

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 **1578** respondents in all countries.

Survey was undertaken in **June 2020** and is a part of a project of debates of University students jointly implemented by MESA10 and CEAS.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic followed by lockdown, some interviews were conducted online. The ratio of F2F and online varied across the countries, on average **one third** of interviews was **in person** and **two thirds electronically**. Since there are not any significant differences according to the mode of interviewing, we do not include it as an extra variable into the interpretation.

The **key focus** of the survey was – of course – the echo of **COVID-19 pandemic**. The questions covered different aspects of it – mostly, those which are related to international relations and international assistance and solidarity but also expectations of the young people vis-a-vis the post-pandemic world.

In addition to these extremely timely issues we kept an eye on the trend questions and issues, among them, above all, the **perception of the EU**, and perspective of the **EU enlargement**.

Further, we explored how the students perceive their country's future, and their own role in it.

In earlier surveys we focused more on cyber security, disinformation and hoaxes – this time there is one question mapping this phenomenon.

The interpretation is organized with the following headlines:

- 1. EU'S ROLE AS A GUARANTOR OF SOVEREIGNTY AND DEFENDOR OF VALUES IS APPRECIATED BUT WITH DEEPER SKEPTICISM ABOUT ENLARGEMENT**
- 2. MIXED VIEWS ABOUT THE EU'S AND NATO'S ASSISTANCE TO WB COUNTRIES AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC**
- 3. REALISTIC OPINIONS ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE VIRUS AND SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE POST-COVID-19 ERA**
- 4. STUDENTS WANT TO LIVE IN DEMOCRACY ENCHORED IN WESTERN INSTITUTIONS**
- 5. STUDENTS ARE MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT POLITICAL CHANGES IN THEIR COUNTRIES**
- 6. COUNTRY PROFILES**
- 7. DEMOGRAPHICS**

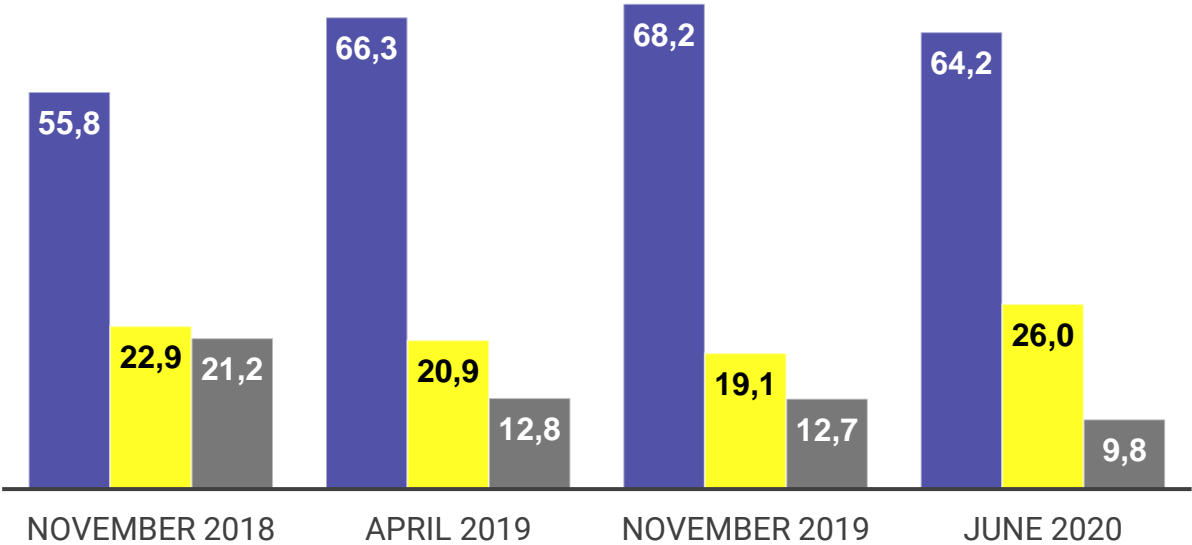
# 1. EU'S ROLE AS A GUARANTOR OF SOVEREIGNTY AND DEFENDOR OF VALUES STRENGTHENED BUT WITH DEEPER SKEPTICISM IN ENLARGEMENT

The number of students who perceive the European Union as a guarantor of their national sovereignty and defender of values and interests is stagnating at the high level of about 2/3 of them. Compared to November 2019 the number of those who think that the EU is a bureaucratic institution slowing country's development increased to 26%, on the other hand those who perceive it as a threat decreased (to 9,8%).

The largest number of positive perceptions of the EU is in Slovakia (78%), followed by Montenegro (76%). The EU has the most critical image among the students in Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by Serbia.

## In your opinion, the European Union is:

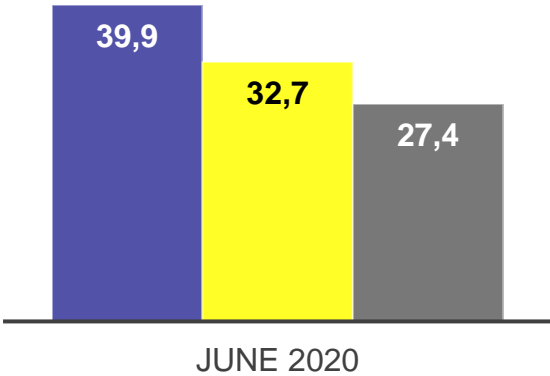
- Guarantor of your national sovereignty and defender of values and interests
- A bureaucratic institution slowing your country's development
- A threat to your national sovereignty



Regarding the importance of EU's Western Balkans summit (May 2020) the views of the students are unenthusiastic - 27% admit they had no expectations. However, almost 40% are more optimistic – the summit reconfirmed EU's commitment to Western Balkans' EU perspective and about a third said that it produced weaker results than it aspired.

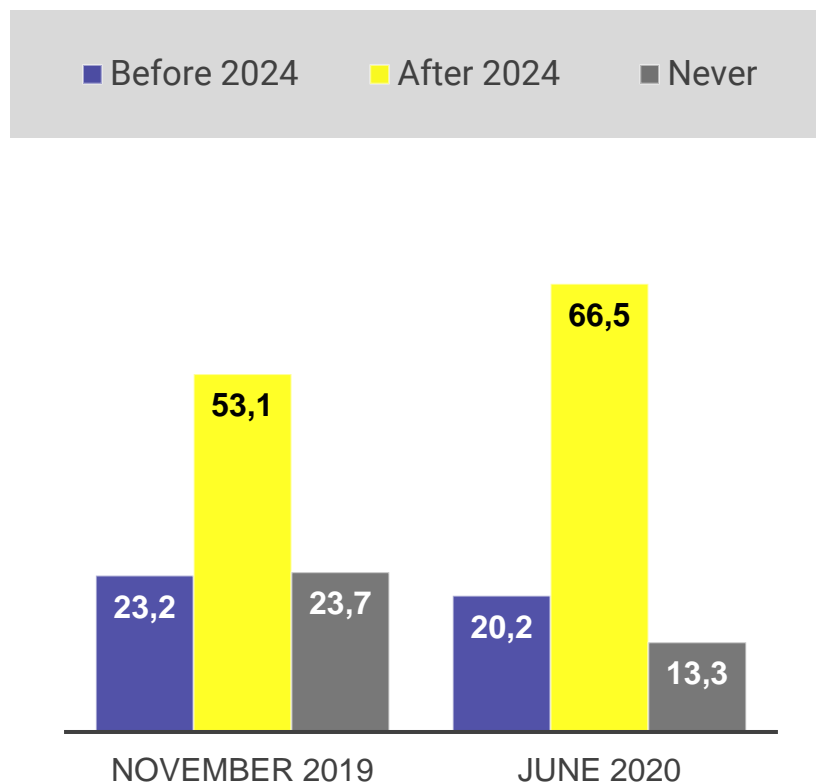
**In your opinion, the May 6, 2020 EU-Western Balkans summit:**

- Reconfirmed EU's commitment to Western Balkans' EU perspective
- Produced weaker results than aspired
- I had no expectations from the summit



All in all we see mixed views of future accession of the WB countries – on one hand, the number of those who say 'it will never happen' decreased (from 23% in November 2019 to 13% in June 2020), but still, the majority see as a realistic scenario time after 2024.

## Some Western Balkans (WB) and EU's East countries will join the EU:



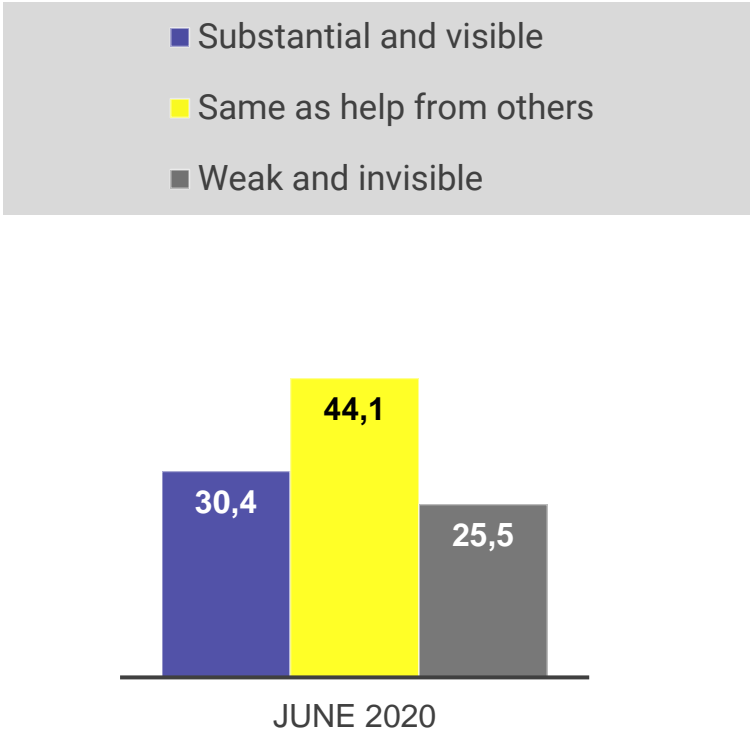
## 2. MIXED VIEWS ABOUT THE EU'S AND NATO'S ASSISTANCE TO WB COUNTRIES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

At the beginning of the pandemic the EU was massively criticized for its slow reactions. Later on, the EU came with substantial assistance for the member states but also for countries outside the EU. However, only small numbers of students see this assistance as substantial and visible - as for the WB's countries recovery, it was 30% of students; as for the overall performance only 28% of students gave the EU the highest ranking. The most frequent responses were that the EU assisted as others (44%), or that the overall performance was weaker and slower than the students

expected. As for the future, provision of medical equipment and protective material and financial assistance are expected.

The views vary among the countries – the most positive evaluation could be found in Montenegro, the most negative in Serbia and Moldova.

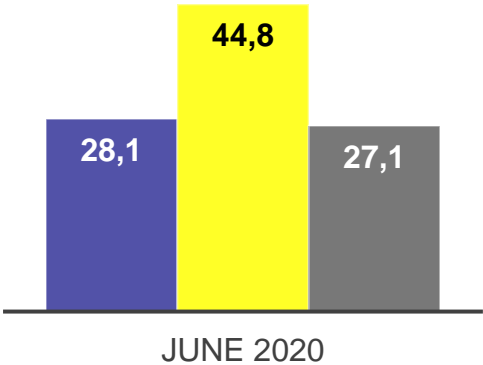
**EU’s assistance to WB’s recovery during COVID-19 pandemic, including its package over EUR 3.3 billion was:**





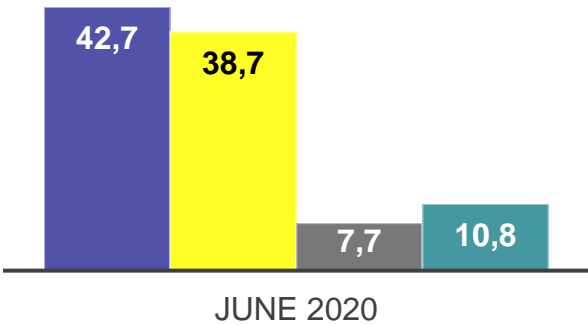
**EU's overall performance during COVID-19 pandemic, including assistance to your country, was:**

- Strong, visible and timely
- Weaker, slower than I expected
- Weaker and less visible than others



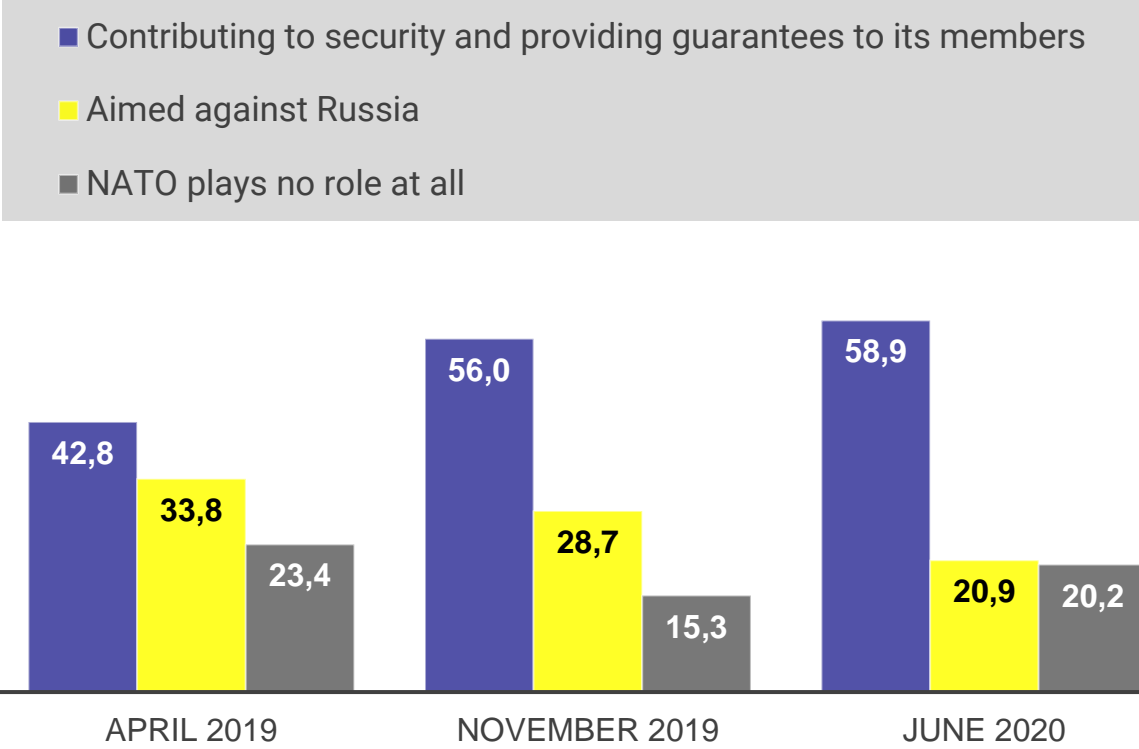
**In a future in case of COVID-19/other pandemic, you would expect EU's assistance to your country in:**

- Provision of medical equipment and protective material
- Financial assistance
- Education and learning
- I expect nothing from the EU

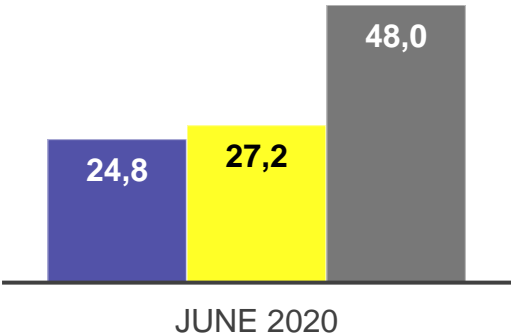
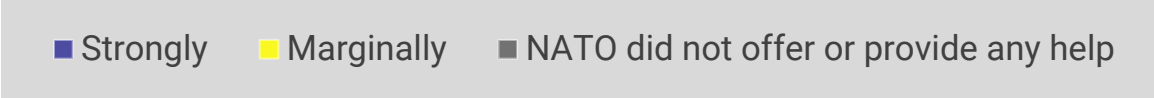


Similar questions were asked about NATO – the prevailing (48%) response was “NATO did not offer or provide any help”. All in all, still the Western alliances were those who assisted most (40%). Help from China was registered (23%), but still - 28% answered “nobody helped us”.

**In your opinion, the role of NATO is:**

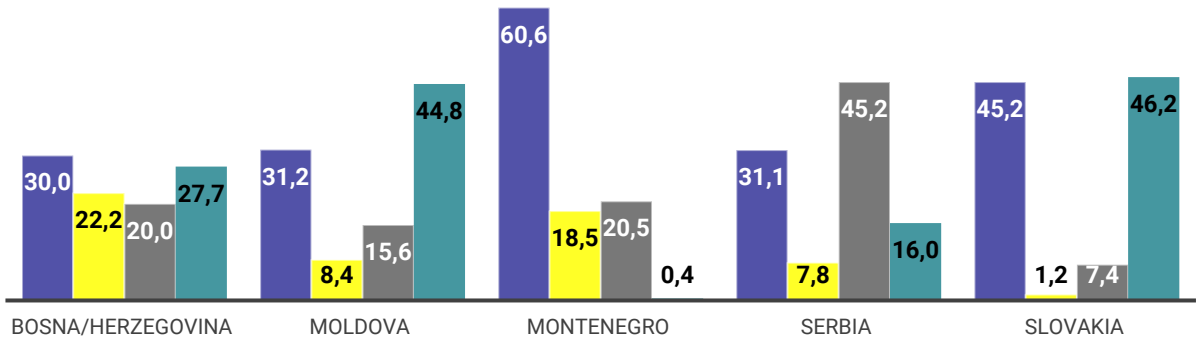
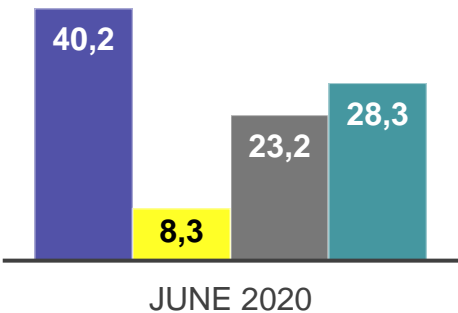


**During COVID-19 pandemic, how did you feel that NATO offered or provided assistance to your country:**



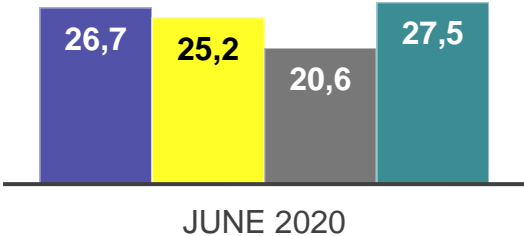
As for this question there are relevant differences among the students in Montenegro - the assistance from the EU and NATO is seen as the strongest and the most effective (61%), followed by Slovak students (45%), whereas in other countries it is only about 30%. China’s assistance is mostly valued in Serbia (45%).

**During COVID-19 pandemic, whose assistance to your country was the strongest and most effective:**



**In a future in case of COVID-19/other pandemic, where would you expect NATO’s assistance to your country:**

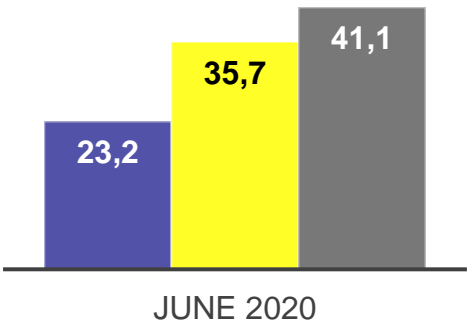
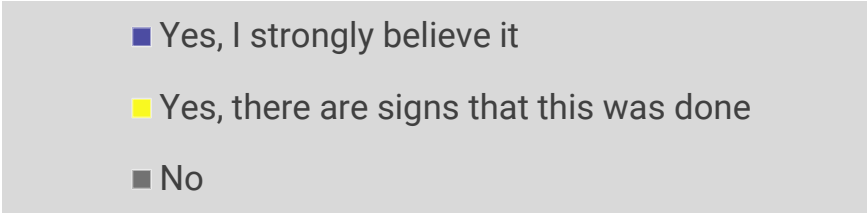
- Airlift to bring medical
- Sending military medical teams
- Procurement of medical equipment
- I expect nothing from NATO



**3. REALISTIC OPINIONS ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE VIRUS AND SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE POST-COVID-19 ERA**

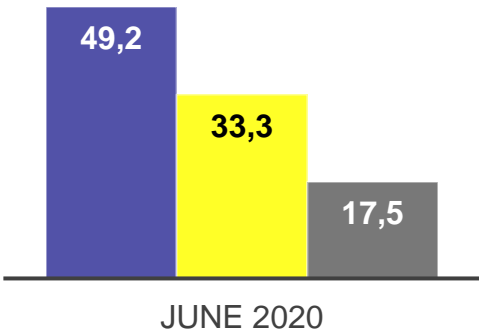
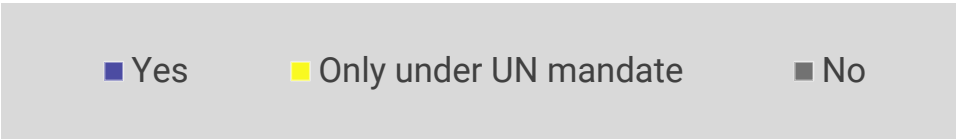
There were a multitude of debates about the origin of the COVID19 virus. Only a smaller part of the students believe in the conspiracy version of the virus being modified in the laboratories to allow its spread to humans (23%), about one third has some doubts, but the portion of those who say clearly “no” to conspiracy version is more than 40%. The portion of conspiracy believers is lower in Slovakia (only 15%) and Moldova (16%).

**Do you believe that COVID-19 virus was modified in the laboratories to allow its spread to humans?**



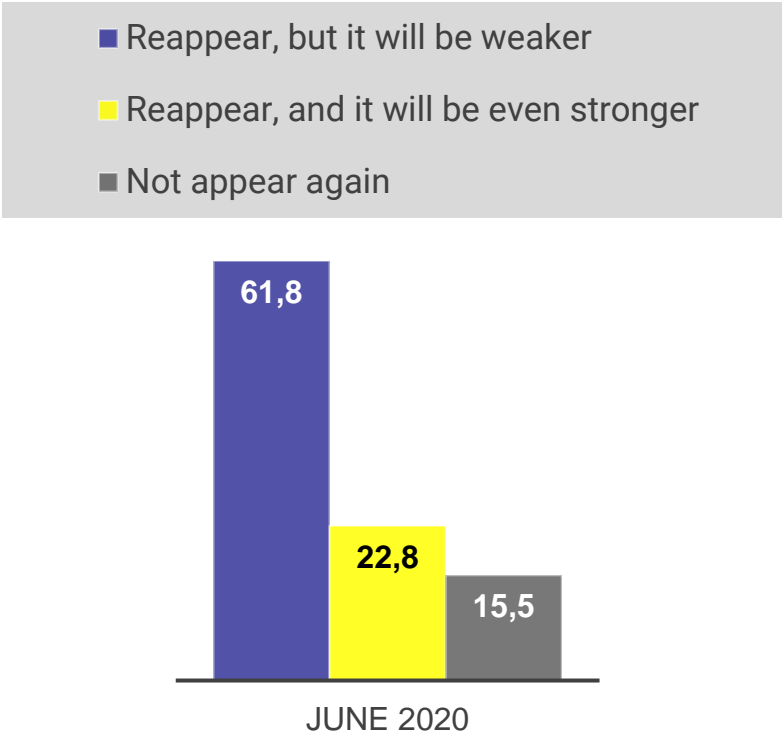
Still, almost a half of the students support international inquiry investigating the origins of COVID-19 virus.

**Would you support international inquiry investigating the origins of COVID-19 virus?**



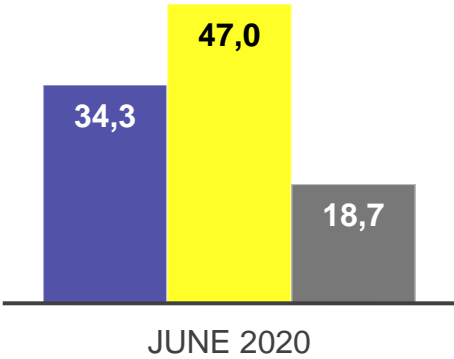
Students have rather skeptical views about the post COVID 19 period. Majority of them (85%) see the reforms, and recovery as crucial. However, at the same time they are skeptical about the plans of their country’s governments – only about one third believe that there is a clear plan for recovery of the economy.

**In your opinion, COVID-19 pandemic in the Fall/Winter 2020 will:**



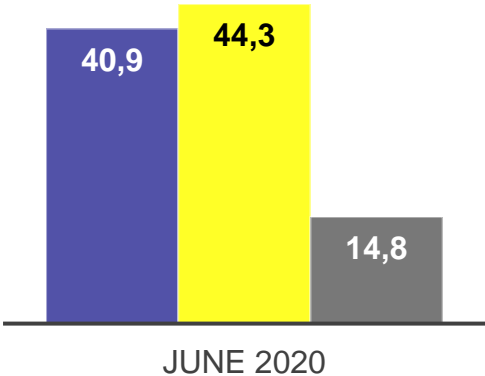
**Do you believe that your country's government has a clear plan of post COVID-19 economic recovery?**

- Yes
- No
- If the gov't has it, it has not been communicated



**In your opinion, what is the most important task for your government in the coming months?**

- Adopting reforms needed to aid economic recovery
- Giving financial help to businesses and people to aid economic recovery
- Preparing for the return of COVID-19 in the Fall/Winter 2020

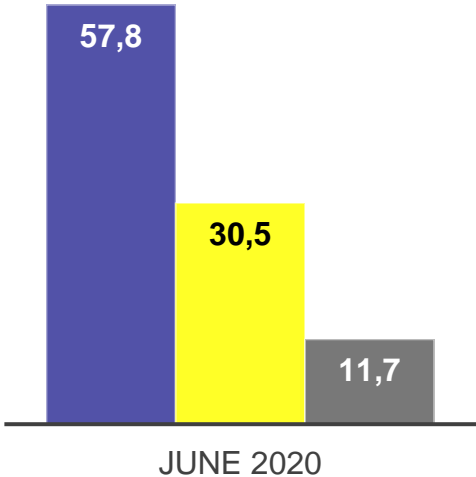




Lessons learned from the pandemic are clear - both national measures and international cooperation are important (58%), fewer students think that the international cooperation is less important than national measures.

**In your opinion, what are some of the lessons from 2020 COVID-19 pandemic:**

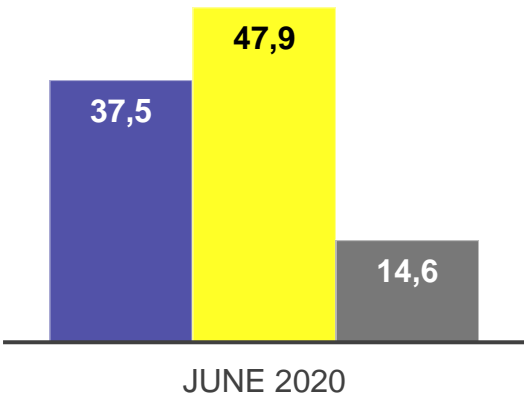
- Both national measures and international cooperation are important
- International cooperation is less important than national measures
- Only national measures are important, international cooperation plays no role at all



In spite of this message the expectations are not optimistic only – almost half of the respondents (47 %) think that after COVID-19 pandemic, in international affairs around the globe there will be more competition, egoism, nationalisms and isolation.

**After COVID-19 pandemic, in international affairs around the globe, you expect:**

- More cooperation
- More competition, egoism, nationalisms and isolation
- The world is the same



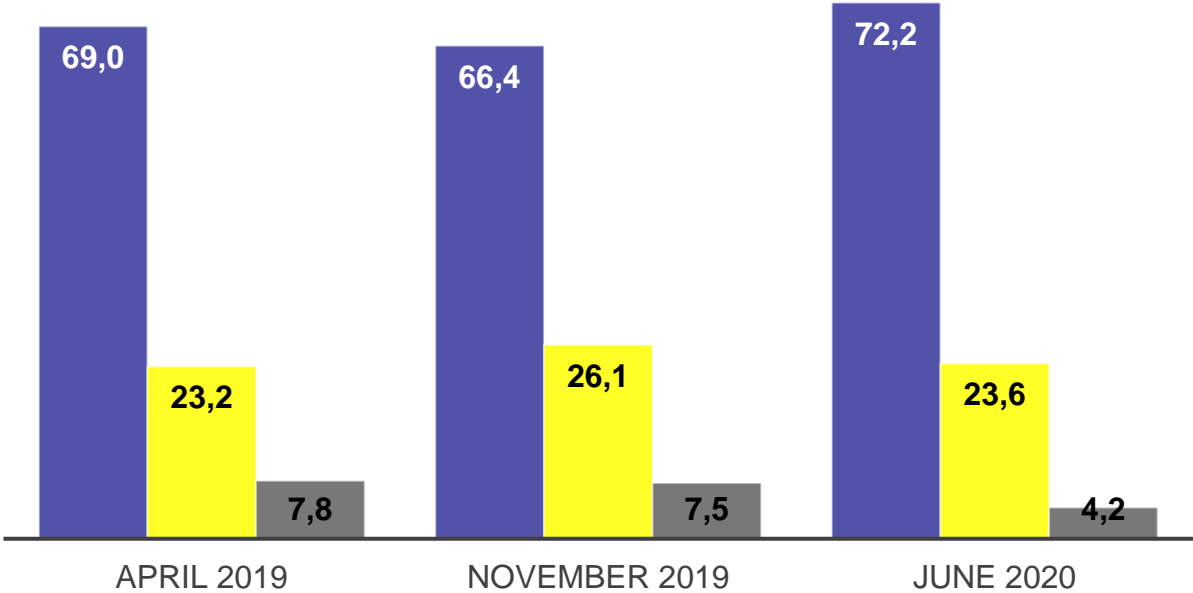
#### **4. STUDENTS WANT TO LIVE IN DEMOCRACY ANCHORED IN WESTERN INSTITUTIONS**

More than 70% of students want to live in a democracy with its institutions. We see a small increase compared to the previous surveys. In addition to that, 62% of students want their country belong to the West and its institutions (EU and NATO) – significant increase from 51%. The portion of students attracted by a regime with a strong leader and some limitations of freedoms and liberties of all citizens declined insignificantly from 26% to 24%, which means that the trend is positive but the result is still not satisfactory. Share of those believing in a regime with a strong leader and substantial limitations of freedoms and liberties for groups of

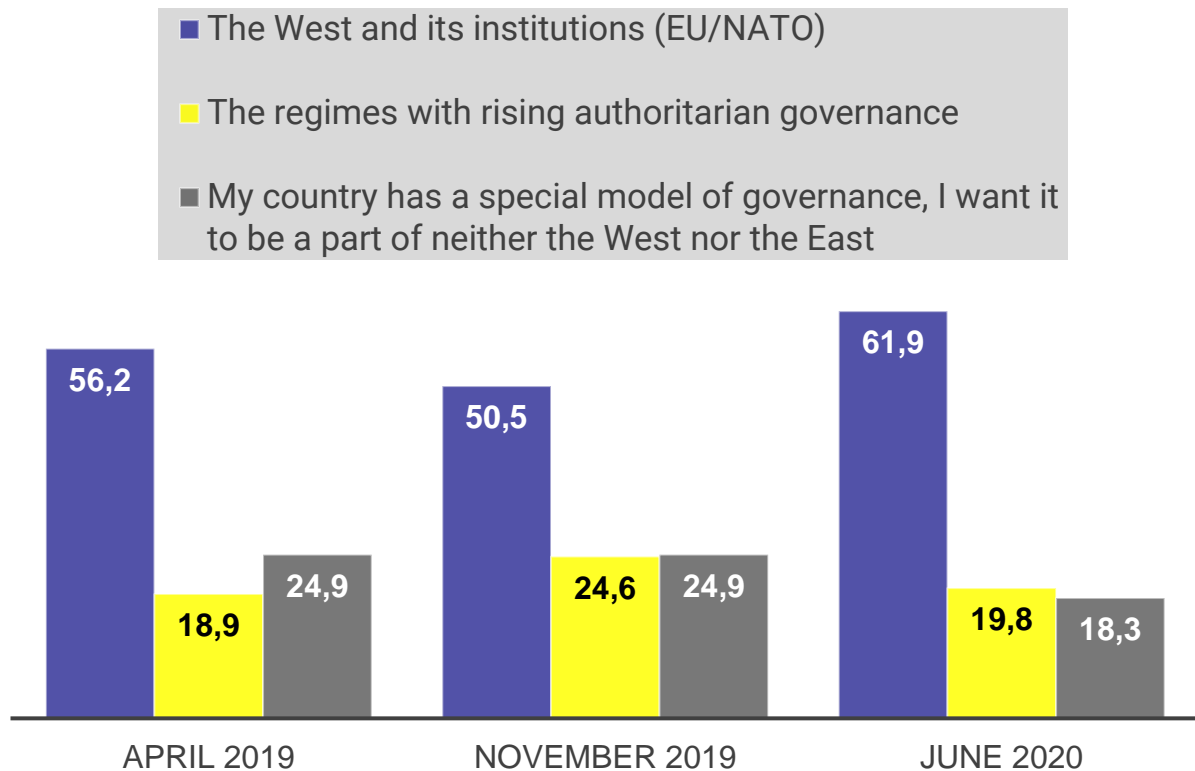
people or defining their country by a special regime of governance, being a part of neither the West nor the East declined, and that is a positive signal.

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

- Democracy with its institutions
- A regime with a strong leader and some limitations of freedoms and liberties for all citizens
- A regime with a strong leader and substantial limitations of freedoms and liberties for groups of people

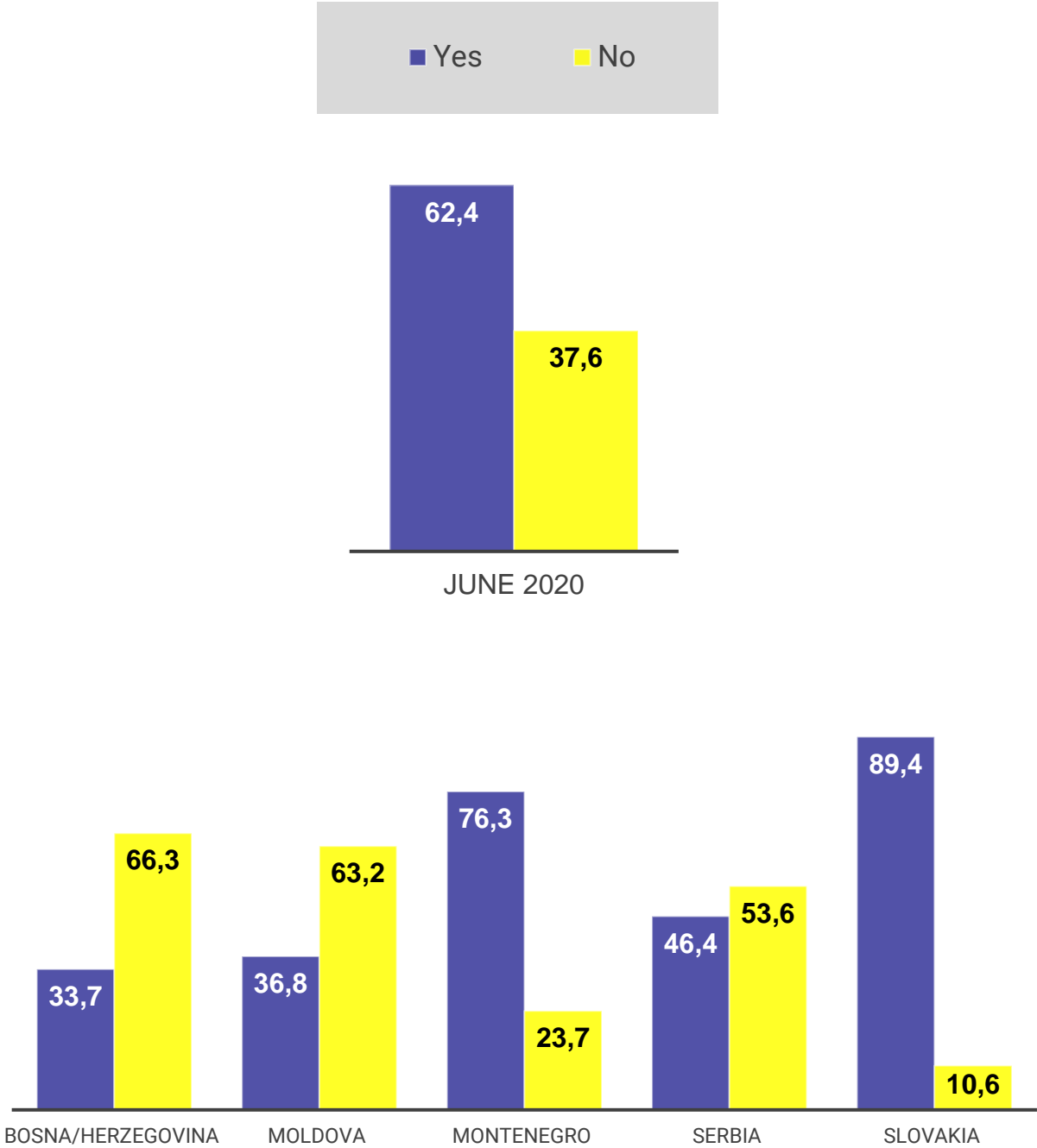


## In the future, where would you want your country to belong to?



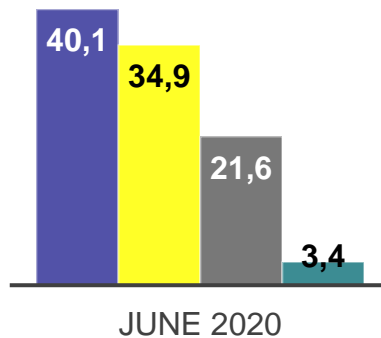
In general, two thirds of students believe they live in a country capable of generating opportunities for them and their future. It is a relatively good result, but we still must have in mind those 38% who do not share this opinion. Moreover, we see huge differences among the countries – in Bosnia and Moldova the share of those who responded “no” is 66%, resp. 63%, in Serbia 53% - and that is worrying. In this respect, Slovakia serves as a real success story – nine out of ten students said that the country is capable to generate the opportunities for them and their future.

**Do you believe that you live in a country capable of generating opportunities for you and your future?**



## After completing your studies, you would like to work for:

- The government or international governmental organization
- Private company
- Yourself, i.e. to be self employed
- Not to be employed at all

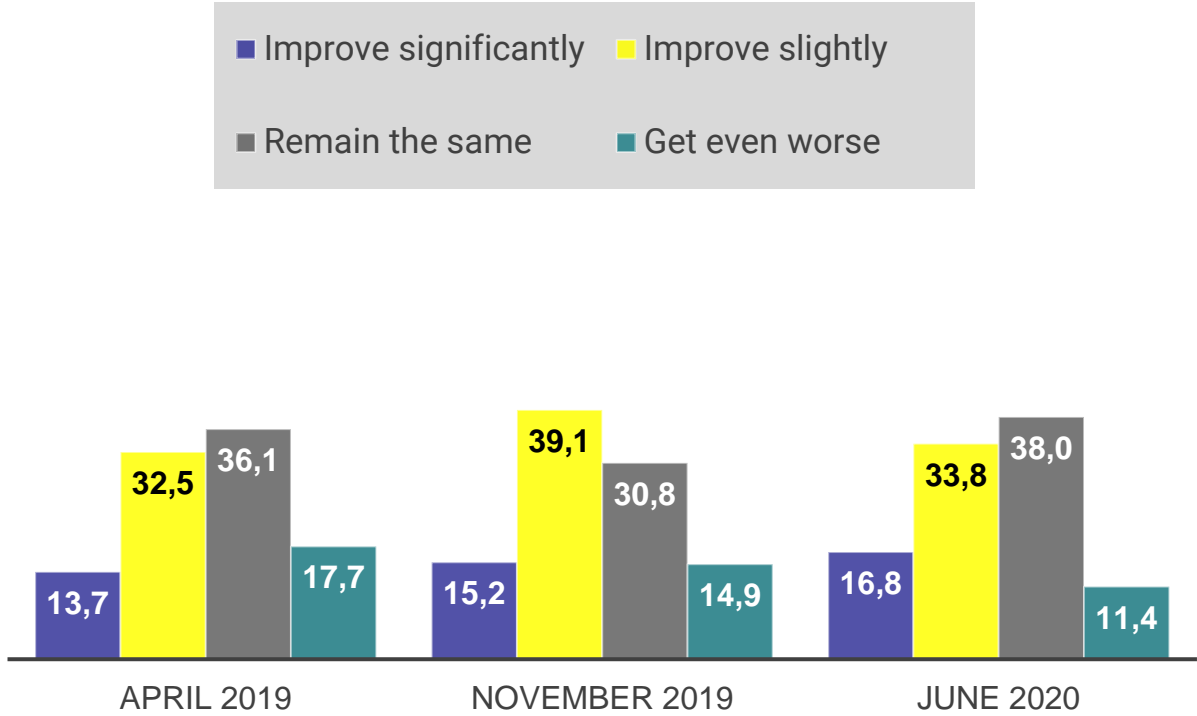


## 5. STUDENTS ARE MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT POLITICAL CHANGES IN THEIR COUNTRIES

Majority of all students (50,6%) believe that within the next 3-4 years, the political situation in their countries will improve (significantly + slightly). Only 11% think that it will get worse. We see some small improvements when comparing results to November 2019 – decline of pessimists from 15% to 11%.

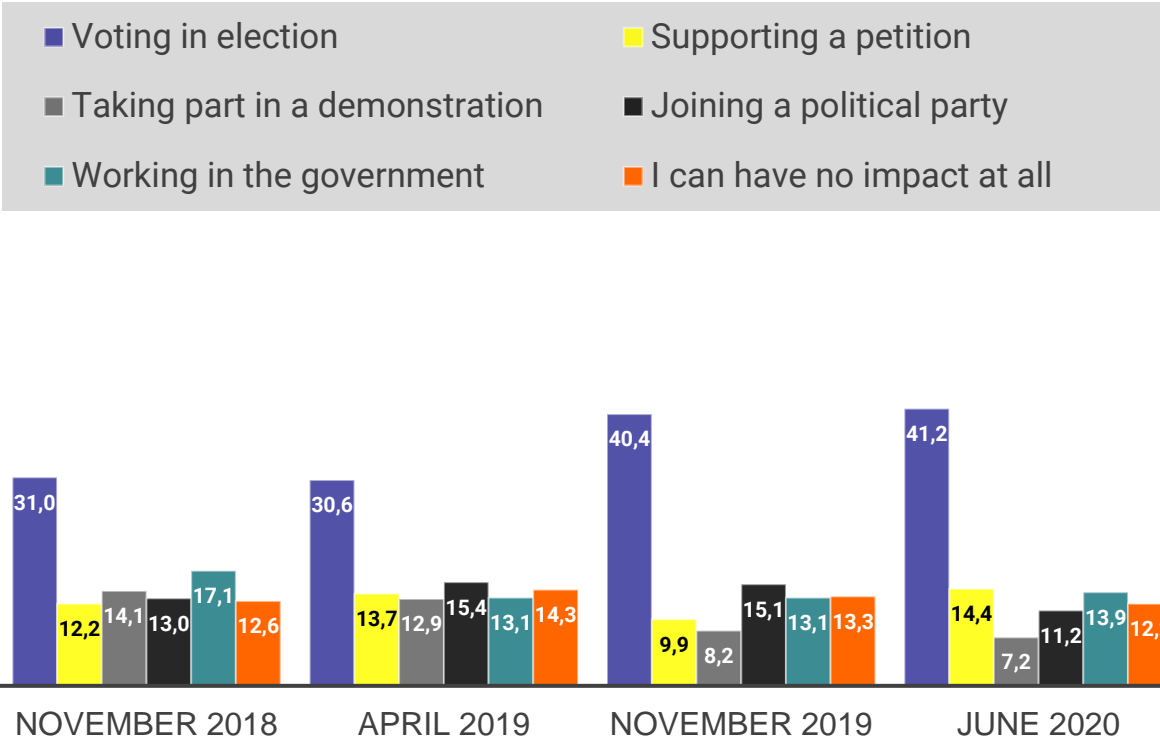
However, there are substantial gaps between individual countries: the most pessimistic are students from Bosnia – 27% of them think it will get worse.

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

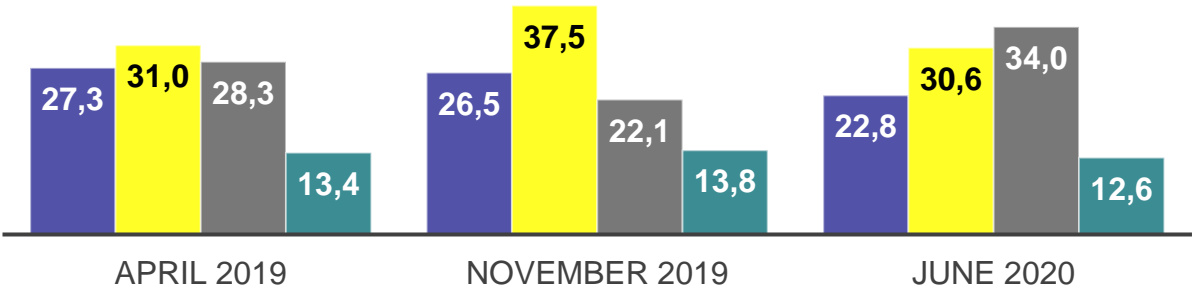
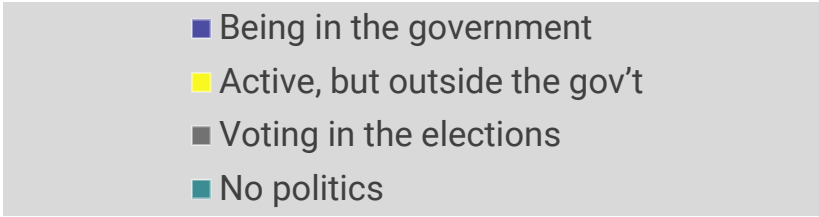


Students are ready to participate in political life of their countries – the most wide-spread tool is voting in election (41%), 30% of them are ready to be active outside the government and 23% even being a part of the government.

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



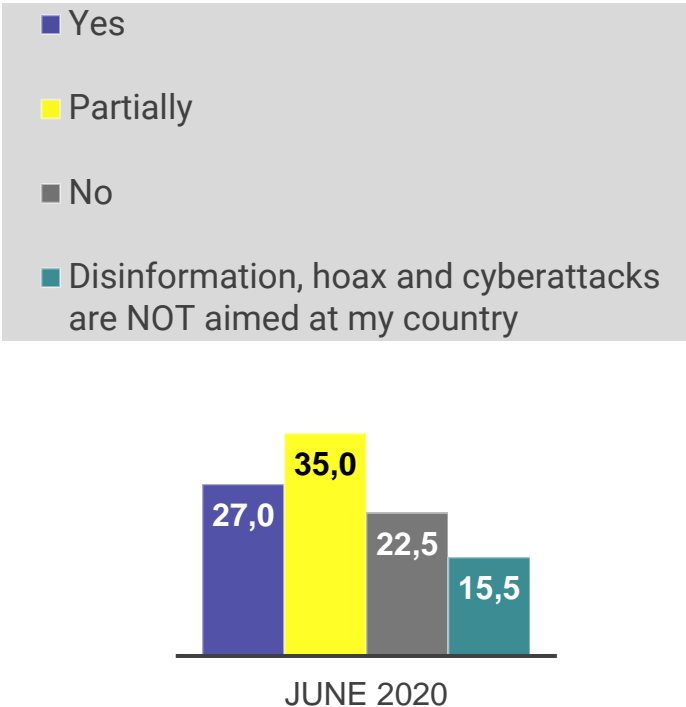
### What would be your most preferred way of participating in the political life of your country?





Only 27% of students think that the country's government is effectively addressing disinformation, hoax and cyberattacks, many (15,5%) think there is nothing like that aimed at their country.

**Your government effectively addresses disinformation, hoax and cyberattacks from abroad:**



## 6. COUNTRY PROFILES

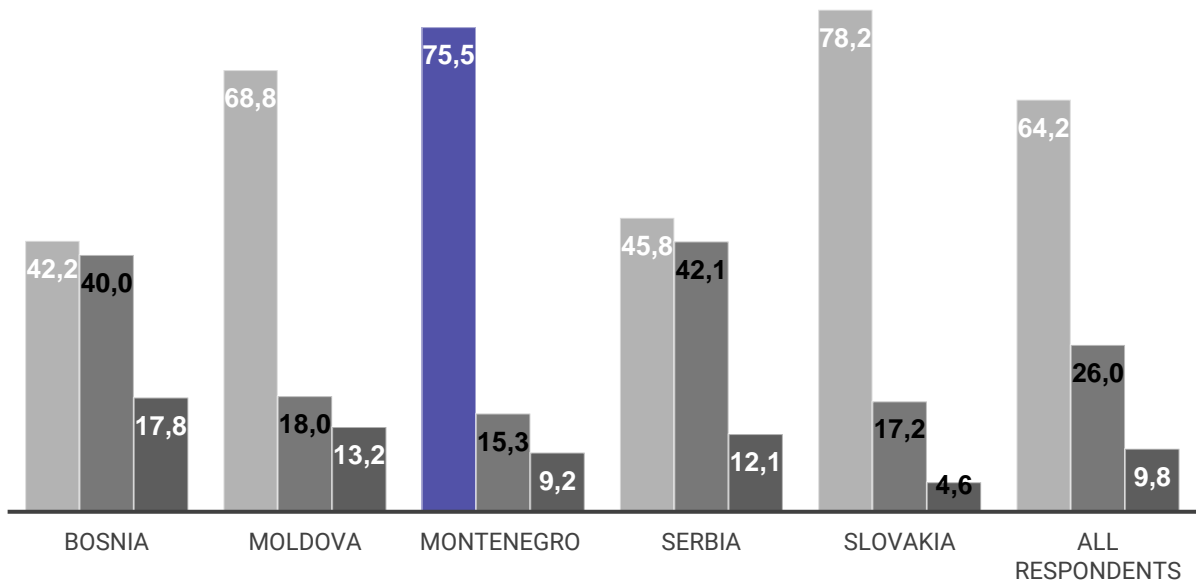
(selected questions)

The students from **Montenegro**:

Among the Balkan's countries the students from Montenegro most frequently (75,5%) think that the EU is Guarantor of national sovereignty and defender of values and interests.

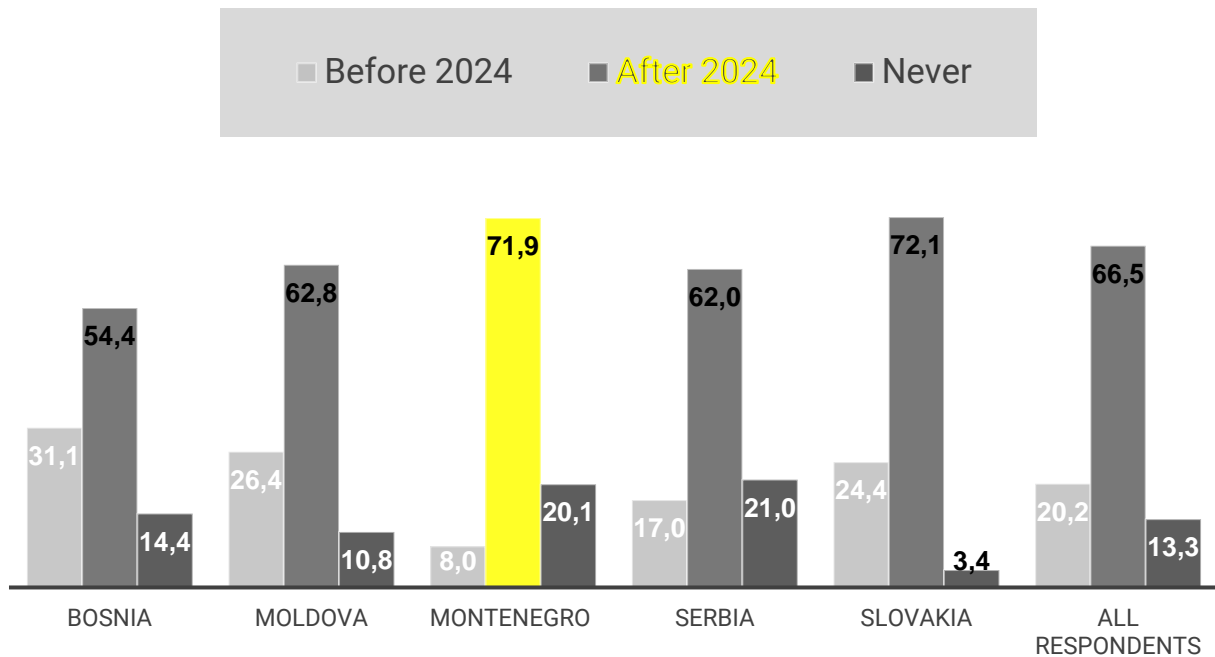
## In your opinion, the European Union is:

- **Guarantor of your national sovereignty and defender of values and interests**
- A bureaucratic institution slowing your country's development
- A threat to your national sovereignty



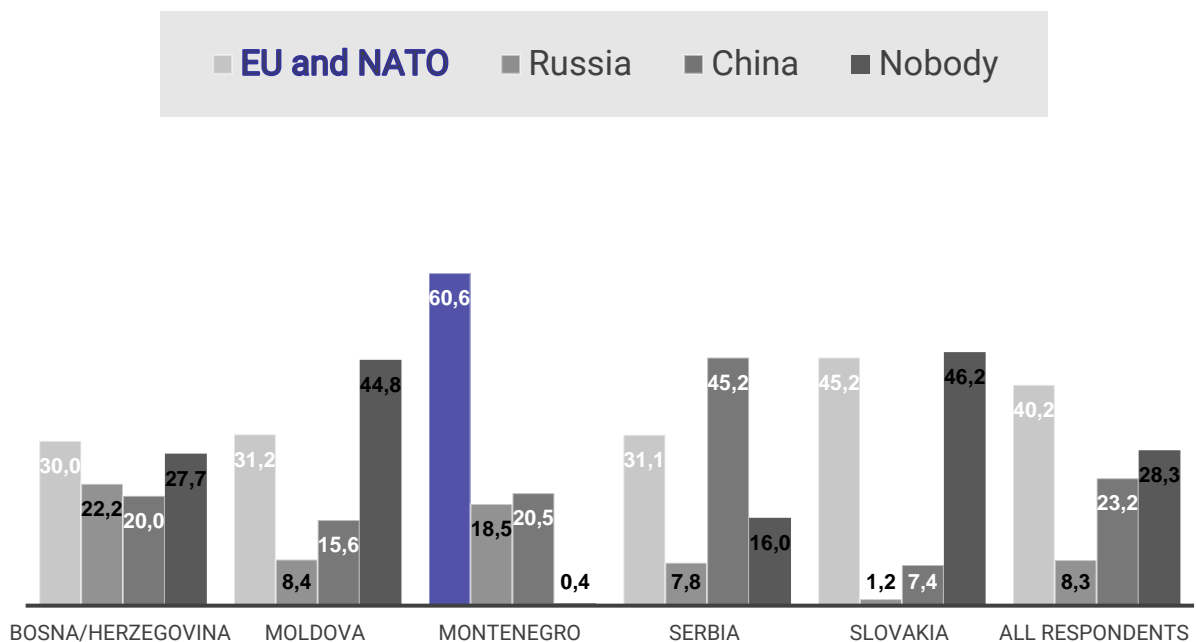
On the other hand, they realistically think about the date of joining the EU – almost 72% of them see the date after 2024. The expectations of students in Bosnia and Serbia are less realistic.

## Some Western Balkans (WB) and EU's East countries will join the EU :



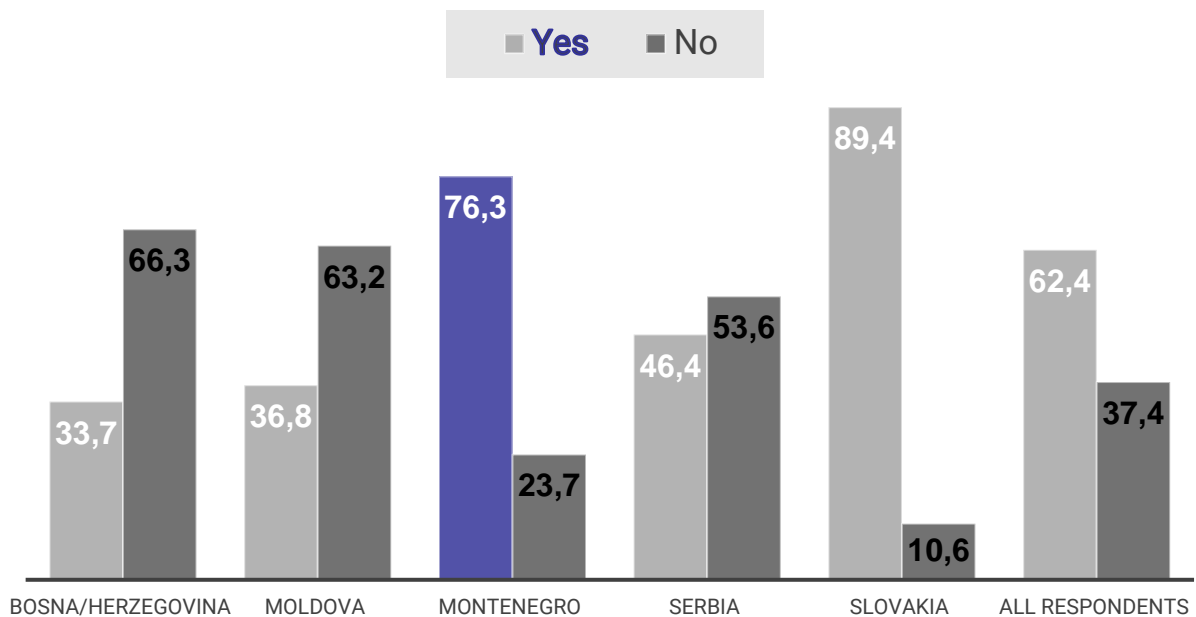
As for the assistance during COVID 19 crises they appreciate – more than other WB countries - the help of the EU and NATO.

**During COVID-19 pandemic, whose assistance to your country was the strongest and most effective:**



Together with Slovakia, in Montenegro there is the highest portion of students who believe that they live in a country capable of generating opportunities for them.

### Do you believe that you live in a country capable of generating opportunities for you and your future?

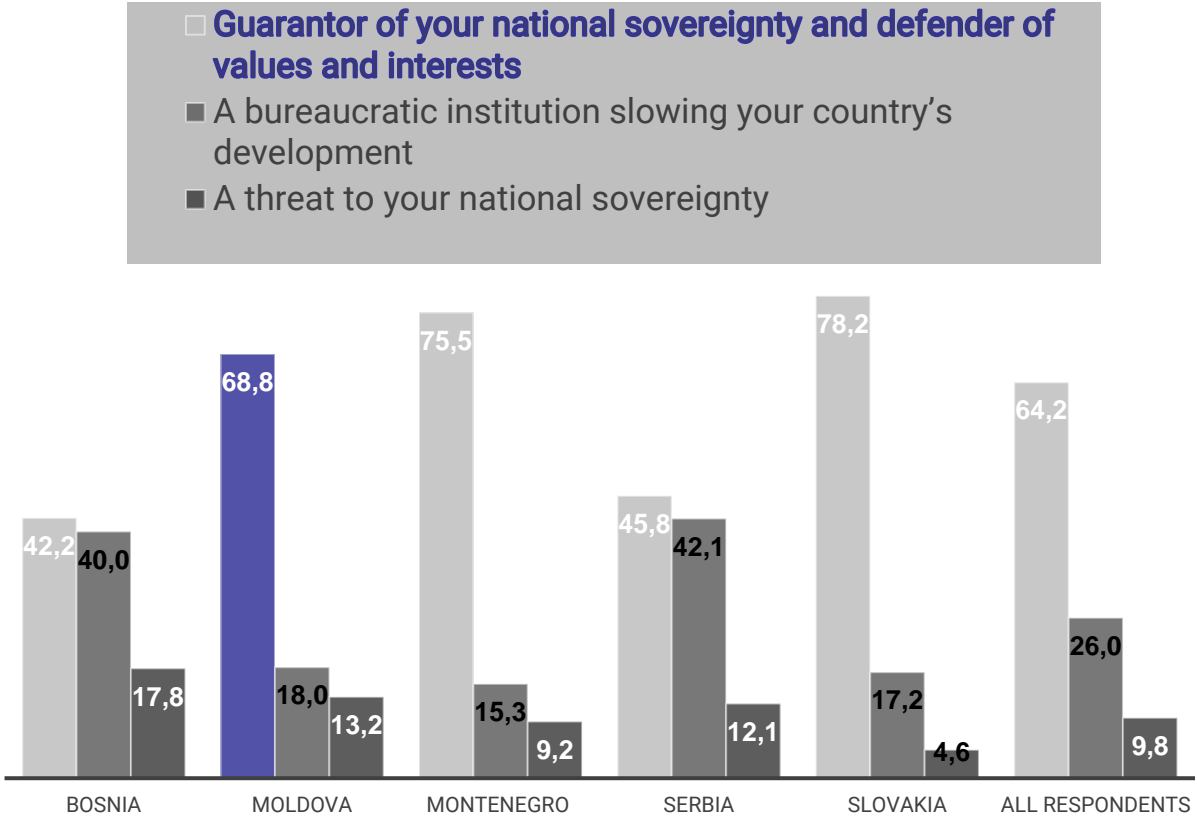


The 2020 results confirm the earlier image of Montenegro as the country which is more pro-Western oriented than its neighbors – Bosnia and Serbia, and having students who are more optimistic about their future.

### Moldova

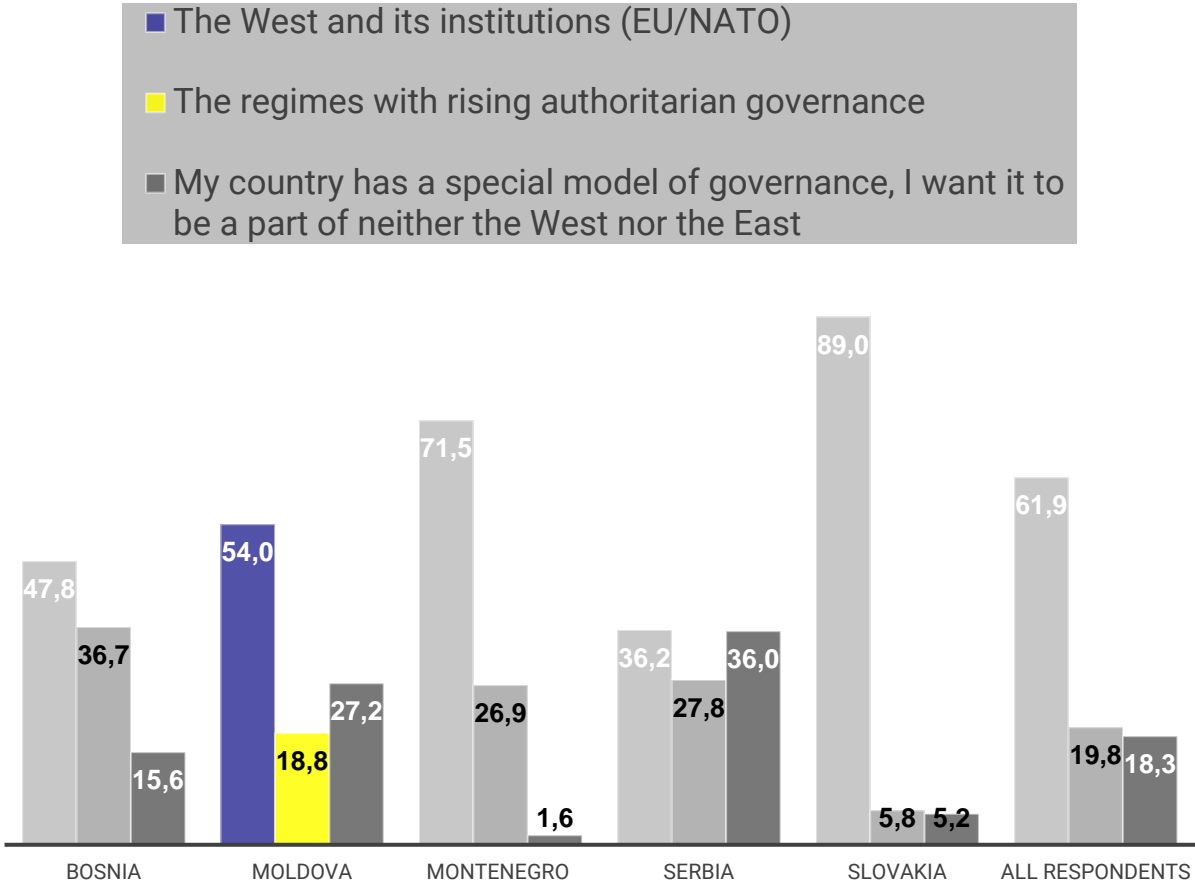
Comparing to Bosnian and Serbian respondents the students from Moldova have more positive view about the EU- 69% of them think that the EU is guarantor of the country's national sovereignty and defender of values and interests.

**In your opinion, the European Union is:**



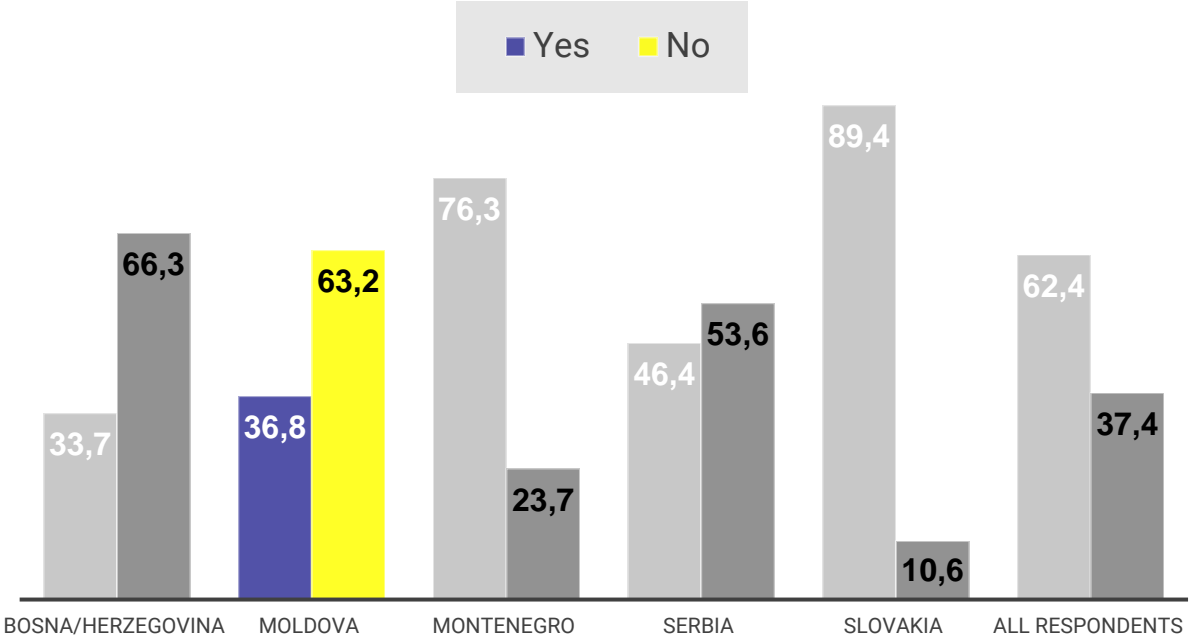
Also, the majority of them favors belonging to the West and its institutions (EU/NATO) – 54%, but still, we see a relevant minority which shares the view that “My country has a special model of governance, I want it to be a part of neither the West nor the East” (27%).

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



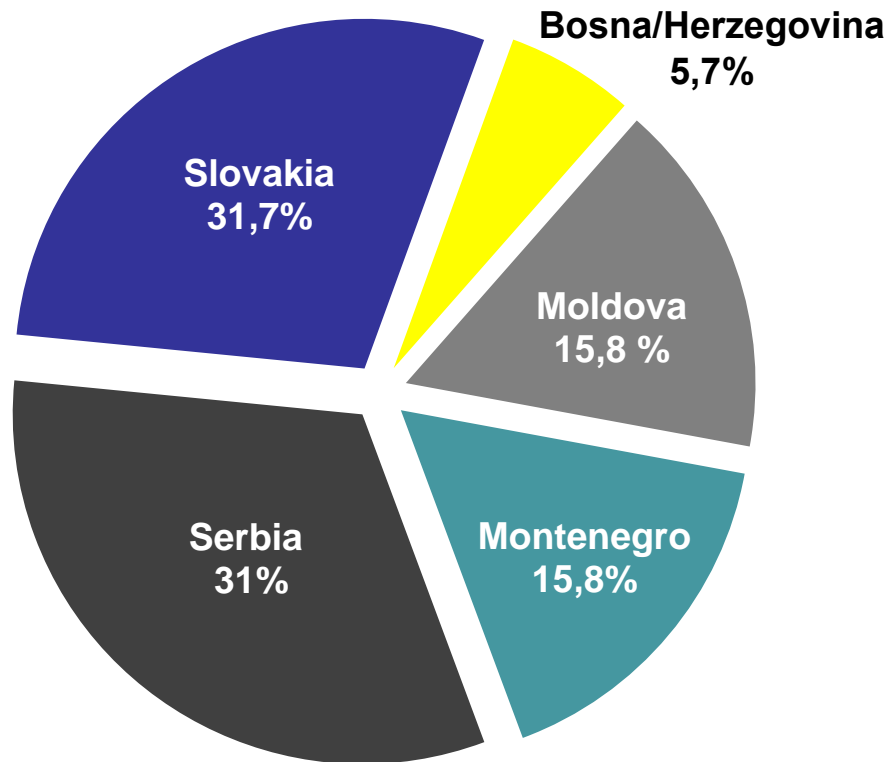
Other negative signal is that almost two thirds of Moldovans (63%) do not believe that they live in a country which is capable of generating opportunities for them and their future.

**Do you believe that you live in a country capable of generating opportunities for you and your future?**

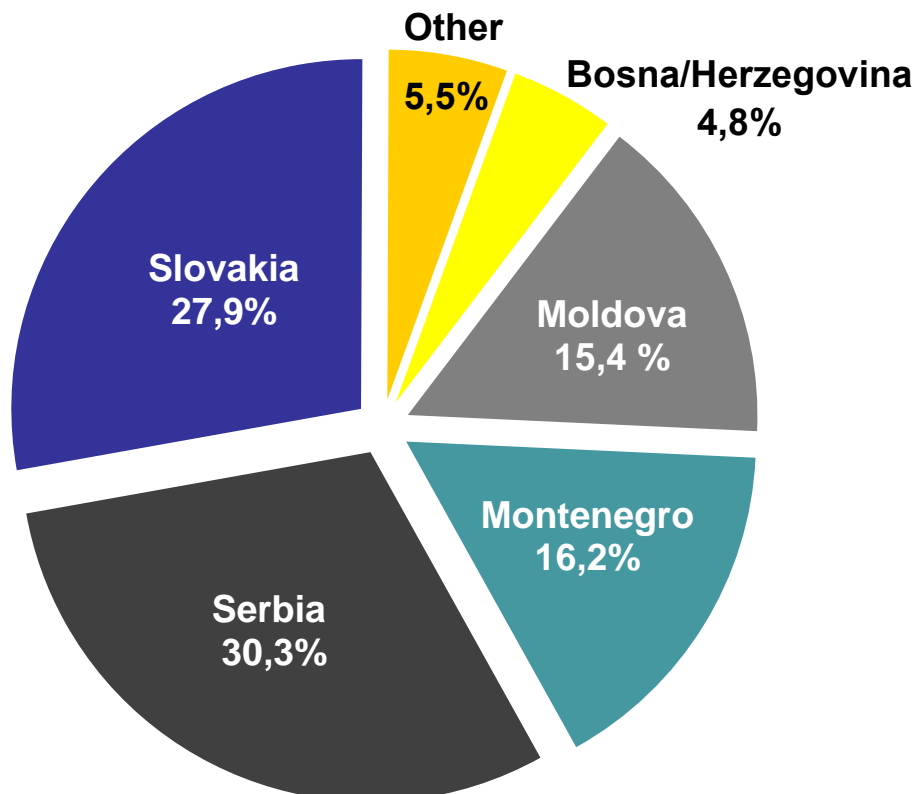


## 7. DEMOGRAPHICS

You are a student from a university in :

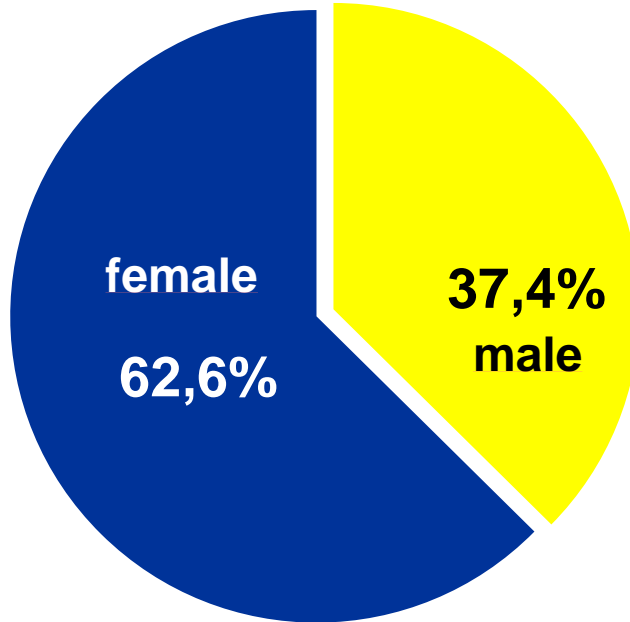


You are a citizen of :

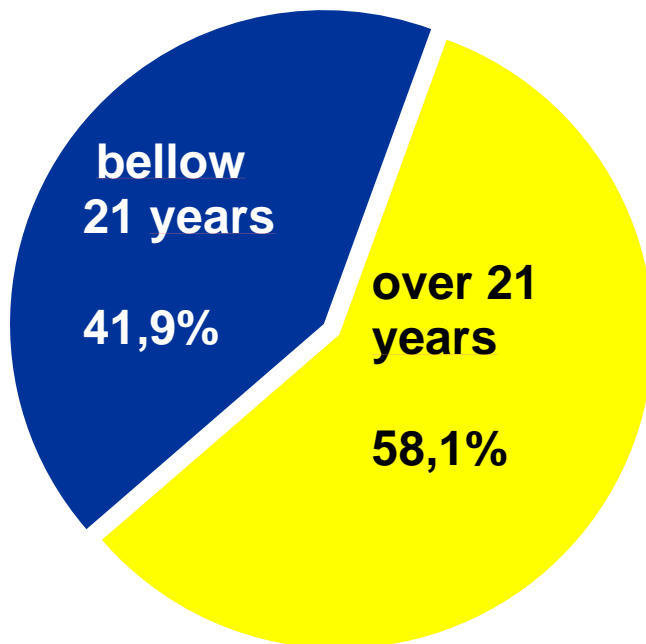




You are:



Age:



Did you attend/watch the current students' debate on June 8, 2020?

