasing range of options for individual managing and planning of life on the one hand, and on the other hand the lessening of predictability and control of life courses;
- the contrast between increasingly greater possibilities for independent decisions concerning one's life during youth, and an ever more pressing urgency to make decisions which inevitably leads to the avoidance of decision making and the negative effects associated with this;
- the contrast between the apparent elimination of traditional differences between classes and layers of society during youth with seemingly equal opportunities for education, and elevated competitiveness and increased pressure to achieve and in the struggle for securing social status and achieving maximum potential on the social ladder;
- the contrast between the individualization and the stylization of life in one's immediate living environment, and the globalization of options and risks;
- the contrast between the relaxation of norms and control over young people, and increased pressures exerted in the central spheres of activity (school, employment).

The analysis of those fundamental contrasts shows that they concern central social issues. These controversies are not new *per se*, but in the past they mostly burdened grown-ups while young people were spared. Today however, they have become the central issues of youth. Moreover, over the past decades they were not so pointed or extreme as to exact urgent or irreversible choices and related risks. Work and the formation of a family quickly absorbed the great majority of young people so that they did not have enough time or opportunity to experience these contrasts (Baethge, 1989, Beck, 1997, Kovacheva, 2001). Their life courses were determined early on without much opportunity for change or risk.

Today these contrasts have been extended to embrace young people from all social layers of modern societies, and more characteristically, these contrasts

represent a system and not simply parallel phenomenon. They make up a web of "objective ambiguities" from the perspective of young people, which cannot be easily resolved. Yet young people must confront these and must process them subjectively into individually specific strategies for achieving a balance between contrasting tendencies.

All of these contrasts and difficulties additionally increase the social and psychological vulnerability of young people. They also escalate difficulties and cause an accumulation of unresolved problems that perpetuate each other. The structural characteristics of social vulnerability (for example a bad starting position in life) as a rule become intertwined with cultural and relational aspects. Due to mostly structural sources of problems and difficulties during youth, young people often experience these as an un-resolvable vicious circle, and sometimes try to fix this by means of various non-reflective shortcuts (consumerism, social anomie, alcohol/drugs). These shortcuts at their best drive problems from the mind, while in fact making them even more significant (Ule at all, 2000).

For young people in Slovenia, the shaping of everyday life and value systems is today part of their daily search for a balance between their personal wishes and expectations on the one hand, and social demands and options on the other. Yet the balance between expectations and demands, and individuals' competences or capacities for action, is conditional and exposed to a great many risks. For many, the conventional signs of success (income, career, status) fall short of their hunger for a "fulfilling life" and an increasing need to "find their own way" and to freely shape their personality.

The young generation of 2000 in Slovenia, whose earliest childhood years were sheltered by the economic security of the previous system, is today confronted with an increasingly competitive education system, a demanding and restrictive labour market, a decline in the quality of relations at work, and the lack of a welfare system. This is the generation which, in the 1990s, was thrust from the certainty of firmly structured, closely supervised, socialist transitional patterns into the welter of risks and uncertainties of the market economy. Today they have to cope with the conflicting challenges of globalisation, technological advance and individualisation on the one hand, and nationalistic mobilisation, economic underdevelopment and traditional conflicts on the other. The risky transition to adulthood compels them to search for flexible strategies that can lead them to their (uncertain) goals through the maze of the education system, work, entertainment, family and peer relations.

However, the transition to adulthood has become increasingly longer, more risky and more uncertain. It is also multi-dimensional and comprises: identity shaping, the achievement of status, the gaining of autonomy, the starting of a family and the gaining of financial independence, which is usually tied to a regular job. Education and employment constitute two very important spheres of transition from adolescence to adulthood. Employment is often privileged as the main transitional step because it enables young people to make other transitions to adulthood (Jones, Wallace, 1992). But, leisure time, parents, friendship, intimate relations, life philosophy and personal characteristics are also important. Rather than being a “moratorium” period, a period of “becoming” something or other, modern adolescence is a period of “being” – being a student, a consumer, a friend. Life paths are no longer linear, meaning that one can start a family or professional career “from scratch” at practically any point in life; in other words, one can make decisions on issues which are “normally” made during adolescence.

The changes of value orientations among youth in Slovenia

In the last decade there occurred a further shift within the system of values, namely a shift from the global value systems produced by ideologies to particular, seemingly fragmentary and concrete values; among which prevail the higher regard of interpersonal relationships and the quality of everyday life. Below is a list of several notions that could be of importance for the life we strive for.

Results show further that the gender dichotomy has widened, so values are divided into male (desire for strength, power, and material goods) and female (creativity, freedom, an exciting life, true friendship). The gendered division of interests is also present among the young generation. The male sample in our survey is highly characterised by “traditionally male interests”, for example sports, military issues, technology, entertainment, while the female sample has typically “female interests” (such as image, shopping, and travelling). Women are also more worried about uncertainty and problems related to unemployment and job retention, which indicates differences between genders related to transitions to the world of work and economic independence, meaning that these transitions have become more difficult and more uncertain for young women.

Circle those that you find important for your life	% very important	
	Youth 98	Youth 93
1. true friendship	94.4	90.4
2. freedom of action and thought	90.0	74.2
3. peace in the world, with no wars and conflicts	80.3	87.1
4. environmental protection	79.0	59.4
5. family life	75.3	84.4
6. personal peace of mind	70.8	47.6
7. the world of beauty, nature, art	68.2	61.5
8. social order and stability	62.8	57.2
9. creativity, originality, fantasy	60.0	33.3
10. the safety of my own nation from enemies	59.5	61.3
11. material goods, money	42.6	58.4
12. an exciting life	31.4	36.6
13. the preservation of traditional values	27.7	22.7
14. having power over others	7.6	14.5
15. having authority, being a leader	8.0	12.2

Source: Ule at al. 2000

Value orientations of young people in the “Mladina 2000” research study.

	No import ance 1	Low import ance 2	Mediu m import ance 3	High importan ce 4	Very high import ance 5
Genuine friendship	0.2	0.5	3.1	18.7	77.6
The world of beauty, nature, arts	1.4	5.4	25.0	38.2	30.0
Health	0.2	0.3	2.2	11.0	86.3
Order and stability of society	0.4	2.3	13.7	44.9	38.7
Exciting life	2.5	8.8	36.2	32.5	19.9
Material goods	2.0	8.9	33.5	36.0	19.6
Security of my nation in the face of enemies	1.6	3.9	15.2	31.4	47.9
School and career success	0.4	1.6	8.9	35.8	53.3
Creativity, originality, imagination	2.6	8.6	31.7	33.9	23.2
Peaceful world without armed conflicts	1.1	2.0	9.5	21.8	65.6
Preservation of traditional values	2.0	10.3	29.5	37.1	21.1
Family life	0.5	1.3	7.7	21.2	69.3
Environmental protection	0.5	1.2	11.9	31.1	55.2
Having authority, being a leader	9.6	25.4	36.6	21.5	6.9
Having power over others	24.8	31.3	28.7	11.1	4.2
Living at ease with oneself	5.1	8.1	14.3	23.3	49.2
Freedom of thought and action	0.4	1.3	8.9	24.5	64.9

Source: Miheljak, Ule, 2002

Research results from Youth 2000 (Miheljak, Ule, 2002) have confirmed the established contemporary trends. Individual transitions from youth to adulthood do not take place in a synchronised sequence. Marriage and parenthood, when compared to the results of previous surveys, have been shifting more and more towards later stages in life. The same trend has been observed with regard to the end of schooling, the beginning of employment and the move away from the parental home. A comparison of respondents' self-assessments of these transitions shows that "small transitions" (e.g. first visit to a disco, learning to cook, deciding on one's image) occur earlier in early adolescence while "big" transitions (e.g. marriage, parenthood) are shifted to ever later stages of life; towards one's thirties.

Trust in family is very explicit in Slovenia as a whole, and particularly among young people. It does not vary according to the age or education of respondents. No other institution enjoys such uniform trust. In other respects as well, the results clearly show that family and friends belong to the key areas of young people's lives, occupying top positions on the scale of values. The results further show that health ranks highest on this scale, and while this may sound unusual, it is not surprising. As a matter of fact, the 1998 survey of the social vulnerability of young people (based on a sample of eighth-grade primary school students) yielded almost identical results. At that time, we interpreted such value priorities as a serious political defeat for the young population, whose concerns about health and comfortable family life left the impression of a value profile typical of "retired people". From today's perspective we can only add that health, like family life and true friendship (occupying the top three positions in the hierarchy of values), should probably be understood as a need for ontological security and not merely as a politically disastrous retreat into petty, banal private shells.

The analysis of the main dimensions of values and orientations in the 1990's and the new millennium indicates some important changes in this sphere. The most conspicuous is young people's turning towards the everyday world, privacy, and their return to the family. This could be called the domestication of youth, and has a twofold significance: one is the return of young people from the public sphere to the private, and the other is the obstruction of the critical and alternative tendencies of young people with the backing of the 'home' (Ule, Kuhar, 2003). The tendency towards domestication indicates that the great majority of young people in the 1990's experience the world more as a threat which one must retreat from, than as a challenge that one must face and to which one must respond productively with innovations. This is an understandable reaction to the fast changes evident within society, everyday life, culture and ideological forms over which young people do not have any influence. Yet this tendency is unproductive

and the transition into post-industrial modernity calls for an active, individualized youth which is ready to take risks and venture into experimenting with life.

The second important characteristic of this reversal of values is the gradual distancing of young people from the formerly prevailing set of values, i.e. work, employment, career, earnings, towards a more personal set, i.e. interpersonal relationships, personal development, creativity, education, and the quality of everyday life. This is not to say that work has lost its importance, but the concept of work has changed: it no longer implies only traditional employment in one's work hours/place, but embraces the integral efforts of the individual striving to achieve greater creativity and productivity. As such it also includes education, creativity in interpersonal relationships, personal expressiveness and similar factors.

The third characteristic of this change of values is an evident need for one's independent managing of life, with as little intrusion of society as possible. This need is present in the personal sphere (individual patterns of entertainment, use of free time), in the educational process (the combination of formal and informal, individual forms of education and studies), and one's work environment (youths prefer work that provides personal satisfaction to work that earns good money).

Interest in politics is very low among young people in Slovenia. Compared to other competitive areas of life, politics ranks considerably lower than various areas of privacy (friendship, family, partnership, etc.), education and creative work. Even though this also holds true for the population in general, lack of interest in politics is especially typical of young people. Consequently, politics and political events, along with the army, military issues, religion and religious life, constitute the group of individual areas of life that arouse the lowest degree of interest. Furthermore, young people have expressed a noticeably low interest in culture and the arts. Differences in the levels of interest are nothing unusual, and they more or less coincide with the findings obtained by researchers elsewhere in Europe. Accordingly, sooner or later all of them arrive at the conclusion that the highest valued areas are friendship, family and sexuality, but also a preoccupation with physical schemes (look) and image. For example, researchers in the German study entitled *Jugendsurvey 2* (Gille, Kruger, 2000) report very similar ratings and even similar levels of interest. One area in which young Germans did show greater interest than their counterparts in Slovenia was culture and the arts. Otherwise, Inglehart (1997) concludes that a low interest in politics and an orientation towards privacy are universal phenomena. In the study entitled "World Values

Survey”, which covered 42 countries, politics was given the lowest position of the six areas (family, profession, friends, leisure, religion and politics).

An analysis of viewpoints on various areas of life shows that young people ascribe greatest importance to three mutually incompatible strategies: individualistic (“finding my way on my own”), relational (“I feel good when working together with other people”) and private (“I like my privacy”). The extensive resistance of young people to the intrusions of society into their individual lives also manifests its self in their negative or passive attitude towards politics, where they simply try to stay "out". It seems that youths have turned away from politics as a collective activity.

When analysing their value systems, we have observed an increase in the significance of “socially important” values (health, order and stability, family life). The most highly prized values among young people in Slovenia are therefore particular values, for example, health, true friendship and family life, followed by global values (e.g. world peace, environmental protection, security), career-related values (success at school) and liberal values (freedom of thought and action). Egoistic/materialistic values (to have power over others, to have authority, material values) occupy the bottom of the scale (Ule, 1998, Miheljak, Ule, 2002).

Conclusion

For young people in Slovenia, the shaping of everyday life and value systems is today part of their daily search for a balance between their personal wishes and expectations on the one hand, and social demands and options on the other. Yet the balance between expectations and demands, and individuals’ competencies or capacities for action, is conditional and exposed to a great many risks. For many, the conventional signs of success (income, career, status) fall short of their hunger for a “fulfilling life”, an increasing need to “find their own way” and to freely shape their personality. The value system of individualisation carries with it the seed of a new ethic that rests on “obligations towards oneself” (Beck, 1997). This seems to be in stark contrast to traditional ethics based on obligations towards others and towards society as a whole. Accordingly, it may create an impression of narcissism and egoism. However, it actually points to a new process that goes beyond this impression. This is a process of self-explanation which implies a search for new ties within the family, in friendship, at work and in public. Furthermore, leisure time and youth culture are also characterised by big changes. Young people have created new choices for themselves. Being experts in matters

of style and youth subculture, they are oriented towards the leisure market, where they are confronted by new styles and must make logical choices.

The results have confirmed our basic hypothesis that young people's identity and social roles have changed. The new spirit of the time calls for changes in identity category apparatus, but in the area of unsuccessful identities rather than successful ones. Individualisation processes and altered socio-economic relations (e.g. unemployment) force young people to develop identities that would be assessed as unsuccessful according to formerly valid criteria. What we have here is the return of uncertainty or, rather, a reaction to the ambivalent processes of individualisation that imply greater choice but also greater uncertainty of choices. After decades of a successful moratorium and autonomous identity statuses, "adopted identities" are again at the forefront. These are identities that do not address the choice of social identity, and can assume these roles only without reflection. This is primarily an ambiguous and diffuse identity status. Research results therefore show that when working on their identities, young people are nothing like expansive. On the contrary, they are defensive and, rather than opting for experiments or innovations, tend to settle for the simulation of various stereotypes of normality, despite the fact that their starting positions differ. It is interesting that other researchers across Europe also report an increasing trend among young people towards "normality": young people want a "normal life", the "normal conclusion of education", "normal jobs", etc. They do not have unusual ideas or unusual wishes. These findings can be described as a re-orientation towards the general norms observed by adults, with a slight deviation from reality and a demonstrative insistence on normality. It is as if they are telling us: *"I am not special, and I don't want to be special. I just try to take things as they are, even though everything may change any time now."*

Desire for normality may be an expression of the changed socio-economic situation. Perhaps normality has come to represent something that is difficult to achieve; or it could constitute a shelter from the "terror of individualisation". Yet it is also an expression of individualist self-protection in the sense that *"my individual life choice is neither better nor worse than that of others"*. This opens up space for the "recognition of differences"; for ties between people despite their individual differences. If we attempt to envisage the effects of such an understanding of normality, we may say that it could mean a farewell to any type of normality that would extend beyond a specific life situation. In line with this, identity would be reduced to a momentary interplay of one's choices, with no ambition to claim their universal validity, durability or coherence.

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Some qualitative findings on young people's attitudes towards political participation

Reingard Spannring

Introduction

The last decades have seen lively academic debate and alarmed concern by policy makers regarding the alleged decline in political participation of young people (Putnam, 2000; White/Bruce/Ritchie, 2000; Wilkinson/Mulgan, 1995; Roker/Player/Coleman, 1999; Council of Europe, 2003). However, a comparison of participation patterns in Western Europe between 1982 and 1999 has shown that trends differ greatly depending on the indicators used for participation, and on the countries concerned. While some countries, such as the UK and Spain have witnessed a general decline, there have been other countries which are characterised by more complex up-down-up or down-up-down trends. On the whole the development of youth participation is in line with the overall development in most countries (Spannring, 2005), a fact that weakens the popular hypothesis of generational change in political participation (e.g. Putnam, 2000).

On the other hand, there is widespread consensus that forms of participation have changed during the past decades. Traditional activities such as membership in trade unions and political parties have decreased while protest activities like social movements, NGOs, demonstrations and petitions have increased (Almond/Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1977; Norris, 2002). Underlying the empirical evidence a complex of diverse and sometimes contradictory processes seems to be at work. On the one hand educational levels, as well as levels of political knowledge of the electorate, have risen, reducing willingness to simply follow a political elite, and increasing elite-challenging political behaviour (Inglehart, 1977). On the other hand, trends toward globalisation set new barriers as to what politicians can achieve within the boundaries of the nation-state. De-traditionalisation in the political sphere affects trust-relationships between political actors and voters as well as the handling of ideologies more generally (Giddens, 1994). On the whole, modern society and its political landscape calls for a more active appropriation of political attitudes, and conscious decisions with respect to political activities. Bearing this complexity in mind the quantitative coverage of participation rates will not suffice to fully explain the young citizens' position.

This chapter therefore seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of youth participation by drawing on qualitative data from eight European countries. It focuses on the young people's definitions and meanings of politics and opinions of political participation, and presents the issue through the young people's own discourses and images rather than statistics.

Data

This chapter presents some findings of the qualitative part of a recent European research project; EUYOUNG¹. The overall aim of this project was to develop and test indicators for comparative studies on youth participation. The construction of the questionnaire was informed by qualitative interviews and focus group discussions among 18 to 25 year olds in Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Finland, Estonia and Slovakia, which were carried out at the beginning of the research project.

The individual interviews were thematic interviews covering the following topics: the interviewee's form of political participation, their political biography, meanings of politics and attitudes to politicians, and advantages and disadvantages of conventional and unconventional political participation. The guiding principle of the sampling procedure was to capture a variety of politically active young people who represent different types of participation. Thus, all research teams included young people who were active in traditional party politics, in "new" forms of participation such as joining demonstrations and petitions with bodies

¹ EUYOUNG, "Political Participation of Young People in Europe – Development of Indicators for Comparative Research in the European Union" is a research project funded by the European Commission (DG Research) within the 5th framework programme. Scientific and administrative management: Günther Ogris, Ruth Picker, Sabine Westphal (Institute for Social Research and Analysis, Vienna, Austria); Austrian partners: Reingard Spanring, Reinhard Zuba (Austrian Institute for Youth Research, Vienna); Estonian partners: Estonia: Raivo Vetik and Marti Taru (Institute for International and Social Studies, Tallinn Pedagogical University, Tallinn); Finnish partner: Kari Paakkunainen (Finnish Youth Research Network, Helsinki); French partners: Anne Muxel, Cecile Riou (Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Centre d'Etudes de la Vie Politique Francaise, Paris) German partners: Walter Bien, Wolfgang Gaiser, Franziska Waechter and Johann de Rijke (German Youth Institute, Munich); Italian partners: Paolo Francescini, Gloria Cornolti and Renato Pocaterra (Fondazione IARD, Milan); Slovak partner: Ladislav Machacek (Centre for European and Regional Youth Studies, University of St. Cyril and Method, Trnava); UK partners: Kerry Longhurst, James Sloam, (The European Research Institute, University of Birmingham, Birmingham)
www.sora.at/news/EUYOUNG

representing young people (e.g. student unions), and in community action groups. The total number of interviewees was 32.

The focus group discussions complemented the individual interviews. The methodology of the focus group gives a possibility to study attitudes, opinions and behaviour in the context of a social setting which comes closer to actual everyday practice (cf. Flick, 1995:132f) thereby creating a less formal situation than the individual interview. This was a very important aspect, especially for the non-politically active young people, who felt anxious to talk about an unfamiliar topic. The interview guide for the focus groups covered a range of topics such as citizenship, definitions and images of politics, possibilities to influence decision-making on various levels (local, regional, national, European, and global), the influence of politics on the interviewees' lives, and involvement in civic organisations. The sampling plan prescribed 4 homogeneous groups of politically non-active young people with respect to gender and education as well as one group of politically active young people. The participants of this latter group were to represent different movements or organisations, i.e. not to form a "real" group, in order to encourage a greater diversity of opinions. The total number of young people included in all focus groups was 167.

This chapter is based on the national reports of the research teams and the comparative report written by Kari Paakkunainen, Reingard Spannring and James Sloam (2004).

The results

A study on the political participation of young people must consider conventional and unconventional forms since both are highly relevant for young people. While the former is still alive, "in the late-modern era, we need a broader vision of the landscape of young people's political participation to include activities such as consumer action, civil resistance and global movements" (Paakkunainen, 2004).

However, in most focus group discussions, the scope of institutions and activities associated with politics is limited to political parties, the government and voting. Of note are the non-active interviewees with low levels of education who have no coherent definition of politics, but rather offer metaphors and depreciative comments. For them, politics is mostly a dirty game consisting of mysterious machinations.

Something negative, difficult to understand
(Italy)

The more educated and/or politically active young people offer broader definitions (e.g. “*trying to get one’s way*”) and include a wider range of institutions and activities (e.g. citizens’ initiatives, community councils, shop stewards). Many refer to “*responsibilities towards society*”, “*making laws*”, “*holding the country together*”, thus connecting politics to a broader communal good (Sloam, 2004). They also have a more differentiated picture of politicians and acknowledge the responsibility politicians carry. However, even among the better educated and/or politically active, attitudes tend to be critical and pessimistic.

The often nebulous picture and diffuse criticism of politics and politicians can be attributed to a lack of understanding with respect to the principles of democracy and the functioning of its institutions, but also to a lack of experience with decision-making processes. Naïve expectations that politicians have to serve the interests of all, and that there always has to be consensus, also point towards a lack of reflection on social and political processes – an issue that seems to be dealt with inadequately by formal and informal educational settings.

On the other hand, the young people’s comments certainly do pin down the shortcomings of the democratic systems in modern society. Young people feel excluded from decision-making processes in several ways: as young people, as citizens and as members of lower social classes. From a demographic point of view young people constitute a minority and have little weight as a subgroup of the electorate (Hondrich, 1999). This leads to a situation in which there is no pressure on politicians to take youth specific issues seriously, nor to address young people either through personal contact or by recruiting young people into leading positions.

They are a long way from our needs.

(France)

Politicians should be a bit younger perhaps, younger people would be more committed, more enthusiastic ... younger people may have a few more ideas and may identify more with young people ...

(Germany)

Even specific bodies representing young people such as student unions and youth organisations are seen as alibi institutions having no real power. Likewise, local and regional participation models are reported to have been abused for party political goals or generally ignored by the public.

The charges levelled against politicians also refer to their relationship with the electorate in general. Politicians do not know, or even care to know, the real needs of people. They are not driven by the needs of the majority but rather by self-interest or by the interests of the party clientele and lobbies.

The point of contact between politics and society is not exactly a model for youths in their twenties. I mean, what youths see now is these people there, caring about their interests, earning their money and that's all. ... it is a split that can't be healed at the moment, and no one is even trying to heal it.

(Italy)

... business and industry are incredibly powerful and, well, I think, considering what one hears and reads, their influence is really, really unbelievable, the individual citizen, after all, does not really have such a strong lobby, he cannot really get to see politicians, he cannot directly influence anybody or anything ...

(Germany)

In this context, young people mention not only the power gap between the political elite and citizens but also the power differential between different groups in society. This inequality has an impact on how well the interests of social groups are served by politics and on political efficacy, i.e. the amount of influence one has on politics.

If you don't have a PhD, then you don't have much to say in politics.

(Austria)

Another set of arguments formulated in the focus group discussions and the individual interviews concerns political culture. Decision-making processes are seen as lacking transparency and objectivity and as dominated by power games and quarrelling. There is no fair-play among politicians and no constructive problem solving.

The way we see it, I think, there's no will to solve our country's problems, no will to face the problems of the country together. The chair is a continual fight, not working together to solve problems but a continual fight.

(Italy)

In this constant struggle for power, idealism only plays a marginal role. Many young interviewees miss ideals and visions in politics or see them being sacrificed

for power. One young Austrian Green activist explicitly referred to the German Green Party's decision to support the war in Afghanistan which was totally against their initial ideology, offended their grassroots members, and many of their voters. He was so shocked that he did not want to take part in the following elections:

... for them it was more important to remain in power than to defend their own ideals. ... ideology just goes to rack and ruin instead of being defended.

(Austria)

You realise that in real events or in political decisions, ideals are not always in line with what is decided.

(Italy)

The interviewees' attitude towards political organisations and movements can be characterised with the notion of "generalised distrust". It expresses the young citizens' concern that politicians deliberately misinform citizens by only presenting half-truths, that they abuse their positions of power, and that "*their machinations behind closed doors*" cannot be controlled by the public. Obviously, the "natural" trust relationships between political actors and the electorate based on tradition and authority have not been replaced by active trust relationships (Giddens, 1994) which are generated through personal contact and transparency of political processes. Rather, the individual experiences a lack of shared moral convictions between the political elite and the people. The more politically conscious feel the need to develop their own moral and political views, and to take on responsibility for their own political activities.

A further feature of the young people's attitude toward politics and participation is a "generalised doubt" which materialises as a refusal to take sides for a political idea or ideology without a critical distance. Young people recognise the fact that people and ideas cannot be categorised as "good" and "bad", and that the world cannot be seen as black or white. Political arguments and ideas always call for counter-arguments or counter-views. Following one idea or ideology blindly is often stigmatised as extremist. This causes an inability to make a decision or support any political view, for even if the counter-argument is not known by the individual there is an expectation that there is a "yes, but...".

Thus, young people have high demands regarding how well informed citizens are who intend to get politically involved. Unless one is well informed, one cannot take the responsibility of a "public act" such as voting or working for a political

organisation. Equally important is control over the opinions and activities of the organisation or movement young people join. Many interviewees are worried that their voice gets lost in the political process and they end up unable to support the result of this process. This is why they stress the importance of the freedom to disengage from a political opinion or groups whenever they choose.

These issues recur in all forms of participation and often produce major dilemmas for young citizens, because the generalised doubt and generalised distrust run counter to the young people's idealistic demand to be involved in a "perfect political movement" which lives up to their moral and political expectations in every respect. Since such a perfect political movement does not exist, the only solution seems to be a refusal to commit oneself to anything or anybody but one's own convictions and a refusal to be integrated in formal structures.

Interest in politics

Most young people see interest in politics as a form of political participation. Among the focus group discussants interest in politics is rather low. This finding has to be seen in the context of young people's access to information. Many interviewees express frustration that there is no youth directed information, i.e. information which they can understand and make sense of. Those with a poor socio-cultural background and low educational level are especially disadvantaged in this respect. A further problem is the failure of schools, work places and local communities to involve young people in decision-making processes in a sustainable way. There is ample evidence in the young people's statements that increased opportunities to actually live the principles of democracy and participation on an everyday basis would greatly increase their future interest and engagement in politics.

Interest in politics is also dependent on the young people's perception that politics "matters" (Spanring, 2004). Many young people, especially the younger and politically non-active ones, do not feel the impact of politics on their lives much. They reason that they will eventually get interested is when they start having to pay taxes. Until then politics remains part of the adults' world.

These statements need not only be read as expressions of a youthful reluctance to take on responsibility. They can also be interpreted as the result of the young people's "citizenship by proxy" (Jones/Wallace, 1992), i.e. their full or partial lack of citizenship rights. Especially social citizenship rights, such as social security, health insurance or housing benefits which are acquired relatively late in

life. In many Western European countries, access to a number of social security provisions is only possible via the young people's parents or depends on previous employment, a precondition that can only be met with great difficulty by young people (Spanning/Reinprecht, 2002). It is obvious that the absence of social rights and the corresponding lack of contact with social institutions do not promote interest in politics. Similarly, the precarious labour market integration of young people has a negative effect on political interest since material well-being and social security are a precondition for political participation.

The better educated and older interviewees, on the other hand, do identify areas where politics impinges on their life, such as tuition fees, taxes, access to social welfare and the health system. Some of them express their helplessness and resignation over the fact that politics has such a strong impact while they themselves have no possibility to influence the decision-making process.

... well, when I watch the news or ... read a newspaper, ... there'll be at least ten topics I can't accept at all, from tuition fees to genetic engineering and God knows what else, the war in Iraq, for example, but I don't think I can change anything, well, I mean there'd be enough topics but I've simply given up, yes, that's how I see it.

(Germany)

One important finding is that young people are interested in and can be mobilised for issues such as civil rights, equality, tolerance and peace. The last decades however have been dominated by debates about tax cuts, fiscal management, cuts in social programmes and deregulation of foreign investment – topics that are not very appealing to young people who are oriented toward idealism and personal development. The young Europeans' alienation from a type of politics which focuses on 'good management' rather than a visionary development of society is expressed in the interviewees' claims to a desire for more ideals and visions in politics. The 'big issues' presented by politicians are often not perceived as such.

... on the whole, the news of politics, which you hear, is really irrelevant for yourself personally. For example the cuts in pensions. Why do they all cry out like that? On the one hand, I can understand, but on the other hand, it is not such a big change. I don't know how much they get less, I think it's €40,- per year or so. That's not so much.

(Austria)

The desire for values like; concern for others, equality and solidarity is reflected in the young people's strong feelings towards broad issues such as animal rights, environmental protection, anti-racism and peace. Many young people are driven to political action by a feeling of 'uneasiness', the perception of unfairness or deeply rooted ethical beliefs (IARD, 2004).

A sort of ethical spur, ethical motivation – it comes from the fact, I think, that the world you have in front of yourself does not stick to the way things should go. To change a reality essentially unfair and wrong ... not equal.

(Italy)

The issues young people are interested in and get active for are by no means restricted to the national level. In fact, many young people refer to the local level where issues are of more direct concern and decisions easier to influence. Others are more interested in international affairs and global issues than in the "petty problems" of national politics

Voting

Voting is seen as a moral duty by many young people, especially those with a higher level of education; one common reasoning being "*why is there a democracy if nobody is interested?*" However, there are a number of dilemmas for the young citizens. One dilemma is based on the perception that young people are not represented and that their issues are not on the political agenda. Most young people also have the impression that elections are ineffective because changes in government do not lead to a perceptible change in policy. Indeed, political parties themselves can hardly be distinguished, hence there are no real alternative choices. Thus, voting is often seen as merely playing by the rules of the democratic game or even as an annoying 'chore' (Sloam, 2004) rather than an opportunity to actually influence decision-making. The reaction of some young people is to vote for extreme parties as a protest vote, or to abstain from voting.

Abstention is a way of voting, it is understood as a vote for something else; this is to show that nobody interests us.

(France)

Abstention is preferable to voting blank, i.e. casting a ballot paper without having ticked a party because low voter turnouts get more public attention while blank

votes remain unnoticed, and therefore do not count as much as a political statement (Muxel/Riou, 2004).

Another dilemma exists between the demand of being an informed voter and the lack of knowledge. They acknowledge the duty to vote but do not feel sufficiently informed in order to participate. As mentioned above, many young people have difficulties accessing and processing information, so that it seems too strenuous to them to be prepared for the election. Standing in the booth with the ballot paper some young people simply feel overtaxed by the demand to choose between parties or politicians about whom they are uninformed.

Furthermore, there is an enormous amount of distrust in politicians and parties with respect to the information that is available. Pre-election propaganda is not accepted as a reliable source, especially since there is no adequate accountability of MPs to make sure that they keep their promises.

Even the better educated young people have difficulties choosing a party. However, they do not surrender their responsibility, while their lower educated peers tend to put forward their lack of information as an excuse for not voting. On the other hand, many young people do not feel entitled to participate in elections or in any other form of political activity if they are not adequately informed (Waechter/Riegel, 2004).

... before I'm forced to put a cross next to any old thing, I prefer not to vote at all.

(Germany)

The necessity to definitely record one's party preference and elect a party for a full legislative period does not fit with the young people's principle of freedom to commitment and disengagement (Muxel/Riou, 2004). Young people only want to give their vote in cases of full approval with the party profile and candidate. This is often not possible because of the lack of information, the lack of full congruence between the party line and the voter's attitudes, and because of the lack of accountability of the MPs. Unless they are 100 per cent sure of the party they vote for, young people do not want to commit themselves. This approach also becomes decisive in their attitudes toward joining political parties and NGOs.

Party membership

There are a number of young people who are not exactly opposed to joining a political party. For them it seems to be a matter of being asked to join and contribute. However, most of the interviewees, even the politically active young people, formulate a range of arguments against joining a political party.

The main reason for not joining is that they have not made up their mind as to which is their favourite party or they refuse to make a definite decision. Often, they do not vote for the same party at every election, so that joining makes even less sense. Young people like to remain flexible and autonomous and to be able to give and withdraw support whenever they feel it necessary. Even if they feel close to one party they keep a critical distance. Political issues are not black and white, but there are always several perspectives on any one problem. This ambivalent attitude toward parties and ideologies is based on the acknowledgement that there is not one infallible truth. Clear cut categories for enemies and “either-or” thinking are no longer credible (Paakkunainen, 2004). In line with their moral demands, young people would not support a party unless they fully agree with it. However, since there can never be certainty about truth and the right way forward, it is only a logical consequence that young people refuse to join a party.

Corresponding to their general critique of parties the young interviewees fear constraints within the party. They are anxious that their opinion is not considered adequately by the other group members, or that they have to submit to party discipline. In both instances they have no control over the party’s activities. Complying with a party thus violates the young people’s principles of consistent loyalty with one’s own values and responsibility for one’s activities and opinions.

Party membership is further seen as hampering open communication with members of other parties, because political parties are more involved in strategic behaviour and power games than in solving problems. Most young people do not see party membership as an adequate means to achieve something in a community.

It is rather in the way... For other people and generally when you want to do something together, as for example building the skater park. If I had gone to a political party, then maybe the other party would have been against it because I am member of this party.
(Austria)

Another reservation mentioned by non-active interviewees is the difficulty to get access to an organisation and to be integrated in the organisation on equal terms with adults and not just as slaves for distributing flyers or sticking posters. A number of politically active young people stress how important it was for them to be recognised as equal partners and given responsibility by the adult members of the organisation, while other young people find it difficult to enter a 'closed society'.

The young people's accounts of their difficulties in getting access mirrors the changing character of political parties. As Marc Hooghe argues on the basis of Belgian data, political parties are becoming less interested in attracting a mass membership and rely more on the media and other professionalized communication channels in order to attract voters. In the course of this development political youth organisations are losing their significance as recruitment channels for political parties (Hooghe, 2003). This implies that, on the one hand, the generation gap in political organisations gets wider and more difficult to bridge, and on the other hand, young recruits are more difficult to integrate in a meaningful way into professionalized processes.

Membership in NGOs

While many young people with a low level of education do not consider NGOs as possible political players, they are recognised and welcomed as such by better educated and/or politically active young people. However, the same scepticism as in the case of political parties is expressed in the case of NGOs. That is, the lack of information and lack of control over the organisation's movements and therefore a lack of trust. Also, structures and group dynamic processes in which the individual's views and activities are too constrained are criticised.

I left certain groups because I realised that in the microcosm of students' collectives, associations, social centres, there was a trend to recreate a structure that actually belongs to another tradition, say that of the Stalinist party, in a vertical sense ... while in fact the intention was to create a horizontal situation of collective participation.
(Italy)

Demonstrations

Demonstrations are more in line with young people's principles and their 'yes-but' attitude in that they are spontaneous acts which express the young people's political and moral feelings and their sincerity.

I was compelled to take part in the peace demonstration, it was not a question of 'black-and-white'; it was for my self-respect.
(Finland)

Demonstrations do not require any commitment to other persons or to an organisation, while still offering some group experience with like-minded people. They permit engagement for a universal value without selling 'whole ideological packages' (IARD, 2004).

I mean, it's not a problem for me to go to a march, whereas, say, joining a party can be more complex.
(Italy)

However, even demonstrations contain the danger that principles are violated. Among these are the abuse of the good cause by political groups and false motivations. Interviewees criticise that extreme groups or political parties use demonstrations for their own propaganda and to manipulate the masses, but also that many people join because they simply enjoy the excitement or use it as an excuse for not attending school.

In particular, the use of violent forms of activism is generally unacceptable for young people, since it is incompatible with their principle of tolerance. As Ann Muxel and Cecile Riou observed, the approach differs between the higher qualified young people and those with a low level of education. For the disempowered latter group demonstrations may be legitimised as the only way of talking to decision-makers. Students, on the other hand, place more value on dialogue which hints at their potentially easier access to and communication with political authorities (Muxel/Riou, 2004).

There is unanimity about the ineffectiveness of demonstrations. While for some this is a reason not to participate, it does not deter others, since it is more a matter of self-expression, self-determination and loyalty to one's moral convictions.

It is not a demonstration that will stop the war, it was to show that we didn't agree.

(France)

Doubt in the effectiveness of action is also formulated with respect to petitions and referenda.

The whole referenda thing is intended purely to let us make decisions on the unimportant things which they allow us to decide on. And the really important things they decide among themselves. They don't even get through to us.

(Austria)

From the point of view of young people there is no distinction between “conventional” and “unconventional” forms of participation; they all belong to the range of possibilities citizens have to express their opinions. Voting, demonstrations and petitions are most commonly referred to. They are forms of mass participation, yet they are not seen as effective means to influence decision-making. Activities of citizens’ initiatives and shop stewards are hardly mentioned; perhaps they are not visible to young people. Another explanation is that there certainly exists a high social and psychological threshold in that young people lacking the self-confidence, social skills and social capital feel nervous about getting in touch with administrative staff and politicians in order to get politically involved.

Summary

This chapter has tried to highlight some of the factors influencing political participation such as education, information and access to social and political citizenship rights. It also aimed at presenting a more nuanced picture of young people’s attitudes to politics. One of the most striking features of young people’s accounts is their refusal to think in either-or, black-and-white categories. Political reasoning is characterised by doubt and scepticism. No political leader or organisation has the monopoly on truth, and ideologies have lost their credibility. For this reason, young people find it difficult to remain loyal to one organisation or even to become ‘party soldiers’, indoctrinated with the organisation’s ideology. They prefer to remain open-minded and autonomous. Many of the better educated young people actively appropriate values and ideologies to patch together their own world views, political identities and moral standards. It is closer to their approach to politics to take part in demonstrations, petitions and short-term initiatives.

One major criticism by young people regards the political processes and cultures which hamper a 'truly democratic system'. Hierarchies within organisations, party discipline and strategic disinformation as well as a lack of system responsiveness are not seen as conducive to consensual problem-solving for the benefit of the citizens. While the ideal picture of politics is similar among all young people there are distinct differences in their reaction to reality according to socio-cultural background, educational level and experience with the political system. There is a substantial group, especially among the less educated and disadvantaged, which turns its back on the dirty game and who solves the many dilemmas by remaining passive. However, even they cannot be generally called ignorant and apathetic, since they are very capable of expressing social and political concerns and point to the malaise of the political system. On the other hand, there are active young people who may be equally frustrated with the conventional system, but who try to change the rules of the game from within the system, or to open up action space which goes far beyond the democratic system based on party politics.

The burning question therefore, is how representative democracy and its institutions must adapt to the changing circumstances in order to retain a broad base within its citizens. The young people's cynical and sometimes naïve statements nonetheless pin down the shortcomings of the political system and they react to them either by withdrawing or through protest activities. It is not by criticising their behaviour by moral standards rooted in the past, but by addressing the structural constraints and adapting the political system. The challenges are clear: a democratisation of all areas of social life and for all groups, the development of active trust relationships between (young) citizens and politicians, the appreciation of new forms of political expression, and the integration of political voices outside the conventional political system. Seen from this democratic-political standpoint youth participation becomes a "two-way process" (Kovacheva, 2003), a question of true communication between young people and society, and of dialectic development rather than a mechanistic integration into established structures.

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Political knowledge and the political attitudes of youth in EU and Slovakia

Ladislav Macháček

Currently, the results of PISA 2003 survey² are being widely discussed by experts and political representatives across Europe³. The survey examined the performance of 14 year old students in mathematics, science, and reading⁴. However, neither experts nor the political community paid much attention to a similar project, the CIVIC EDUCATION STUDY, conducted in 1999 by The International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (Amsterdam). This study was conducted in twenty-eight countries while using nationally representative samples of 14-years old students⁵.

It aimed to test students' knowledge and comprehension of materials with a civic and political content (e.g. texts, cartoons) and their understanding of fundamental political principles (e.g. democracy and citizenship). It further measured the political attitudes of respondents such as trust in national government and willingness to participate in political and civic activities.

The study found that civic knowledge is highest in Finland (similar result was found in PISA 2003), followed by Italy and Slovakia which were equal. Germany and the United Kingdom were below the international mean. Among those countries scoring below the international mean are: Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Belgium, Portugal, Switzerland, Bulgaria and Romania.

For the cases of Finland, Italy, Germany, and Estonia the observed differences between political knowledge and interpretation skills confirmed

² Bratislava 28.4.2005—Conference of Slovak Paedagogical Society and Ministry of Education SR

³ Losch, H. Zu diesem Heft. In Diskurs 1, 2004, p.2.

⁴ PISA SK 2003 National report SR (P. Koršňáková), Štátny pedagogický ústav, Bratislava 2004, p.38.

⁵ *Civic Education Study. Civic education survey among 14-years old students in SR. (M. Čapová, I. Sklenárová) State Paedagogical Institute, Bratislava 2002, 156 p.* Countries participating in the study : Slovakia, Estonia, the UK, Italy, Germany, Finland. France and Austria, EUYOUNG PART partners, were absent.

previous findings (94 points in knowledge section and 95 points in skills section).

On the other hand, some participating countries showed significant differences. For example, in the US, sample students scored 102 in the political knowledge assessment and 114 for interpretation skills (similarly in the UK with 96 and 105 score points).

In Slovakia and some other countries, including Poland, knowledge at the age of fourteen significantly outweighs civic and political skills (107 and 103 score points).

In Slovakia, a Pearson coefficient ($r = 0.689$) suggests a direct interdependence of variables. A higher score in knowledge and civic principles correlates to a higher score in correct interpretations of political materials (CEA, Bratislava 2002, p.22).

Slovak students showed high levels of knowledge in civic and political issues; they performed better in knowledge tasks than in tasks requiring interpretation skills⁶.

Test of Political Knowledge

EUYOUPART further suggested the importance of measuring not only the opinions and attitudes of respondents but eventually their civic and political behaviour as well as some **fundamental knowledge about political life, in particular with regards to countries of the European Union**⁷.

Four questions from each area were chosen, totalling eight questions. Respondents could answer: 'true' 'false,' or 'I don't know.'

⁶ One of the main challenges faced by the Slovak education system is to encourage interpretation of texts and information more than currently which supports memorization. It is rather unfortunate to say that Slovakia was placed last among all twenty-five countries participating in the survey (PISA 2003, p.22). In this section, Slovakia was placed behind Finland, France, Germany, Austria and Italy.

⁷ This set of questions was not obligatory and some countries did not include these questions into their questionnaire (Germany, Finland).

Table 1**Political knowledge via 8 questions**

		Right	False	(I don't know)
1	Serbia is member EU	12,4	70,6	17,1
2	EU has 25 members	68,4	18,6	13,0
3	Flag EU is blue with white stars	26,2	71,9	2,0
4	Josè Barroso is had EC after Romano Prodi	41,1	18,4	40,5
5	Prime Minister SR is MD	92,6	5,8	1,6
6	Head of Party is XY	10,3	78,9	10,8
7	Parliament Voting in Slovakia (4 years)	93,2	3,0	3,8
8	Prime Minister has the right dissolve Parliament	26,6	48,2	25,2

Note: Young people had alternatively a chance to agree with correct statements (e.g. number of EU members) or disagree with incorrect statements (e.g. the EU flag).

Results in Slovakia (Table 1 and Table 2)**In European issues**

Approximately 70% of young people have correct knowledge about the EU, its members and symbols. Only the question on the recent change of the head of the European Commission (R.Prodi – J.Barroso) invoked a 40% “I don’t know” response. In each of the four questions 15-20% of respondents answered incorrectly.

In national politics

Respondents know much more about their national politics (80-90% correct answers), when it comes to parliamentary elections or the name of the Prime Minister or Vice-Chairman of a particular political party.

Young people performed lower in questions dealing with the relationship between the Prime Minister and the Parliament; 25% did not know the answer and 27% did not answer correctly.

Main results: The political knowledge of young Slovaks seems to be relatively high.

- Out of 8 indicators, 13.6% of Slovak young people answered almost all of them correctly
- At the other extreme, a slightly lower percentage (8%) could answer 0-2 questions correctly
- 43% have medium-strong knowledge
- There is not a clear gender difference: Young women and men have similar political knowledge
- 18-25 year olds have better knowledge than the younger age group

Table 2 Political knowledge via knowledge indicator: Slovakia (%)

	Male	Female	15-17 years	18-25 years	Entire sample
Weak (0-2 correct)	7.9	8.4	12.0	6.6	8.0
Medium-weak (3-4 correct)	32.3	35.9	35.8	33.3	34.2
Medium-strong (5-6 correct)	43.7	42.2	40.9	43.8	43.2
Strong (7-8 correct)	16.2	13.5	11.3	16.2	13.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Comparative analysis: 6 EU countries

No answer- I don't know

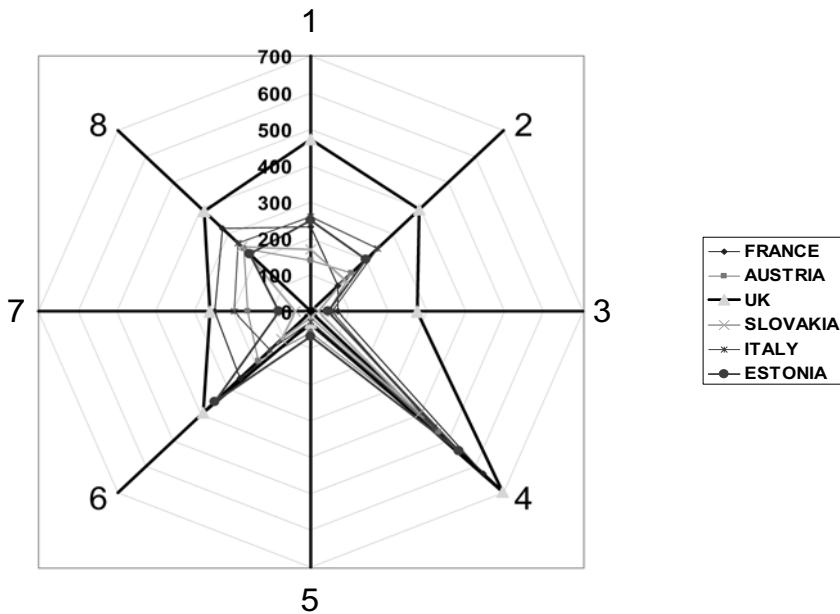
In a survey of knowledge, it is important to look at how many respondents answer "I do not know"

The United Kingdom is a country where the highest amount of young people answered “I do not know”. With the exception of the name of their Prime Minister, they placed first in all other questions with an “I don’t know” answer as compared to the other five countries (Chart No.1).

In European issues

Slovakia and Austria lead in the number of correct answers, followed by France, Italy and Estonia. Young people from the UK placed last.

Chart No.1 I don’t know



Question No. 1: Knowledge about new EU members (Serbia-Slovenia)

During this period many significant changes occurred; ten new members joined the EU on May 1, 2004. However, only one of them was a former Yugoslav state (Slovenia). Serbia currently has the lowest chance of becoming a member of the EU. Young people of Austria performed best, which is not surprising since it borders with countries of former Yugoslavia.

Question No. 2: Number of EU members (15 or 25 members).

We assumed that the correct answer would be found primarily among young people from countries that have just become EU members, i.e. Slovakia and Estonia. Surprisingly, France placed first.

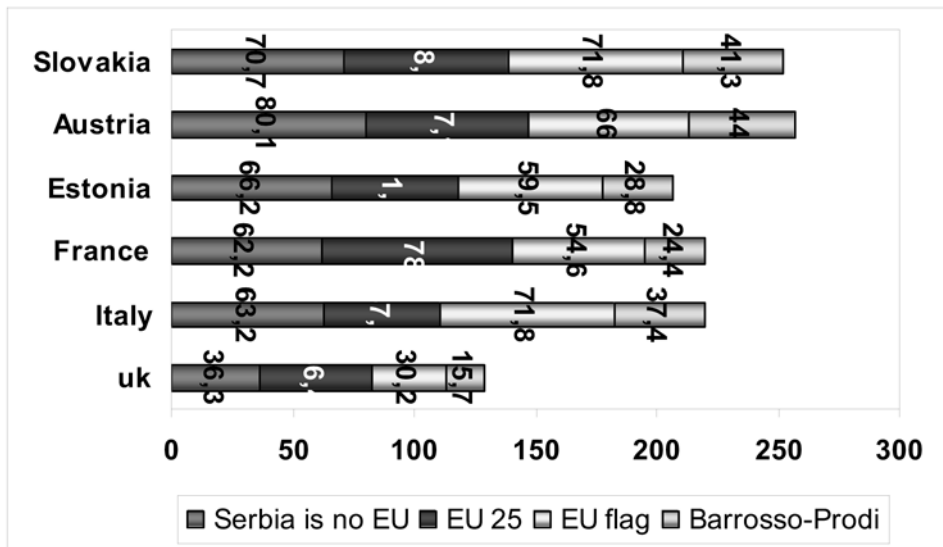
Question No. 3: Knowledge of the fundamental EU symbols: flag.

This question was submitted with a wrong answer, it said that the EU flag was blue with white stars. Young people of Slovakia and Italy gave the most incorrect answers.

Question no 4: J. Barroso replaced R. Prodi in the post of the European Commission leadership

The most correct answers were reported in the Austrian and Slovak samples. Most correct answers were found in the Austrian sample among females under eighteen years of age. In Estonia, France, Italy, the UK and Slovakia more correct answers were found among those over eighteen, and more so amongst males.

CHART No. 2 Youth Knowledge About European Policy



National Politics

Question No.1 (5): The name of the Prime Minister

Young people know the name of their Prime Minister. British youth placed first with the most correct answers but other countries scored high when it came to key executive positions with knowledge among all age groups and both sexes.

Question No. 2 (6): Who is the leader of a political party?

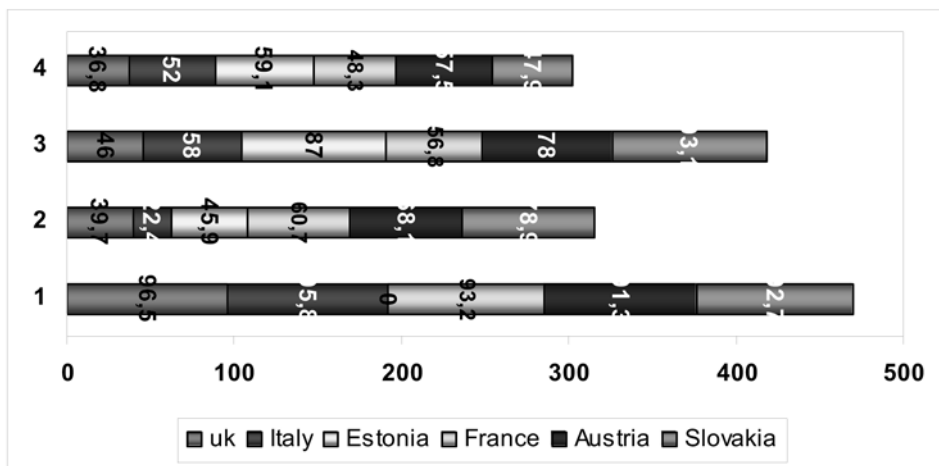
This relatively difficult question was rather tricky since we asked students whether a particular representative (in fact, the leader of a right-wing or

conservative party) was the leader of a left-wing political party. To answer correctly, respondents would have to know the leader by his/her surname and his/her political affiliation. That means that respondents had to mark the statement “the leader of the political party is XY” as incorrect. Most correct answers were found among Slovaks (79%), followed by French (60%). In the case of Slovakia it can be assumed that it was rather easier to “uncover” the leader of Christian democrats than the leader of the Communist party.

Question No. 3 (7): How often are parliamentary elections held?

This presumably easy question on the organization of parliamentary elections wielded surprising results. Slovakia (93%) is the “leader” in fostering young European democrats.

CHART No.3 Questions about National politics No. 1-4



Question No. 4 (8): Does the Prime Minister have the right to dismiss Parliament?

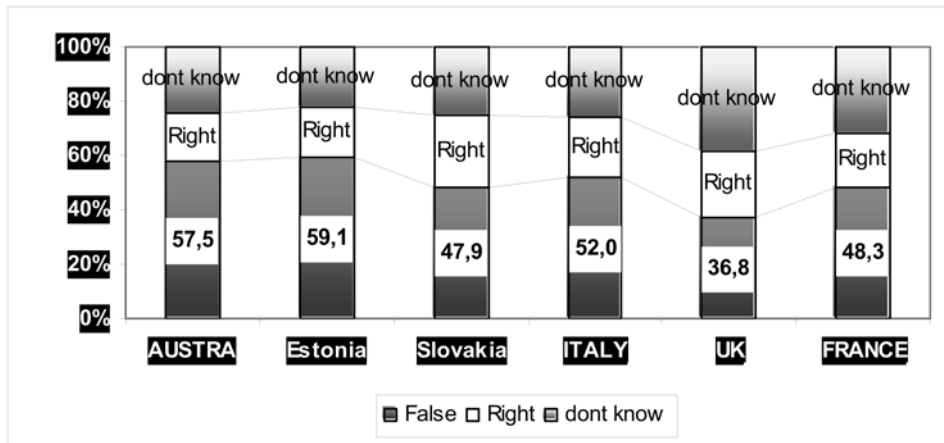
Overall, young people scored lowest in this question (ranging 36.8%-59.1%). This was the most difficult question and the most problematic one. It does not provide any information on “knowledge” only, yet it speaks about the “values” of the respondents. At the same time it provides relevant information regarding respondents’ “civic maturity and knowledge of parliamentary democracy”.

What captured the attention of political scientists and politicians in all participating countries is the fact that approximately 40-50% of **young people do not have knowledge regarding how parliamentary democracy works.** This

was true also in the Slovak case where young people admitted they did not know the answer (25%) and even more (27%) *claim that it is right if the Prime Minister had the right to dismiss Parliament.*

In the case of the United Kingdom more young people (39%) admitted that they did not know the answer. However, the number of incorrect answers did not differ significantly from other countries. Yet the complicated relationships between executives, representatives, and the monarchy are a very unique aspect of the United Kingdom

CHART No.4 Does the Prime Minister have the right to dismiss Parliament?



Age - Gender

In **Austria**, more men than women under eighteen (W: 78.9%-M: 81.9%) knew the principles of parliamentary democracy when compared to those age 18-25 (men and women: 73-74%). In the **Slovak, Italian and English** samples the results were reversed. Young men above eighteen gave more correct answers than women. Girls gain knowledge at school more than through practical life experience regarding political participation. **France** reported an interestingly balanced score between right and wrong answers in both age groups and sexes (70%-73%).

The Knowledge about democracy and attitudes towards democracy: Slovakia
Parliamentary democracy and authoritarianism

Since 1989, the young generation in Slovakia has received a rich education in the issues that have been disputed in the National Parliament and within the ruling coalition, even after 1998 (e.g. University tuition, tracing of financial/wealth sources). Many of them hold an assumption that **only a strong leader would be able to solve the problems of our country more efficiently** (28.2% of young people).

Table 3 The Prime Minister has the right to dismiss Parliament
 – a strong leader is able to solve problems more efficiently than Parliament

	A Strong leader would be more efficient than Parliament					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	I don't know	Don't agree	Strongly disagree	
The Prime Minister has the right to dismiss the Parliament						
Right	39.7	37.4	40.3	28.4	15.4	34.0
Wrong	60.3	62.6	59.7	71.6	84.6	65.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Mutual correlations of these two attitudes imply (Table 3) that incorrect knowledge about how democracy works, i.e. the relationship between executive and legislative power, is interconnected with distrust in the ability of the parliament to solve the problems of our country. Those who refuse a “strong leader” (in Table 3 this attitude was expressed by “disagree and strongly disagree”) know that the Prime Minister does not have the right to dismiss Parliament. Only parliament has the right to dismiss Ministers and the Prime Minister. The results might imply that those who have some fundamental knowledge about principles of plural democracy do not agree with the statement that a strong leader is better than the worst parliament.

Political knowledge and preference of political party

When we speak of an “affinity” (“close” or “very close”) for a political party among young people, we may find different levels of knowledge among the supporters of different political parties. In Slovakia correct knowledge on how parliamentary democracy works is above the average score among those who feel **very close** to KDH-Christian democracy (77%), SDKU (75%) and SMER-Social Democracy (70%). Those who are “very close” to HZDS-LS scored well below the overall average with only 56.3% of correct answers. Supporters of HZDS-LS who feel “close” to their party, performed the same as supporters of other political parties.

Who are the supporters of “a strong leader” and “ample rights of the Prime Minister”? Primarily, they are young people with a low standard of living, low education, and whose parents also have a lower educational level. For the vast majority of them, politics is perceived as too complicated and not in the scope of their interest.

Reflection

The results of “Political Knowledge Among Young People” are not the quality reflection of civic education in Slovakia that we would like to see. Still, the comparison showed that the same situation can be found in other countries as well. Interest in politics and national politics in particular, is associated with a better knowledge of democratic principles. For example, in Slovakia knowledge scores climb higher no matter what political orientation young people prefer (“left-wing” or “right-wing”), 71-72%. More intense political preferences underscore fundamental knowledge of democracy and its principles.

The Indicator from the eight knowledge questions implies that with increasing age (15-25) the score in Slovakia grows, with the exception of “**knowledge about how parliamentary democracy works**”. This knowledge is significantly influenced by education on democracy and citizenship as taught in Civic Education and Science on Society courses⁸.

Additionally, this knowledge is undoubtedly determined by the transformation process of the political system in post-communist countries like Slovakia. Young people are rather sceptical when it comes to public political life; they distrust

⁸ Interviewees in Edinburgh (56%) and Manchester (61%) were significantly less likely to be exposed to any formal education about the European Union than those from other sites participating in the study. For example: Vienna (18%), Bratislava (31%), Chemnitz and Bielefeld (34-36%). Final reports, Youth and European Identity (2002). Proj.coord. L.Jamieson, University of Edinburgh. Brussel, February 2005, pp.45

institutions of the state, for example law, and there is a tendency to support autocratic forms of leadership.

Our findings confirm the hypothesis that education in some countries (e.g. Austria) devotes much attention to EU issues and its institutional background. This is likely due to a more precise attitude toward studying and memorizing. Overall, women measure better on knowledge than men.

In other countries (e.g. Estonia) young people aged 18-25 gain knowledge via political participation and a general interest in politics. This is more typical of boys and young men than girls and young women.

In the third group of countries (e.g. Slovakia) real civic and political participation invokes rather contradictory doubts as to what young people learned at school about principles of democracy.

The democratic citizenship of individuals and nations is built on gaining knowledge of a democratic legal system. Developing one's knowledge potential is one aspect of legal awareness, but is not the only one. Under certain social circumstances it is not even the decisive one. A further element that interferes with the whole process is the conflict of social interests. This conflict could, after reaching a certain limit, eliminate the constructive knowledge potential that was gained through education⁹. The rather worrying results of the civic knowledge test on EU issues may be viewed as a challenge to modernize education towards democratic citizenship in schools as well as in informal education outside of schools; 2005 was declared "The Year of Education toward European Democratic Citizenship." Many assignments of this program can be found in "The Action Plan of Youth Politics in Slovakia for 2005"¹⁰ and are a substantial part of the European Commission's monitoring of the participation and education of youth in all EU countries¹¹. The results of the survey communicated important information for everyone involved in youth work, youth policy, and youth education within the European Union.

⁹ A new type of citizen arises. While in 1995 we would have called them "pseudo-democrats" (valaškár): they know principles of democracy and a state of law very well, yet they prefer mens other than democracy (valaška – transl., axe, sword) to be used in the name of social justice. R.Roško: Smer demokratické občianstvo. Bratislava, SU SAV 1995, p.108.

¹⁰ Action Plan of Youth Politics 2005 was approved by the Slovak government in March 2005.

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council on European policies concerning youth. Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe- implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship. Mr.Figel (SK) in association with Mr.Špidla (CZ). Brussel 30.05.2005,p.9.

Young Hungarians

A short overview of the main results of Youth 2004

Mobilitas Youth Research Centre

Introduction: General tendencies affecting youth in Hungary¹²

Hungarian society has been undergoing a lengthy process of transition for (already) one and a half decades. The effects of this transition have had an undeniable impact on public opinion in ways which come to shape Hungary's budding civil society and political democracy. Paying special attention to societal change and the opinion structures of youth, the snapshot we provide here attempts to offer a short insight into the processes of the past 15 years, and in particular, into the changes which occurred over the last four years.

Since the transition began, Youth2004 is the second social scientific and sociological study by the National Youth Research Centre to attempt a description of the generational changes that resulted from the social and economic transformations of a changing regime.

One of the aims of reproducing the previous Youth2000 study, and acquiring comparable longitudinal data, was to record the extent and ways in which social factors affecting education, employment, careers, becoming self-sustaining and acceding to financial opportunities have changed. Furthermore, the study seeks to record how these changes have impacted on the lifestyles, leisure activities and cultural consumption of young people.

Recent sociological research on youth indicates that 'youth' itself, as a period in one's life, has lengthened. For example, young people spend more and more time in education. Data from the eighties and even from the early nineties reveal that in the case of skilled workers, as well as in the case of workers who partake in routine white collar activities (especially those with secondary school degrees), leaving school, beginning work, starting a family, and having children are closely correlated. Young people - irrespective of their qualifications - usually get married after entering work and have their first child in the following two years. However, one third of young people holding vocational certificates enter the labour market at the age of 18, and another third at the age of 19 or later.

¹² This short paper is a part of the full Youth2004 research report, which can be downloaded at www.mobilitas.hu

Similar tendencies can be described in the case of young people doing the kind of intellectual work that does not require a degree. Up until 1993-5, entering the world of work usually coincided with obtaining one's secondary school degree. By 2000 more than two fifths of our sample entered the labour market for the first time at the age of 20, or later. Similar tendencies can be observed in 2004. The question can be raised whether postponing entry into the world of work bears relation to the integration of young individuals in society and their acceptance of traditions and norms.

The prolongation of youth as a stage of life is further indicated by the fact that while young people want children, in the last 10 years having one's first child has been delayed by a couple of years. This can partly be explained - along with the increased time spent in education- by a change in commitment to permanent relationships by men and women in the second half of their twenties. While in 1990, 20.3% of the whole population was unmarried, in 2001 and 2002 the figures were 27.1% and 28% respectively. The Youth 2004 data on young people between 15 and 29 shows that this trend is on the increase.

Although it is undeniable that the period following the political transition assertively introduced cohabitation as the 'new' form of permanent relationship, Youth2000 called attention to the fact that even in 2000 the intention to have children was tied to marriage. This traditional inclination remains essentially unchanged as the data indicates that young people tend to marry around the same time as they have their first child. The prolongation of the youth stage promotes other roles, such as the single, or even the 'pre-single' stage.

Within this age group's life strategies we can observe new dynamics of dependency and independency in relation to the parental home. This results from the fact that the time spent living with one's parents overlaps with becoming independent. Leaving the parental home mostly coincides with marriage or cohabitation with a partner, and is no longer simply correlated with finishing one's studies or entering work.

In the nineties, sociological studies on youth cherished the hope that qualification levels would rise, thereby maintaining the illusion that the gates of higher education would also open for those lower down the social ladder (e.g. children of rural families with low educational attainments). However, a study conducted in 2002 among freshman students of higher education indicates that this hope was unfounded. Though higher education holds certain opportunities for the children of parents with secondary or higher educational qualifications; for the majority of society education remains only *a theoretical possibility* of social advancement.

In the year 2000, the unequivocal beneficiaries of the expansion of higher education seemed to be young people belonging to the most educated familial and social environments. Nonetheless, for children of fathers holding secondary education qualifications, the prospect of pursuing higher education has appreciably improved in the past four years. The proportion of children of parents holding no more than secondary school degrees significantly increased both among university and college students. Consequently, it seems that from the point of view of pursuing higher education, only the father's secondary education qualifications may be regarded as an indicator for the time being. Nevertheless, this development seems to have had no beneficial effect for those two groups of young people belonging to familial and social environments having even lower qualifications (that is, children of fathers having vocational high school or elementary school qualifications). What is more, the likelihood of young people from disadvantageous familial and social environments to enter further education seems, if anything, to have decreased. Therefore, it appears that differences in social background have an incommensurable impact on educational opportunity and result in perpetuating inequality.

Furthermore, we observed that the quantity and the type of cultural activities which young people participate in are below the expectations of recent studies in cultural sociology. The few leisure activities young people report doing out of impulse rather than conscious thought reflect actions and decisions which, for the most part, involve only the individual themselves. In other words, the demand for companionship and communal spirit rarely appears. In fact, the desire for ambitious social activity has almost disappeared from the cultural activities of young people.

Compared to previous years, values relating to a sense of security (peaceful world, prosperity, social order) have fallen behind on the ranking of values, while (more) transcendent ideas or values (creativity, respect of traditions, world of beauty) have come to play an increasingly central role in the life of young people. The fact that material principles are coming to play a less and less significant role in young people's value systems may be explained by the country's economic improvement and a further increase in social stability. In parallel, values regarding one's individual life, notions of self-realization, and values which directly impact on everyday actions appear to have taken the front stage of young people's value systems.

In the next chapter we provide insight into the preliminary detailed results of the research concerning only the topics of *values and political interest*. At present,

we have neither any pretensions pertaining to a profound interpretation of the existing data, nor do we seek to explore and explain any of the correlations which may emerge.

Values and political interest

Family's role in the development of values

For numerous years in a young person's life, the first and most important realm of socialization is the family. Although peer groups also play a significant part, it is crucial to analyze the Hungarian youth's attitudes towards their parents' values and life philosophy.

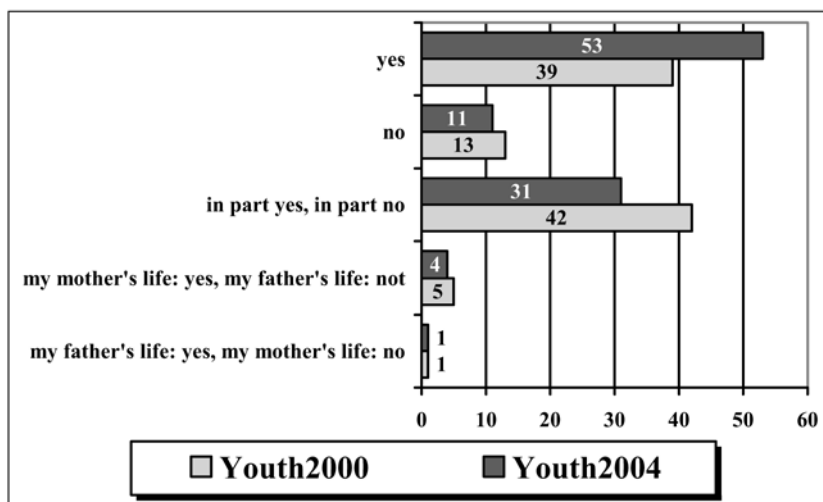
In 2004 a majority of respondents found that the principles by which their parents lived were suitable (54%). This contrasted with the 38% of those who answered likewise in 2000, thus denoting an increase in young people's satisfaction with their parents' value systems. It would be far from true to claim that young people in 2000 were far more opposed to their parents' values. In comparison to 2004, changes in the proportion of those replying "no" or "in part yes, in part no" to this question reveals a less critical stance of young people towards their parents' principles. While four years ago 42% of young people had ambivalent attitudes towards their parents' values, this figure has decreased to 31%.

By contrast, the proportion of young people rejecting their parents' values has seen a smaller decrease, from 13% to 11%, in the past four years. However, there has been a minute decrease, from 6% in 2000 to 5% in 2004, in the number of young people between 15 and 29 years of age who, though they reject the values of one parent, embrace the other's. It perhaps comes as no surprise that within this group there is a significantly higher acceptance of mothers' rather than fathers' values. On one hand, this relates to the traditional role of mothers in family life according to which it is the mother's responsibility to raise the children as far as emotions, behaviour, and values are concerned. On the other hand, this relates to the fact that a significant part of children living with a single parent live with their mothers, rather than their fathers.

Younger respondents, both in 2000 and 2004, are more acceptant of their parents conduct and principles than their older counterparts. 62% of teenagers claimed their parent's lives to be in accordance with their own views and ideals, while the same holds true for only 54% of young people aged 20-24 and 49% of 25 to 29 year olds. Furthermore, alongside the dynamic of young people growing

older, and the influence of their families giving way to that of their friends, the proportion of young people rejecting or ambivalent towards their parents' values increases.

Figure 1: Does your parents' lives correspond to your own views and ideals? (in percentages, in 2000 and 2004)



General opinion

In line with the Youth2000 study, the 2004 study approached young people's general opinions through the multifactor dimensions of economic situation and their impact on quality of life, as well as through self-evaluation of personal situations.

It needs to be said that, since 2000, we noted improvements in nearly every dimension. However, despite this positive portrayal, evaluating the transition shows a fundamentally negative picture.

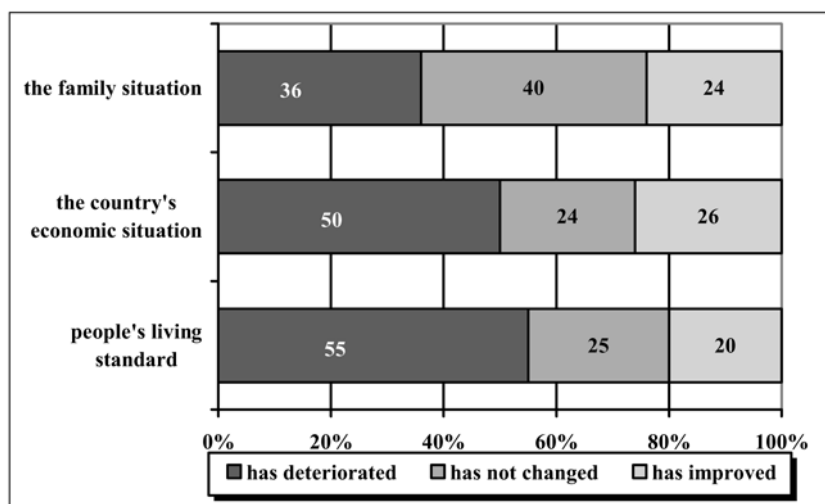
In parallel to 2000, 2004's survey describes living standards as unfavourable. For over half of respondents, a deterioration in living standards ensued from the transition. According to a quarter of respondents, they remained the same, and for a fifth there was improvement. Compared to the data collected four years ago, answers shifted 12%, particularly in the "it has not changed" and the "it has improved" answer categories.

Though developments in the general economic situation are judged less negatively, they are still regarded unfavourably. According to exactly half of

respondents, the country's economic situation has deteriorated since the transition. One fifth think of the situation as unchanged, and around a further fifth perceive some improvement. This data corresponds with the results of the Youth2000 study.

To the contrary, there is stagnation rather than deterioration in the case of generally interpreted "personal situations", and 40% of respondents see no change. According to slightly over one third of respondents, personal (or familial) situations have deteriorated, while a fourth indicated definite improvement. In this regard, compared to the 2000 results we can talk of an 11% change, mostly in the direction of improvement. It can be generally stated that the youngest age category (15-19 year olds), the children of highly qualified parents, and young people from cities, perceive a positive effect on their living standards since the transition.

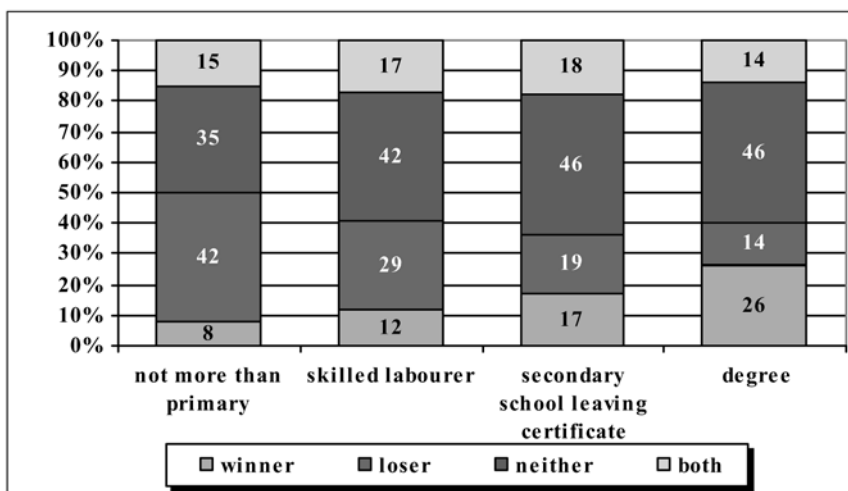
Figure 2: Taking everything into account, how has ... developed since the transition? (in percentages)



The answers show a high level of consistency with a question asked later in the questionnaire. According to their own account, 12% of young people consider their family as 'winners of the 1989-90 transition, while one quarter see themselves as 'losers'. One in two young people gave an evasive answer, and almost 14% remain uncertain regarding their opinion on the matter. As we have seen above, young people defining themselves as 'winners' are from cities, are highly educated, and come from families of good social standing. Analyzing the

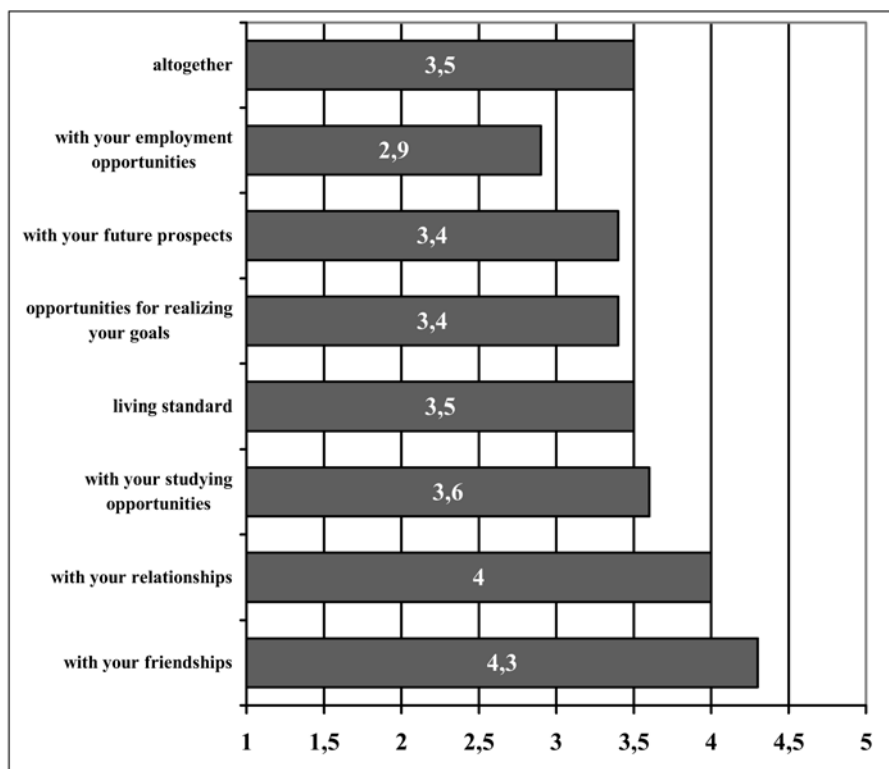
current situation is possible only if we account for several factors simultaneously. Analyzing the eight factors on a scale of five degrees, it seems that young people aged 15 to 29 look upon the decisive aspects of their lives in a positive light. They are particularly satisfied with those two factors which most impact on their lives: relationships and friendships. Only the value of employment opportunities remains below average with young people being somewhat sceptical: 35% are rather unsatisfied, a third are rather satisfied, and 32% are uncertain about the issue.

Figure 3: Taking everything into account and on the basis of your own experience, in which category would you classify your family? (in percentages, by educational level)



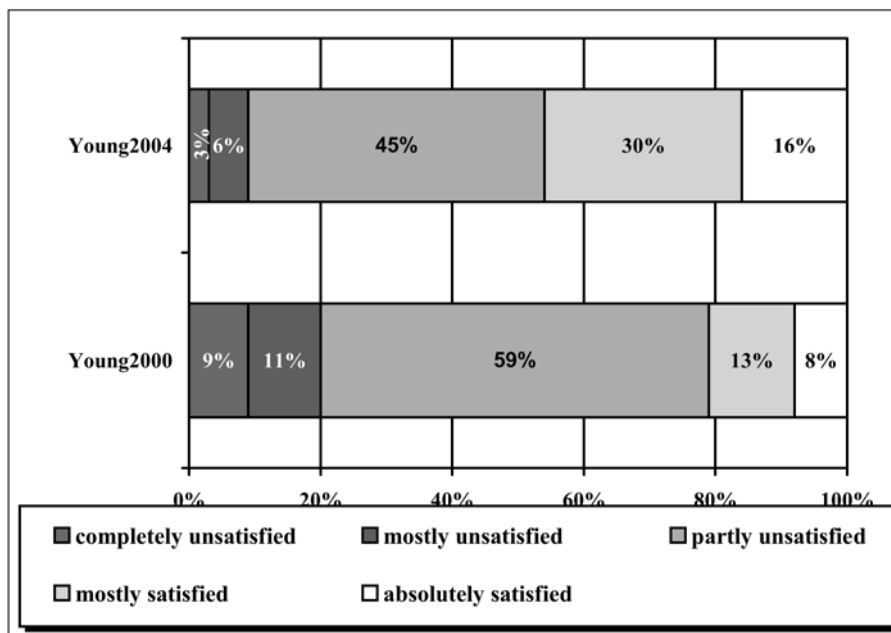
There are significant differences between the opinions of those young people who are employed or studying, in relation to those who are unemployed. Those "most satisfied" are the employed (averaging at 3.3), while the least satisfied are the unemployed (1.9). It is worth mentioning that students' satisfaction level with employment opportunities is also rather unfavourable (2.9). This might be related to low social prestige, poor financial rewards, and lack of student and seasonal work.

**Figure 4: How satisfied are you with the factors below?
(average values of the five-degree scale-1:least satisfied;
5:completely satisfied)**



Analyzing general satisfaction, the opinion climate has fundamentally changed since 2000. The proportion of youths who claim dissatisfaction has decreased by 13%, and ambivalence by 10%. In other words, young people's assessment of their present situation has, over the last four years, shifted positively.

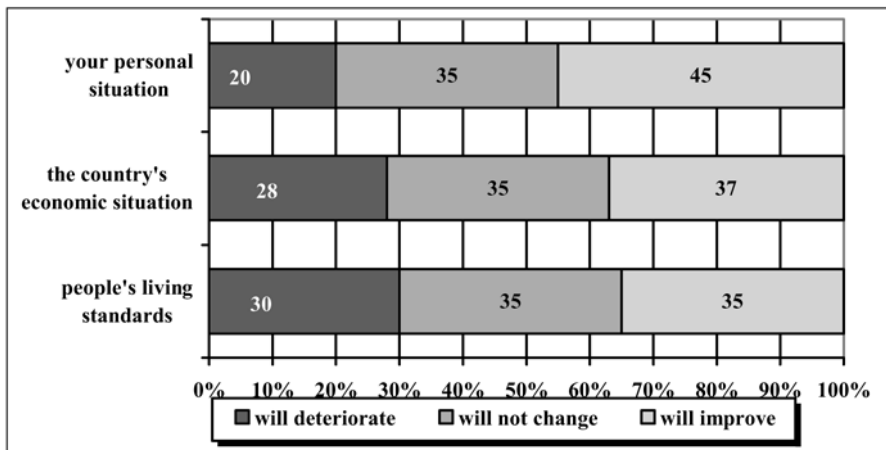
Figure 5: Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with how you live? (in percentages)



In relation to the future, which is the third determinant factor of general opinion, spirits seem high. The majority of respondents expect improvement, or see themselves as rather satisfied with their current situation. Nearly four tenths of young people having answered this question expect positive changes in the economy and living standards, and 45% expect favourable changes in their own personal situation. In all three cases, the proportion of ambivalent young people stands at 35%, and the proportion of those forecasting deterioration is no more than 30% (20% in the case of personal life strategies).

Compared to 2000, our data shows a favourable improvement along two dimensions. Young people are at their most optimistic regarding both living standards, and their personal situations.

Figure 6: If you think about the future, how will ... change? (in percentages)



Personal plans and expectations

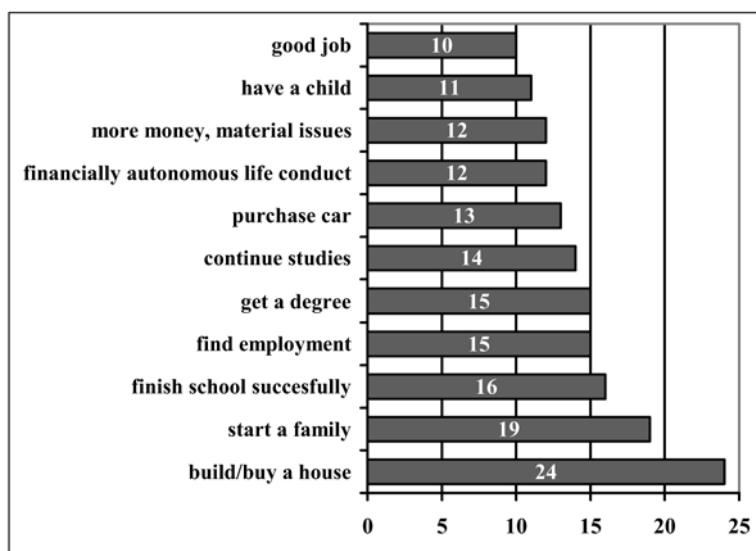
Personal expectations influence how a youth perceives his/her future. 90% of young people who responded to this question reported having already developed concrete expectations concerning their future. Taking into account the high ranking of several questionnaire items, we concluded that the successful completion of one's education – whatever the level – ranks on top of the expectations list.

The second most important personal expectation pertains to building a house or buying a flat. Based on a joint analysis of these two questionnaire items, 25% of 15-29 year olds voiced intent to do so. In opposition to previous data and former hypotheses, starting a family is an important expectation for the Hungarian youth. Almost every fifth young person responding to this item decisively asserted the desire to start a family within the following five years. Similarly, in 2000, starting a family ranked third on the wish list. However, we noticed that, since 2000, willingness to have children has slipped back four places on the list. Further, while in the Youth2000 study, one out of six respondents bore and raised children, in 2004, this figure decreased to every ninth respondent.

In parallel to 2000, apparent differences are to be observed amongst age categories. Evidently, the 15-19 age group wished to study and obtain qualifications or a degree. For those between the ages of 20 and 24, material issues, employment, buying a car and a flat, as well as starting a family are of more value. These concerns, in addition to childbearing, become of greater

importance as respondents get older. Consequently, the personal plans of young people between the ages of 25 and 29 are dominated by concerns which prepare them to become financially autonomous. A spectacular increase in desire to bear children occurs at the ages of 27 for men and 25 for women.

**Figure 7: What personal plans do you have for the following five years?
(only results higher than 10% are indicated)**



With regard to the opportunities necessary for realizing one's life plans, the data indicates striking optimism: 48% of respondents are 'rather' or 'predominantly' satisfied and only 15% are 'unsatisfied'. In 2000, respondents were for the most part hopeful: 28% were optimistic, while 12% were pessimistic. This means that, in comparison to the previous study, the proportion of young people considering the possibility of realizing their personal plans as 'good' has favourably increased by half in the past four years.

Political interest and opinions

Studies in 'political socialization' conducted in the past decade have univocally asserted interest in politics and political activity to be low. However, during the 2002 elections, a hypothesis was formulated which claimed change was in the making concerning this issue. Some believed that young people were increasingly participating in campaigns and partaking in electoral programs. This

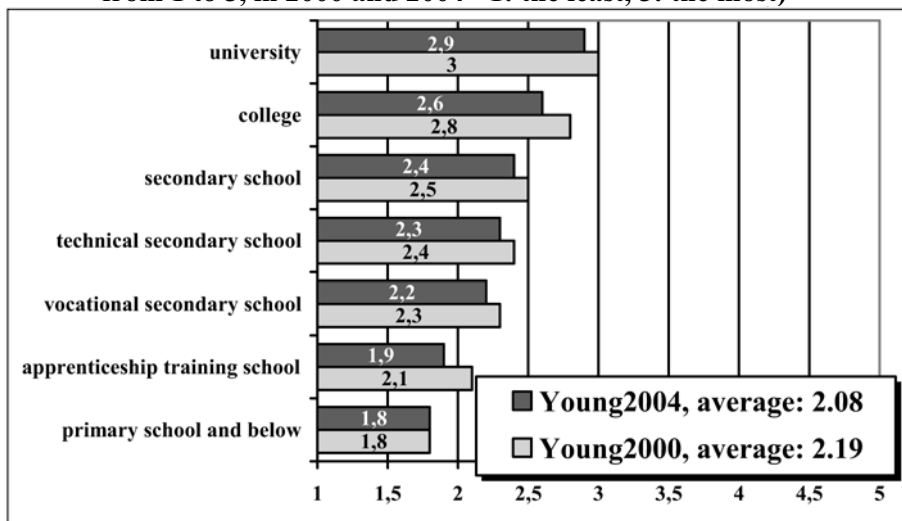
may reveal a shift in young people's relationship to politics. However, were we to address this hypothesis solely on the basis of interest in politics, it is doubtful that we could verify it. Indeed, our data depicts a truly low level of interest in politics.

63% of respondents are either "not interested" or "not interested at all" in politics, 26% of respondents displayed "moderate interest", and 11% claimed an "acute interest" in the political arena. In comparison with the 2000 data, we found a decline rather than an intensification of the youth's interest in politics. The proportion of young people who stay removed from politics has increased by 8% in the past four years.

Concerning interest in politics, fundamental and significant differences exist according to educational attainment.

It is particularly noteworthy that the foundations of representative democracy, the Parliament and political parties, are seen as very untrustworthy. Low interest in politics comes hand in hand with an intense distrust of certain political institutions which are integral to the political system. Furthermore, both keystones of constitutional law and government are looked upon negatively in addition to both public and private media, and - surprisingly - one of the foundations of civil society: the church.

Figure 8: Interest in politics by level of education (Mean values ranging from 1 to 5, in 2000 and 2004 - 1: the least, 5: the most)



Institutions which provide a sense of security - such as the Hungarian Army, the police, and courts - are regarded positively. This political spectrum is usually divided along the traditional lines of left-right and liberal-conservative. Around

75% of respondents aged between 15 and 29 participated in locating themselves on the left-right ideological spectrum. 43% classified themselves on the seven point scale's fourth degree, or in the "neutral" category. 13% of the sample saw themselves as belonging to the left and centre-left sides of the spectrum, while 21% located themselves on the right and centre-right of the spectrum. These tendencies correspond to data collected four years ago. Both then, and now, generational idiosyncrasies are verifiable. The proportion of right wing and centre-right young people is significantly higher among youth age groups than those of older age groups.

As far as the liberal-conservative political spectrum is concerned, young people demonstrate rather liberal tendencies. More respondents chose to answer items about this traditional divide than when asked whether they were of right or left affiliation. Only 13% of those interviewed abstained from answering this item. 40% placed themselves around the middle of the spectrum. 23% see themselves as rather liberal, while 12% see themselves as rather conservative.

**Figure 9: How much do you trust ... ?
(average of scale ranging from -40 to +40)**

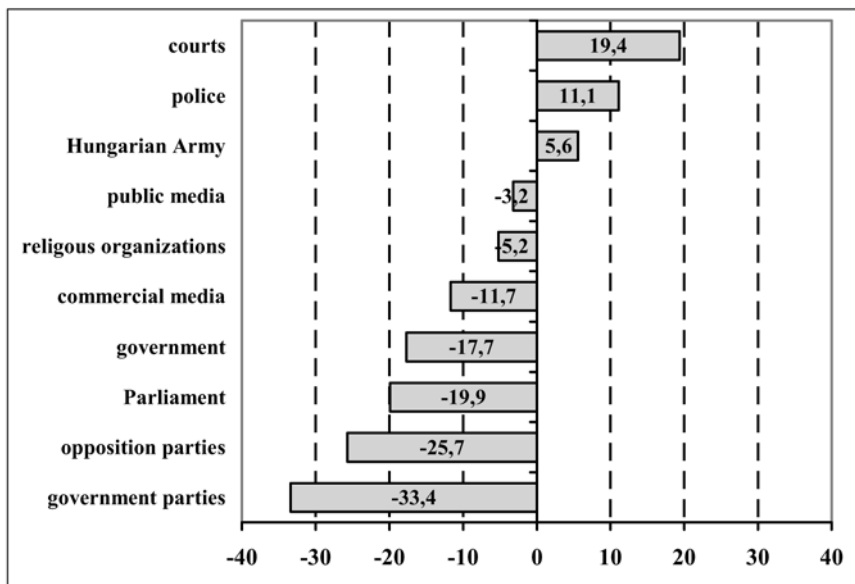
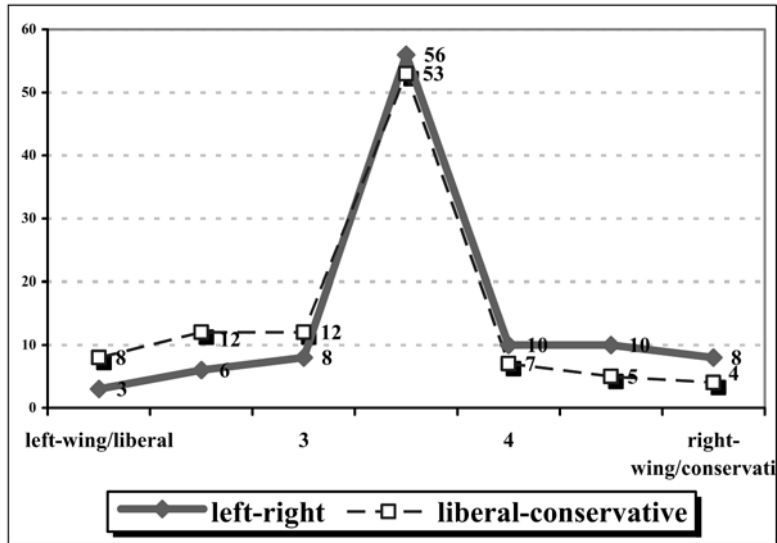


Figure 10: Left-right and liberal-conservative political affiliation (7 degree scale, in percentages)



The previous chapters made it apparent that along with the growth of time spent in education, the past decade has seen young people attaining financial autonomy at a later age. Therefore, parents' ways of thinking still have a strong influence on young people.

We would therefore like to question whether one can talk of conformity or non-conformity.

Data inclines us to talk of conformity since a significant portion of young people (43%) are in line with their parents on political issues. A tenth of young people between 15 and 29 report having contrary opinions to that of their parents', and around a third agree only on certain issues. Around 13% found themselves unable to answer the question, perhaps due to the fact that politics do not play role within the parental environment. 15-19 year olds, females, and children of highly educated fathers who are still in education hold the most conformist outlooks.

The older the respondent, and thus the more experience they have, the more likely they are to oppose parents on political issues.

Lost Highway: Polish higher education in transition

Dominik Antonowicz

The university is a social institution with the power to shape social stratification because knowledge (provided and certificated by higher education institutions) is an attribute owned by the individual which strengthens vertical as well as horizontal mobility. According to Simon Jenkins the higher education institutions took over the functions of symbolic initiations from the guild organisations. It remains structured around its medieval roots which are still vividly present, despite the bureaucratic structure of the contemporary university. Academia still has a monopoly on the authorisation of possession of formal knowledge and demonstration of skills, by awarding a set of academic titles such as bachelors, masters, doctorates and professorships. Even if universities are losing their elite character as we enter the epoch of mass higher education, the awarded degrees remain a pass to the middle class.

1. Higher education under the communist regime

Under the socialist regime Polish universities became organised and top-down controlled, bureaucratic organisations. This was a result of the economic structure (heavy industry prioritisation leading to emphasis on technical and vocational education), as well as the nature of political ideology (central planning as opposed to free market competition, including the planning of student numbers and subjects to be studied). A new stratum of intelligentsia was to be created primarily from among workers and peasantry by facilitating their access to secondary and higher education. One of the principles of educational policy was the transformation of social structure. Educational inequalities as such were regulated by means of egalitarian social policy and resource redistribution (Antonowicz i Simonova 2006).

Therefore higher education institutions were by definition state institutions with very little autonomy. The state control over universities stemmed from political suspicion as universities had always been regarded as a bastion of independent thinking – the hidden enemy of the system. On the other hand the socialist dogma about the uselessness of academic education and knowledge was wide-spread in society. That is why in the Soviet Block, higher education did not play a dominant role in professional development. Education was not totally neglected, it was just undervalued. Although in some cases it opened a door to higher social status and power, the instrumental value of education was low due to lack of direct correlation between the level of education and the level of income

(Białecki 1993: 34). Moreover, the reality of socialism led Włodzimierz Wesolowski (1975) to form a hypothesis of decomposition of traditional attributes of social position: income, education, power, and social status. This illustrates the reality of Polish higher education under the communist regime supported by the working class myth that higher education is a holding pen for people who have no idea about their future (adult) perspective.

The socio-economic transformation of the 1990s changed everything, so twenty-five years after the Wesolowski hypothesis was formed, Jan Denecki (1997) and Henryk Domański (1994) talked about the re-composition of these attributes. Contrary to the times of socialism, in democratic and liberal Poland knowledge and education became positive functions of professional career development, and became the desire of hard-working and ambitious individuals. The university diploma became a priceless certificate legitimising knowledge and skills in the labour market. In the beginning of the 1990s a masters degree guaranteed a full time job which was a profitable and a quite secure post in the very unstable times of the restructuring the post socialist economy.

Finally, the Poles began to believe that in the free market economy fundamental rules of meritocracy were being applied, and that knowledge and skills did have a positive impact on professional careers and salaries. More importantly, the process of education is generally perceived as self-investment and self-development in a continuous drive for excellence (por. Domański 2000; Danecki 1997).

2. The educational boom of the 1990s

After 1989 tight political control over universities went, together with the communist system it represented. The universities were finally being released from political hands-on-management because the democratic wind of change rolled back the frontiers of the state. The free market economy required an educated and skilled labour force, and more importantly, it also created financial mechanisms to reward the best quality of labour. It restored the fundamentals of meritocracy which naturally caused a growing demand for education. Unfortunately, the Polish bureaucratic system of higher education was inflexible, under-funded and poorly managed. It simply was not able to face such a great demand. To add insult to injury, the state budget was in such a critical condition (due to hyperinflation and unemployment) there were no additional funds for extra students to be lectured.

The relief for potential students came with new, very liberal legislation (Higher Education Act 1990), which established a market of higher education. Luckily, despite the communist past, cultural boundaries had allowed the

academic community to remain strong, and liberal universities had an important influence on the direction of changes in the Act of 1990 (see Jabłeczka 1994: 14). The new act paved the way to a free, liberal and autonomous higher education system in Poland. It granted greater autonomy to universities by restoring decision-making power to the rectors and the academic senates, and returning their authority to manage and govern universities. According to the Act, the freedom of all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to teach and research is reflected in several dimensions:

- *Legal foundations delegated by the Act to the higher school statutes (...)*
- *Decentralization of power and responsibilities from the central level down to lower levels (e.g. departments, institutes). According to the Act, the Minister of National Education is responsible only for overall educational policy (...).*
- *The division of power and responsibilities between heads of departments, deans and rectors on the one hand and collegial bodies of the same level on the other hand (...)*
- *To some extent ministerial decisions are subject to supervision by the Main Council of Higher Education, a democratically elected body with both advisory and decision-making powers (...)*
- *Rectors and deans are elected for a three year-term (...)* (Jabłeczka 1994:16)

Liberalisation of higher education was primarily created in order to address a heavy demand on education, but also in order to create an internal market and competition among the universities. The idea was to put some dynamism to the elements of a stiff socialist system, and make them as flexible, responsive and diverse as possible. Practically, it was meant to enrich the potential offered by widening the spectrum of courses with innovative ideas seen in the private schools. The most important thing was to increase the accessibility of higher education to all citizens (who are intellectually able to study) regardless of their social standing. The new legislation opened a door for private higher education institutions. On the one hand there were a number of potential students whose parents had money in hand to invest in education, and on the other hand a very limited number of (unpaid) places at higher education institutions. The only option was to introduce private education for those who were willing to pay for their studies.

Liberalising the legal framework became a milestone of an increasing number of private higher education institutions, and also boosted a paid form of studies at public universities. In 2005 the total number of higher education institutions reached 400. Simultaneously, the number of students in these institutions increased five times from 403,000 (1990) to almost 2,000,000 in 2005. The rapid growth applied mainly to the private sector of higher education where over that period 250 private institutions launched their activities. The process named by

Bronisław Misztal (2000) as *privatisation of Higher Education*, became a unique phenomenon as the private sector of higher education did not fit the overall picture of privatization in Poland. It grew up neither on the basis of destroyed (bankrupted) state institutions or through the transfer of ownership from public to “foreign hands,” as has most frequently happened (Misztal 2000). On the contrary, from the very beginning, private universities and colleges grew freely despite the existence of well-established public universities. This was possible because the private institutions seemed to be very different from public ones in terms of targeted students. They play a complementary role to the state universities, widening participation in higher education but not forcing any public universities out of business.

3. *McUniversity*

In a comparison to the times of socialism when higher education institutions were under strict political and bureaucratic control, the Higher Education Act (1990) allowed almost unlimited freedom. The power of government was very limited and almost symbolic, relying almost solely on traditional academic values and peer pressure. Nevertheless, the increasing number of schools revealed a wide range of hidden inadequacies and problems which were branded as “unsolved” in the communist times.

First and most problematic was a deficit of academic staff; both professors and junior academics. The old elite universities did not require a great number of academics as they underlined a quality apprenticeship rather than the mass production of students. In addition, due to the ideological principles of socialism, modest resources were invested into science and education, as they were thought to be bourgeois leftovers. The new democratic government did not invest either, since in the first place they had to face political tensions caused by rapidly increasing unemployment. Due to insufficient resources invested in higher education there were (is) not enough academics to lecture students and conduct both basic and applied research. Worse, a flourishing number of private schools had to employ academics from public schools, and this doubled and even tripled their lecturing hours, leaving no time for research and development. In reality, the professors were needed only to provide their academic titles to legitimise the institution and often did not even turn up at the school (except on a pay-day) because it is much cheaper to pay young academics to run the lectures instead. The unregulated nature of the relationship between the private and public institutions, and a lack of peer or state quality control, led to a number of pathological practices.

Such great demand and limited supply of higher education resulted in a new model higher education institution. Unfortunately a taste of easy money – previously unknown to academia – caused a number of both private and public schools to be established primarily to earn as much money as students could pay, and in the shortest possible time. As a result of these changes a previously unknown model of ‘McUniversity’ materialised in Polish higher education.

Universities became *another component of the consumer society* (Ritzer 1996:186) in which they are producers (or at least service-providers), whereas students, and (more importantly) their parents, were assigned the customer status. The McDonaldization of society (1993) is defined by George Ritzer as *the process by which the principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate*. The principles underlined by Ritzer are based on fundamental values: efficiency, predictability, calculability (with strong emphasis on quantification) and obviously control. McDonaldization does not necessarily mean poor quality, taking the example of Coffee Haven a chain restaurant which is generally praised for the quality of its service.

However, in general the McUniversity sells junk education which looks attractive only in the advertisements. When it comes to consumption there appears to be “a big catch” and a nasty surprise. For example the great building from the advert appeared to be the palace of the chancellor but students must actually squeeze into the nursery because it was the cheapest building for rent. Famous professors whose names should legitimise the school actually never visit, and instead their lectures are being taken by the junior academics. The professors who do lecture students do not seem to be very enthusiastic about having to spend extra time on their largely anonymous students. The process of McDonaldization introduces an impersonal model of contractual relation between professors and students. It also reduces, and worse dehumanises, the relationship with students because the student is only a customer who receives what they pay for. In practical terms, their relationship is no different than in a fast food restaurant where the customer pays for a product then must make way for the next person in the queue.

So junk education; like junk food, from a distance looks very promising and attractive but problems arise as we uncover a more detailed explanation. The driving force behind the McUniversity is to maximise profits by serving the largest number of people possible. The jobs available are routine and have tightly scripted procedures. The academics employed are given a quantitative number of specific tasks, which should be performed effectively and within a specific time period. What matters for McEducation is the number of students processed, not the quality of teaching. So there is no (or very little) selection based on merit, as long as students keep paying their tuition fees. In many cases, academics had to

pass all students regardless of their achievements otherwise they received no pay. In other words, many Polish higher education institutions were simply selling bachelor and masters certificates. In many cases these were worth less than the paper they were printed on. This sell out was indirect and the payments divided into parts over prolonged periods of time.

The Mcdonaldization of higher education is a multidimensional and complex process but it appears to be only a transitional period. It affects the relationship between higher education institutions in the outside world in many different ways – both positively and negatively. Unfortunately the concept also shapes the relationship within academia, dehumanising interactions between professors and students.

4. Demographic low – the great hope or dead end?

What is the future of Polish higher education? One of the most important factors, which has a profound influence on higher education, is the demographic balance of the population. Rethinking the influence of the demographic factor over the last century, and examining it from the intergenerational perspective, one can clearly see that population swells appeared relationally and consecutively with respect to the demographic distribution of the population. The general tendency is towards a demographic ‘high’ entering the reproductive age and creating an increase in birth rate (e.g. over 763,000 in 1950, 723,000 in 1983) while conversely, a demographic ‘low’ has the opposite effect. In the last two decades, Polish society has undergone a wide range of deep social changes, which has also affected the model of the family, and lifestyle more generally. Since the mid 1980s a gradual decrease in the birth rate has been observed. It is difficult to say what exactly the driving force behind this tendency is. However, tough competition on the labour market, an unstable financial situation, responsibility for bringing up children, or simply a desire to have an easy life are among the main reasons being cited for the demographic crises.

Examining birth rates, it must be pointed out that in 1990 547.7 thousand children were born in Poland, whereas last year (2004) there were only 340 thousand! This drop of around 40% (200 thousand) is worrying and shocking, in particular because this tendency is very clear and constant over the recent past. Put simply, this means that in five years time there will only be 320 000 secondary school-leavers. Practically at least, 80 000 seats will remain empty which is 1/5 of today’s high school population. Unfortunately, in the future the number of higher education entrants will fall, and (in 2015) will have dropped to the critical level of 250 000, leaving 150 000 seats empty.

There is no doubt that this situation will have a profound effect on the future of higher education. Both public and (in particular) private higher education institutions will have to compete tooth and nail for (literally) every student in order to survive on the market. Even if some of the higher education institutions specialise in life-long learning and address their programmes to adults, undoubtedly some will have to face bankruptcy as there simply will be not enough students. This will be an all-or-nothing game. That is why the evaluation of the quality of teaching will play such a significant role. Facing the danger of loosing business it is very likely that the temptation of selling certificates will naturally re-emerge. This puts great responsibility on the Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA)'s shoulders, who must be tough in drawing a line between good quality, and unacceptable practice.

This also raises a question regarding the role of the state, and governmental policy toward higher education. Can Poland afford to maintain more than 150 public higher education institutions when a maximum of 15-20 can compete with other European universities in areas of research and teaching? The rest represent mediocrity, or even poor levels of performance (mostly teaching). Their existence stems more from political interest and overgrown aspirations of local elites than the principles of public policy. Due to the fact that their curriculum is heavily dominated by teaching, the shortage of students may undermine the purpose of their existence. Whether the government will be determined to protect the public interest and tough enough to shut universities down is a completely different question. The Polish experience shows however, that governments are ineffective in tackling "wicked issues" and the public good is usually sacrificed for the sake of particular (professional or regional) interests.

To sum up, there is no doubt that the demographic crisis will force the higher education institutions to change their McStrategy and develop approaches orientated more towards the individual and their subjective needs. This will apply primarily to the private institutions because they rely entirely on students fees. However, public universities must also change their attitudes towards students; otherwise they will end up with nothing. The student-client may regain a more personal relationship with the process of education, and will attract more attention from both the university administration and academics. In a quest for survival on the market, the mechanical McLecturing is not going to be enough. In order to stay on the market, higher education institutions will have to foster an individualist approach towards the students because being one of many as in the fast-food restaurant will not bring satisfaction.

Would it help to bring back the spirit of higher education? It is hard to predict the outcome of these changes but this will definitely change the nature of Polish higher education institutions, both the public and the private. Not all of

those will defend their places on the market, but those which do will have to adapt to a completely new environment. So, whatever happens, the changes in Polish higher education become a fascinating issue since underneath the academic conservatism there is a hidden dynamism which shapes its nature.

5. Unanswered questions

The liberalisation of higher education has put a question mark over the practicalities of free higher education. The education act of 1990 created an opportunity to establish non-state higher education institutions and allowed them to charge for provided services. Liberalising legislation meant also allowing state higher education institutions to initiate paid forms of education, such as different sorts of part-time education.

Theoretically, the Polish Constitution, Article 70, says, "Education in public schools is free of charge", but in the subsequent articles it allows schools to charge for "certain educational services". In practice this means that full-time studies at public universities are free, but part-time students and those who take evening courses have to pay tuition fees. This has produced a very profitable business for the universities. Aiming to find an answer for the question of practicalities of free higher education requires clearly defining the nature of higher education.

The first perspective addressed here defines higher education as an investment, and further as a symbol that alumni have to fulfil their role as responsible and intelligent citizens. From that perspective, one may understand higher education as a kind of individual investment of time, hard work, and financial resources by the person involved in the education process. Therefore the individual is "the main investor" and must remain the consumer of their success or failure. Despite this, individual achievements indirectly benefit society as well, since better educated, more creative individuals are the driving force of the (knowledge) economy. Taking this perspective one might agree that universities must have the right to take as many students as they wish, and set fees on the level they feel most appropriate. The second perspective defines higher education as a simple consumer good, while higher education institutions are only tools in the hands of the government which help to distribute resources equally. Since education is a simple consumer good the government is responsible for a fair distribution, and in this case, that means distribution in equal proportions to the citizens from all social strata.

Whatever perspective we take, there is no doubt that according to the analysis conducted by Jan Rutkowski (1996: 88) the level of income became a positive function of education and the level of return from investment has risen. In

other words, after 1989 higher education clearly becomes a good choice for the professional career. This trend is also reflected in the polls (1995 – 78% , 1999 – 90%) where people found levels of education to be an important indicator of social position, and as a symbol of personal success (por. Falkowska 2000). In other words, higher education pays off, and this encourages more and more people to begin education at a tertiary level. The debate surrounding the introduction of tuition fees for full-time students in the public universities has not been settled. To be frank, it has not even started yet as there have been many slogans and declarations but little serious discussion. In fact, there are strong arguments from both sides, but the final decision requires an examination of the facts (not the myths) with political courage and wisdom. So far this has not been demonstrated by the government.

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INFORMATION

Reflections on the Situation of Youth Research in Central and Eastern Europe

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Youth research in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in the beginning of the 21st century is searching for its identity somewhere on a scale between the local and the global. European and world influences intermingle with local problems, past traditions, and regional specifics. If we want to understand the current situation of youth research in the CEE, we have to look at the societies in the region, the way they construct youth, the structure of their youth policies in accordance with societies' main problems, and their chosen strategies for solutions. Besides this, one needs a historical approach to capture the developments that have led to the present state, the processes of change that have resulted in a particular assortment of perspectives, methodologies, institutional structures, informal networks, and the power distribution among them.

This short article is only the beginning of the debate over the state and future of youth research under post-communism. Neither in the Soviet Block or the present stage of European integration have societies in the region been thoroughly identical. Current challenges make their studies on society and youth even more divergent. Given the underdeveloped channels of communication among researchers in CEE, many studies and even whole national programs remain largely inaccessible for comparative research (Chisholm and Kovacheva, 2002). This article focuses on youth research structures and themes in Bulgaria (the author's home country) and its neighbours, as well as Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, which have kept the tradition of widely publishing youth studies. Due to a lack of research-based information the situation in other countries can only be loosely sketched by highlighting the more general trends.

The development of youth research in the CEE can be summarised into the following five stages (See Table 1). The most recent is still under way and its definition is more a prognosis than an evaluation of an existing state. The analysis of the stages follows the governing patterns of the social construction of youth in the region, the institutional structures of youth research and its dominant themes, concepts and methodological perspectives.

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Table 1. Stages of Development of Youth Research in CEE

	Time period	Social Construction of Youth	Youth Research Structures	Theoretical Perspectives	Methodology
1.	60s-70s	Youth as the builder of the bright communist future	Research centres and institutes established by the state and amply subsidised	Youth as a socio-biological group, socialisation of youth, juvenitisation of society	Large-scale country-wide representative surveys
2.	80s	Youth as experiencing problems between aspirations and realisation	Tightening of control over institutes and researchers, sanctions against the non-conforming, fostering international co-operation within the framework of UN and ISA	Youth as comprised of different subgroups (students, workers, peasants), non-formals, self-realisation, self-determination, youth subcultures	Large-scale country-wide surveys, comparative surveys within the Soviet block and world-wide, ethnographic studies
3.	Early 90s	Youth disappears from public discourse, "equal chances for all"	Closure of some research institutes, others turning to teaching courses or marketing research	Youth, along with other groups, facing the challenges of the Transition, entrepreneurship, democracy	Surveys, as well as small-scale qualitative studies
4.	Late 90s	Youth as a vulnerable group in the process of economic liberalisation	Mushrooming of new research centres, nongovernmental agencies, informal international networks	Youth emerges as specific groups with specific problems, social exclusion, social integration	Methodological pluralism: national and international surveys, case-studies, interviews-in-depth, life history, focus groups
5.	Beginning of 21 st century	Youth as a positive force, an actor in the economic and social upheaval	Co-operation between youth research and youth policy within the countries and on the European level, new stage in European youth research collaboration	Youth participation, Youth as an active agent in European integration, The problem of generations	Methodological pluralism continues, large-scale comparative research, as well as small-scale local studies

The establishment of youth studies as a legitimate academic discipline in East Central Europe and the setting up of a research agenda in the 60s and 70s came with rising political concerns and mounting economic difficulties in the Soviet camp. First the German Democratic Republic in 1966, then in the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Romania and subsequently other nations, youth research institutes were founded, or research centres were established, at the Academies of Sciences and major universities. This strategy followed ideological considerations – youth was perceived as the most optimistic and hence the least dangerous group to be studied empirically. In countries with youth protest movements, as in Slovenia, the communist state did not develop institutional structures for youth research ((Ule and Renner, 1998). Under the communist regimes the unwritten social contract was “The Party cares for the young, the young are faithful to the Party”. The activists of the Youth Communist Leagues (the Komsomol) were not only the youth workers of the time, providing various social services, but also managers of the youth research centres influencing their thematic policy. Despite the ideological underpinning, the studies carried out by youth institutes were among the best examples of empirical research in the eastern part of the continent during the communist regimes, while most other fields of sociology were abstractly theoretical and under the influence of the official Marxist ideology.

The first phase of youth research in the state socialist countries also gave rise to important conceptual reflections. This started with discussions of class and age as stratifying factors, and addressed how to specify youth as a social group given the biological and developmental components (Mitev, 1969). The work of the Russian sociologist (Kon, 1967) provided an elaborate concept of socialisation, linking the development of the personality to the specific social relations and institutions. The Romanian sociologist Fred Mahler (1983) developed the idea of juvenisation to reflect the innovation that young people introduce into society and envisioned the development of youth research into the science of juvenology.

In the 80s youth studies faced new social challenges – as the economic limitations of the centrally planned economy became more obvious, attempts were made to free space for private initiative. Young people were still the main beneficiaries of the state social policy and were expected to contribute to technological innovation and strengthening of the economy. The amounting problems and discontent among the youth were interpreted as a mismatch between their growing aspirations and the ‘still’ limited job opportunities. Youth researchers have gathered much empirical information about the varying expectations and experiences of young people and started conceptualising youth as comprised of different subgroups: students, workers, and peasants. Bulgarian and Russian researchers theorised about the self-realisation of the personality (See

for an overview of the concept Kharchenko 1999) while Baltic sociologists advanced the concept of self-determination. The latter focused on the choices young people made during their transitions through life - from one educational stage to another, from education to work, from the parents' family to creating their own, etc. Using this paradigm, sociologists insisted on looking closer at young people's own beliefs and values, which had been largely neglected up to then.

During this second stage, youth research was already well institutionalised and abundantly subsidised in most Warsaw Pact countries. The communist regimes fostered international co-operation in the youth field in the attempt to advertise "the growing success of the state youth policy". East-West communication flourished despite the obvious barriers - the different political and cultural contexts, different themes and theoretical perspectives, and even different methodologies (youth studies in the East were almost wholly identified with large-scale quantitative surveys while small-scale qualitative studies dominated research traditions in the West). Good examples are the projects dedicated to the International Youth Year in 1985. The first two presidents of RC34 came from South-East Europe – the Romanian Ovidiu Badina and the Bulgarian Petar-Emil Mitev. International conferences and seminars were organised on a regular basis in Primorsko, Costinesti, Leipzig, Moscow, and Bratislava. While German youth researchers from the institutes in Munich and Leipzig were not allowed officially to communicate with each other, Munich, Sofia and Bucharest had a 'cultural contract' to hold regular alternating conferences annually. The only World Congress of Sociology held in Eastern Europe was organised in 1970 in Varna, Bulgaria. Of course, the lists of congress participants were carefully checked out by the local organisers, as were the papers of the Eastern scholars. Regardless, communication between researchers on both sides of the continent, as well as within Eastern Europe, was well developed and there were many opportunities for publishing research results. For example, there were two research journals in Bulgaria – one in Bulgarian 'Problemi na mladezta' and one in Russian – 'Problemi molodezi', the latter specialising in comparative studies. The People's Youth Press in Sofia became a major publishing centre for international youth research (See for example Hartman and Stefanov, 1984).

The period of the 80s was also a time of tightening state control over youth research. When researchers turned to topics that were inconsistent with the tale of successful youth policy and loyal youth (such as the deviant behaviour of the 'non-formals' (youth dissident groups)), state funding was withdrawn. Individual researchers and whole institutes were punished and banned from participation in international research projects or in conferences and seminars abroad. In Romania for example, Ceausescu's regime was particularly oppressive towards the widely known youth researchers Fred Mahler and Ovidiu

Badina. However, they could rely on the support of their colleagues at home and abroad, particularly the network of the RC34. When Badina could not publish his important book 'Youth in the Contemporary World' in Romania, this 'youth bible', as it was known among the East European youth sociologists, came out in Bulgaria with the personal endorsement of Mitev, the then RC34 president.

The social transformation in the region after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 affected youth studies in many ways. Although young people played a prominent role in the 'gentle' revolutions in the Soviet Block countries, they lost the privileged position which they enjoyed from the ideology and social policy of the communist regimes. A process of deconstruction of youth took place, similar to the one in advanced market societies (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998). Factors such as the prolongation of the youth phase, the loss of clear cut age boundaries, and the increasing differentiation and individualization of young people all played a role in the CEE in the first half of the 90s; however the post-communist deconstruction had its additional specific effects. The liberal ideology of the new political elite in most CEE countries stressed the social role of individualism and implied that if only all individuals, independently of their age, were left free from the party and state control, their entrepreneurial activity would alleviate all social problems. Young people were perceived as no longer needing privileges from a patronising state. What they needed was an equal chance in life. The disappearance of the former mass official youth organizations is another significant factor for the deconstruction of youth under post-communism. Together with the Komsomol young people lost their political representation, even though this was in a largely token form during communism. Numerous new youth associations had to spread themselves very thinly to make a difference in public discourse and policy considerations.

In this third phase youth research infrastructure suffered a major blow - some institutes were closed (re. Bulgaria), as they were perceived to be associated with the previous regime, while others (such as the Romanian Institute) found themselves deprived of the abundant state financing. The old research institutions had to look for new sources of funding, and many, such as the Russian Youth Institute in Moscow, found this in teaching courses in prestigious subjects such as psychology or business studies, or by producing opinion polls and market research. Individual researchers also left youth studies in large numbers to go to the more profitable spheres of private businesses, politics, or advertising. As young people themselves, some youth researchers ventured along the road of emigration abroad, as far away as the United States and Australia. Those who persisted in the youth field in the CEE countries had to rediscover small-scale studies since the sources for financing large nation-wide surveys had disappeared. Once again support from international networks both informal and formal, such as

the RC34 with its first female president Sibylle Huebner-Funk, was of great importance for the survival of youth studies in the region.

The second half of the 90s was a period of overcoming the initial crisis in society, and in social research. Addressing the increasing individualisation and differentiation among young people, the focus of the social construction of youth was placed on the specific problems of specific groups among youth: the young homeless, the young unemployed, the young drug addicts, youth religious movements, etc. Youth started to be seen as posing problems for society, and not as an asset or resource. This resulted in a proliferation of agencies and state departments dealing with youth: education, health, labour, police and the army. However, each had differing definitions and diverging approaches in finding solutions.

A process of institutional pluralisation took place in the youth field in the CEE with many new centres coming into being. This had not been possible when there was only one recognised state institute. The new university departments teaching social sciences and the numerous marketing and polling companies also started doing youth research. The Centre for Social Psychology/Youth Studies in Slovenia can be cited as an illustration of this trend, developing into a well established and internationally recognized institution for youth research. The institutional pluralisation was accompanied with a high outflow and inflow of researchers in the field. With the generational change, youth research experienced a conceptual opening up to new themes and ideas, new approaches, and new methodologies. Instead of looking for the juvenitisation of society, youth researchers revealed problems in the social integration of youth (Chuprov and Zubok, 2000) and focused on social exclusion. A most remarkable feature of the fourth stage of youth research in the CEE is the methodological pluralism. National and international surveys were matched with case-study approaches, life history and focus group interviewing.

Economic pressures account for a lot of these changes. The new centres found themselves competing for scarce sources of funding. These came either directly from foreign agencies such as the programmes of the European Commission and the Council of Europe; national governments such as the German, Austrian, American, and Dutch; private foundations such as Ford, MacArthur, the Open Society, Friedrich Ebert, etc; or from local voluntary organisations, which had the resources and skills to use research data. Again, in most cases this meant NGOs with foreign affiliations. This structure of funding sources had two important consequences. The national research agenda was largely formed by the visions and perceptions of outside bodies with the risk of missing problems specific to the youth condition in the region. Second, there was great interest in comparative studies and in Western concepts and methodologies. The East-West collaboration

gave birth to innovative studies (See for example Machacek and Roberts 1997, Bynner and Koklygina 1995, Pilkington et al, 2002), as a result of which, many informal networks developed. These contacts succeeded largely due to the personal devotion of researchers on both sides, who were strong enough to overcome travel difficulties, loss of mail, collapse of banks, road blockades, etc.

There is evidence on the beginning of a fifth period of youth research in the CEE. In the current stage of the countries' accession to the EU, youth are to be perceived again as a positive force for economic and political upheaval. The 21st century started with a renewed co-operation between youth research and youth policies in many countries in the region, and on the international arena, as shown in the process of the review of national youth policies in Estonia, Romania and Lithuania, and in the consultations for the development and adoption of the White paper of the European Commission 'A New Impetus for European Youth'. Youth is studied as an active agent of European integration (Baranovitch, 2002; Mitev, 2005) and youth participation has become a new topic for research (Kovacheva, 2000; Machacek, 2001). The European and global concerns are matched with research into local problems, such as ethnic tolerance among young people in the multicultural societies in the Balkans (Mitev and Riordan, 2002). As the youth research agenda becomes increasingly diversified, so do research methodologies in youth studies. We still need more sensitive techniques to measure the flexibility of youth transitions, the negotiations of opportunities and risks underway, and the uncertainty and ambivalence in identity formation.

In some countries the status of youth researchers vis-à-vis public administration is respectable, which results in state support for surveys and academic training as in Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Russia. In other countries youth research is hardly recognised politically or academically, remaining scattered among other disciplines. On the European level youth research in Armenia, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan is hardly visible. At present the channels of communication and dissemination on youth issues are underdeveloped throughout Europe. The Council of Europe provides contact information about researchers and institutes via its European Directory of Youth Research, as well as a database on youth research publications via the European Youth Research Bibliography. Much greater efforts are needed to make this an up-to-date, all-encompassing and effective infrastructure for European co-operation. Research networks such as RC34 of ISA, 'Youth and Generations' of ESA and CYRCE (up to 2003) served as an impetus for forming and strengthening an all-European research community. The two most widely read youth research journals in the CEE are the English language publications '*YOUNG*', and the '*Journal of Youth Studies*', in which the youth studies in Central, South or Eastern Europe are hardly visible. There are also specialised

outlets by individual research institutes that are known internationally such as DJI-DISKURS (Munich), AGORA/Debats-Jeunesses (Paris) and Mládež a spoločnosť- 'Slovak Journal for State Youth Policy and Youth Research' (Vol.XI.Bratislava). It seems that most of the former state socialist countries have lost their specialised youth research journals. Youth research is mostly published in sociological and psychological journals.

The development of youth research in the ECE has been powerfully influenced by the social upheavals in the region in the second half of the 20th century. Under state socialism youth researchers were under strong pressure to demonstrate the successes of the centralised social policy of the one-party regime. Nevertheless, they managed to reveal some real problems of young people and to create innovative concepts for their interpretation. Under post-communism, youth research has been under a process of reconstruction, experiencing a pluralisation of scientific paradigms and institutional structures. Europeanisation and globalisation have radically altered the situation of youth studies in the ECE. Youth research in the region has undergone normalisation and professionalisation, becoming an equal partner to national and European policy makers, and to young people in Europe. Its theoretical and methodological perspectives are an essential part of the richness of the European research mosaic.

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Youth Research in Austria

Reingard Spanring

This chapter gives a short overview of the historic roots and development of youth research in Austria in the 19th and early 20th century. It will be argued that due to historic circumstances and social change, youth was recognised as a social group in its own right. The development of youth groups and youth cultures deepened scientific interest in youth. In the early 20th century youth research was institutionalised, psychological theories were advanced, and sociological perspectives were introduced. After World War II youth research in Austria never regained the innovative force and publicity of the 1920s and 1930s.

A historic perspective on youth research highlights that it was social change which provided the conditions for focusing on youth in the social sciences. In order to understand the development of youth research in the German speaking countries one has to consider the roots of the youth movements. During the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) resistance groups of students came into existence which fought for freedom. These groups were recognised by society as an important factor in the liberation. This independency was praised and legitimated (e.g., in the work

Hegel). The second starting point for the development of youth as a specific group was the first attempt to overcome Absolutism in the revolutionary year of 1848. Here, the political aims were linked with social aims in that the aspirations for freedom by the students were joined by the desire for social mobility in the lower social classes. The alliance between students and workers provided a strong basis for the self-understanding of youth and led to new ideas, which were picked up during the 1860s and 1870s by the social democratic trade union movement (Rosenmayr, 1962).

At the beginning of the 20th century an emerging awareness of the specific position of youth as a group in society was linked to youth movements and youth magazines. During the first decade of the 20th century the “Wandervogel” movement was founded. Members were recruited from the sons of upper middle class families and families of civil servants. The movement combined ideals of the volunteer corps of the national independence movements with a reaction against bourgeois life and the conventions at school and in the family. Wandervogel activities were based on friendships among young men and included trips to the countryside, camp-fires and spending the night outdoors. The forms and symbols of the Wandervogel movement were soon adopted by various religious and political groups such as the proletarian youth, catholic youth, protestant youth and the national-liberal youth. The ideas of the 1848 revolution and of the trade union movement were most prominent in the proletarian youth movements of Social Democracy and of Communism, while the other youth groups focused on the protest and life philosophies of the late 19th century. However, all groups shared the view that youth was an independent group in society which strived to create its own life style and culture and to influence public affairs. Thus, the notion of youth culture was born. The youth movements came to be associated with a maturation process of the adolescent and the special status of youth in society (ibid).

The massive political changes after World War I, which included the transformation of the monarchy into a democracy in Austria, were accompanied by the feeling of a “new beginning”. The notion of youth was generally equated with social renewal, especially with respect to community life, morality and social institutions. Youth research at that time primarily meant criticism of the conditions, and did not distinguish between empirical work and the promotion of values. However, in the social democratic and protestant youth movements there was interest in linking a scientific approach with the problems of young people.

The development of youth research in Vienna must also be seen in the context of the education and social policy of the socialist government of the 1920s and the

striving intellectual climate of the city at that time. The combination of the youth culture movement, youth work, reform pedagogy and youth research is found in the prominent work of Siegfried Bernfeld, Charlotte Bühler and Paul Lazarsfeld.

Siegfried Bernfeld (1892-1953) was himself a member of the youth movement and was involved in practical pedagogic work. He was influenced by the experiential and empirical approaches of the philosophers and psychologists of his time, by the first discussions of the newly developed psychoanalysis of Freud, and by the introduction of an empirical sociology by Franz Zizek (1912). Bernfeld's approach has a physio-biological basis, a psychological orientation, and attempts to broaden this with a sociological perspective. In his dissertation (1915) Bernfeld is concerned with a binding method for youth research and a definition of youth. With respect to method Bernfeld refers to the American G. Stanley Hall (1904) who has interviewed a great number of children using questionnaires. However, Bernfeld recognises that there are problems of validity with using survey methods in children and youth research, and advocates the use of interpretative methods as well as statistical quantifying methods. Bernfeld himself collects and analyses literary products of young people such as letters, poems and diaries. In his later work on the community life of young people (1922) he develops sociograms on the basis of correspondence between 5 girls, and interviews with the group.

With respect to a definition of youth, Bernfeld refers to those years between the finalisation of the development of the psycho-physical elements, especially sexuality, and the chance to realise one's sex life in a socially accepted way. This discrepancy between the psycho-physical and the socio-cultural reality leads to such tensions in the young person that they call into question the social environment and its order. While rules for the type and duration of the youth phase are difficult to identify from a psychological perspective, Bernfeld points to the variations produced by the social structure. This sociological question was later picked up by Paul Lazarsfeld in his study "Youth and Occupation" (1931).

Bernfeld was interested in youth research as an instrument for supporting the youth culture movement, restructuring youth life, and reforming education at school and in the family. In 1913 he founded the "Archive for Youth Culture" ("Archiv für Jugendkultur") which collected empirical material including student newspapers and reports of youth groups and secret organisations. In 1917 Bernfeld published his plan to found an "Institute for the Psychology and Sociology of Youth" ("Institut für Psychologie und Soziologie der Jugend"), which was intended to link youth research and youth policy. In 1922 he founded

the “Jewish Institute for Youth Research and Education” (“Jüdisches Institut für Jugendforschung und Erziehung”) (Dudek, 1990).

In the work of Charlotte Bühler (1883-1974) we find links to philosophy, poetry and literature; also the idea of developmental stages during childhood and adolescence. Methodologically we see the rich use of para-literary documents such as diaries, letters and confessions. Her interest in diaries seems to be more influenced by the cultural psychological ideas of Wilhelm Dilthey than by the self-descriptions found in the youth movements which sparked Bernfeld’s interest in diaries (Rosenmayr, 1962). One of Bühler’s major contributions is the study on the inner life of young people during puberty, which is based on the data of 76 diaries. While this method allowed her to follow the lives of young people over several years it does not allow the researcher to identify typical life courses and developments. Similarly, Bernfeld Bühler defines youth as the period of puberty in the biological sense. On the psychic level, puberty is characterised by a longing and a desire for a (sexual) partner. Considerable attention is therefore given to erotic feelings and sexual behaviour during puberty. On the cultural and social level, puberty involves difficulties associated with integration into the world of the adults. Bühler identifies a negative and a positive phase during puberty. The former involves anger and hatred against oneself or the environment; defiance, disobedience and despondency. While the latter involves a joyful affirmation of life based on the experience of nature, values and love. Bühler stresses the socialising role of the peer group and the supporting role of friends during the phase when family ties are loosened. In her book on childhood and youth (1931) Bühler deals in depth with social relations, including peers and friends of the same sex, as well as peer groups and youth movements. Bühler sees all forms of communities and socialising in young people as phenomena belonging to the realm of psychology. However, in her research on the understanding of the art and literature of young people, and the description of friendship and peer groups, she also considers the influence of the young people’s social background. The method of using diaries proved somewhat limited with respect to the social background of the children in Bühler’s samples, since the interest and ability required to keep a diary is largely restricted to children of the upper middle class.

Charlotte Bühler and her husband, Karl Bühler, worked at the “Pedagogical Institute of the City of Vienna” (“Pädagogisches Institut”) which was founded in 1923. Their activities had a considerable effect on Viennese school reform and understandings of the psychology of children and youth. After 1927 Karl Bühler lead the “Psycho-economic Research Institute” (“Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle”), which comprised a number of work groups including the

social-psychologically and empirically oriented group based around the mathematician Paul Lazarsfeld (Dudek, 1990).

Paul Lazarsfeld's interest in youth issues stems from ideas he encountered in his involvement in youth movements. Lazarsfeld (1901-1976) was member and leader of youth movement groups associated with the Social Democrats. The first study he carried out was greatly influenced by Bernfeld's reform pedagogical experiment with the children's home "Baumgarten" (Bernfeld, 1921). The main result of this study is the recognition of the importance of groups in the education of larger masses of children. The reference group is a necessary setting for processes of self-education. With respect to methodology Lazarsfeld introduces surveys and statistical analyses. While also basing his research on a different theoretical consideration than Bühler in that he emphasises the necessity to go beyond individual psychological data and to look at the direction which societal development has taken (Lazarsfeld, 1931). Social change must be investigated by the means of empirical research. Another innovation in youth research was Lazarsfeld's focus on working class youth. In his study on youth and occupation (1931), for example, he combines survey data on job expectations and wishes, with social background information of the respondents, and adds statistical information on the social and occupational structure. In the context of working class youth Lazarsfeld talks about a "shortened puberty": "The socially disadvantaged adolescent is extremely constrained in time and space and is pushed into the role of the adult at an age which, according to their development, is not yet a match for them..." (Lazarsfeld, 1931:54).

The ascent to power of the National Socialist in 1938 led to a considerable loss for youth research. Siegfried Bernfeld, Karl and Charlotte Bühler and Paul Lazarsfeld, among many other scientists, emigrated. The research policy of the Nazis had fatal consequences for the development of theory and research practice. The hegemony of the Bühler-school was disregarded and replaced by more ideologically appropriate schools and theories.

In 1962, the Austrian Institute for Youth Research was founded. While its staff are certainly not the only youth researchers in Austria today, the institute still identifies with some of the tasks formulated by the early Austrian youth researchers in the first half the 20th century. Thus, the institute has a strong tradition in cooperating with practitioners in youth organisations, youth work, and youth policy. Apart from continuous basic research, the institute sees its special task in translating research findings into the language of practitioners.

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Youth sociology in Slovakia

Ladislav Macháček

The late 1960s are associated with the establishment of the new Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and of other sociological institutions which made it possible for each of us to specialize in what is for us a new of field of science. Further, to become a kind of natural authority for a certain area of sociological theory. It can be said, with a certain amount of exaggeration, that we could become founders of Slovak sociology of the family, urban sociology, rural sociology, and suchlike. It was simply a miraculous “pioneering” period.¹⁴ It was sociology of youth that became my area of interest, and I have continued to study within this area to this day. Even at the beginning of my activities, I was searching for sources of “sociological” ideas and concepts in the works of older colleagues. These “pioneering” times of our sociology are still not (and probably will never be) fully supported by memoir sources, and perhaps for this reason they will never be fully documented.

In the publication “Sociológia mládeže ‘69” (Sociology of the Youth ‘69) with

¹⁴ See Pasiak, Jan - Machacek, Ladislav: *Sociology in Slovakia: Fiction or Reality*. In: *Eastern Europe in Transformation. The Impact on Sociology*. Ed. by M. Keen - J. Mucha. Greenwood Press, London 1994, pp. 89-99.

the subtitle “Slovenská ročenka pre teóriu a výskum mládeže” (Slovak yearly for theory and research on the youth) in the article “Situácia sociológie mládeže a výchovy na Slovensku” (The situation of the sociology of the youth and education in Slovakia) (Bratislava, Smena 1969, pp. 7-10), I emphasized that we had several important personalities active in the period between World War I and World War II, and in the post-World War II period, who pointed to the issues of health of children and the youth, who analyzed the issue of education, or who analyzed the way of living of the youth in Slovakia. One of them was Professor Alojz Chura, a doctor–paediatrician, and the author of a multi-volume research publication “Slovensko bez dorastu” (Slovakia without juniors) (1937-1939). He was famous for his slogan “medicine without sociology is just a torso” which was presented on various occasions at scientific conferences. The second personality of this kind was professor Juraj Čečetka, a pedagogue-sociologist, and the author of the work “Medzil'udské vzťahy a rovesnícke skupiny” (Interpersonal relations and peer groups) (Bratislava, SPN 1965) and “Sociológia v pedagogike” (Sociology in pedagogy) (Bratislava, SPN 1965). Professor Juraj Čečetka was not only an expert in the field of pedagogical sociology, but also an active presenter of the ideas of a new concept of state youth policy, and was one of many candidates for the position of Chairman of State Committee for Youth.

Both professors become known in my field from remote disciplines. Further, to my surprise, they were still “living” in Slovakia, and although retired, they were writing essays and analyses from their homes, waiting to see if somebody would recall them, invite them for a meeting with students, for a seminar, or ask them to contribute to a journal or to a collection of lectures.

I was really lucky to be able to meet Professor Chura and to prepare his newer reflections on sexuality of the youth for publishing in the annual journal “Sociológia mládeže 70” (Sociology of the Youth 1970, Bratislava: Smena 1970, pp. 39-52), also to give a paper at a conference (on problems of the youth) in his research paediatric institute in Trenčín., and finally, as I am already Chairman of the National Slovak Sociological Society (SSS) which is a member of the International Sociological Association (ISA), I gratefully accepted an invitation from the organizers of the seminar dedicated to the 100th birthday anniversary of Alojz J. Chura (30.11.1999), and presented some recollections of our meetings in my speech. Similarly, in the case of Professor Čečetka,¹⁵ as early as December

¹⁵ It was only later that I found out that not only I, but also other colleagues had some professional or career problems in the post-1968 period of “normalization”, due to the fact that in the years 1959-1969 they involved such (as mentioned above) personalities in their professional as well as public events who had been, for various reasons (e.g. activities during wartime Slovak State), marginalized and literally erased from the memory of the

1989 I organized a seminar on his legacy for pedagogy and sociology (together with Professor Josef Pšenák). Subsequently, there was a contest for students for the Juraj Ččetka's Award, granted by the youth pannel of the Slovak Sociological Society for the best diploma thesis of the graduates of sociology and pedagogy and dealing with the issue of youth. The participants were students from several pedagogical and sociological institutes and departments, i.e. departments or institutes in Prešov, Trnava, Bratislava and Banska Bystrica.

The real sociology of youth as an "institutionalized activity" is connected only with the 1960s, when the process of institutionalization of sociology in Slovakia (in the years 1964-1969) was completed. In this period, the Sociological Institute of SAS, Slovak Sociological Society at SAS, the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Arts of the Commenius University in Bratislava, and the scholarly journal "Sociológia - Slovak Sociological Review" (ISSN 0049-1225), were all established. Within this framework, research of youth was developing, conferences were held, and the first sociological findings on youth were published. The reflection on many areas of social life was at that time a domain of other scientific disciplines and their clearly shaped personalities. Younger, as well as older, "quick-grown sociologists"⁷ entering academia through sociology had to confront personalities from other disciplines, and their scientific writings. In some cases, sociologists were not welcomed or received well by influential personalities from well-established fields, especially from those who belonged to the system of Marxism-Leninism (this involved especially the specific field designated as scientific Communism).

With regard to the sociology of youth and education (Ondrej Baláž, Josef Koščo, Damian Kováč, Vladislav Kačáni, Ondrej Pavlík, Ernest Sýkora, Ladislav Schubert), this lack of official support was even stronger in the case of pedagogical, psychological and legal sciences. However, the community's relationship of mutual support could even be described as friendly. This resulted from the fact that the nature of these sciences was less ideologically affected (due to the age difference), but also due to the fact that our older colleagues who had

nation since they were unacceptable for the Communist regime.

A large number of students from my generation were not so lucky as to have been taught that once there had been sociology or sociography in Slovakia, that there was a scientific journal named "Sociologický zborník" (Sociological booklet) published regularly, that there is a well-deserved place in Slovak sociology for such personalities as Anton Štefánek, Julius Lajčiak, Peter Gula, Ignác Gašparec, etc. It was only at a later time that I got to know that a sociological seminar existed in Commenius' Faculty of Arts in the past. Some of our professors and associate professors were concealing – because of various personal as well as career reasons – their "sociological" history, either the fact that they had been studying sociology, or even actively worked for a certain time as assistants at the sociological seminar of Professor Anton Štefánek.

more real-life experiences understood better the risks we were taking, despite our being fully aware of the danger. It is necessary to mention that the renaissance of sociology also reintroduced the issue of interdisciplinary co-operation in the research of youth. Basically, there were two issues; on one hand there were concerns with the not quite clearly defined “pan-sociologism”. Practically, this meant there was concern not to explain all life expressions of youth solely as determined by social factors. On the other hand, Professor Juraj Čečetka accepted the fact that the sociology of youth only *overlaps* with pedagogical sociology, that it is not tied only to education, but also more broadly to the life of the youth in its full width.

In his consideration on the tasks of the research of children and the youth, he justifies and develops the need for establishing a research institute for the sociology of children and youth. On the other hand, there were positive expectations when publishing new empirical findings of sociological research. It is necessary to admit, that the opinions and attitudes of pupils, students, citizens, and representatives of various professions acting in the area of education of the young generation had a remarkable, liberating influence on the rigid, dogmatic understanding of social reality, but also on the understanding of interdisciplinary co-operation. This was also manifest in many original monographs by psychologists and lawyers (Anton Jurovský 1965, Ladislav Schubert 1967) which were published exactly in this period.

It was not possible to isolate the sociology of youth from the public discourse on the young generation, which was initiated by writers (Peter Karvaš, Pavel Bunčák, Michal Chorváth, Rudolf Olšínský), and was joined also by sociology-bound philosophers Miroslav Kusý, Jiří Suchý on the pages of Slovak journals and newspapers (“Kultúrny život”, Slovenské pohľady (Slovak outlook), “Mladé letá” (Young years), “Pravda” (Truth), etc.). In the period of the 1960s, the presentations of writers as “the bearers of the nation’s conscience” were a considerable factor of developing public opinion. Today many writers have difficulty coping with the fact that they were replaced by pop stars or by popular athletes, particularly by ice-hockey players in Slovakia. The voicing of public displeasure over untraditional displays and emerging youth subcultures stimulated the initiation of several empirical research surveys of youth. Today, we can state that the public literally suffered from a naive idea that empirical research is a tool that will produce indisputable truth, giving “ultimate” answers to complicated questions addressing the relations between the young and the older generations, and also to the development of the whole society.

Part of the discourse on youth was the publications by foreign authors, like Ernest Fischer, Andreas Flitner, Helmut Schelsky, Samuel N. Eisenstadt, and Gerhardt

Wurzbacher on generational problems and socializing and personalizing, some of which some were translated into Slovak or Czech language.

It is necessary to emphasize here our dominant orientation towards Polish sociology¹⁶. An interview given to me by Professor Jan Szczepanski for the journal "Sociológia mládeže 70'- slovenská ročenka pre teóriu a výskum mládeže" (An annual journal for theory and research of youth) has to be understood as one of numerous demonstrations of loyal or even friendly relations that were established between the sociologists of Poland and Slovakia in the process of the institutionalization of sociology in Slovakia before 1964.

I was elected to be a committee (RC 34) board member and an editor of the IBYR –Informational Bulletin for Youth Research in 1990 at the ISA congress in Madrid. It was only here, twenty years after the ISA's congress in Varna in Bulgaria (1970), that I again had a chance to contribute to what Professor Jan Szczepanski indicated in the interview through the following idea: "we hope that sociological research in this area will be coordinated to a sufficient extent" (Szczepanski, Jan: Interview with L.Machacek. In: Sociologia mládeže 70.Bratislava: Smena 1970, p.202). Today, as the discussions of the ISA's RC 34 – 'Sociology of Youth' indicated at the World Congress in Brisbane (2002), the sociological research of youth and its reflections on youth in the global citizen's

¹⁶ It is necessary to remind the readers that as a young PhD (CSc) candidate at the Sociological Institute of SAS in Bratislava, I had the opportunity in 1967 to complete a long-term study stay in Warsaw. Professor Jan Szczepanski was not only the director of our partner institute (IFiS PAN – the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, but was also he the Head of the Zaklad Badan nad Szkolnictwem Wyzszym - Section on the Higher Education Research). Thus, I spent my study stay in a collective of his collaborators (Zygmunt and Jadwiga Komorowski, Mirosława Jastrab and others). The results of my study stay were subsequently mirrored in my first scholarly study published in the Sociológia journal (1969, no.2-3, pp.182-195) under the title "K funkcii školy v akulturačnom procese" (To the function of school in the acculturation process), and I quote in this writing also his Jan Szczepanski's book "Socjologiczne zagadnienia wyzszego wykształcenia" (Sociological Aspects of Higher Education, Warszawa 1963), which publication influenced me while looking for topics for my PhD dissertation thesis "Mládež a škola: tranzície zo strednej na vysokú školu" (Youth and School: youth transitions to the university) (1968).

In the interview with Jan Szczepanski, it is possible to find some of his characteristics of sensitive questions regarding the crisis of youth in capitalist and socialist countries, and these characteristics are acceptable even today. It is also true that the International Sociological Association, especially through its Research Committee 34 – Sociology of Youth, permanently dedicated itself after the year 1970 to the coordination of sociological research in the world. By the occasion of the 90th birthday of professor Szczepanski (90 years) it was published by the Polish quarterly Studija Socjologiczne (2003, No 3) with comments of Slovak and Polish sociologists on the theme of youth sociology.

movements are an integral part of the efforts of sociologists to support world democratic governance.

As we know, August 1968 was an important month for the young people of Europe, including Slovakia. The renegeing of the allied armies of the Warsaw Pact 9 and the consequent “normalization” after April 1969 hindered the modernization process not only in Slovakia, but in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe for the following 20 years in the area of the youth life, of its youth organization, and of the state youth policy. A large number of sociologists in Slovakia were prosecuted and marginalized.

The Slovak Sociological Society – a scientific society of Slovak sociologists (a member of ISA) has, since its establishment, been playing an important role particularly because the institutional structure of research units was undersized. Besides one department of sociology (UK-University of Comenius in Bratislava) and one institute of sociology (Institute for Sociology SAS in Bratislava) practically this always concerned small sub-departments of sociology or even individual sociologists working in non-sociological research units. The sociological association was bringing together all individuals and small groups, and they were allowed to use its name (logo) for their activities. This was a very important point.

In the period of years 1988-1990, this professional association of sociologists played the role of a real agent of social change in Slovakia. But, after obtaining confidential information on our preparations in 1989 the top-ranking authorities of the then Communist establishment were considering the possibility of banning the 2nd congress of Slovak sociologists. This can hardly have a parallel in the future. Together with Róbert Roško as a conceptual designer of the sociological congress, I was as an experienced organizer who was very well aware of what was at issue in the Czechoslovakian society, and in the sociological community. Approximately 12 months prior to November 1989 there was an (eventually successful) struggle under way in this community for the establishment of its internal democratic profile, for rehabilitation of the agents of the revival process from the year 1968-1969, and for liberation from the oppression of the Party regulation of everything. All these facts were practically signalling the indecisiveness and weakness of the Communist power structures, also in the decisive struggle for the political power in then Czechoslovakia. While at the same time, the meeting “at the scene of the crime” (Matica Slovenská in the city of Martin) after 10 years, was signalling that the position of sociology and its opportunities in a pluralistic democracy are asserted in a different way. Political and even Party plurality is differentiating the sociological community to such an extent that it is difficult to look for a consensus even in purely methodological

professional issues. In the report for the General Assembly (“Sociológia” 2000, 2, p. 197-205) as the Chairman of the Slovak Sociological Society at SAS from 1998–1999, I reminded the audience, not by accident, that since its beginning the Society has been acting as a defence mechanism against disrepute of sociology brought about by various sociological amateurs and their surveys. Further, I implied newly arising threats connected with a tendency to “privatize” sociology by various privately-owned agencies. In this period, characterized by the General Assembly of ISA in Brisbane (2002) as a general emergency situation of national sociological associations, we managed to organize several events showing that the sociological society can play an important role not only for its own “community”, but also for a broader professional public which is starting to discover and understand sociology above all as a science authorized to interpret election forecasts and results.

The scientific society and the scientific journal where we certainly had a traditionally good background were changing. Meanwhile, so was my base work place; the sociological institute. After 1989, there were collapses and important changes occurring to research programs of the base scientific-research sociological work places. For the Sociological Institute of SAS, this particularly meant a literal destruction of the traditional research of social and class structure, and a re-orientation (or literally a discovery) of the issues of citizenship, citizen society, citizen movements and initiatives, and creation of a conception of research within the institute. Many colleagues took this opportunity as a challenge to find for themselves a new position in sociological research. There were fierce discussions on this orientation, conducted either within the entire sociological community or in the institute. The meetings of the Martin congress of Slovak sociologists in 1989 predicted that the context of a civil society would be an important area of transformation of the Slovak society. At first, more intensive contacts with young sociologists (Claire Wallace) with a classical sociological education and detailed knowledge of T. H. Marshall’s theory only assured us in this strategy, and they supported us in person for a couple of years. Jan Stena was appointed the first head of our research group, but after a certain hesitation we (Ol’ga Plávková, Monika Čambáliková, Ľudovít Turčan, Bohuš Búzik, Ján Sopóci etc.) were also joined by Róbert Roško; he originally wanted to concentrate on his traditional topic of social structure. It turned out that the concept of civil society, citizenship and the citizen was innovative and progressive. It established itself in sociology as one of the strategic research projects important for understanding citizen modernization in Slovakia, for explaining the troubles of the development of the Slovak society over the years, and for explaining the role of non-party subjects of citizen society in its democratic development after the year 1993.

For me personally, this was particularly a problem of how to incorporate the issues of the youth into a broader, socially relevant sociological concept. For the sociological research of youth in the years 1964-1989, it was the context of a social structure. This expressed the idea that youth reproduces the social structure in terms of the given social system, that it is perceived as a specific social-demographic group, and it is described by an exhaustive age set of people aged from 15 to 26 years. The concept of the civil society was drawing attention to youth research, but only to that part of the young generation which was able to present itself as its attractive component parts, having the form of various social, charitable, aggressive ecological or anti-globalist citizens' movements and initiatives. That was also a reason for more intensive attention to be paid to the issue of citizens' associations of youth, to the most varied forms of citizens' participation of youth, and to the issue of its formal and non-formal education towards European citizenship.

Youth research in the Czech Republic¹⁷

National Children and Youth Institute and its share on the research

The first attempts to monitor youth problems appeared in Czech sociology in the 1920's and 30's. Although youth was not the main object of study, it was merely perceived as one of the age brackets in broader sociological surveys. In the 60's there were more attempts to monitor this issue as sociology was politically rehabilitated as a science in what was then the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The youth issue was a marginal topic for some pedagogical and social pedagogical surveys. In this period the foundations of methodology for youth research were laid down.

Until 1990 youth research was realized on two levels: Firstly, within the control of the only official state organization representing children and youth (the Socialist Youth Union), and secondly at the work place of the youth department in the Academy of Sciences of the Czechoslovakian Republic. There was a connection between these two institutes, but the research topics were being solved in different qualitative ways. There existed a state program of basic research in that time, which included the monitoring of youth problems. The first attempts of

¹⁷ The information that was used in this paper was kindly provided by Dr. Houška, Dr. Pelka, Doc. Sak and workers of conceptual analytical and research department of the National Children and Youth Institute of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

interdisciplinary research including all the fields of sociology, pedagogy and psychology appeared. Within the Academy of Sciences of the CSR the youth sociology section operated. This consisted of c. 1500 researches from different areas, but with a common interest in youth issues. Results of their activities and on the levels of cooperation in the surveys were presented in discussions about special topics related to youth, and in periodic seminars.

Youth research gradually moved into the field of the Socialist Youth Union. The basic issues of research activities in the 70's were not solved in a satisfactory manner. The Analytical Conceptual department of the Central Committee of the SYU, which did not perform sociological surveys but was trying to coordinate cognitive activities, became the guarantor of state policy. Research activity was not coordinated enough, it lacked a long-term concept and systematic direction. Research topics were focused on the inner problems of the SYU, which were often considered as a general indicator for the whole youth population. It should be mentioned that there was not a workplace for data collection and analysis within this field. We can observe the tendency to develop systematic international cooperation, but only on the level of youth organizations. Extensive information about youth research in single countries was being processed. Many home-made and foreign surveys were publicised in the bulletin of the Analytical Conceptual department of the Central committee of the SYU (IMPULS).

Besides the state program of research in which youth issues were just a marginal topic, there existed a plan of youth research. The list of researches planned for the immediate future was not sufficient though. Some measures to improve the organisational element of youth research were proposed, and although they were not fulfilled they are still functional today: critical valuation of existing knowledge about youth research, processing of long-term projects for research activities about youth, securing a coordination of research, the use of knowledge brought up from research, international cooperation and formation of a specialized workplace for social youth research.

The youth issue was included in the state program of basic research. The lack of a specialized workplace which would be a guarantee of youth research and would have a coordinative and methodical function was significant. In those days, the only established workplace which was institutionally grounded was the "Institute of Pioneer" organization of the SYU. The focus of their activities was purely around the issue of children. Some time after, a research centre was established at the Central political school of the SYU. More than 100 research projects were carried out there on the topic of children and youth, many of those were in cooperation with the Czechoslovakian academy of sciences. Although much data is not compatible, we can still gain some relevant information from that research today. For example: Social profile of youth intelligence, moral and social

profile of youth aged 15-18 years, social activities of youth and metamorphoses of its social structure, youth and intensification of social-economic development, or research youth value orientation.

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After 1989 there was no established research workplace which focused on this issue. This situation is very well described by sociologist Petr Sak: “In the early 90's youth sociology became extinct. If there is any sociological research focused on youth carried out, it happens haphazardly in ad hoc grants and their information is not synthesized. Therefore there no cumulative knowledge gained”.

First attempts to systematize youth research resulted in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MŠMT) by establishing its directly controlled allowance organization Children and Youth Institute MŠMT (the follower of which is the National Child and Youth Institute MŠMT). Within this institute a department for youth and child research was established (which still functions), also a conceptually analytical research department of the National Child and Youth Institute.

After 1990 The Child and Youth Institute became the only workplace for youth research. Its department has carried out tens of research projects, including grants from MŠMT. It created a unique database, which could report on opinions and problems of youth in the period of restoration of democratic and pluralist society, based on interconnected, continual research. It also gained the experience of common international research (the first project was carried out in cooperation with the Jelinek Institute in Amsterdam).

The activity of the department was extended to the creation of a database of youth and child research accomplished by other subjects. The core of research on child and youth issues is held mainly in these workplaces (Most of them are departmental institutions of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport):

- “The Institute for information on education” which supplies analysis, surveys and prognosis of development of educational system and educational policy.
- “The National institute of professional education” which coordinates the sphere of education and labour market and it is focused also on career counselling.
- “The Research institute of education in Prague” whose interest is mainly in education of pre-school and school children, on youth, and on the education of children and youths with specific educational needs.
- “The Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs” which follows applied research in the field of labour and social affairs on

regional, nationwide and international levels. This includes social security, equal opportunities, labour market and employment.

- “The Institute for criminology and social counselling” which monitors youth criminality, its causes and consequences, and criminality against youth. It is focused on analysis and prevention of pathological phenomena.
- “The Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic” which pursues sociological research of present-day society.
- “The Association Hestia, national voluntary centre” which carries out research programs on social, social health and cultural spheres, and on the field of work with youths.
- “Firm Insoma” - Which has a preference for sociological research focused on youth issues.
- Many surveys are carried out by child and youth civic organizations

Their activities are concentrated on thematic research according to different spheres of state youth policy and on a project of indicators evaluating whether the goals of state policy have been reached. The main objectives were the following: preparation of material and data for the inception of state youth policy, cooperation in creating the methodology of youth research and initialization of the inter-branch approach to youth research, further, the cooperation of partners in the Czech Republic and abroad.

The main idea was to link the activities to continual polythematic research from 1994-97, which would provide a connection of time series.

Besides research, other aspects include; counselling, methods, educating services for individual subjects, people concerned with state administration, child and youth organizations etc. Individual subjects are mainly high school and university students.

We want to mention the research objectives of The Children and Youth Institute (IDM MŠMT) in the past, which its successor, The National Children and Youth Institute (NIDM MŠMT) can bind to.

The aims were to project and actualise child and youth research for the needs of the Ministries of education, youth and sport, and for other interested parties. Moreover to monitor child and youth research carried out in the Czech Republic and abroad. The topics were for example: youth life style, rational use of free time, value orientation of youth, relation of youth towards racism and intolerance, drug misuse, and socio-economic conditions of youth lives. The research topics are connected to these spheres of state child and youth policy:

1. Family and housing: Youth, family and housing; Family and its influence on individual formation; Young families; Free time of families with children; The economic options of families with children; The influence of parents on children's spare-time activities
2. Education and upbringing: Research on education and its practical use; Analysis of actual Centres for children and youth; Youth, education and upbringing; The influence of family and primary school on adolescents behaviour; The readiness of centres for children's free time to work with chosen social groups (with application of experience from Germany, France and Slovakia); Interest in education as an instrument of rational use of children's and youth's spare time; The influence of parents on children's spare-time activities; The motivation of adults who work in the sphere of spare time with regard to educational activities; Social climate in the environment of primary schools.
3. Labour market: The analysis of groups of the young unemployed (taken from evidence from employment offices); the issue of youth participation in the labour market
4. Participation of the young generation in social and political life
Youth participation and society; development of youth participation in social and political life at the level of public service; Civic consciousness; Voluntary service
5. Non-governmental non-profit associations acting in the sphere of children and youth:
Summer camps; Youth clubs; the profile and motivation of people focused on work with children and youth.
6. Youth and free time: Children, youth and free time; Youth activities in free time; The structure and development of spare-time activities of children and youth; Interests of children of middle school age and their function; Statistical surveys on interest activities in primary schools and high schools in CR; Spare-time activities and value orientation in connection with youth religious orientation; Survey of child and youth spare-time activity issues, and the role of Centres for children and youths; Basic survey results of opinions of high school professional activity participants; Comparative analysis of research of child and youth spare-time interests and the possibilities of their actualization.
7. Health: Disabled children and youth
8. Socio-pathological phenomena:
Youth and socio-pathological phenomena; Research of exclusion from chosen social groups; Opinions of youths age 15-20 on criminality and some socio-pathological phenomena in their environment; Exploratory studies of social assistants' opinions; Centres for children and youths subject to social prevention; Youth drug addiction; The level of knowledge about drugs and drug addictions among parents; Research of youth drug addiction; Research of drug addiction

among the Prague high-school youth; The prevention of addictive substance misuse in the light of previous research

9. National minorities, young migrants, refugees:

Relations between people, nations, racism and intolerance

10. Environment: Attitude of the Czech youth towards environmental protection

11. Protection of child and youth rights:

Monitoring of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Children and State; Situation and Position of Children in the Czech Republic; Opinions of adults on exercising of children's rights

Besides those main research topics there are some additional ones, for example:

Socio-economic status of youth during the transformation of society, Ethical problems in every day youth life, Social saturation of youth needs, Youth in the Czech Republic, Opinions of young people aged 15-26 on chosen social and political topics, Opinions of youth on different position of men and women in the society, Personality and opinions of workers of district authorities and municipalities responsible for the sphere of youth and sport, EUROBAROMETR CR 1998, 1998-2000, The youth on the threshold of the third millennium, The youth of CR 2002, Repeated research on youth attitudes and opinions 1997-2000.

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The successor to The Child and Youth Institute (IDM MŠMT); The National Child and Youth Institute (NIDM MŠMT), continues to transformation in the same direction.

The National Child and Youth Institute is a directly controlled allowance organization of the Ministry of education, youth and sport. It acts to realize the goals of state policy in relation to the young generation, with associated social support and youth protection guaranteed by The Convention on the Rights of the Child. Cooperation with other subjects of state administration, public administration and NGO's from CR and abroad is also important. The main objectives in this field are defined in the organization's manifesto as following:

- Realization of interdisciplinary child and youth research
- Creation of conceptual, analytical and methodical material following from research, information, exploratory and other expert techniques of IDM, including editing activities
- Realization of grants and projects focused on solving the problems of youth and children on all levels of their lives
- Counselling, consulting and methodological activities in all fields of IDM action for expert and non-professional public

The conceptual analytic and research department was established in order to actualize cognitive and analytical activities. The main goal of this workplace is accumulating, processing, and analysing and interpreting of all accessible

information products and services with relation to the needs of youth, their organizational structures, and the other related subjects of state and public administration, and the non-governmental sphere. This is done on a level corresponding to standards of the EU.

The activities of this workplace are closely connected to state policy in the field of children and youth. Therefore we should mention a few things about this policy.

The government of the Czech Republic, in the meeting held 7th April 2003, asserted its responsibility for the healthy development of children and youths and for the creation of conditions for its broad participation in social, political and economic life in the Czech Republic. This issue is a priority, and therefore the “Governmental Policy Concepts on Children and Youth through 2007”, was adopted. Attached to this governmental resolution are also duties directed to single departments, including education, youth and sport.

The activity of the state towards children and youth has two levels; support and protection. The support is constituted by measures of the state dealing with problems of the young generation and moreover through different innovative programmes. It also includes the state activities that create conditions for youth participation in social and political life. Significant roles are taken by NGO's which are also supported by the state. This support leads to the weakening of influences and consequences of negative phenomena on children and youth.

Two of the instruments in support and protection of children and youth are: the application of research activities in this field, and efficient information systems based on quality knowledge and its representation.

The basis of the Governmental Policy of “Concept on Children and Youth through 2007” is mainly the following: the Czech government's policy statement of August 2002, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and following periodical reports on its fulfilment, the White Paper of the European Commission: “New impetus for European Youth” (November 2001), Recommendations included in the declaration adopted at the 6th conference of the ministers of education for young people, and Conclusions and recommendations adopted at the National conference on the White Paper. Important for the conception of state policy is also the research knowledge about children and youth, whose needs are implicitly included in this material.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (together with its departments) was set the task of guaranteeing research activities dealing with the problems of children and youth which would create a permanent record:

- a) To establish a national register of children and youth researches within NIDM MŠMT
- b) To guarantee the publication of ongoing research within the activities of NIDM

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Both tasks fall after the transformation within the structure of NIDM MŠMT. Therefore in the immediate future its activities are oriented towards creating a knowledge base for the inception of governmental policy on children and youth, working with the National register of research, and continuing to publish ongoing research.

The creation of a knowledge base means monitoring all spheres according to their importance, and in connection with the structure of governmental policy, gradually or in parallel (as it was being realized by IDM MŠMT).

The administrator of the National Register will be the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and its operator will become NIDM MŠMT. The research will be based on the data of the information system on research and development, which exists in the Czech Republic in parallel with other EU countries.

Its aim is to accumulate and organize information about research already conducted or still in progress on children and youth in the CR into an available public database which will bibliographically file all research on young people in the Czech Republic. The research, annotations and final reports will be publicly available.

A further aim of the register is the creation of a platform enabling communication between current and future research workers. It is also important for addressing other subjects working to similar objectives, and to coordinate cooperation with them.

The register will provide information about research results, governmental research support, and the results of research activities to the state administration and to the public.

The data will be publicly available with the exception of personal data and confidential information. Part of the register will be a virtual library of completed research reports, mainly from NIDM, but also including older reports.

The European Commission asked the member states to participate in the project of the European Council and European Commission (European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy) and to gradually prepare for participating in the creation of a new European portal, in which a database about young people and about work will be built. This will address three spheres (knowledge, training, and information) and will be directed towards the expert public in European Union. NIDM also intends to take part in this project.

Continual research is the second important field of activities of NIDM. Youth represents a specific sociological group, which is being shaped in the existing social, cultural, economic and political context. It brings changes to the process of social reproduction while on the other hand it ensures its continuance.

It is necessary to monitor, evaluate and reflect on these changes in conceptual material in order to draw up the governmental policy on children and youth.

Considering this task and the “Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth”, NIDM is formulating research connected with past projects which will enable a comparison of changes in 6-8 year olds.

As already mentioned above, NIDM has focused on youth research since 1990. In 1994 NIDM switched from isolated research to so-called ‘continual research’, where particular topics have been repeated over time. As a result it became possible to show time series results, which enabled evaluation of the changes. The results of continual research were used in forming the Governmental Policy Concept on Youth through 2002.

The project “Continual research IDM MŠMT 2003-2005” continues the research from 1990. It constitutes a realization of 4 partial research projects on these topics: Problems of youth participation on labour market; Young families; Youth and socio-pathological phenomena; and Youth, education and upbringing. I shall now explore some problems which this research is monitoring.

Problems of youth participation in the labour market

The influence on the young population of preparation for occupations at schools and training centres; problems with participation in the labour market; problems of lack of motivation for young people to study meagre professions; discrimination against some young people in the labour market in comparison with other age groups; equal opportunities for young men and young women; problem of alumni gaining the practice; readiness of alumni for demands from their employers; working groups; readiness of young people for self-employment; problems of misuse of social benefits and work in the grey economy; interest in community service etc.

Young family

Opinions of young people on the possibilities of getting their own flat (tenant or owner occupied); financial sources of young people and their families; opinions on appropriate and corresponding forms of governmental and communal support (starting flats, financial support, issue of saving in a building society and mortgages); the connection between problems with housing and getting married (cohabitation without marriage, misuse of social benefits etc); parenthood etc.

Youth and socio--pathological phenomena

The object of the research will be to investigate the increase of criminality towards children and youth; the perception of being at risk from criminality (e.g. child maltreatment, commercial sexual abuse of children and general criminality); attitudes towards extremist and racist movements; and extremist and racist attitudes of youth. Further investigation will look at the extent of the misuse of addictive substances, and the evidence of prevention on different levels; the

influence of families, peer groups, schools and media in relation to behaviour and actions of children and youths (also the increase in aggressiveness in schools). The research of spare-time activities should supply the time series.

Youth, education and upbringing

In accordance with the White Paper of the European Commission the focus is mainly on changing educational cycles, the interest in more heterogeneous educational opportunities (e.g. different short-time courses, chosen modules or study subjects etc), and the increasing importance of lifelong learning. Moreover the financial security of student study in families will be monitored, as will the interest in student loans, the extent of students' working activities in connection with security of studies and personal standards (as a barrier to better student results). The focus will also be on the maintenance of those methods and forms of work which do not use the activity of students and do not support their creativity, language preparation and mobility.

A partial survey will be focused on the problems of extremely intelligent and talented children, but also on the problems of children and young people from a socio-culturally disadvantaged environment.

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As it was already mentioned above, in youth research there are still many deficiencies, which we will have to deal with step by step. The inspiration for the following reflection was also the Questionnaire of European Commission from 2003 on the topic of Better awareness of young people's issues.

Independent research focused on children and youth is often received in the Czech Republic more or less haphazardly. The compilers are often very poorly informed about each others activities. Those projects and enquiries have a different validity and empirical value. NIDM carries out some of their research by virtue of MŠMT. The quality of that research is more or less guaranteed, but there is a lack of capacity for making continual and systematic research in key areas. In general there is a lack of coordination between the compilers in defining systematic and crucial questions, and a lack of the capacity to compare longitudinal data.

Research that is carried out often has a high lack cohesion and orderliness. A further problem is the deficient presentation of results in public. So how are we to improve this situation?

The strategy of improvement could have the following steps:

- Establishment of a coordination point for youth research (NIDM would be an optimal place). This would mediate interconnection between all subjects that focus on youth research.

- Creating a strategy within the youth sphere which would contain a list of the main areas (divided into topics?) These would be continually and systematically researched.
- Standardising the methodology of this research to contain a few different methods of data collection and their analysis. Therefore the research quality could be controlled (through opponent proceeding, referential comparison etc.)
- The standardisation of methods for submission of research, which would lead to cost reduction during data collection
- Standardisation of “media policy”, which would ensure that results are accessible. All who are working in the sphere of child and youth research would be informed of the existence of the results, and the results could influence subsequent decisions about dealing with the related problems
- Financial assurance of research (EU projects, commercial subjects)

Nowadays the status of the youth research concept is more defined than in the past decades. The main reason is the interconnection of research activities and systematic measures of Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth. We would like to express the opinion that the revitalization of youth sociology will go hand in hand with this process.

Youth research in Hungary – a brief history and current trends

Bence Ságvári

Youth sociology before the change of regime. Since the “rebirth” of Hungarian sociology in the 1960s, the study of youth has been an important area for research. Of course we have to bear in mind that the condition of sociology as a science under the one-party-system was somewhat different from that which we would describe as “normally functioning”.

Sociology and the sociologist posed a permanent danger for state power. However the compromise between social science and politics created an environment which allowed a quasi-freedom for research. Despite this, there were certain spheres of life that could never be questioned without risking retortion, although plenty of “less dangerous” topics were available for researchers. As the economic and social conditions worsened, from the late 1970s, the demand for professional and more or less objective research was increasing and although the results did not get much

publicity it directed attention to several serious problems in education, poverty, backwardness of rural areas, and the situation of the Roma population.

As a milestone in the history of youth sociology, a volume of essays and studies was published in 1969. The book included the Hungarian translation of youth-related works, and among others, included Karl Mannheim, Helmut Schelsky, David Riesman, Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, Albert K. Cohen and Janusz Trybusiewicz.

The first major direction of youth sociology was the investigation of youth subcultures, lead by Péter Józsa. The empirical realization of this research dates back to 1971 and 1973.

In the 1970s and 1980s there were three main institutes or “workshops” of youth sociology in Hungary. The first was the Institute of Popular Culture (*Népművelési Intézet*). As its name suggests the focus was mainly on cultural issues. Another major contribution was made by the Institute of Sociology at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Here the main topics were the sociology of music and lifestyle. The third domain of youth sociology can be connected to the work of the Workgroup for Youth Research under the “umbrella” of the Communist Youth Association (*Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség*).

In 1981 youth policy and youth research established its own journal called Youth Review which was published by the Communist Youth Association (CYA). The editors and the authors had relative freedom in choosing topics and publishing studies. Many of the texts published here pass the test of time and transition and have an appreciable message for our time. The journal ceased to exist in 1989 with the break up of the CYA.

From the 1980s there were many opportunities for the qualitative study of youth. This could be explained by the fact that official (mostly quantitative) research was limited, so qualitative results could often be presented as opinions of young people, and not as classic research studies. Through this approach the vigilance of the Party was evaded.

In the 1970s sociological research on youth was mainly influenced by the problems of values and lifestyle. However in the 1980s a new approach was emerging from the Social Science Institute of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party. Their focus moved towards the political activation, and participation of young people.

From the mid-1980s, as social tensions increased due to the general crisis of the socialist political and economic system, young people and younger generations

were seen as a group which progressively “lost out” due to unemployment and social exclusion. This approach remained paramount until the mid-1990s.

Youth sociology from the 1990s. Hungarian youth research – as with most social sciences – was faced with a completely new challenge after the change of regime. New social problems and conflicts had emerged concerning youth. Sociologists had to familiarize themselves with total freedom of research; however a new and stronger barrier has emerged: the lack of financial resources.

Youth research has traditionally taken place in a number of different institutions whose main profiles generally do not fall within the scope of these issues. Researchers working at different universities and scientific institutions (also) do youth related work. At universities research is done mostly in the departments of sociology, psychology and behavioural sciences. Different research institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Institute of Sociology, Institute of Political Sciences and Institute of Psychology) also do significant work around youth research. Among the government run research institutes (working independently or as a background institution to a ministry) the Education Research Institute, the National Public Education Institute and the National Criminology Institute are worth mentioning. Valuable efforts are made by the Demography Research Institute (DRI) of the Hungarian Central Statistic Office in the field of social structure and relationships concerning young people. The National Youth Research Centre founded in 2001 has been working as a background institution to the Ministry of Child, Youth and Equal Opportunities, and currently this is the only institution in Hungary which focuses its research primarily on youth.

A number of opinion poll institutions (e.g. Századvég, Tárci, Gallup, Szonda, GfK Hungaria) also do youth related polls, mostly commissioned by the government or within international frameworks. While opinion and market research is a relatively young industry in Hungary, most of the leaders and leading researchers of these companies have a traditional scientific background dating back to the 1980s, so their approach has lots in common with classic sociological research.

Directions of research in the last decade

The National Youth Research Institute has reviewed all the empirical research done since 1995. The results were as follows: Hungarian youth research is dominated by the sociological approach and survey methods. Most of the research done in the last few years which we reviewed was done using some sort of a questionnaire (80%), a third of which (37%) was done through personal interviews. This was the determining form of representative sociological research in Hungary. The second most used survey technique was self-filled questionnaires

(20%), which were more typical of the less well funded Academy research. About one sixth of youth research done after 1995 (17%) was done through deep interviews or some other qualitative method. As for methodology, significant emphasis was put on quantitative research done by questionnaire, often on representative samples. Apart from a few exceptions, longitudinal and time series research works which could follow longer term trends in a given issue were missing. Also there were too few systematic, independent qualitative studies.

Having reviewed youth research done in the past few years, the following picture developed regarding the chosen topics. Several youth research projects done after 1995 in Hungary studied the living conditions, attitudes and values of youth in general (8), and were typically commissioned by the government. The most frequently studied specialist areas were related to health, lifestyle (addiction) (21); disadvantaged groups and deviance were also studied in significant numbers (11 projects); youth values, identity, political attitudes (10); issues related to studying and school (10); starting a career and employment issues (10). The study of prejudices is also characteristic (5) as well as studies on leisure time and media consumption (7).

Based on the opinion of well known youth experts, research projects on lifestyle, cultural, and value sociology stand out from among the wide scope of research done in the last few years. Similarly significant results were provided by research related to employment/unemployment and to education/student life. Research done in Hungary on health (addiction) and on identity and prejudices fit well into the international research scene. Of course research going into the special problems of the major ethnic minority group in Hungary, the Roma, must not be left out.

Partially due to the institutional and funding situation in Hungarian youth research, regular, repeated studies which could serve as indicators to create a comprehensive picture of the life of youth in Hungary are very limited. The large scale youth research funded by the Hungarian Government, Youth 2000, started off as something to create a tradition, studying Hungarian youth with a sample size of 8000. This study was followed by Mozaik 2001 (with similar findings), studying Hungarian youth living in five regions beyond the borders of Hungary (Felvidék [Upper Hungary, now Slovakia], Kárpátalja [Sub-Carpathia], Belső-Erdély [Inner Transylvania], Székelyföld [Secler Land], Vajdaság [Voivodina]). The latest large scale youth research (Youth 2004) followed the methodology of these two research projects, providing the opportunity for longitudinal comparison as well.

The topics covered by this research were the following: social mobility, educational paths, financial situation, marital status, characteristics of the labour market, general social feeling, public attitudes, value systems, religiousness, cultural consumption, health, way of life, sexuality, disabilities, sport, information technologies.

Youth Research in Slovenia

Mirjana Ule

The story of youth in Slovenia was part of the common frame of Yugoslavia until the 1990s. Because of the special (paternalistic and conformist) relationship between youth and the society of former Yugoslavia, as well as Slovenia, youth had not been an object of sociological research. The society did not support and did not need research on youth. It could even be said that it put a stop to it. In the socialist period as well as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, societies faced a lack of themes to research that did not belong to the arsenal of great socialist themes.

Since the Yugoslav society was very rapidly economically developing, and young people were participating in this swift advancement, the great majority of the young identified themselves with the social system, its values and aims. This is why the image of the youth in that time was clearly positive. The political public was fascinated by the youth, who were compared with the negative image of the young in the West. However, from the 1960s onward, in the speeches of politicians and in the media, texts began to appear that warned against the various "non-socialist", "bourgeois" habits of some young people. Students were especially suspicious, as they had always been the most resistant to seduction by the authorities and ideology. Conflict between the youth (university students) and society had intensified by the end of the 1960s, and culminated in the student movements.

With the appearance of student movements, young people in Slovenia approached the development and events in other parts of the developed world. By the end of the 1970s in Slovenia, a mindful and diverse youth scene had developed, which in the 1980s represented an important part of the independent political public. This meant that youth in Slovenia parted from the youth of other parts of the former Yugoslavia. This fact was most drastically shown in the first major sociological youth research done in the former Yugoslavia carried out in 1986 on a sample of 6849 young people (Aleksić, Vrčan, 1986). The study imitated some approaches of the well-known German Shell youth research (Jugendwerk der deutschen Shell, 1981). The study

showed some important differences of the youth of Slovenia regarding the youth in other parts of Yugoslavia. The most important were the differences in values and life orientations.

The survey attracted much attention from the political, professional and civil public, since it was the first to warn about the great differences between particular republics regarding the values and life orientations of the young in Yugoslavia (Ule, 1988). Namely:

- the differences among the young people of different republics, respectively nationalities are more explicit than all other social differences
- the response of the young people to the present socioeconomic crisis was less critical where the crisis was deeper (higher unemployment).

The results of the survey in the 1980s had such a strong predictive value and were done at a time of such an interesting crossroad, that they demanded the continuation of the research. The researchers in Slovenia wanted to determine what was happening with the youth at the turning point of the 1990s in Slovenia, and how young people were reacting to important transitional processes. In the first youth research done in Slovenia after it reached independence we thus repeated some approaches and questions from the earlier Yugoslav youth research. Thus we have been able to compare some results of both studies.

The problems of young people in the transition time

The first major youth research in Slovenia in the 1990s was carried out in 1993 on the sample of 2354 young students of secondary schools¹⁸ (Ule, Miheljak 1995). The survey included the main part of the young population who were at the so-called classical youth age of 15 to 19. This population of young people experienced the transition from childhood to adulthood at a time of transition in Slovene society. The generation included in this research was the first one to start its process of socialization when all the great themes of former Yugoslavia were already exhausted. These were the children of socialism, who spent their

¹⁸ In the 1990s, Mirjana Ule with a group of young co-workers at the Faculty of Social Sciences continued the research on youth in Slovenia. She founded the Center for Social Psychology-Youth Studies on the Institute of Social Sciences on the Faculty of the Social Sciences. Youth Department at the Ministry of Education and Sport in Slovenia provided financial support for continuous research on youth.

childhood with pictures of Tito above the blackboard, and who entered youth when the same pictures were removed from the walls.

The second major empirical research study was carried out in 1995 on a sample of 1829 higher education students in Slovenia. The aim of the project was the analysis of higher education student responses to current societal and life circumstances, especially regarding the troubles caused by the series of transitions in Slovenia. Special attention was given to the main patterns of reactions of higher education students and the main differences between them and secondary school students (Ule et al., 1996).

Data from the research Youth 93 survey and the research Youth 95 survey indicated that the young people were in an ambivalent state. According to the general and civic framework the economic problems were by far the biggest concern of young people; especially concerning employment, economic independence and housing.

In the 1990s young people in Slovenia grew up in a society which was in the middle of a process of multiple transitions. Changes in political and economic systems also caused significant social changes, e.g. unemployment. Slovenia was not totally unprepared for the process of transition; the people had known for a decade that major social changes were going on and that they would have to be fully realized. This was a society which for at least 20 years had spoken about the necessity of social "change", and about the "crisis in society". Slovenia had been open to the world, especially to the West, more than the other Yugoslav republics. There was a strong and steady exchange of information and material goods between Slovenia and Western countries. As a result, young people had significant contact with their peers in the West and the experience of youth movements and cultures quickly spread among the young in Slovenia. In these movements and cultures, young people saw a model for their affirmation and emancipation from ideological, cultural and political tutors.

In the period of substantial changes in Slovene society in the 1990s, young people met with particular difficulties. One of the larger problems was the eventual unemployment of the young, and a change in the way employment was realized. The generation of their parents did not face unemployment or an uncertain life perspective, while young people now face both as quite a real possibility.

In the mid of 1990's it was already clear that young people in Slovenia were becoming increasingly sensitive to dangers which threatened life options. The difficulties associated with the modes of transition into the world of adults and especially the world of paid work were ever more numerous. These crisis situations were already dramatically reflected in the change of viewpoints and lifestyles of young people. Transition processes solely specific to Slovenia did not influence the changes underlying the process of growing up. Furthermore, recent conclusions in the fields of sociology and psychology indicate that these changes are paradigmatic and that classic socialization models of growing up cannot explain them. The understanding of the process of growing up as a continual and natural process corresponded to the situation of classic modern societies in which young people were above all objects of control and education both within the family and in school. However, this model is incompatible with modern developed societies in which the gaining of psychological and social independence starts early and young people experience their journey to adulthood as a process implying negotiation on their own identity and the identity of society.

The structure of young people's problems significantly changed in the 1990s. In the 1970s and 1980s the youth in Slovenia started to critically address social problems, such as ecological and peace problems, with claims for basic democracy. In the 1990s the importance of such problems in relation to the personal emancipation of youth, and to political influence, was significantly decreasing.

There has been a significant increase in these problems in the 1990s compared to the 1980s. This was undoubtedly due to a rise in economic uncertainty, especially concerning unemployment during this important transitional period in Slovenia. The feeling of danger regarding drugs and alcohol was more an expression of an increase in personal uncertainty and the vulnerability of the young in new situations, than an actual threat (Ule, Miheljak, 1995).

It can be argued that young people in Slovenia in the 1990s did not represent a problem to society, nor did they cause problems for society. Rather, they lived, caught in a net of problems, defined by the limitations of the labour market and the limited employment opportunities of new generations.

The surveys conducted in 1993 and 1995 showed a surprisingly high percentage of young people who were prepared to leave the country for a long period or even forever. It would seem that this was a kind of 'daydream migration', a reaction to

the great changes at home, which caused fears and doubts regarding the future. The share of those prepared to leave the country forever was significantly smaller in the survey carried out in 1995 compared to the previous surveys. This indicates that the situation is stabilizing.

The stabilization of the life situation is the general trait of the youth conditions in Slovenia in the late Nineties and at the beginning of the new Millennium. In Slovenia, modernization and various processes of adaptation to liberal capitalism, as well as to "European social and political standards" affect the lives of all young people, and demands more and more from them although does not affect each young person in the same way. Despite many youths finding their way through life, there is a possibility that these developments promote two contrasting groups: the winners and the losers. Winners have social and personal opportunities by which they can benefit from changes going on in Slovenia in the 1990s. Through their creativity, flexibility and supporting networks they manage to make use successfully of the chances offered to them.

Young people who do not manage to adapt to the new demands of society are prone to become losers. They often but not exclusively originate from the lower social strata. The dynamics of modern society increases the risk of larger groups of youngsters emerging who are equally liable to become winners or losers. Winners and losers have their fate only partly in their own hands, but winners know how to use this to their benefit. Modernization makes prediction of future developments in youth more difficult. Modernization impacts upon young people through family, education, employment and leisure. Furthermore, it seems that social inequality appears to perpetuate itself especially in these spheres of life (Ule, Renner, 1998).

Some findings of our empirical research in the 1990's already led us to believe that young people were again undergoing changes. Our studies left us with an image of a rather passive generation who felt best in a safe private environment and family circle (meaning that childhood was prolonged at the expense of an autonomous youth), who above all loved peacefulness and much less an active or exciting life. Furthermore, members of this generation were less willing to take challenges and risks in their public life, and did not show any desire for social recognition, while at the same time they were becoming less open, less responsive to challenges and less tolerant of differences. We also concluded that young people were withdrawing from public stages, even from the stages of exclusive youth culture, and were turning to fantasy worlds and fantasy solutions that more represented an escape from reality than a readiness to face problems.

The social vulnerability of young people

The research project entitled "The Social Vulnerability of Young People" was the fourth study of youth in 1998¹⁹ conducted Young people in Slovenia (Ule, Renner, Mencin, 2000). The study "Youth 2000"²⁰ conducted on the turn of the Century was the fifth and the last big survey on Youth in Slovenia till now (Miheljak, Ule, 2002). In the beginning of the 1990's we observed that young people in Slovenia had not yet been confronted with the social differentiation that divided young people into those who gain advantages from transition processes (in terms of status, capital, standard, social influence and power) and those who do not. Social background, living environment, gender, the standard of living and similar factors of social differentiation in wider social circles had not yet had an obvious impact on young people.

Accordingly, we concluded that young people still had (for the time being) certain props that helped them cope with the newly emerging social divisions in Slovenian society. Among those props we counted the rather uniform lifestyles of young people in Slovenia; generally the middle-class lifestyle, and correspondingly uniform cultural and living patterns. At the same time we presupposed that how long these sources and props would hold out in the face of ever more powerful pressures generated by social differentiation was only a matter of time.

In all studies after 1993 we have detected some common tendencies of youth: the tendencies towards domestication, social passivity, the guarding of peace, and illusionary solutions. In our studies on social vulnerability of youth and in "Youth 2000" we asked if these tendencies were a sign of regression in light of the achievements of youth in recent decades, or are they perhaps a necessary yet transitory phenomenon. Were they connected to the youth's adaptation to an uncertain reality and events that they cannot influence, while on the other hand, reality deeply influences their own future? A number of indicators confirmed that both explanations were true (Ule, Renner, Mencin, 2000).

Each of our surveys in the 1990's showed that young people in Slovenia display the general characteristics of (post)modern youth, typical of which is a turning away from grand themes, ideologies and historical stories, and a return to a world of privacy and ordinary life. On the other hand, the unfinished and inexpressive

¹⁹ The study included 1687 pupils in the last i.e. eighth grade of elementary schools.

²⁰ The study included 1800 young people in the age from 15-24 ages.

character of the young generation of the 1990's in Slovenia was also a consequence of the social deconstruction of youth.

This was a process that concurrently eliminated the socially determined and safeguarded transitions from childhood to adulthood. It diminished the strength and recognition of youth subcultures, lessened the autonomy of young people in confronting risks and challenges caused by a lack of jobs, imposed greater demands associated with studies and professional qualifications, and introduced a greater flexibility with respect to modes of employment, work and education. This process was especially painful for young people in Slovenia, since it has occurred unexpectedly and come after a long period of relatively high social safety, low unemployment and low dynamics.

The transition process has thus increased the social vulnerability of young people. The data of all youth studies in the 1990's show that young people in Slovenia are turning into a "worried" generation. The problems have become more pointed, particularly in central areas of growing up that are significant for the social promotion and identity of young people, such as education and employment. Problems associated with the transition from the world of education to the world of work have become especially acute. Specifically youth problems (conflicts of generations and similar conflicts typical of the specific status of youth) lag far behind "economic" issues. Young people in the Nineties no longer experienced problems that clearly burdened the young generations of recent decades, for example: a lack of models and ideals, boredom, opportunities for entertainment or amusement. Neither were they disturbed by the absence of political influences.

The developments of the Slovenian young generation in the last fifteen years are similar to those in other developed European countries. One of the main common tendencies in Slovenian youth and the youth in developed European countries is the withdrawal of young people from the streets into privacy and youth micro-scenes (Ule, 1995, Zinnecker, 1991). This means on the one hand the continuation and intensification of the individualization of youth, which tends towards the elimination of youth as a transitory period between childhood and adulthood, and also the elimination of the specifics of the young generation, and the establishment of inter-generational cooperation (Heitmayer, Olk, 1990). On the other hand, this triggers certain regressive processes of new infantilization, parental symbiosis, regression and a lack of autonomous strategies for overcoming difficulties.

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