MASTER THESIS

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„Political attitudes of generation Z and generation X towards EU,

comparative analysis of cases: Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia"

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Zusammenfassung

In dieser Masterarbeit wird untersucht, ob die Präsenz der EU in der politischen Landschaft während der Gründungsphase eine Rolle dabei spielt, wie die Menschen Wahrnehmungen und Bilder von den EU-Institutionen, der Staatsbürgerschaft und den Werten gegenüber der EU entwickeln. Als Beispiele werden Kroatien, Montenegro und Slowenien herangezogen. Die Generation Z in Kroatien und Slowenien wurde geboren, als die EU in der Politik präsent war, während ihre Altersgenossen in Montenegro den Verhandlungsprozess ihres Landes schon seit geraumer Zeit miterlebt haben. Die Datenquelle ist das Eurobarometer 95.3, das im Juli 2021 erhoben wurde. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Generation Z die Konzepte der Unionsbürgerschaft in allen drei Ländern im Allgemeinen akzeptiert und dass dieser Optimismus bei der Generation X geringer ist.

Abstract

Since the breakup of ex-Yugoslavia, the states in Western Balkans have been searching for their place in an international setting. The countries in the region have had different paths towards independence, international integration, and finding their geopolitical identity. The study examines if the presence of the EU in the political landscape through the formation period plays a role in the creation of attitudes towards the EU. This is tested in the cases of Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia. Generation Z in Croatia and Slovenia was born with the EU being present in the political landscape, while their peers in Montenegro witnessed, for quite some time now, the negotiation process of their country. The source of data is Eurobarometer 95.3, which was collected in July of 2021 and published in September of the same year. The study finds that generation Z is generally accepting of European citizenship concepts across all three countries and that this optimism is lower with generation X. However, it seems that generation Z is less willing to give political empowerment to the EU, while at the same time they feel closer in terms of shared values and being European. Additionally, the democracy satisfaction of the EU is higher in the countries with a higher corruption index, which proves the optimism of candidate countries and new joiners about the EU's system. It seems that the generation that was born with the EU being present, expect more to be done, while generation X, could be possibly, experiencing fatigue from the long accession periods and the row of crisis that struck the EU in the last several years. Either way, leaders will have to find a way, how to communicate with younger generations and find solutions to the feeling of ''distant'' to institutions and decision-makers. If we want to make a fuller picture of the EU's relationship with the region, we need to take into account what benefits EU citizenship brings to people in different life stages and to people of different socio-economic stratification, generally speaking, while it seems that further political integration does not have the support, effects of soft-powers do.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to find out if membership plays a role in political attitudes towards the European Union tested through two different generations in three countries which gained independence through the break-up of ex-Yugoslavia. Specifically, tested generations are X (born 1965-1980) and generation Z (1996-2010) in Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia. Each case had its' own path of independence and therefore, a relationship with the EU. Slovenia was admitted to the EU in 2004, nine years after that Croatia also closed all of its chapters and Montenegro is a candidate country with the best prospects to join the Union at the moment. The main source of data on the attitudes will be taken from the online basis of Eurobarometer 95.3 (Commission, 2021), and tested by the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Like many generations before, Gen Z is struggling to understand the generations before them, their way of life, habits, affiliations, and opinions and it is the same another way around. The chosen comparison of the political attitudes between generation Z and X is particularly interesting because of the specific, unlike geopolitical circumstances under which the two generations spent their formative periods in states that were previously a part of ex-Yugoslavia. Most of the time when we think about different generations throughout history and in different parts of the world there is a certain degree of the inability of parents to fully understand the way of thinking of their children. Further on, this happens because every generation is brought up under specific historical circumstances that create their perceptions about their environment and outer space (Mannheim, 1926). Some researchers would point out that generalization on this level (generational dividing of samples) could be fallacious because we also need to consider the age of respondents at the time when the experiment was done. If we are talking about political affiliations that are in some part also created through personal relationships, experiences, and socio-economic stratification, regardless of the circumstances under which you were raised (Alwin, 1991). In the cases that we are examining more closely, Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia, the two generations were brought up under very different societal environments and this is why the generational approach to this problem is justified. Generations are the lens through which we can think about social movements and should not be taken as drivers of change, but rather indicators (Dimock, 2019).

Across all three cases, generation X has spent most of their childhood in communism, which in the eighties became communism in decline, followed by war events in the region. In contrast, generation Z in Slovenia and Croatia were brought up as European citizens while their peers in Montenegro still witness their country's negotiation process and complex relationship with the EU at the moment. Three cases we are looking at had very different paths towards independence and subsequently negotiation timelines and relationships with the EU.

Further on in this chapter, I will provide background information on all of the three cases, the sub-chapters will contain both historical context information and academic takes or results of public opinion polls on the countries' attitudes towards the Union in crucial times. After that, I will look at more closely the specifics of the research question and the design, the definitions of constructs that are used and examined in the study, as well assumptions that are used. The second chapter will review related literature, the focus is put on generational studies, and political attitudes of youth, especially across Europe and European identity as such. At the end of the same chapter, I will zoom in on the Croatian case and go through relevant literature on the political attitudes of youth in Croatia. Afterward, the details of the methodology will be explained, with Eurobarometer as the source of data, its' approach, variables, measures, and ANOVA as a tool. In the following chapter, I analyze the results according to the chosen questions from the Barometer, those tackle; the general image of the EU, trust in EU institutions, more decision-making power in the EU, democracy satisfaction, and the direction things are going in the EU and EU citizenship. The analysis is followed by a boarder interpretation of the results and conclusion.

1.1 Croatia

After the summation of war losses, reconstruction brought Croatia long-term high rates of unemployment, stagnating economy, and collapsing pension system (Srdoč, 2012). All this was accompanied by a long accession process to the EU, but the efforts of political elites brought the country closer to western integration. Subsequently, Croatia was admitted to NATO in 2009 and European Union in 2013, making its main foreign policy goals to that point, completed. Throughout this time, the international society was trying to bring Croatia to fully co-operate with CTY proceedings, and Croatian motivation to do so fluctuated over time. To

demonstrate this fluctuating attitude, right before the verdict of general Gotovina in Hague, in March of 2011, 55% of 1000 respondents looked positively towards the Croatian accession process, already in April, after the sentence was defined, this number dropped to 33% (Bago, 2011). Further on, the referendum on accessionwas held in January of 2012, the results were that 66% of votes were for and 33% against, theturnout though was 43% and it broke the record for the lowest EU accession referendum recorded after the one that was set in 2003 by Hungary (Cipek, 2014). While some would callthis state of affairs Euroscepticism, Dejan Jović calls it Euro-indifference, the problem was that most people did not want to engage with another supranational organization and jurisdiction right after the reconstruction, but they were aware of the economic empowermentthat the EU will bring all together. The trend of Euro-indifference continued throughout the first several years of Croatia's full membership, making Croatia's public relations with the Union complex (Cipek, 2020). As the EU was always an elitist project, it was important to the Croatian political elite to flatter the Croatian public that by joining the Union, Croatia will return to its natural European surrounding finally leaving the Balkan politics in past, Cipek mentions. This narrative was used during the accession process to facilitate the acceptance of European liberal-democratic values, on the other hand, slow but visible progress was done interms of judicial reforms, fighting corruption, and economic empowerment.

Generation Z was brought up in democratic Croatia, this generation has no recollection of Yugoslavia, war, late nineties reconstruction, unemployment rates, or the time before cell phones. For most of us, being born after the war, the debate about the Union, was one of the first memories of political events that we have. A study that analyses major political media reports and commentson television news reports, from 2003 to 2005, confirms that there are several major points about Croatianmedia discourse on the Union from that period (Čengić, 2007). Firstly, the topic of the accession process was quite present in Croatian newspapers, the most read monthly opinion magazine *Globus* published 105 articles in a period of two years, including comments and opinion pieces in regards to the Croatian relationship with the EU. Second, three dominant narratives have been singled out as discourses that inform the public about the relations between the Republic of Croatia and the EU; a pro-European discourse of leading columnists and journalists, the bureaucratic discourse of the EU representatives, and the pro-European discourse of Croatia's ruling political elites. The Eurosceptic stance was rarely taken by opinion leaders during this period and most of them agreed upon the fact that

the EU was the right direction of Croatian foreign policy at that time. During the early 2000s, the country began to feel economic empowerment of the open market, first, serious inflows of foreign money were felt tourism sector was bringing good results (Lozina, 2019). First gen-Zers were brought up during this era and notably, they were able to travel around Europe with their family or friends. Further on, when their secondary education started, various student exchange programs were already set, so a significant number of them were able to acquire their education in different parts of Europe. As Gvozdanić (2019) proves in her comprehensive study of the political attitudes of Croatian youth, they consider cultural and travel opportunities of EU membership much better than those of political or economic kind.

The process of attitude formation is conducted through direct experiences and the more one is exposed to certain narratives, beliefs, politicians, or food, the bigger the chance that one's attitude will be positive towards defined phenomena (Eiser, 1986). Therefore, I assume that generation Z in Croatia is the first fully ''European'' upbrought cohort and consequently has more positive political attitudes towards this political construct than those of their parents (Ilišin G. P., 2015). As is the case with younger generations, the election turnouts are quite low, which is not exclusive to Croatia or the region. If the existing political options want to be present in the future, there will be a need for a coherent strategy on how to approach these groups.

1.2 Slovenia

Slovenian membership in the EU has been set as the priority foreign policy goal, before the official acceptance of the constitution and proclamation of the Declaration of Independence by end of the June 1991. Slovenian economist and political scientist, Marjan Svetličić, argued at the time: that ''political disintegration and economic integration are the two sides of the same coin'' (Svetličić, 1993). The successor of SFRY in the Slovenian case ended up as a winner in a time of uncertainty and political upheaval in the region, as Slovenian historians and political scientists claim, this was not a coincidence. This strategic secession was a result of Slovenian interconnectedness with European political and economic flows (Bojinović Fenko A. S., 2017). Already before the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Slovenia's closest trade partners were from European Community, in 1980 this percentage was already around 58%, the highest of all former SFRY states (Potočnik, 1995). Economic development turned out to be a decisive argument because resisting integration would bring high costs for a small country (Svetličić,

1998). Already in 1993 negotiations began and the Accession Agreement was signed (Slovenia, 2009). Three years later the application for EU membership was handed over and relatively fast afterward, the Association Agreement entered into force, Slovenia became a part of the Luxembourg group, and negotiations had begun (Svetličič, 2009). By the end of 2002, negotiations were concluded and the Treaty of Accession was signed in April of 2003. The referendum showed that 89.64% of the population (of those who choose to vote) was supporting EU membership (Bernik, 2005). By the first of May EU Accession Agreement entered into force.

Since 1992 Slovenian newly established national identity was supplemented by the decision to show Slovenia as a state that is not involved with the Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian wars (Bojinović Fenko A. , 2005). Although armed conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia ended in 1995, Slovenian foreign policy throughout the next couple of years stayed ''Away from the Balkans''. This changed in 1999 when both US and EU exerted pressure on Slovenia to go ''Back to the Balkans'' transitioning Southeast Europe has begun (Bojinović Fenko A. Š., 2014). The country's new foreign policy identity under the EU was to be a mediator between the Western Balkans region and Euro-Atlantic integration, this was supported by the argument that the country has a broad knowledge of the region.

Slovenian foreign identity has been externally-driven and conditioned by the search for a security, economic empowerment, and political integration (Troha, 2008). EU accession was complemented by several transition processes: administrative, economic, and political. This gradual top-down Europeanization, like in the Croatian case, Copenhagen criteria had to be adopted, the technical difference between the two processes of integration was that the conditions for legislative alignment were split into 35 chapters in the Croatian case.

Early years of Slovenian membership have been marked by the positive reception of the EU and its institutions, some Slovenian authors mention that this perception has also been at times under-critical of the Union, however, subsequently, a low portion of Euroscepticism appeared to denote healthy diversity in public discourse (Luthar, 2013). The general observation is that both Slovenian politics, the public, as well as elites, and academia have welcomed European integration from above and even planned and discussed it before the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Perception has been mainly positive in the years leading to accession and

afterward, the first criticism of the Union appeared after the 2008 crisis, it came mainly from economists who made observations about the short-comings of being a small country inside a much bigger political and economic system (Bojinović Fenko A. L., 2015).

1.3 Montenegro

Montenegro's relationship with Union has been amicable since the declaration of independence, similarly to the Slovenian case, ever sincethe country's international recognition in 2006, the goal has been to join the Union, and the country's candidacy was announced already in 2010. As it stands at the moment, Montenegro is the only 100 percent aspiring member country that is completely in line with EU foreign policies, however, problems with domestic politics and a lack of ability of leadership to efficiently tackle corruption and organized crime are still blocking this country from becoming a member state. This is exactly why I choose this case, to illustrate a candidate country with full commitment to EU membership, unanimous political will exists, just like in Croatia and Slovenia in the past. In late August of 2020, Milo Djukanovic's party (DPS) which lead the country for 30 years (and is an heir of the ex-Communist party) lost elections to a new generation of politicians. By this, the myth that only his party could lead the country toward western integration was debunked and it seems that new political options are in line with European ambitions set by Djukanovic and act unanimously towards this goal. However, the current coalition is comprised of detrimental different parties, some of them demonstrate Serbian nationalism and social conservatism (Democratic Front, Popular Movement, Serbian Radical Party), while others reflect socially-liberal green ideologies (United Reform Action) (Engjellushe, 2022). The prime minister (coming from the Democratic Front) is close to the Serbian Orthodox church, whose interests do not always go in line with national ones. Consequently, the new coalition's task is two-sided, they have to eradicate corruption created by DPS and overcome ideological differences between governing minorities. As Engjellushe mentions:

'' *The political upheaval that has occurred in Montenegro in recent years may be a form of generational change. The country's fight against corruption and its efforts to protect its institutions from Serbian and Russian pressure could be transformational. But the Democratic Front could pose a long-term threat to Montenegro's democracy. Russian interests are trying to block Montenegro's and other western Balkan countries' accession to the EU* (Engjellushe, 2022)."

1.4 Accession process

Since 2004, only three candidates became member states (Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia) and following Croatia's experience, the Commission emphasized the importance of all of the chapters which imply compliance with rule-of-law. Therefore, the negotiation chapters that deal with judicial reforms and fundamental rights (chapter 23) and justice, freedom, and security (chapter 24) are to be opened first and closed last. In 2020, the Commission communicated a document entitled 'Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans' which again re-visited enlargement process details in the Western Balkans. As the EU already noticed candidate countries are experiencing fatigue when their expectations in regards to incentives are not fully met, along with this enlargement process they published a detailed plan on the Economic and Investment plan for the region (Lilyanova, 2015). At the moment Montenegro is a frontrunner in the enlargement process, with a conditioned promise to take place as a member state by 2025, but Commission has also noted that this prediction is extremely ambitious (Parliament, 2018). The country has opened all 33 chapters,but provisionally only closed 3 so far, which is still far more successful than other countries inthe region that are considered to be candidates (Parliament, 2022). The research commissioned by the EU recently showed that if the referendum was held at the moment, a high percentage, 85.7% of the population would vote for Montenegro's membership in the EU, denoting once again that country does not have a tradition of Euroscepticism. On the other hand, some other polls have shown that closer collaboration with its closest historical ally and geographical neighbor (Serbia) is not off the table if European membership turns out to be ''too far'' (Kelmendi, 2021).

1.5 Research question

Across the above-listed cases, this thesis seeks to answer the following question: does membership make a difference in attitudes of gen Z towards the integration? Independent variables, age, and country, are going to be tested on a set of independent variables which measure satisfaction with democracy, citizenship, shared values, and perceptions of the institutions and benefits of the membership. After that, I will analyze if certain patterns, that can be interpreted, appear.

1.6 Research design

The questions and data about the attitudes towards the Union and its policies are yearly and periodically collected and researched by several European institutions, most notably, Eurobarometer. Since the data is published online, it is going to be analyzed through IBM SPSS and interpreted afterward. Since the Eurobarometer consists of a wide range of questions that are related to the public perception of the EU, I will be able to see if certain sentiments are generation or country-related. In this way, the differences between the cases will point to the answers I seek for. The study is going to be a cross-sectional examination of the results of the latest surveys of 2021 (Commission, 2022). Because of this, it is important to point out that the study will pose a snapshot of the current state of matters and give us a certain perception of the generational differences in the region at the moment. Using this approach has both its limitations and delimitations. As I decided to do a generational study, the most comprehensive approach would be to use ACP (age-cohort-period) effects analysis. The latter modeling calculates the results for the age of respondents, the period when the survey was conducted and cohort affiliation (Robertson C., 1999). Using ACP would mean collecting data from earlier editions of Eurobarometer and ESS from the time when generation X was going through young adulthood like generation Z now. Since the first session of the Eurobarometer was done in 2004, and both questions and length of the survey have progressed, consequently we cannot acquire comprehensive longitudinal data that would enable us to analyze and discuss social movements over a longer period. Nevertheless, a deep look into a current situation can provide us with a good basis for a conversation on current events and the future comparison of the political attitudes and attitudes towards the Union between these two generations. However, the cross-section of the current attitudes will not give us a filter on which we can predict future social movements or happenings.

Further on, as most of the questions in both questionnaires of Eurobarometer and ESS are not descriptive, we can only say that a certain value exists, but not why so (Opdenakker, 2006). Another limitation that questionnaires and interviews pose is that given answers might not be truthful. However, we must make a common assumption made by researchers that given data is very close to the actual truth, this might be altered in case of ultra-sensitive questions. On the other hand, the data collected by Eurobarometer and ESS guarantee the representativeness of their samples. Eurobarometer relies on the samples of 1000 persons from each country in case of interviews that presuppose a wider set of questions that include all demographics, the

respondents to surveys are selected randomly and the total sample is weighted to ensure geographical and demographic representativeness (Commission, 2020). This is a delimitation, but using already collected answers to posed questions, leaves us with no chance to ask may be more specific questions of interest. In contrast, if the survey was created solely for this study, I would be able to create the questions and scales through which we evaluate certain opinions and make them more suitable to the study's objectives.

1.7 Definitions

When discussing generations, this thesis uses Karl Manheim's definition which presupposes that a generation has experienced a unique set of technological, political, economic, and social circumstances and therefore has created a set of experiences different than those of other generations (Mannheim, 1952). Although some other researchers claim that we are open to change for most of the period in our lives, more studies point out that our political identities stabilize as we grow old and subsequently theory relies on this finding (e.g., Jennings and Markus 1984; Alwin, Cohen, Newcomb; Sears and Funk 1999). However, Mannheim points out that there can be different social locations within a generation, and this separates a generation from a cohort, according to your social location there is a chance that you will experience a certain historical event differently from peers that have other social locations. In this study, I'll deal with Mannheim's classical definition of generations and not cohorts. Also, I am setting an arbitrated line between generations, that is most commonly used in literature when talking about generation X (born: 1960 – 1985) and generation Z (1996 – 2010).

As for the political attitudes, in the literature, they are mostly defined as a set of personal beliefs that define our position in regards to political ideologies, government's role in society, labor, tolerance, immigration, and other important societal questions that fall under the specter of politics (Allport, 1929). In this study, political attitudes are seen as constellations, rather than components of one attitude (e.g. Abelson & Rosenberg: 1958; Festinger 1957; Heider, 1958; Newcomb, 1968; Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1995). Because of cognitive dissonance, the attitudes that we have already acquired from our experiences and outer world are furtherly fixed in stone (Festinger, 1962). As Festinger explains, for people it is hard to accept a situation that does not advocate for our already created attitudes, therefore, we accept a certain situation that makes us uncomfortable and tries to fit it in with already existing values, so that no information falls out of place. In this way, we are confirming our biases.

It is important to define European identity, as this term has been broadly debated over time, especially in the last 20 years in European literature. As this paper supports the social constructivists' point of view, the definition that I will use is based on Tajfel and Bruter. Through their lens, identities are constructed, changeable, and subject to formation under specific circumstances and influences. Tajfel defines European identity as: '' that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1981)''. This broad definition is complemented by Bruter's definition that we have more than one identity which connects us to the Union. Those are: civic and cultural. The cultural component is the one that connects us based on the way of life, moral values, and social similarities, Civic component can be understood as political, ways in which we want to engage and see politics, and namely how we interact with EU communities and institutions, in which light do we see them (Bruter, 2008).

Another important term to define is European values, as I am going to measure ''openness towards'' and ''willingness to accept these values''. As stated in TEU, the values are '' common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and equality between women and men prevail. To be a bit more specific, these were defined in the Lisbon Treaty as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, and human rights (Commission, 2015). To conclude, when I mention the values in the analysis process, those will consider values defined by the European Union and not European values in the broader sense.

Each tested variable is going to measure a set of beliefs and attitudes that are related to different European instrument of power (either hard or soft). Further on in the analysis, we will be able to see how strong is the support of one generation for the value in question. Additionally, as stated earlier, the aim of this study is not just to highlight the main differences in the political attitudes and readiness to accept European values, but also to see if one group is more accepting of the EU as a political body. Certain respondents might be supportive of the values, but not of the EU institutions. This is why it is important to check both of these categories of attitudes with the same amount of thoroughness.

2. Review of the related literature

As this research brings together several questions and disciplines, the literature that I will review in this chapter will be related to generational studies, political attitudes, European values, youth participation and prevailing attitudes in Europe, and Euroscepticism.

2.1 Generational studies

As the main research question poses a division based on year of birth, I would firstly like to address reflections on the political studies that base their arguments on the constructs of generations. As I previously mentioned in the introduction, the definition of the generation that is going to be used to set certain criteria when thinking about a generation is the one made by Karl Mannheim. His argument about generations rests on two parts. The first part of this argument is that people do not change their political attitudes during their whole life, but during ''impressionable years (IY)'', the second part of the argument is that these impressionable years, spent in a similar period bring certain similarities. These assumptions have been challenged by certain scholars who claimed that people are open to change of attitudes during their whole lifespan, but more susceptible to change during formative years. The assumption has been dismissed by evidence and theoretical work (Sears D. O., 2013). Subsequently, over the time, more research has been keen on this approach and has proved that political attitudes stabilize over time, but are quite unstable during the adolescence and young adulthood. Authors, already mentioned in the chapter above (Jennings and Markus, Alwin, Cohen, Newcomb, Sears and Funk) have proved several important facts on attitude formation. For example, political engagement habits are formed during impressionable years, so if a certain crucial event marks your youth and you have been active during that time, there is a probability that these proactive habits will prevail during your adulthood (Plutzer, 2002). Further on, socio-political events that marked your youth are very likely to be remembered later on and judged as important (Schuman, 2004). Maybe the most important issue that has been researched in this sense is if these events experienced in your young adulthood will more likely provoke attitude change than later on in life and several authors have proven that it will (Dinas, 2013). As Jennings proved, students that joined the civil rights movement and anti-war protests in the seventies evolved to have left-leaning political attitudes and strong participatory habits afterward (Jennings, 2002).

Another perspective on this issue argues that children resemble their parents in their political behavior and it is mostly backed up by the mapping of reproduction of socio-economic stratification and partisan attachments, example of this kind of study is Beck's socialization theory (1974), his definition of generation is a lineage one. The usual perspective and argument of this theory are that children have learned about social influence within their families, in this way children learn about their family's political orientation and social location, and afterward, they inherit it either completely or partially. Most of the work that examines lineage generations that concentrate on socio-economic reproduction has proved that the amount in which a child's political affiliations and habits resemble those of their parents is heavily dependent on polity changes (Niemi, 1977). Although lineage generation can provide us with some information on how to think about family politics and partisanship, Beck's socialization theory of party realignment can provide us also with the lens through which we can think and discuss macro-level change. To be more specific, Beck argued that partisanship is imperfectly transmitted from each generation in the family to another, because of these imperfections, the lineage connection to the party gets weaker, and subsequently after a few generations the political atmosphere is ready for partisan realignment (at least he prove this to be true for the US politics). The pattern that Backs examined was consistent with historical evidence and party realignments. Also, as Dinas proved in (2014), intergenerational transmission is highly important in one's political life, if your parents were highly politically active, you are going to be too. These two concepts of generations can sometimes be used together to explain certain phenomena and movements.

Generally, both approaches to generational studies, being similar to Mannheim's generation, or Beck's lineage generation can help us understand better the multi-level concept of political attitudes. The focus on child-parent transmission enables us to understand the origins of someone's political identity on the individual level, and then again how social stability and socio-economic stratification are sustained in one society over a certain period. On the other hand, the work that was done by authors that examine political generations contributes to the debate about the circumstances that a group of people has experienced during their impressionable years, giving an attribute to a political character of a certain generation. To conclude, both approaches should be used by political scientists, if we want to conclude generational similarities and differences.

2.2 Political attitudes of youth

Many scholars who decided to study political attitudes or participation of youth faced the same methodological problem, the younger the respondents, the fewer affiliations they have towards certain moral or political issues (Sears D. O., 1990). Children can identify partisanship and express it but are unable to express their attitudes towards specific questions, because of this, political scientists turned the focal point more towards young adults and adolescents (Hess, 1967). Further on, through the seventies and the works of Clarke (1978) and Percheron and Jennings (1981), it has been detected that the objects of partisan socialization are different in different countries, so we can infer that political socialization is country-specific. Later on, it has been determined by many authors that political socialization is less determined by parents, but by the atmosphere and conditions under which this socialization happens (Van Deth, 2011). Another crucial finding points to the fact that this socialization process is more often situated in other places than home, and those are; schools, spending time with peers, and media influence (Blais, 1990). Most notably, many authors debated if the school can be seen as the main place of political socialization, some scholars consider it a very important factor (Himmelweit, 1969) and those who do not (Easton, 1969). Already in the seventies, the influence of newspapers and television during political socialization and impressionable years has been researched (Atkin, 1978). Only recently, the influence of social media entered the debate. The argument that separates social media from typical media regarding socialization is; that the threshold of political activities and engagement is lowering, today a simple comment online could be seen as, in fact, political involvement or activism (Ekström, 2018). To conclude, the social media factor brings in a crucial change in the sphere of political socialization.

In countries in transition, the attitude of young people towards politics does not tend to differ from the attitude of young people in established democracies, but comparative analyzes have shown that institutional and extra-institutional political participation of young people from post-socialist countries is significantly lower than their peers from Western Europe (Kovačić, 2018). Such insights also apply to the political engagement of young people in Croatia, who, through most indicators of political culture are similar to their peers from other transition countries in Southeast Europe. However, they differ in the amount of volunteering they do. While most are satisfied with the democracy achieved in their country, at the same time, they are the least satisfied when it comes to generational representation in domestic politics and

personal influence on national and local politics (Hurrelmann, 2015). Young people in Croatia are also characterized by lower political participation compared to generations of young people in the socialist period, which confirms the collapse of youth engagement after the change of socio-political order (Ilišin V. , 2002). Intergenerational differences are also evident because young people are less interested in politics and willing to go to the polls, their party affiliation is noticeably lower, they are fewer members of political parties, less accepting of democratic values , and less trust in social and political institutions (Ilišin V. , 2007).

2.3 Youth across Europe

Further on, it has been established by the McKinsey study done in Brazil in 2018 that Generation Z is much more ready than any other generation before, to put differences aside to mobilize around the cause they believe in (Francis, 2018). This progressing awareness about human rights issues, inter-ethnic tolerance, and pragmatism comes in part from the ability to consume various cultural influences through the internet all the time.

As the author of a book that takes on generation Z's behavior and attitudes explains:

''*This Generation is predicted to be the last one in America in which Caucasians are the majority as only 55 percent of people in Generation Z are Caucasian. This is a considerable difference compared to 72 percent of Baby Boomers who are Caucasian. Instead of shying away or opposing what is different, generation Z welcomes difference with an open mind and open arms, believing more diversity in America is a good thing.''* (Seemiller, 2016).

While most of the work done by the authors in the US points out that Generation Z is more tolerant, ethnically diverse, and ''more ready'' to take action when needed politically, the results across Europe vary, especially since the 2004 rejection of the Constitution Treaty, 2008 economic crisis, when uncertainty about the employment first took the stage and later on with 2015 migration crisis, which exacerbated the polarization drastically. Until 2015, most of the European polls among youth were based upon the opinion that younger people are generally more accepting and have positive attitudes towards migration and immigrants, this view was challenged after 2015.

Keating and Janmaat did several studies on the attitudes towards race, sexuality, and tolerance among British youth and concluded;

'' *What our findings will show is that, on the whole, young people are indeed more accepting of homosexuality and racial diversity than their parents or grandparents and previous generations of young people. However, we shall also see that intolerance has not disappeared from youth attitudes altogether; for a sizeable minority of youth, it has merely shifted its focus to immigration. Contemporary youth are markedly less welcoming of immigrants than young people 10 or 20 years ago*" (Janmaat, 2019).

Keating and Janmaat (2020) further on in their research highlight that in the UK (at the moment when data was collected and analyzed UK was a part of the EU) a substantial minority of youth held negative attitudes towards immigrants due to '' the perception that immigrants pose an economic and cultural threat, and to the spread of culturalised forms of citizenship" (Keating, 2020). Surprisingly, they managed to prove that this pattern is true across demographically different groups, which was surprising since people with higher education usually have more tolerant views towards foreign workers and immigrants, and we should consider that younger generations are in general more educated than generations before them. Janmaat and Keating go on and analyze if these attitudinal changes can be ascribed to the replacement of generations (cohort effect) or certain conditions in the prevailing period (period effect) through the APC analysis. They found out that attitudes that concern racial and homosexuality tolerance can be connected to wider cultural shifts, but in contrast, if we talk about tolerance towards foreign workers, this seems to be a shift that is a function caused by current conditions. Scarce resources and fewer opportunities for employment and housing seem to confirm the pessimistic assertion that levels of intolerance are rising in times of crisis, this can also point to the fact that there is a clear resurging nationalism in times of complicated social and economic atmosphere.

Another important observation of this work is that further acceptance of people of different races and sexuality can make a more resilient divide between majority and minority, Keating and Jaanmat are not the first ones to observe this phenomenon. Back (1993) was observing white and black youth in South London and concluded that growing popular support for Afro-American or Afro-Caribbean cultures managed to perpetuate ''neighborhood nationalism'', especially towards Asian and Vietnamese minorities, he concludes his findings with the

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assumption that the growing trend of more inclusive attitudes towards certain groups can lead towards the further exclusion of other groups that seem to be a minority in the new setting (Back, 1993).

Due to the 2015 crisis, a growing number of authors that study political attitudes of youth in Europe concentrated their work on attitudes towards migration and populist movements that exacerbated the proportions of the existing crisis. Therefore, Pollock, Brock, and Ellison (2015) took a deeper look into the perceptions of populism, cynicism, authoritarianism, nativism, and xenophobia across 14 different European countries. The paper also examines if the location of respondents can be connected to the readiness to accept contradictory populist values. Indeed, the statistical analyses showed that there is a greater tendency of people who live in places where there is a political/historical background to accept these views. Further on, they state that within western European states youth is less likely to be authoritarian, nativist, and xenophobic in comparison to post-socialist countries. On the other hand, through their findings, it is clear that there are major regional and, even local, variations of the views that would be considered ''populist'', additionally, these views are quite inconsistent and subject to pluralism. They go on and explain '' it makes sense that evidence shows populism to be partially independent of the left-right spectrum, as young people respond to a deep dissatisfaction with contemporary politics but in ways that mirror their local and regional concerns. Concerning this finding they point out to Rancière and Laclau, assert that young people's views cannot be considered as a single ideological project, but the reflection of a wide range of political attitudes that all fall under democracy. Another interesting note made by the authors mentions the work of Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012) that ask if these views can be considered corrective or a threat to democracy? This position is supported by Pollock, Brock, and Ellison's argument that regional diversity of populist attitudes could be a part of a wider critique that is directed toward the crisis of western democracy and the established "center".

2.4 Attitudes of the youth in central Europe

As above mentioned authors decided to make a difference between western welfare states and post-socialist countries of central and eastern Europe, I'm going to focus a bit more on the social movements among youth in central Europe, most of the countries in the region share socialist history with countries in the Western Balkans. National Democratic Institute (National Democratic Institute, 2020) is a US-based organization that closely follows attitudinal changes

of the population in terms of democracy, in 2020 they published research that compares trust to crucial democratic values, participation, and concerns due to Covid-19 pandemic of youth in Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (aged 16-29). While peers in those countries give strong support to democratic governments and democracy in a wider sense (around 80%), they would be ready to sacrifice civil liberties and human rights to get better protection from terrorism and other external threats (this percentage is the highest in Poland, around 44%). Concerningly, this number is even higher in the Czech Republic when asked if they would be ready to sacrifice those liberties to gain higher standards of living – 54 %. Undoubtedly, the pandemic exacerbated youth's concerns about their future professional and economic situation, this is palpable in all of the countries in the region, however, this number is quite high in Poland. When talking about the EU, most of the respondents say that the pandemic crisis did not enhance the cooperation and trust among the states and EU institutions, quite opposite. On the other hand, the poll has proven that there is a strong common European identity across the region, the percentage of people who feel close to European identity is above 73% in Hungary and Slovakia and around 60% in Poland and Czechia. However, this identification is still weaker than one concerning their home states. The attitudes towards most concerning issues at the moment vary across the region, but some of them are repeated as the most concerning, those are prices of living, unemployment, corruption, climate change, and health care.

2.5 To be European…

If we talk about universal, homogenous European identity, there is a lot to debate about since political scientists, as well as psychologists, do not have a consensus in the literature on this issue. This is not because it is especially hard to define what makes us ''European'' and where could this imagined line be geographically drawn, but because identities are amorphous, influenced by many factors, and, finally, fluid. Moreover, to be European is not exclusive to EU member states, which makes this definition especially complex in my opinion. What would make an individual identify more with people of a certain MS and, on the other hand, not that close to people of Montenegro or Norway who are also considered to be European? Some authors argue that this identity between MS of EU is based on common political, social, and moral values, but these values are inseparable from all of the other identifications within ourselves and may not make us closer to the Union. From personal observation, what makes you close to the other peers from other member states is this common political identification that Europe should be united to counter threats to its economic, cultural, and political life. Other

literature in regards to this shared identity mentions that being European is comprised of two different identifications: cultural and political (Bruter, 2005). This is somewhat confusing, especially in the case which we are looking at, Croatia, because, youth in Croatia might feel culturally closer to peers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, or Serbia, than to those of Sweden, which is understandable due to the historical and geographical circumstances. However, major efforts have been taken by the EU to reverse this low identification within the Union, especially when it comes to initiatives that support political education like the ''Youth in Action'' program adopted by the European Parliament and the Council between 2007 and 2013. These undertakings were highlighted as important especially since the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in 2004 (where the majority of 18-24-year-old votes were a ''no'' to further political integration of the Union) (Huyst, 2009). It has been debated if this can be seen as s rejection of the EU or an outcry for a different EU, these two different outcomes mean completely different directions in which the future can play out. The first scenario means that the youth does not believe in this project neither politically nor culturally, but the second one means a completely different thing, and that is; that the youth takes certain decisions made by the EU for granted and demands even more efficiency from the institutions. One author mentions:

"*Young Europeans, in sum, are probably considerably more comfortable than their parents and grandparents with Europe as a social and political space in which to exist, but they have not been drawn to identify with Europe more than previous generations (and may do so less than their elders)*" (Green, 2007).

Defining identities has always been a complex work, even if we talk about national identities which were constructed quite recently. Social constructivists claim that different languages, religions, and customs should not pose insurmountable obstacles to the creation of European identity (Wintle, 1996). They argue that these differences were present also when states and national identities were created, in other words, states can be created over one day, but identities cannot. Moreover, social constructivists claim that people can have more political identities within themselves, but do not have to use all of them all of the time (Risse, 2004). They are loose and shaped by social interactions, and used accordingly to meet social, time-frame and situational factors, consequently it is very hard to study separate political attitudes, therefore, European political identity can be observed only through questions that concern an individual's connection to this community, his/hers perception of belonging to this group and expectations that they have towards the future of EU (Cerutti, 2008). This paper supports the social

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constructivist point of view on the European identity, more precisely, that it exists complementary to the national and other identities. From personal observation, I deduced that these identities do come out when they are tested and when we need to choose which identity are we going to ''play out'' towards certain situations or people.

Recently there was a twist towards how we use our ''European identity'' in both civic and political sense. War events in Ukraine played a crucial role in the last couple of months, there has been a public concern that this is, in a wider sense, an attack on European identity, political sovereignty (in terms of gas dependence), and democracy. Due to the social movements of the last few months, it seems that the EU managed to make its identity more palpable and visible, but, it also became clear that this identity reaches beyond the borders of the Member States, solidarity can be felt by people all over the continent; Ukraine, Western Balkans, Norway, Switzerland and so on. To me it seems that being European is a wider cultural identity through which attitudes toward the EU are created, this identification constellation plays a crucial dynamic in individuals.

The key findings of Flash Eurobarometer 2021 for youth, published by the European Parliament point in different directions: '' Around three in five (62%) respondents are generally in favor of the EU – though this includes 34% who are dissatisfied with the way the EU is working at present and a slightly lower proportion (28%) who are satisfied. A further 21% of respondents are rather skeptical of the EU but could change their opinion if radical reforms are introduced, while 5% are opposed to the general idea of the EU." (Parliament, 2021). Research on citizen relations and politics conducted in the developed and older democracies of recent decades has pointed to the phenomenon which we can find under different labels - such as political saturation, passivity, alienation, apathy, disillusionment, skepticism, cynicism, and/or criticism of citizens - who have a common alienation of citizens of politics, primarily institutional ones (Norris 2011; Amna and Ekman 2013; Grasso 2016).

2.6 Zoom-in: Croatian generation Z

Comprehensive research on attitudes and worldviews of youth in the countries of south-eastern Europe was done by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung foundation in 2019. Croatian youth was also included, and the authors of the paper point out several important relationships of Croatian youth with the European Union. Most young people consider the European Union superior to

Croatia regarding the status of democratic values (except when it comes to security), and although they generally did not perceive positive political and economic consequences after European integration in Croatia, two-thirds of respondents believe that Croatia has to stay in EU (Gvozdanović, 2019). Additionally, the study shows that among youngsters, national identity is the most pronounced, 85 percent of them feel mostly or completely primarily Croatians, 80 percent are followed by those who feel like citizens in the places where they live, and 77 percent as citizens of their regions. Identities that cross-national and local borders are something less pronounced, but still high, as 68 percent of those surveyed feels Europeans and 59 percent are citizens of the world. Per expressed identities, young people are relatively homogeneous, and differentiation is mainly given by the level of the father's education. Concerning the primary political identification, the situation in other member states is not much different as most of the people, regardless of their generation, identify as citizens of their state first.

Gvozdanić and others, also prove that a positive outlook towards liberal-democratic and socio-economic values in the EU is the highest amongst the youngest respondents with the highest education. However, most of them think the results of Croatia's almost five-year EU membership are not spectacular. In the area of economic development, 30% identify their positive effects, 40% do not notice any changes, and one percent point out the negative effects. Simultaneously, in terms of political system development 24 percent of respondents state positive consequences, 39% do not notice changes, and one percent point out the negative effects. Although the rating of economic effects is somewhat more favorable than political, when asked specifically about the changes that they have experienced with Croatian membership, the respondents' most common answers are: travel opportunities, getting to know the cultures of other nations, better education, faster democratization of society and better protection of human and minority rights. Which points to the benefits of political development and not the economic one.

The most important finding is that in both cases two-fifths of respondents believe that integration in the EU has not resulted in noticeable changes. The authors go on and explain why they expect this is happening:

''*This disagreement probably stems in part out of optimism that EU membership guarantees change at least in the future to move in the desired direction, and partly out of the need to meet*

the expectations, which were constantly emphasized in the years of the pre-accession process." (Gvozdanović, 2019).

Authors also mention the most common answers when asked about the bad sides of Croatian membership so far, and it turns out that most believe that Croatia's dependence on developed European countries has increased consequently its economic exploitation. Accordingly, almost the majority of respondents believe that integration limits economic development in Croatia, but also that it has contributed to a higher standard of living for citizens across the country. Additionally the higher the age the weaker the positive perception of the consequences of European integration of Croatia. These estimates are in line with previous research findings on what consequences can be expected after Croatia's admission into the EU.

3. Methodology

When we talk about European identity, the researchers have concluded that it is a phenomenon that is very hard to measure, this is because, as already mentioned before in the literature review, people have a couple of political identities that sometimes overlap. The true question is when is one identity being more important so it acts over others. This question of duality was posed by Spanish sociologist – Luis Moreno, in his work, he aims to measure the duality of the national and European identities which compose our political identity, however, Bruter (2008) points out that it is not enough just to detect this duality, because other research has shown that people can have numerous identities and those do not need to compete with one another (Risse, 2006). To study European identity, scholars often use a quantitative approach (Green, 2007). As the notion of European identity is quite hard to capture, survey systems like – Eurobarometer and European Social Survey were established. However, this method has been questioned by some authors, because the level of attachment to certain political constructs (EU or state) may not be directly pointing to the identification problems. Therefore, Cerutti and Lucarelli recommend supplementary qualitative in-depth methods when we are talking about European identity, to catch the thinking process, narratives, influences, and dominating opinions (2008). In this study, the aim is to detect the differences in the attitudes towards the Union between the two generations and observe possible patterns across youths' perceptions in candidate countries and countries that are member states.

3.1 Eurobarometer

Eurobarometer has been a principal cross-national empirical data provider on attitudes toward European integration over time. Moreover, the survey method gives us a possibility of wider generalization. Eurobarometer is a public opinion survey conducted and funded by the European Commission to summarize attitudes towards the Union and its policies. The forerunner of this social survey was the ''Attitudes towards Europe'' conducted in 1962 to demonstrate the public perception of European unification, Jean Rene Rabier is often mentioned as its creator. The standard Eurobarometer is being carried out twice a year and although some questions changed, the aim is to have as many as possible identical questions so that longitudinal data can be obtained when needed and changes over time can be closely followed. Moreover, the survey's organizational structure permits for transnational comparisons between the states, or a combination of those two approaches (Saris, 1997). Cleansing of the data and missing variables are removed by the Barometer itself.

Special Barometer surveys are in-depth examinations of certain attitudes to specific topics, when those are collected researchers use different methods to gather information, for instance, they observe respondents' behavior in the debate or group conversation. Since Eurobarometer 34 (carried out in 1990) special topics have been determined, which are irregularly repeated and examined by the survey. Some of the inspected topics are health, immigration, consumer behavior, energy, working conditions, gender issues, family, gender issues, and so on (Eurobarometer Data Service, 2020). It is debated in the public if these surveys have been used by the Commission to establish a link between the institution and citizens, the results may be sometimes used for the agenda-setting, as the Commission is known as a competence maximizer and European institution responsible for selecting and de-selecting topics (Haverland, 2015). Here, I would point out that the Eurobarometer's freedom of action is constrained by the sole fact that it is used primarily for the Commission's purposes. As a pioneer project of cross-national studies initiated by the EU, at the time when the survey was established, much less diligence was posed on methods, today, however, these standards have been drastically improved (O'Shea R., 2004).

As Eurobarometer is conducted in all of the member states, and even the candidate countries, there is a crucial need for the equivalence in terms of language and meaning of the questions, the surveys are officially translated and contain detailed annotations about the meaning of the

questions. To conclude, whilst other regional or national barometers measure 'feelings' towards national parties and political systems, it seems that Eurobarometer measures the progress of integration by examining the amount of trust in supranational institutions (De Lombaerde, 2012).

In the standard Eurobarometer survey, which I am going to use in this research, each time a new round comes the new sample is independently chosen. Each country questions 1000 citizens in a face-to-face manner (CAPI), and if a country is smaller in population, this sample is lowered to 500 interviewees (Malta, Luxembourg, and Cyprus). The collected dana comes from examinees that are over 15 years old. The collected data sets are stored and updated by German Social Science Achieve, which highlights that since 1989 the basic sampling design is a multi-stage probability sample (Commission E. , 2021). Although it is possible to download and do the analysis of the longitudinal movements, I am going to use standard Eurobarometer 95.3 data. The data was collected through June and July of 2021 and uploaded in September of 2021, importantly, this analysis will show us a snapshot of the current situation and attitudes which prevail at the moment. Importantly, it will be interesting to see if these attitudes changed in the 2022 Barometer, as some authors claim that war events in Ukraine crucially changed attitudes and trust in European institutions and integration.

Some of the questions that measure citizens' content with EU's integration effects do not have the data in regards to Montenegro, because this cannot be measured. Also, not all of the questions that appear in the questionnaire for Member states are asked in candidate countries too, however, they might get a different set of questions, depending on what is important to Commission. The edition or Eurobarometer that I am going to use was carried out in three candidate countries: Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia (GESIS, 2022). To add, as we will only extrapolate the values of two generations that I need for this research, we have to keep in mind that the results that we get cannot be applied to the country-level analysis.

The problem that is often highlighted by the scholars of political and social science is that Eurobarometer makes no systematic use of nonresponse studies available, however, they do include post-stratification weights to adjust the samples for further usage (Nissen, 2014).

3.2 Variables, measures

The questions in Eurobarometer can be sub-divided into 2 groups, one type of question asks respondents to estimate the situation and choose the category of an answer, in this sense the dependent variable is nominal (it has different categories that are not distributed in rank order, they do not have equal spacing or true zero). Although p can be read in SPSS as Exact Sig. 2-sided, I am going to denote this value as in other literature, namely ''p''. The given value of p shows the probability that data confirms null hypotheses. Consequently, if $p < 0.05$, there is a very small chance that differences do not exist (Petz, 2012). Through crosstabulation and value of adjusted residual (higher or smaller than 1,96), we will be able to see where those significant differences can be seen and where (country or generation). To demonstrate what these questions look like in the questionnaire: ''How do you think things are going in the European Union? Possible answers: things are going in the right direction, things are going in the wrong direction, neither bad nor good or I do not know.

The second type of question refers to a scale through which respondents are obliged to evaluate their perception of a certain phenomenon. This means that the dependent variable is quantitative and contains both categories, ranked order, and equal spacing. Importantly, the respondents who have answered 'I do not know'' have been removed from the analysis since the value of this answer has been set to ''9,99'' which would further complicate the comparison and analysis of means. Therefore, these questions are going to be tested through analysis of variance or ANOVA (Petz, 2012). As adjusted in Eurobarometer, the scale is reversed from what we would naturally expect, so positive opinion is coded with smaller numbers (1-2), while negative attitudes are denoted by higher numbers (3-4-5). While analyzing these types of questions, I will use also tables that show purely descriptive statistics and then test for differences between the subjects (being countries and generations). Afterward, through tests of in-between subjects, I will test for $p < 0.05$, to see where the main differences are (generation effect or country effect). If the effect of either of the actors can be detected, then we will pairwise comparisons of the means to see the significance of this difference, once again, the higher the number the more negative perception of the phenomenon in question. Questions that are going to be examined in this way can be asked as followed: '' How attached do you feel to your country (grade this feeling an on a scale of 1-4, 1 being completely positive value ''very attached'', 4 being completely negative ''not at all attached'')''.

The first question that I am going to examine is: ''In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative, or very negative image?'' By asking this question we will see if there are differences in general perceptions of the EU as such, without specifying whether this applies to institutions, leadership, or the cultural specter of the Union. We simply want to conclude the general image of the EU in three countries between the two generations. The second question specifies the political identity of the Union and tests if people believe in institutions, therefore, the second variable is: '' Do you trust the EU as an institution?'' Possible answers, in this case, are divided into only two absolute categories: tend to trust, tend not to trust. This question will help us to define if there is a different amount of trust towards the political dimension of the Union. Further on, I will question if the respondents are keen on the further integration of the Union. Subsequently, the third examined question is: Should more decisions be taken at the EU level? Possible answers will be distributed on a scale from 1-to 4, 1 being ''totally agree'' and 4 beings ''totally disagree''. We will be able to see the amount of readiness, between the generations and countries to embark on the journey of further integration in general, not specifying if this implies political, economic, or security dimensions.

Further on, we will also see if there are some crucial differences in how people perceive democracy in the Union, the question in the survey that will provide us with the answers is: How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in the Union? Answers will be distributed along the scale of 1 (very satisfied) to 4 (not at all satisfied). Afterward, we will also see if citizens of the EU feel like citizens they indeed share crucial values that are often emphasized as the main cohesive means of the Union, the respondents were asked: '' In your opinion, in terms of shared values, are the EU Member States…? The answers are again on the scale, 1 being "very close to each other" and 4 "very distant to each other".

To test if there is a prevailing amount of pessimism about the future of the Union, or if there are positive outlooks that pervade between generations or states, I will also extrapolate the results of the question: ''At present, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or the wrong direction, in the EU? Possible answers are divided into two unrelated categories: "things are going in the right direction" and "things are going in the wrong direction". While testing for this attitude we should keep in mind that the results could be altered due to the Covid-19 crisis and public general dissatisfaction with these terms.

The last question is going to represent the level of ''Europeanism'' among citizens of the EU in Slovenia and Croatia. Therefore, the last question being tested is: ''Do you feel like you are a citizen of the EU?'' (scale 1-4). With this variable, I want to see if there are some differences, mainly, between the generations that grew up with the Union being present in their formative years in public debate and education.

4. Analysis of the results

4.1 General image of the EU

Table 1.

The general image of EU, analysis of variance

Dependent Variable: COUNTRY	EU IMAGE - POSITIVE/NEGATIVE	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
HR	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,48	0,845	161
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,57	0,784	311
	Total	2,54	0,805	472
ME	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,33	0,977	94
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,57	1,028	159
	Total	2,48	1,014	253
SI	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,28	0,783	128
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,61	0,818	275
	Total	2,51	0,821	403
Total	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,38	0,862	383
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,58	0,853	745
	Total	2,51	0,861	1128

Through this table of descriptive statistics, we cannot infer if there are major statistical differences in how generations or nationalities see the Union. The means are quite evenly distributed along the standard line since value 1 was ''very positive'' and 5 ''very negative''. Further on, we obtained the test of between-subjects effects through which these answers can be analyzed. Since p = 0.357 for the country effect, there is no significant difference in how Montenegrins, Slovenians, and Croatian generally see the Union, but the result was different when we tested for the generation, in this case, p=0.000 which means there is an effect of the generation on the provided answers. Let's see how this effect manifested.

Table 2.

Comparison of statistically significant differences of means between the generations

(I) Generation – (J) Generation		Mean difference (I-J)
Gen X (1965-1980)	Gen Z (1996-2010)	0,216

It seems that generation X in general gave a higher score on the scale to the image that the EU evokes in them, albeit, more negative (table 1.). As we can see this difference is not as high as one whole degree, but it is statistically significant. This means that generation X across all of the three countries has a more negative perception of the image of the Union than generation Z. If we take a closer look at where this interaction takes place, it seems that differences between the two generations are more obvious in Slovenia and Montenegro.

4.2 Trust in EU institutions

Since the provided answers for this question are not on a scale, but rather ''I do trust'' or ''I do not trust'' we ran the chi-square tests to provide us with the answers if there are significant differences between the generations of countries in regard to trust with European institutions. Since p>0.05 for the generation effect, there is no need to see if there are significant differences in answers of generations looking across all three states, in contrast, the hi-square test points to the differences between the countries, since p=0.000. Therefore, we take a look at the differences between the countries.

Table 3.

Trust in EU institutions, country effect

			Tend to trust	Tend not to trust	Don't know (SPONTANEOUS)
COUNTRY	HR	% within COUNTRY	50,7%	43,8%	5,5%
		Adjusted Residual	1,7	-2,2	1,1
	ME	% within COUNTRY	31,6%	62,3%	6,1%
		Adjusted Residual	-8,6	8,0	1,4
	SI	% within COUNTRY	55,0%	41,2%	3,8%
		Adjusted Residual	5,3	-4,4	-2,2
Total		% within COUNTRY	48,6%	46,4%	4,9%

Through the value of adjusted residual, we can see that the major differences can be seen between Montenegro and Slovenia, where there is a substantial difference in the number of people who trust/do not trust the EU institutions. If the value of the adjusted residual exceeds 1.96 (albeit -1.96) there is a statistical significance in the results. The trust is much higher in Slovenia. Further on, we take look at the chi-square values for the generational and country effect at the same time. It seems that statistically significant differences among the generations appear in, again, Slovenia (p=0.015) and Montenegro (p=0.039) as shown in table 4.

Table 4.

Differences in trust in EU institutions among generations, Slovenia and Montenegro

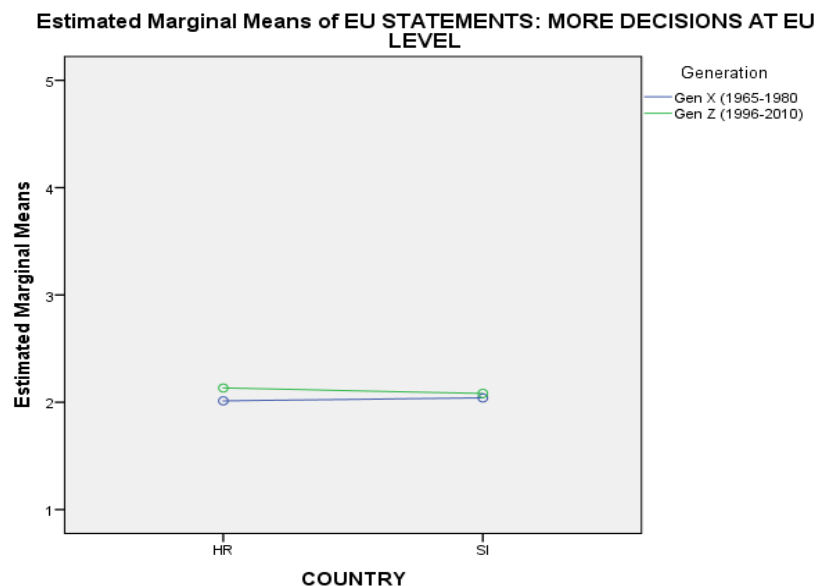|				Tend to trust	Tend not to trust	Don't know
ME	Generation	Gen Z (1996-2010)	% within Generation	23,2%	68,4%	8,4%
			Adjusted Residual	-2,2	1,4	1,6
		Gen X (1965-1980)	% within Generation	36,5%	59,7%	3,8%
			Adjusted Residual	2,2	-1,4	-1,6
	Total		% within Generation	31,5%	63,0%	5,5%
SI	Generation	Gen Z (1996-2010)	% within Generation	65,6%	29,7%	4,7%
			Adjusted Residual	2,6	-2,9	0,5
		Gen X (1965-1980)	% within Generation	51,6%	44,7%	3,6%
			Adjusted Residual	-2,6	2,9	-0,5
	Total		% within Generation	56,1%	40,0%	4,0%

While gen Z in Montenegro tends to trust less in EU institutions by a substantial amount, the case in Slovenia is opposed to the one in Montenegro. In Slovenia generation, Z is much more likely to trust EU institutions with a high 65,6%. This percentage is much lower when we look at generation X, 51,6%.

4.3 More decision-making power for the EU

In this question, the participants have been asked to grade (1 ''totally agree'' – 4 ''totally disagree'') how much they support the following statement: ''More decisions should be taken on an EU level''. Of course, this question was only asked in member states, therefore, we are looking at the results for Croatia and Slovenia. When run a test of between-subjects

(generation, country) there is no significant statistical difference (country p= 0,848, generation p= 0,185). We can conclude that there is no active effect of the country or generation on how participants think about more decisions being made at the EU level, however, if we look at the graph 1, we can see that in both countries generation X is slightly more willing to give more decisions into EU's hands. Generation Z in Croatia gave a generally higher score, which means they tend to disagree more with further empowerment of the Union, than generation Z in Slovenia. On the other hand, most of the respondents answered that they somewhat agree or disagree with the proposed statement.

Graph 1.

4.4 Democracy satisfaction

In this case, the respondents were asked how are they satisfied with the democracy in the EU (1 ''very satisfied'' to 4 ''not at all satisfied''). As we are dealing with the analysis of variance, subsequently, through tests between subjects we can detect that there are noticeable differences between the states, as well as generations. As shown in table 5.

Table 5.

Test between subjects, satisfaction with democracy

	p
COUNTRY	0,003
GEN	0,000
COUNTRY * GEN	0,163

Further on, we take a closer look at the differences between the states and generations by the comparison of total means of answers for the countries (Table 6.). While satisfaction with democracy is, ironically the highest in the country that is not a member, Montenegro, this satisfaction gets lower in Croatia and is the lowest in Slovenia. If we look at the means within countries more closely, it is obvious that in all of the three countries generation Z is more satisfied with democracy within the Union than generation X. This can be explained by the theoretical assumption that as people get older, they engage more with democratic processes, and, consequently, they perceive more deficiencies of the democratic system.

Table 6.

Democracy satisfaction, descriptive statistics

COUNTRY		Mean
HR	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,35
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,40
	Total	2,38
ME	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,14
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,36
	Total	2,28
SI	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,34
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,56
	Total	2,49
Total	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,29
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,45
	Total	2,40

4.5 Shared values

In terms of shared values, the participants could determine if member states are 1 ''very close to each other'' or 4 ''very distant from each other'' in their opinion. EU shared values as specified by the Lisbon Treaty are human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, and human rights. However, since those are not specified in the question, it could be the case

that participants could have been thinking of the shared values in a somewhat broader sense. Since the impact of those can be felt only in member states, the question was posed to the participants in Croatia and Slovenia. In the first part of the analysis, we run the test of in-between subjects and determine that there is a statistically significant difference between the countries, and then again, between the generations too. Therefore, the smaller the mean, the better the perception of the shared values (Table 7.)

Table 7.
The closeness of member states through shared values

COUNTRY		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
HR	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,09	0,636	158
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,26	0,602	310
	Total	2,21	0,618	468
SI	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,35	0,637	127
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,57	0,673	272
	Total	2,50	0,668	399
Total	Gen Z (1996-2010)	2,21	0,648	285
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,41	0,654	582
	Total	2,34	0,658	867

By comparison, of means, we can tell in Croatia both generations perceive that member states are closer in regards to values than in Slovenia. Importantly, in both countries generation, Z feels that member states are closer to each other in terms of values than generation X. However, the mean of generation Z in Slovenia is still higher than the mean of generation X in Croatia, it follows: the effect of the country is stronger in this case and Croatians generally think that member states are closer in terms of values than Slovenians do.

4.6 Direction things are going in the EU

Through this variable we find out if citizens are ''happy'' with the direction things are going in the EU, I should point out that this perception is not solely dependent on the EU, but also on personal experiences and state of general happiness in life. However, we can find out if there is a general difference in optimism or pessimism about the future of the EU in our three countries and among generations. Since this question's answers are not on a scale, but rather three separate categories, being: ''Things are going in the right direction'', ''things are going in the wrong direction'', ''neither the one nor the other'' nor ''don't know''. Through the calculation of chi-square we find out that there are no major differences between the countries,

on the other hand, when we calculate this measure for generations, it turns out p=0,008, which means there is a significant difference in how generations think about the current direction of the Union. More specifically, if we take a look at table 8. We can see that generation Z has a more positive attitude towards this question, by the value of the adjusted residual of 3,3. If we want to explain this difference with descriptive statistics, 58,1% of generation Z participants positively see the direction, whereas this percentage is somewhat lower in generation X, 47,7%.

Table 8.

The direction things are going in the EU, generations crosstabulation

			Things are going in the right direction	Things are going in the wrong direction	Neither the one nor the other (SPONTANEOUS)	Don't know
Generation	Gen Z (1996-2010)	% within Generation	58,1%	34,1%	2,3%	5,5%
		Adjusted Residual	3,3	-2,3	-1,6	-1,0
	Gen X (1965-1980)	% within Generation	47,7%	41,2%	4,2%	7,0%
		Adjusted Residual	-3,3	2,3	1,6	1,0
Total		% within Generation	51,2%	38,8%	3,5%	6,5%

Further on, we can take a closer look at what is going on in generations in a specific country by crosstabulation of these variables. By calculation of chi-square, we detect that there is a significant statistical difference between generations in Slovenia. The calculated p=0,005 points to the fact that in this country generations see this direction quite differently. This is not just the case in Slovenia, in all of the three countries generation Z generally has a more positive outlook towards the situation, in Slovenia, this difference is the most pronounced and statistically important by high adjusted residual (red). Even 63,3% of generation Z participants think things are going in the right direction, while this percentage is 46,2% when generation X is asked this question. In Montenegro, a high amount of gen Z respondents (60%) think positively about this, while this percentage gets a bit lower in Croatia, 52,8%. Interestingly, Montenegro has the highest percentage of gen X respondents who think things are going positively, this changes in member states, Slovenia (46,2%) and Croatia (46,9%) as shown in Table 9.

Table 9.
The direction things are going in the EU

				Things are going in the right direction	Things are going in the wrong direction	Neither the one nor the other (SPONTANEOUS)	Don't know
HR	Generation	Gen Z (1996-2010)	% within Generation	52,8%	37,9%	2,5%	6,8%
			Adjusted Residual	1,2	-0,5	-0,3	-1,1
		Gen X (1965-1980)	% within Generation	46,9%	40,2%	2,9%	10,0%
			Adjusted Residual	-1,2	0,5	0,3	1,1
	Total		% within Generation	48,9%	39,4%	2,8%	8,9%
ME	Generation	Gen Z (1996-2010)	% within Generation	60,0%	35,8%	2,1%	2,1%
			Adjusted Residual	1,3	-1,1	0,5	-1,0
		Gen X (1965-1980)	% within Generation	51,6%	42,8%	1,3%	4,4%
			Adjusted Residual	-1,3	1,1	-0,5	1,0
	Total		% within Generation	54,7%	40,2%	1,6%	3,5%
SI	Generation	Gen Z (1996-2010)	% within Generation	63,3%	28,1%	2,3%	6,3%
			Adjusted Residual	3,2	-2,6	-2,0	0,5
		Gen X (1965-1980)	% within Generation	46,2%	41,5%	7,3%	5,1%
			Adjusted Residual	-3,2	2,6	2,0	-0,5
	Total		% within Generation	51,6%	37,2%	5,7%	5,5%

4.7 EU citizenship

To measure how much people of member states actively feel like citizens of the EU, the interviewees are asked to rate how much they feel like citizens of the EU, the scale goes from 1 ''yes, definitely'' to 4 ''No, definitely not''. This question only appears in questionnaires for member states, consequently, we are looking at the results for Croatia and Slovenia. Through analysis of variance, and firstly tests of between-subjects effects we find that $p<0,05$ for both country and generation effect (Table 10.)

Table 10.

Tests between-subjects effects, feel to be an EU citizen

	p
COUNTRY	0,000
GEN	0,000
COUNTRY * GEN	0,343

Further on, through a pairwise comparison of means, we find out that generation Z feels more to be EU citizens, while the congregate mean of generation Z in Croatia is 1,97 (we keep in mind that a lower number means the more defined feeling of citizenship), this effect is even more pronounced in Slovenia where this value is 1,66. On the other hand, it seems that the country effect is more important in this case because generation X (1,92) in Slovenia considers itself to be more EU citizens than generation Z in Croatia (Table 11). We conclude that in Slovenia both generations X and Z consider themselves to be EU citizens more than both cohorts from Croatia do. Subsequently, generation X in Croatia has least the feeling of EU citizenship.

Table 11.

EU citizenship, comparison of means

COUNTRY		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
HR	Gen Z (1996-2010)	1,97	0,852	158
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,13	0,798	311
	Total	2,08	0,819	469
SI	Gen Z (1996-2010)	1,66	0,758	128
	Gen X (1965-1980)	1,92	0,796	275
	Total	1,84	0,793	403
Total	Gen Z (1996-2010)	1,83	0,825	286
	Gen X (1965-1980)	2,03	0,803	586
	Total	1,97	0,815	872

5. Interpretation of the results

While at first glance it might seem that the effect of state plays the dominant factor in the dynamics of relationships of people with EU, by gathering results of all seven variables, we can see that generation Z expressed more positive outlooks on five of them. This effect is present in all the three countries and not just in the member states. Therefore, the answer to my research question if the longevity of the membership plays a role in gen Z's perception of being European is – no, the support for the EU by generation Z is pronounced in all the three countries. However, the generational divide is the strongest in Slovenia, the country that has the longest experience as an EU member. On the other hand, the strong support for the EU's democracy from Montenegro could be explained by the perceived corruption index and optimism about the membership, it seems that the longer the country is in the Union the less satisfied citizens are with the politics, but feel closer in terms of cultural identification.

We also have to take into account that generations benefit differently from the EU citizenship, while most of the generation Z is still high school and university students, generation X is experiencing more dimensions of the political impacts on everyday life for a longer time, this might have made them more cautious about EU politics. However, it is crucial to consider that generations are not homogenous and the EU might mean bring/not bring important life-improving benefits to people of different socioeconomic stratification. For example, the middle classes in both Croatia and Slovenia have more prospects to use the benefits of the EU, they can use educational exchange programs and travel easily. Generation Z in Slovenia shows the most pronounced identification with the EU, if we take into account that GDP per capita is higher there than in Croatia or Montenegro it could be concluded that they have better prospects to use the benefits the EU brings. This optimism seems to water down as people grow up and face different issues that reveal weaknesses of the system, as seen, Slovenian generation X is least happy with the direction things are going and overall democracy. Additionally, as they are longer in the system, they expect more from it and see how it can evolve.

In contrast, the feeling of being European is closer to Slovenians, which is longer in the EU, than in Croatia. Therefore, one must also take the account the historical developments and geopolitical perspective of the region. While Slovenia speculated about its' future in Europe even before the war, Croatia was dealing with Balkan politics for a longer time. The oldest

member state of all three cases also showed the highest trust in institutions, their shortest accession process might be the answer in this case. Long negotiation processes the and slow pace of closing the chapters of Croatia and Montenegro play a role and fatigue impacts on institutions' image can be felt.

6. Conclusion

As shown in the last two chapters, there are quite a few points to address when it comes to perceptions of the EU in the region and among the generations. However, thecross-section of the current attitudes will not give us a filter on which we can predict future social movements or happenings.

What I have found out is that Generation Z in Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia have a better perception of the EU's image as a whole, they are more satisfied with how democracy works, feel closer in terms of shared values, feel more optimistic about the direction EU's headed to and have a stronger perception of common citizenship (Montenegro excluded in some cases: more decision making power, shared values, EU citizenship). On the other hand, they are less willing to give more decision-making power to the European institutions than generation X. Could this be a call for a more regional division of power or skepticism? Nevertheless, in general, it seems that generation Z across all of the three countries is more ready to identify with ''being European''.

On a state level, Slovenians are more ready to give additional powers to the EU and have more trust in institutions than the other two nationalities. While they feel more like citizens of the EU, Croatians feel member states are closer in terms of shared values. Montenegrins are the most satisfied with the democracy in the Union, this can be explained by the optimism of a candidate state that ''things will eventually change'' in terms of anti-corruption and rule of law once they access the Union. This satisfaction is significantly lower in Croatia and the lowest in Slovenia.

As for the general image, generation Z gave a substantially better score on the scale than generation X in all of the three countries, this image is, as mentioned earlier, constructed through public discourses, experiences, and the presence of the phenomenon in question in the

public eye. Through the period through which gen Z grew up, the Union was a constant topic in all the three countries. Positive attitudes towards the Union in the media and efforts of local politicians to bring countries closer to European integration influenced this image.

While trust in institutions is much lower and distorted in Montenegro, it is the highest in the country that is a member state the longest, Slovenia. In the Montenegrin case, this result might be an effect of long accession negotiations and the prevailing perception of insufficient incentives. The trust in institutions is especially high among the younger generation in Slovenia, while in Montenegro generation Z is much less likely to trust institutions than generation X. Although we notice a small difference in terms of how two member states think about further widening of EU's powers, interestingly, generation Z is less ready to give further powers to the EU, which could maybe be connected to the democracy (dis)satisfaction and feeling that decisions are being made ''far away'' from citizens. There is a more or less constant pattern of Slovenians being closer to the EU values and trust and it does not break when asked about citizenship. Interestingly, Croatians think that member states are closer in terms of shared values than Slovenians do, which breaks the pattern of previous variables that showed that Slovenians identify more closely with the EU. Across all of the last three variables, being: shared values, direction things are going and citizenship generation Z shows more positive attitudes.

We should keep in mind that Eurobarometer data is collected every spring and autumn and that results can differentiate in the future from those, which were collected in the spring of 2021. The results should be followed especially after the Russian invasion of Ukraine as there are assumptions that this event has amplified the extent of identification within the EU and Europe (Gehring, 2021).

After examination of seven different variables of the attitudes towards the Union, generation Z proved to have more positive attitudes concerning five of those in all of the three cases. However, the younger generations are not keen on further political empowerment of the EU. This study does not show a black-white picture, but rather a showcase the complex reality of the future of the EU in the region. It seems that the generation that was born with the EU being present, expect more to be done, while generation X, could be possibly, experiencing fatigue from the long accession periods and the row of crisis that struck the EU in the last several years.

Either way, leaders will have to find a way, how to communicate with younger generations and find solutions to the feeling of ''distant'' to institutions and decision-makers.

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