



## CAPITULATION, CONFUSION OR RESISTANCE: SOCIAL CAPITAL AMONG MACEDONIAN HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

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### YOUTH EDUCATIONAL FORUM

The association **Youth Educational Forum** (YEF) is a youth NGO founded in 1999 and focusing on education and human rights. The activities of the organization are carried out through three programs: Informal Education, Research and Education and Youth Policies, and Youth Activism. YEF's programs aim to promote critical thinking, encouraging tolerance and respect for different ideas and attitudes, promoting rule of law and democracy and the development of transparent quality education. Through lectures, trainings, discussions, campaigns, publications and other methods, the members of the YEF contribute to the promotion of democratic principles and youth engagement in building an open society and integrating Macedonia in the European Union.

### REACTOR

Reactor is non-profit think tank founded as a reaction to the need for acquiring independent, accurate and timely data on the conditions in the Republic of Macedonia. It was formed in 2005 with a mission to contribute to the process of creating, monitoring and evaluating public policies on the local and national level. Our multi-disciplinary team of researchers and analysts is dedicated to providing relevant strategic analysis; raising awareness on the importance of certain areas of interest and encouraging the policy making process; as well as facilitating Macedonia's EU integration.

## FOREWORD

Young people are a permanent, necessary and progressive element of all societies, whose role is especially important and useful in the public policy making process. However, the youth in Macedonia are yet to be included in these processes at a satisfactory level. This publication is an attempt to change this and it came about as a result of the cooperation between the *Youth Educational Forum* and *Reactor – Research in Action* in the project “Youth for an Open Society – Local Youth Initiatives”.

Over the past two decades, the Youth Educational Forum has been involved in improving the status of young people in Macedonia, especially through providing informal education for high-school students. On the other hand, Reactor is a think tank for which the youth are a strategic research area. Starting from the need to examine in detail the level of inclusion and civic engagement of the high-school students in Macedonia, we designed a survey that was taken by a representative sample of 3607 high-school students in 13 cities and towns in the country. The results of the study are presented in this publication in two parts:

In the first part you can expect to find the key results of the study. In it we present the objectives of the research and give an overview of the students’ perceptions. In the context of the study, we also provide an analysis of current youth policies in Macedonia, in terms of the role of the Macedonian formal and informal education system in civic activism. Finally, this part contains our recommendations, primarily aimed at the institutions and organizations responsible for creating youth policies or involved in youth activism, civic engagement and volunteer work.

The second part contains the scientific study. This part primarily targets individuals or organizations involved in scientific research and specifically researching the status of the youth. With it we hope to contribute to the scarce scientific literature on this topic in Macedonia. At the same time, we believe that it will be of use to anyone interested in analyzing the data, browsing the complete results of the study and perhaps even going on to use the data and results for further research and analysis.

Finally, we hope this publication will help promote this issue in scientific and political discourse, that students’ opinions will be heard and taken into account by the institutions, and that the recommendations that resulted from this empirical study will be considered and adopted by the relevant actors, local and national authorities, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions.

## ABOUT THE LOCAL YOUTH INITIATIVE

Taking as a starting point the youth’s need to engage as active participants in the development of a democratic, civil and open society, the project “Youth for an Open Society – Local Youth Initiatives” aims to encourage young people take initiative and actively engage in social events on the local and national level. The project came as a response to the need for internal integration of the youth in the Republic of Macedonia and for bridging the gap between them and an open society. It is initiated and funded by the Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia [FOSIM]. The Youth Education Forum [YEF] was included as a partner in the creation of the concept for the project and is responsible for its implementation. The project started in 2008 and was implemented in cooperation with 14 centers in 14 cities and towns in the Republic of

Macedonia: 12 local support centers<sup>1</sup>, Youth Cultural Center – Bitola and the YEF center in Tetovo.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE LYI PROJECT**

Over the past three years, this project has continuously provided promotion of informal education, critical thinking, debates, public speaking, protection of youth rights and carried out youth actions and events. Projects of local significance are carried out biannually by high-school students in the local youth clubs and they serve as a tool for real life application of the skills and knowledge gained at the clubs. These projects aim to identify local youth problems, raise relevant social issues and initiate their resolution through actions, public events and street performances.

More than 1000 young people from 14 cities and town have experienced youth activism, initiated and advocated for the solution of more than 50 youth problems through the organization of public events. Joining the knowledge and experience of the youth and their well-defined youth attitudes undoubtedly paint a new picture of the youth in Macedonia. A picture that signifies progress, criticism and influence as opposed to apathy, passivity and disinterest. This network is a system for channeling youth attitudes on the national level, which is used to position the youth as active actors in the resolution of social problems.

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<sup>1</sup>Regional Advocacy Center – Delchevo, Regional Center for Sustainable Development – Kratovo; Center for Sustainable Development of the Community – Debar; Center for Sustainable Development Porta – Strumica; Regional Center for Sustainable Development – Gevgelija; Center for Local Development – Resen; Center for Local Development Antigone – Negotino; Association for Development and Activism AKVA – Struga; Foundation for Local Community Development – Shtip; Center for Community Development – Kichevo; Foundation for Local Development and Democracy – Veles.

### 1. Research Objectives

Lead by the international, scientific and political discourse on the topic of civic engagement, social inclusion and the role of education in their promotion; as well as by the direct experiences of the activists from the Youth Education Forum with the youth in Macedonia, this study aims to examine the attitudes of the Macedonian high school students and explain their position in these key issues. Attitudes are cited in scientific literature as the most important predictor of civic engagement in all its forms. With this in mind, this study examines the attitudes of the high-school students on the issues of civic engagement and activism, volunteerism, and the so-called conventional citizenship, i.e. voting in elections. The study also examines attitudes towards the educational system, confidence in the institutions, as well as the demographic features of the students – variables that appear in the literature as key determinates of civic engagement and social inclusion. With all this we aim to provide a clear picture of the current state of civic engagement and social inclusion of the Macedonian students, as well as highlight areas where possible interventions could be made.

The second goal of this study is to analyze the results in the context of the youth policies in the Republic of Macedonia, focusing on two aspects: the inclusion of the youth in the process of creating public policies and the mainstreaming of youth inclusion and their priorities. In the Republic of Macedonia, youth issues are not addressed in a systemic and all encompassing manner, the existing legislation treats the issue of the status and role of the youth in Macedonia only marginally, and there is no legislation that regulates the status of the youth or the distinct forms of youth association or action.<sup>2</sup>

The final goal of this study is to compare the responses and attitudes of the Macedonian high-school students to those of the members of the youth clubs, which are part of the project “Youth for Open Society – Local Youth Initiatives” (LYI). For years the Youth Educational Forum has been providing informal education opportunities and has worked on issues in the local communities through their activities and also through implementing the activities of the LYI project. Informal education is recognized in the European Commission White Paper: A New Impetus for European Youth.<sup>3</sup> It emphasises the need for encouraging informal education as a form of civic participation, which tends to the expectations of the young people, due to its flexibility, the opportunities for participation, its self-organizing nature and the closer connection to the aspirations and interests of the youth. The high-school students involved in the LYI went beyond being members of the clubs as an organized extra curricular activity to directly take part in civic activism.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the study aims to determine whether these students differ systematically from their peers in certain socio-demographic parameters and their attitudes towards society as a whole, in order to better understand the obstacles and to highlight areas for possible interventions. The results of the study in this respect are encouraging.

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<sup>2</sup>Comparative Analysis of Domestic and European Legislature Regulating the Status of Youth, Coalition NOW, pp 3-17.

<sup>3</sup>European Commission White Paper “A New Impetus for European Youth”, COM (2001) 681 final, Brussels, 2001 ([http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001\\_0681en01.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001_0681en01.pdf))

<sup>4</sup>You can read more about YEF and the LYI project at [www.mof.org.mk](http://www.mof.org.mk).

## 2. Attitudes of the Macedonian High-School Students: Confusion

The key findings of this study reveal that, overall, the students in Macedonia display a high level of exclusion from the daily political events, in that they are disinterested, distrusting and cynical towards the public institutions. The only institutions the students have confidence in are the educational ones. It seems that the students live under a bell jar, displaying little concern about and removed from the problems that surround them. They have developed a cynical attitude towards the problems and the possibilities for solutions and display a worrying lack of social responsibility. As far as the various subgroups are concerned, one positive finding was that the young women and men seldom differ in their responses. On the other hand, the students' ethnicity often leads to differing opinions, as does the place of residence. The most important conclusions from this study in terms of students' attitudes are the following:

**The students in Macedonia are skeptical about their power to in any way contribute towards solving local problems.** More than two thirds of the students believe they can do little to nothing to personally influence changes towards solving local problems. In addition, they also do not believe that they can influence the work of the government and therefore indirectly contribute towards solving these problems. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the majority of students in Macedonia have never been engaged in solving a local problem. Nevertheless, the students were divided on whether or not instigating change in society should be their concern.

**The students do not trust the local governments, and trust the local elected officials even less.** More than two thirds of the students do not believe that the local elected officials care about the youth and their needs. Perhaps this is why the students were divided about the importance of voting. In addition, as much as a third of the students do not believe that government actions have any bearing on their lives.

**The weak economy and the lack of jobs is the biggest problem according to the youth;** a response which was chosen by 19,8% of the respondents. This was closely followed by alcoholism and drug addiction with 17,9% and violence and criminality with 16,7%. Somewhat less important problems chosen by the students were the environment (12,9%) and the infrastructure in the towns they live in (8,6%).

**Two thirds of the students do not have classes in which they are required to follow current political events.** In addition, almost half of the students (46,3%) have never given a presentation, participated in a debate, visited a public institution, nor have they written a letter to an institution. The students nevertheless discuss local problems, but are more likely to do this with their parents than at school.

An alarming third of the students believe it is better to keep disagreement with their professors to themselves. **An encouraging 65,8% of the students believe that they should voice their opinion.**

**The students do not participate in student governance.** As much as 70% of the students do not know whether their school has an associated student body and 81.3% have never taken part in student body elections. In addition, the students were divided about how much they can influence the way the school is governed. Nevertheless, students consider school to be very important (76%).

**One in four students is a self-declared socially excluded young person.** As much as a quarter of the students believe that there are little to no opportunities for them in their hometowns.

**The public and the business sector are the most attractive employment sectors for the students,** and three in four students will choose one of the two. Only 6.7% choose to not work in ideal circumstances, and the students who live in rural areas are twice as likely to choose this option than their urban peers (11.1% compared to 5.2%).

**Finally, almost half of the students do not see themselves in Macedonia in 10 years.** An additional 15.9% see themselves out of their hometown, but still in the country, and 38.3% of the students plan on still being in their hometowns in ten years. Strumica, Debar and Skopje are the towns in which the students are most likely to want to remain. Life seems to be the most unbearable in Delchevo, Veles and Shtip. It is interesting that the students who live in rural areas are more likely to choose remaining where they are in ten years compared to their urban peers.

All in all, the results show that the Macedonian students are excluded and mainly uninterested in civic engagement and the improvement of their country. They believe they are more likely to leave the country than they are able to change anything here.

### **3. Youth Policies in the Republic of Macedonia: Capitulation**

The Republic of Macedonia's first strategic attempt to contribute to the improvement of the status of youth occurred as late as 2005, when the Government adopted the National Youth Strategy (2005-2015). This national document defined the strategic objectives that the state needs to accomplish in unison with the youth in the following areas: education, youth self-employment, quality of life, youth independence, housing, health and prevention, youth participation, youth information, culture and local youth work. In this context, one of the goals of the strategy was "the integration of the youth in the center of the political, social, economic and cultural life in the Republic of Macedonia and their recognition as a vital element in the future of society". Recognizing that youth participation is below par, the strategy defined these specific goals: 1) encouraging the youth to actively take part in society; 2) removing obstacles (administrative, legal, generational gaps, distrust, etc;) for the active participation of youth in public life in the country; 3) establishing channels for youth participation and the expression and adoption of their opinions in the administrative bodies in the central and local governments; 4) promotion of the right of the youth to affiliation; 5) youth participation in the work of the state bodies.

Despite the fact that it is precise and created after a comparative analysis of positive foreign experiences, the Strategy did not get the necessary attention from the state and the organization that was appointed to lead the process of its implementation, the Youth and Sports Agency. At the institutional level, the agency is responsible for promoting the interests of the youth and working towards addressing their problems and needs. However, an analysis of their budget spending (Program for the development of sport and youth), shows that all of their finances are allocated to sport (i.e. building sports complexes, football and tennis fields), and almost none of it goes for the development of youth policies or encouraging activities for the improvement of the status of the youth in Macedonia. Thus far, the National Youth Strategy has not given the expected results, mostly due to the lack of political will for its implementation<sup>5</sup>.

All things considered, it is hardly a surprise that the political activity among the youth in Macedonia is below par. The youth have no interest in going out to vote, nor addressing a public

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<sup>5</sup>For Example, the first action plan for the implementation of the strategy was adopted in 2009.

official<sup>6</sup> in an attempt to solve a local problem. In 2010, the government once again vowed to solve this problem and in the context of its Council of Europe presidency, to facilitate the adoption of a regional declaration for the youth and their participation in decision-making<sup>7</sup>. This inevitably brings us to the question – do the youth serve merely as ornaments to the documents adopted by the government in order to fulfill the needs of the international community and are they only on the priority list of each party in election campaigns, only to be forgotten by the institutions and the government once political offices have been secured?

On the other hand, volunteer work is also a rare occurrence. There is a general lack of public awareness about the usefulness of volunteer work, which leads to a lack of valorization of volunteerism and its recognition as relevant experience, e.g. when it comes to employment<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, the Republic of Macedonia has at least declaratively adopted the stance held by the EU and the UN that volunteer work is a value that contributes to changes in society and that because of this there is a need to create an environment for volunteers in which their work can be recognized and characterized as necessary for the development of society.<sup>9</sup> It is for this reason that a Law on Volunteerism was adopted in 2007.

In addition, the government had great expectations for education and the inclusion of the youth as a basis for economic development, declaring that “quality education is a fundamental propellant in a society”<sup>10</sup>. However, the “root reforms” did not give the planned results, which is why the European Commission noted in its last progress report in 2010 that there is limited progress in the areas of education, training and youth. The means for implementing the Strategy are inadequate and it continuously remains far below the EU average.<sup>11</sup> As a result, there are still obsolete curricula in all educational levels (elementary, high school, undergraduate and graduate). The existing system of formal education in Macedonia does not foster the development of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills which the labour market demands and does not prepare the youth for self-employment.<sup>12</sup> What this means is that the reforms have yet to have a visible effect.<sup>13</sup> Faced with these challenges, this study aims to give an answer to the question of whether the *power of the Macedonian education*<sup>14</sup> can be a catalyst for change and a better future?

Furthermore, in the past couple of decades the Macedonian youth is continuously faced with a structural unemployment problem. The Republic of Macedonia is among the leaders in Europe in unemployed youth with a 57.7% unemployment rate that is as high as 80% in some municipalities. In addition, if we consider that leading research on the topic has proved the scarring effects of longterm unemployment on the youth (Shon et al., 2001, Basic et al., 2009;

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<sup>6</sup>Only 12% of the population address a politician to ask for changes (UNDP Human Development Report 2009). Even though there is no information on youth votes, the general assessment is that the youth are not interested in voting (Reactor interview with the organization MOST).

<sup>7</sup>Adopted in September 2010, the Ohrid Process Declaration: Youth & Decision-Making: Towards Greater Inclusion and Ownership.

<sup>8</sup>Strategy for the Promotion and Development of Volunteerism (2010-2015), MLSP, September 2010.

<sup>9</sup>Published in Official Gazette No. 57/2007 and the Law on Changing and Amending the Law on Volunteerism published in the Official Gazette No. 161/2008

<sup>10</sup>Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, 2006-2010, pp. 28.

<sup>11</sup>Page 58, in Macedonian [http://www.sep.gov.mk/content/Dokumenti/MK/mk\\_rapport\\_2010\\_mk.pdf](http://www.sep.gov.mk/content/Dokumenti/MK/mk_rapport_2010_mk.pdf)

<sup>12</sup>National Development Plan, pp 39

<sup>13</sup>20% of the youth believe that the reforms were hasty and had no effect, 29% believe there is minimal effect and 31% still cannot see the effect. Only 5% believe that the reforms have had an excellent effect. An Analysis of Youth Trends in Macedonia, Coalition of Youth Organizations NOW, pp 13.

<sup>14</sup>The Power of Education is a government campaign started in 2009 with the objective of encouraging young people to enter and remain in the educational process/system.



Koller-Trbović et al., 2008; Pavis et al., 2001), it is worrying that young men need 7 years and young women 9 years to successfully transition from the educational system to the labor market<sup>15</sup>.

On the other hand, the lack of confidence in the institutions further deteriorates the possibility of the youth participating through institutionalized structures. Compared to the past, the youth are less committed to the traditional structures of political and social action (e.g. political parties, chambers, youth organizations) and have a low level of participation in consultation with democratic institutions.<sup>16</sup> There also seems to be a need for redefining and restructuring youth organizations.<sup>17</sup>

This, however, still does not mean that the youth are not interested in public life. There are clear indications that the youth want to participate and influence decisions made by the community in which they belong, but they do tend to this individually, spontaneously, sporadically and outside the old participative structures and mechanisms<sup>18</sup>. It is therefore imperative that the authorities work on bridging the gap between the youth and their current means of communication and the obsolete traditional structures for participation and communication.

### *Does the classroom create citizens or puppets?*

In this respect, the changes in policies should start with the education that is being offered to the youth. Our study confirmed the irreplaceable role that the education system can have on the social capital of the Macedonian youth, considering that the number of school activities in which the students participate and which equip them with civic skills was the largest predictor (correlate) for civic participation. The more the students had access to building civic skills in the classroom, the more likely they were to have contributed to their communities. In addition to activism, the support from the educational system was also the largest predictor for volunteer work, although with a smaller effect. If we consider the fact that the numbers for civic engagement (on average 'never') and the number of activities at school (on average less than one of four) were exceptionally small among the high school students in Macedonia, this information has to be the starting point in the attempt to address the apathy and disinterest of the Macedonian youth. Despite their great lack of confidence displayed for the institutions of the state and society in general, it is nevertheless true that the students who were skilled in civic engagement are more likely to have practiced it. It can be concluded then, that the training that the active young people received in the classrooms is essential for their civic engagement.

Additionally, the number of activities at school is positively correlated to the attitudes of the youth towards civic engagement, which again were positively correlated to student behaviour, i.e. specific "participation". The students who considered voting important and can see themselves as volunteers were more likely to have participated in activities for solving certain problems in their community. Despite the fact that a correlative analysis cannot determine whether these attitudes are created in the classroom or the young people who have these attitudes are more likely to

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<sup>15</sup>Republic of Macedonia: Labor Market Profile 2004-2007, World Bank, 2008

<sup>16</sup>The Social Responsibility Survey (2009), MCIC, identified huge gaps in the attitudes towards responsibility and the actual participation in political non-party activities (62.8 % и 25.3 %), the engagement with civic organizations (59.6 % и 26.1 %), engagement in volunteer work in the community (57.1 % и 27.4 %). A similar situation is noted in the EU with the Eurobarometer (55.1) for Youth 2001 pointing to lack of confidence of the youth in the organizations, with one in two young people responding that they do not belong to any group.

<sup>17</sup>The Youth Council of Macedonia was founded in 1991 as a legal successor to the Union of the Socialist Youth of Macedonia. It failed however, to position itself as a key youth organization, and even though it still formally exists, it has not received government funding from 1998 onwards. There are a few networks of organizations today, among which the Coalition NOW: ([www.sega.org.mk](http://www.sega.org.mk)).

<sup>18</sup>European Commission White Paper "A New Impetus for European Youth", COM (2001) 681 final, Brussels, 2001



chose such classes and activities, there is still a case to be made for the invaluable importance of the educational programs that could potentially benefit both the students and their communities.

In this context, our research showed that the schools these students attend do not provide an adequate education which would produce responsible and active citizens. When we asked the students to choose from four provided activities that they have taken part in school<sup>19</sup>, the students on average responded that they have participated in less than one. In the context of the development of human resources, the National Development Plan for the Republic of Macedonia for 2007-2010 notes that “[e]ducational programs continue to be approved at the national level; they are incoherent and closed and focused on content instead of objectives or problems. With this they do not adequately respond to the needs of the economic, social and individual development (also from the aspect of culture, creativity, protection of the environment and health). There is much left to be done in this respect.”<sup>20</sup>

One of the goals of the educational system is undoubtedly the “production” of active citizens who understand their role in a democratic society (Stern, 2009). Among other things, the results of this study confirm the conclusions laid out in the National Development Plan, which point to the fact that high-schools inadequately address the needs for the social and individual development of the Macedonian youth. What this means is that as long as the high-school students show signs of apathy and disinterest in socio-political events and their own roles in the advancement of society, the high-schools in Macedonia do not justify their legally determined compulsory nature. In other words, if one of the goals of the educational system is to foster the social and individual development of the young person, it is not sufficient for high-school to be compulsory, but the schools themselves should also compulsorily produce active, socially responsible citizens.

## **4. Education on Civic Activism: Resistance**

The study revealed that there are significant differences between the high-school students who have not been involved in informal education and those who are additionally educated in civic activism. The members of the LYI clubs and the other students, aside from expectedly differing in volunteer work and civic engagement (in both cases the difference is of a large effect size), they differ in the responses to 18 questions in the survey (a detailed analysis of the differences is provided in the second part of this publication). They score higher than the other students in both attitudes towards civic responsibility, i.e. they believe that voting is more important and are more likely to have volunteered. In addition, they participate on average in 1.7 more extra curricular activities, and get more support from their schools. The members of the LYI clubs are 2.72 times more likely to have participated in school activities that foster civic engagement. Whether the LYI club members more often come from schools that provide these activities or they are more likely to make use of the opportunities provided by their schools is a question that this study cannot answer. Nevertheless, the positive influence of extracurricular activities and, again, curricula that favor civic participation is more than clear.

If we look at confidence in the institutions, the LYI members on average have more confidence in the non-governmental and international organizations than do the other respondents. As for their confidence in the state institutions, it is interesting to note that their level of confidence is as low

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<sup>19</sup>Writing a letter to an stranger/institution; give a speech or oral presentation; participate in debate/discussion; visit a public institution. For more information, see the results in the second part of the publication.

<sup>20</sup>Republic of Macedonia: National Development Plan, pp. 39

as the average among the other students, and in some cases even lower. Even though these students are on average more active in their communities than their peers, they are equally likely to believe that they cannot do anything to change or influence the way the governments work. As opposed to the other students, though, the LYI clubs members are more likely to believe that changing society is their personal responsibility.

All this points to the conclusion that the members of the LYI clubs are more responsible and on average more trusting, but their lack of confidence in state institutions and above all their untypical cynicism towards the possibilities of instigating change has to be taken as a serious warning, especially considering that they did not differ from their peers in the desire to have left the country in 10 years time. We can therefore conclude with confidence that should their wishes come true in the long run, Macedonia would lose out on priceless social capital.

***Are extracurricular activities a promoter of civic enagement or merely a certificate for  
Macedonian students?***

Going further in the analysis of the differences in the responses between the LYI club memebtrs and the other students, it is very significant that the study confirmed the positive influence of extra curricular activities on the social capital of the youth. Those students who take part in extra curricular activities are more likely to get involved in volunteer work and activities that benefit their communities. Even though parental support in itself did not have a direct role in the civic enagement of the students (perhaps because the majority of the students reported great support from their parents), it is interesting to note that the number of extra curricular activies is positively correlated to the support they reported getting from their parents. Those students who reported more support from their parents are on average involved in more extra curricular activities. Perhaps through the support for these activities, the parents are indirectly heping their children develop a sense of belonging and responsibility towards their communities.

If we consider that 60% of the youth do not actively use their free time, of which 10% reported that they mostly do nothing, 25% each reported they spend this time in cafes or at home in front of the TV or on the internet (Markovska-Spasenovska i Nashkovska, 2010) and that this unproductive “waste of time” is already an established trend, the importance of organized extra curricular activities becomes even greater. Stimulating and encouraging this engagement through public policies can be a major motivator and incentive for young people to use their time constructively and for the benefit of the community. Additionally, even though this study looked at extra curricular activities only as a predictor for civic engagement, it is worth noting that, as a form of informal education, they are also important for the youth as labor market capital. In the European Union, but also on the global level, there is ever more emphasis on informal education as a replacement for formal education, which deteriorates in dynamic economies which it fails to keep up with. In this sense, using public policies to encourage extra curricular activities as part of the curricula will be key not only in fostering civic enagement among the youth, but in facilitating their transition to the labor market.

***The lack of confidence in institutions, the authorities and public officials  
leads to a lazy youth***

One last thing we want to point out in this part are the two contradictory results from our reseach that should be taken as a warning signal. The first result is the expected positive correlation between the students’ confidence in institutions and their civic engagement, volunteer work and

the attitudes towards them. The second result is the controversial lack of increased confidence on part of the LYI members, despite the fact that they volunteer and engage in civic action more than the other respondents.

Because the level of confidence among all students is low, even more meaning is attached to the correlation between confidence and civic participation, which must be taken into account in the process of creating youth policies. What must be inferred from the results that point to the important role of confidence in institutions plays in civil engagement is that the governments are faced with a great responsibility to actively work on building that confidence, through improving the institutions' integrity and dealing with partization and corruption. Should they fail to do this, there remains the threat that even those young people who are actively involved in the improvement of their communities will over time be less motivated and lose interest, especially if we take into account the high level of distrust in the institutions that we noted even among this group.

In other words, the fact that even the more active students do not trust the public institutions means that even the subpar civic participation that we determined with this study will not be sustainable in the long term unless the governments show that they are willing to improve the reputation these institutions have with the general population, and especially among the youth. An additional indicator and even a threat in this sense is the large number of both active and passive students hoping to leave the country.

## **5. Recommendations**

Civic participations allows young people to develop new skills, to understand the decision making process and to learn how to contribute to it. By being treated better by society, they will be motivated to take responsibility for the events in their communities. Youth participation contributes towards better quality of the legal framowork, where the local and national governments will have a relevant source of information, perspectives and potential solutions that they could use in the process of creating youth policies. Considering the youth dimension, affirmation of the youth and understanding the youth's needs, the recommendations that came out of this study are the following:

The local governments should put the youth on their list of priorities and include their needs and problems in the process of decision making on the local level; to provide equal opportunities in informing and be committed to their active participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the local communities.

The local governments should establish regular communication with the youth through various communication tools, including new media. Each local community should create local youth action plans and monitor their implementation. The local authorities should aim to provide a space where young people will be able to spend their free time to organize activities and events (in the form of youth information centers / youth corners / internet portals).

The local governemnts should budget specific youth activities and contribute to the affirmation of the youth. They should increase their capacities and train current staff, providing skills that would allow them to work with the youth and contribute to the improvement of youth policies and the status of the youth. The local governments should monitor and support existing youth initiatives.

The education institutions and the creators of the curricula should offer adequate content, skills and knowledge. In other words, these institutions should develop and adapt the educational programs, which are currently poor, closed and incoherent, so as to address the needs of the youth and have a positive impact on their further development and education. They should provide practical knowledge in communication skills and create active, socially responsible citizens. Education should stimulate young people to communicate with the local and national authorities, through mechanisms and processes they acquire in school. It should equip the youth with skills that are relevant on the labor market and prepare them for self-employment. It should encourage participation in student body governments and provide democratization and pluralism in student assembly.

The financing conditions for state schools should be adapted to encourage schools to provide education on civic activism. The state currently finances the schools through the local governments only based on number of students, which means that the only thing of relevance to the national government is whether the students are physically present in class and not what and how much they learn. Despite the fact that the number of students is an important factor, we believe that additional result-based conditions imposed on the schools for state financing will encourage the schools to adopt formats for teaching and learning that will effectively use the time spent in the classroom and provide students with knowledge on student activism.

In order to prevent brain drain, the central government should communicate with the youth, work on solving youth problems and address issues pertaining to the youth. It should promote and value volunteer work, as well as provide a fast transition for the youth from education to employment. It should start building confidence with the youth by increasing the integrity of the institutions, addressing the problem of participation and corruption and by adopting specific measures that will directly benefit the youth. In creating the legal framework, the central government should provide a continuous discussion and debate that will include all relevant actors working on youth policies. In this respect, a good example of including the needs and expectations of the citizens and especially the youth is the EU's Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate. This plan was introduced in 2005, with the aim of regaining the citizens' confidence in the EU by improving communication with its citizens. Among other things, this program finances EU MPs' visits to high-schools, which is an excellent opportunity for the governments to directly learn about the problems that young people are faced with, but also to show them that their voices are heard beyond the schoolyard.

The national authorities should support youth networks and encourage youth assembly. If they fail to do this, there will remain the threat that the youth, left to their own individual incentives for participation and activism, even those young people who are actively involved in improving their communities will eventually lose interest, i.e. will see their future out of the country.

The Youth and Sport Agency should provide regular annual plans for the implementation of the National Strategy, which will significantly improve the status of the youth and will no longer be only words on paper. Based on the priorities and needs of the youth, as well as the annual action plans, an adequate budget should be secured for the achievements of their goals.

The non-governmental organizations can also contribute to the improvement of the status of young youth by advocating for their rights, but also through including young people in their activities. Volunteerism is an important tool for developing civic awareness and increasing the civic participation of high-school students, so by developing volunteer programs and encouraging student participation in their work, the NGOs can directly contribute to increasing civic engagement among the youth. Furthermore, youth NGOs must work together on advocating

youth interests by forming platforms and coalitions that will lobby for the youth and encourage and monitor the process of creating public policy that pertains directly to the youth.

## Part II

### Abstract

This study examines the relationships between social capital (specifically, civic engagement and volunteer work) among high-school students in thirteen towns in the Republic of Macedonia. A representative sample of 3607 high-school students shows that positive attitudes towards civic obligations, as well as towards volunteer work correlate with increased civic engagement and volunteer work. The support from the educational system, the number of extra-curricular activities, as well as confidence in the institutions and society in general also positively correlate with civic engagement and volunteer work. Religion and perceived parental support, on the other hand, do not correlate with civic engagement and volunteer work. The study also emphasises the differences between the active members of the Local Youth Initiative Clubs and the other high-school students.

**Key terms:** social capital, civic engagement, volunteerism, high-school students, parental support, educational system, religion, attitudes, extra-curricular activities, Republic of Macedonia.

### Introduction

Civic engagement, volunteerism and social capital of the youth are current topics on the global scientific and political scene. Today's youth is defined as apathic, excluded and unengaged. The reasons for this characterization are many and have been examined and analyzed in numerous international scientific articles.

A number of authors have expressed concern over what they consider to be a decrease in civic norms and behavior among adolescents and the youth. Young people are less interested in political issues, rarely vote and are less likely to join political parties (Blais, et al 2004, Franklin, 2004, Kimberlee 2002 and Norris 1999). Harris, Wyn and Youness evaluate this apathy as a generally accepted fact, i.e. they report that the youth in a new globalized world do not understand the relevance of state policies and state activism and see no meaning in the traditional opportunities for affiliation and engagement (Harris, Wyn & Youness 2010).

On the other hand, this growing apathy among the youth is a potential threat both for them and the societies in which they live, considering that when they are actively engaged in improving their communities, they improve their own development and the development of a civil society (Lerner 2004, Levine & Youniss 2006 and Zaff & Michelsen 2001).

Numerous studies have reported the positive effect of civic engagement on the young person, i.e. civic participation is singled out as a key result in the theories on the positive development of the youth (Lerner et al 2009 and Lerner 2004). A key aspect in the programs and policies for the development of democracy will therefore be to understand and encourage civic engagement of the youth in society (Sherrod & Lauckhardt 2009).

Emphasising civic engagement and above all civic responsibility among the youth is important also in the sense of their future civic behavior, as studies have shown that civic behavior is relatively stable and those who did not vote when they were young are less likely to vote when they are older (Jois & Troppe 2005). The Aspen Institute Study claims that young people do not grow up to be voters, but those who develop a habit of voting at a young age will retain this habit when they are older.

Voting as a measurable indicator of civic responsibility is not the only form of civic engagement. Activism, volunteerism and general activities aimed at improving the community are characterized as civic engagement and social inclusion. Zaff et al propose considering active and engaged citizenship as a second degree construct that contains four basic constructs: 1) civic responsibility, 2) civic capabilities, 3) neighborhood and social contacts and 4) civic participation (Zaff et al 2010).

They describe civic responsibility as a construct of the attitudes towards those who need their help, care for equality among people and a general personal responsibility to do something to help the community and achieve equality. The question “I believe that I can make a difference in my community” is one of the questions that reflects these attitudes. This construct corresponds to Jois and Troppe, who believe that it is precisely the youth’s attitudes (specifically the attitudes towards volunteerism and voting as measurable indicators of social capital) are a basis for long term solutions (Jois & Troppe, 2005).

The second construct, civic capabilities, are skills that help us actively contribute in our communities. Self-esteem or the practice of contacting a newspaper or a Member of Parliament are part of those skills. The examination of these skills is a regular topic and fundamental part of scientific programs in the developed world, as a result of the fact that schools play an important role in producing active and engaged citizens who understand the political system and civic life (MCEETYA).

The third construct, i.e. neighborhood and social contacts are closely related to youth social inclusion. It measures the sense of belonging of the youth in the communities in which they live and their perception of the closeness with their neighbors and their own importance in the community. The school is an important institution in which young people spend a large portion of their time and especially teachers and instructors play an important role. Questions such as “I believe that I am important to the people in my neighborhood” and “My teachers care for me” are examples of questions that operationalize this construct.

The last and most relevant construct of active and engaged citizenship is civic participation, such as volunteer work and helping to solve a certain problem in the local community (Zaff et al 2010). Civic participation itself (or civic engagement) is a term that many authors propose should be treated as multidimensional. For example, Dejaeghere & Hooghe recognize a difference between conventional and engaged citizenship, where conventional citizenship has a much bigger positive influence on the likelihood of voting, whereas the concept “engaged” is associated with volunteering (Dejaeghere & Hooghe 2009). These authors refuse to believe in the

theories of the degradation of social capital and propose that there is in fact a replacement, or a compensation, where young people are moving from participation in the “unattractive” political parties to various volunteer activities (Cohen 2005, O’Toole, Lister, March, Johens, McDonald 2003; Zurkin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins & Delli Carpini 2006).

Scientific literature is divided on this issue, where on the one hand the more pessimistic authors believe that social capital is on the decline and on the other there are optimistic studies that, despite the reduced political life of the youth, consider alternative behavior (volunteerism, organizing protests and street performances) as types of civic engagement. W. Lance Bennet (2003) for example, claims that young people today live in an unstable social context and as a result find greater pleasure in determining their own political way by volunteering locally, participating in consumer activism, supporting global causes (protecting the environment, human rights), participating in various transnational youth activities and creating a global civil society through global and local social networks and forums.

All these attempts to understand the complexity and justification of civic engagement aim to integrate this term in the process of policy making and creating curricula, in order for these to be adequate and successful. The criticism against “limiting and conventional views on civic education” (Weber, 2008) are also part of scientific literature on this topic.

Led by this international, scientific and political discourse on the topic of civic engagement and social inclusion, the present study aims to examine the attitudes of the Macedonian high-school students on this key topic. As mentioned above, the attitudes are the most important predictor of civic participation and a key indicator of the actual situation. In addition to the attitudes, this study will examine a few other predictors of civic participation, volunteerism and what Dejaeghere and Hooghe call conventional citizenship, i.e. the attitude towards voting. The predictors that we look at in this study are the following:

### **I) Support from the Education System**

As mentioned earlier, the educational system and curricula are key in forming a sense of civic responsibility and building skills and knowledge for civic engagement. There is universal agreement in scientific literature that education has two goals, one of which is to prepare the student for becoming an informed and active citizen. Therefore, one of the questions that researchers are interested in is do schools really prepare teenagers for taking up civic responsibilities when they come of age? In response to this question, Stern (2009) argues that schools have to develop three key skills: 1) analytic skills that would allow students to form opinions on public issues, 2) knowledge of state institutions and their jurisdictions, and 3) active participation in the community. Science still sees room for improvement in all these areas. Similarly, Kovacheva (1999) claims that studying is closely related to engagement and active citizenship. According to her, active citizenship implies active learning and informed citizens generally make better decisions that will influence both their future and their present.

### **II) Parental Support**

In addition to the schools, the educational role that parents play is also crucial. Parental influence over the attitudes and behaviors of the youth has been proved in many studies, and their political behavior is one of the biggest factors that determine whether or not the young person will vote when she comes of age. Along with schools and religious associations, parents are one of the three key “institutions” that play an important role in developing attitudes towards civic engagement of the young person (Jois & Troppe 2005).

### **III) The Role of Religious Associations**



Time and again scientific literature quotes religious affiliation (mostly churches<sup>21</sup>) as an influential factor that contributes to increased civic engagement, volunteerism and sense of civic duty. There are numerous theoretical and empirical findings (Caputo 2008; Becker & Dhingra 2001, Iannacone 1990, Wilson & Musick 1997) that point to a positive correlation between religion as a form of cultural capital and civic engagement, especially when considering frequency of attendance<sup>22</sup>. A study conducted by Wuthnow (1999), which uses only this dimension of religiosity, reveals that those who visit places of worship twice or more per month are more likely to volunteer. It is nevertheless interesting to note that in Caputo's (2008) study, which differentiates between various forms of volunteer work<sup>23</sup>, the frequency of attendance had no influence on activist volunteer work.

Even though the Republic of Macedonia does not have a long history of religious groups working with children and youth, it is interesting to examine whether religiosity influences the attitudes of the youth and indirectly contributes to both their civic engagement and their sense of belonging in their communities.

#### **IV) Extracurricular Activities**

Young people spend almost half of their waking time in voluntary activities, such as sports or school clubs (Larson & Verma, 1999). Even though there is a large variation in the level and nature of these engagements, generally speaking studies show that involvement in these organized activities benefit the youth, i.e. are time well spent out of the classroom (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Holland & Andre, 1978). More importantly, extracurricular activities are predictors of school performance, mental well-being and civic engagement (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Mahoney, Cairns & Farmer, 2003). The more activities they are involved in, the more the youth are tuned into the communities in which they live, as each organized activity can be seen as a particular environment for learning, with unique opportunities for growth and development (Hansen et al, 2003; Larson, Hanson, & Moneta, 2006) and less time for unproductive and risky activities (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Osgood, Willson, O'Maley, Bachman, & Johnson, 1996).

All in all, increased participation in organized extracurricular activities successfully predicts a higher level of civic engagement among the youth (Fredrick and Eccles; 2006; McLellan, Su & Yates, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles 2010). In addition, structured active participation in high-schools, especially those activities that are service oriented, increase civic engagement because they teach leadership skills, civic duty values and expose the youth to collective action (Glanville, 1999; Youniss & Yates, 1997; Fredricks & Eccles 2010).

#### **V) Confidence or Cynicism**

The final predictor (correlate) of civic engagement that this study examines is the confidence, i.e. cynicism that young people have towards institutions and their fellow citizens. One of the explanations for the decline in civic engagement among the youth is that politics is ineffective (Benjamin Quinto Bo Jois & Troppe 2005<sup>24</sup>), that the voting process does not bring specific results (Byrne Fields, 2001), that politicians do not represent their views (Bauman, 2001; Beck

<sup>21</sup>Due to the fact that most cited scientific articles are from USA, Great Britain, EU and Australia.

<sup>22</sup>More recent studies measure religiosity through additional dimensions. Lam (2002) uses 4 dimensions: affiliation, dedication, fundamentalism and participation (frequency of attendance), whereas Park and Smith (2000) add religious socialization. Our study only used only attendance as a proven predictor of civic engagement.

<sup>23</sup>Caputo adds a third category to the classic dichotomy of volunteer/non-volunteer and groups the respondents as activist volunteers, non-activist volunteers and non-activist non-volunteer.

<sup>24</sup>Goutam U. Jois and Chris Toppe. "Civic Engagement Among American Youth: Research, Activism, and Democracy" Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. Washington, DC. Nov. 2005.

and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001; Giddens, 1992), that public institutions are impotent in the process of transforming private problems into public issues (Bauman, 2001) and that society is no longer seen as a community that creates ties and in which young people should have a sense of belonging (Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2010).

It is not strange then, that young people who are civically engaged, i.e. those who belong to the most civically engaged group (who have volunteered in the past year and consider voting important) have a more positive attitude towards government and society in general, are more likely to trust others, talk about politics with their parents, believe they can make a difference in their communities and believe that elected officials care about the youth (Jois & Troppe 2005).

## Methodology

### Instrument

The questionnaire used for the purposes of this study was composed of questions quoted in three relevant studies (Jois & Troppe, 2005; Dejegehe & Hoorghie, 2009, Zaff et al., 2010), which were in turn drawn from large national studies: the Belgian Youth Survey (2006), a survey by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and the Zaff et al (2010) survey, which was based on a number of valid and tested instruments (for more information on the scales used, please consult Zaff et al., 2010). Our survey included questions that were created specifically for the needs of this study and the internal needs of the Youth Educational Forum. The questions were divided in two parts and it was provided in two slightly differing versions in order to avoid making the survey too long – a convenience provided for by the large size of the sample.

All questions, as well as a demographic analysis of the responses, are included in the descriptive analysis of the survey, provided further below in this study.

1. Civic engagement i.e. activism was measured with the question *Have you ever worked with someone or within a group towards solving a problem in the city in which you live?*. Unengaged students have never worked on a certain problem, medium engaged students have worked on a problem, but not in the past year and highly engaged students have worked on a problem in the past 12 months.

2. Volunteerism was measured with the question *Have you ever participated in some form of volunteer work? (volunteer work is defined as choosing to give services, knowledge and skills and/or performing other activities that benefit other persons, organizations, institutions etc., WITHOUT COMPENSATION)*. Students who have never volunteered were coded with 0, those who have volunteered, but not in the past year with 1 and those who have volunteered in the past 12 months were coded with 2.

3. Civic duty, in the context of conventional citizenship, was measured with the question *How important is voting to you personally?*. In the series of measured attitudes in the context of engagement, students were also asked *If you have never volunteered, but have the opportunity and the time, can you see yourself as a volunteer for your community/town?*

4. Support from the educational system was measured on the one hand with four questions pertaining to civic activities that were or were not provided the students as part of the curriculum: writing a letter to an institution/a stranger; giving a speech or a presentation; participating in a

debate/discussion and a visit to a state/municipal institution. The total number of activities the students reported to have participated in was used as a measurable predictor of civic participation. On the other hand, we used the question *Do any of your classes require of you to follow current political events by reading daily newspapers, following the news on TV, on the internet, or similar?*

5. Parental Support was measured with the question *If you think about activities you would like to take up in the future, do you think that your parents would support you in most of your decisions or be opposed to them?*. Students were additionally asked how often their parents voted in the past, as well as how often they discuss daily political events with their parents, in order to measure the influence of these factors over the student's level of civic engagement.

6. The role of religious associations. In the context of Wuthnow, the role of religious associations was measured through frequency of attendance (responses ranged from never, only for religious holidays, at least once a month to at least once a week).

7. Extracurricular activities The role of extracurricular activities in the level of civic engagement was measured with an open list of 12 different activities, of which the students were asked to check those activities in which they have participated. In addition, students were invited to add any activity they have taken part in that was not part of the provided list. Similar to the question about the support from the educational system and in the context of Fredricks & Eccles (2010), we also used the total number of activities as measurement.

8. Confidence or cynicism Confidence was measured on a scale created with the mean values of 17 questions, such as the attitudes *How much do you think you personally can change society*, *To what extent does the government/non-governmental sector have an influence on your life* and *How much do the elected officials care about the youth*. In addition to the attitudes, we directly asked the students how much they trust ten institutions, including public media and international organizations. The reliability (inherent consistency) of this scale was satisfactory, with Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.797$ .

## Participants and Procedure

The survey on civic engagement, social inclusion and problems among high-school students in Macedonia was carried out by the Youth Education Forum, in cooperation with Reactor – Research in Action and the local youth clubs, as part of the Local Youth Initiative Project funded by the Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia. It was conducted in 13 towns across the country, covering 50 high schools, on two different occasions: May and September 2010.

The questionnaire was filled out by 3607 high-school students from randomly selected 149 classes, half of which were from general education schools, while the other half were vocational. It was additionally filled out by 182 members (also high-school students) of the Local Youth Initiative centers in the 13 cities.

1645 or 45,6% of the students in our sample, study in Skopje, 338 or 9,4% in Bitola, 84 or 2,3% in Delchevo, 62 or 1,7% in Kratovo, 204 or 5,7% in Kichevo, 267 or 7,4% in Struga, 190 or 5,3% in Strumica, 54 or 1,5% in Resen, 99 or 2,7% in Negotino, 125 or 3,5% in Gevgelija, 80 or 2,2% in Debar, 235 or 6,5% in Veles and 224 or 6,2% go to school in Shtip. Of the total 3607 students, 969 or 27,8% live in rural areas, 2522 or 72,2% live in urban areas, and 112 students did not disclose their place of residence (3,1%).

When asked about their gender, 97,8% answered the question and 2,1% or 79 students gave no reply. Of those who did reply, 53,3% or 1604 are female and 44,5% are male.

Most of the surveyed students (1178 or 32,7%) were 16 years old at the time the survey was conducted. 853 or 23.7% were 15 years old, 254 or 7% were 14 years old and 10.2% or 366 students were 18 years old. Two of the students, a young woman and a young man, stated that they were 19 years old, and 81 students did not answer this question.

As far as the ethnic background of the sample is concerned, 2442 students or 67.8% were ethnic Macedonians, 713 or 19,8% - Albanian, 143 or 4% - Turks, 79 or 2,2% - Roma, 47 Serbs, 47 Bosnians and 19 that chose an ethnic group other than those listed. 86 students did not answer this question.

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis of the Variables

In this part we only present the mean values and standard deviations of the relevant variables (described above). A detailed descriptive analysis of all results and variables is given below.

1. Civic engagement (M=0.53, SD=0.75)<sup>25</sup>
2. Volunteerism (M=0.73, SD=0.82)
3. Civic Duty
  - a. Conventional citizenship (M=1.50, SD=1.43)
  - b. Engagement (M=2.10, SD=0.80)
4. Support from the Educational System (M=0.72, SD=0.83)
5. Parental Support (M=2.48, SD=0.82)
6. Frequency of religious attendance (M=1.52, SD=0.83)
7. Extracurricular activities (M=2.72, SD=1.82)
8. Confidence (M=2.19, SD=0.61)

One of the limitations of our study is the fact that not all of the variables are normally distributed, i.e. the distributions were skewed and with that broke the assumption for parametric testing.

For covariants, we controlled for the following socio-demographic variables: gender, age, ethnicity, size of the place of residence and the opportunities they believe they were given.

	TABLE 1.								
	1	2	3a	3b	4	5	6	7	8
1. Civic Engagement	-								
2. Volunteerism	.438**	-							
3. Civic Duty									
a. Conventional Citizenship	.088**	.077**	-						
b. Engagement	.170**	.227**	.086**	-					
4. Support from the Education System	.316**	.252**	.098**	.171**	-				

<sup>25</sup>Каде М ја означува средната вредност, а SD ја означува стандардната девијација.

5. Parental Support	.002	.025	.049**	.069**	.038	-		
6. Frequency of Attendance (Religion)	.053*	.000	.007	.037	a.	-.007	-	
7. Extracurricular Activities	<b>.160**</b>	<b>.197**</b>	<b>.087**</b>	<b>.142**</b>	a.	<b>.108**</b>	-.029	-
8. Confidence	.097**	.092**	<b>.232**</b>	<b>.126**</b>	.063**	.099**	.046	<b>.128**</b> -

\*\* correlation is significant at 0.01 level..

\* correlation is significant at 0.05 level.

a. Cannot be measured as variables are part of two different questionnaires

## Correlative Analysis

The correlations between civic engagement, volunteerism and the proposed predictors is presented in Table 1.

As the Table shows, civic engagement and volunteerism have a high correlation, which means that those students who have actively participated in their communities are more likely to have also been volunteers. This questions the multidimensionality thesis of the civic engagement concept in our study. The number of those who were actively involved in their communities and who have volunteered is very small among the Macedonian high-school students (see Results), whereas the correlative analysis reveals that this small number of activists and volunteers is shared by the same group of young people.

The second and most obvious conclusion from the correlative analysis is that the support of the educational system is the biggest predictor of civic engagement. The students who gained the most civic skills at school have already participated in solving a problem in the community. The number of extracurricular activities, as well as the positive attitude towards volunteerism also play a significant and practical role ( $r > 0.1$ ) in the students' decision to actively participate in solving problems in their cities. Confidence and a positive attitude to voting also positively influence their involvement in their communities. On the other hand, the perceived support from the parents had no influence on civic engagement and religiosity had very little influence.

Volunteerism showed similar correlations as civic engagement, with the difference that the influence of the school is slightly lower and attitudes towards volunteer work, expectedly, play a bigger role. Parental support is once again without effect, as is religiosity.

As for the other correlation, it is interesting to note that confidence in the institutions strongly correlates to the attitudes of young people (in the context of Dejaeghere and Hooghe, both in conventional attitudes and in attitudes towards civic engagement), which means it could indirectly influence civic engagement.

Aside from the place of residence (where students who live in villages are significantly less active and have volunteered less), no other demographic factor played a significant role in civic engagement and volunteerism among the youth.

If by using regression we try to explain the reasons behind civil engagement, i.e. if we try to determine how much the above mentioned predictors determine future civil engagement, we get a model that explains between 6 and 10 percent of the civil engagement's variance ( $R^2 = 0.06$ ,  $p < 0.01$  for the first questionnaire,  $R^2 = 0.117$ ,  $p < 0.01$  for the second one). This means that beyond the abovementioned predictors, the reasons or motivators for civic engagement depend on other external predictors as well. However, due to the abovementioned non-normal distribution of some of our variables, and the multicollinearity between some of the predictors that is another assumption for doing multivariate regression analysis, we did not go into further detail with it.

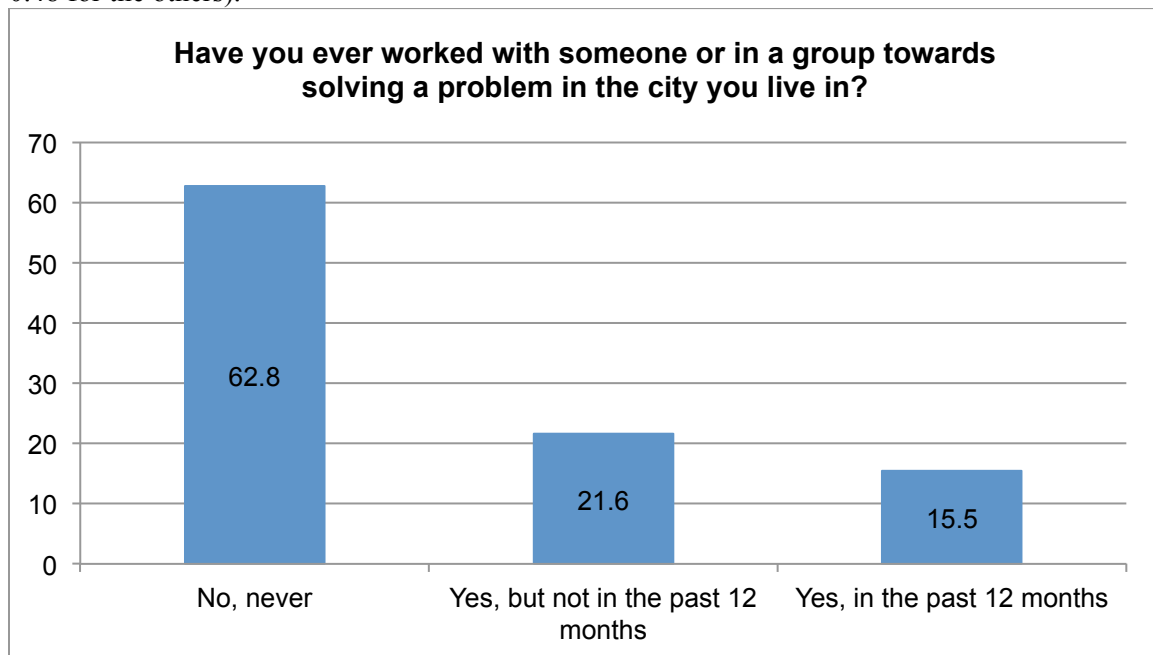
## Descriptive Analysis of the Survey Results

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

#### Volunteerism

##### 1. Have you ever worked with someone or in a group towards solving a problem in the city in which you live?

When asked *Have you ever worked with someone or within a group towards solving a problem in the city in which you live?*, 62,8% of the students replied that they had never been engaged in solving a certain problem in their city, 21,6% replied that they had, but not in the past year, and only 15,5% of the students had participated in solving a local problem within the past year. If we compare the responses of the LYI members to those of the other participants, there are significant differences of large effect size ( $d=1.11$ ), where respondents were more likely to have worked on solving a local problem if they are also LYI members ( $M = 1.34$  for the LYI respondents,  $M = 0.48$  for the others).



##### 2. Have you ever participated in some form of volunteer work? (Volunteer work is defined as choosing to give services, knowledge and skills and/or performing other activities that benefit other persons, organizations, institutions etc, WITHOUT COMPENSATION)

The numbers are somewhat better when it comes to volunteer work, but still half of the students (51,2%) have never done any volunteer work. When asked *Have you ever participated in some form of volunteer work?*, more than half (52,1%) said they have never volunteered and less than a quarter (23,9%) volunteered in the past year.

It is interesting to note that the students from the rural areas have volunteered less than those who live in the urban areas. When taking into account ethnicity, the group that has reported volunteering the most is the Vlachs and the group that reported volunteering the least is the

Albanians. The difference between the two largest ethnic groups<sup>26</sup>, the Macedonians and the Albanians, are of small to medium effect ( $d = 0.35$ ), where Macedonians are more likely to have volunteered compared to the Albanians.

As in the previous question, the LYI members once again reported greater initiative, with the results showing that they have volunteered significantly more than the other respondents ( $M = 1.38$  for the LYI members,  $M = 0.69$  for the others). The differences are of large effect ( $d = 0.85$ ).

### **3. If you have never volunteered, but have the opportunity and the time to do so, can you see yourself as a volunteer for the community/the city?**

It is encouraging that when asked *If you had the opportunity and the time, can you see yourself as a volunteer*, most of the students replied with “probably yes” (52,5%), 31,2% said they would definitely volunteer and only 16,3% said that they would probably or definitely not volunteer.

If we consider ethnicity as a factor, the differences in the responses between the two largest ethnic groups is of too small an effect. On the other hand, LYI membership is once again a positive factor, with differences of almost medium effect ( $d = 0.49$ ).

Nevertheless, this is the first instance where we are faced with the contradictory nature of the students’ replies. Of the 1735 students who replied that they had volunteered in the previous question, 1635 also replied to the question beginning with “If you have NOT volunteered...” It remains unclear whether this is the result of disinterest, unfocused reading or whether there is another explanation for these results.

### **4. If you have volunteered, how did you start?**

How does one become a volunteer? The largest number of volunteers (24.8% of those who responded) got involved with no particular reason. 17.5% said that they volunteered because a friend asked them to help out, for 11.4% it was a school prerequisite and 9.1% responded that they were very interested in the issue for which they volunteered.

However, once again we have paradoxical and defeating responses from the students: of the 1821 respondents who previously stated that they had never before volunteered, 789 gave a specific response to this question. This calls for caution in the interpretation of any of the following results.

## **Initiative and Personal Responsibility**

### **5. If you think about the problems that you see around your city, how much do you think that YOU PERSONALLY can change something or do something to solve these problems?**

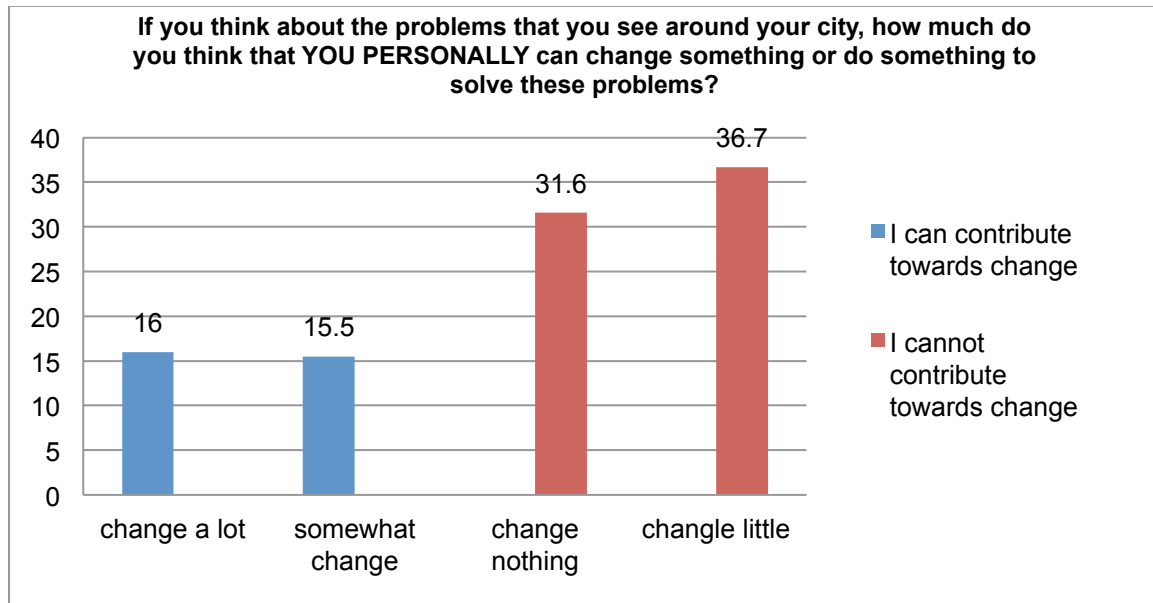
How many of the students believe that they can contribute towards solving the problems their community is faced with? As much as 68.3% of the Macedonian high-school students believe that they cannot change anything, 15.5% believe that they would be able to change very little and only

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<sup>26</sup> The ethnic Albanians and Macedonians are the only truly representative groups in our sample, so these comparisons are only relevant for these two groups. The comparisons with the other ethnic groups are only indicative and should be interpreted with caution.



16% believe that they can make significant contributions. If we consider the fact that we are talking about students who have yet to go out into the “real world”, this is an alarming number of prematurely disappointed and skeptical young people, growing up without hopes for improving their own future in the community they live in.



Even though the Albanian students were skeptical on average, they nevertheless reported the highest optimism in their ability to contribute towards change in their communities compared to the other ethnic groups, while the Serbian students scored the highest resignation, i.e. an inability to contribute to change. The Serbs are followed by the Roma in their skepticism. The differences between the two largest groups (the Macedonians and Albanians) are significant with small to medium effect size ( $d=0,39$ ).

Unlike in the previous questions, there were no differences here in the responses between the LYI members and the other students, which means that the noted overall pessimism in the ability to contribute towards positive changes is also prevalent among them. On average, the LYI members responded that there is little they can do to contribute towards change in their communities.

This lack of confidence in the students' own power to bring about change is consistent with their inactivity and may indeed be the cause of it. As we have already pointed out, not only do the students not believe that they can solve the problems, they are not even trying to do so. This confirms the numbers of only 15% of student activists and almost two thirds of students who have never been part of an initiative for solving the problems in their communities.

#### **6. When students disagree with their professors, do you think that they should voice their opinion or is it better to keep their opinion to themselves?**

How much do the students believe that their opinion is worthy of being shared publicly or with the institutions? Our starting point is the school, where the students spend most of their time and where the professors are their first point of contact with the public institutions. Do our students believe that they should speak up and make their voice heard or do they “learn” that it is better to keep their opinions to themselves?

The question was *“When students disagree with their professors, do you think that they should voice their opinion or is it better to keep their opinion to themselves?”* and it showed that an encouragingly high percentage of the students (65,8%) would prefer to voice their opinion even when they disagree with their professors. Nevertheless, one in three students (31,1%) replied that it is best to keep their opinion to themselves. The percentage of those who chose to not answer the question is 3,1%.

If we take a look at the ethnicity of the students, the Vlachs and the Albanians are the most restrained (45% and 41% respectively, believe that it is better to keep their opinion to themselves), whereas the Turks and the Macedonians were the most vocal in our sample (75% and 70% respectively, believe that it is better to voice their opinion). The differences between the two largest groups are of a small effect size ( $d=0,27$ ).

We also determined differences between the students from rural and urban communities – the students who live in rural areas reported more restraint than the others. The most interesting and welcome difference we noted was the gender-based difference, where the female respondents were unexpectedly more confident in believing that they should voice their opinion than their male counterparts were: 70% for the young women compared to the 66% for the young men.

However, the effect size of the last two differences we noted is too small and the differences, though statistically significant, are still within the margin of error.

Finally, there were also differences in the responses of the LYI members and the other students, and these were of a small effect size ( $d=0.3$ ).

#### **7. Regardless of whether you are of voting age, how important is voting to you?**

Voting in local and parliamentary elections is one of the most important civic duties that can bring about changes in governments, parliaments and city councils. How do the high school students view this future responsibility? When asked, *“Regardless of whether you are of voting age, how important is voting to you?”*, the students were divided in their answers. Slightly less than half (48,8%) replied that voting is not at all or only somewhat important, while the other half (51,6%) stated that it is partially or very important. There were 5% of students who chose to not answer this question.

This is a high percentage of high school students who deem this civic duty as unimportant. The responses revealed no differences when we took into the account the age of the respondents: the students who were of voting age (i.e. 18 years old) when the survey was carried out do not differ in their responses from the other age groups.

We identified minor differences based on the gender of the respondents (for young women voting is slightly more important than it is for the young men) and also based on their ethnicity, where the Bosnians and the Albanians consider voting to be less important than do the other groups, while the Roma and the Turks consider it more important.

There were also differences in the responses of the LYI members, who tend to value voting more than the other students do. These differences were of a large effect size ( $d=0.65$ ).

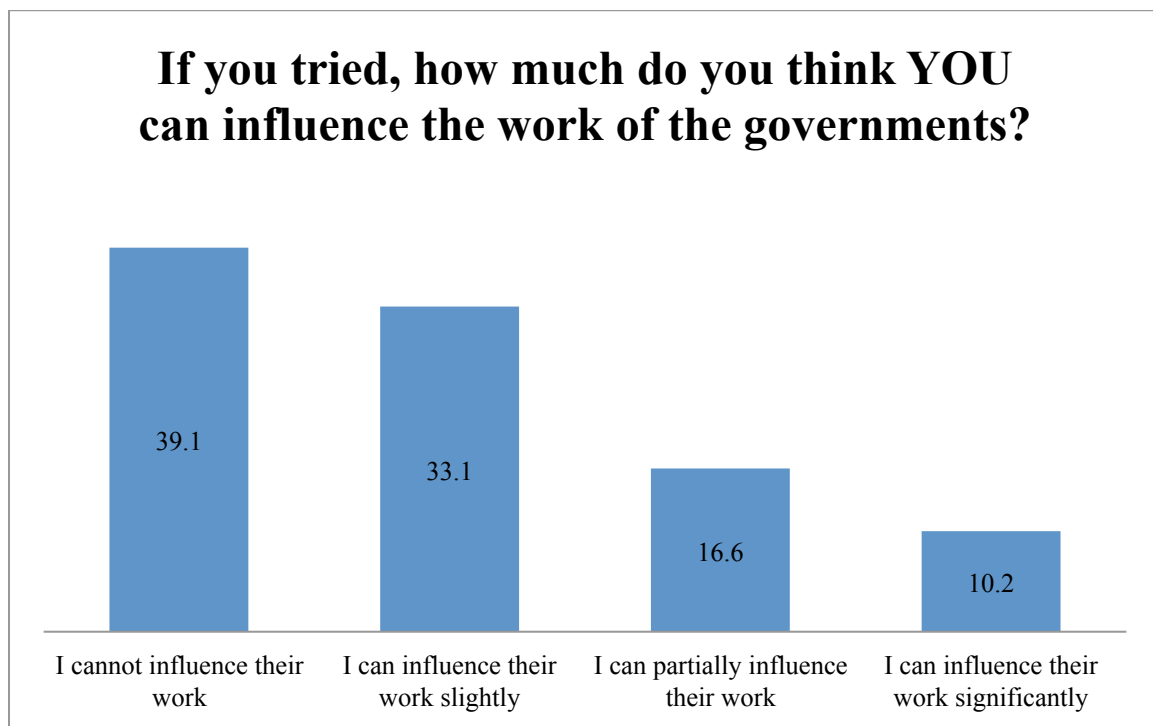
#### **8. From what you can remember growing up, did your parents vote in all elections?**

The indifference that we noted among the students as to the importance of voting is even more surprising if we consider the fact that 75,1% of them estimated that their parents had voted in almost all elections for as long as our respondents could remember.

Once again we noted differences between the LYI members and the other respondents, but this time with a small effect size ( $d=0.25$ ).

**9. On the other hand, if you tried, how much do you think that YOU can influence what the governments do?**

Not only do the students believe that they cannot change anything directly, they also do not believe that they can influence what the government does. A high 72.2% believe they can do little to nothing to influence the government's work. When asked "*If you tried, how much do you think YOU can influence what the governments do*", only 10.2% believe they can have a large influence, 16.6% believe they can partially influence the government's work and 3.2% did not respond to the question. This reveals serious resignation on part of the students as to their role in the decision making process.



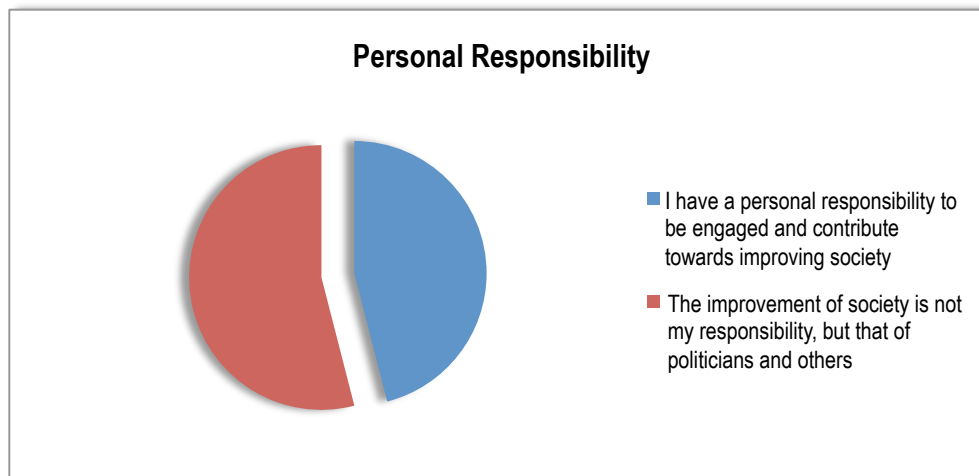
The young women and men did not differ in their responses, nor did age account for different answers when it comes to how much the students can influence their governments.

The only difference we noted were between the ethnic groups, where Turks and Albanians believe they can have a bigger influence than do the Serbs and Bosnians, who were in the bottom group. The differences in the responses between the Albanians and Macedonians are statistically significant, but with a small effect size ( $d=0.23$ ).

It is interesting to note that there were no differences in the responses between the LYI members and the other respondents, which means that the LYI members feel equally helpless when it comes to how much they can personally influence their governments.

**10. I have a personal responsibility to be engaged and contribute towards improving society  
OR The improvement of society is not my responsibility, but that of politicians and  
others.**

One of the last questions in the survey gave the students three sets of opposing statements, asking the respondents to choose which one they agree with more. In one of these sets they were asked to choose whether improving society is their personal responsibility or not. A large number of students (37.2%) did not respond to this question at all. Of those who did, 54% believe that they have no personal responsibility to contribute to change, i.e. that it is the responsibility of others. This once again confirms the ambivalence, resignation, disinterest as well as a general lack of social responsibility on part of high-school students today.



If we consider the ethnicity of the respondents, the Vlachs and the Albanians have the highest sense of personal responsibility, whereas the lowest was noted among Bosnians and Serbs. The differences between the two largest groups are insignificant.

We also once again noted differences between the LYI members and the other students, where the LYI members noted more personal responsibility. These differences are of medium effect size ( $d=0.55$ ).

### **Support from the Education System**

To what extent do the Macedonian high schools equip the students with the skills and motivation necessary for civic engagement? Are the Macedonian students invited to discuss relevant issues and create a critical approach; do they learn how to formally communicate with public institutions and are they encouraged to develop an interest in current events as part of the curriculum?

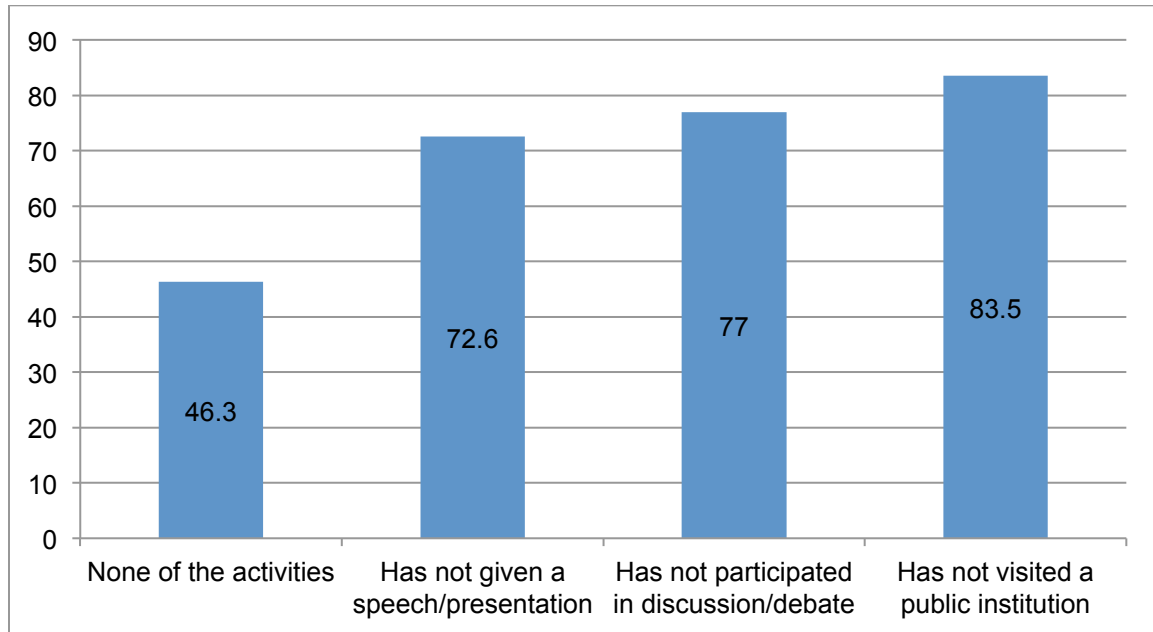
We already noted that the students rarely have classes in which they are confronted with current political events and in this part we take a look at whether the educational system offers other activities that prepare the students for civic engagement.

**11. In your high school experience so far, which of the following activities have you completed AT SCHOOL:**

- ☐ Written a letter to an unknown person or institution
- ☐ Given a speech or a presentation
- ☐ Participated in a debate or discussion

- ☐ Visited a public institution on the local or national level
- ☐ None of the above

Almost half of the respondents (46,3%) stated that they had not participated in any of the activities listed above. Only 6,7% percent have written a letter to someone they didn't know or to an institution; 27,4% have given a speech or a presentation; 23% have participated in a debate and only 16,5% have visited a public institution. It would seem then that at least part of the blame for the students' disinterest should be placed on our educational institutions.



Looking at the responses based on LYI membership, we determined that the LYI members are more likely to have participated in the activities given above, with the exception of visiting a public institution on the local/national level.

## 12. Do any of your classes require of you to follow current political events by reading daily newspapers, following the news on TV, on the internet, or similar?

When asked whether or not they have classes in which they talk about current political events, 65.9% of the students stated that they do not have such classes in their curricula. This number decreases as the age of the students increases, which means that these classes are more likely introduced in the later high school years. Nevertheless, even with the oldest group we noted 52.8% of students who reported that they do not have classes in which they discuss current events. It would seem then that the results of the responses to the question *“Do any of your classes require of you to follow current political events by reading daily newspapers, following the news on TV, on the internet, or similar?”* point to the fact that our educational institutions do not adequately prepare the students for civic engagement.

It was interesting to see that there were differences in the responses between the LYI members and the other respondents. Of the LYI members, as much as 45.1% said that they have classes that require of them to follow daily events, compared to 33.4% of the others. Considering that the

LYI members go to the same high schools as the other respondents, this difference might be due to the students' choice of project activities within the schools.

### 13. In class, have you had a chance to talk about problems young people are faced?

The majority of the students (59.9%) replied that they have had an opportunity to discuss youth problems in class. The results of this question also reveal that there are differences between LYI members and the other respondents, where the LYI members are more likely to have had these discussions in class. The differences are of an almost medium effect ( $d=0.44$ ).

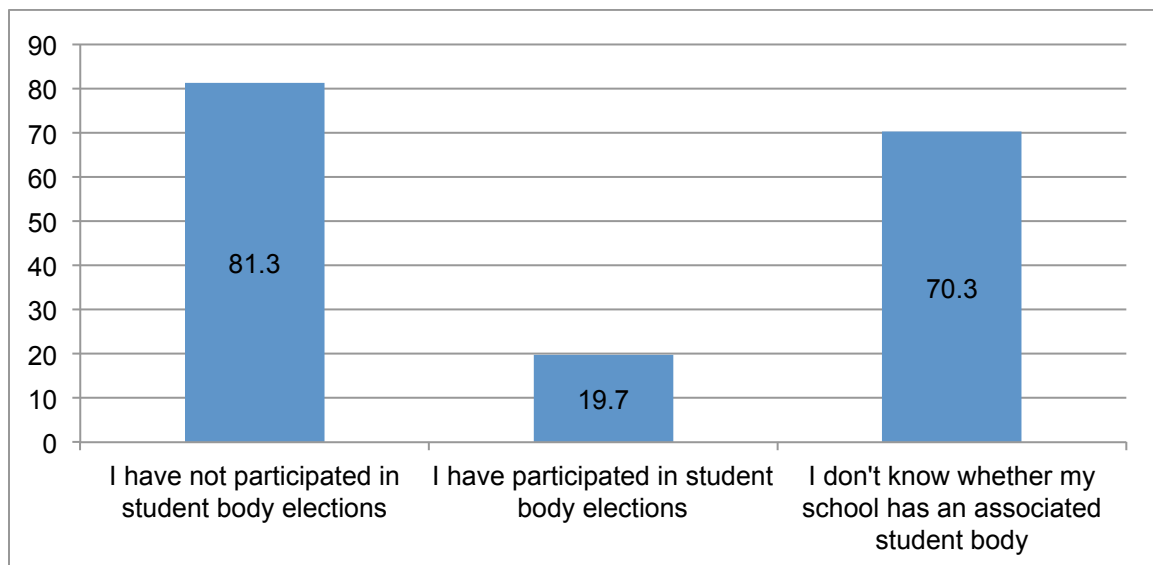
### 14. Does your school have an associated student body or another type of governing student body?

When asked whether their school has an associated student body or another type of governing student body, 70,3% of the students replied that they do not know. Only 12,9% of the respondents think that their school does not have one; 12,8% replied that there is a student body in their school, but only 4% could name their representative.

For this questions we noted huge differences in the responses of the LYI members and the other students. Only 24.8% of the LYI members responded that they do not know whether they have an associated student body or not, whereas the same number for the other respondents was 73.6%. In addition, compared to only 2.8% of the other students, as much as 20.8% of the LYI members knew the name of their representative.

### 15. Have you ever participated in the election of a representative for the associated student body?

As much as 81,3% of the students have never participated in the election of a representative for their associated student body. The LYI members once again differ significantly in the responses: 40.2% of them have participated in the elections, compared to only 17.2% of the other students.



What are the reasons behind these high percentages of non-participation in the election of representatives for the only body whose sole purpose is to represent the students' interests?

Are students just disinterested or are they simply not sufficiently informed about student governance? Whatever the reason, these results reveal serious shortcomings in the functioning of the associated student bodies if more than 70% of the students they are meant to represent are neither aware of their existence, nor have taken part in the election of their representatives.

#### **16. How much attention do you pay to what your associated student body does?**

Of our respondents, 32.7% pay no attention and 30.6% pay little attention to what the associated student body does. This amounts to 63.3% of high-school students who are disinterested in the only body whose purpose it is to represent the students' interests. Of the remainder, 23.5% are partially interested in what the associated student body does, 13.1% are allegedly very interested and 4.4% did not respond to this question.

We say allegedly because there were paradoxical responses to this question. Namely, of the students who just two questions prior responded that they do not know whether their school has an associated student body or not, 11.7% here replied that they pay a lot of attention and 21.3% replied that they pay partial attention to what the student body does.

It is interesting that there were no differences in the responses to this question between the LYI members and the other students, which seems implausible compared to the differences we noted in earlier related questions. Nevertheless, considering the low rate of participation in student body elections and the level of awareness of the existence of student bodies determined above did not translate into a low level of interest in the responses to this question, the lack of differences between the LYI members and the other students may be due to the unrealistic assessment on part of the non-members of their personal interest in student body matters.

#### **17. How much do you think the students in your school can influence how the school is governed?**

Despite the fact that the students are disinterested in the student councils and the majority of them are unaware of the existence of these bodies, one in two students (50,1%) believe that they can influence the way the school is governed.

The other half of the students (49,9%) think that they can have no influence over how the school is run, i.e. they think that they can have a limited influence.

There were differences in the responses between the two largest ethnic groups, in that the Albanians are more likely to believe that they can influence how the school is governed compared to the Macedonians. These differences are of small effect size ( $d=0.23$ )

The LYI members stood out with their responses once again and are more likely to believe that students can have an influence. The differences are of small to medium effect ( $d=0.33$ )

### **Parental Support**

#### **18. If you think about actions you might want to take up in the future, do you think that your parents would support you in most of your hopes and decisions or do you think that they are more likely to disapprove?**

The responses to this question indicate that the students believe that they get a lot of support from their parents. As much as 64.6% believe they would get their parents' full support and an



additional 24.7% expect partial support. This points to a good relationship between the students and their parents.

The socio-demographic indicators did not account for differences in this question.

**19. No matter how much they try not to, in the end children turn into their parents OR Children are usually the complete opposite of their parents**

Among the sets of opposing statements given towards the end of the survey, we included two questions that indicate the students' relationship with their parents. However, as much as a quarter of the students did not respond to this first question. Of those who did, 61.5% believe that children turn into their parents rather than turn into their complete opposites.

The differences in the responses to this question were based on ethnicity, with differences between the two largest groups. The Macedonians have a tendency to believe that children are more likely to turn into their parents, whereas the Albanians are divided on this issue. The differences are of small effect size ( $d=0.26$ ).

As for the LYI members, their responses did not differ from those of the other students.

**20. Children adopt their parents views OR Children create their own views.**

The students were again divided in groups of almost of the same percentages, but this time in the opposite direction. Of those who responded, 59.1% said that children create their own views and 40.9% that they adopt the views of their parents.

Once again there are differences of a small effect size ( $d=0.28$ ) between the responses of the Macedonian and Albanian students. The Macedonians were more likely to subscribe to the second statement i.e. that children create their own views. As in the previous question, there were no differences in the responses based on LYI membership.

Despite the fact that we thought the responses to these questions would be indicative of the relationship between the students and their parents and influence the way they think and answer the questions from the survey, the results reveal that these do not significantly influence their responses.

## **SOCIAL INCLUSION, OPPORTUNITIES, FREEDOM**

We noted that relations with the parents were generally positive and that the students feel supported by their parents. Do they also believe that they are given sufficient opportunities, that they are free and completely included in the community in which they live or do certain groups feel more free, more included and more privileged than others?

Are the disappointing numbers for the students' civic initiative an indicator that the Macedonian students are in a way excluded from communal living in the country or is their apathy rooted in something entirely different?

**21. If you take into account the city/town and the family you were born in, do you think that you were given sufficient opportunities for success in life or do you think that others were given more and have higher chances for success?**

For the most part, the students in Macedonia believe that they were provided with sufficient opportunities for success in life – a somewhat contradictory result compared to their self reported lethargy and civic exclusion.

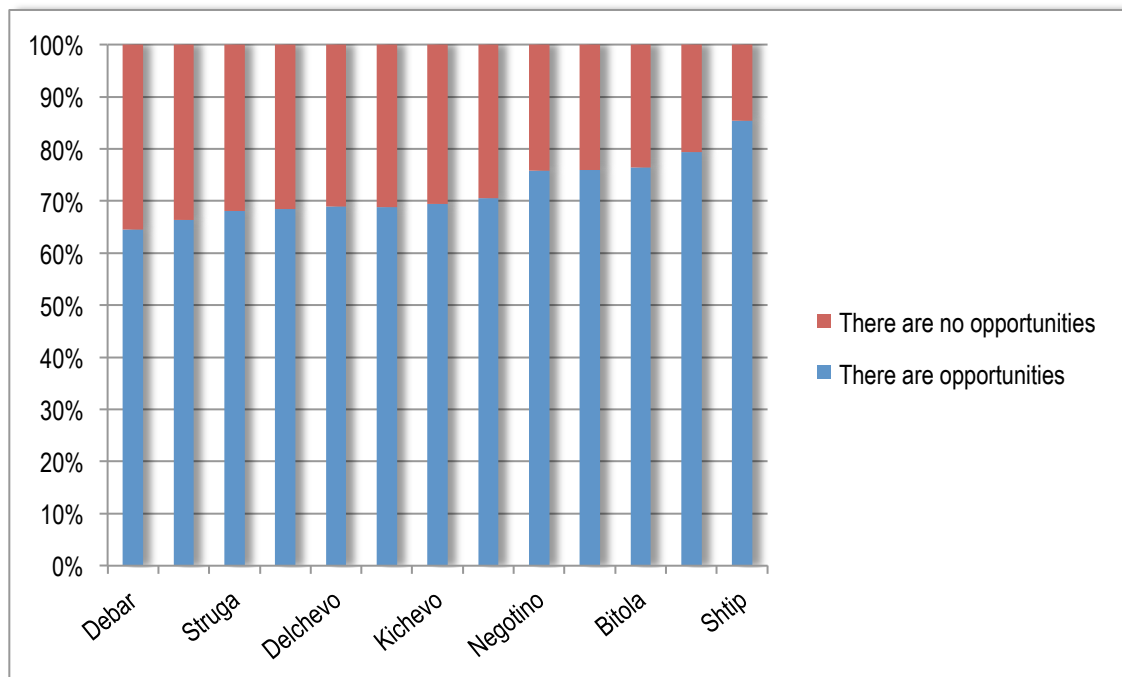
As much as 40.2% believe that they were well provided for and an additional 35% believe this to be partially true. Nevertheless, there is still a significant number of 24.5% of the students who reported that they were given little to no opportunities in life.

Does this quarter of the students in any way differ from the others? Our analysis revealed that there were a number of indicators accounting for difference, although all of them with small effect size.

The students gave varying answers depending on their age. The younger students felt that they were given more opportunities than did the older ones and there is a linear correlation between the age and opportunities, where with each additional year the confidence that they were provided with sufficient opportunities decreased. These are significant, but small differences, because in general, the students are more likely to be satisfied with the opportunities they were given. This can nevertheless be taken as an indicator that as the students grow older, they are disillusioned about the abundance of opportunities ahead of them and develop a cynical outlook on the future as early as in high school.

As far as the different ethnic groups are concerned, it is interesting to note that on average, the Roma students are most likely to agree that they were provided sufficient opportunities, followed by the Bosnians. The Turks and the Vlachs feel the most disadvantaged, but these differences are nevertheless of a small effect size.

Based on their place of residence, it would seem that based on the students' opinions Shtip is considered to provide the most opportunities, followed by Skopje and Bitola, whereas Debar, Veles and Delchevo seem to provide the least opportunities for their young citizens.



There were no differences in the responses based on gender, so it was a welcome result to see that young women do not feel like they are given fewer opportunities than their male peers.

All in all, the Macedonian students are satisfied with the opportunities they are given and there are, on average, no subgroups that responded considerably different from their peers.

## **22. Do you have fun at school?**

Most of the students reported that they are having a good time at school, which is another indicator that they do not feel socially excluded. A significant majority of 82.8% reported to be having a good or great time at school, 11.1% have mixed feelings and only 6.1% reported having negative feelings about their experiences at school.

The students from Negotino, the Albanians and the youngest students were more likely to report that they are having a great time at school, whereas the students from Kratovo, the Bosnians and the oldest students seem to have a less fulfilling experience. Additionally, the female students evaluated their experience at school slightly better than their male counterparts.

In addition to the results about the opportunities they were provided with, this is yet another indicator that the students are not concerned, unsatisfied nor do they feel threatened in their everyday lives.

## **23. What is the highest level of educational that you plan to achieve?**

How do the students evaluate their opportunities for continuing their education and how long do they plan (or want to) remain in the educational system?

The students were very ambitious in their responses to this question: 43.4% believe that they will get a Bachelor degree or equivalent, 29.3% plan on studying for a Masters degree and as much as 19.1% plan on completing a PhD. Only 16 students (0.5%) plan on dropping out of high school, whereas 7.7% do not plan on continuing their education past high school.

Naïve though it may seem (compared to the current numbers of university graduates in the country), this is a welcome optimistic outlook on part of the students, which stands in contrast to their skepticism about participating in the collective public sphere. This indicates that the students place a great deal of importance on their education and realize that the better educated they are, the more they increase their chances of progressing in life.

As far as the differences between the subgroups are concerned, we noted that the Albanians and the Vlachs are the most ambitious, with their plans for future education averaging with a Masters degree, whereas the Roma and the Bosnians are the least ambitious, but with a median of “only” a Bachelor degree.

If we look at the place of residence, the students from Strumica and Negotino are the least ambitious, followed by Debar and Resen and then Gevgelija and Kratovo.

Delchevo and Veles are in the final group before the most ambitious students, who are from Struga, Shtip, Kichevo, Bitola and Skopje.

The young women and the students from the urban areas are slightly (but significantly) more ambitious than their male and rural peers respectively.

It is interesting to note that the LYI members differed in their responses in what could be considered a surprising direction, as their plans for further education were less ambitious compared to those of the other students. This seeming lack of ambition, however, could also be interpreted to reveal more rational and realistic plans on part of the LYI members. The differences were of a medium effect size ( $d=0.41$ ).

## **24. How much do you think the decisions made by the government influence your day-to-day life?**

We noted earlier that the students do not believe they can influence resolutions to the problems in their communities, nor influence the way that the government works, but does the opposite hold true as well, i.e. do the actions undertaken by the government have no influence on the lives of our students? How reciprocal is the exclusion, i.e. how immune are the students to the decisions made by the government and how much are their lives untouched and “excluded” by the actions of the leading institutions?

When asked, *“How much do you think the governments’ decisions influence your day-to-day life?”*, 14.8% of the students believe that government decisions have no bearing on their life whatsoever, and an additional 20.4% believe that the government have little influence on their day-to-day life. If we put these two groups together, we have more than one in three students who believe that the government does not influence their lives.

A third of the students believe that the government partially influences their day-to-day life (35.5%); another third (29.3%) believe that this influence is substantial and 2.2% did not respond to this question.

If we look at the place of residence, the students from Struga and Debar reported the least influence, whereas the respondents from Strumica and Shtip are most likely to think that the government’s decisions have influence over their lives.

The ethnicity of the students also explains some of the variance in the responses, where the Albanians are less likely to think that the government’s decisions have bearing on their day-to-day lives, especially compared to the Vlachs and the Macedonians who are more likely to report a more significant influence. This is a potential indicator of possible social exclusion of the Albanian students, or it could be that the government’s decisions do not in fact have a direct influence on the lives of the Albanian youth.

The students who live in rural areas are also more likely to believe that the government’s decision have little bearing on their lives compared to the students who live in the urban areas. Looking at the gender of the respondents, we noted that the young men are less likely to recognize government influence in their lives compared to the young women. Although these two differences are statistically significant, they do not cross the threshold of small practical effect, which means that what we have are minor differences in the responses.

There were no differences in the responses between the LYI members and the other participants.

## **25. Given the choice, where would you prefer to work and build a career?**

How do the students evaluate the job market in Macedonia? Where would they like to work and build a career? The students were given the options of picking from the public administration, the business sector, the non-governmental sector, an additional sector that they were invited to fill in or chose that in ideal circumstances they would not like to work and build a career.

The students were most likely to choose public administration (37.4%) and the business sector (34.8%), where the differences between the two choices were statistically insignificant. The NGO i.e. the non-profit sector was significantly less popular among the students (10.8%) and the option to not work at all even less so (6.7%). An insignificant 2.6% did not give an answer to this question and 7.6% wrote another sector in which they would most like to work, more often than not stating a profession (and not a sector) that could belong to more than one sector (e.g. doctor).

It is interesting to note that the female respondents prefer the public sector over the business sector (40.9% compared to 31.7%), while their male peers were more likely to choose the business sector over the public sector (40.8% compared to 35.4%). The young women were also more likely to chose the non-profit sector: 13.9% chose this option compared to 7.7% of the male

respondents. Both genders were equally (un)likely to chose not working over working: 7.6% of the male and 6.3% of the female respondents.

The urban/rural division also had an impact in the way the students answered this question: the students from rural areas were more likely to chose not working than their urban peers (11.1% compared to 5.2%).

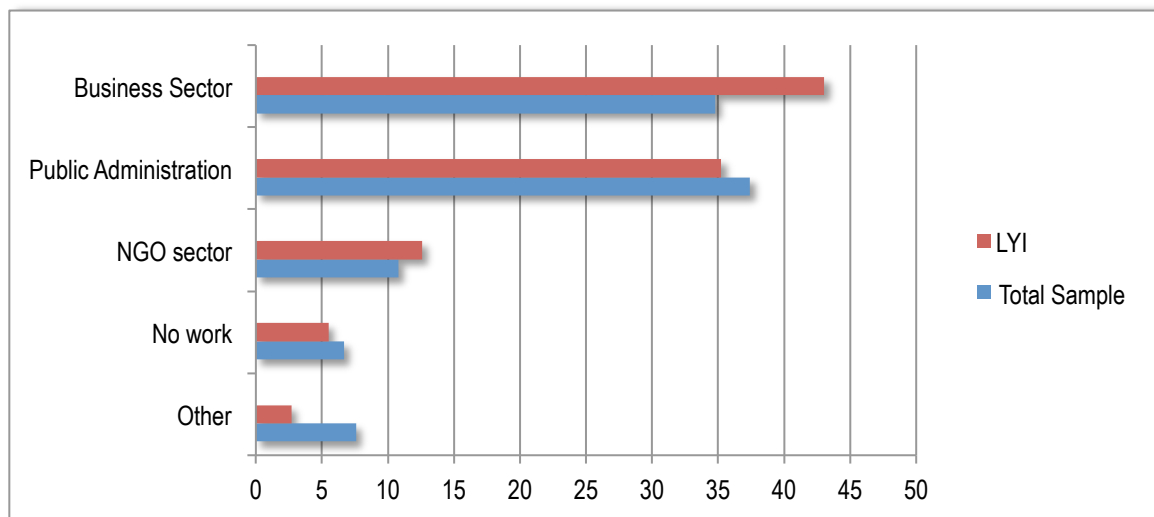
Public administration is most popular in Kratovo (50.8%), Debar (45.5%) and Bitola (44.4%), and the least attractive in Gevgelija (25.2%), Strumica (33.2%) and Resen (34.0%).

The NGO sector is most popular in Kichevo (17.2%), Struga (14.1%) and Negotino (13.4%), and was chosen the least in Gevgelija (3.3%), Kratovo (6.6%), and Bitola (8.7%).

The business sector is most attractive to the young people in Gevgelija with 53.7%, then Delchevo with 42.7% and Strumica with 41.2%.

Given the right conditions, the high-school students from Strumica (12.3%), Negotino (10.3%) and Resen (10.0%) were most likely to chose the option of not working at all. This option was the least popular with the students from Delchevo (2.4%), Debar (5.2%) and Kratovo and Kichevo (each at 6.6%).

Differences between the LYI members and the other students appeared in the frequency of choosing the business sector (where 43% of the LYI members chose this sector compared to 35.5% of the others), as well as in that LYI members were significantly less likely to respond with 'other'.



While the preferences for the public and the business sector are chosen with almost equal frequency among the ethnic Macedonians (37.5% and 38.1% respectively), the Albanians and the Turks are more likely to choose the public sector (41.8% compared to 28.7% and 46.8% compared to 28.1% respectively). The Albanians are also more likely to pick the non-profit sector than the Macedonians: 14.5% among the Albanians compared to 9.8% among the Macedonians.

For illustrative purposes, it is interesting to note that 64.7% of the respondents who said they would prefer to work in the public sector do not believe that the government works for the benefit of the people and 77.1% agreed in another question that the country is governed by a small number of individuals who have their own interest ahead of everyone else's.

On the other hand, 49.8% of the students who chose the non-profit sector do not believe that the non-governmental organizations work for the benefit of the community and only 51.3% believe

that the NGOs work for the benefit of the people. It would seem that the motives behind their choices for ideal sectors to work in are not based on their confidence in their sectors of choice.

## **26. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

Migration and the desire for migration are factors often cited in the literature on social exclusion. Where do the Macedonian students see themselves in 10 years? Is there a looming potential for internal and external migration over the next 10 years?

38.8% of the students are either happy with their place of residence or see no way out of it, since in 10 years time they plan to be in the same town in which they currently live.

An additional 15.9% plan to be still in the country, but not in the place in which they currently reside. The remaining 45.5% are an alarmingly high number of students who do not see themselves in the Republic of Macedonia in 10 years. If the students indeed manage to live up to these plans, our country will be faced with a brain drain of massive proportions.

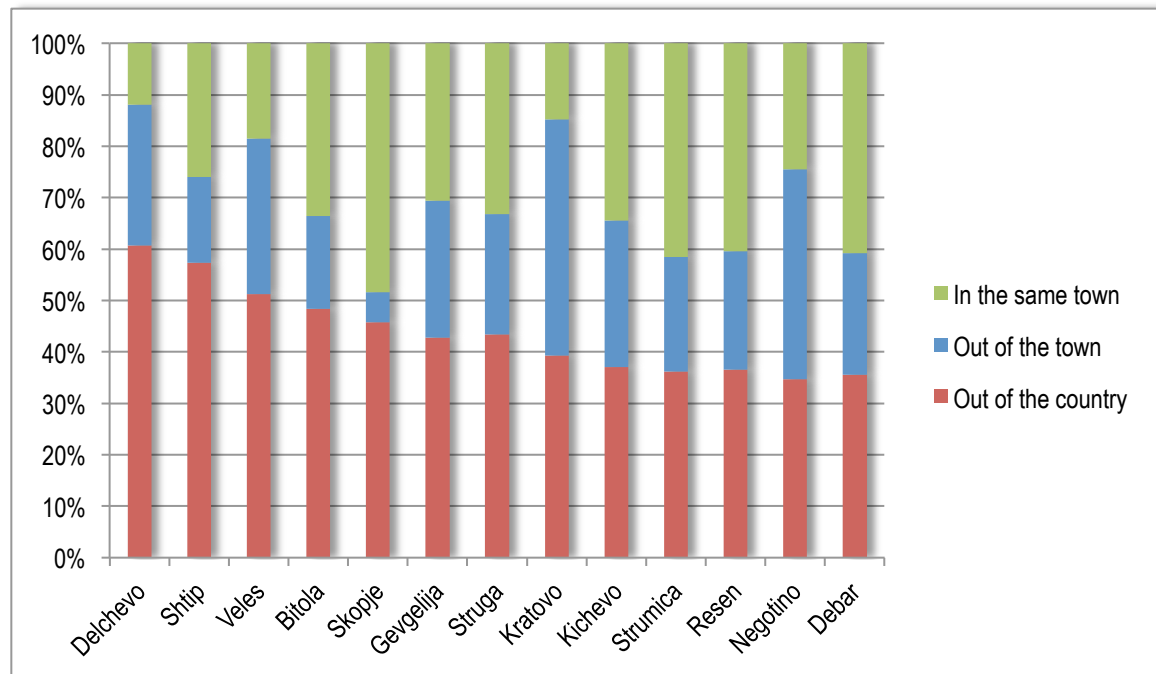
How much do the responses differ between the various subgroups? Which students are more likely to see themselves closer to home?

The analysis revealed differences based on almost all indicators.

The female students are less likely to see themselves in the town they currently live in than their male peers. Only 34.4% of the young women, compared to 42.8% of the young men, plan on staying in their current place of residence. Is this the first indicator that the young women in Macedonia are given fewer opportunities, or is it that they are more mobile?

The ethnic groups also responded differently to this question: the Turks, Albanians and Serbs are more likely to see themselves in their current places of residence, whereas the Vlachs, the Roma and the Bosnians are more likely to see themselves elsewhere. This is especially true of the Roma and the Vlachs, where less than a quarter of the students see themselves in their current place of residence and more than half see themselves out of the country. The Macedonians are in between these two extremes, but compared to the Albanians are significantly more likely to want to leave the country.

If we look at the place of residents of the students, Strumica, Debar and Skopje are cities the respondents are more likely to want to remain in, whereas Delchevo, Veles and Shtip seem to be the least popular places to live in. If we go back to the question about opportunities, you will remember that Delchevo and Veles were on the list of towns in which the students reported to have been given the least opportunities, so this desire to leave their hometowns is not surprising. On the other hand, it is somewhat ironic that Shtip had earlier been among the towns reported to provide the most opportunities for the students, and yet when it comes to leaving town, the students seem to be more than willing to do so, which is an additional indicator for the somewhat contradictory responses we got from some of the students. This is confirmed with the almost non-existent correlation between the students' assessments of the opportunities they were given and their desire to leave their hometown ( $r = -0,041$ ). This means that, contrary to expectations, the desire to remain in or leave their hometown does not depend on the opportunities the students reported to have been given in the towns they live in.



It is also interesting to note that the students who live in rural areas are more likely to see themselves in their current place of residence compared to their urban peers. We are once again faced with the dilemma, which could be the topic of subsequent studies, of whether this is an indicator that the students perceive a higher quality of life where they currently reside, or that they believe they will not be given sufficient opportunities to start a life elsewhere.

The LYI members do not differ from the others when it comes to leaving the country – 45.3% of them see themselves out of Macedonia in 10 years. LYI membership did account for differences when it comes to internal migration, i.e. the members differ from the others in that a larger number of them would move to another city in Macedonia (30.9% chose this option compared to the sample average of 16.3%). However, these results do not reflect the actual situation, as there were no LYI members from Skopje, which was expectedly the city students would most likely remain in. In order to test this, we excluded the responses of the students from Skopje, which lead to an increase in the average to 24.3% for those who do not live in Skopje. Despite this, the number of LYI members who would opt for internal migration is still statistically above the average, but practically only by 5%.

## Extracurricular Activities

### 27. Which of the following activities have you participated in?

In order to test how involved students are in extracurricular activities, we asked them what kind of activities they pursue in their free time. The question gave 13 possible answers, asking students to check all that applied, and additionally providing extra space for them to fill in activities that were not already listed. The results show that only a small number of students (2.1%) did not participate in any extracurricular activities. Most of the respondents (30.8%) participate in only one activity and the most often listed activities are sports and fitness clubs membership and foreign language classes. The students are the least interested in Model UN, as well as journalism and new media.



## Religion

### **28. How frequently do you go to church, mosque or another place of worship?**

If we take frequency of attendance as an indicator for religiosity, the results of our survey reveal that Serbs, Vlachs and Macedonians are the least religious (on average, they visit places of worship only for religious holidays) and the Turks and Albanians the most religious (visiting places of worship once to twice a month on average).

One of the options given as a response to this question was “Never, I am not religious”. This response was chosen by 5.2% of the Macedonians and 8% of the Albanians and was the least likely answer for the Turks, with 1.4% (only 1 of 74 respondents).

On the other hand, with 37.2% the Albanians were most likely to visit a place of worship at least once a week, followed closely by the Turks with 35.1%. For the Macedonians this number was 8.9%.

The most common response for all ethnic groups was that they go to places of worship only for religious holidays: 57% of the Macedonians, 38.6% of the Albanians and 39.2% of the Turks.

If we look at the responses based on the town in which the survey was conducted, Delchevo and Strumica have the most non-religious students, with 12.8% and 12.1% respectively, whereas Bitola (2.8%) and Debar (2.6%) have the least. Skopje, Debar and Struga have the largest number of religious students who visit a place of worship at least once a week, with numbers above 20% for each town.

It is interesting to note that the rural students visit places of worship more often, with the frequency of attendance decreasing as the size of the place of residence increases. This correlation, however, is of a small effect size ( $r = 0.13$ ).

On average, the LYI members responded similar to the non-members, so there were no differences between these two groups for this question.

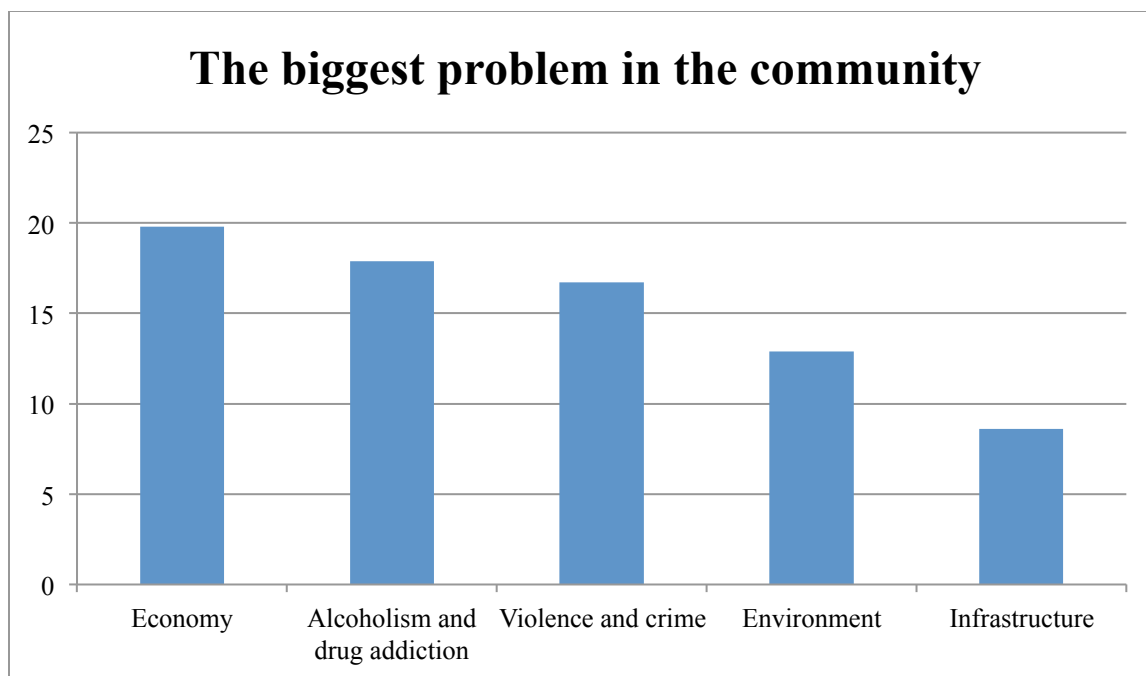
## **PROBLEMS AND INTERESTS**

What are the biggest problems that the Macedonian students are faced with and how concerned are they about these problems?

### **29. What is the BIGGEST PROBLEM in your town that you would like to see resolved as soon as possible?**

The first question in our survey asked our students to choose one of the 12 listed problems or write in what they believe is the biggest problem in their place of residence. The results showed that the problem most frequently chosen by the students, with 19.8%, was the weak economy and lack of jobs. This was followed by alcoholism and drug use with 17.9% and violence and crime with 16.7%. A clean environment came in fourth with 12.9%, followed by infrastructure with 6.8%. The other problems were chosen less frequently (below 5%).





The leading triad of problems (economy, addiction and violence and crime) is prevalent in the responses of all subgroups, sometimes in a different order. For example, the female respondents chose the economy as the biggest problem (with 23.4%) and they are more likely to choose this problem than their male peers, who are more concerned about alcoholism and drug use (20.7% of young men chose this option compared to 16.7% of the young women).

If we look at the responses based on the town in which the survey was conducted, the Economy and lack of jobs was the most frequently chosen response in Kratovo (37.5%), Debar (37.2%), Bitola (28%), Delchevo (28%), Veles (27.4%), Strumica (24.6%) and Kichevo (21.9%). Alcoholism and drug use are the biggest problems in Gevgelija (32.3%) and Resen (20.8%), violence and crime in Skopje (26.6%) and Shtip (18.3%), whereas in Negotino (30.3%) and Struga (21.3%) the biggest problem is the environment.

In the rural areas, the biggest problem is alcoholism and drug use (20.9%), whereas the economy and lack of jobs appears as the biggest problem in the urban areas with 20.4%.

Much like the other respondents, the LYI members mostly chose the economy and lack of jobs, but with a much higher frequency of 28.8%. It is interesting to note that the second biggest problem for the LYI members was the infracturcture, which did not appear in the top 3 problems of the full sample.

### 30. When you were growing up, how often did you talk about local problems and current events with your parents?

Do the students often discuss these problems with their families? When asked *“When you were growing up, how often did you talk about the local problems and the current events with your parents?”*, the most frequent response the students gave was ‘sometimes’, with 43.5%. Almost a third of the students (29.9%) reported that they often discussed these issues with their parents, whereas one in four (26.6%) reported that they seldom or never have these discussions at home. This shows that the students talk about these problems after all, which stands in contrast to their disinterest and lack of a sense of responsibility noted in previous questions.

There were no differences between LYI members and non-members. There were also no differences between the ethnic groups, nor were there differences based on place of residence – the rural and urban students gave similar responses.

**31. Listed below are a few problems that other young people of your age are concerned about. Please rate each problem on a scale from 1 to 5 based on how much it concerns you, where 1 means you are not concerned at all and 5 means you are very concerned.**

How concerned are the students about the problems in their communities. We asked the students to rate their concern for these problems on a scale from 1 (not at all concerned) to 5 (very concerned). The problems listed here corresponded to those in the previous question: Access to quality health care (M= 4.3304); the Environment (M= 4.0864); Unemployment and a weak economy (M= 4.0512); Access to quality education (M= 4.0462); STDs such as HIV, HPV and similar (M= 4.0114); Alcoholism and drug use (M= 4.0063); Personal rights and freedoms (M= 3.8871); Teen pregnancy and abortions (M= 3.7233); Lack of cultural/leisure events (M= 3.6379); Discrimination and prejudice (M= 3.6173); Weak infrastructure (roads, water and sewage) (M= 3.4759); Ethnic intolerance (M= 3.4569); Corruption (M= 3.4537) and Non-transparency and lack of access to information (M= 3.2503).

Even though the problems here are ranked from the one they are most concerned about to the one they are least concerned about, the differences in the mean values are too small to take this list at face value.

The first six problems that concern the students all have a mean value above 4. The remaining problems have an average mean value of 3 (the ambivalent response), so these results show that compared to other problems, the students are not too concerned with transparency, corruption and ethnic intolerance.

If we compare the responses of the LYI members to those of the other students, we have small effect size differences in that the LYI members are more concerned about non-transparency ( $d = 0.30$ ) and less concerned about the lack of cultural and leisure events ( $d = 0.32$ ).

Ethnicity did not account for differences for most of the problems. One exception is that Albanians stand out with their concern about the weak infrastructure and, along with the Roma, about discrimination and prejudice. The Roma stood out with their concern for lack of transparency and access to information.

## Interests

**32. How often do you follow the news on these topics?**

In order to determine what interests the students the most, we asked them to tell us how often (always, often, sometimes, seldom, never) they follow news on the following topics: religion, leisure and fun, sport, computers and IT, culture, politics and service information. When we ranked their responses, leisure and fun were on top of the table, with students on average following news on this topic often, followed by IT and computers, which they follow between often and sometimes. Last on the list we have information about political events, with students responding on average that they seldom follow the news on this topic.

If we consider the ethnicity of the respondents, there are almost no differences between the ethnic groups. The only differences we noted were for religion, with Serbs and Macedonians following

this topic the least, and the Albanians and Turks the most. The difference between the Albanians and the Macedonians is statistically significant and of medium effect size ( $d = 0.50$ ).

There were also differences based on the place of residence, with the rural students more likely to follow news on the topic of religion. The towns also differ only on this topic, with Debar and Resen leading the table and students from Strumica showing the least interest in religion.

When controlling for the gender of the respondents, we noted some differences. The young women are more likely to follow leisure and fun topics (small to medium effect size  $d = 0.28$ ), whereas the young men are more likely to follow sports (an almost large effect size  $d = 0.76$ ), computers and IT (small to medium effect  $d = 0.33$ ) and politics (small to medium effect  $d = 0.30$ ). There were some differences in the responses for the other topics, but these did not have a practical effect.

The LYI members differ from the others in that they follow service information more often (differences are of an almost medium effect of  $d = 0.44$ ) and politics (small to medium effect  $d = 0.39$ ).

### **SKEPTICISM / CYNICISM / CONFIDENCE**

We already established that about a third of the students believe that they should keep their disagreement with their professors to themselves. We also noted that a third of the students believe that the government has no bearing on their day-to-day life and that 70% of them believe that they can have little to no influence over the government's actions.

Do these indicators of a lack of confidence apply to other public institutions or do the students trust 'the system' in general?

#### **33. According to you, how important is school in life?**

When asked how important school is in life, only 6.3% replied that it is marginally important or not important at all. The remaining 93.7% consider school to be important, where 76% replied that it is very important. These answers point to significant confidence on part of the students with the educational institutions, which was previously confirmed with their high ambitions for post-high school education.

The only significant differences we noted were based on the town in which the survey was conducted, with the students in Resen and Strumica attaching less importance to education, and Gevgelija and Debar more. Ethnicity was not a factor in the responses, nor were gender and LYI membership.

#### **34. How much do you trust the local government to do good for the city/town?**

When it comes to the local governments, the level of trust is not nearly as high. As much as 40.6% reported that they do not have confidence in the local governments at all and 30.6% replied that they have little confidence. Only less than a third (28.3%) of the students reported partial or complete confidence in the people who govern in their communities.

These results were the same in all subgroups, so we did not note differences based on ethnicity, LYI membership or gender.

If we look at the responses based on the town in which the survey was carried out, the students from Struga are least trusting with 61.5% responding that they do not trust the local government at all (with a mean value of  $M=0.65$ ), followed closely by Gevgelija ( $M=0.88$ ) and Skopje ( $M=0.92$ ). Compared to other towns, the students from Strumica trust their local government the most ( $M=1.49$ ), but even they are divided in the responses, with the majority (26.7%) responding that they only partially trust the local government to do good for the community. Other towns where confidence is high are Resen ( $M=1.26$ ) and Bitola ( $M=1.16$ ). The standard deviation for these results is 0.99.

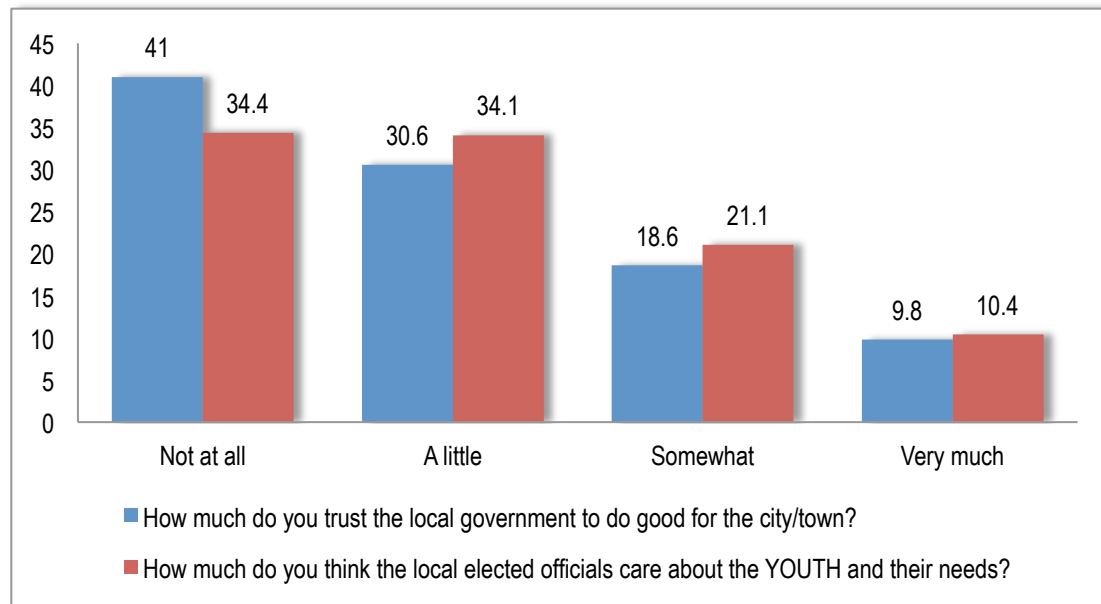
**35. How much do you trust the non-governmental/non-profit organizations to do good for the city/town?**

The non-governmental, i.e. non-profit organizations also do not bode well when it comes to the students' confidence in their work. Even though 40.2% of the students reported confidence in these organizations and there is a decrease of about 10% compared to the students' lack of confidence in the local government, the number of those who do not believe that the NGO sector works for the benefit of the community is still large at 59.8%.

Once again we noted differences based on the town the survey was conducted in: Struga is again the least trusting (with a mean value of  $M = 1.0$ ), and Resen the most ( $M = 1.6$ ). A small difference of a small effect size was noted between the rural and urban students, where those in the urban areas are more likely to have confidence in the NGOs. LYI membership once again accounted for differences in the responses, with the LYI members more likely to trust the non-governmental organizations than the other respondents. These differences were of an almost large effect ( $d = 0.74$ ). On the other hand, gender and ethnicity did not account for differences in the responses to this question.

**36. How much do you think the local elected officials (mayor, city council members) care about the YOUTH and their needs?**

When the question is turned from confidence in the local government to confidence in the specific elected officials who run the public institutions and specifically the attention they pay to the youth and their needs, the responses remain unchanged. Once again, more than two thirds (68.4%) do not believe that the local government officials have their interest at heart, while less than a third (31.6%) believe that the officials care about the needs of the youth after all.



If we take a look at the responses based on the town in which the survey was conducted, Strumica is once again on top with the most confidence ( $M = 1.70$ ) and Struga again has the least confidence ( $M = 0.78$ ). In Strumica, 29.6% believe that the local elected officials care very much about the youth and their needs, whereas in Struga as much as 55.6% believe the opposite to be true, i.e. that local elected officials do not care about the youth and their needs at all. Ethnicity and place of residence once again did not account for differences in the responses and the LYI members also do not differ from the other students.

**37. Please rate the following institutions/organization based on how much you trust them, where a 5 signifies the most and a 1 signifies the least confidence in that institution/organization.**

When we asked the students to rate their confidence in the individual institutions, the confidence in the education sector remains consistently high, whereas the local governments took the penultimate spot on the list.

The students were not as skeptical as in the other questions that tested confidence and their responses reveal that, on average, they neither trust nor distrust the following institutions: education sector, including schools ( $M = 3.58$ ), international organizations ( $M = 3.24$ ), health sector, including hospitals and clinics ( $M = 3.19$ ), non-governmental organizations ( $M = 3.18$ ), police ( $M = 3.04$ ), public media ( $M = 2.97$ ), judiciary ( $M = 2.93$ ), the state electoral commission ( $M = 2.89$ ), the local/municipal government ( $M = 2.80$ ) and customs ( $M = 2.65$ ).

It is interesting to note that this trend of decreased skepticism appears in the first question where the options allowed for an ambivalent or neutral response. For all other questions the students had to choose a positive or a negative direction, but this time they had a neutral option which was chosen on a massive scale: it was the most often chosen response. It is also interesting that although this option was the most widely picked, it did not lower the number of students who did not rank the institutions. This number varied between 7 and 8%.

All in all, the students are ambivalent and divided in their responses, which once again points to a disinterested attitude towards the system and the society in which they live. This disinterest is a

feature of all ethnic groups, as ethnicity did not account for differences in the responses to this question.

If we look at the differences between the students from the rural and urban areas, we noted that the rural students on average have less confidence in the health care system, education, customs, the police and the State Electoral Commission (SEC), with differences of a small effect size (on average  $d = 0.27$ ).

Taking into account the town in which the survey was conducted, there were no differences in the responses on the students' confidence in the police, the SEC, public media and NGOs.

For the remaining institutions, we noted the following differences:

The health care system got the highest vote of confidence in Negotino ( $M = 3.69$ ) and the lowest in Bitola ( $M = 2.89$ ).

The education system got the highest vote of confidence in Negotino ( $M = 3.97$ ) and the lowest in Strumica ( $M = 3.30$ ).

The judicial system got the highest vote of confidence in Resen ( $M = 3.34$ ) and the lowest in Kichevo ( $M = 2.72$ ).

Customs got the most confidence among students from Negotino ( $M = 2.91$ ) and the least among students from Kratovo ( $M = 2.32$ ).

The non-governmental organizations are most popular in Negotino ( $M = 3.46$ ) and the least popular in Resen ( $M = 2.82$ ).

Finally, the local governments have the best reputation in Strumica ( $M = 3.29$ ) and the worst in Resen ( $M = 2.50$ ).

Gender accounted for differences only for the police and the judicial system, with young women revealing a tendency to have more confidence in these institutions. The differences are of a small effect size ( $d = 0.22$ ).

The LYI members differ from the other respondents in that they have less confidence in customs (differences of a small to medium effect size  $d = 0.33$ ) and the judicial system (differences are of a small effect size  $d = 0.24$ ). Compared to the others, they only have more confidence in the International organizations, with differences of a small effect size ( $d = 0.29$ ).

### **38. To what extent do the activities of the non-governmental/non-profit impact your day-to-day life?**

The numbers on the perceived impact of the non-governmental and non-profit organization on the students' lives were consistent with the noted cynicism on behalf of the respondents. Almost 60% of them believe that the activities of the NGO sector have no bearing on their lives, 28.8% perceive partial impact and only 13.8% said that the non-governmental organization have a large impact on their day-to-day lives.

If we look at the responses based on the town in which the survey was conducted, the students in Struga are least likely to recognize influence (with a mean value of  $M = 1.16$ , they believe on average that the NGO sector has little bearing on their lives), whereas in Strumica they are most likely to perceive this. The majority of students in Struga (33.2%) believe that the NGO sector's work has no impact on their lives at all.

The ethnicity of the students, their place of residence and their gender did not account for differences in their responses. On the other hand, we noted differences between LYI members

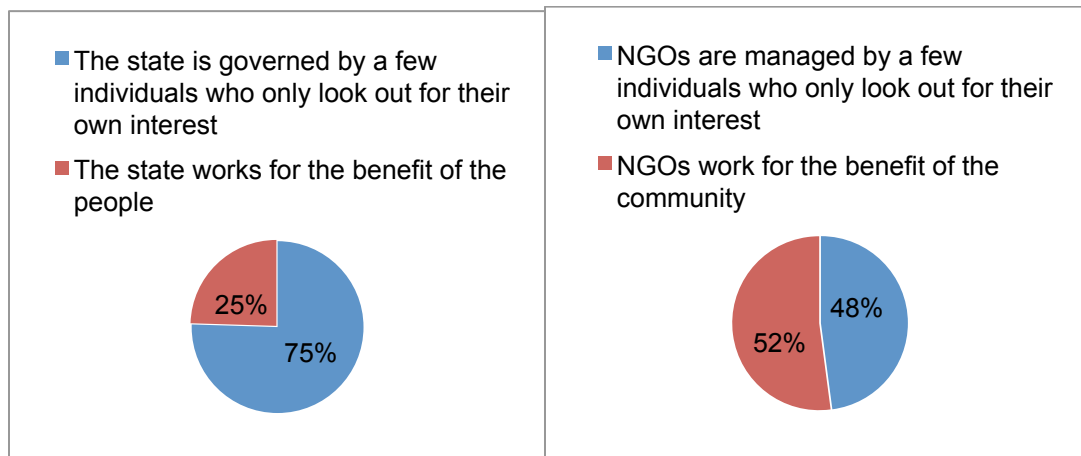
and the other students, in that with a mean value of  $M = 1.69$ , the LYI members are more likely to believe that the non-governmental organizations have an impact on their day-to-day lives. These differences are of a small to medium effect ( $d = 0.40$ ).

**39. The state is led by a few people with big interests who only look out for themselves OR The state works for everyone's benefit**

The second set of opposing statements that the students were asked to choose from tested their confidence in the work of the state. The responses revealed a high level of cynicism among the students, 77% of whom replied that the state is governed by a small number of individuals who only look out for their own interests. These 77% percent are part of those who replied to the question, as 16.6% chose to not answer the question at all.

Even though the majority of the respondents chose the cynical statement on the work of the state, there were nevertheless significant differences in the responses depending on the town in which the survey was conducted. As much as 91.5% of the students in Gevgelija believe that the state is led by a few people who only look out for themselves, whereas in Debar, where students were least likely to choose this statement, the percentage of cynics is still high at 61.5%.

There were no differences in the responses to this question based on the ethnicity, place of residence, LYI membership and the gender of the participants.



**40. Non-governmental organizations are led by a few people with big interests who only look out for themselves OR Non-governmental organizations work for everyone's benefit**

We also noted significant cynicism when it comes to the NGO sector; however, the level of cynicism here is much lower compared to the previous question. The students' responses here are split in half, where 47,9% revealed a cynical attitude towards the work carried out by the NGO sector. Once again in this question we have a large percentage of no responses: 17.9% chose to not answer this question.

As in the previous question, there are no differences based on ethnicity, place of residence, gender, nor did the town in which the survey was conducted have bearing on the responses of the

students. As expected when we consider the responses to other questions about the NGO sector, the responses of the LYI members differed compared to those of the other students in that they are more likely to believe that the non-governmental organizations work for everyone's benefit. These differences are of medium to large effect ( $d = 0.65$ ), where more than three in four (76.1%) of the LYI members chose this statement compared to 51% of the other students.

- 41. Given the chance, most people would use others OR Most people are fair with others;**  
**42. Given the chance, most people would try to use me OR Most people are fair to me**

What about the students' cynicism when it comes not to institutions but to people in general? A shocking 76% of the students who responded to this question believe that given the chance, most people would use others! This is an indication that the students' lack of confidence does not stop with the institutions, but is also prevalent on the individual level.

Nevertheless, as much as a quarter of the respondents could not decide between the two opposing statements and did not answer the question.

We noted differences in the students responses when controlling for place of residence, which revealed that students from rural areas are less skeptical on this issue. Even though the majority of these students are skeptical, there are significant differences between the two groups: 65.7% of the students in rural areas compared to 80.6% of the students who live in urban areas.

The ethnicity of the students and the town in which the survey was conducted had no bearing on the responses to this question. On the other hand, LYI membership did account for differences in the responses and with 87% having chosen the first statement, they are on average more skeptical than the other students who participated in the survey. The differences have a small practical effect ( $d=0.34$ ).

When the issue of confidence is formulated directly at the students and they are asked to assess whether other people would try to use them or treat them fairly on the personal level, we noted that the cynicism decreased. Opinions are once again divided and 51.5% still believe that given the chance, most people would try to use them.



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