International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)
Volume 5, Issue 3, March 2018, PP 124-135
ISSN 2349-0373 (Print) & ISSN 2349-0381 (Online)
http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0503013
www.arcjournals.org

Youth Democratic Practices in Four European Countries

Dániel Oross – Andrea Szabó

Hungary

Corresponding Author** ***Dániel Oross – Andrea Szabó. Hungary

Abstract: *The paper aims to reveal the impact of current political contexts on non-electoral participation by presenting four dissimilar European cases (Austria, Belgium, Hungary and Switzerland). We explore how different political opportunity structures affect the gap between young peoples' and adults' non-electoral participation. By challenging the political opportunity structure paradigm, we suppose that age is a key factor behind non-electoral participation and by comparing non-electoral participation to electoral participation we expect that non-electoral participation increases the likelihood of electoral participation, especially among young people.*

The paper analyses seven datasets (2002 – 2014/2015) of the European Social Survey (ESS) in order to elaborate a comparative perspective on non-electoral forms of political participation. We found that compulsory voting is the most effective in reducing the gap between adults and young peoples' participation. Instead of age affect, the paper revealed four socio-cultural effects explaining non-electoral participation regardless of the differences in electoral systems.

Keywords: *Youth Transition, Youth Participation, Political Opportunity Structures, Comparative Politics*

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of youth participation has received a great deal of attention in recent times. From scholars who write about the decline in political participation there is a growing body of literature on how citizens, especially younger generations, tend to prefer participating in the extra-parliamentary realm, in non-hierarchical and informal networks to get their voices heard in the political arena (Teorell et al. 2007a; Marienet al. 2010) It may well be the case that the upcoming generations prefer participatory acts that are taking place beyond party politics like protest acts (demonstrations, petitions, boycotts, etc.) or are simply interested in inventing novel forms of political participation (Phelps, 2012).

The emergence of novel forms of participation presents a theoretical challenge, prompting researchers to come up with new concepts and distinctions. One such innovation has been the separation of the 'political' and 'civic' forms of participation. (Dahlgren 2000; Dalton 2008; Livingstone et al. 2005; O'Toole et al. 2003; Phelps 2012; Verba et al. 1995). Other salient theoretical attempts include: Barnes and Kaase's (1979) distinction between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' forms of participation, Inglehart and Catterberg's (2002) focus on 'elite driven' and 'anti-elitist' mobilization, Norris' (2012) 'citizen-oriented' and 'case-oriented' participation, institutionalized forms closely related to the electoral process versus non-institutionalized forms that keep their distance from the political system (Marien et al. 2010) and Dalton's 'responsibility-based' and 'commitment-based' participation.

We approach the debate about the lack of electoral participation of young citizens by exploring potential causal forces at play. In order to shed light on how electoral participation is related to any other forms of political action our paper differentiates two categories: electoral participation, which means participation at parliamentary elections and non-electoral participation meaning participation in political organizations as well as forms of participation related to these organizations (such as campaigning, participation in meetings, wearing the symbols of these organizations and direct forms of political participation i.e. sit-ins, blockades, expressive and symbolic acts).[1]

[1]The literature differentiates a third form of political participation: 'new' or 'virtual' forms of political participation typically require low levels of commitment and few resources. With the help of the internet it has become possible to take part in both *traditional* and *collective* forms of political participation, for example,

The literature on political participation has tended to blame young citizens for their lack of political participation; however, it is also worth considering how opportunity structures influence non-electoral participation of young people. Recent results (Grasso, 2016) suggest that nation-specific political contexts are more important than the 'logic of post-industrialism' in patterns of political participation over time. Therefore our research draws on the political opportunity structure (POS) paradigm in social movement research that states that political opportunities shaped by access to the political system or alliance and conflict structures influence the choice of protest strategies and the impact of social movements on their environment (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 58). Only recently has research been conducted on the sources of cross-national differences in political participation beyond voting and the influence of political context and on non-electoral forms of political participation remains a less-well researched area. Exploring the correlates of non-electoral participation by testing a political opportunity structure through a context-driven research agenda (Vrábliková, 2014) found that only one type of institutional decentralization leading to a higher number of veto players and thus a more open POS motivates increased non-electoral participation.

In order to investigate the reasons behind the changing forms of citizens' political participation this paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of regional differences in Europe by studying four dissimilar cases (Austria, Belgium, Switzerland and Hungary) among the European countries surveyed by the European Social Survey. We suggest that individuals do act in a social and political context (Franklin, 2004, p. 206), therefore both individual-level and election-specific information are important (Fieldhouse et al. 2007) in understanding young peoples' political participation.

2. JUSTIFICATION OF THE CASE SELECTION

The aim of the paper is to gain a deeper understanding of the context dependency and conceptual meaning of non-electoral participation in diverse institutional contexts by studying four dissimilar cases (Switzerland, Belgium, Austria and Hungary). Our paper compares European countries with similar political systems that differ in one institutional variable (compulsory electoral system and electoral system with lowered voting age) and countries with different political systems that differ in one critical institutional variable (post-communist political system, representative versus direct democracy).

In order to influence the political process, young Swiss men and women use a variety of different forms of participation. Instruments of direct democracy not only promote related forms of participation, but apparently cause a snowball effect. When young people learn that they can make a difference through their political commitment, on the basis of this experience they may be more willing to make a greater effort, be it through a time-demanding commitment or by studying more about political issues. Young Swiss respondents are less likely to go to the polls and the voter turnout in this age group is lower than in other western European countries. There is a significant difference in voting turnout since that is less important for young Swiss people, compared to other forms of participation (Rothenb**ü**hler et al. 2012, p. 43).

There are only a few, but a growing number of states in Europe where the voting age at national elections is below 18 years. Austria[2] was the first country where the voting age was lowered from 18 to 16 in 2007[3], Norway followed suit in 2011 and then Scotland in 2014. Being the first country in Europe to lower the voting age makes Austria one of the very few countries with a general voting age that low and provides us with a particularly interesting group of young voters (Wagner et al. 2012). However, little is written about the effect of lowered voting age on non-electoral forms of participation.

According to Quintelier (2008, p. 25), there is no regular 'political participation'-panic among Belgian youth because of compulsory voting in Belgium, and for this reason the government also has less interest in political participation. Some authors (Quintelier et al. 2011**)** have demonstrated that

through blogging, posting and other forms of social media use – but this third form is not analysed in this paper due to a lack of data in the ESS questionnaire.

[2]Compulsory voting was introduced in Austria in 1924. Although it was abolished at national level after the presidential elections in 1925, it remained in force in the region of Tyrol until 2004.

[3]The Federal law on the Change of the Rights to Vote (32/BNR (XXIII GP)) provides the right for young people who have reached the 16th year of age to vote at local, regional, national and European levels.

older age groups are more strongly affected by compulsory voting than younger age groups, thus rendering the age gap in voter turnout even larger than it would be in other voting systems. Compulsory voting might induce young citizens to participate at elections (Wattenberg, 2007) but it cannot be taken for granted that it tends to boost non-electoral participation.

For the new democracies of the post-communist countries, disenchantment with politics and low self-perceived political efficacy are still very serious problems. In Hungary, civic participation is low even as compared to other post-communist countries. Therefore we claim that the communist heritage of the country seems to have an enduring negative impact on political participation. Compared to electoral participation, among the whole population the level of participation in non-electoral forms of political participation is still low; electoral participation is 2.5 to 3 times higher than the most preferred other form of participation (Kern–Szabó, 2011, p. 22). Although for young people, dealing with the mechanisms of institutional politics is not popular, out of the different forms of political participation direct democratic participation (demonstrations, flash mobs and petitions) and issue politics are the most preferred activities (Oross, 2013). This might indicate changes in electoral behaviour, but we should not overestimate the impact of this change since all previous Hungarian and international comparative research findings substantiate the thesis that the political interest of young Hungarians is very low and decreasing (Kern–Szabó, 2011).

3. HYPOTHESES

H1: To explore the sources of active participation among young people, it is important to see more clearly how big is the gap between young people and older citizens and what are the most striking aspects of the difference? We assume that compulsory vote boost non-electoral participation and that it has a negative effect on the age gap. Therefore we expect that the difference between adults' and young people's non-electoral participation in Belgium will be smaller than in the Austrian, Swiss and Hungarian cases.

H2: Since there exists no switch to activate political participation, the impact of differences in electoral systems (compulsory voting, lowering the age of voting) is not evident. Challenging the political opportunity structure paradigm, we suppose that despite of the differences in political opportunity structures, age is a key factor behind non-electoral participation in the selected – most different – cases.

H3: In order to compare non-electoral participation to electoral participation we test the proportion of voters among those respondents who had participated in any non-electoral activity. We expect that non-electoral participation increases the likelihood of electoral participation, especially among young people.

4. DATA AND METHODS

The empirical investigation demands particular type of data. For the aims of the research, the ideal type of data is longitudinal, where the same people are contacted first when they are younger and then when they are older. Such datare rare. However to some degree they can be substituted if the same questions in the same form are repeated in succeeding empirical data collections and if they cover a sufficiently long time horizons over which the examination of the changes over time can be accomplished (Robert–Valuch, 2013, p. 126).[4] The comparison is made by examining the responses of young adults in a general population survey, the European Social Survey that offers a reliable measurement of civic attitudes and behaviours for various European societies.

Since we are interested young peoples' non-electoral participation, we present our results by comparing young people to the rest of the population. The categorization of Eurostat defines young people as persons aged between 15–29 years. In order to the decide if this categorization catches participation of young people we have checked electoral (Figure 1) and non-electoral (Figure 2) forms of participation in the selected four countries within the whole population.

[4]The paper writes about the impact of the explanatory variables on the dependent variables and it aims to uncover connections and relations between them. This entails terminological causal explanations, but being based on across-sectional investigation, the paper cannot reveal causal relationships.

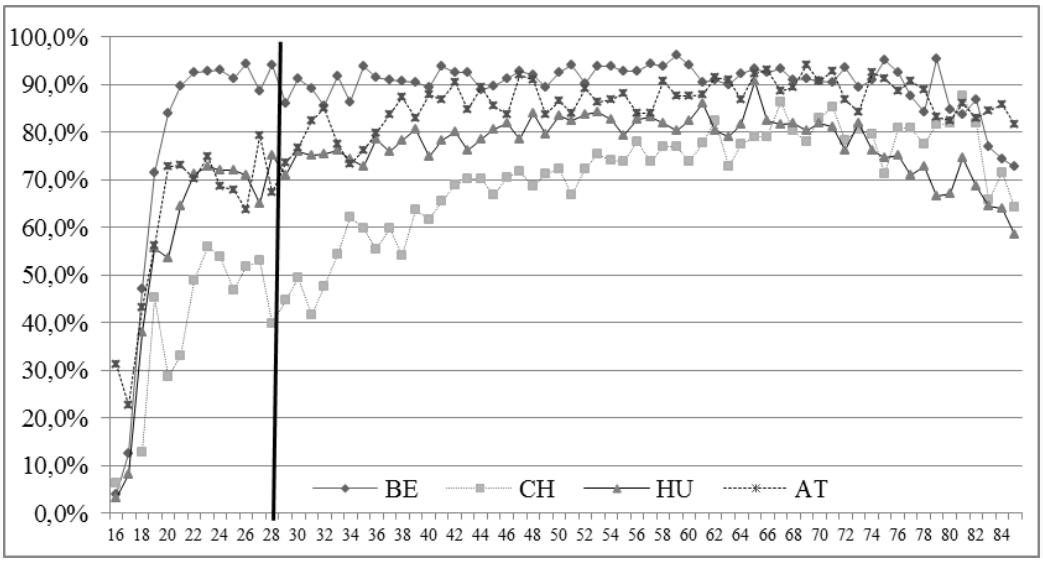

Figure1. *Voted last national election (%)**

*respondents over 85 years are merged Source: own calculation

According to our data it is hard to draw any line for defining youth as a period of life. As for electoral participation, after a steady increase between 18–20 years (first vote) there is a peak point of electoral participation that is reached at different age periods in the selected countries. In Belgium it is at the age of 26, in Hungary it is 28 whereas it is a period between 27 and 32 in Austria and between 23 and 34 in Switzerland. As for non-electoral participation it is even less evident if there is any threshold for defining 'adult' patterns of political participation. Since these results do not provide any benchmark we accept the categorization of Eurostat.

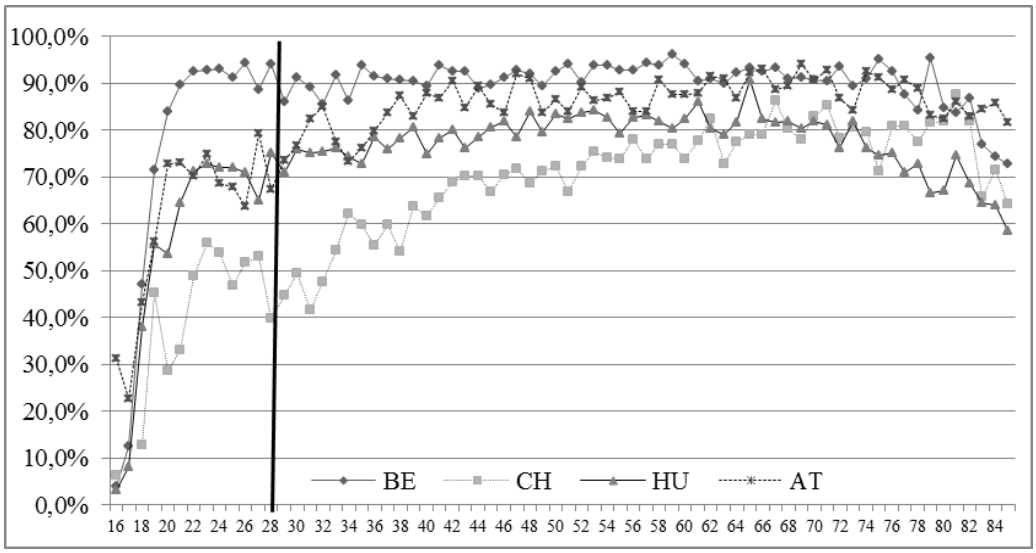

Figure2. *Non-electoral participation (0–1) (%)**

*respondents over 85 years are merged Source: own calculation

The paper analyses the seven datasets (2002–2014/2015) of the European Social Survey.[5]When selecting the dependent and independent variables, the main criteria was that they were all investigated during the ESSsurveysbetween2002and 2014/2015. This way, some kind of longitudinal effect can be examined, so the date of the 'investigation' has also been included in the analysis.

[5]The European Social Survey is a major comparative survey conducted in 20 countries with approximately 42,000 respondents. The ESS is supported by the European Science Foundation and adheres to rigorous methodological norms. As such, it can be considered the most reliable measurement of political attitudes available for European young people and adults (For more detailed information see http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/).

4.1. Dependent variables[6]

These variables indicate the relationship of the respondents to their social context in both countries and show the fundamental differences concerning their relationship to the political system. The first dependent variable is 'voted in last national election'.

The second dependent variable is a participation index. The index was created in two steps. First, we created a base index that could take values between 0 and6, which is used to include those seven forms[7] of participation that are in the ESS (0 when not involved in any forms, and 6if participated in every form in the last 12months). All elements of the index fitted well, as shown by the high value of Cronbach's Alpha: 0.638. As is the case with any index, our index has limitations, most of all, that all forms of participation get the same weight in the model, even though different forms need different levels of individual involvement and different tools.

As Figure 3 indicates more than half of young respondents did not engage in any non-electoral participation within the selected countries. Therefore we decided to take a second step.

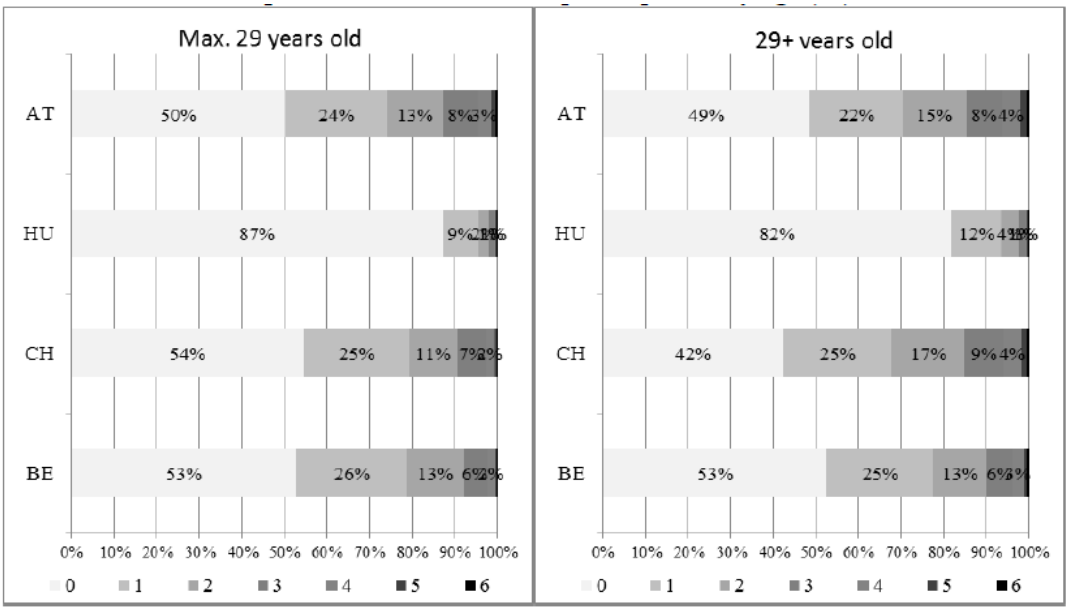

Figure3. *Frequencies of non-electoral participation by age (%)*

Source: own calculation

As a second step the 0–6base index was transformed into a value between 0 and 1 (to take a binary logistic model). If the respondent did not participate in any activity the value was 0, whereas 1means that the respondent had some involvement.

4.2. Control variables

During the analysis in our binary logistic models we used 15 variables (indexes) measuring political attitudes a socio-demographical characteristics of the respondents (see Appendix 1).

4.3. Methodology

For the empirical analysis we used different statistical methods. First, we compared changes in the differences in non-electoral participation at each round country by country. Then, during the analysis, binary logistic regression was used in parallel for Hungarian, Belgian, Austrian and Swiss respondents in order to see the characteristics of each selected country separately. The binary logistic regression was run for the non-electoral participation indexes and also for the electoral participation.

[6]For a full list of variables, see Appendix 1.

[7]These forms are: 1. Worked in political party or action group last 12 months; 2. Worked in another organization or association last 12 months; 3. Wore or displayed campaign badge/sticker last 12 months; 4. Contacted politician or government official last 12 months; 5. Signed petition last 12 months; 6. Taken part in lawful public demonstration last 12 months; 7. Boycotted certain products last 12 months.

5. RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: We assume that compulsory voting boosts non-electoral participation and that it has a negative effect on the age gap. Therefore the difference between adults' and young people's non-electoral participation in Belgium will be smaller than in the Austrian, Swiss and Hungarian cases.

Table1. *Difference in non-electoral participation (Young and adult people, index, 0–1 means, standard deviation)*

Dataset	Statistics	Belgium			Switzerland			Hungary			Austria		
		max. 29 years old	29+	different	max. 29 years old	29+	different	max. 29 years old	29+	different	max. 29 years old	29+	different
Dataset 1	*Mean*	*.570*	*.532*	*.038*	*.493*	*.634****	*-.140*	*.182*	*.214*	*-.033*	*.511*	*.524*	*-.012*
	Std. Dev.	.496	.499	-.003	.501	.482	.019	.386	.411	-.024	.500	.500	.001
Dataset 2	*Mean*	*.439*	*.414*	*.026*	*.489*	*.571****	*-.081*	*.113*	*.194****	*-.081*	*.490*	*.539**	*-.049*
	Std. Dev.	.497	.493	.004	.500	.495	.005	.317	.396	-.079	.500	.499	.002
Dataset 3	*Mean*	*.569*	*.552*	*.017*	*.444*	*.577****	*-.133*	*.148*	*.199*	*-.051*	*.496*	*.538*	*-.042*
	Std. Dev.	.496	.497	-.002	.498	.494	.003	.355	.399	-.044	.500	.499	.002
Dataset 4	*Mean*	*.487*	*.485*	*.002*	*.427*	*.564****	*-.138*	*.149*	*.201**	*-.052*	*.519*	*.461***	*.058*
	Std. Dev.	.500	.500	.001	.495	.496	-.001	.356	,401	-.045	.500	.499	.001
Dataset 5	*Mean*	*.376*	*.424*	*-.048*	*.433*	*.531****	*-.098*	*.146*	*.197**	*-.051*	–	–	*.000*
	Std. Dev.	.485	.494	-.009	.496	.499	-.003	.354	.398	-.044	–	–	.000
Dataset 6	*Mean*	*.438*	*.446*	*-.008*	*.439*	*.575****	*-.136*	*.071*	*.131****	*-.060*	–	–	*.000*
	Std. Dev.	.497	.497	.000	.497	.495	.003	.257	.338	-.081	–	–	.000
Dataset 7	*Mean*	*.419*	*.467*	*-.048*	*.445*	*.575****	*-.130*	*.101*	*.164****	*-.063*	*.465*	*.509*	*-.044*
	Std. Dev.	.494	.499	-.005	.498	.494	.003	.302	.371	-.068	.500	.500	.000
All data	**Mean**	*.472*	*.475*	*-.002*	*.456*	*.577****	*-.122*	*.129*	*.183*	*-.054*	*.499*	*.514*	*-.015*
	Std. Dev.	.499	.499	.000	.498	.494	.004	.336	.387	-.051	.500	.500	.000

***F-test significant at level 0.001. ** F-test significant at level 0.01. *F-test significant at level 0.05.

Source: ESS 1–7. Own calculation.

In Belgium, values of the index indicating the difference between young people and adults concerning non-electoral participation (see Table 2) have a small variance (0.01 – 0.09), and the seven datasets indicate no large differences concerning the participation index of young people and adults. The value of the index is around 0.48 both for young people and for adults (it has the highest value in the third dataset and the lowest in the fifth and seventh). Although the difference is statistically not relevant, it is worth mentioning that young people's non-electoral participation index was higher than that of adults in four datasets out of seven – there is no reason for 'political participation-panic' in Belgium since young people are as active in these forms of participation as adults are. As for the difference index between young people and adults concerning non-electoral participation the Austrian case shows similarities to the Belgian values: they are small, statistically not relevant (0.01 – 0.04). However young people's non-electoral participation index was higher than that of adults in only one dataset out of five (although the difference is statistically not relevant).

In Switzerland, values of the difference index between young people and adults concerning non-electoral participation have higher variance (0.03 – 0.19). The value of the index is around 0.46 for young people and 0.57 for adults. It has the highest value in the first dataset (-0.14) and the lowest in the second (-0.08). However, in all datasets, adults proved to be more active than young people.

As for non-electoral participation, Hungary differs completely from the other countries. The main difference is that the value of the non-electoral participation index is very low both for adults (0.18) and for young people (0.13). Concerning the seven datasets, non-electoral participation is four times lower than in Austria or in Belgium. Values of the index indicating the difference between young people and adults concerning non-electoral participation have a small variance (0.03 – 0.08). Adults are more active than young people in all datasets (just as in the case of Switzerland), but it is more precise to note that while adults have a low level of non-electoral participation, young people hardly have any.

Our results partly verified the first hypothesis. In Belgium the difference between young people's and adults' participation is very low; there is almost no difference between them. The difference is slightly

higher in Austria, but the mean values of the non-electoral participation indexes are similar in both countries (0.48/49). However, the Swiss and Hungarian (even though Hungary is the most dissimilar case) data show similarities from several aspects of non-electoral participation that might be a surprising result. The main reason for the similarities is the fact that the difference between young people's and adults' non-electoral participation is higher (although the difference is statistically not high) in these countries. What makes these countries similar is the fact that in both cases, adults are more active than young people.

Hypothesis 2: We supposed that despite of the differences in political opportunity structures, age is a key factor behind non-electoral participation in the selected – most different – cases.

Therefore, in order to better understand those factors that might explain the above-mentioned features of non-electoral participation, as a second step of the analysis we ran binary logistic regression for the four selected countries.[8]

Table2. *Non-electoral participation logistic binary model*

Dependent: Participation index (0–1)	Belgium			Switzerland			Austria			Hungary		
	B	Exp (B)	Sig.	B	Exp (B)	Sig.	B	Exp (B)	Sig.	B	Exp (B)	Sig.
Age	-.003	.997	.026	.003	1.003	.058	-.003	.997	.101	.001	1.001	.487
Clsprty (dummy, 1=yes)	**.709**	**2.032**	**.000**	**.778**	**2.177**	**.000**	**1.055**	**2.871**	**.000**	**1.000**	**2.718**	**.000**
Zschool (z-score)	**.324**	**1.382**	**.000**	**.449**	**1.567**	**.000**	**.497**	**1.644**	**.000**	**.427**	**1.533**	**.000**
Social_tendency (factor)	**.438**	**1.550**	**.000**	**.275**	**1.316**	**.000**	**.244**	**1.276**	**.000**	**.264**	**1.302**	**.000**
Political_attitudes (factor)	**-.137**	**.872**	**.000**	**-.154**	**.858**	**.000**	**-.134**	**.875**	**.001**	**-.124**	**.883**	**.003**
Social_trust (factor)	.109	1.115	.000	.097	1.102	.002	.130	1.138	.000	.034	1.034	.329
C.ollection_year_BE/_SW_CH_HU	-.306	.736	.000	-.002	.998	.972	-.037	.963	.485	-.092	.912	.155
Gender (dummy, 1=male) (1)	-.191	.826	.000	-.002	.998	.962	-.044	.957	.412	-.154	.857	.019
Trust (factor)	.074	1.077	.026	-.086	.918	.024	-.086	.917	.014	-.054	.948	.195
Zsubinat (z-score)	-.051	.950	.044	-.070	.933	.032	-.033	.967	.343	.027	1.027	.463
Happy (factor)	-.054	.948	.091	.003	1.003	.943	.148	1.160	.000	-.128	.880	.000
Zreligion (Z-score)	-.034	.966	.123	.031	1.031	.242	.051	1.053	.084	.231	1.259	.000
Constant	-.219	.803	.003	-.218	.804	.012	-.261	.770	.005	-2.081	.125	.000

(1) Categorical Control Variables

Statistics

	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
Belgium	12201.056	.124	.165
Switzerland	9809.479	.096	.129
Austria	8257.922	.113	.150
Hungary	6202.644	.076	.124

Source: ESS 1–7. Own calculation.

According to our second hypothesis, we expected age to be a significant variable influencing non-electoral participation. However, as Table 2 clearly indicates, age is a significant variable only in the Belgian case (although there is no strong correlation). It increases the likelihood of one's non-electoral participation (Exp B 0.997) negatively, meaning that the younger the respondent is the more likely it is that he or she had taken part in non-electoral forms of political participation.

Instead of an age effect, we found that feeling close to a party was the variable that affected the likelihood of non-electoral participation the most in all four cases. This variable increased the likelihood of participation the most in Austria (ExpBis2.87), but it also doubled the likelihood of participation in Hungary. Attachment to political parties positively affects non-electoral participation regardless of differences in political opportunity structures in all selected cases.

We found three socio-cultural effects that influenced non-electoral participation in all selected countries. Highly educated citizens have a significantly higher chance to engage in non-electoral participation in all selected cases (Exp B is 1.38 in Belgium, 1.57 in Switzerland, 1.64 in Austria

[8]Models can be analysed for each country, since the value Nagelkerke R is between 0.149 and 0.181 and the models are significant.

while it is 1.53 in Hungary). The respondent's social tendency and the density of social contacts had an impact on non-electoral participation in all selected countries. This implies that one's participation in these forms of political action is dependent on the level of social integration. A fundamental political tendency is indicated by political attitudes, namely how satisfied respondents are with the government as well as the way democracy works in their country. This influenced non-electoral participation in all selected countries.

Hypothesis 3: In order to compare non-electoral participation to electoral participation we test the proportion of voters among those respondents who had participated in any non-electoral activity. We expect that non-electoral participation increases the likelihood of electoral participation, especially among young people.

As final step of the analysis we compared young people to the rest of the population. Table 3 indicates the relationship between electoral and non-electoral participation.

Table3. *Proportion of voters among those respondents who had participated in any non-electoral activity (mean, anova)*

	Belgium		Switzerland		Hungary		Austria	
	max. 29 years old	29+	max. 29 years old	29+	max. 29 years old	29+	max. 29 years old	29+
none	0.84	0.89	0.30	0.59	0.61	0.76	0.57	0.81
1	0.88	0.92	0.46	0.72	0.84	0.88	0.73	0.89
2	0.89	0.94	0.55	0.78	0.9	0.94	0.82	0.91
3	0.87	0.95	0.61	0.87	0.83	0.98	0.88	0.94
4	0.89	0.96	0.66	0.88	0.92	1.00	0.89	0.97
5–6	0.91	0.94	0.84	0.95	0.86	0.94	0.93	0.99
country mean	0.86	0.91	0.42	0.71	0.64	0.79	0.68	0.86
Sig	*0.258*	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*	*0.000*
eta^2	0.003	0.008	0.063	0.058	0.033	0.02	0.071	0.029

Source: ESS 1–7. Own calculation.

As Table 3 indicates, compared to the country means non-electoral activity does not boost electoral participation in Belgium which can probably be the effect of compulsory voting. However, in the other three cases we found some evidence for that effect. In Hungary we found that if the respondent had any non-electoral activity that has an impact on electoral participation that increased the likelihood of electoral participation too. But in the Swiss and Austrian cases we found almost linear increases of the likelihood of electoral participation – the more forms of non-electoral participation the respondent was involved in, the more the likelihood of electoral participation increased.

Table4. *Correlation with electoral and non-electoral participation (r)*

	max. 29 years old	29+
Belgium	0,047*	0,082***
Switzerland	0,245***	0,233***
Hungary	0,153***	0,13***
Austria	0,253***	0,161***

*significant P≤0.05 level. ***significant P≤0.000 level Source: ESS 1–7. Own calculation.

Finally we checked the correlation between electoral and non-electoral forms of participation (Table 4). Correlation was moderate in the Swiss and Austrian cases and weak in Hungary whereas it was almost unmeasurable in the Belgian case. Therefore we can claim that electoral and non-electoral forms are not complementary, they measure distinct attitudes.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In order to explain context dependency and conceptual meaning of non-electoral participation as a first step we intended to see more clearly how large the gap between young people and older citizens is and what are the most striking aspects of the difference. We found that compulsory voting in Belgium reduces the gap between adults and young people the most – young people being slightly more active than adults – while lowering the voting age in Austria had quite a small effect since young Austrians are slightly less active as adults. Swiss and Hungarian data show similarities concerning non-electoral participation since in both cases adults are more active than young people.

Even though we found the highest levels of non-electoral participation in Switzerland, the gap between adults and young people is larger than in the Belgian and the Austrian cases. The level of non-electoral participation is the lowest in the Hungarian case, and comparing the results of the seven datasets, young Hungarians hardly engage in any non-electoral participation underlining that the category of 'post-communism' still has not lost its relevance (Howard, 2003).

Challenging the political opportunity structure paradigm we found four factors that might explain non-electoral participation regardless of the differences in electoral systems. Contrary to our expectation age did not turn out to be a significant variable influencing non-electoral participation – this result might add further arguments to the 'ageing of the protest generation' approach (Jennings,1987), meaning that these forms of non-electoral participation are specific to one cohort, who might have been young two decades ago, but are now typically in the 35–50 years of age bracket.

Instead of age we found that respondents' closeness to a given party has influence (even though to a different extent) on non-electoral participation in all selected cases. This result implies that political parties still have quite a high influence on citizens' non-electoral participation.

We found that not only political contacts (close party) but also individual contacts (social tendency) have positive effects on non-electoral participation. This form of participation might be closely affected by social contacts among citizens and non-electoral participation might be an act of confirming political views by meeting similarly minded people (Aminzade–McAdam 2002; Jasper 1998).Similarly to former results (Marien et al. 2010) our analysis has also confirmed that education strongly correlates to non-electoral participation in all selected cases. Political attitudes, namely satisfaction with the government and the way democracy works in the given country influenced non-electoral participation in all selected countries.

Finally, comparing non-electoral participation we did not find any strong evidence to support our expectation that non-electoral participation increases the likelihood of electoral participation. Although there is some correlation between electoral and non-electoral participation they are not complementary: they measure to distinct attitudes. We suppose that young people get socialized to the political system of their country and instead of following specific patterns their participation morphs into the participation of older citizens.

REFERENCES

[1] Aminzade, R.– D. McAdam (2002): Mobilization. *Special Issue on Emotions and Contentious Politics* Volume 7, No. 2

[2] Barnes, S. –Kaase, M. (1979): Political Action. Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies. Beverly Hills: Sage.

[3] Dahlgren, P. (2000): The Internet and the democratization of civic culture. Political Communication, 17, 335–340.

[4] Dalton, R. J. (2008). "Citizenship Norms and the Expansion of Political Participation." Political Studies, 56: 76–98.

[5] Franklin, Mark N. (2004): *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established DemocraciesSince 1945* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[6] Fieldhouse, E. – Tranmer, M.- Russell, A. (2007): Something about young people or something about elections? Electoral participation of young people in Europe: Evidence from a multilevel analysis of the European Social Survey. *European Journal of Political Research*, 46:797–822.

[7] Freitag, M., Stadelmann-Steffen, I. (2010). Stumbling Block or Stepping Stone? The Influence of Direct Democracy on Individual Participation in Parliamentary Elections, in: *Electoral Studies*, 29: 472–483.

[8] Grasso, M. T. (2016): Generations, Political Participation and Social change in Western Europe. Routledge, London & New York.

[9] Henn, M., Weinstein, M. and Wring, D. (2002). A Generation Apart? Youth and Political Participation in Britain. *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 4 (2): 167–192.

[10] Howard, M. (2003). *The weakness of civil society in post-communist Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[11] Inglehart, R. and Catterberg, G. (2002) 'TrendsinPolitical Action: The Developmental Trend and the Post-HoneymoonDecline', International Journal of ComparativeSociology 43:3-5: 300-316.

[12] Jasper, J. M. (1998): The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and around Social Movements. *Sociological Forum*13(3), pp 397–424.

[13] Jennings, M. (1987) 'Residues of a Movement: The Aging of the American Protest Generation', American Political Science Review, 81 (2), 367–82.

[14] Kern, T. and Szabó, A. (2011). *A politikai közéleti részvétel alakulása Magyarországon, 2006-2010*. In: Tardos Róbert – Enyedi Zsolt – Szabó Andrea (eds.): *Részvétel, képviselet, politikai változás*. Budapest, DKMKA.

[15] Kitschelt, H. (1986). "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies" *British Journal of Political Science* (1986): 57– 85, 58.

[16] Klingemann, H. and Fuchs, D. (1995). *Citizens and the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[17] Kunz, R., Moeller, J., Esser, F. and De Vreese, C. (2014). Comparing political participation in different institutional environments: the mobilizing effect of direct democracy on young people. In M.J. Canel – K. Voltmer (eds.), *Comparing political communication across time and space: new studies in an emerging field* (pp. 117–134). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

[18] Kriesi, H. (2008). Political Mobilization, Political Participation and the Power of the Vote. *West European Politics*, 31 (1), 147–168. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402380701834762.

[19] Kostelka, F. (2014). The State of Political Participation in Post-Communist Democracies: Low but Surprisingly Little Biased Citizen Engagement, Europe-Asia Studies, 66:6.

[20] Livingstone, S. – Bober, M. – Hesper, E. (2005): 'Active participation or just more information? Young people's take-up of opportunities to act and interact on the Internet'. Information, Communication and Society, 8/3: 287–314.

[21] Marien, S., Hooghe, M. and Quintelier, E. (2010). Inequalities in non-institutionalised forms of political participation: a multi-level analysis of 25 countries. *Political Studies* 58(1): 187–213.

[22] Mierina, I. and Rungule, R (2012). *Youth and political alienation in post-communist countries*. The Second ISA Forum of Sociology Abstract Book, International Sociological Association, Buenos Aires: Sage, p. 517.

[23] Norris, P. (2012). *Democratic Phoenix. Reinventing Political Activism*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

[24] Oross, D. and Szabó A. (2013): Students' relationship to democracy. In: Szabó Andrea (ed.) *Political Orientations, Values and Activities of Hungarian University and College Students*. 82 p. Prague: Heinrich BöllStiftung, pp. 9–20.

[25] Oross, D. Szabó, A. (2017): Changing tendencies of youth political participation in Europe: evidence from four different cases In: Michael J. Breen (ed.) Values and Identities in Europe, Evidence from the European Social Survey, Routledge (Forthcoming)

[26] O'Toole, T., Lister, M., Marsh, D., Jones, S.,McDonagh, A. (2003). 'Tuning Out or Left Out? Participation and Nonparticipation among Young People', *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2003, pp. 45–61.

[27] Phelps, E. (2012): Understanding Electoral Turnout Among British Young People: *A Review of the Literature Parliamentary Affairs* 65, 281–299.

[28] Quintelier, E. (2007): Differences in political participation between young and old people, *Contemporary Politics*, 13:2, 165–180, DOI: 10.1080/13569770701562658.

[29] Quintelier, E. (2008): Why study youthpolitical participation in Belgium? (paper delivered at the Centre for Political Research) 2008https://soc.kuleuven.be/web/files/2/6/Reseach%20Day%20Quintelier.pdf.

[30] Quintelier, E., Hooghe, M. and Marien, S. (2011): The Effect of Compulsory Voting on Turnout Stratification Patterns: A Cross-national Analysis. International Political Science Review, 1–21.

[31] Robert, P. and Valuch, T. (2013): Generaciok a tortenelembenes a tarsadalomban. *Politikatudomanyi Szemle*, XXII. evf., 4. szam. 116–139.

[32] Rothenb**ü**hler, M., Ehrler, F. and Kissau, K. (2012).CH@YOUPART Politische Partizipation junger Erwachsener in der Schweiz. Schweizer Kompetenzzentrum Sozialwissenschaften FORS, Bern.

[33] Stolle, D. and Hooghe, M. (2011). Shifting inequalities. *European Societies*, 13:1, 119–142.

[34] Szabó, A. (ed.) (2013). *Political Orientations, Values and Activities of Hungarian University and College Students* Prague: Heinrich BöllStiftung. 82.

[35] Teorell, J., Sum, P. and Tobiasen,M. (2007a) 'Participation and PoliticalEquality:AnAssessment of Large-ScaleDemocracy', in J.W. vanDeth, J.R. Montero and A. Westholm (eds), *Citizenship and Involvementin European Democracies:AComparativeAnalysis*. NewYork: Routledge, pp. 384–414.

[36] Vráblíková, K. (2014): How Context Matters? Mobilization, Political Opportunity Structures and Nonelectoral Political Participation in Old and New Democracies Comparative Political Studies 2014 47: 203.

[37] Wagner, M., Johann, D. and Kritzinger, S. (2012): Age group differences in issue voting: the case of Austria. Electoral Studies 31 (2), 372–383.

[38] Wattenberg, M. P. (2007). *Is Voting For Young People?* Pearson Longman, New York.

APPENDICES

Appendix1. *List of variables in the analysis*

Variable	Contents	Comments	Availability
voted	If respondent ?voted" in last national election	(0= if "not", 1=if "yes")	Individual level
participation index	It consists of the following variables: 1.Worked in political party or action group last 12 months; 2. Worked in another organization or association last 12 months; 3. Wore or displayed campaign badge/sticker last 12 months, 4. Voted in last election; 4. Contacted politician or government official last 12 months; 5. Signed petition last 12 months; 6. Took part in lawful public demonstration last 12 months; 7 Boycotted certain products last 12 months.	(values: 0–7, recoded 0–1) Index parameter: Cronbach`s Alpha .638. Cronbach`s Alpha based on standardized items .649	Individual level
age **(Age: name of variable in the table)**	If respondent is young or not	1= if young <30 year	Individual level
education **(diploma: name of variable in the table)** **(elementary: name of variable in the table)**	If the respondent has university diploma or not; If the respondent has higher level of education than elementary level or not.	diploma 1=has, 0=not; elementary1= has, 0=not	Individual level
Gender (Gender: name of variable in the table)		(1=male, 0=female)	Individual level
religion (Zrlgdgr: name of variable in the table)	How religious are you?	(0–10 scale, Zscore)	Individual level
subjective income attitude (Subinat_g: name of variable in the table) (Subinat_w: name of variable in the table)	Feeling about household's income	(good 0–1, wrong 0–1)	Individual level
Individual trust factor (FAC_social_trust: name of variable in the table)	Principal components: Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful, Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair).	Reliability Statistics: Cronbach's Alpha: 0.711; Initial Eigenvalues: 1.48; Cumulative %: 74.14	Systemic level
Individual satisfaction factor (FAC_happy: name of variable in the table)	Principal components: How happy are you? How satisfied with life as a whole?	Reliability Statistics: Cronbach's Alpha: 0.829; Initial Eigenvalues: 1.71; Cumulative %: 85.66	Systemic level
Social tendency factor (FAC_social_tendency: name of variable in the table)	Principal components: How often socially meet with friends, relatives or colleagues? Taking part in social activities compared to others of same age.	Reliability Statistics: Cronbach's Alpha: 0.534; Initial Eigenvalues: 1.41; Cumulative %: 70.63)	Systemic level
Factor of trust (FAC_trust: name of variable in the table)	Principal components: trust in country's parliament; trust in politicians, trust in political parties; trust in the European Parliament; trust in the United Nations, trust in the legal system; trust in the police.	Reliability Statistics: Cronbach's Alpha: 0.898; Initial Eigenvalues: 4.367; Cumulative %: 62.38	Systemic level
Political attitude factor (FAC_political_attitudes: name of variable in the table)	Principal components: Satisfaction with the government, How satisfied with the way democracy works in country, How satisfied with the national government.	Reliability Statistics: Cronbach's Alpha: 0.821; Initial Eigenvalues: 2,208; Cumulative %: 73,596	Systemic level
wave (Collection_year_BE/_SW_CH_HU: name of variable in the table)	Year of election		Systemic level
Close party (Clsprty: name of variable in the table)	Feel closer to a particular party than all other parties	(1=yes, 0=no)	Systemic level

Appendix2. *Statistics Voted in last national election? "Yes" answer, %*

	Belgium	Switzerland	Austria	Hungary
	Cramer-V	**Cramer-V**	**Cramer-V**	**Cramer-V**
Dataset 1	0.228	0.305	0.153	0.151
Dataset 2	0.095	0.197	0.230	0.230
Dataset 3	0.020	0.221	0.196	0.093
Dataset 4	0.051	0.179	0.185	0.077
Dataset 5	0.013	0.221	–	0.101
Dataset 6	0.027	0.184	–	0.132
Dataset 7	0.013	0.206	0.192	0.150
All dataset	0.063	0.215	0.189	0.131

Citation: *Dániel Oross – Andrea Szabó. "Youth Democratic Practices in Four European Countries". International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE), vol 5, no. 3, 2018, pp. 124-135 doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0503013.*