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## Democratic Values and Political Attitudes of the Macedonian Young People

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### Abstract

The paper gives an insight into attitudes towards democracy of young people in the Republic of Macedonia, in particular their interest in politics and their engagement in civic and political activities. The findings in the paper rely on the data from following research projects: *Virtual and Real Identities in the Republic of Macedonia*, *Youth Trends in the Republic of Macedonia* и *Youth Study Macedonia 2013*. Throughout the paper, the pursuit of these issues is interlaced with a comparative analytical perspective involving the dimensions comparison of students' attitudes towards democracy by their ethnic belonging and comparison of students' attitudes towards democracy by their gender. The findings point out to certain indifference and disengagement in terms of the political and civic activities of the young people, as well as the fact that there are major differences among the young people pertaining to their interest in politics and their satisfaction with the democratic development of the society is of particular interest and it is worth highlighting.

**Keywords:** democracy, attitudes, civic engagement and political activities.



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## 1. Introduction

Late 20th century can be described as a flourishing period of the democratic societies' development. Before World War II, only 28% of countries worldwide claimed to be democratic. By the end of 20th century, particularly after the fall of the Berlin wall, this figure increased to 62%. Whether the process of the democratization of the societies will continue, depends mostly on the citizens' willingness to be actively involved in political and civic activities, such as: defining issues, policy making, solving public problems, taking responsibility for building communities, and participating in the political and electoral processes.

According to William Damon (2001), the process of the democratization worldwide is not moving in the right direction in particular because of the civic and political disengagement of the young people. Indifference is the greatest in mature democracies, but is apparent in many new democracies or problematic one. Today, as he claims, the general young people's attitude towards democracy is apathy or cynicism.

On the other hand, higher education is recognized as key to delivering the knowledge requirements for political development. It is essential for the design and operation of key political institutions of a modern political system, from the judiciary to the legislative and executive arms of government, the top staffing of the state bureaucracy as well as key institutions of civil society. Moreover, public higher education in democracies is typically mandated to contribute to the development of an enlightened, critically constructive citizenry (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011: 9).

Hence, many researchers, with significant funding from foundations, have focused on the college student demographic to assess the civic and political health of the nation's new generations. Results show a generation that is both disconnected from conventional politics, and yet has much civic potential. There is widespread evidence, along with a general characterization in the media, that college students today are cynical and apathetic about politics. Survey research has also demonstrated that young people are considerably less knowledgeable of and interested in political affairs (Longo and Meyer, 2006: 5).

Having in mind that the Republic of Macedonia is considered to be a young democracy, the discussion pertaining to the relevance and significance of democracy is one of the most contested issues in the political and academic debates in the Republic of Macedonia. The issue of democracy, as well as the issue of the citizens' engagement in political and civic activities, is of a great importance particularly having in mind the fact that a stable democratic regime does not only require well-designed and functioning political institutions and processes to be sustainable and consolidated; it requires democrats (Mattes *et al.* 1999).

The paper gives an insight into attitudes towards democracy of young people in Republic of Macedonia, in particular their interest in politics and their engagement in civic and political activities. The findings in the paper rely on the data from following research projects: *Virtual and Real Identities in the Republic of Macedonia*<sup>1</sup>, *Youth Trends in the Republic of Macedonia*<sup>2</sup> и *Youth Study Macedonia 2013*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The project was conducted by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research – Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. The project was based on the research of political attitudes and identities of the student population in Macedonia, by direct surveying of respondents. The survey was conducted from September 2012 until July 2013. The number of respondents in the survey is representative for the Republic of Macedonia in terms of ethnicity, gender, religion, place of residence and region. It covered a group of 707 respondents. General characteristics of the sample were the following: 707 students from 4 state universities and 2 private universities; 256 male and 451 female students; Macedonians 442, Albanians 239 and others 26; 201 were living in rural and 504 in urban areas. All the respondents were third and fourth year students. The survey was undertaken among the students on the universities in Skopje, Bitola, Shtip and Tetovo.

The paper includes questions that explore the attitudes of young people towards democracy, in particular their interest in politics, their civic and political engagement:

- Are young people interested in politics;
- Where do they get information about politics and do they use news media;
- How often they discuss about politics with their friends;
- Their engagement in civic activities and civic associations;
- Their engagement in political activities i.e. electoral participation;

Throughout this paper, the pursuit of these questions is interlaced with a comparative analytical perspective involving the following dimensions:

- Comparison of the attitudes of young people towards democracy by their ethnic belonging;
- Comparison of the attitudes towards democracy by their gender;

Having in mind that this review focuses on attitudes of young people towards democracy, the notions of *democracy*, is to be further defined and elaborated on.

## 2. Understanding Democracy

'Democracy' is one of the most used and arguable concepts in more recent history, particularly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Definitions and operationalization of this concept vary quite a bit. Hence, even though there is no universally accepted definition, there are two approaches in defining democracy: 'minimal' and 'maximal'. The first one focuses on the importance of 'means', that is, procedures such as fair elections, respect for human rights, and universal suffrage. In contrast, maximal definitions include not only democratic procedures but also 'ends', or outputs (such as economic equality and social services) (Baviskar and Malone, 2004: 4).

Democracy in political theory is described as a political philosophy, but also as a form of governing where the governing power lies in the hands of people, and it may be exercised either in an immediate (direct democracy) or intermediate manner (indirect democracy), i.e. according to the principle of presentation and representation of interests realized by virtue of free and fair elections. Modern or contemporary interpretation of democracy is connected with the philosophical principle of equal rights. Hence, the notion of democracy is occasionally used in the context of liberal democracy, which on the other hand implies existence of certain additional elements, such as political pluralism, equality before the law, civil freedoms and civil rights, i.e. all the agents in a civil society. Furthermore, these elements represent a parameter regarding the level of democracy within societies (Atanasov and Cvetanova, 2013: 27).

<sup>2</sup> The survey research was conducted by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research – Skopje and Agency for Youth and Sport in the period between October and December 2014. This survey research (vis-à-vis) was conducted covering a representative sample of the young population (aged 15 to 29). The final number of respondents in the survey research was 1190.

<sup>3</sup> The survey research was conducted by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research – Skopje and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in the period between September and November 2013. A combined approach employing both quantity and quality techniques and procedures was implemented in the course of the survey research. This survey research (vis-à-vis) was conducted covering a representative sample of the young population, as well as semi-structured in-depth interviews with both typical and atypical representatives of the young population. The final number of respondents was 1026, whereas the surveyed population was aged 15 to 29.

Different scholars define democracy in different ways. Definitions of democracy often are influenced by the aspect they emphasize. For example: some of the definitions focus on the *institutions and procedures of democratic governance*, others on *political aspect* i.e. freedom and liberties, and third take into account the *social dimension* i.e. social benefits.

These three broad alternatives—institutions and procedures, freedom and liberties, and social benefits—constitute the primary substantive choices in defining democracy. Certainly people will offer other responses if asked to define democracy spontaneously. Yet the extent to which democracy is defined in terms of these three broad choices provides a framework to assess the high levels of public support for democracy in recent public-opinion surveys and the implications of these democratic aspirations. Each alternative has different implications for the interpretation of public opinion toward democracy and the principles that guide the democratization process (Dalton, Shin, and Jou, 2007: 145).

Despite many definitions and different approaches in defining democracy, political theory highlights three pillars that underpin democracy: transparency, accountability and right to participate. Therefore, citizen participation – as one of the three pillars - is regarded widely as vital to democracy. The classic Kantian distinction between active and passive citizens implies that only those citizens who in one way or another actively participate in decision-making are indeed different from the subjects of a nondemocratic polity (Weinrib, 2008).

### 3. Republic of Macedonia

Republic of Macedonia, as a relatively young democratic country, gained its independence in the so-called '*third wave of democratization*', i.e. in the year 1991 following the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Regarding the political pattern, Macedonia relies upon parliamentary democracy with an executive government elected by a unicameral parliament. The Assembly (parliament) is made up of 123 seats and the members are elected every four years. The role of the President of the Republic is mostly ceremonial and the real /executive power rests in the hands of the Government which makes the prime minister the most politically powerful person in the country. Various political indicators of democracy and good governance indicate that the democratisation of the society is an ongoing process or, in other words, the society is still in a process of democratic transition<sup>4</sup>.

The country is located in the central Balkan Peninsula in Southeast Europe, with a total population of around 2 million. A quarter of the population (approximately 500,000) is located in the biggest city and capital, Skopje. Most residents are concentrated in the urban areas i.e. in moderately sized cities with a population of more than 20, 000.

According to the ethnic composition of the population, Macedonian society is regarded as a multiethnic, multicultural and multiconfessional. Despite the Macedonian majority (66, 6%) there are other ethnic communities living on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia: Albanian ethnic community (22, 7%), Turkish (4, 0%), Serbian (2, 1%), Vlachs (0, 4%) and others (1, 9%). Regarding the religious affiliation, 67% of the population belongs to the Christian- orthodox religion and 30% to Islam.

<sup>4</sup> According to Linz and Stepan (1996) a democratic transition is complete when a sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government de facto has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial powers generated by the new democracy does not have to share the power with the other bodies de jure.

All of these ethnic communities living in the Republic of Macedonia, including the Macedonian majority, have their own cultures created in accordance with the cultural history of the group they belong to. They have different cultural and value systems, different patterns of social life, language, religion, tradition and customs. The overlapping of the divisions among the ethnic communities - primarily due to their different ethnic belonging, religious affiliation and usage of different language - makes the Macedonian society even more fragile. This division is particularly accentuated between the Macedonian majority and the biggest ethnic community – Albanian (Cvetanova, 2014: 35).

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the Republic of Macedonia was 5110 \$/per capita (2013)<sup>5</sup>. The unemployment rate in Macedonia amounts to 27, 6% (as per the fourth quarter of 2014)<sup>6</sup>, whereas in the case of the youngest population aged 15 to 24 it amounts to 50, 4%. According to the researchers' estimations the unemployment rate among the young population aged 15 to 29<sup>7</sup> amounts to 45, 5% (Jakimovski, 2014:22)

The total number of young people in Macedonia aged 15 to 29 is 457 477<sup>8</sup> or 23% of the total population. According to the data of the State Statistical Office obtained on the basis of received reports, there were 57 746 enrolled students in the Republic of Macedonia in the academic year 2013/2014, an increase of 1.5% compared to the academic year 2012/2013. The number of enrolled female students was 31 450 or 54.5%. The majority of students, 88.5%, were enrolled in public tertiary institutions, while 11.1% were enrolled in private tertiary institutions.

#### 4. Interest in Politics

According to Oxford Dictionary of Politics, political participation refers to taking part in politics. Although political discussion does not fit in with this classic definition of political participation, yet it is an important feature of democratic citizenship. Political discussion can also mean an attempt to influence given government policy or the selection of government leaders who create government policies. When it comes to contemporary democratic systems, citizens are allowed to discuss their problems freely, express and voice their dissatisfaction and complaints and request changes. (Atanasov, Cvetanova, 2013: 33).

Pursuant to the survey research *'Youth Trends in the Republic of Macedonia'*, the largest number of respondents stated that they were partly interested in politics (51, 6%), whereas 8, 8% stated that they were very interested in politics. Approximately 40% of the respondents stated that they were not interested in politics at all (Cekic, 2014: 62-64).

Even though the direction is the same, the focal point of the survey research *'Real and Virtual Identities'* is students. Certain deviations are noticeable in this survey research, i.e. the interest in political issues is evident in a greater number of respondents. Hence, 18,2% of the students responded that they were very interested in politics, 32,9% responded that they were not interested in this topic at all, whereas the other half of students responded that they were partly interested in politics (48,7%). Male students are more interested in politics compared to female students, and the same applies to the members of the Albanian ethnic group as opposed to the Macedonian ethnic group. In this context, 28, 6% of male students and 12, 2% of female students stated that they were very interested in politics, whereas the percentage of

<sup>5</sup> [http://kushnirs.org/macroeconomics/gdp/gdp\\_macedonia.html](http://kushnirs.org/macroeconomics/gdp/gdp_macedonia.html) (30.03.2015)

<sup>6</sup> State Statistical Office, Labour Market, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2015/2.1.15.04.pdf> (20.04 2015)

<sup>7</sup> The State Statistical Office does not keep this category as a special one, and therefore the researchers' estimations have been taken as relevant ones

<sup>8</sup> Official data from the State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia and the latest estimations of the population dated 31.12.2013 were used taking into account that the latest census of the population was conducted in the year 2002.



the response 'I am partly interested' is almost identical in the case of the two groups. A lack of interest in politics among female students could be interpreted in the light of a generally negative attitude to women and their representation and participation in politics due to the traditional and conservative values which are typical for the cultural background of the people living in Macedonia. This negative attitude is reflected in the number of women in politics which is significantly lower compared to the number of men, particularly in terms of the executive and local government (Cvetanova, Naumovska, 2014: 26).

With reference to ethnicity, 26,4% of students from the Albanian ethnic group stated that they were very interested in politics as opposed to only 14,1% of the Macedonians who produced the same response.

The increased interest in politics among the students that belong to the Albanian ethnic community, as opposed to Macedonians, is probably due to the fact that they consider the implementation of the *Ohrid Framework Agreement*, i.e. the resolving of ethnic issues as an open and still ongoing process (Cvetanova, Naumovska, 2014: 25).

#### 4.1 Where do they get information about politics and do they use news media?

Despite the fact that the access to the Internet and the ever more increased use of social networks have dominated as a starting point in obtaining information, the survey research indicates that in the Republic of Macedonia television still plays a pivotal role when it comes to obtaining information about political issues. In accordance with the data derived from the survey research '*Youth Study Macedonia 2013*', 87, 9% of the young people obtain information about political issues from the television, 75, 9% from the Internet, followed by 52, 7% who obtain information from discussions with their friends, 52, 2% from discussions with family members, 42, 4% who use the newspapers and 27, 2% who use the radio as a source of information. The presented findings point out to the fact that the young use different sources of information when building their attitudes and viewpoints (Topuzovska Latkovikj et al. 2013: 97).

The findings from the survey research '*Youth Trends in the Republic of Macedonia*' gives us a comprehensive image of the interest in politics among the young people compared to other day-to-day topics. The findings indicated that the first most searched topic in media for almost half of the young (46,5%) was information regarding celebrities, music and/or film, followed by information about political or economic affairs (16,2%), information pertaining to sports events and athletes (15,5%) and topics pertaining to culture (13,4%). The lowest number of respondents (6, 1%) search the media for information regarding crime and corruption. Interest in political and economic affairs as the first most searched content is unsurprisingly higher among the oldest respondents (aged 25 to 29, represented by 27, 7%), and lowest among the youngest (aged 15 to 19, represented by 4, 5%). As for ethnicity, there is a significant difference, i.e. information pertaining to economic and political affairs is twice more searched as a primary topic among the Albanian respondents (25, 2%) compared to the Macedonian respondents (11%) (Babunski, 2014: 72, 73).

#### 4.2 How often young people discuss about politics with their friends?

An indicator that highlights the genuine interest and the role that politics plays in the day-to-day life of the young people is the response to the question of how often they discuss politics with their friends. In compliance with the data derived from the survey research '*Real and Virtual Identities*', the responses provided were as follow: very often 17, 8%, sometimes 61, 6% and never 19, 8%. Nonetheless, the information obtained by interrelation of the questions "*Are you interested in politics?*" and "*How often do you discuss politics with your friends?*" and the cross tabulation is that 47, 8% of the respondents who are

not interested in politics sometimes discuss these topics with their friends. (Cvetanova, Naumovska, 2014: 27).

With reference to the interest in politics, the results indicate that the largest number of respondents are partly interested in these issues, but at the same time they indicate that almost one half of the respondents discuss politics even though they are not interested in it. This may be due to the ongoing process of democratic transition and the continual changes in each and every segment of social life. This is further conditioned by the high rate of unemployment which is particularly pronounced in the case of the young population. These issues are included in the programs and policies of any government and their regulation is crucial for the young.

### 4.3 Civic and Political Engagement

Citizen engagement may be defined as a process in which ordinary people take part – whether on a voluntary or obligatory basis and whether acting alone or as part of a group – with the goal of influencing a decision involving significant choices that will affect their community. Such engagement may or may not take place within an institutional framework, and it may be organized either by members of civil society (for example, through class action, demonstrations, citizens' committees, etc.) or by decision-makers (for example, through referendums, parliamentary commissions and mediation (André, 2010). As Longo and Meyer (2006) claim, the strength of any democratic society lies in an actively engaged citizenry.

#### 4.3.1 Civic Engagement

The study '*Youth Trends in the Republic of Macedonia*' elaborates on the civic engagement of young people in Macedonia, as within the educational institutions, and in a broader social context. According to the collected data, 43, 6% of the young involved in the educational process take part in setting requirements within the school/university. A slightly lower percentage of respondents (33%) at least sometimes resort to protests that have not been announced, but which they regard as fair.

As far as the civic engagement of young people in a wider social context is concerned (beyond the educational institutions), somewhat different results have been obtained – a lower engagement on the part of the young has been registered. Namely, 29,4% of the young take part in setting requirements, whereas 34,2% of the young have at least once signed a petition or have resorted to certain previously announced protests. A slightly lower percentage of respondents (27, 9%) at least sometimes resort to protests that have not been announced, but which they regard as fair (Cekic, 2014: 67, 68).

Although non-political in its nature, participation in socially useful work i.e. in non-profit services for the benefit of the community is another fundamental aspect of democratic society and democratic citizenship. Participation in civic associations is not just important only because it develops civic skills, but also because it is critical to establishing social and political networks that are so important for political activity. Associating with other citizens about any interest on any basis increases the probability of establishing contact with government and for active involvement in politics. As Nie and Hillygus (2001) claim, even members of a garden club can be drawn into politics because the government controls what seeds can be grown and what fertilizers should be used.

Hence, the findings in terms of youth engagement in civic associations in Macedonia, presented in the study '*Youth Trends in the Republic of Macedonia*', may even be regarded pessimistic. Namely, a high percentage of young people, i.e. 53, 8% are not members of any organization. As for those that are engaged (multiple choice answers allowed), the highest percentage of engagement is evident in sports/recreation organizations (11, 9%), humanitarian organizations (11, 7%), student/high school organizations



(11%), cultural/arts organizations (9, 4%), youth organizations (9, 3%), political parties (9, 3%), religious organizations (6%) and human rights organizations (5, 8%) (Cekic, 2014: 67, 68).

#### 4.3.2 Political Engagement

One of the crucial indicators pertaining to the engagement of the young people in politics is the use of the democratic right to vote. Voting represents a higher level of political activity compared to the previously processed ones and is the most immediate way to assess the attitude of the young towards politics (for example whether it is a case of apathy, etc.). Unfortunately, there is no information about voter turnout in Macedonia with reference to age groups, which further implies that only research-based data may be used as indicators of this phenomenon.

According to the findings presented in '*Youth Study Macedonia 2013*', 41% of the young responded that they have always voted at elections, whereas 31% responded that they have voted several times. Having in mind that 19% of the respondents are not eligible to vote, only 7% of the young people responded that they have never voted. Hence, the authors of this study are of the opinion that there are other reasons that motivate the young people to go out and vote having in mind that the interest in politics on the part of the young is noticeably lower. In conformity with the data obtained, it is the ethnic Macedonians that most often vote in elections, whereas the ethnic Albanians and members of the smaller communities more seldom vote. The difference among ethnic communities grouped in such a way is approximately 10%. (Topuzovska Latkovikj et al. 2013).

As far as the same question is concerned, there are minor discrepancies among the data obtained from the survey research '*Youth Trends in the Republic of Macedonia*' which may be due to the provided modalities<sup>9</sup>. According to this survey research, approximately one half of the respondents almost always vote (49, 8%), 22, 7% sometimes use their right to vote, and only 7, 3% of the respondents stated that they have never voted (having in mind that the target group of the survey research was young people between 15 and 29 years of age, 20, 2% are not eligible to vote). Excluding the young people who are not eligible to vote, it could be inferred that 58% of the young who are eligible to vote have almost always voted, whereas 28, 5% have voted sometimes (Cekic: 2014: 64, 65).

The existence of **trust towards political leaders and political parties**, in most cases is an indicator of the attitude of young people towards politics and occasionally it affects their decision about more pro-active engagement in activities with reference to the political processes in any society.

Two questions from the survey research '*Youth Study Macedonia 2013*' (2013: 27, 97, 98) illustrate the young people's trust towards the political leaders and political parties.

By employing the Likert scale ranging from 1 to 10 (1 being 'I do not trust them at all', and 10 being 'I trust them completely') and referring to 10 social groups and individuals, the young people expressed their level of trust. The trust they have towards the political leaders and towards the people with different political convictions is the lowest. As far as the political leaders are concerned, the mean value is 3, 18, whereas the level of trust towards people with different political convictions is characterized by a mean value of 4, 29, which may be a sole indicator of the existence of a politicized and a divided society.

Additionally, the figures regarding the trust towards the political parties are the lowest compared to all other provided answers (a total of 16), i.e. compared to all indicated public and private institutions, as well as international organizations, media, nongovernmental organizations, religious organizations, trade

<sup>9</sup> Namely, the answer 'I always vote' was provided as a first answer in the first study research, whereas the answer 'I almost always vote' was provided as first answer in the second survey research.

unions and banks. On a scale from 1 to 4 (1 being 'I do not trust them at all' and 4 being 'I trust them very much'), the mean value of political parties is 1, 95.

On the basis of the presented findings and pertaining to the level of trust that the young people have towards the political leaders and political parties it may be inferred that it is on a rather low level. The survey research highlights that the lack of trust or the low level of trust towards these political entities results in apathy among citizens. Nevertheless, despite the low level of trust towards political leaders and political parties, apathy is non-existent among the Macedonian young people.

## 5. Young People and Macedonian Society

Taking into account that the Macedonian society is still regarded as a society in democratic transition, one of the key elements of consideration regarding the awareness towards democracy of the young people in Macedonia is their perception of the democratic development. In this sense, the following attitudes and viewpoints were taken into consideration: their satisfaction with reference to democratic development of the Macedonian society; their willingness to stay or leave the country and the type of society they would like to live in.

According to *Youth Study Macedonia 2013*, as far as the satisfaction with reference to democratic development of the Macedonian society is concerned, the mean value of answers from the overall sample is  $M=2,74$  (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 denotes very disappointed, whereas 5 denotes very satisfied). Girls are more satisfied with the democratic development ( $M=2,85$ ) as opposed to boys ( $M=2,63$ ) and the same applies to the members of the Albanian ethnic community ( $M=2,54$ ) as opposed to the members of the Macedonian ethnic community ( $M=2,39$ ). There is a statistically significant difference in both presented cases (T. Latkovikj et al. 2013: 112). The fact that the members of the Albanian ethnic community are more satisfied with the democratic development in the Republic of Macedonia compared to the Macedonians is probably due to the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement<sup>10</sup>, in particular concessions made<sup>11</sup>, and the implemented affirmative measures<sup>12</sup> for the benefit of the ethnic communities. This attitude of young Albanians fully corresponds with the attitude of the wider Albanian community. Namely, members of the Albanian ethnic community are of the opinion that with the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, Macedonia finally acquired the model of political system thus enabling Albanians to earn their well-deserved status in society (Cvetanova, 2014: 37).

Probably, due to the fact that young Albanian respondents are more satisfied with the democratic development in the Republic of Macedonia, they – in much higher percentage compared to young Macedonians – would like to remain to live in the country.

<sup>10</sup> The Ohrid Framework Agreement ended the seven-month armed conflict between the Albanian Paramilitary Formation called National Liberation Army and Macedonian security forces in 2001. The objective of the Agreement was to meet the requirements on the part of the Albanian ethnic community in Macedonia, but at the same time for the purpose of preserving the unitary character of the state. The Document incorporated both general principles and suggestions for solving concrete interethnic problems, such as: decentralization, non-discrimination in public service, special parliamentary procedures for changing the constitution and other major laws, education and language matters, as well as the expression of identity. The Agreement was implemented in the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>11</sup> It primarily refers to the use of languages of the ethnic communities. According to the Ohrid Framework Agreement the official language throughout Macedonia and in the international relations of Macedonia is the Macedonian language. But - as stated in the Agreement - with respect to local self-government, in municipalities where a community comprises at least 20 percent of the population of the municipality, the language of that community will be used as an official language in addition to Macedonian. With respect to languages spoken by less than 20 percent of the population of the municipality, the local authorities will decide democratically on their use in public bodies.

<sup>12</sup> Appropriate and fair representation of the members of the ethnic communities in the public and state administration.

But, first of all, we should consider the overall data from *Youth Study Macedonia 2013* regarding this issue. Namely, one half of the respondents, i.e. 53% of the young people, is thinking of (31%) or has already decided (22%) to leave Macedonia. The most desired destination among the young people is the Western Europe countries. This destination is opted for by 55% of the respondents, followed by the USA and/or Canada, opted for by 25%. Financial reasons are the key motive for leaving the country of origin, as stated by 65% of the young people. One third of the young people (33%) who are thinking of leaving the country, are planning to remain there forever (Topuzovska Latkovikj et al. 2013: 56).

As before mentioned, there are noticeably different migration trends among the young Macedonian and Albanian people. A total of 55% of the surveyed young Macedonians are planning to leave the country, as opposed to 57% of the members of the Albanian ethnic community that are not thinking of leaving the country and going abroad. This trend is further acknowledged by the survey research *Real and Virtual Identities*.

As evident from the enclosed table, the percentage of respondents that agree with the statement 'I will remain to live in Macedonia' is greater among the Albanian students (**Table 1**).

**Table 1.** "I will remain to live in Macedonia"

	I fully agree	I partly agree	I do not agree	No answer
<b>Macedonians</b>	52 11,8%	130 29,5%	179 40,7%	79 18%
<b>Albanians</b>	70 30,4%	50 21,7%	57 24,8%	53 23%
<b>Total</b>	126 18,1%	184 26,4%	248 35,6%	138 19,8%

In 2001 - as a result of the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement a new political pattern was inaugurated in Macedonia. Hence, it is of great importance to take into consideration the attitudes of young people towards the type of society (in terms of political pattern) they would like to live in. According to the collected data from the research project *Real and Virtual Identities*, 45, 7% of the respondents opted for civil, 39, 5% for multicultural and 2, and 4% opted for bi-ethnic. The greatest statistically relevant difference is evident when this question is analyzed from the aspect of ethnicity.

It may be inferred that the percentage of respondents that are in favour of the civil society is higher among the Macedonian students, whereas the percentage of respondents that are in favour of the multicultural society is higher among the Albanian students (**Figure 1**).

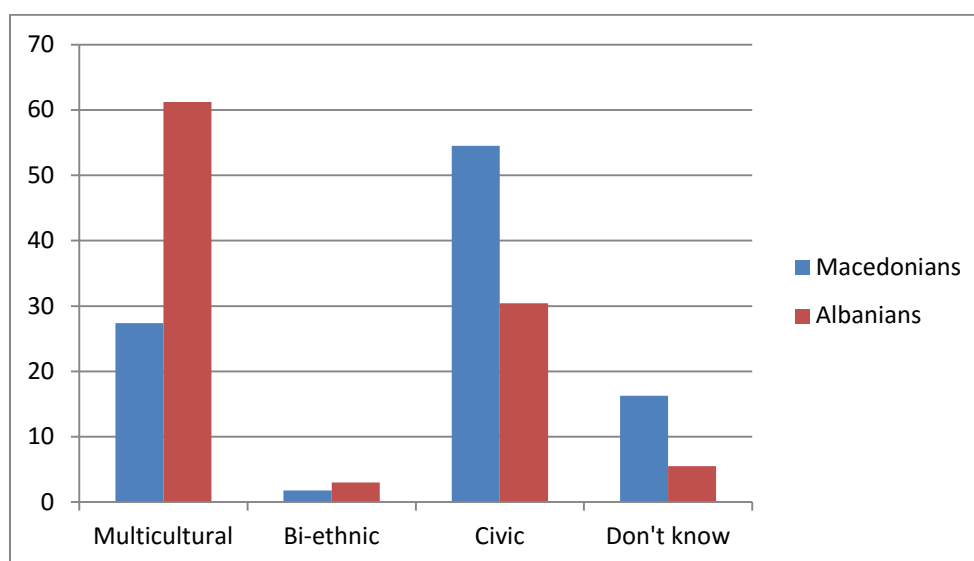


Figure 1. "What type of society would you like to live in?" (Ethnic Variable)

It is evident that the division among the ethnic communities in Macedonia - particularly accentuated between the Macedonian majority and the biggest ethnic community (Albanian) – is reflected in different views and opinions regarding the concept of the political pattern. In other words, young Albanians prefer multicultural society rather than civil one. It should be emphasized that the newly inaugurated political pattern shifted the focal point from individual to collective rights (the ethnic ones) and on behalf of the larger communities, thus enabling the individual to realize his/her rights (economic, social, cultural, political) through the ethnic community they belong to. This political pattern inevitably leads to a sheer model of ethnic pluralism with elements of consociational democracy instead to the declared multicultural endeavours (Cvetanova, 2007: 153, 2014: 37).

## 6. Conclusions

The democratization of the Macedonian society – as a society in democratic transition – is largely dependent on the democratic awareness of its citizens and their political viewpoints and values. In this context, the willingness of the citizens and of the young people in particular is of pivotal importance with reference to their engagement and participation in all political and civic activities within the society.

Nonetheless, the findings from the conducted research in Macedonia point out to certain indifference and disengagement in terms of the political and civic activities of the young people.

The fact that there are major differences among the young people pertaining to their interest in politics and their satisfaction with the democratic development of the society is of particular interest and it is worth highlighting. This fact is even more remarkable from the aspect of their ethnicity.

Namely, the young people of Albanian ethnicity, as opposed to the young Macedonians, are more interested, discuss politics more and are consequently much more informed about the current political affairs in the Republic of Macedonia. This is probably due to the fact that the Albanian ethnic community in Macedonia is of the opinion that the ethnic issues (minority and cultural rights) have not been fully realized, and hence their interest in the current political affairs in the country is greater. The different viewpoints and

visions concerning the political structure further prove this. The young Macedonians, who constitute a majority, would like the Macedonian society to be a civic, as opposed to the young Albanians who envisage it as a multicultural.

On the other hand, certain contradiction has been ascertained regarding the level of satisfaction with the democratic development of the society in the case of the young Albanians. Compared to the other ethnic communities, including the Macedonian majority, the young Albanians are most satisfied with the democratic development of the society. Hence, the percentage of respondents who stated that they would not like to leave the country and would like to remain in Macedonia for ever is the highest among the young Albanians.

As for the engagement in civic associations, there are no differences pertaining to ethnicity. The generally weak engagement of the young people in Macedonia, which is ultimately pessimistic, indicates non-existence of awareness regarding the relevance and significance of such engagement. Namely, participation in civic associations is not just important because it develops civic skills, but also because it is critical to establishing social and political networks that are so important for political activity. Associating with other citizens about any interest on any basis increases the probability of establishing contact with government and for active involvement in politics.

Regarding the trust towards political leaders and political parties, despite the low level of trust, apathy is non-existent among the Macedonian young people when it comes to their electoral participation. The identification of causes of such a phenomenon is crucial for our society, which is an additional impetus to research this topic further.

Nevertheless, further systematic and comprehensive research of the political viewpoints and values of the young people in Macedonia is needed, in addition to continual observance of their civic and political engagement, taking into account that the successful democratization of any society depends on the level of democratic awareness of its citizens and their willingness to be actively involved in political and civic activities.

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