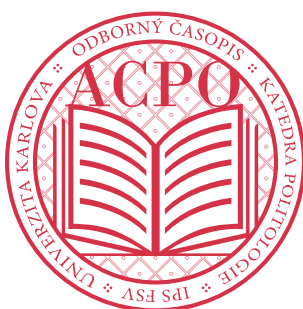


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Participatory Attitudes and Electoral Behavior of Young People: The Cases of Turkey and Bulgaria¹

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Abstract:

This research explores and compares basic indicators regarding the participation of young people in political processes in Turkey and Bulgaria between 2011 and 2016. The data used are derived from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems database. The results of the secondary processing of the quantitative data are comparatively analyzed. This paper shows that the youth of Turkey and Bulgaria had some similarities regarding their attitudes toward civic participation but also significant differences. The economic performances of governments shown to be a factor regarding support for ruling parties. However, in the case of Bulgaria, other factors played more significant roles in this respect during the examined period.

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

Introduction

In recent decades, significant transformations have arisen in people's values (Dalton, Welzel 2014), how they participate in political life (Peters and Tatham 2016), and in their demand to have a voice in the policymaking processes. The process of digitalization in every area of life further altered the behavior of political actors in societies and became decisive for making political choices, especially among young people. As the traditional gap between the generations grew wider in the process of digitalization (Bengtson 1970), politicians became increasingly alienated from the values, beliefs and attitudes of younger generations, to the point where some may gradually become unable to identify their priorities. Under the circumstances of this changing political atmosphere, identifying the political perceptions and attitudes of young people and the association thereof with economic performance is essential in the policymaking processes.

After an era of repeated coups in Turkey and decades of communist rule in Bulgaria, young voters became more active in political processes and therefore of more importance to political parties. In the years between 2013 and 2016, a period of turmoil in Turkish

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politics increased the polarization among voters, especially among the youth. Street protests, the ongoing war in neighboring Syria, and prolonged uncertainty about economic conditions were decisive factors regarding voters' choices in Turkey at the time. During the same period, Bulgaria witnessed a shift in the values of young people. Mass protests with the participation of the youth were staged in Bulgaria to demand more ethics in politics rather than solutions to inveterate socio-economic issues. This study investigates this turbulent political period (2011–2016) in Turkey and Bulgaria and analyzes some selected indicators regarding the political attitudes of young people in these countries.

Several studies thus far have evaluated voting behavior, political activism, or impacts of the economy on electoral choice in Turkey and Bulgaria, as well as the political attitudes of the youth in comparison with the non-youth. Cross-country or cross-regional comparisons were also made (Kentmen-Çin 2015; Kalaycıoğlu 2007a); however, no study in the literature focused in particular on the youth of Turkey and Bulgaria, in a comparative manner. This study aims to compare these neighboring Balkan countries, which have a shared history, have faced similar challenges in the process of establishing functioning democracies, and have significantly large populations of youth. These two countries are also studied here in comparison to other democratic countries. The main research questions of this study are:

1. whether there are similarities and differences in the political attitudes, electoral choices, and political participation patterns of the young people (35 years or younger at the end of 2019) in Turkey and Bulgaria, and
2. whether there are similarities or differences in these subjects as compared to those in other democratic countries.

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

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

Democracy and civic participation: a conceptual framework

Democracy

Defining the notion of democracy always presents a serious challenge. Although most scholars contribute to the modern understanding of democracy, the confusion of Alexis de Tocqueville persists. He argued that if a society does not have a clear understanding of what *democracy* and *democratic governance* are, its confusion will constantly make it prey to demagogues and despots (Sartori 1987: 3). *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought* defines democracy as “an ancient political term, meaning the rule of the people.”

(Miller et al. 1991: 114). Since the 18th century, democracy has been perceived not only as a political regime but as a standard by which regimes are weighed (Miller et al. 1991). In the 1990s and 2000s, methodologies for assessing democratic political systems were developed further. Currently, several indicators measure the quality of democracy in a country.

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

In a similar manner, this paper focuses on the concepts on democratic participation, economic voting, and the electoral attitudes of the youth in Turkey and Bulgaria.

Participation

During the 20th century, as suffrage reached the highest levels in the world, Almond and Verba (1963) predicted that the new world culture would be a culture of participation. Yet more recently, some scholars have observed that people may refrain from taking part in political processes. As Clammer (2016) states, these problems are observed even in the most democratic societies. Based on this phenomenon, some scholars focus on the concept of “post-democracy” (Crouch 2004). According to Crouch (2004), the involvement of people in political processes has tended to decline, and be limited to voting in elections. The author states that the elites “learned how to manage and manipulate” and how “people became disillusioned, bored, and preoccupied” (Crouch 2004: 9). Cook et al. (2007) also identified a drop in the involvement of citizens in voting and other political activities. On the other hand, especially in the 2010s, people from various parts of the world demanded more democracy, rights and involvement. Following a wave of protests, in 2011, *Time* magazine’s person of the year was “The Protester” (Time 2011).

There are a variety of understandings of the concepts “political participation” and “civic engagement.” These concepts are used to cover a wide range of political behaviors, from reading papers to practical political activity (Ekman and Amnå 2012). Many factors affect the level of civic participation in a country. In the case of Turkey, political participation (Bee and Kaya 2017; İnan and Grasso 2017) and voting behavior are affected by factors such as emotions (Erisen 2018), populism (Kaya, Robert and Tecmen 2019; Zengin and Ongur 2019), partisanship (Çakır 2019), or threat perceptions (Erişen and Erdoğan 2019), as discussed in the literature. Some research on Turkey embraced a comparative approach (Çakır 2019) and studied the youth (Kayaoğlu 2017; Yılmaz et al. 2016), as this study does. Relevant factors might also be the institutional design (Skelcher and Torfing 2010), group-based emotions or collective action (Mackie, Devos and Smith, 2000; van Zomeren et al. 2004), the media (Livingston and Markham 2008), and – in the case of Bulgaria – the communist regime (1944–1989). Furthermore, the weak economic development of Bulgaria has had negative impacts on political participation, as in seen in other post-communist democracies (Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2013). In the current research, the concept of political participation is defined as *taking action to affect the formation of elected institutions, taking part in the process of policymaking, and reacting actively to certain matters.*

Economic Voting

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

Youth Participation

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

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

The development of civic participation in Turkey and Bulgaria

Turkey since the beginning of modernization

The first steps toward the modernization of politics in Turkey began with reforms under the Ottoman Empire, in the late 18th century after the accession of Selim III to the throne. After his rule, the first attempt to limit the power of the sultan culminated in the acquiescence of the Charter of Alliance (*Sened-i İttifak*) by Mahmud II in 1808. The Charter was prepared by the grand vizier of Mahmud II, Alemdar Mustafa, and limited the full authority

of the sultan in favor of the notables (*ayan*). On the other hand, the Charter could not be implemented (Ataay 2019). The reforms in social and political life, as well as the liberalization of the economy, continued during the *Tanzimat* period (1839–1876). The Edict of Gülhane (*Tanzimat Fermanı*) gave civil and property rights to Ottoman citizens and limited the power of the state (Gözler 2019). Thereafter, the Reform Edict issued by Abdülmecid I in 1856 granted equality to all Ottoman citizens and gave some extra civil as well as political rights to non-Muslims living in the Empire, which frustrated Muslim subjects and led to some riots, principally in the Arab lands (Zürcher 2010).

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

After World War I and during the War of Independence (1919–1923), a new parliament was established in the new capital, Ankara, in 1920, before the proclamation of the new republic in October 1923. A rebellion took place shortly afterward, which was organized by Sheikh Said (Mumcu 1992). Under the single-party rule of the Republican People's Party (RPP, *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası*) between 1923 and 1946, public unrest in the east of Turkey reoccurred in 1926–1930 and 1937–1938, based on religiosity and Kurdish nationalism.³ In 1930, this time the crowds in Izmir demanded *sharia* rule. The government suppressed all these movements. Under the single-party rule of the RPP, some short-lived political parties were established and quickly gained considerable popular support from the conservative masses, yet they failed to establish a government and were forcibly abolished.

Under the multi-party system, the founder of the republic, the RPP, lost power and was replaced by a government of the newly established Democratic Party (DP), which ruled Turkey until the 1960 military intervention. The military intervened repeatedly in Turkish politics in 1971, 1980, and 1997. Especially in the 1960s and the 1970s, the socialist movement and the left-wing opposition were on the rise among university students. Wide-scale protests took place on the main streets and squares of big cities in Turkey, and bloody clashes occurred between protesting youth and riot police. After the 1980 coup irrevocably crushed the leftist movements, the conservative and the center-right politics were on the rise despite the 1997 military intervention, which was against the rise of “political Islam”. In the 1990s, anti-corruption protests took place nationwide, and some environmentalist resistance movements arose against the foreign mining companies. During these years, the resistance and protest movements of leftist groups and parties were replaced by NGO movements under the influence of Turkey's EU accession process (Yildirim and Gümrükçü 2017).

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

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

Bulgaria since 1878

The participatory attitudes of Bulgarians can be traced back to the Bulgarian National Revival in the 18th and 19th centuries (Hadzhiyski 1997), when the territory was part of the Ottoman Empire and not a sovereign state. However, it was a time of transformations in Bulgarian society, when people started to form community centers, various kinds of civic associations, and guilds. A culture of participation started to emerge, which focused on the creation of some kinds of political institutions of a national state. (Georgiev 2000)

Thus, two groups of transformations marked this period – objective and subjective. The objective transformations are related to the consolidation of the nation, the formation of social structures in the society, and the formation of intellectuals and elites, who later became the leaders of the Bulgarian state. The second group of transformations, the subjective ones, affect the values of the nation. The latter is quite significant for the political culture of the reestablished Bulgarian state and political participation, in particular (Blagoeva 2002).

During the Bulgarian National Revival, a kind of national self-knowledge and national socialization took place (Yankov 1988). The beginning of the transformation coincided with the political crisis in the Ottoman Empire. In the 17th century, Ottoman influence in Europe weakened, and the empire needed new suppliers for the army. The main suppliers at that time were Bulgarian craftsmen, whose importance became so great that, in 1773, autonomy was granted to the craft organizations by the Sultan's Ferman (Hadzhiyski 1997). The development of political participation of Bulgarians was accompanied by alienation from Europe and European values with the impact of Eastern Orthodoxy, and a sense of doom and hopelessness, which made Bulgarians feel put down and harmed by other nations (Georgiev 2000).

In this period, a contradictory self-awareness emerged. On one hand, Bulgarians turned to their heroic past, but on the other – due to the awareness of a certain backwardness, “the Bulgarian inferiority complex” emerged. This led the Bulgarians to endeavor to

grasp the modernity of Western Europe. This process is indicative of the democratic worldview of the Bulgarian National Revival, which found its political materialization after 1878, following independence from Ottoman rule (Blagoeva 2002).

However, Bulgarian independence did not create an environment supporting democracy and active civic participation until the early 20th century (Todorov 2011). The newly established party system was not based on class affiliation or social origins but was mediated by “European liberalism and conservatism, [...] Russian radicalism and revolutionary democracy, [...] the ideas of the national liberation struggle of the Bulgarian people during the Revival.” (Blagoeva 2002: 59). This is a result of the Bulgarian inferiority complex and the need to associate with a foreign “patron”, which can be seen even after 1989.

In the period between 1878 and 1944, political parties in Bulgaria identified themselves with their foreign policy preferences (the division is mostly between Russophiles and Russophobes) (Mitev 1996). According to Georgiev, both “Bulgarian liberalism and conservatism from the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century [...] derive their ideological content from the outside rather than from the inside” (Georgiev 2000: 224–225). During this period, Bulgarian political parties began to use their power to avenge their opponents, when the latter were in opposition. Furthermore, parties failed to unite around any ideological platform, and their supporters and members readily switched from one party to another. This led to the emergence of a negative image of politics and politicians, and the alienation of society from political life. This also hampered the creation of a real functioning civil society in Bulgaria from 1878 until 1944.

The totalitarian government from 1945 to 1989 required a non-participatory type of political culture. The people were asked only to vote in support of the governing party or its partners. The beginning of the democratic transition in 1989 was marked by a very high level of civic activity, but this was mostly chaotic and more demonstrative rather than constructive. After 1989, various historical and political circumstances reinforced the alienation of citizens from politics and led to a reluctance to participate in socio-political affairs. Georgiev (2000) argues that not only the consciousness but also the spirituality of Bulgarians was traumatized by the communist regime, which determines the permanence of alienation.

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

In the following decades, political parties lost many members and electorates because they failed to respond to people’s expectations. Unions became less popular, and NGOs were already perceived as purely commercial in nature, unable to represent the civil society (Todorov 2011). More recently, citizens show their political position either through elections only or through mass protests. On the other hand, in recent years, various movements emerged in Bulgaria demanding specific problems be solved. One example is the protest against high fuel prices, which came together in the SILA movement (Union of Internet Car Lovers). Most of these movements had environmental roots – the civic movement “Save Irakli”, the campaign “For the nature of Bulgaria”, the civic movement against shale

gas production, and the “Movement for Energy Independence”, “Save Pirin”, etc. What is common in these new forms of political demand is that they are organized primarily in social networks. In this sense, the new media and the social networks have expanded the political participation of citizens, especially the youth, and make them reach the government more easily. However, there is still a need for transformations to achieve sustainable development in the social environment (Mihova, Nikolova-Alexieva, and Angelova 2018).

Aim and scope of the study

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

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

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

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

1. The attitudes of the youth in Turkey and Bulgaria are rather similar. Although they live in different political environments, they share close values because of globalization and the impact of social networks in both countries;
2. The youth of so-called full democracies share similar values and opinions;
3. The youth of Turkey and Bulgaria differ from the youth of the full democracies as the latter are more participatory oriented;
4. The economic decline led to more participation in elections and less support for the governing party.

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

Youth, political participation and economic voting: an empirical analysis

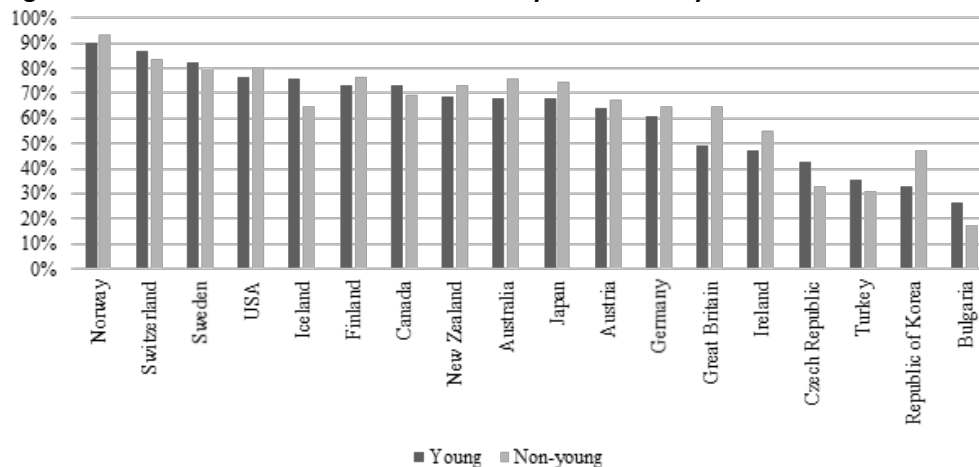
Participation

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

Democracy and readiness for political engagement

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

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction with the democracy in the country⁴



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

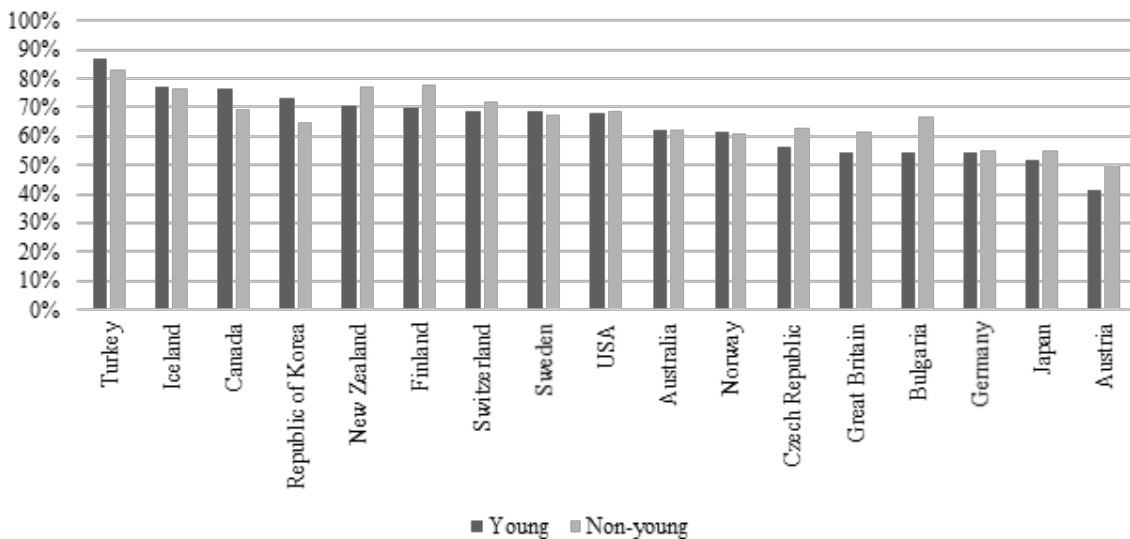
In Turkey, along with the worsening economic indicators in the 2010s, the harsh response by riot police to nationwide protests during the abovementioned June 2013 Gezi protests and increased political polarization experienced thereafter have affected the perception of young people about democracy. The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

Another important factor affecting political participation is whether people believe that it makes a difference who is in power. As regards this indicator, the youth of Turkey

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

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

Figure 2: Importance of who governs⁵

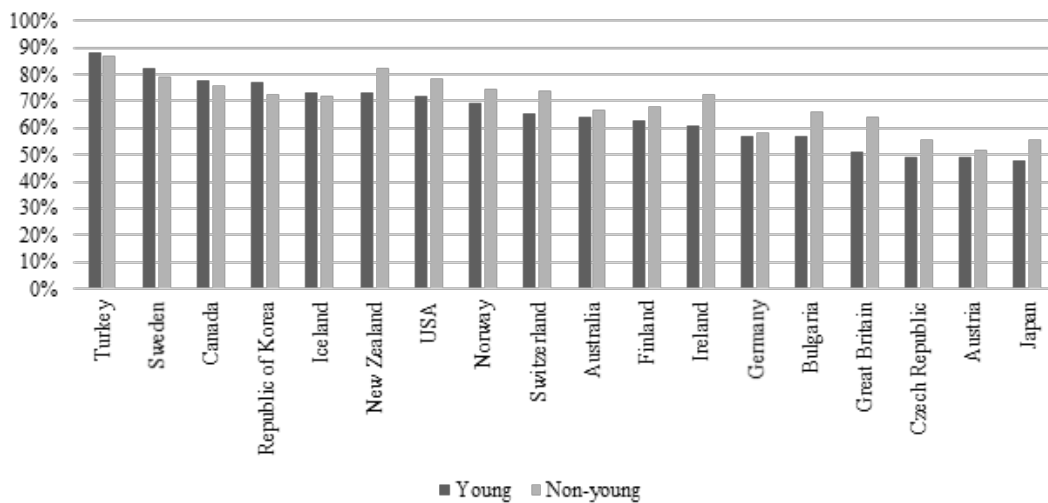


Source: Authors’ calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

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

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

Figure 3: Importance of voting⁶



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

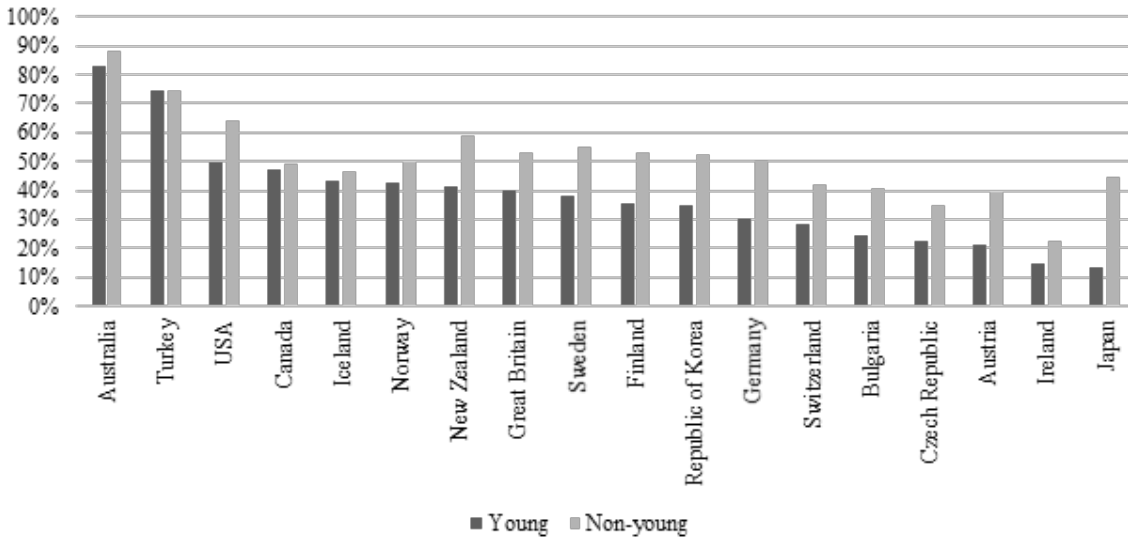
Citizens and political parties

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

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

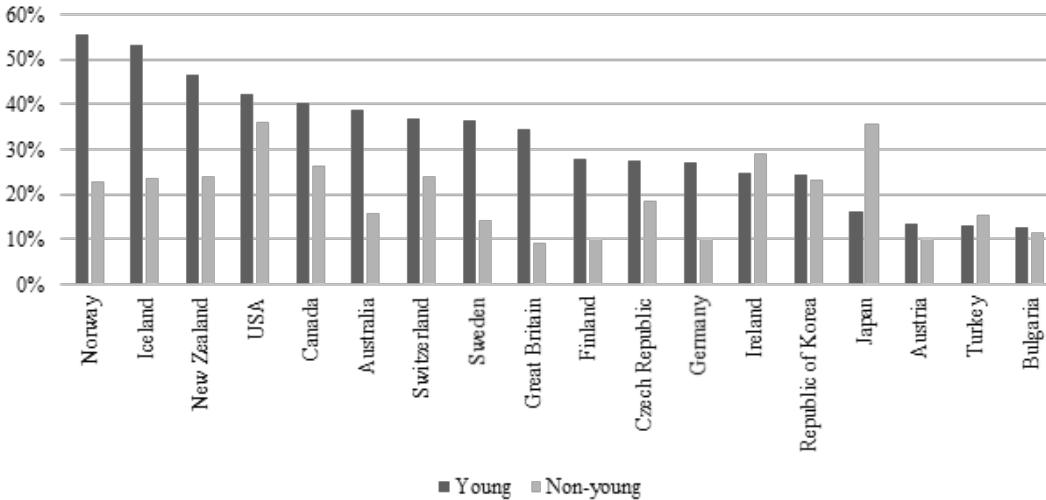
⁶ The respondents were asked where on the scale from 1 to 5 they would place themselves if “1” means that it won’t make any difference who people vote for and “5” means that it can make a big difference who people vote for. The figure displays the results for answers 4+5.

Figure 4: Closeness to a political party⁷



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

Figure 5: Personal contact during the campaign⁸



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

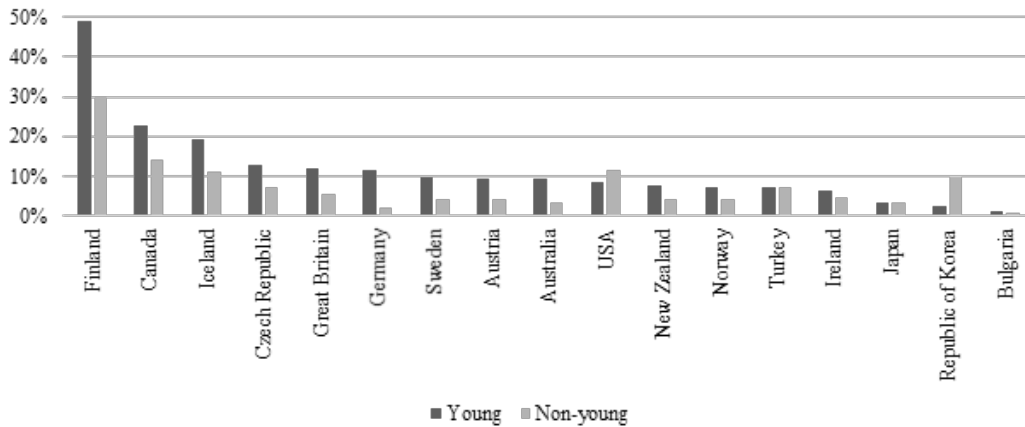
Similar results are observed regarding whether voters signed up to receive online information during the campaign (Figure 6). Bulgaria holds the last position among the analyzed countries with only 1 percent of its youth declaring such activity. In Turkey, 7 percent of the youth signed up for information, a higher percentage than in Ireland, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. In Finland, almost 50 percent of the youth registered for this kind of information. This is because Finland is among the world's most digitalized countries and

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

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

its youth are interested in election campaigns. The following country, Canada, is almost 20 percentage points below, at 23 percent. It is no surprise that in almost every country more young people signed up than non-young to receive information during the campaigns. The two exceptions are the USA and the Republic of Korea. In Turkey and Japan, the shares of young and non-young are almost equal (Figure 6).

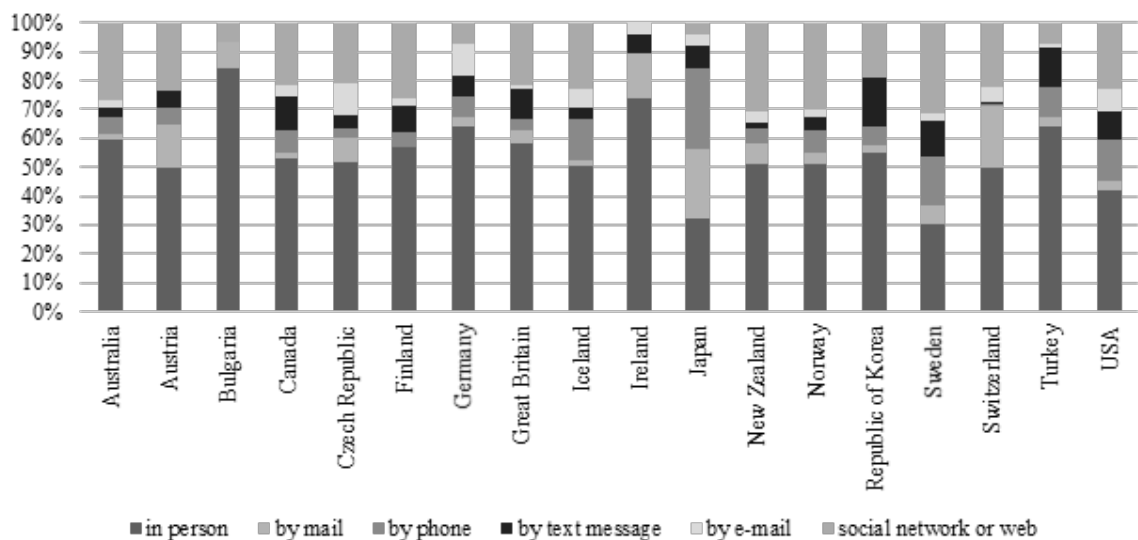
Figure 6: Signing up for online information during the campaign⁹



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

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

Figure 7: Ways of personal contact during the campaign, young people

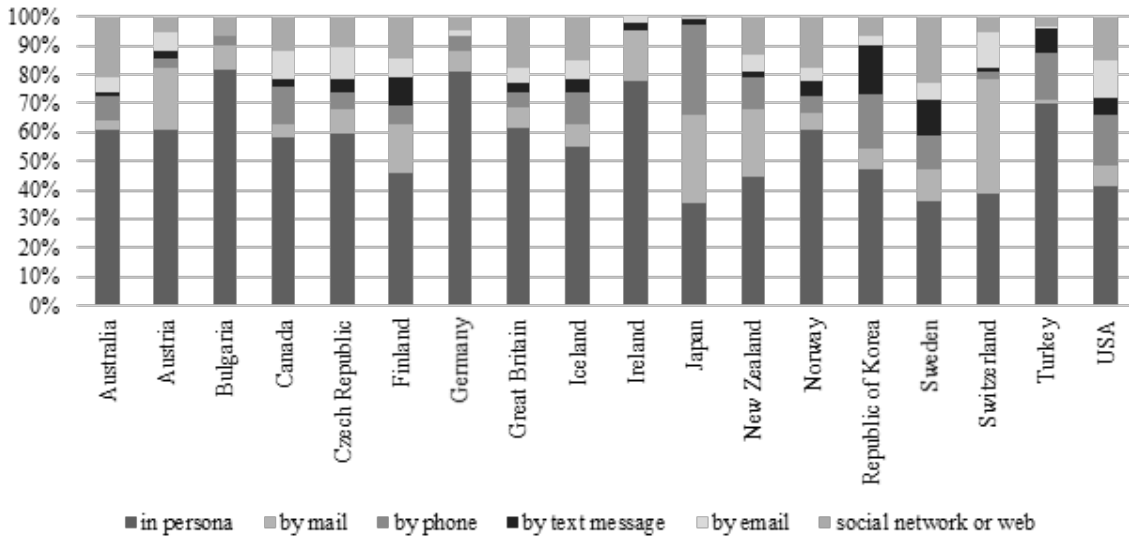


Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

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

Compare these results with those for non-young people, it is clear that there is almost no variance (Figure 8).

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

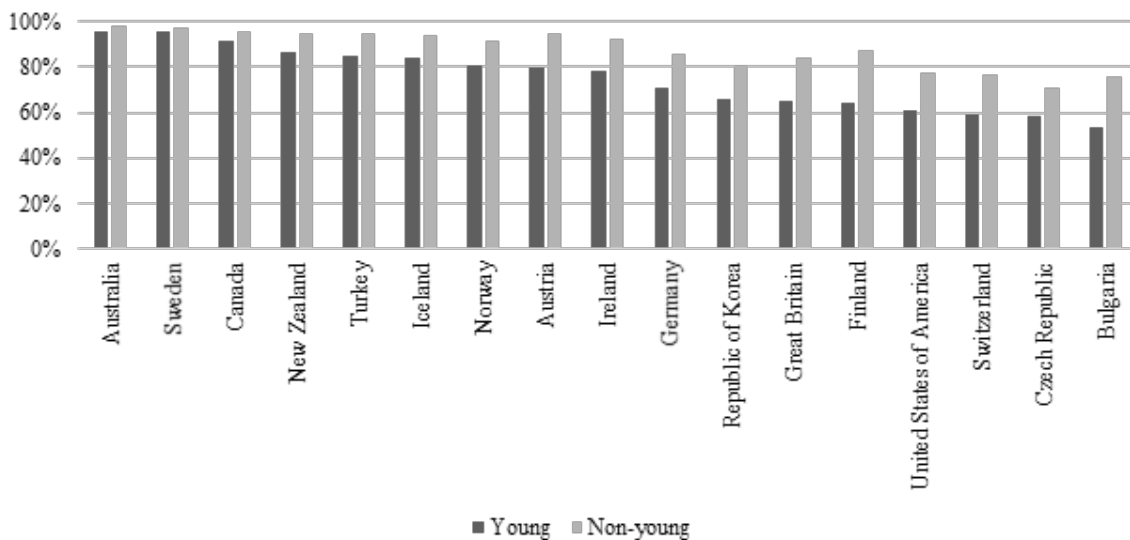


Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

Voting

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

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

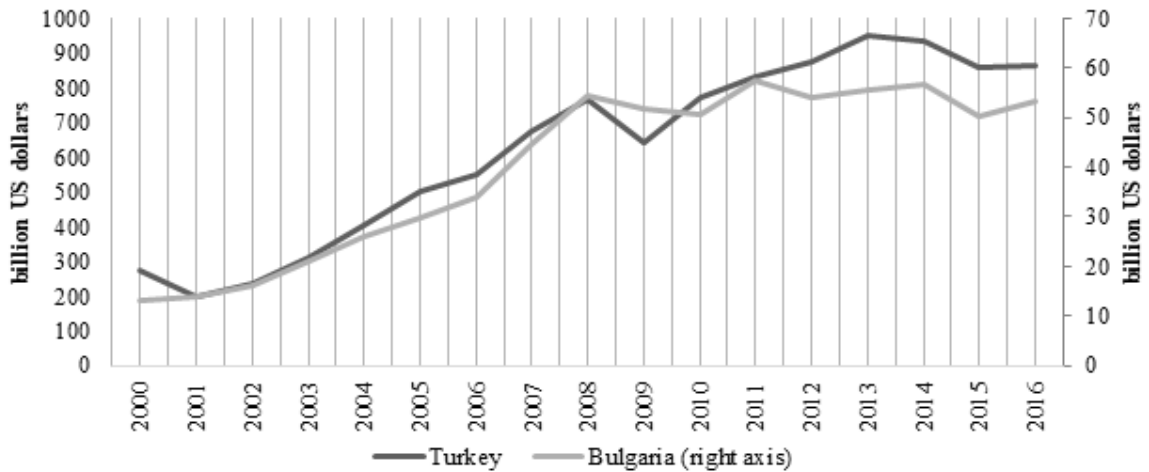


Source: Authors' calculations based on CSES: Module 4.

The impact of the economy on voting behavior

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

Figure 10: Gross domestic product of Turkey and Bulgaria



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

Turkey experienced an economic slowdown in 2014 and 2015, when its GDP shrank by about 100 billion US dollars in two years (Figure 10). In Turkey, this economic slowdown had a significant impact on the ruling party: after the elections of June 2015, it lost its parliamentary majority (Bardakçi 2016; Canyaş, Canyaş and Gümrükçü 2016; Çarkoğlu and Yıldırım 2015; Tol and Hjerbo 2015), which it had enjoyed since 2002.

Similarly, the political environment in Bulgaria since 2008–2009 has become unstable. However, the reason, in this case, was not the global financial downturn. From 2008–2009, Bulgaria had eight governments in total, including three “caretaker” governments. In the winter of 2008–2009, there were protests in Bulgaria against the government of Sergey Stanishev.¹⁰ In fact, on the macro level, the government performed well, because it benefited from the favorable economic environment in Europe. Nevertheless, the government lost the elections in 2009, and the newly established political party of Boyko Borisov (GERB) managed to form a minority government. The Borisov government almost completed its full term in power, but the government resigned at the beginning of 2013 during mass

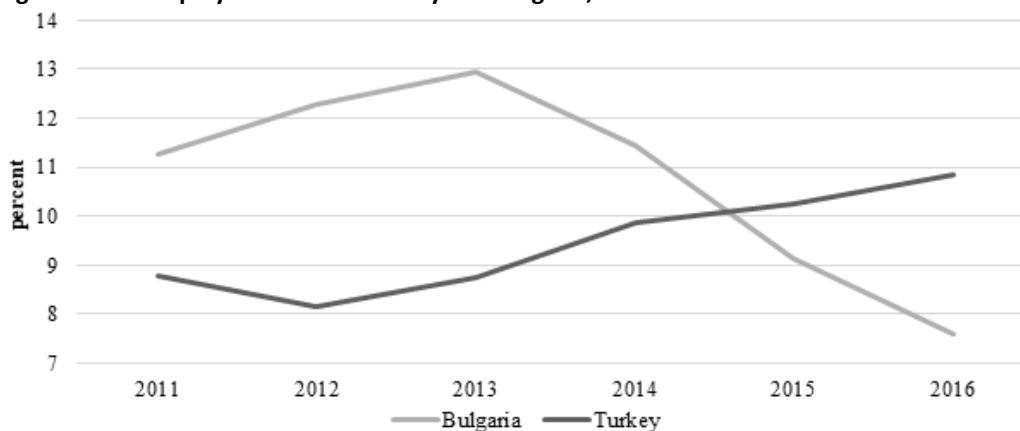
¹⁰ Claudia Ciobanu, BULGARIA: Protests Rise Above Parties, and Against Them. Inter Press Service. January 26, 2009. <http://www.ipsnews.net/2009/01/bulgaria-protests-rise-above-parties-and-against-them/> (accessed January 21, 2020).

protests against it over high electricity prices (Brunwasser and Bilefsky 2013). The latter was not an indicator of economic decline. It was an incidental case, and the Bulgarian electricity distribution system had no similar problems after that. Thus, it could be concluded that as concerns GDP growth, there were other challenges in the political environment in Bulgaria that determined voting behavior.

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

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

Figure 11: Unemployment rate in Turkey and Bulgaria, %

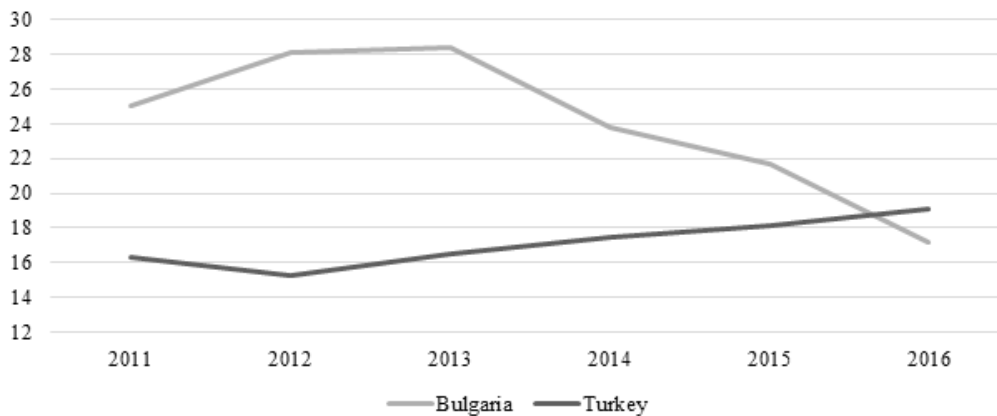


Source: Authors' calculations based on data of the World Bank, 2019.

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

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

Figure 12: Youth unemployment in Turkey and Bulgaria, %

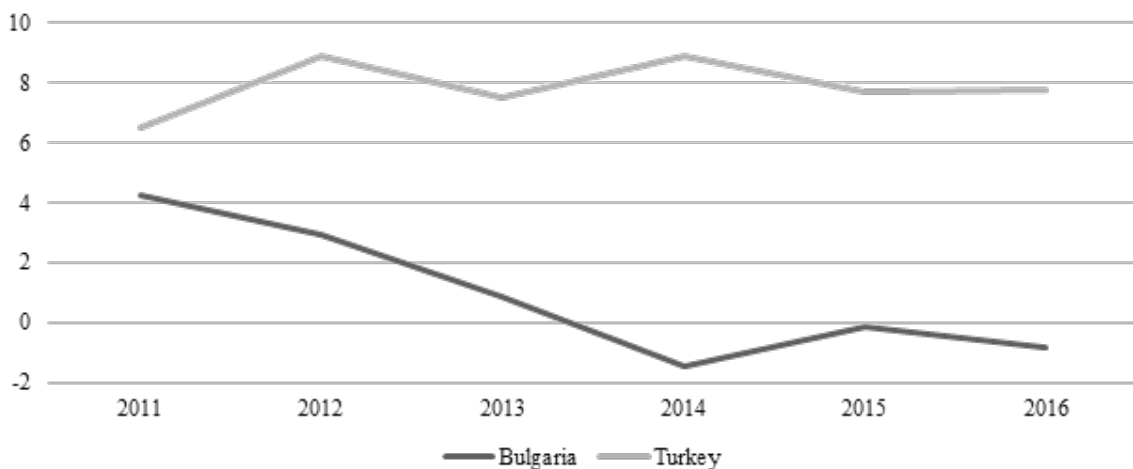


Source: Authors' calculations based on data of the World Bank, 2019.

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

The inflation rate in Bulgaria in the examined period was rather low (Figure 13). The annual percentage change in the CPI was at its lowest level (-1.4 percentage points) in 2014 when the most large-scale protests had continued. This is also the year when there was a government resignation. This situation clearly shows that in the examined period there is no association between economic performance and civic attitudes. Furthermore, the governing party in 2013–2014 lost the 2014 parliamentary elections. Such a result demonstrated that inflation is not relevant to voter preference in Bulgaria.

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



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

Concluding remarks

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

In Turkey, young people mostly think that it is very important who governs the country, and they find voting as a crucial way of expressing their political will. This finds reflection in the high level of participation in the elections by the youth in Turkey. Participation in the elections is especially important for young voters in Turkey, as they find the government responsible for the performance of the economy. The data and the reports support the argument that the slowdown in the Turkish economy resulted in the loss of the parliamentary majority of the ruling party in Turkey. In Bulgaria, while the economic environment generally matters for voters, during the period of the study further significant problems prevailed that were more relevant for the way the youth voted. For both Turkish and Bulgarian youth, getting online information or being contacted personally were factors seemingly irrelevant to their political choices. Unlike in Bulgaria, most of the young population in Turkey feel close to a political party, which impacts their voting behavior to a significant degree.

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

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

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

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