

PARTICIPATORY ATTITUDES AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR OF YOUNG PEOPLE: THE CASES OF TURKEY AND BULGARIA¹

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Abstract:

This research aims to explore and compare the basic indicators regarding the participation of the youth in the political processes in Turkey and Bulgaria. The data used is derived from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems database, and the period between 2011 and 2016 is covered in this study. The results of the secondary processing of the quantitative data are comparatively analyzed. This paper shows that the youth from Turkey and Bulgaria have some similarities and differences regarding their attitudes toward civic participation. The economic performances of the governments is a factor for the support of the ruling parties. However, in the case of Bulgaria in the examined period there were factors, which played more significant roles in the citizens' attitudes rather than the economic performance.

Key words: *democracy; participation; economic voting; turnout; Turkey; Bulgaria*

Introduction

In recent decades, significant transformations have arisen in the values (Dalton, Welzel 2014) and the way people participate in political life (Peters and Tatham 2016) and in their demand to have a voice in the policymaking processes. The process of digitalization in every area of life further altered the behavior of the political actors in societies and became decisive on the political choices, especially those of the young people. As the traditional gap between the generations grew wider in the process of digitalization (Bengston 1970), politicians became more alienated from the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the new generations and may gradually be unable to identify their priorities. Under the circumstances of this changing political atmosphere, identifying the political perceptions and attitudes of the young people and their association with the economic performance is essential in the policymaking processes.

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After an era of repeated coups in Turkey and years of communist rule in Bulgaria, political parties gave importance to young voters in the population, who became more active in political processes. In the years between 2013 and 2016, a period of turmoil in Turkish politics increased the polarization among the voters, especially among the youth. The street protests, the Syrian war, prolonged uncertainty about economic conditions were decisive factors on voters' choices during this period in Turkey. During the same period, Bulgaria witnessed a shift in the values of the citizens among the young people. Mass protests with the participation of the youth in Bulgaria demanded more ethics in politics rather than solutions to inveterate socio-economic issues. This study investigates this turbulent period (2011-2016) of politics in Turkey and Bulgaria and analyzes some selected indicators regarding the political attitudes of the youth in these countries.

Several studies thus far evaluated the voting behavior, political activism, or the impacts of the economy on electoral choice in Turkey and Bulgaria, as well as the political attitudes of the youth in comparison with the non-youth. Cross-country or cross-regional comparisons were also made (Kentmen-Çin 2015; Kalaycıoğlu 2007a), however, no study in the literature focused particularly on the youth of Turkey and Bulgaria, in a comparative manner. This study aims to compare the two neighboring countries of the Balkans with a shared history, common recent challenges in the process of establishing a functioning democracy, and a significant number of young population. These two countries are also studied here in comparison to democratic countries in the world. The main research questions of this study are:

1) whether there are similarities and differences in the political attitudes, electoral choices, and political participation patterns of the young people (35 years or younger by the end of 2019) in Turkey and Bulgaria, and

2) whether there are similarities or differences in these subjects as compared to those in the democratic countries in the rest of the world.

We also embrace a historical approach as we are convinced that the past developments in the political histories of the countries are highly relevant for their current development that should not be underestimated.

The paper is organized as follows: the following two sections review the relevant literature on democracy and civic participation and discuss the historical development paths of democratic participation in Turkey and Bulgaria to better understand the current indicators of political participation of the young people in both countries in the democratic processes. The next section then discusses the impacts of the economy on voting behavior as there is strong evidence in the literature and the presented data in this study that some main economic indicators are decisive in the voting behavior of the young people in these countries. The next section concludes the study.

Democracy and civic participation: a conceptual framework

Democracy

Defining the notion of democracy always presented a serious challenge. Although most of the scholars contribute to the modern understanding of democracy, the confusion of Alexis de

Tocqueville persists. He argued that if a society does not have a clear understanding of what *democracy* and *democratic governance* are, its confusion will constantly make it prey to demagogues and despots (Sartori 1987: 3). The Blackwell's *Encyclopaedia of Political Thought* defines democracy as "an ancient political term, meaning the rule of the people." (Miller et al. 1991: 114). Since the eighteenth century, democracy has been perceived not only as a political regime but as a standard by which regimes are weighed (Miller et al. 1991). In the 1990s and the 2000s, methodologies for assessing democratic political systems have been further developed. Currently, several indicators measure the quality of democracy in a country.

Based on the understanding that democracy is the governance of the people, one should not focus on the outcome of policies (welfare, solving of environmental problems, social spheres, etc.), but rather on identifying to what extent citizens have the opportunity to participate in political processes, and if they *actually* govern. In this sense, Robert Dahl (1998: 37-38) proposes some criteria for evaluating the involvement of the citizens in the political processes: 1) effective participation, 2) equality in voting, 3) enlightened understanding, 4) control over the agenda, 5) inclusion of the adult population.

Participation

During the twentieth century, as suffrage reached the highest levels in the world, Almond and Verba (1963) predicted that the new world culture would be a culture of participation. Yet more recently, some scholars observed that people may refrain from taking part in political processes. As Clammer (2016) states, these problems are observed even in the most democratic societies. Based on this phenomenon, some scholars focus on the concept of "post-democracy" (Crouch 2004). According to Crouch (2004), there is a trend of decline in the involvement of the people in the political processes, which is limited to voting in elections. The author states that the elites "learned how to manage and manipulate" and how "people became disillusioned, bored, and preoccupied" (Crouch 2004: 9). Cook et al. (2007) also identified a decay in the involvement of citizens in voting and other kinds of political activities. On the other hand, especially in the 2010s, people from various parts of the world demanded more democracy, rights and involvement. Following the wave of protests, in 2011, *Time* magazine's person of the year was "The Protester" (Time 2011).

There is a variety of understandings on the concepts of "political participation" and "civic engagement." These concepts are used to cover a wide range of political behaviors from reading papers to practical political activity (Ekman and Amnå 2012). Many factors affect the level of civic participation in a country. In the case of Turkey, political participation (Bee and Kaya 2017; İnan and Grasso 2017) and voting behavior are affected by factors such as emotions (Erişen 2018), populism (Kaya, Robert and Tecmen 2019; Zengin and Ongur 2019), partisanship (Çakır 2019), or threat perceptions (Erişen and Erdoğan 2019), as discussed in the literature. Some research on Turkey embraced a comparative approach (Çakır 2019) and studied the youth (Kayaoğlu 2017; Yılmaz et al. 2016), as this study does. The relevant factors might also be the institutional design (Skelcher and Torfing 2010), group-based emotions or collective action (Mackie, Devos and Smith, 2000; van Zomeren et al. 2004), the media (Livingston and Markham 2008), and in the case of Bulgaria – the communist regime (1944-1989). Furthermore, the weak economic

development of Bulgaria has negative impacts on political participation similar to other post-communist democracies (Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2013). In the current research, the concept of political participation is defined as *taking action to affect the formation of elected institutions, taking part in the process of policymaking, and reacting actively to certain matters.*

Economic Voting

As this study argues, the economic environment is a significant factor in the formation of voting behavior (Linn, Nagler, and Morales 2010). Although it was not identified as the main reason for the electoral choice of the people, the economic environment was a part of the Michigan Model, presented in the book *American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960). The association between economy and voting behavior is known in the literature as *economic voting*. Some studies show that people's past evaluations of the economy determine their political choice rather than their expectations for the future of the national economy (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2019; Akarca, Tansel 2006; Kalaycioğlu 2007b; Klašnja and Tucker 2013). The impact of the economy on voting behavior depends on various factors, including individual attributes of the citizens, "welfare spending, and the integration of a country's economy in the global economy." (Carreras and Castañeda-Angarita 2010: 3). The level of gross domestic product (GDP), the level of unemployment and the inflation are considered to be the most relevant indicators for the economic environment, in association with voting behavior (Carreras and Castañeda-Angarita 2010; Guvercin 2018; Queralt 2012; Powell and Whitten 1993). In accordance, this study analyzes these indicators concerning their relevance to the voting behavior of the youth in Turkey and Bulgaria.

Youth Participation

As regards the youth, various scholars claim that the youth are apathetic and disengaged from the political life in their countries (Allaste and Cairns 2016; Ryan 2011; Loader, Vromen and Xenos 2014). One may also claim that the young people do not recognize and accept the traditional ways of participating, i.e., engagement with the political parties and voting in elections (Loader, Vromen and Xenos 2014). The attitudes of the youth are generally formed in the process of political socialization. The main factors of socialization are family, school, and the social environment.

There is a growing literature on the political participation of the youth, which focuses on the impact of civic education (Chareka and Sears 2006; Manganeli, Lucidi and Alivernini 2014, Losite and D'Apice 2003). Civic education has the potential of increasing the support for democratic values. It can also promote political participation and help citizens understand more clearly their interests and how politics work. Civic knowledge makes the position of the citizens more consistent and rational (Galston 2004). Another factor is social media, which has an increasing impact on the political choices of the young population. In that respect, some authors particularly examine the relations between the civic participation of youth and social media (Kim and Khang 2014). As social media have been connecting the youth more intensively, they have the potential to create new "democratic practices" (Loader, Vromen, and Xenos 2014).

The development of civic participation in Turkey and Bulgaria

Turkey since the beginning of modernization

The first steps towards the modernization of politics in Turkey began with the reforms in the Ottoman Empire in the late eighteenth century after the accession of Selim III to the throne. After his rule, the first attempt to limit the power of the sultan was the acquiescence of the Charter of Alliance (*Sened-i İttifak*) by Mahmud II in 1808. The Charter was prepared by the grand vizier of Mahmud II, Alemdar Mustafa, and limited the full authority of the sultan in favor of the notables (*ayan*). On the other hand, this charter could not be implemented (Ataay 2019). The reforms in social and political life, as well as the liberalization of the economy, continued during the *Tanzimat* period (1839-1876). The Edict of Gülhane (*Tanzimat Fermanı* as known in Turkish) gave civil and property rights to the Ottoman citizens and limited the power of the state (Gözler 2019). Thereafter, the Reform Edict issued by Abdülmecid I in 1856 granted equality to all Ottoman citizens and gave some extra civil as well as political rights to the non-Muslims living in the Empire, which frustrated the Muslim subjects and led to some riots, principally in the Arab lands (Zürcher 2010).

In 1876, with the help of some high-level bureaucrats, the young army officers made Sultan Abdulhamit II proclaim the first Ottoman constitution (*Kanun-i Esasi*), which introduced the first Ottoman parliament (Ahmad 2009). The right to vote was given solely to men, among them the taxpayers and property holders (Ataay 2019). After a while, when the sultan suspended the parliament and reintroduced autocracy, the reformist young officers went abroad and continued the struggle for modernization and democracy in two main groups, one of which was the Union and Progress Committee (UPC, *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), which succeeded to make the sultan reopen the parliament and proclaim a brand new constitution in 1908. Some anti-UPC riots took place in the streets of İstanbul after this date, among which the most serious was the so-called 31 March incident, which demanded the introduction of *sharia* rules (Zürcher 2010).

After World War I and during the War of Independence (1919-1923) a new parliament was established in the new capital, Ankara, in 1920, before the proclamation of the new republic in October 1923. A rebellion took place shortly afterward, which was organized by Sheikh Said (Mumcu 1992). Under the single-party rule of the Republican People's Party (RPP, *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası*) between 1923 and 1946, public unrest in the east of Turkey reoccurred in 1926-1930 and 1937-1938, based on religiosity and Kurdish nationalism.³ In 1930, this time the crowds in Izmir demanded *sharia* rule. The government suppressed all these movements. Under the single-party rule of the RPP, some short-lived political parties were established and quickly got considerable popular support from the conservative masses, yet they could not establish a government before being forcibly abolished.

Under the multi-party system, the founder of the republic, the RPP, lost the government and was replaced by the newly established Democratic Party (DP), which ruled Turkey until the

³ See for a discussion on whether these rebellions were religious or nationalistic in character: Robert Olson, "The Kurdish Rebellions of Sheikh Said (1925), Mt. Ararat (1930), and Dersim (1937-8): Their Impact on the Development of the Turkish Air Force and on Kurdish and Turkish Nationalism." *Die Welt des Islams* 40, no. 1 (2000): 67-71; See also: Ataay, *Türkiye Demokrası Tarihi*, p. 99-105.

1960 military intervention. The military intervened repeatedly in Turkish politics in 1971, 1980, and 1997. Especially in the 1960s and the 1970s, the socialist movement and the left-wing opposition were on the rise among university students. Wide-scale protests took place on the main streets and squares of the big cities in Turkey, and bloody clashes occurred between the youth and the riot police. After the 1980 coup irrevocably crushed the leftist movements, the conservative and the center-right politics have been on the rise despite the 1997 military intervention, which was against the rise of “political Islam”. In the 1990s, anti-corruption protests took place all around the country and some environmentalist resistance movements occurred against the foreign mining companies. During these years, the resistance and the protest movements of the leftist groups and parties were replaced by NGO movements with the influence of the EU accession process of Turkey (Yildirim and Gümrükçü 2017).

In the early 2000s, after the economic crisis of 2001, the citizens voted for the newly established conservative party, the Justice and Development Party (JDP, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), which has ruled Turkey since then. The consecutive JDP governments faced with anti-globalization and anti-privatization protests led mostly by the young and educated activists (Yildirim and Gümrükçü 2017). But the most serious resistance against the JDP rule based on environmentalism and the rights of some marginalized groups was the so-called Gezi resistance that occurred after the 2010 amendments to the constitution (Kentmen-Çin 2015). The resistance was spearheaded by the youth and quickly spread throughout the country. Social media was the main platform for communication among the young protesters (Özkırmılı 2014). The waves of military coups, various protest movements, and other events in Turkey (Kentmen-Çin 2015) were important determinants of the public emotions that led to an increase in political polarization among the voters and are decisive on voting behavior (Erisen 2018). In the post-2010 period, the end of the alliance of the JDP with the Gulenist movement and the economic downturn since 2013 had a great impact on politics and voter initiative. As Erisen (2018) observes, the influence of ideology or identity diminished since the 1990s and the role of the economy and people’s perceptions of economic indicators gained importance in determining the political choices of the electorate. As this study intends to show, the economic performance of the ruling party had a considerable impact on voting behavior.

Bulgaria since 1878

The participatory attitudes of the Bulgarians can be traced back to the Bulgarian national revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Hadzhiyski 1997). In this period, Bulgaria was not a sovereign state but was part of the Ottoman Empire. However, it was a time of transformations in Bulgarian society, when people started to form community centers, various kinds of civic associations, and guilds. A culture of participation started to emerge, which focused on the creation of some kinds of political institutions of a national state. (Georgiev 2000)

Thus, two groups of transformations marked this period – objective and subjective. The objective transformations are related to the consolidation of the nation, the formation of social structures in the society, the formation of intellectuals and elites, which later became the leaders of the Bulgarian state. The second group of transformations, the subjective ones, affect the

values of the nation. The latter is quite significant for the political culture of the reestablished Bulgarian state and the political participation, in particular (Blagoeva 2002).

During the Bulgarian national revival, a kind of national self-knowledge and national socialization took place (Yankov 1988). The beginning of the transformation went along with the political crisis in the Ottoman Empire. In the seventeenth century, the Ottoman influence in Europe weakened, and the empire needed new suppliers for the army. The main suppliers at that time were the Bulgarian craftsmen, whose importance became so great that in 1773, autonomy was granted to the craft organizations by the Sultan's Ferman (Hadzhiyski 1997). Alongside, the development of political participation of Bulgarian people was accompanied by alienation from Europe and European values with the impact of the Eastern Orthodoxy, and a sense of doom and hopelessness, which make Bulgarians feel placed on lower levels and harmed by other nations (Georgiev 2000).

In this period, a contradictory self-awareness emerged. On one hand, Bulgarians turned to their heroic past, but on the other - due to the awareness of the backwardness from the rest of the world, "the Bulgarian inferiority complex" emerged. This led the Bulgarians to endeavor to grasp the modernity of Western Europe. This process is indicative of the democratic worldview of the Bulgarian Revival, which found its political materialization after 1878, after the independence from the Ottoman rule (Blagoeva 2002).

However, the independence of Bulgaria did not create an environment that supports democracy and active civic participation until the early twentieth century (Todorov 2011). The newly established party system was not based on class affiliation or social origins but was mediated by "European liberalism and conservatism, [...] Russian radicalism and revolutionary democracy, [...] the ideas of the national liberation struggle of the Bulgarian people during the Revival." (Blagoeva 2002: 59). This is a result of the Bulgarian inferiority complex and the need to associate itself with a foreign "patron", which can be seen even after 1989.

In the period between 1878 and 1944, the political parties in Bulgaria identified themselves with their preferences towards foreign policy (the division is mostly between Russophiles and Russophobes) (Mitev 1996). According to Georgiev, both "Bulgarian liberalism and conservatism from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century [...] derive their ideological content from the outside rather than from the inside" (Georgiev 2000: 224-225). During this period, Bulgarian political parties began to use their power to avenge their opponents, when the latter are in opposition. Furthermore, parties failed to unite around any ideological platform and their supporters and members easily switched from one political party to another. This led to the emergence of a negative image of politics and the politicians and the alienation of society from political life. This also hampered the creation of a real functioning civil society in Bulgaria from 1878 until 1944.

The totalitarian government from 1945 to 1989 required a non-participatory type of political culture. The people were asked only to vote in support of the governing party or its partners. The beginning of the democratic transition in 1989 was marked by a very high level of civic activity, but this was mostly chaotic and more demonstrative rather than constructive. After 1989, various historical and political circumstances reinforced the alienation of the citizens from

politics and led to a reluctance to participate in socio-political affairs. Georgiev (2000) argues that not only the consciousness but also the spirituality of the Bulgarians was traumatized by the communist regime, which determines the permanence of alienation.

Long after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the political protests in Bulgaria were dominated by calls for resignations rather than some reasonable and practical requests. Although there has been a transformation towards more purposeful activity, there is still a lot of political excitement in the protests rather than rationality (Chilev 1997). Moreover, the reason for such behavior is the low level of civic competence (Georgiev 2000). On the other hand, political party membership became widespread after 1989 as a form of civic participation in politics. In the first years of the transition, the political parties gained importance. Other forms of civic participation were trade unions and NGOs.

In the following decades, political parties lost much of their members and electorates because they failed to respond to the expectations of the people. Unions became less popular and NGOs were already perceived as purely commercial in nature, unable to represent the civil society (Todorov 2011). More recently, citizens show their political position either through elections only or through mass protests. On the other hand, in recent years, various movements emerged in Bulgaria that demand the solution of specific problems. One example is the protesters against high fuel prices, which came together in the SILA movement (Union of Internet Car Lovers). Most of these movements have environmental roots - the civic movement "Save Irakli", the campaign "For the nature of Bulgaria", the civic movement against shale gas production, and the "Movement for Energy Independence", "Save Pirin", etc. What is common in these new forms of political demand is that they are organized primarily in social networks. In this sense, the new media and the social networks expand the political participation of the citizens, especially the youth, and make them reach the government more easily. However, there is still a need for transformations to achieve sustainable development in the social environment (Mihova, Nikolova-Alexieva, and Angelova 2018).

Aim and scope of the study

Based on the discussion of the literature above, this paper aims to analyze the basic indicators regarding the participation of the youth in the political life of Turkey and Bulgaria. The subject of this study is the young people of both countries, namely those younger than 35 years by the end of 2019 (born from 1984 and on). The focus of the research here is a set of characteristics, measured through a set of variables.

The data that we use is derived from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), module 4: 2011-2016 (The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems 2018). We made secondary processing of the quantitative data and embraced a comparative approach. We compared the results of Turkey and Bulgaria with each other and with the results of the full democracies (according to EIU Democracy Index), which are included in the CSES Module 4 which covers elections between 2011 and 2016. The selection consists of those countries, which were categorized as "full democracies" in the year of their survey (Economist Intelligence Unit Limited 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016).

The analysis here is based on various indicators, including participation in elections, evaluation of the personal role in the formation of the government, awareness of the political platforms, and basic economic indicators that may have an impact on the voting behavior of the youth. Another dimension of the comparison is to identify if there are differences in the attitudes of the young and non-young people.

Based on the reviewed literature our initial hypotheses are as follows:

1) The attitudes of the youth in Turkey and Bulgaria are rather similar. Although they live in different political environments, they share close values because of globalization and the impact of the social networks in both countries;

2) The youth of so-called full democracies share similar values and opinions;

3) The youth of Turkey and Bulgaria differ from the youth of the full democracies as the latter are more participatory oriented;

4) The economic decline leads to more participation in elections and less support for the governing party.

In the following sections, we first explore the democratic participation attitudes among the young voters in Turkey and Bulgaria comparatively leaning on the data provided by the CSES Module 4. Then, we discuss the impacts of some basic macroeconomic indicators on the voting behavior of the youth and the results of the elections.

Youth, political participation and economic voting: an empirical analysis

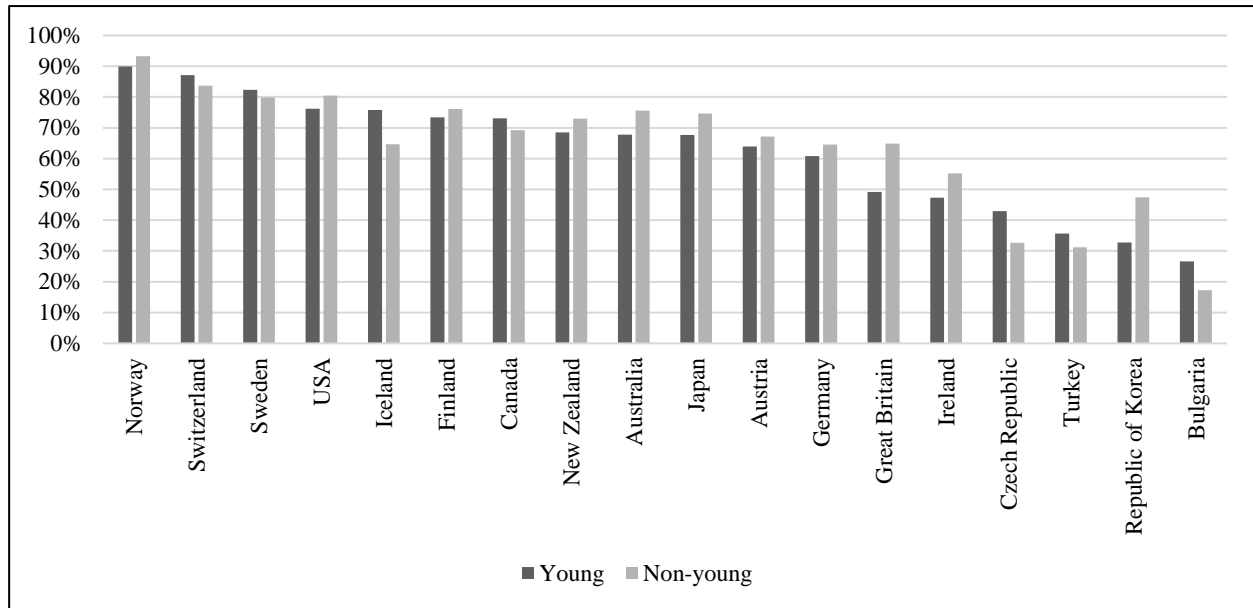
Participation

This section comparatively analyzes the democratic participation among the youth in Turkey and Bulgaria using various indicators.

Democracy and readiness for political engagement

The first indicator is the opinion of the people towards the overall performance of democracy in their countries. We selected this variable because the way young people evaluate democracy may affect their readiness to participate in political life – it can reduce or increase participation. Concerning this indicator, Turkey and Bulgaria have similar results. The share of youth in Turkey, which is satisfied with how democratic mechanisms function, is slightly higher than 40 percent, and in Bulgaria, it is slightly below 40 percent. Furthermore, as we compare the young with non-young people it is visible that there is no significant difference between the age groups. In general, non-young people are more satisfied with democracy in their own country as compared to young people (Figure 1). This indicates that the younger generations tend to demand more democracy than the older generations.

Figure 1. Overall satisfaction with the democracy in the country⁴



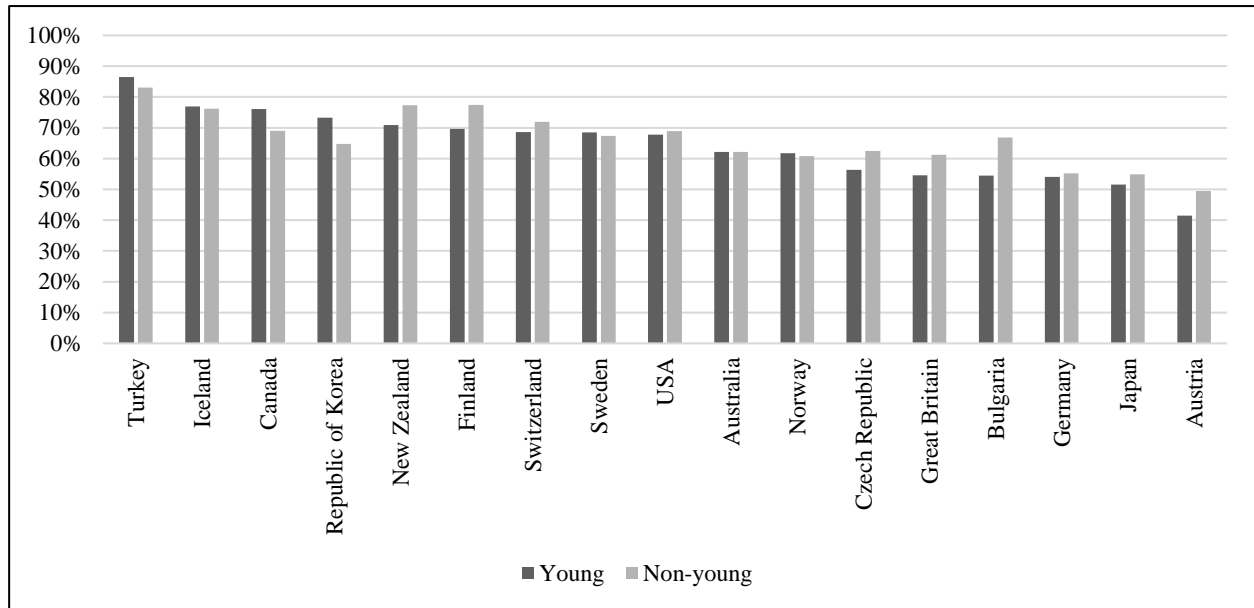
Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

In Turkey, along with the worsening economic indicators in the 2010s, the harsh response from the riot police to the country-wide protests during the abovementioned June 2013 Gezi protests, and the increased political polarization experienced thereafter have affected the perception of the young people on democracy. The dissatisfaction among the youth in Bulgaria is related to the poor economic performance after 1989 and the disappointment of the people with the way the institutions work. The corruption among politicians also contributes to such a low level of satisfaction.

Another important factor, which affects the political participation of the people, is their belief that it makes a difference who is in power. As regards this indicator, the youth of Turkey ranks first among all countries, for which data are available. Almost 90 percent of the Turkish youth think that it is important who governs. This result is an indicator of the increased interest in the politics of the young people in Turkey. Bulgaria's results are more than 30 points lower: 54 percent. Nevertheless, some of the full democracies have the same or lower scores. These are Germany (also 54 percent), Japan (52 percent), and Austria (41 percent). Concerning this indicator, there is no significant variance between the young and the non-young respondents. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that the largest identified variance between the young and non-young among the analyzed countries is in Bulgaria, at about 10 points. In Turkey, the share is almost equal (80 to 85 percent) (Figure 2).

⁴ The respondents were asked on the whole if they very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in their country. The figure displays the results for answers very satisfied and fairly satisfied.

Figure 2. Importance of who governs⁵

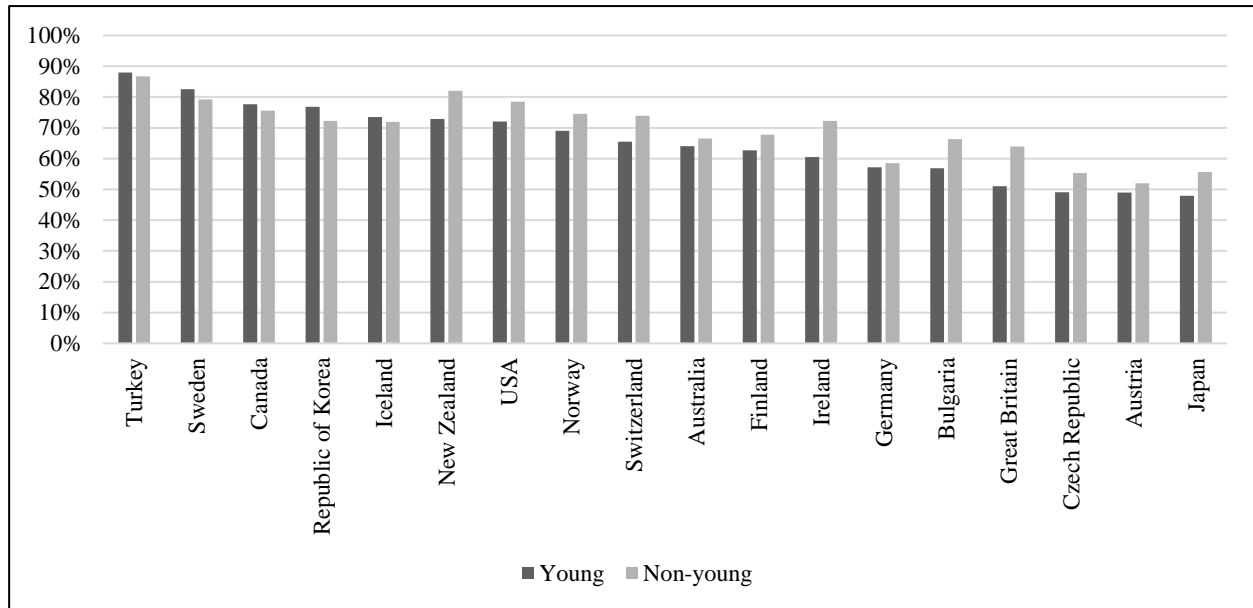


Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

Of similar importance is the belief that it matters whom people vote for. Figure 3 shows very similar results to the one presented in Figure 2. Again, Turkey has the largest share of youth who think that it matters whom people vote for (88 percent). The same position is shared by 57 percent of the Bulgarian youth, which is 30 points below. Nevertheless, the UK, Czechia, Austria, and Japan have results around 50 percent of their youth having such an opinion. When we compare the young with the non-young people, we see that to a high extent their attitudes coincide. There are some slight exceptions, where the non-young people are more likely to believe in the importance of voting. Bulgaria is among these countries. In Turkey, almost 90 percent of each group is convinced that voting is important (Figure 3).

⁵ The respondents were asked where on the scale from 1 to 5 they would place themselves if “1” means that it does not make any difference who is in power and “5” means that it makes a big difference who is in power. The figure displays the results for answers 4+5.

Figure 3. Importance of voting⁶



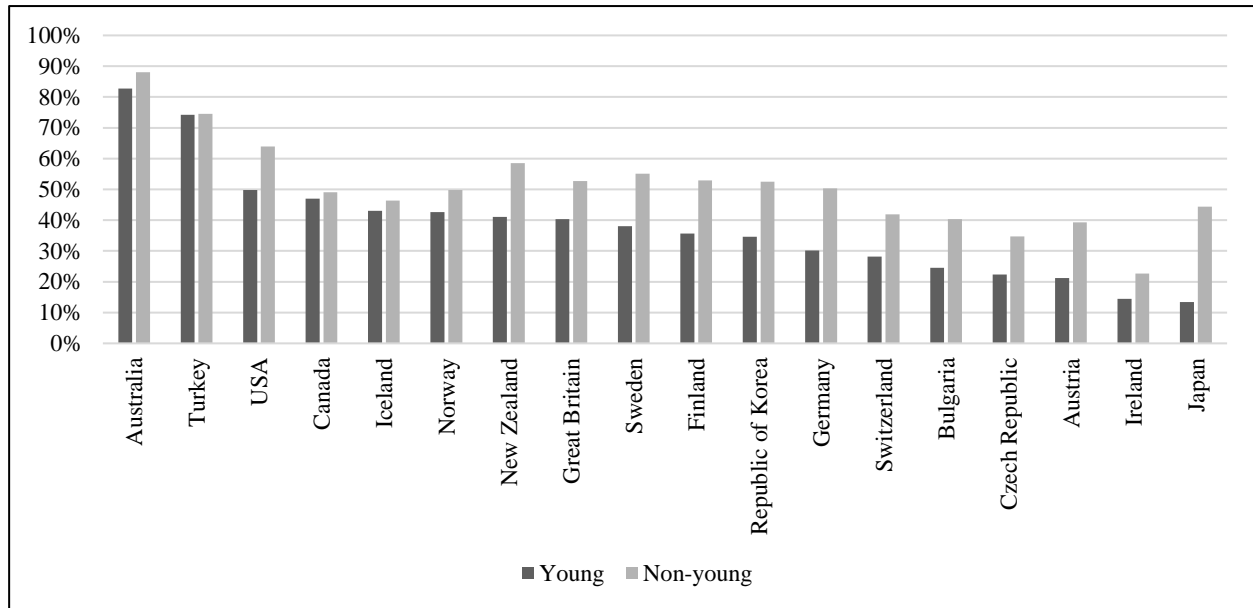
Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

Citizens and political parties

When people feel close to a political party, they are likely to be more convinced to support it in the elections. It is a prerequisite for higher political engagement. On this indicator (Figure 4), there is a very significant variance among the full democracies. Over 80 percent of the Australian youth declare that they are close to a political party. About 70 points lower is the result of Japan as only 13 percent of their youth feel so. The result of Turkey is closer to Australia, as 74 percent of its youth feel close to a political party. Bulgaria has a lower score than Turkey (25 percent), but higher compared to Czechia, Austria, Ireland, and Japan. In contrast to the previous indicators analyzed above, concerning this indicator, there are differences between the studied age groups. In all of the examined countries, the share of those who feel close to a political party is larger among the non-young people. However, in Turkey, this difference is very low, namely 0.4 percent. In Bulgaria, the difference is higher at 16 percent (Figure 4).

⁶ The respondents were asked where on the scale from 1 to 5 they would place themselves if "1" means that it won't make any difference who people vote for and "5" means that it can make a big difference who people vote for. The figure displays the results for answers 4+5.

Figure 4. Closeness to a political party⁷

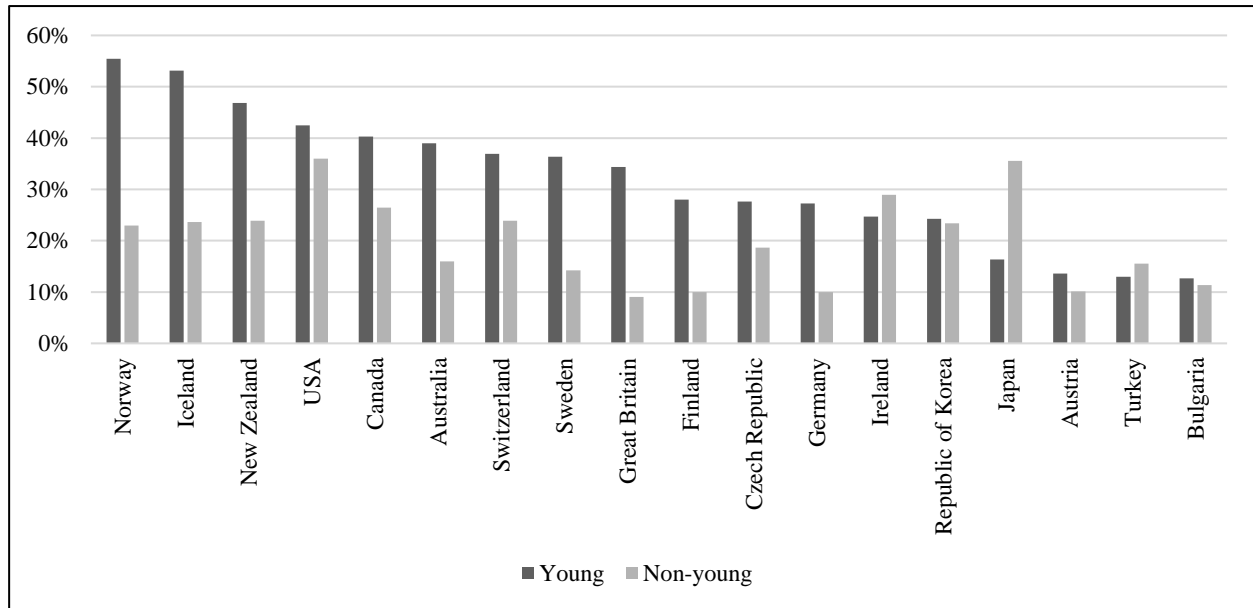


Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

The next indicator is related to the way political parties try to involve people in voting. The question is if the respondents were contacted personally during a campaign (Figure 5). Turkey and Bulgaria are at the last two positions among the analyzed countries as only 13 percent of their youth were personally contacted. Nevertheless, there are also full democracies with similar results, namely Austria (14 percent) and Japan (16 percent). One should note that 55 percent of Norwegian youth declared that they were contacted personally during the campaign, which is the highest share among the studied countries. As concerns this indicator, we identified some very significant differences between young and non-young people. In 10 countries, the share of contacted young people is significantly higher than the share of the contacted non-young. The biggest variance is in Norway where the difference between the age groups is 32 points in favor of the youth. Turkey is one of the exceptions as the share of contacted youth is lower than the share of contacted non-young, with 3 points. In Bulgaria, the difference in favor of the young people is as low as 1.3 points. (Figure 5).

⁷ The respondents were asked if they usually think of themselves as close to any particular party. The figure presents the results for answer "Yes"

Figure 5. Personal contact during the campaign⁸

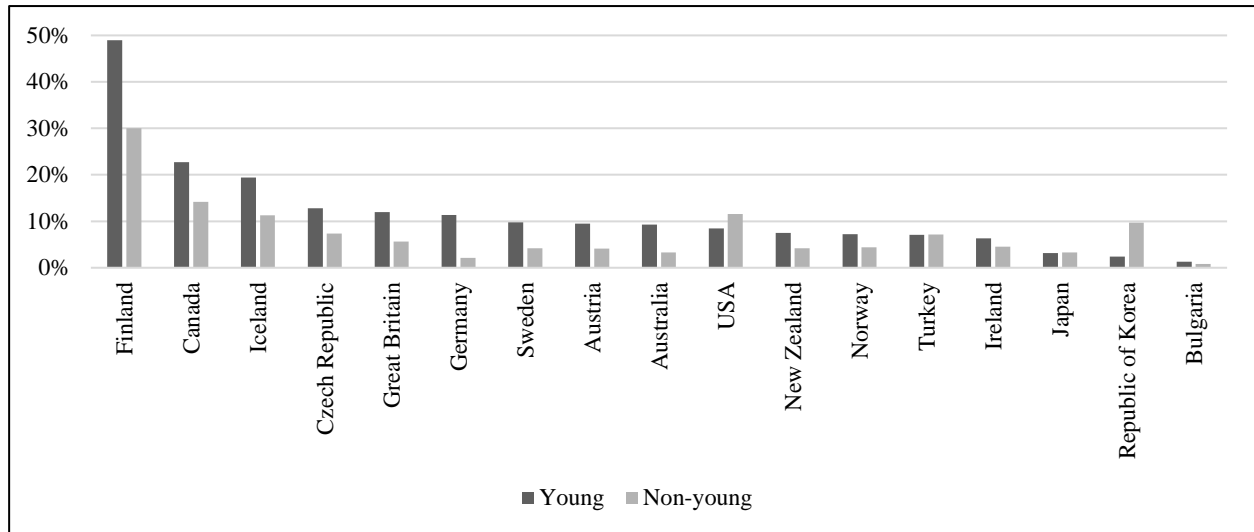


Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

Similar results are observed for the question of whether the voters signed up for online information during the campaign (Figure 6). Bulgaria holds the last position among the analyzed countries with only 1 percent of its youth declaring such activity. In Turkey, 7 percent of the youth signed up for information and this result is higher than the results of Ireland, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. In Finland, almost 50 percent of the youth registered for this kind of information. This is because Finland is one of the most digitalized countries in the world. Alongside, its youth are interested in the election campaigns. The following country, Canada, is almost 20 points below, with 23 percent. It is no surprise that almost in every country, more young people signed up than the non-young to receive information during the campaigns. The two exceptions are the USA and the Republic of Korea. In Turkey and Japan, the shares of young and non-young are almost equal (Figure 6).

⁸ The respondents were asked if during the campaign a friend, family member, neighbor, work colleague or other acquaintance try to persuade them to vote for a particular party or candidate. The figure presents the results for answer "Yes".

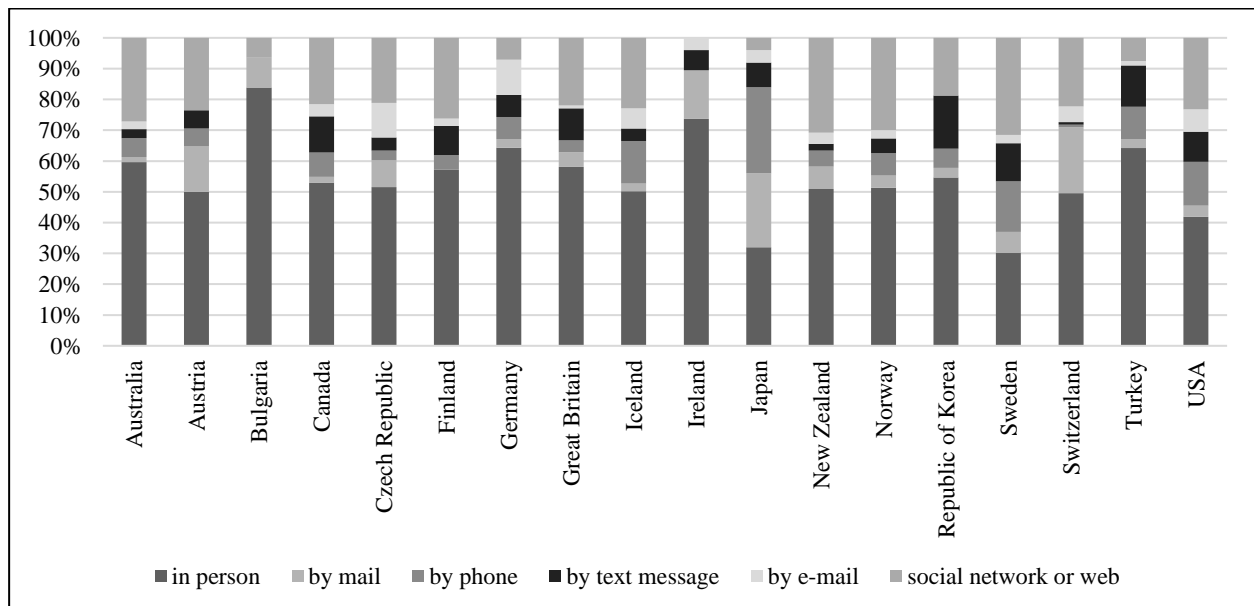
Figure 6. Signing up for online information during the campaign⁹



Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

As concerns the personal contact during the election campaign, the data show that it was mostly done in person. The country, which has the largest share of youth contacted through a social network is Sweden, followed by Norway and New Zealand. Turkey and Bulgaria have similar shares (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Ways of personal contact during the campaign, young

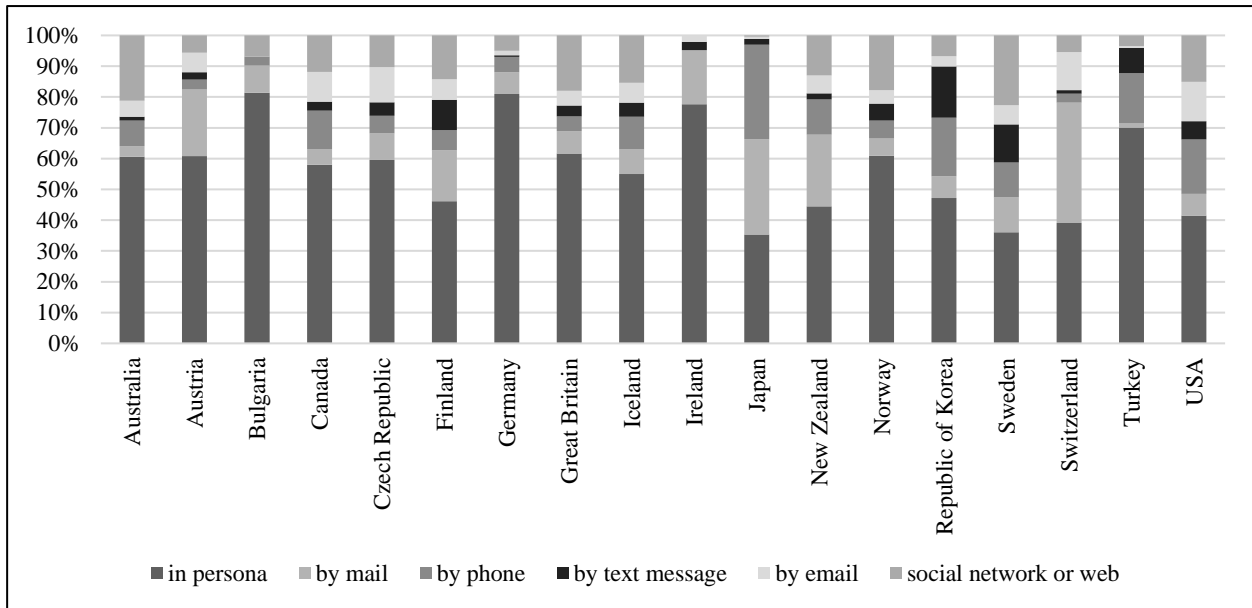


Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

When we compare these results with the non-young people, it is visible that there is almost no variance in the results (Figure 8).

⁹ The respondents were asked if prior to or during the campaign, they used the Internet or mobile phone to sign up for information or alerts from a party or candidate. The figure presents the results for answer "Yes".

Figure 8. Ways of personal contact during the campaign, non-young

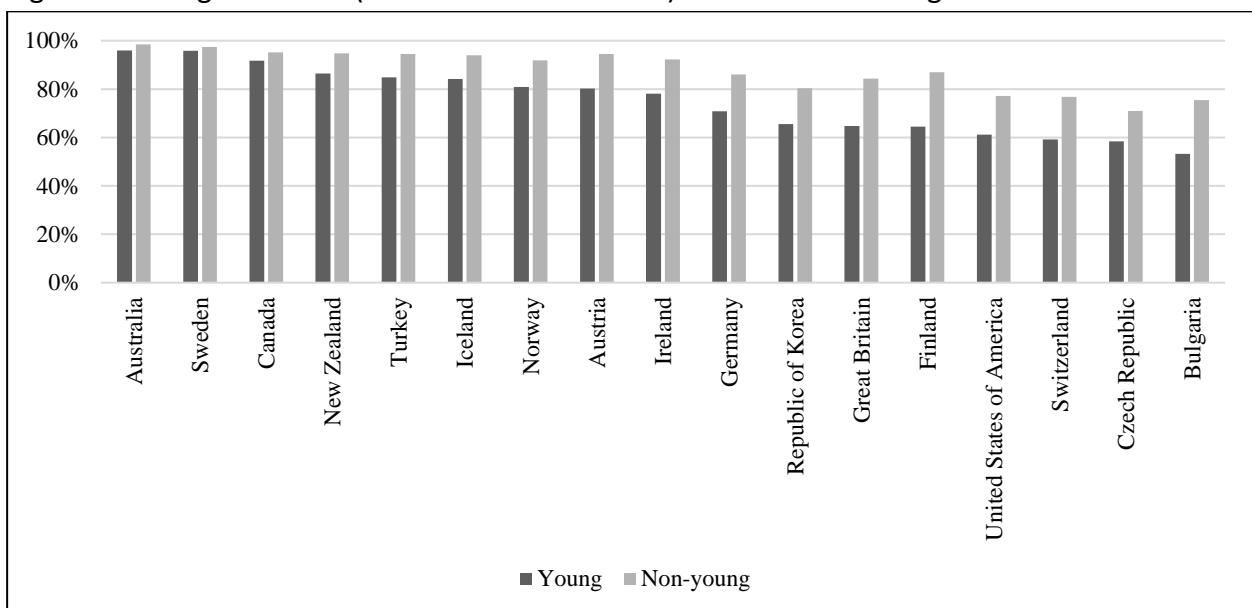


Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

Voting

Austria and Sweden are the countries with the biggest share of youth, who declared that they voted in the years of the study, namely 96 percent. Turkey ranks after them with 85 percent. In Bulgaria, 53 percent of the youth declared that they voted in the parliamentary elections during the examined period. This result puts Bulgaria in the last position among the studied countries. It can be observed that non-young people are more likely to participate in elections compared to young people. The highest level of variance is identified in Finland and Bulgaria, with 22 percentage points. In Turkey, the difference is about 10 points (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Voting in current (at the time of the wave) elections for the legislature

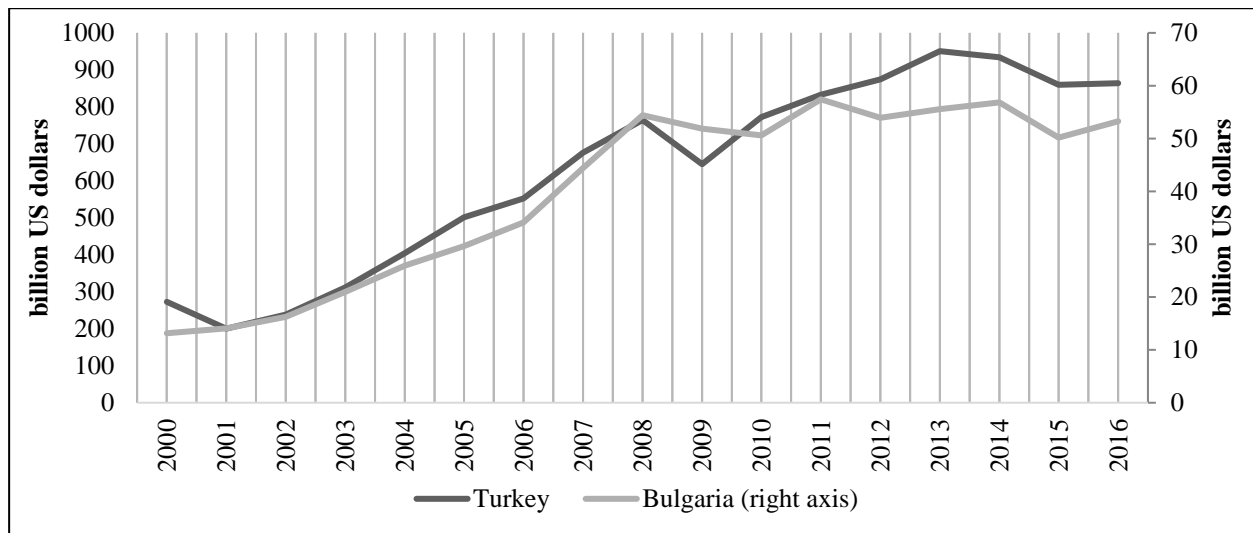


Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

The impact of the economy on voting behavior

As discussed above, the democratic performance of the ruling party may have an impact on the voting behavior of the young people in Turkey and Bulgaria. This section analyzes the economic performance of the countries and shows the relationship between the voting behavior among the youth and selected economic indicators. It can be observed that since the 2000s, Turkey and Bulgaria have similar economic growth patterns, especially between 2000 and 2008 (Figure 10). Between these years, both countries recorded significant economic growth. In 2009, both countries were affected by the 2008-2009 world economic downturn. As a result, in 2009, Turkey's economy contracted by 15.6 percent and Bulgaria's by 4.6 percent. After the crisis, Turkey entered another path of economic growth until 2013, while Bulgaria's economy stagnated with a moderate average growth rate of 2 percent between 2010 and 2014.

Figure 10. Gross domestic product of Turkey and Bulgaria



Source: Authors' calculations based on data of the World Bank, 2019.

The years 2014 and 2015 were the years of an economic slowdown in Turkey, as the GDP shrank by about 100 billion US dollars in two years (Figure 10). In Turkey, this economic slowdown had a significant impact on the ruling party's loss of its seats for a parliamentary majority according to the results of the elections that took place in June 2015 (Bardakçi 2016; Canyaş, Canyaş and Gümrükçü 2016; Çarkoğlu and Yıldırım 2015; Tol and Hjerne 2015), which it enjoyed since 2002.

Similarly, the political environment in Bulgaria since 2008-2009 has become unstable. However, the reason, in this case, is not the world financial downturn. From 2008-2009, Bulgaria had eight governments and three of them were "caretaker" governments. In the winter of 2008-2009, in Bulgaria, there were protests against the government of Sergey Stanishev.¹⁰ In fact, on the macro level, the government performed well, because it benefited from the favorable

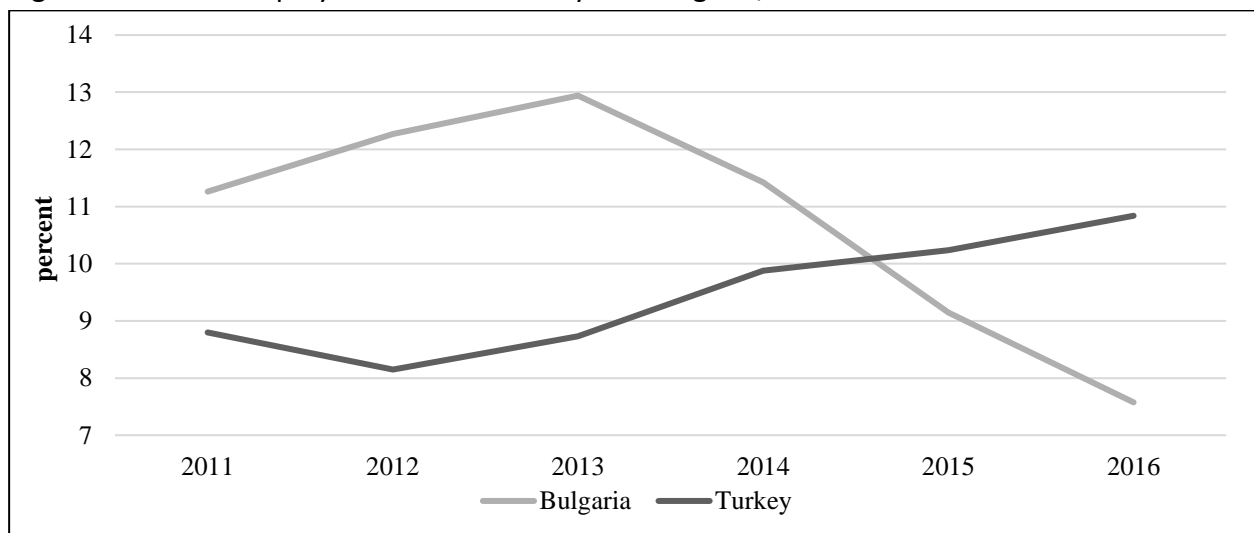
¹⁰ Claudia Ciobanu, *BULGARIA: Protests Rise Above Parties, and Against Them*. Inter Press Service. January 26, 2009. <http://www.ipsnews.net/2009/01/bulgaria-protests-rise-above-parties-and-against-them/> (accessed January 21, 2020).

economic environment in Europe. Nevertheless, the government lost the elections in 2009 and the newly established political party of Boyko Borisov managed to form a minority government. The Borisov government almost completed its full term in power, but the government resigned at the beginning of 2013 during the mass protests against it because of high electricity prices (Brunwasser and Bilefsky 2013). The latter was not an indicator of economic decline. It was an incidental case and the Bulgarian electricity distribution system had no similar problems after that. Thus, it could be concluded that as concerns the GDP growth, there were other challenges in the political environment in Bulgaria, which determined the voting behavior of the people.

After 2012, in parallel with the economic slowdown, the unemployment rate in Turkey was on the rise. In the year of general elections in 2015, unemployment exceeded 10 percent. This was another determinant of the ruling party's loss of seats in the general elections (Alptekin 2015). This figure was very close to the level of 10.6 percent recorded in 2010, just after the world economic crisis.

On the other hand, the unemployment level was higher in Bulgaria, although the level declined to 11.4 percent in 2014, when the elections took place (Figure 11). The decreasing unemployment rate in 2014 compared to 2013 did not contribute to the stability of the government of Plamen Oresharski. The latter lacked legitimacy and his term was marked by mass protests, which can be compared only to the scale of the demonstrations in the early 1990s. For months, thousands of people demonstrated in the streets of Sofia and other big cities with demand for the government to resign. In this period, the Bulgarian people were not interested in any economic achievement of the government and a year later finally it resigned. The political party of Boyko Borisov (GERB) won the elections in 2014. Thus, in 2013-2014 the economic environment was irrelevant for the voting behavior of the society as they just wanted the resignation of the government of Plamen Oresharski.

Figure 11. The unemployment rate in Turkey and Bulgaria, %

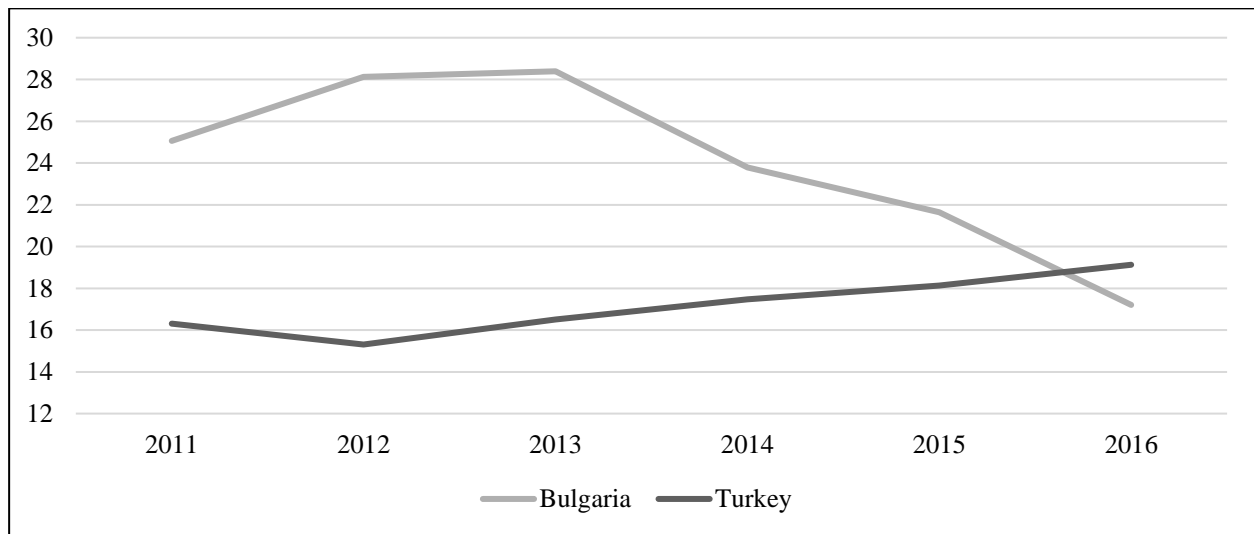


Source: Authors' calculations based on data of the World Bank, 2019.

The unemployment level among the young population was even higher in both countries. In 2015, almost one in every five young people in Turkey were unemployed, while this figure was nearly one-fourth in Bulgaria in 2014 (Figure 12). For Turkey, this figure is consistent with Figures 2 and 3, which show that the young population thinks that it is important who governs, and that voting in a nationwide election is very important.

In Bulgaria, in this period of unemployment, the Bulgarian youth was involved in the mass protests against the government of Plamen Oresharski. These were related to the lack of legitimacy of the government. Thus, their voting behavior in the 2014 elections was motivated by their wish to punish the ruling party by voting for another.

Figure 12. Youth unemployment in Turkey and Bulgaria, %

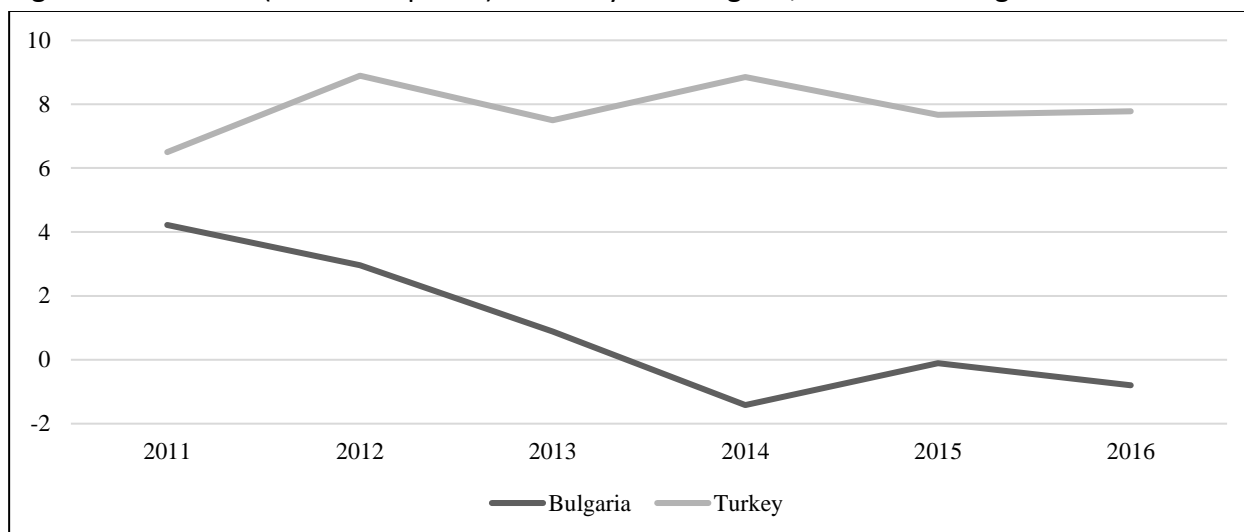


Source: Authors' calculations based on data of the World Bank, 2019.

Inflation in Turkey remained stable in the examined period (Figure 13). The government of Turkey managed to keep the inflation rates in single-digit figures since 2004 after 28 years of high inflation. This became only possible as a result of some radical changes in the monetary and fiscal policies in the wake of the national banking crisis in 2001. The annual percent change in the customer price index was between 6 and 9 in the period of 2011 and 2016. Although the inflation rates in Turkey were higher than those in Bulgaria, Turkey experienced historically low-level inflation during this period, and this was one of the most successful aspects of Turkey's economic performance in the examined period. Thus, inflation was not a decisive factor in the changing voting behavior in Turkey.

The inflation rate in Bulgaria in the examined period was rather low (Figure 13). The annual percent change in the consumer price index reached its lowest level (-1.4 percent) in 2014 when the most large-scale protests had continued. This is also the year when there was a government resignation. This situation clearly shows that in the examined period there is no association between economic performance and civic attitudes. Furthermore, the governing party in 2013-2014 lost the 2014 parliamentary elections. Such a result demonstrated that inflation is not relevant for the preferences of the voters in Bulgaria.

Figure 13. Inflation (consumer prices) in Turkey and Bulgaria, annual % change



Source: Authors' calculations based on data of the World Bank, 2019.

Concluding remarks

This study shows that the youth of Turkey and Bulgaria differ significantly as regards most of the indicators. They have somewhat close results only as concerns the overall satisfaction with democracy and personal contact with them during the election campaign. In Turkey, the high level of political polarization in the society and the corruption claims voiced in the national media led at least half of the young population to think that the institutions function only in favor of the ruling party. A rather significant reason for the dissatisfaction of Bulgarians, on the other hand, is the divergence between the expectations for economic development and what has been achieved in the national economy so far. It is true that during the last few years, the Bulgarian economy is stable and performs well on the macro level, but it started from a very low point and there is still a lot to be done in order to get closer to the EU countries' average economic performance. However, the stability and growth together with the low unemployment rate created an environment, which does not provide any ground for civil activity of the youth based on social and economic problems. There are many young people in Bulgaria, who are involved in rather post-materialistic causes such as environment protection, rule of law protection, etc.

In Turkey, young people mostly think that it is very important who governs the country and they find voting as a crucial way of expressing their political will. This finds reflection in the high level of participation in the elections by the youth in Turkey. Participation in the elections is especially important for the young voters in Turkey as they find the government responsible for the performance of the economy. The data and the reports support the argument that the slowdown in the Turkish economy resulted in the loss of the parliamentary majority of the ruling party in Turkey. In Bulgaria, while the economic environment generally matters for the voters, during the period of the study, further significant problems prevailed which were more relevant for the way the youth voted. The Turkish and the Bulgarian youth do not bother for getting online

information or being contacted personally. These factors seem irrelevant to their political choices. Unlike Bulgaria, most of the young population in Turkey feels close to a political party and this impacts their voting behavior to a significant degree.

Although the share of Bulgarian youth who believe that who governs and whom people vote for matter, it is still over 50 percent of them who share such an opinion. However, very few of them feel close to a political party and the reason for this may be the lack of confidence on the parties and the lack attempts by the political parties to attract the youth. Furthermore, as low as 1 percent of the youth in Bulgaria signed up to receive information about a certain political party or a candidate. While such behavior may indicate a very low level of interest of the young people, over half of the youth declared voting in the parliamentary elections.

The comparison in this study between the age groups (young and non-young) demonstrates that it is important to examine and to focus on the young people as a separate group. The reason for such a conclusion is the fact that the views and the political behavior of the young and non-young do not coincide, as the analyzed data here shows. Although for some of the indicators regarding the participatory attitudes and electoral behavior, there are converging opinions between the age groups, for other indicators, there are significant divergence.

The results of this study show that the attitudes of the youth in Turkey and Bulgaria are not quite similar, and the youth of the full democracies do not share comparable values and opinions as hypothesized at the beginning of the study. The political processes, context, economics, and polarization play more significant and relevant roles in the voting behavior and attitudes of the youth than the roles played by globalization, the level of democracy in the countries, and the social networks.

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