

MESA10 &

CEAS

University

Students

Survey

The following are the main conclusions and results of a survey among University students from:

7 universities in **5** countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovakia) with a total of **1714** respondents in all countries.

Survey was undertaken at the end of November 2019 and is a part of a project of debates of University students jointly implemented by MESA10 and CEAS.

KEY FINDINGS



EU's role as a guarantor of sovereignty and defender of values strengthened but enlargement seen with deeper skepticism



NATO's core role for its members gets more support while NATO radiates less relevance and guarantees of the USA to its allies in NATO are seen as waning



Students ready to support countries against Russia's aggression



Concerns over Russia's and China's defense spending undetected on students' radar screens



Students are more optimistic about political changes in their countries and ascribe increased impact to their participation in elections on political life of their countries

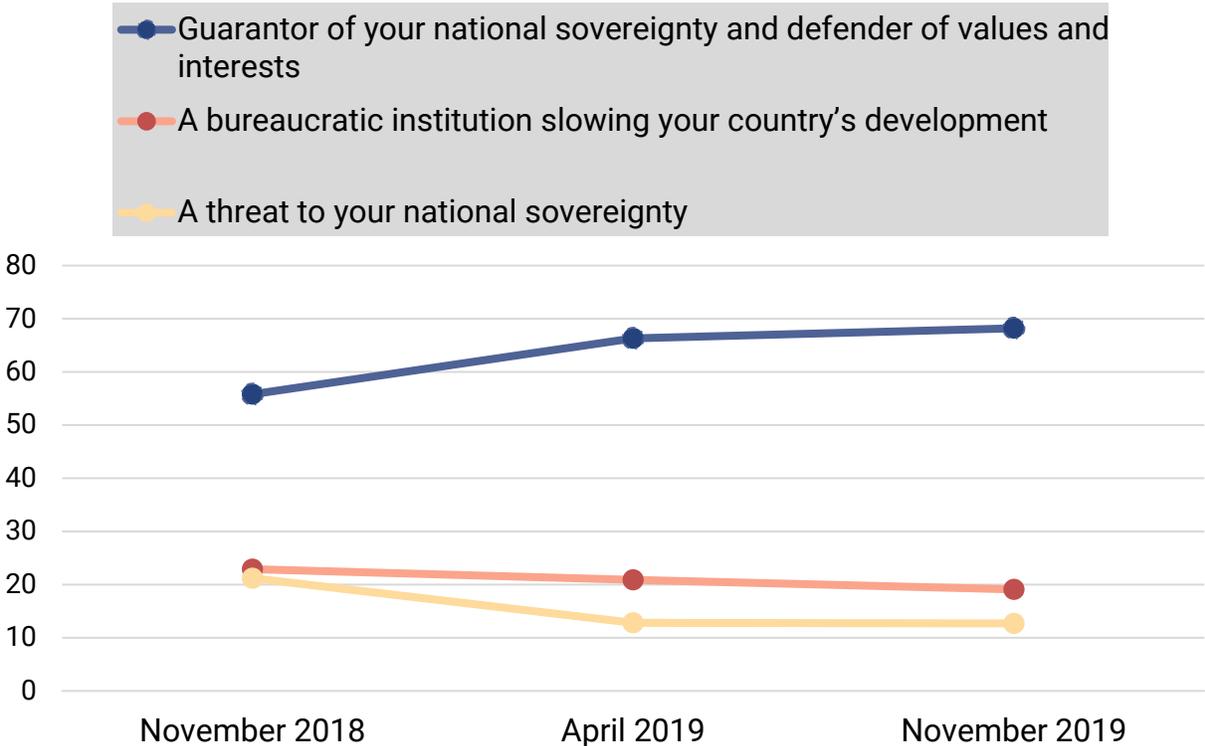


Students want to live in democracy with its institutions

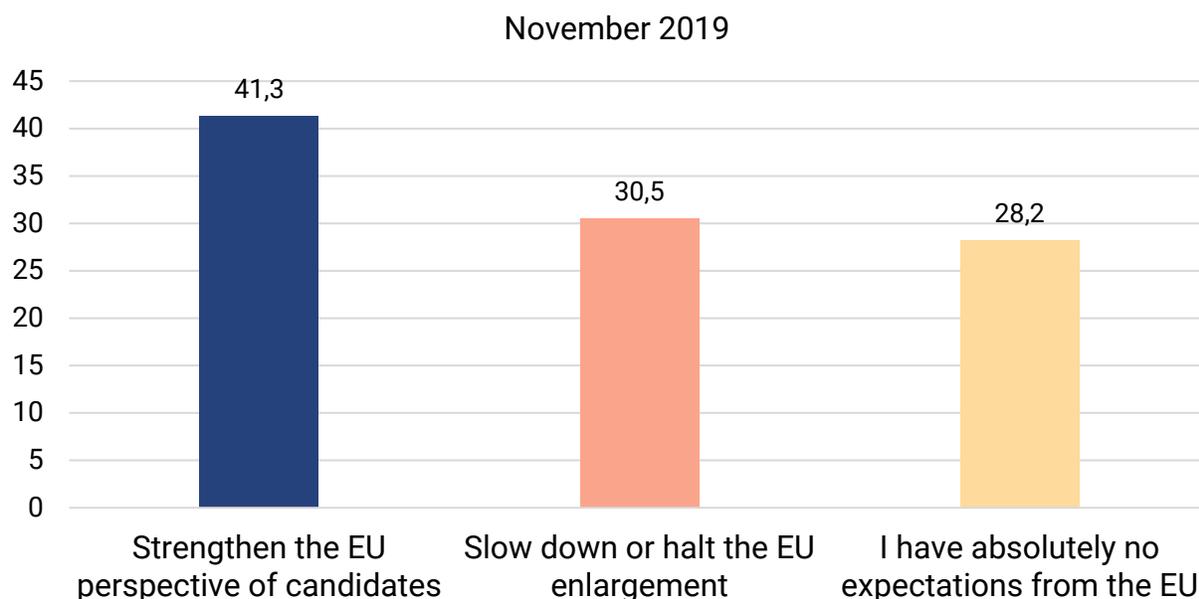
1. EU'S ROLE AS A GUARANTOR OF SOVEREIGNTY AND DEFENDOR OF VALUES STRENGTHENED BUT WITH DEEPER SKEPTICISM IN ENLARGEMENT

While more students (68,2%) perceive the European Union as a guarantor of their national sovereignty and defender of values and interests (in November 2018 it was at 55,8% and in April 2019 at 66,3%), the majority of students (58,7%) are skeptical about EU's future enlargement. They believe that the upcoming 2020 EU Western Balkans summit will either slow down or halt the EU enlargement or they have no expectations from the EU at all. Only students from Moldova (58%), Slovakia (55%) and Montenegro (49%) are believers that the summit will strengthen the EU perspective of candidates.

In your opinion, the European Union is:

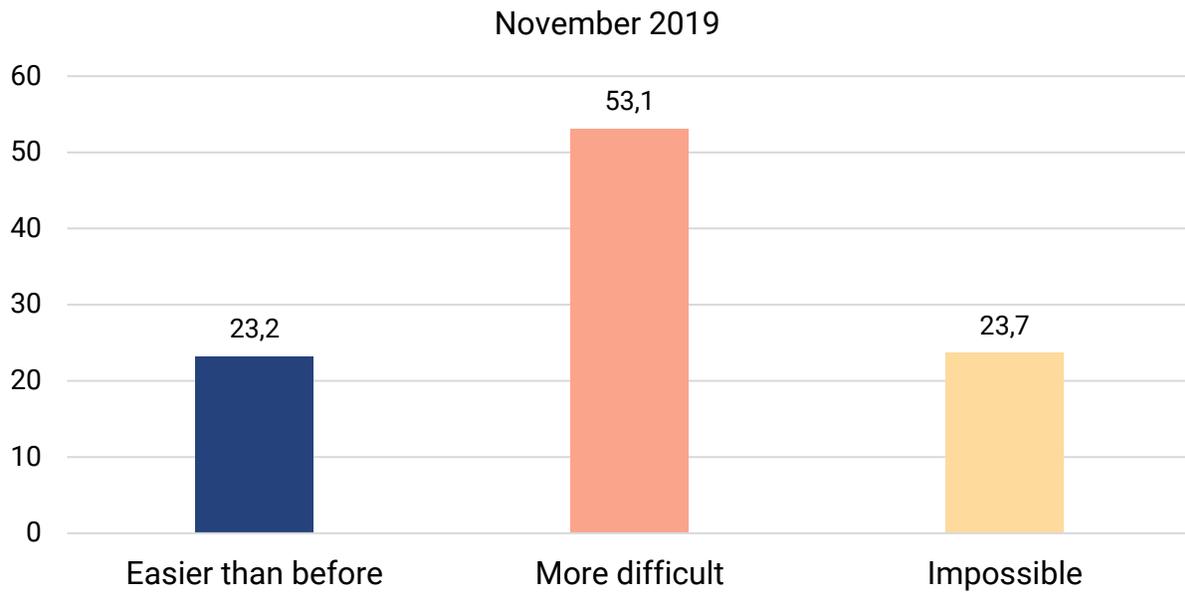


In your opinion, the upcoming May 2020 EU Western Balkans summit will:

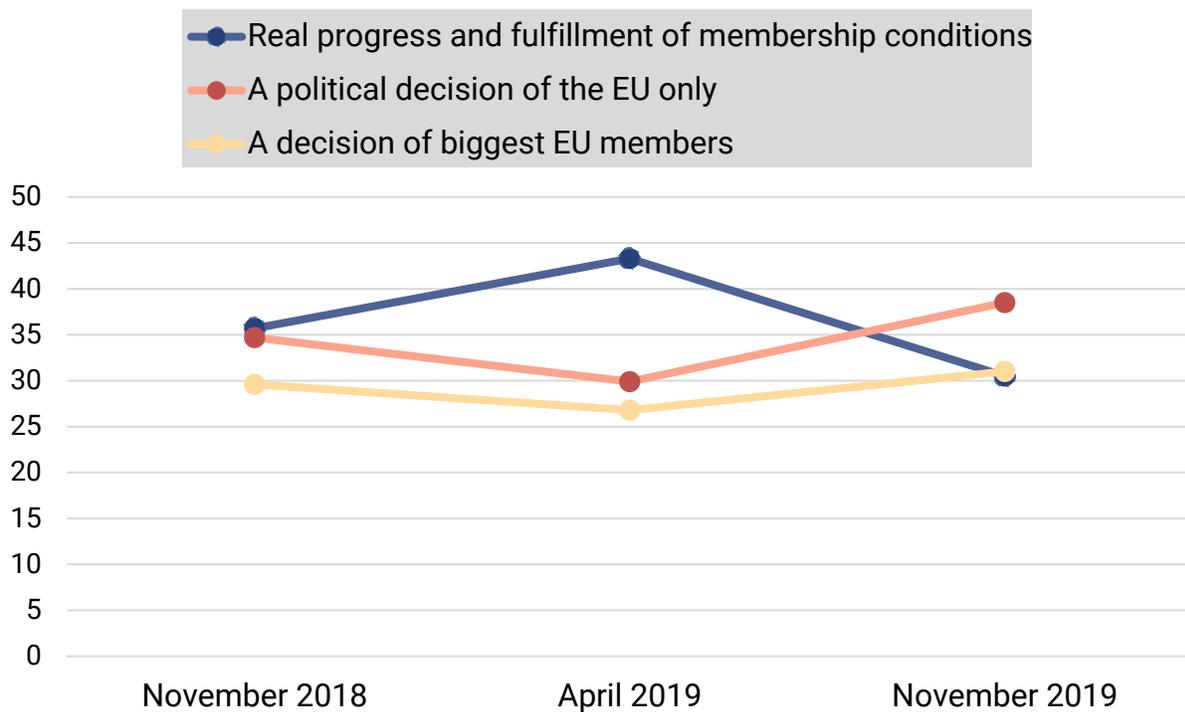


At the same time, 53,1% of students opined that until 2024 joining the EU by the Western Balkans countries will be more difficult. A relative majority of students (44,3%) also believe that by 2025, no country will join the EU. In addition to that, the share of those believing that the EU entry depends upon fulfillment of criteria decreases (30,5%) and the number of those persuaded that the membership is a decision of biggest EU members (31%) or a political decision of the EU (38,5%) is rising. Generally, the persuasion about EU's joining as a political decision of the EU oscillates around 1/3 in all countries, with the exception of Montenegro, where it reaches 56%. On the other hand, the role of real progress in candidate countries in meeting the EU criteria is falling from 43,3% in April 2019 to 30,5% in November 2019.

Until 2024, joining the EU by Western Balkans and EU's East will be:



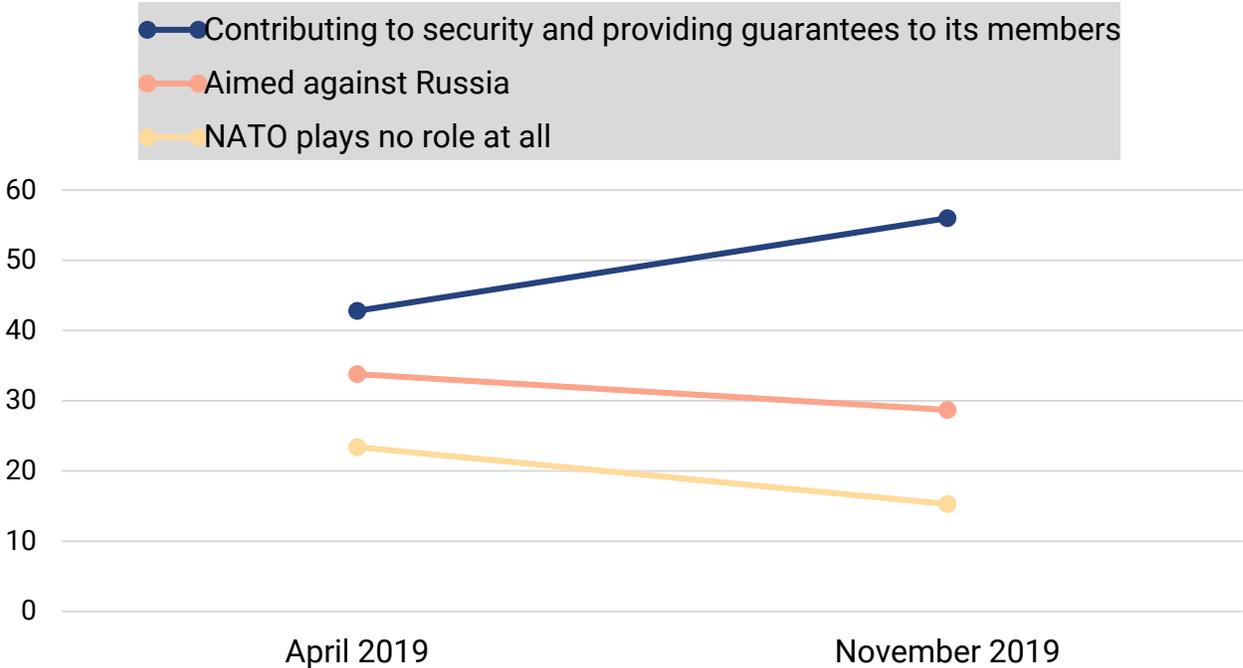
If your country became/will become a member state of the EU, it was/will be on the basis of:



2. NATO'S CORE ROLE FOR ITS MEMBERS GETS MORE SUPPORT WHILE NATO RADIATES LESS RELEVANCE AND GUARANTEES OF THE USA TO ITS ALLIES IN NATO ARE SEEN AS WANING

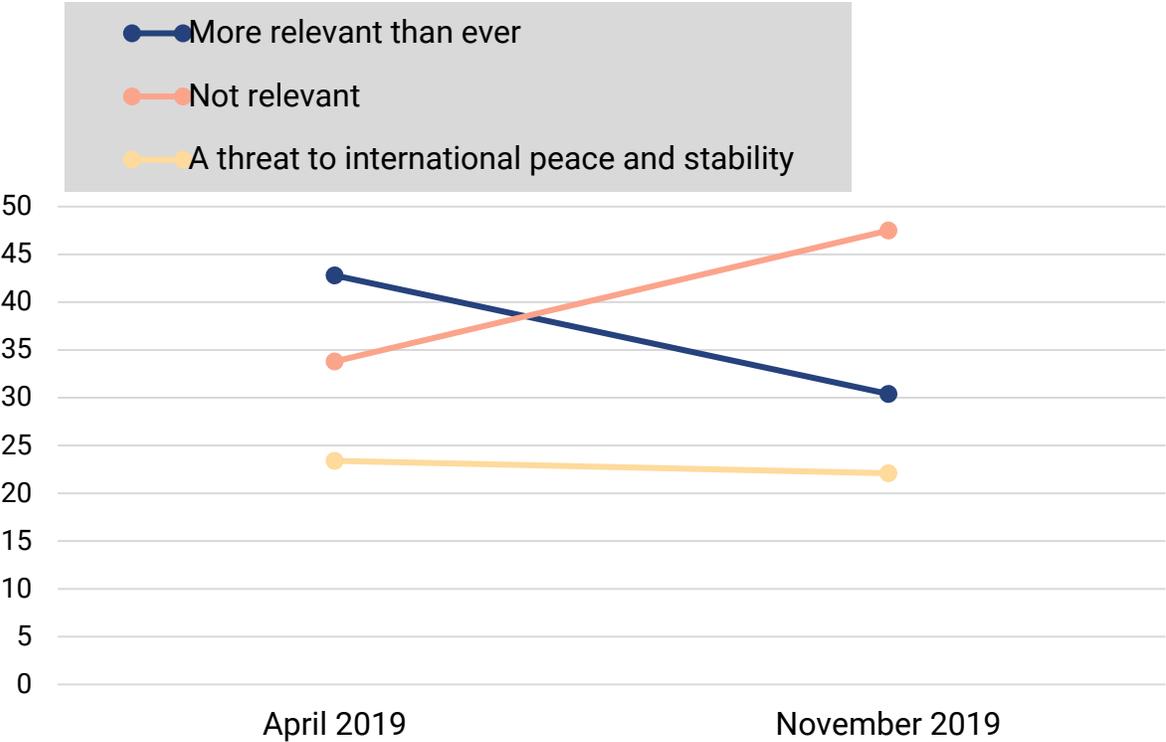
The share of students believing that NATO is contributing to security and providing guarantees to its members achieved majority and rose to 56% (April 2019 - 42,8%). However, significant differences between students persist - while those in Moldova (76%), Montenegro (62%) Slovakia (65%) and almost a majority of students in Bosnia and Herzegovina (48%) believe so, in Serbia only 32% of students share this opinion.

In your opinion, the role of NATO is:

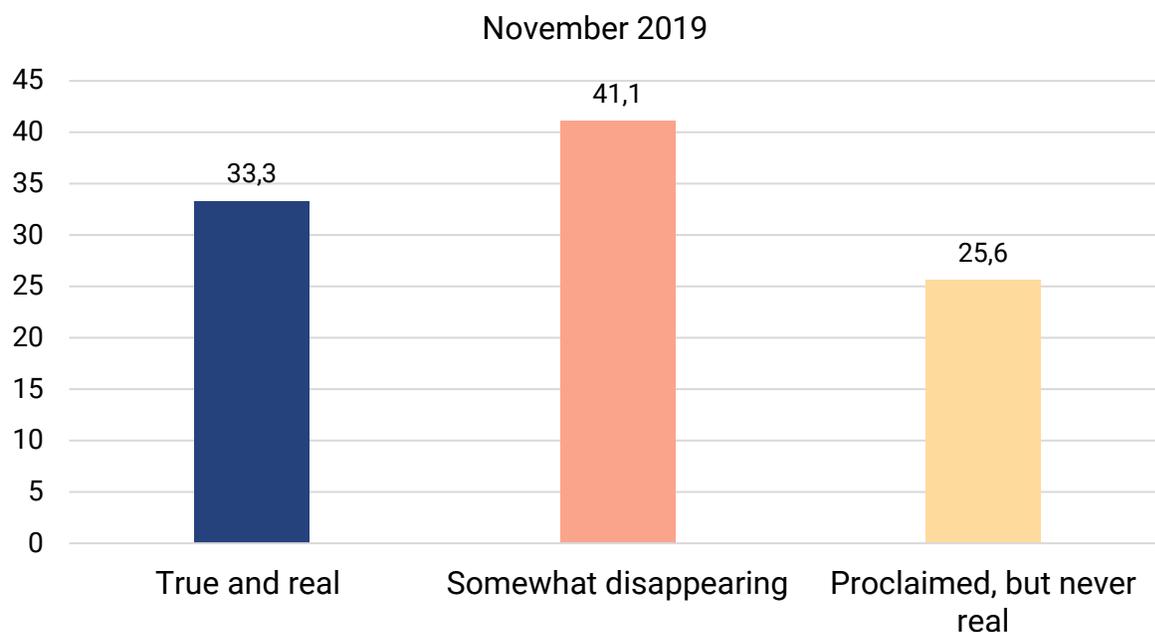


At the same time, the share of students thinking that NATO is not relevant rose from 33,8% (April 2019) to 47,5% (November 2019). Also 66,7% of students believe that security guarantees provided by USA to its NATO allies are either “somewhat disappearing” or “proclaimed, but not real”. Even students from Slovakia, usually NATO supporters, express only half the persuasion (37% of them believing the US guarantees are true and real) of their fellows students in Montenegro (66%), the only other NATO member country of the five surveyed.

In your opinion, in 2019, 70 years after its founding, NATO is:



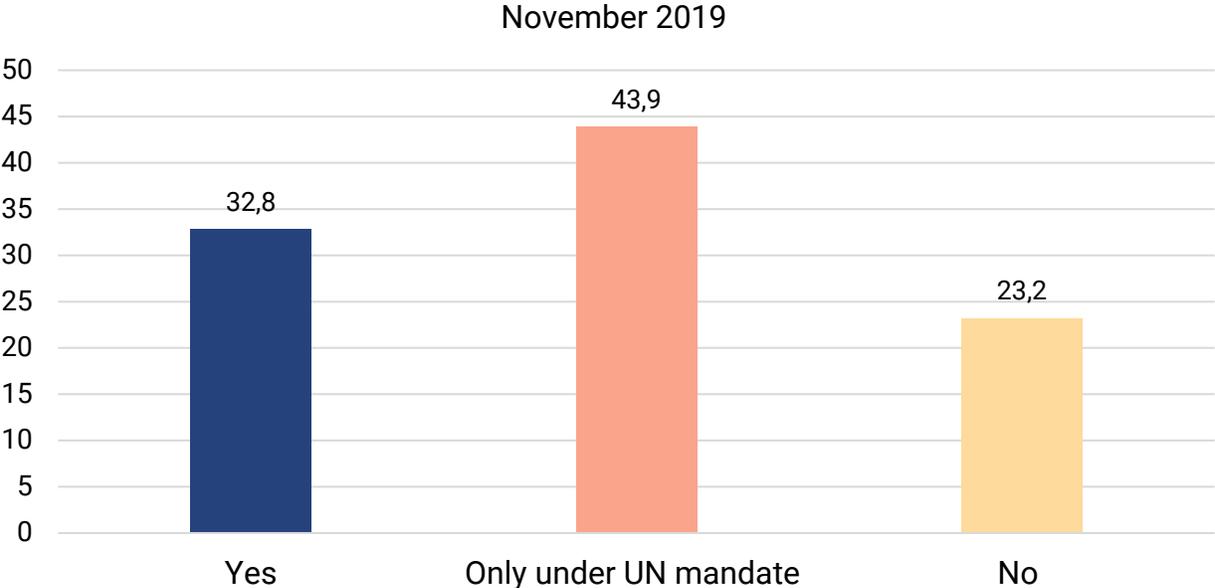
In your opinion, security guarantees provided by the USA to its allies in NATO are:



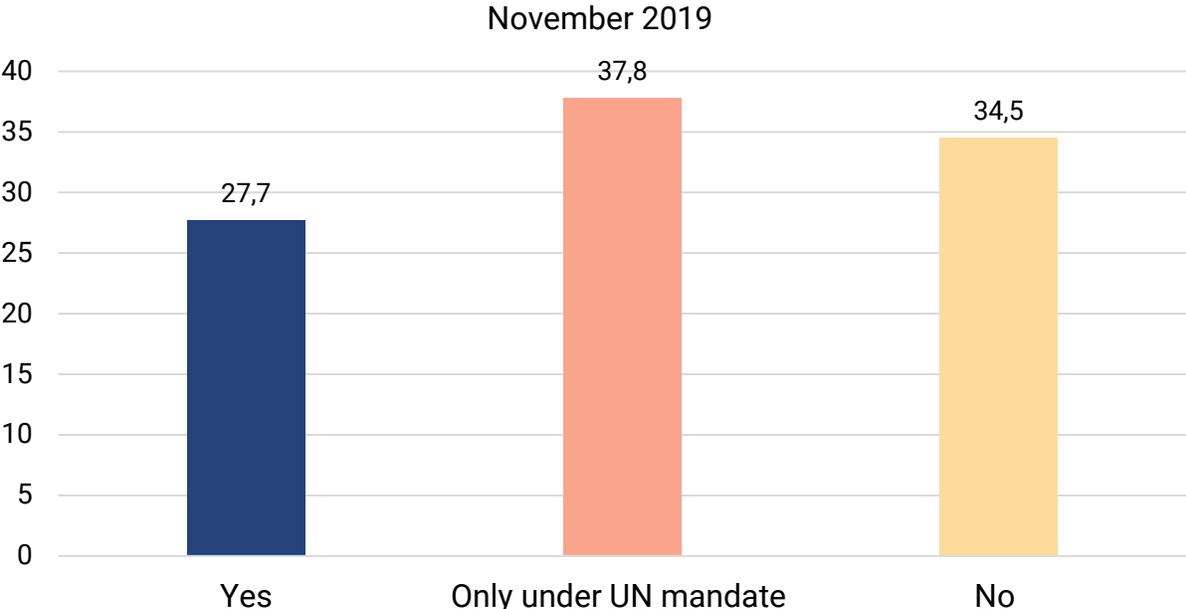
3. STUDENTS READY TO SUPPORT COUNTRIES AGAINST RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION

Less than a quarter of students (23,2%) would not support Estonia, Lithuania or Latvia if one of them were attacked by Russia. 32,8% of students would support them without any conditions and 43,9% would do that under a UN mandate. 34,5% of students would not support sending their country's troops to Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania under attack by Russia. However, 27,7% would support sending the troops and 37,8% of students would do that under a UN mandate. There is clearly a wider share of support for countries under Russia's aggression among the students from Montenegro (42%) and Slovakia (40%), both NATO members.

Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia are NATO members. Would you support NATO's defense of them if one of them were attacked by Russia?

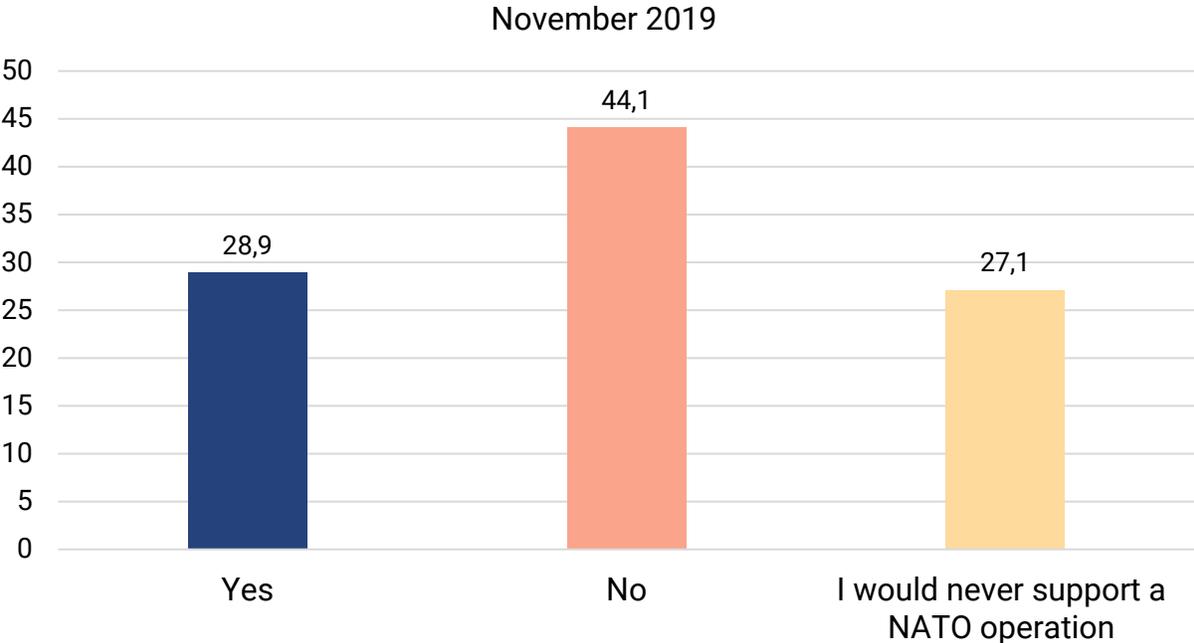


Would you support sending your country's troops to Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania if one of them were attacked by Russia?



When students are posed a question directly entailing NATO membership (“Imagine that your country is a NATO member (or already is in NATO). Would you support sending your country’s troops to Estonia, Lithuania or Latvia if one of them were attacked by Russia?”), the numbers change. Relative majority of students (44,1%) would not be supportive and 27,7% of students would never support a NATO operation. However, 28,9% of students would support sending the troops to Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania if one of them were attacked by Russia and their country were a NATO member.

**Imagine that your country is a NATO member (or already is in NATO).
Would you support sending your country’s troops to Estonia, Lithuania or
Latvia if one of them were attacked by Russia?**

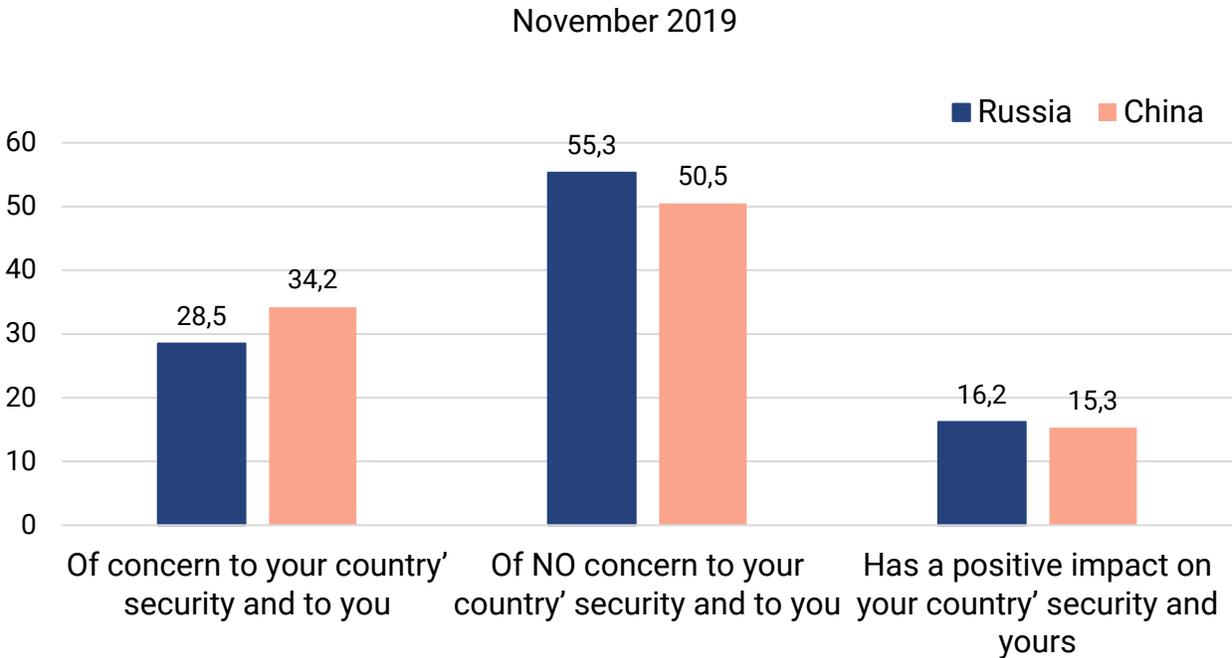


4. CONCERNS OVER RUSSIA’S AND CHINA’S DEFENSE SPENDING UNDETECTED ON STUDENTS’ RADAR SCREENS

Increasing defense spending by Russia and China is not a source of concern of students in any of the surveyed countries. 55,3% of all students are not concerned by increasing defense spending by Russia and 50,5% of students share the same opinion about China’s increased defense spending. Less than 1/3 of students are concerned by Russia’s increasing defense spending and less than 1/6 of students by that of China.

Increasing defense spending by Russia is:

Increasing defense spending by China is:



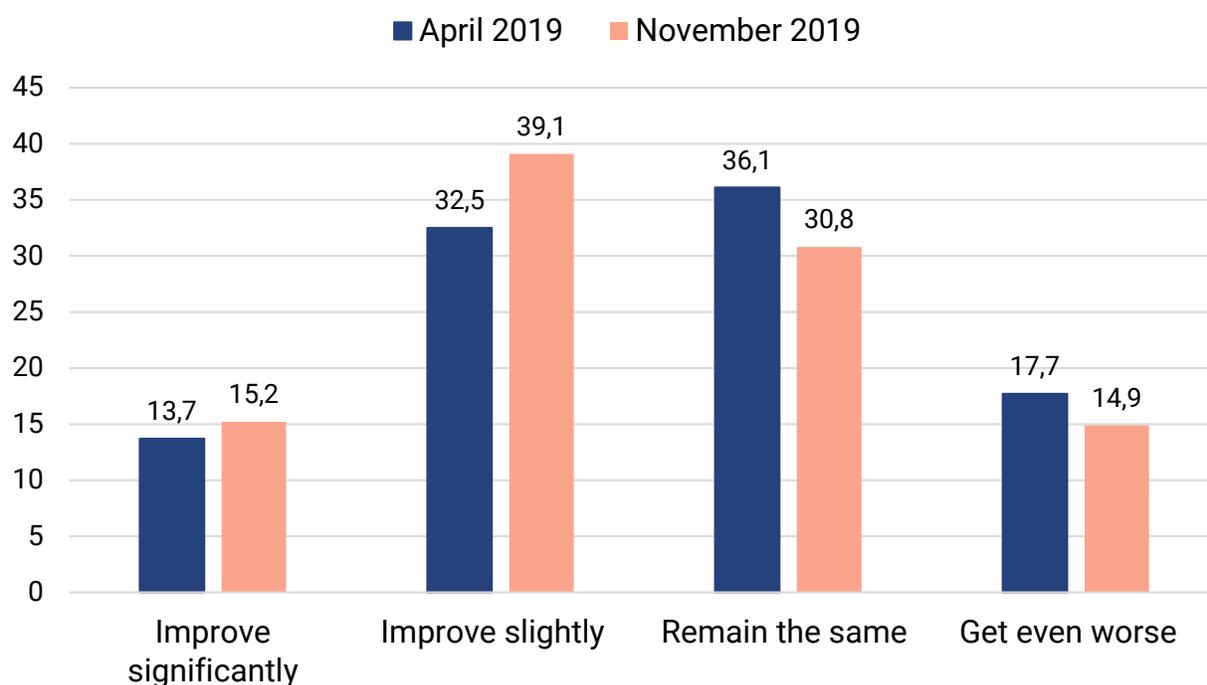
5. STUDENTS ARE MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT POLITICAL CHANGES IN THEIR COUNTRIES AND ASCRIBE INCREASED IMPACT TO THEIR PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS ON POLITICAL LIFE OF THEIR COUNTRIES

Majority of all students (54,3%) believe that within the next 3-4 years, the political situation in their countries will improve. Pessimism yielded to optimism on the rise – in April 2019 majority of students (53,8%) believed that it will remain the same or even get worse.

However, there are substantial gaps between individual countries: while majority of students from Bosnia and Herzegovina (59%), Moldova (68%), Montenegro (53%) and Slovakia (64%) are hopeful about significant or slight improvement in the political situation of their countries, students from Serbia see it in darker colors - 68% of them believe that it will remain the same or even get worse.

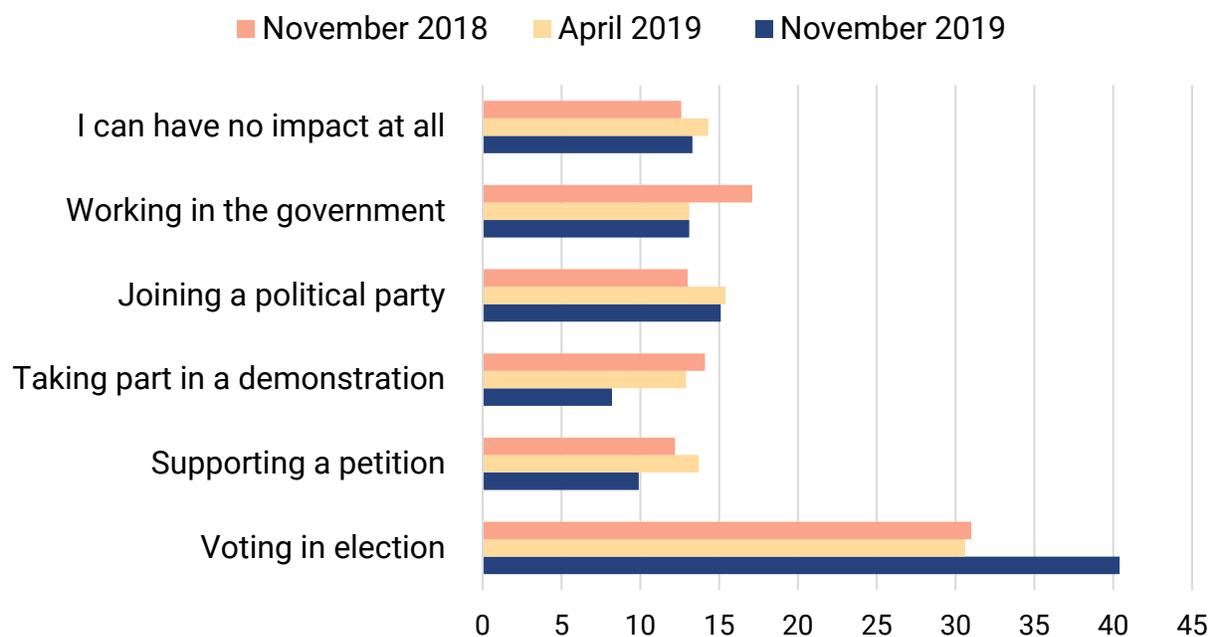
In addition to that, while majority of students from all countries (53%) opined that their country can be called successful and students from Slovakia (74%), Moldova (69%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (55%) are true believers in their countries' success, only 30% of students from Serbia and 29% of students from Montenegro believe so.

In your opinion, within the next 3-4 years, the political situation in your country will:



Compared with the results of previous surveys (April 2019 and November 2018), there is also an increased importance that students ascribe to elections in political life of their countries. 40,4% of all students believe that by voting in the elections, they can have the greatest impact on political life of their country. As the results show, such an increase is mainly due to the importance of voting marked by 54% of students from Slovakia (while others range from 31% to 38%). This seems to be connected with a politically very active year of 2019 in Slovakia and with the upcoming parliamentary elections in Slovakia (February 2020).

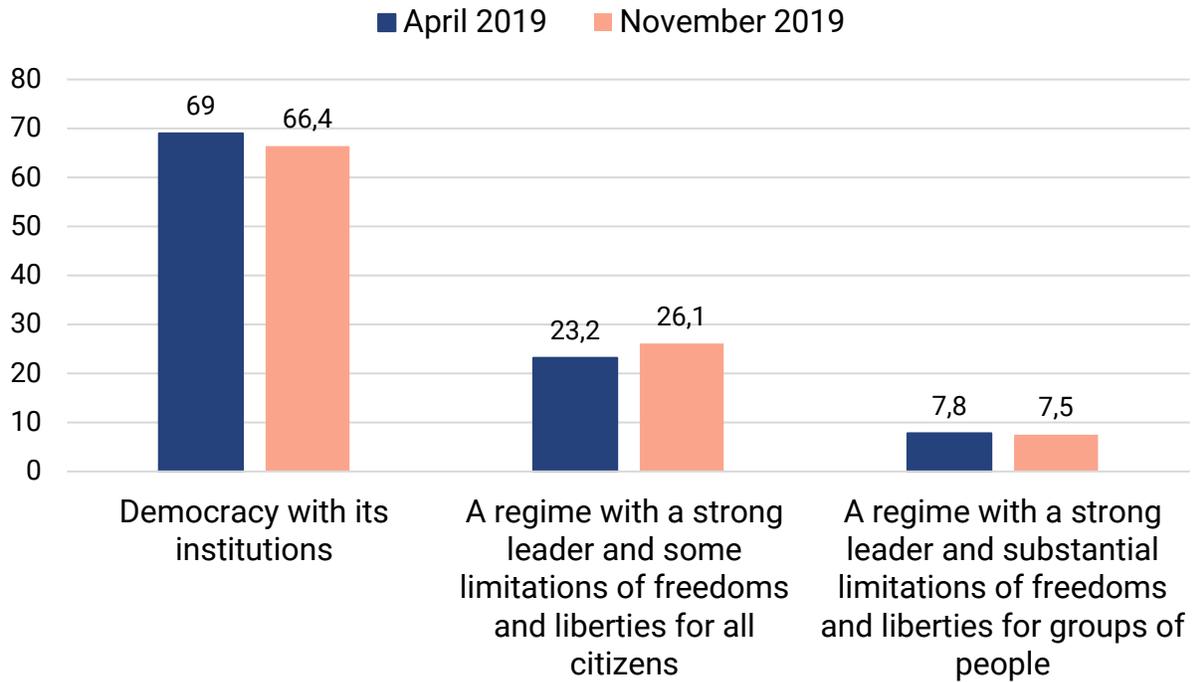
In your opinion, how can you have the greatest impact on political life in your country?



6. STUDENTS WANT TO LIVE IN DEMOCRACY WITH ITS INSTITUTIONS

66,4% of students want to live in a democracy with its institutions. In addition to that, 50,5% of students want their country to belong to the West and its institutions (EU and NATO). The weight of students attracted by a regime with a strong leader and some limitations of freedoms and liberties of all citizens grew insignificantly from 23,2% (April 2019) to 26,1% (November 2019). Share of those believing in a regime with a strong leader and substantial limitations of freedoms and liberties for groups of people or defining their country by a special regime of governance, being a part of neither the West nor the East remains low and almost unchanged.

In what kind of system of governance would you like to live?



In the future, where would you want your country to belong to?

