

# From dissatisfaction to passivity: Young Hungarians in 2021

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## *Introduction*

In this paper, we present three phenomena related to the social situation of young people and their attitudes towards politics, in which Hungarian young people are unique in a regional comparison among the Visegrád countries. Young Hungarians are distinctly dissatisfied not only with their life conditions and economic situation, but also with education and the state of democracy. Rather than spurring them to become more politically active, however, this deep sense of crisis affecting their personal situations and their perception of public life results in a deep apathy, making Hungarian youth the most passive youth in the Central European region. The consequence of this passivity is that Hungarian youth turnout in elections is low by regional standards. There are no serious signs of rebellion either in public life or within the family: Hungarian youth are also characterized by conformity, and they are more strongly in agreement with their parents on political issues than the youth of any other country in the region.

In the following, we back up these three observations with empirical results from a large-scale regional opinion poll. In the spring and summer of 2021, with the support of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, a study employing a number of sociological methods was conducted among 15–29-year-olds in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. When analyzing the results of the FES Youth Study in Hungary, we specifically sought to take advantage of the exceptional opportunities for regional comparability: we analyzed the Hungarian data in the context of the other Visegrád countries.

What makes the Hungarian situation unique is that the political socialization of the age group in question took place largely or entirely under the post-2010 Orbán<sup>1</sup> governments. The public awareness of the younger cohorts in the 15–29-year age group developed entirely under the regime still in power in 2021, while those in the second half of their twenties also said that they spent their entire adulthoods under Fidesz<sup>2</sup> governments. In light of this, we considered it particularly important to supplement the shared regional questionnaire with additional, specifically Hungarian questions about the Orbán regime<sup>3</sup> in order to learn the opinions of young Hungarians concerning the domestic version of democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Viktor Orbán has been the Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Fidesz is the populist right-wing governing party.

<sup>3</sup> Fidesz has won the Hungarian parliamentary elections four times and has held a two-thirds majority in parliament since 2010.

## **1. Dissatisfaction among young Hungarians**

### *The financial situation of young Hungarians*

Within the framework of the FES Youth Studies, we examined the respondents' subjective assessment of their financial situations. Young people could characterize the financial situation of their household on a verbal scale, with five categories.<sup>4</sup>

A relative majority of the young Hungarians in the sample, or about 40 percent, say that the household in which they live is not experiencing major financial problems. Most have enough for all essentials, although their income does not stretch to such larger purchases as a new car or flat. The proportion of those in a particularly good financial situation is 7 percent, which means that, overall, the proportion of those who chose categories four and five is 48 percent.

According to our research, 5 percent of Hungarians aged 15–29 live in households that struggle to cover everyday necessities, whilst another 12 percent can pay their utility bills and buy basic foodstuffs, yet cannot afford clothing, entertainment, or cultural expenses. The proportion of those in unfavorable financial situations is particularly acute among those living in villages: more than one-tenth of these respondents indicated that even the most basic expenditures are difficult to afford on the family budget. By contrast, young people who claimed to be able to afford any financial expenditure are more likely to live in an urban setting (39 percent).

If we do not evaluate the Hungarian data in isolation, but also compare the opinions of young people in other V4 countries, we note some very unfavorable tendencies. In comparison with other V4 states, the subjective income perception of young Hungarians is the least favorable. In Hungary, the proportion of people living in a particularly disadvantageous financial situation is the highest, while the proportion of those who report living in very good conditions is just half or even one-third of the rates among young people in the Czech Republic, Poland, or Slovakia.

### *Satisfaction with the quality of education*

Young Hungarians were also asked to rate the overall standard of education from one to five (the same way students themselves are graded). Only 2 percent were entirely satisfied with the quality of the Hungarian school system, and 17 percent gave a “good” rating, meaning four out of five. On the other hand, 45 percent rated the general quality of the Hungarian educational system as either a one or a two (the average of the 1–5 scale was 2.54). It is noteworthy that whether or not someone is still a student or has already left the educational system has no statistical influence on their opinion about the quality of education (though MA and PhD students have the highest opinion of the system, giving an average score of 2.79). Thus, regardless of their social affiliation, young people aged 15–29 have a broadly uniform assessment of the Hungarian educational system. A person's assessment of the quality of Hungarian education is more accurately predicted by ideology and political affiliation.

Young Hungarians are critical of the quality of the education system, and their views are informed by ideological and political attitudes. One result of political polarization is that young people who

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<sup>4</sup> These five categories are the following: 1. We don't have enough money for basic utilities (electricity, heating, etc.) and food. 2. We have enough money for basic utilities and food but not for clothing and shoes. 3. We have enough money for food, clothing, and shoes, but not for more expensive things (a refrigerator, a TV, etc.). 4. We can afford to buy more expensive things but not so expensive as, for instance, a car or an apartment. 5. We can afford to buy whatever we need for a good standard of living.

support the opposition have very different opinions from pro-government young people regarding the quality of education.

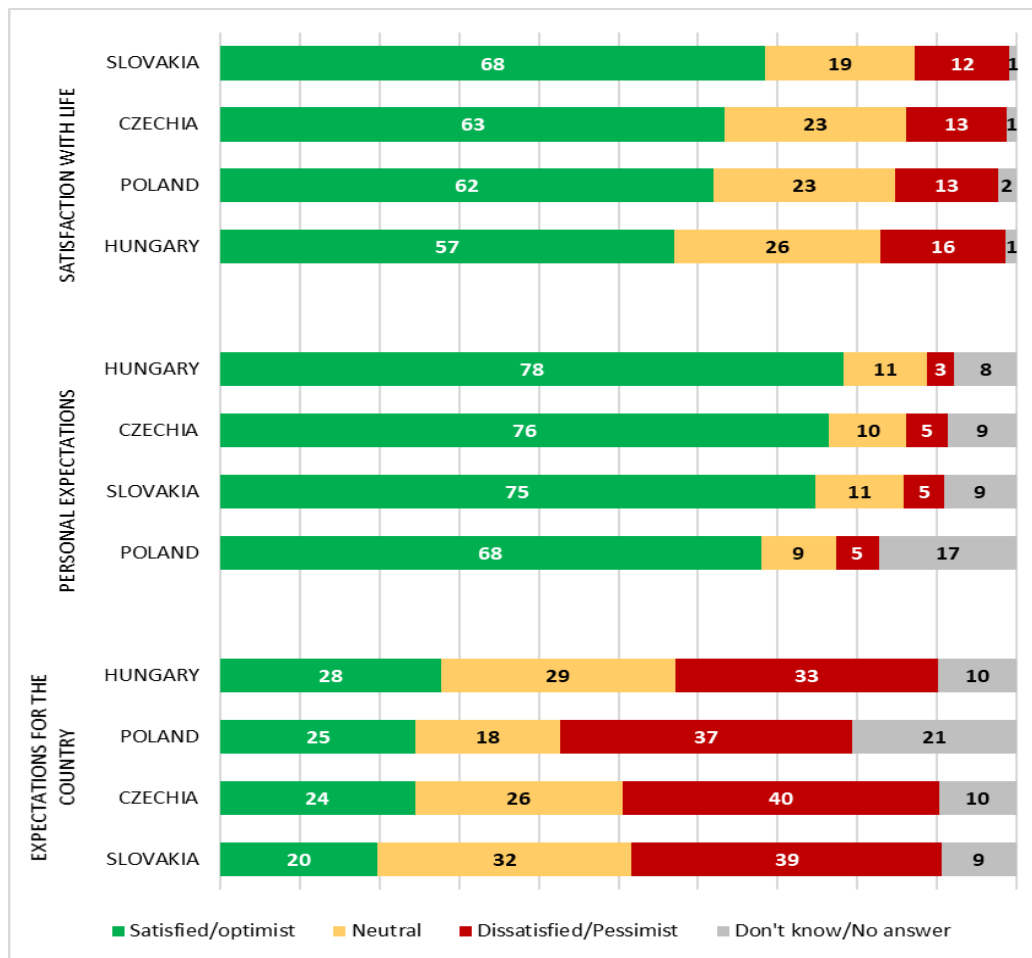
The opinions of young Hungarians are also unfavorable in comparison with the other V4 countries. While the proportion of those who gave a rating of 4 or 5 was not fundamentally different from those of a similar age in other countries – especially in Poland and Slovakia – proportionally more young Hungarians expressed a clearly or moderately negative opinion. It is striking that far fewer young Czech youngsters chose values 1 and 2, whereas far more of them chose values 4 and 5.

### *Satisfaction with their lives*

Although the majority of young Hungarians are mostly or very satisfied with their lives (57 percent), this proportion lags behind the other V4 countries (Figure 1). However, four-fifths of young Hungarians are optimistic in terms of personal expectations, which is the highest rate within the V4. It is a regional trend that the proportion of young people optimistic about the future of the country lags significantly behind positive personal expectations. The majority of young Hungarians are pessimistic about the country's future; however, rates of pessimism regarding the nation's future are even higher in the other V4 countries.

The differences between the various age subcategories of young Hungarians are moderate, but do surpass the margin of error: personal dissatisfaction and pessimism about the country's future both increase with age. Those aged 15–18 are more satisfied with their lives (61 percent) than 25–29-year-olds (54 percent). They are also more optimistic about the future of the country (33 percent) than those aged 19–24 or 25–29 (26 percent in both cohorts). The majority of young Hungarians have similar rates of satisfaction with their family life (62 percent), their circle of friends (59 percent) and their education (55 percent), as with life in general.

Figure 1. Life satisfaction and expectations for the future in V4 countries (%)



Source: FES Youth Study Central and Eastern Europe 2021.

According to data from the European Social Survey, it is generally the case in most European countries that supporters of the government are happier than opposition voters (Patkós and Farkas 2020). The Hungarian data from our research, when broken down along political lines, also supports this conclusion. Among young people who support the government, significantly more are satisfied with their lives (65 percent) than among opposition supporters (56 percent) or undecided voters (54 percent). The difference is somewhat smaller as regards personal expectations, as optimism predominates among all political persuasions (pro-government 82 percent, opposition 79 percent, undecided 76 percent). In contrast, pessimism about the future of Hungary is characteristic mainly of young people who support the opposition (43 percent) or are undecided (31 percent) but is much less frequent among young supporters of the government (17 percent).

### *The fears of young Hungarians*

As in the other countries of the region, climate change is the overriding fear among young people in Hungary (only in Poland has climate change been pushed into second place). Though it is considered a serious threat by a majority in all education categories, this fear is even more prevalent among those with higher levels of education. Young people with higher levels of education are also more

concerned about problems of social justice and corruption. The former was one of the key issues in all V4 countries, but corruption is of concern to significantly more young people in Hungary than in the other V4 countries.

Young Hungarians predominantly articulate post-material fears (climate crisis, social injustice, and corruption), while they are least afraid of crime, immigration, and terrorism. Among those with lower education levels, somewhat more are worried about unemployment and physical threats, whilst a striking proportion of graduates are worried about climate change, inequality, and corruption.

By mid-2021, the public health and economic crises caused by the Covid-19 pandemic had no more than a moderate impact on the fears of young Hungarians. Only approximately one-third of respondents feared serious illness or unemployment, which correlated with results across the region, though significantly more respondents in Poland and Slovakia specifically feared serious illness. At the same time, it is important to note that unemployment is of less concern to young Hungarian graduates. This is in line with the fact that the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has had a less severe impact on young Hungarians with high levels of education (Köllő and Reizer 2021; Bíró-Nagy and Szászi 2021).

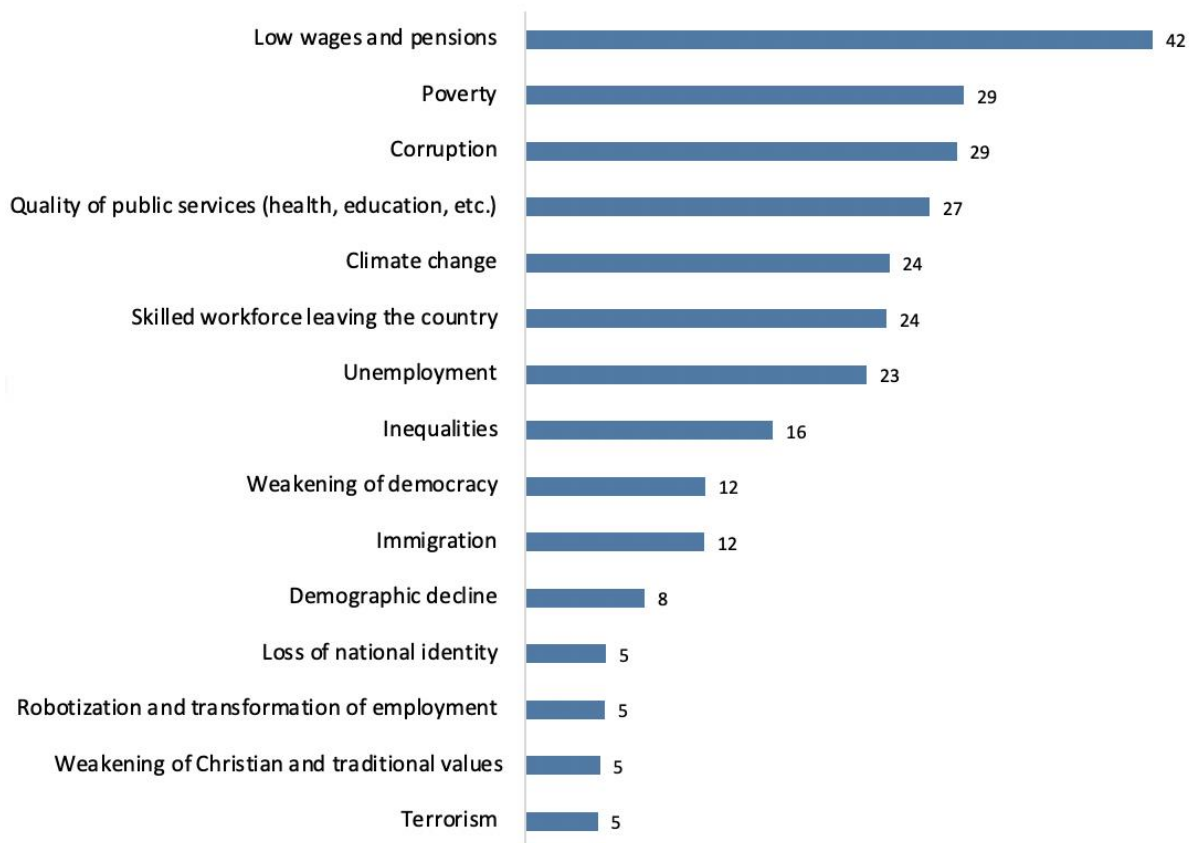
The issue of immigration dominated the Hungarian political agenda until 2018, when the government, through an intensive anti-migration electoral campaign, decisively turned public opinion against immigration. Among other factors, this was one of the reasons for its success in the 2018 elections (Bíró-Nagy 2021). However, the impact of this seems to have diminished significantly by 2021. In all countries in the region, only one-fifth of young people report particular concern about immigration or terrorism. Worries related to other physical threats (violent assault, falling victim to robbery) are also among the least commonly reported in Hungary, as they are in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. At the same time, these fears related to feelings of physical security are more common among young Hungarians with lower levels of education.

### *The problem map of young Hungarians*

The problem map among young Hungarians is dominated by the issues of low wages and pensions: four in ten named these among the three most important long-term challenges (Figure 2). The picture then begins to fragment: poverty and corruption were each singled out by 29 percent. Similarly, many young people are concerned about the poor quality of public services, including the education and health systems. In addition to other material issues (poverty, quality of public services, workforce emigration and unemployment), corruption and climate change are also seen by many as major problems.

The Policy Solutions FES study from March 2021 shows a similar picture for the whole of Hungarian society, although the question asked was not the same as in our study (Bíró-Nagy et al. 2021). According to the survey cited, Hungarians consider the high cost of living, low salaries, and low standard of health care to be the country's most pressing problems. In other words, young people's perception of the problems, like that of Hungarian society as a whole, is dominated by material issues, with the difference that, based on the present research, issues of corruption, emigration, and climate change are more pressing for young people.

Figure 2. The most important challenges of the next decade according to young Hungarians



Source: FES Youth Study Central and Eastern Europe 2021.

In Hungary, young people under the age of 30 are almost exclusively the driving force behind political activism on climate change (Mikecz 2020). Despite this, one-quarter of respondents listed climate change as among the three most important problems (it ranked in fifth place overall on the list of problems). This is also a relatively low rate compared with other V4 countries. Climate change is the most frequently cited issue in the Czech Republic (38 percent), the second most frequent in Slovakia (34 percent) and the third most frequent in Poland (29 percent).

Young Hungarians cited work-related issues as a major threat to the country in a similar proportion to climate change: these include the emigration of skilled labor (24 percent) and the problem of unemployment (23 percent). With the exception of corruption, the standard topics of debate between the Hungarian opposition and the ruling party were cited by few as being among the defining problems of the next ten years. Inequality, which is a particularly important issue for the left, was considered one of the most important problems by just 16 percent, whereas only 12 percent cited the weakening of democracy in Hungary, which is the key driver of the opposition coalition. Immigration was mentioned by only 12 percent and terrorism by only 5 percent, though both young people and Hungarian society as a whole decisively reject immigration.

The positive worldview communicated by the Hungarian governing parties is based on the preservation of the country's national and Christian values and the concept of Christian democracy. However, these are not important topics for young people, and only one in twenty cited a possible loss of national identity and the weakening of Christian and traditional values as being among the main

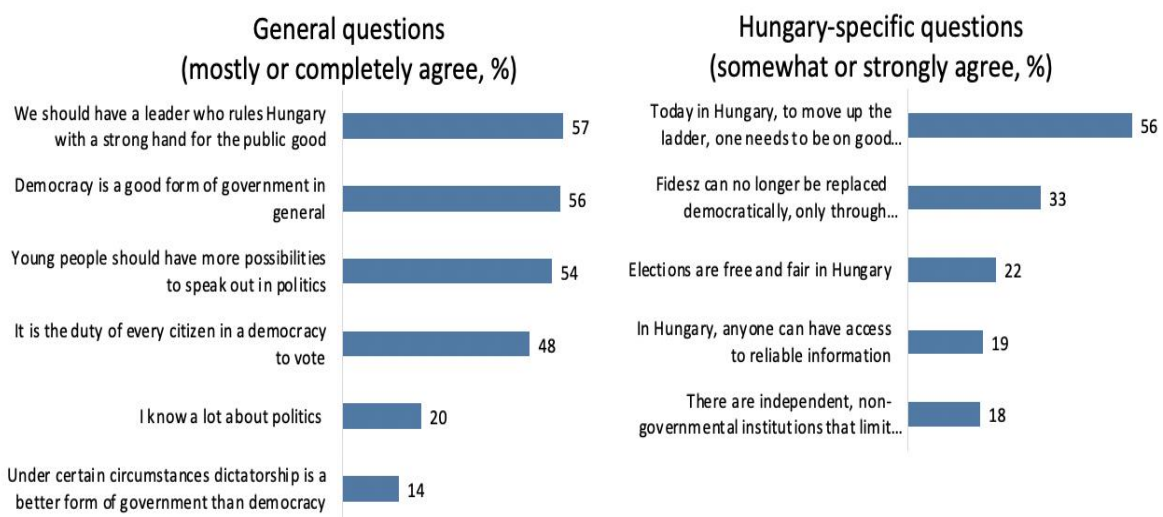
problems. As yet, very few young people appear to consider the Fourth Industrial Revolution to be a serious threat: automation and the robotization of workplaces were likewise listed as among the most pressing problems by only 5 percent of respondents.

### *Satisfaction with the governance and democracy*

The Hungary-specific questions in our research show that there is significant dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the current state of governance and democracy (Figure 3). A majority of respondents (56 percent) believe that one needs good contacts with the government to succeed in Hungary. According to one-third of young Hungarians (33 percent), Fidesz can only be removed from power by force. Only one in five young people think that elections are free and fair (22 percent), that reliable information is available to the public (19 percent), and that the system of checks and balances works (18 percent).

The literature on the apolitical nature of young Hungarians draws attention not only to the negative connotations attached to politics but also to the fact that the exclusionary behavior of the political elite and the lack of avenues for young people to engage politically (Oross 2013) may also be contributory factors. If they feel that their interests are left unrepresented and do not see anyone standing up for the values of the young, they will obviously take little interest in public issues. This, however, is a vicious circle, because the more apolitical they are, the less “interest” and importance they will have for those in the political world. Perceiving this, meanwhile, young people are likely simply to withdraw still further from this sphere. According to the results of our survey, an absolute majority of young Hungarians in the sample (51 percent) feel that their interests are not represented in national politics, and only 14 percent have the opposite opinion.

*Figure 3. Assessing the concept of democracy and its current state in Hungary*



Source: FES Youth Study Central and Eastern Europe 2021.

Comparing the opinions of Central European contemporaries with this data, it appears that in no country are respondents particularly positive about their political representation. In each country,

around 1–2 percent feel that the interests of young people are represented very well in politics, yet in none of the other countries are opinions as negative as among Hungarians. The opinions of young Czechs aged 15–29 are the least negative (2.52 points on a scale of 1–5) and, as indicated, the opinions of the Hungarians are the most negative (2.38 average points).

## **2. Political passivity**

Albert O. Hirschman (1970) published his classic book, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, more than 50 years ago. In his analysis, Hirschman formulates two conflicting options, exit and voice, to which he adds the concept of loyalty. Hirschman uses the term “exit” about market conditions, whereas he applies the term “voice” to the world of politics. In both cases, he aims to show that people have several means of fulfilling their desires, validating their opinions, or expressing dissatisfaction with a system. According to his hypothesis, when someone chooses to exit, they lose the possibility to protest (Szabó et al. 2015). Naturally, there is always a large group in any society that any of these options cannot describe. Concerning this group, Hirschman speaks of loyalty, while some of his critics speak of neglect or conformity. Our data clearly show that—mainly for reasons related to political socialization—young Hungarian people choose to exit and be passive/conforming instead of protesting.

### *Low levels of civic participation*

The declining rates of citizens’ political participation worldwide are considered by many social scientists to be part of a more general negative trend in which traditional forms of civic engagement (church attendance, trade union membership, integration into traditional communities) are increasingly being marginalized (Dalton and Klingemann 2013). In Hungary, on the other hand, political and civic activities are markedly divergent: whilst electoral turnout is traditionally high, civic activity is low by regional standards (Mikecz 2020).

This statement is to some extent contradicted by the comparison of youth volunteer activity across the V4 countries: the Hungarian data does not stand out from the other V4 countries. The proportion of respondents who participate in volunteer activities is low in all four states: 28 percent in Hungary, 30 percent in Poland, 32 percent in the Czech Republic, and only 23 percent in Slovakia. Furthermore, rates of volunteering decrease significantly with age: whereas 38 percent of Hungarians aged 15–18 volunteered during the last year, only 29 percent of those aged 19–24 and 21 percent of those aged 25–29 did so. This represents a difference of 17 percent between the youngest and oldest age groups, while the difference is even larger in Poland (23 percent) and slightly smaller in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (9 and 6 percent, respectively). It should be emphasized that since January 1, 2016, only those who have completed at least 50 hours of community work during their high school years can graduate in Hungary. This rule has remained in force throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Robert Putnam (2000), reasons for declining civic activity include the weakening of traditional social institutions, urbanization, increasing television watching, and the integration of women into the labor market. However, based on the age trend presented in this research, we may conclude that communities based around educational institutions, as well as compulsory secondary-school volunteer work, can somewhat counterbalance this trend—at least so long as participation in education continues. This is also confirmed by the fact that young Hungarians generally volunteered in some form of school or university organization (29 percent of volunteers).

In addition, many also took part in some form of civic initiative (28 percent) or association (for example, sports club or band—19 percent). Less common forms of volunteering include participation in the work of an ambulance or fire brigade service (9 percent), youth organization (9 percent), NGO (6 percent), political party (3 percent), or trade union (3 percent).

By contrast, forms of collective action (political and civic activity) and the wearing of brand label clothing are least important to young Hungarians. The most and least important values were the same in the other V4 countries. Individualism and low rates of political activity among young people reflect global trends. According to some studies, young people's disengagement from politics does not stem from their personal value choices, but from the fact that they consider the existing political system to be inadequate (Cammers et al. 2014). This is supported by other studies, based on Eurobarometer data, which show that young people show higher levels of political and civic participation in more mature, well-established democracies (Kitanova 2019). In light of these findings, it is not surprising that public engagement is less important to young people of the region, whereas according to our data, this is accompanied by an emphasis on individual, self-centered goals.

### *Political participation*

We also examined different forms of political activity that require individual involvement and resources. Electoral activity (past and upcoming elections), seeking political office, and various forms of democratic civic participation, from the signing of a petition through participation in the work of parties and NGOs, to taking part in demonstrations, which are given different names by different authors (Theocharis and van Deth, 2017).

The main reason for this is that of the four countries, Hungary has the highest proportion of people who explicitly decline to vote (18 percent), but there are also higher rates of indecision than among their peers in other V4 countries.

Among young Hungarians, the willingness to participate is lower than average among those attending secondary (and possibly primary) educational institutions, as well as among those who have already left education, those aged 19–24, and the children of mothers with only eight years of primary education. Although, with the exception of Poland, in the other V4 countries there is a statistically significant difference between the mother's increasing educational attainment and an increased willingness to vote, in Hungary this variable is especially pronounced, given the very low rates of participation among those with low levels of education and high rates among those with a university degree.

Traditional forms of political participation include seeking a political function. The probability of this is low in all countries, and there is little difference between responses. Currently, 1 percent of Hungarian young people have some form of political function, and another 9 percent would be happy to accept such an opportunity, whilst one-third categorically reject the possibility and a further quarter reject it somewhat less vehemently. There is a clear gender gap in the acceptance and rejection of political roles in all four countries studied. This is because men are much more open to political functions than female respondents. In Hungary, 44 percent of women and 27 percent of men who answered the question indicated that they would not take on any political role whatsoever, whereas 7 percent and 12 percent, respectively, indicated a hypothetical willingness.

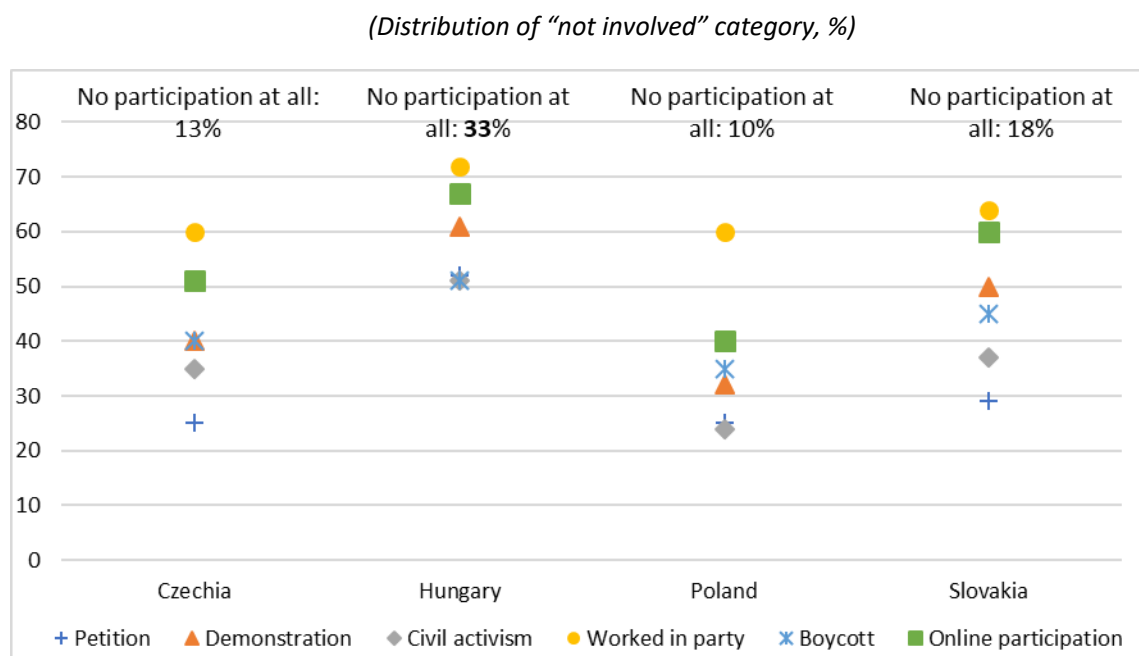
As already mentioned, a number of articles have been written in recent years about the apolitical, apathetic and passive political character of young Hungarians. These analyses, based on empirical

data, have consistently indicated that young Hungarians are among the least politically active in Europe and that this characteristic has not changed substantially over time.

Our research examined participation and intention to participate in six forms of democratic activity.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the pandemic, from early 2020, it was almost impossible to organize street demonstrations or even collect signatures, so this study did not restrict the time frame to the otherwise usual “in the last 12 months”. Whatever form of participation we examine, our data clearly indicates that political participation and intention to participate among Hungarian 15–29-year-olds lags far behind that of their peers in the other V4 countries (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Lack of political participation among young people in V4 countries (THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO GET INVOLVED IN POLITICS. HAVE YOU DONE OR WOULD YOU DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES?)



Source: FES Youth Study Central and Eastern Europe 2021.

Some 26 percent of young Hungarians indicated that they had signed a petition, and another 13 percent said that although they had not yet signed a political petition, they might do so in the future. Some 13 percent had attended a demonstration, and a further 19 percent said they planned to do something of that nature in the future. About one-fifth indicated activity in a non-governmental organization, and about the same number would be willing to do such work in the future. 6 percent had assisted in the work of a political party in the past, but only 6 percent wished to do so in the future. Around 23 percent had boycotted a product for a political or environmental reason, and the

<sup>5</sup> These are as follows: signing a letter of protest, political statement/signing an online petition (petitions); participating in a demonstration (demonstrations); volunteering for or participating in the activities of non-governmental organizations, associations, foundations (civil activism); active involvement in a political party or other political organization (party work); refusing to buy a product or service for political or environmental reasons (boycott); participating in an online policy initiative/group (online activity).

second-highest proportion (17 percent) would consider doing so in the future. Finally, 11 percent had participated in some form of online policy initiative, and another 14 percent might do so in the future.

It is worth putting this data into context. There is no form of political activity in which rates of actual and potential participation would not be lowest among young Hungarians. If we add up all forms of participation, one-third of Hungarians aged 15–29 were not engaged in any form of political activity, whereas in other countries, rates of political passivity vary between 10 and 18 percent.

### *Exit – emigration*

According to Eurobarometer data, mobility decreases significantly with age, and in general an absolute majority who would consider working abroad (56 percent) is found only in the 15–24 age group (Lulle et al. 2019). One quarter of young Hungarians (26 percent) have a strong or very strong desire to leave the country for a period of at least six months. Nearly half of young people have a weak-to-moderate desire to emigrate (45 percent), whereas one-third (33 percent) are sure they don't want to move abroad. With age, the proportion of those who are sure they want to emigrate decreases: 32 percent of 15–18-year-olds, 26 percent of 19–24-year-olds, and just 23 percent of 25–29-year-olds. Among those in the wealthiest economic category, a remarkable number said they would almost certainly leave the country (34 percent, or 5–11 percent higher than in the other groups).

Among young Hungarians, just 15 percent have already been abroad for educational purposes. Studying abroad is even less common among high school students (7 percent), but it is much more common among those over the age of 18 (17–18 percent), partly due to Erasmus scholarships. It is interesting that among young Hungarians, twice as many men (20 percent) as women (9 percent) have studied abroad. The proportion of people with educational experience abroad is similar in Slovakia and the Czech Republic (18 and 19 percent, respectively), whereas the proportion of young Poles who have studied abroad is almost twice as high (28 percent) as among Hungarians.

In Hungary, the most significant differences in willingness to emigrate are found between political groups. Just 12 percent of Fidesz supporters expressed a strong or very strong desire to emigrate, while more (37 percent) declared a clear preference to stay in Hungary. This ratio is reversed (36 and 17 percent) among opposition supporters and is evenly balanced (24 and 27 percent) among the undecided. In all V4 countries, opposition supporters express a greater willingness to leave the country permanently than do government supporters, but in the entire region, willingness to emigrate is highest among young Hungarian opposition supporters.

The primary destination for young Hungarians is Germany (21 percent of those intending to emigrate), followed by Austria (15 percent), the United Kingdom (9 percent), the USA (8 percent) and Spain (7 percent). In terms of destination countries, there was considerable overlap with the top-five lists of young people in the other V4 countries. Germany and the United States were among the top destinations in all four countries. The UK and Spain were still at the top of the Czech and Polish lists, and Austria was first on the list of young Slovaks.

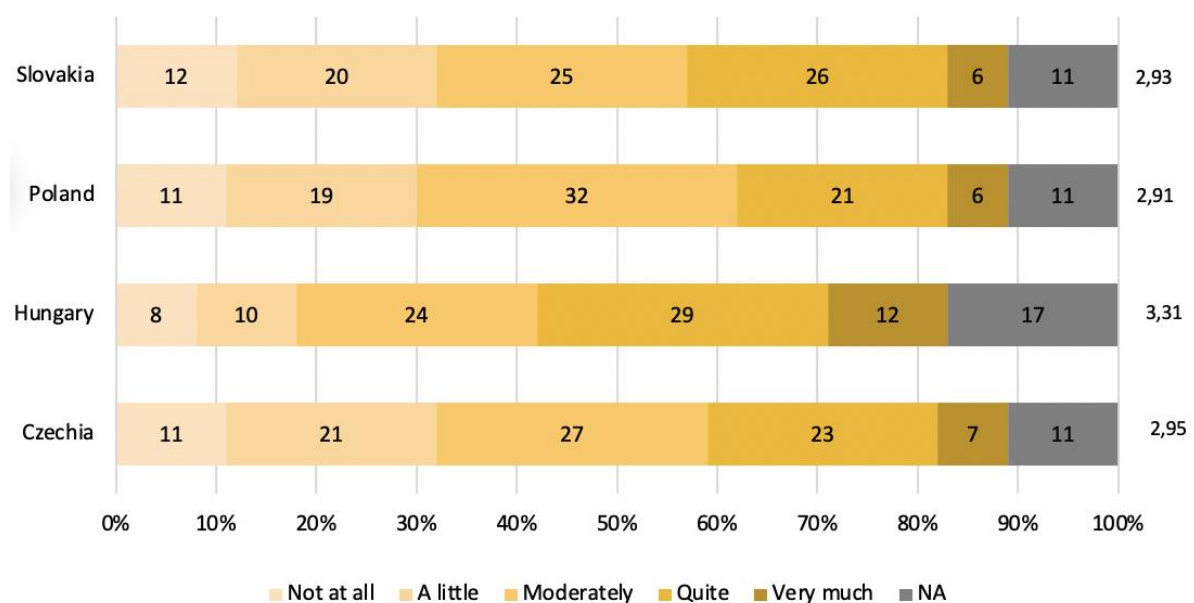
### **3. Conformity**

Research results from the past 20 years show that young Hungarians have consistently professed politically conformist views, and the signs of generational rebellion could be detected only within narrow sub-strata (Oross and Szabó 2021).

Some 12 percent of young Hungarians strongly agree with their parents, and a further 29 percent broadly share the same political views. Young Hungarians agree with their parents to the greatest extent among the V4 countries (Figure 5).

Some 8 percent of Hungarians aged 15–29 reported a fundamental disagreement with their parents on political issues, whilst 10 percent somewhat disagreed with them. Compared with their Czech, Polish, and Slovak peers, Hungary shows the lowest rates of nonconformity. Still, perhaps the most interesting statistic is how many Hungarian young people do not know their parents’ political views and beliefs (17 percent) compared to young people in other countries (11–11 percent). This is obviously related to lower political interest and lower levels of political communication.

*Figure 5. Political conformity among young people in the V4 countries (TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOUR POLICY VIEWS AND BELIEFS IN LINE WITH YOUR PARENTS’ VIEWS?) (Distributions and averages on a scale of 1 to 5)*



Source: FES Youth Study Central and Eastern Europe 2021.

Women, the youngest age groups, those who live in an urban environment, those who judge their financial situation more favorably, and young Hungarians with higher levels of cultural capital all show an increased tendency to agree with their parents on political issues.

Various youth sociological studies conducted in recent years have shown that communication about politics within the family is quite sporadic in Hungary (Oross and Szabó 2019a; Oross and Szabó 2019b). If parents and their children do have conversations about political issues, these usually take the form of interactions within negative contexts, whereas politics itself is chiefly associated with exceptionally negative narratives, including lying and corruption (Szabó and Oross 2018, Szabó 2019). The Hungarian Youth Research 2020 survey also recorded some changes in this area, including a slight increase in discussions on political topics.

Some 16 percent of Hungarians aged 15–29 talk often or very often with their parents or direct acquaintances about political issues. By contrast, 15 percent never talk about such topics and a further 35 percent do so only rarely.

Overall, on the five-point scale, the average rate of political conversation of Hungarian young people stands at 2.52 points, which is the lowest among the V4 countries. Hungary does not lag behind in terms of those who frequently discuss politics but rather in the high proportion of people who either never or only seldom talk about such topics compared with rates among young people in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

A very strong ( $r=0.699$ ) correlation can be observed between the level of political interest and the frequency of political conversations. That is, high levels of interest are generally accompanied by frequent conversations on the topic, low levels of interest with infrequent political discussions. This correlation can be found in all Central European countries but is most pronounced in Hungary (and lowest, in relative terms, in Poland  $r=0.532$ ).

## **Conclusion**

If the world view and thinking of Hungarians aged 15–29 were to be described in three simple terms, the most applicable might be *dissatisfaction, passivity, and conformity*, which is eerily similar to Albert O. Hirschman's conceptual triad of *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970).

### 1. Dissatisfaction

Among the young people of the V4 countries, Hungarians are the most dissatisfied with their personal relationships, as well as with their wider environment. They judge their current life circumstances, quality of life, and income situation unfavorably, but are also dissatisfied with the quality of the school system and vocational training. As for the wider political environment, it can be shown that they feel that no one represents their interests in national politics, and on a presumably related note they also strongly criticize the Hungarian version of democracy.

Attitudes towards the functioning of democracy and the political system are likewise extremely polarized. The vast majority of respondents, including supporters of the opposition, believe that good government connections are a prerequisite for success in Hungary. According to one-third of young Hungarians (33 percent) and more than half of opposition supporters, Fidesz can only be removed by force. Whereas nearly six in ten young supporters of the government say that elections are free and fair in Hungary, the proportion of young opposition supporters who say the same is only around 10 percent. The same picture of Hungarian young people as extremely divided is found in response to questions concerning public access to reliable information and concerning the system of checks and balances.

### 2. Passivity

However, a critical attitude is not linked to political action. Whatever form of participation we examine—electoral participation or offline and online political activity—young Hungarians are by far the most passive in the region. However, it is worth noting—and this complicates the impression of passivity—that, in line with the results of the previous large-scale youth survey conducted in Hungary in 2020, an increase in political interest was recorded. Compared with previous surveys, young Hungarians have become more interested in the events of the wider world, yet they remain the least interested in public affairs by Central European comparison. At the same time, however, there is a narrow segment of politically active individuals, largely comprising students or graduates from the larger cities, drawn from among the politically dissatisfied.

### 3. Conformity

The third adjective that can be applied to Hungarian young people is conformism. There is no empirical evidence of general rebellion or open opposition to the views of parents in the attitudes of young people in the V4 countries, including Hungary. The continuous and unusually long period of forced coexistence sparked by the Covid-19 pandemic has not negatively affected intergenerational coexistence, nor has it put significant strain on the child–parent relationship within the family. Apart from the lack of a general revolt, the Hungarian and Central European data gives no particular indication of political revolt. The research experience of the past 20 years in Hungary is that a significant proportion of young people consistently express conformity with their families in terms of political views, regardless of the political period. Only 18 percent say they mostly or entirely disagree with their parents. Some 12 percent of young Hungarians strongly agree, and a further 29 percent broadly share the same political views as their parents. Hungarian young people agree with their parents to the greatest extent among the V4 countries.

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