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YOUTH IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN MONTENEGRO 2020.



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Note:

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in Montenegro. All terms used in this research paper in the masculine grammatical gender should be understood as referring to both genders.

INTRODUCTION

This research shall be focusing on the position and role of young people in Montenegro in the Parliamentary elections held on August 30, 2020. By “young people”, in accordance with the Law, we mean those who are between 18 and 30 years of age¹ and who found themselves in the role of voters, candidates or members of party election teams in these elections. The research included monitoring the election process and campaign in the part concerning young people, identification of the position of young people in decision-making bodies in political parties, analysis of their representation in political programmes, as well as in the media and political discourse in Montenegro. The special focus of the research was the election promises and concrete measures dedicated to the younger population, as well as the way of animation of or communication with young people as voters, especially with those young people who were for the first time able to exercise their right to vote.

The fourth parliamentary elections in Montenegro since the Independence Referendum were scheduled for August 30, 2020. In addition to the parliamentary elections, local elections were held at the same time, at which councillors of the assemblies of the municipalities of Andrijevica, Budva, Gusinje, Tivat and Kotor were elected.

In these elections, 541,232 voters had the right to vote. The Statistical Office of Montenegro (Monstat) estimated that on January 1, 2020, there were 118,649 young people between the ages of 15 and 29 living in Montenegro. Although it is impossible to conclude from the way of

¹ According to the Youth Law (Official Gazette No. 025/19 from 30 April, 2019, 027/19 from 17 May, 2019), the definition of a young person is that that is any person between 15 and 30 years of age. In this research, we defined the target population within that framework, but in relation to the right to vote – from 18 to 30 years.

presenting the data of the Statistical Office how many young people had the right to vote (18-30 years old), based on this number we can estimate that there were over 100,000 of them, which makes almost 20% of the total number of voters.²

The research was conducted by young people who are members of the Montenegrin Association of Political Science Students (MAPSS), in cooperation with a mentor from the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Montenegro.

Method and data

As noted in the Introduction, the report addresses three topics:

The first topic is **young people in the role of politicians**. The main research question we tried to answer in this segment was – *how political parties involved young people in the electoral process during the recent elections*.

The auxiliary research questions we used to try to answer this question were:

- Were young people on the electoral lists, and to what extent?
- What was the gender distribution of young people on these lists?
- What was the role of young people in the party organization during the elections?
- What was the role of young people in the party organization outside of the elections?

To answer these questions, we analysed confirmed electoral lists, conducted a survey among representatives of political parties, interviewed young party members and analysed party statutes.

² Information source available at <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=273&pageid=48> (accessed on 19 August, 2020)

Another topic covered by the report is **parties' communication with young people**. The basic research question was *how and to what extent parties communicate with young people during the campaign*. Auxiliary research questions were:

- Do parties communicate with young people at all?
- Are young people addressed as one of the topics in party election programmes?
- Are topics of interest to young people addressed in election programmes?
- Do parties and in what way recognize the effects of the COVID 19 epidemic on youth?
- Are there campaigns targeting first-time voters?

In order to answer these questions, we analysed election programmes, surveyed representatives of political parties, and analysed party profiles on the social networks Facebook and Instagram.

The third topic concerns **young people as voters**. We were interested in how the elections look from the point of view of young voters, *whether they feel included and whether the messages sent by the parties are reaching them*. Auxiliary questions were:

- How do young people see the campaign?
- Do young people participate in elections?
- How do they decide on who to vote for?

We answered these questions using six mini-focus groups, with young people from the following categories: unemployed youth, employed youth, young women, young first-time voters, young people studying

social sciences, young people studying technical and art faculties. It is important to mention that all focus group surveys were organized online, due to the current COVID-19 epidemic.

The report has the following structure: In the first part we describe the context of the elections and set the theoretical foundations for the analysis of political parties and voters. In the second part we present the results of the research in relation to three basic questions. In the end, we conclude what the position of young people was in the recent elections, regardless of whether they found themselves in the role of candidates, voters or activists.

CONTEXT: FOURTH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN POST-REFERENDUM MONTENEGRO

11 electoral lists, i.e., coalitions and parties, participated in the last parliamentary elections. The elections could be considered historic because after them, for the first time since the introduction of the multiparty system, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), so far the predominant party in the Montenegrin system, has not been able to form a government. The individual results achieved by the electoral lists are presented in the following table.

Ordinal number	List name	Percentage of votes won	Number of votes won	Number of seats won
1	Social Democrats (SD)	4.10%	16.769	3
2	Bosniak Party	3.98%	16.286	3
3	Croatian Civic Initiative (HGI)	0.27%	1.115	0
4	Social Democratic Party (SDP)	3.14%	12.839	2
5	Croatian Reform Party (HRS)	0.13%	532	0
6	“In Black and White”	5.53%	22.649	4
7	Albanian Coalition – Unanimously	1.14%	4.675	1
8	Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS)	35.06%	143.548	30
9	“For the Future of Montenegro”	32.55%	133.267	27
10	Albanian List	1.58%	6.488	1
11	“Peace is Our Nation”	12.53%	51.297	10

Table 1: Results of the Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro, 2020. godine

The election campaign was predominantly conducted via traditional electronic media, but also via the internet and social networks. According to the Digital Forensic Centre data, the amounts political parties spent on advertising show social media campaigns played a significant role in political parties’ election strategies.³ The election campaign was dominated by topics and messages related to identity issues, European

3 <https://dfcm.me/tokom-avgusta-partije-potrosile-vise-od-77-000-eura-za-reklame-na-fejsbuku/>

integrations and the fight against corruption and organized crime.

When we talk about the context in which these parliamentary, and in some municipalities also local elections, certain social, health or epidemiological, economic, legal and political factors should also be taken into account.

In the light of the pandemic that struck the world, including Montenegro, the new **health circumstances** posed a serious challenge to the organization of the election process.⁴ The immediate experiences of the previous parliamentary elections in Northern Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia were not encouraging when it comes to the development of the epidemiological situation after the elections. On the other hand, the parliamentary elections in Croatia are an example that with increased caution and strict respect for the measures issued by the health authorities, the election process can still be held smoothly and with respect for national and international standards.

Montenegro has been recording a record high number of newly diagnosed cases of COVID-19 virus since mid-June. From the day of calling the elections to the end of the election process and announcing the results, the number of infected has increased almost 60 times, which indicates that the measures applied during the election campaign, on the election day and after it failed to prevent mass transmission of the virus.

⁴ More on this topic: <http://www.electoralmanagement.com/covid-19-and-elections/> (accessed 19 August 2020)

Number of infected persons on the day of calling the elections (20 June)	35
Number of infected persons on the election day (30 August)	729
Number of infected persons on the day of official confirmation of election results (14 September)	2085

Table 2: Overview of the number of infected persons from the announcement to the day of the elections (source: official website of the Institute of Public Health of Montenegro)

The economic context of these elections is closely related to the current epidemiological situation, which has strongly influenced the economic situation in Montenegro. In the period before the pandemic, the economic situation in Montenegro could have been assessed as relatively stable. All assumed investments from the previous period, as well as credit obligations of the state, were executed within the stipulated deadlines. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened the functioning of the small and open Montenegrin economy, which is largely dependent on tourism and foreign investments. The economic situation is additionally endangered by high public debt, which is predominantly financed from foreign loans, so the room for manoeuvring is additionally limited due to the pandemic. An economically particularly vulnerable group are young people who have yet to seek employment and job opportunities.

The political context of the August 30 parliamentary elections was marked by deep divisions. The opposition insisted on changing the government, especially having in mind that the governing party had been in that position for 31 years. On the other hand, the ruling coalition used NATO as one of the crowning arguments of the successful foreign policy action of the then government and its leadership. An important characteristic of these elections was also the unsuccessful reform of the election legislation, which was supposed to provide additional legitimacy and legality of the upcoming elections, but which ended with

the withdrawal of part of the opposition from the negotiation process.

A special **social circumstance** that influenced the parliamentary elections was the adoption of the Law on Freedom of Religion, which produced major political and social divisions by polarizing citizens, including young people. Immediately after the entry into force of the Law on Freedom of Religion, the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) began organizing the so-called protest processions, aimed at withdrawing this Law. The issue of the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church, i.e., the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral, its dioceses and property, significantly influenced the campaign and the mobilization of voters.

Certain **legal aspects also** had an impact on these parliamentary elections, especially those concerning negotiations with the European Union, focusing on Chapters 23 and 24. The peculiarity of these elections were the constitutional and legal blockades of important institutions of the political system of Montenegro, due to the impossibility of obtaining the required majority in the Parliament of Montenegro for the election of members of these institutions.

Youth and politics in Montenegro: what we already know

In order to describe the attitude of young people towards politics in Montenegro, their level of interest, interaction with political actors or their reflection on politics, we will use two empirical studies on youth. The first is a survey of the perceptions and attitudes of young people in relation to politics in Montenegro, which was conducted in 2019 by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy,⁵ and the second is the *Study*

5 <https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Youth-perceptions-and-attitudes-towards-politics-in-MNE-1.pdf>

on *Youth in Montenegro 2018/2019*⁶ conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

According to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy's survey, only 28.6% of young people in Montenegro frequently or mostly follow political events. On the other hand, 71.4% of respondents do not follow politics (39.1% generally do not, 32.5% do not follow at all)⁷. When asked to what extent they agree with the statement "I think I understand the most important political issues in society", 41.6% of young people agreed that they understand or mostly understand the political situation in Montenegro, while 58.4% answered negatively.⁸ Therefore, a significant majority of young people in Montenegro do not follow politics and do not understand the main political issues.

According to the same survey, 49% of young people rate the Montenegrin political system as democratic, 19.9% as authoritarian, while 31.1% of them believe that we need a "firm hand" to guide us. This data indicates authoritarian tendencies in a significant percentage of youth population in Montenegro. If they were to choose the type of leader they would like to see as the head of the state, 20.7% would choose an authoritarian, 33.6% a leader "from the people and for the people", 21.3% would choose a paternalistic profile, a person with conservative attitudes, while only 24.4% of them would opt for a leader with a democratic profile.⁹

When asked if there was a politician they trust, 57.1% of young people answered negatively. Also, when asked whether politicians address young people directly in their political speeches, through a programme

6 Study on Youth in Montenegro 2018/2019, Đukanović Petar, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2019.
7 Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Youth perceptions and attitudes towards politics in Montenegro, 2019. p. 7
8 Ibid. p. 8
9 Ibid. p. 11

or some other type of media appearance, only 51.4% of young people answered in the affirmative. These data indicate that political parties in Montenegro are unsuccessfully communicating with young people.

When it comes to political participation, young people are mostly uninterested. When asked if they would participate in a party event, 32.2% of young people answered in the affirmative. Only 25.4% saw themselves as political party activists, while 21.8% would participate in a party rally. Furthermore, only 21.1% of respondents would wear certain party symbols, and 13.9% of them would participate in a canvassing campaign. It is also indicative that more than 75% of respondents would not like to become a member of any political party.¹⁰

When it comes to political preferences, 23.2% of young people claimed that they would opt for the leader or the party that would deal with the problems and challenges that most directly affect young people. A party made up of a team of experts would attract 20% of young people, while the ideology of a particular party would attract 13.2% of young voters. A party that is consistent in implementing its programme and political goals would attract 12.4% of young people, while an honest relationship would attract 11.3%. Charisma of a leader and leader itself would through their actions influence 9.2% of young people¹¹.

The results of the *Study on Youth in Montenegro 2018* confirm the findings of the Westminster Foundation on low interest in politics. Namely, according to this study, only 62.7% of young people are interested in politics in one form or another. This study also finds that political developments in the European Union, the United States and Russia are far from the interest of young people in Montenegro, although the

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 13

¹¹ Ibid. p. 16

interest in what is happening in the EU is somewhat higher. The study finds that the influence of factors such as family social capital (parental education), the level of youth education and age are not statistically significant predictors of interest in politics among young people. On the other hand, young men are somewhat more interested in politics than young women.¹²

Young people rarely speak about and exchange ideas or information about politics with their family or friends, which is a logical consequence of the general lack of interest in political events, according to the authors of the *Study on Youth*. Most respondents do not discuss politics with parents and friends.¹³

When it comes to the way of being informed about politics, young people in Montenegro, in addition to the internet, are predominantly informed about politics through traditional media (through television 63.1%), while social media are in second place (51.3%). Social networks are somewhat less used as a source of information (22%), as well as daily newspapers (20%), a circle of friends is a more frequent source of information on politics than family (14.3% compared to 9.3%), while radio as a source of information is at the bottom of the list (7%). The internet is more often used by young people with higher education, as well as young adults. Also, there is a statistically significant relationship between the age of young people and watching television as a key information channel about politics, so younger respondents were somewhat more inclined to get information about politics through television¹⁴. Young people with higher educational attainment are more informed about politics from daily newspapers, and the same is true of those currently attending

12 Study on Youth in Montenegro 2018/2019, Đukanović Petar, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2019. p. 36

13 Ibid. p. 36

14 Ibid. p. 36

higher education and young adult respondents.¹⁵

From all the above, we see that young people in Montenegro remain excluded from politics and the political process. They are uninterested, not many things peak their attention, they know little and, in the end, they are not that willing to participate.

RESEARCH RESULTS

In the following section, we will present the results of our research in relation to the three questions posed in the introduction. We will first be dealing with **young people in the role of politicians** and try to answer the question *how are young people involved in the electoral process by political parties.*

Another topic covered by the report is the **parties' communication with young people**. The principal research question we will try to answer in this segment is *how and to what extent parties communicate with young people during the campaign.*

In the end, the third topic is focused on **young voters** and **whether they feel included and whether the messages sent by the parties are reaching them.**

Young people in the role of politicians

The aim of the first part of the research was to analyse how young people are involved in the electoral process by political parties. In order to find an answer to that question, we analysed the statutes and the structure of the bodies of political parties that participated in the recent parliamentary elections in Montenegro. Statutes, as acts that define the internal organization of the party, as well as the structure of parties' governing bodies are especially important for young people to have a chance to have their voice heard in the parties they support, to advance in the party hierarchy and gain space to advocate for their interests and work on issues and problems that interest them.

Party organization is prescribed by the statute of the party, and most often in addition to the central (national) level, it also prescribes the lower levels of hierarchy. At these levels operate collegial bodies, elected mainly at party gatherings (conferences, congresses), and independent bodies elected by collegial bodies or directly by the membership.¹⁶ The most important party bodies and entities that we analysed are: the Congress, the Main Board, the Presidency and the Executive Board, the Club of MPs, and special forms of organization within the party (women, youth clubs, etc.).

Analysis of structure of these bodies was conducted by analysing the party statutes of the following parties: Social Democrats (SD), Bosniak Party (BS), Croatian Civic Initiative (HGI), Social Democratic Party (SDP), Civic Movement URA (GP URA), Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), New Serbian Democracy (Nova), Movement for Change (PZP), Democratic People's Party (DNP), Forca, Democratic Montenegro (DCG) and DEMOS.

In the analysis, we were interested in the answers to the following questions:

- Does the Statute of the party even provide for the existence of a special body that brings young people together (youth forum, youth network, etc.)?
- Is there a direct “passage” from the body that gathers young people to the highest bodies of the party, such as the Main Board, the Presidency, etc.?
- Does the Statute provide for any mandatory quotas, i.e., a minimum number of young people in key party bodies?

¹⁶ Goati Vladimir, *Političke partije i partijski sistemi (Political Parties and Party Systems)*, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Montenegro, 2008. p. 103

The results of the analysis are summarized in the following table.

Name of the party and the coalition in which it participated at the elections	Is there a party body in the party that gathers young people?	The name of that body	Is there a direct “passage” from the body that gathers young people to the highest bodies of the party (the Main Board, the Presidency, etc.)?	Are quotas provided for young people in these bodies?
Social Democrats	Yes	SD Youth	The Presidents of the SD Youth are also members of the Main Board and the Presidency	No
Bosniak Party	Yes	BS Youth Forum	The President of the Forum is a member of the Main Board	No
Croatian Civic Initiative	Yes	HGI Youth Organization	The presidents of the municipal bodies are ex officio members of the Municipal Board	No
Social Democratic Party	Yes	SDP Youth Forum	The SDP Youth Forum proposes 3 candidates for members of the Main Board	Out of 15 total seats from the quota for the Main Board, the SDP Youth Forum and the SDP Women's Forum propose 3 candidates for members of the Main Board.
URA (In Black and White)	Yes	Youth Forum	The President of the Youth Forum is also a member of the Convention and the Presidency	At least one third of its members in all bodies and entities to be young people up to 30 years of age and women. At least 30% of youth representatives (for candidacy in party bodies).
DPS	Yes	DPSCG Youth Council	The President is also a member of the Municipal Board and the Executive Board	Local committees, municipal boards, the Board of the Old Royal Capital, the Board of the Capital and the Main Board should be made of at least 20% of young people.
New Serbian Democracy – Democratic Front (For the Future of Montenegro)	Yes	NSD Youth Club	The president is also a member of the Main Board, and the presidents of the municipal youth clubs are also members of the municipal boards	No
Movement for Change – Democratic Front (For the Future of Montenegro)	Yes	Youth Network	The President of the Youth Network is also a member of the Assembly, the Main Board and the Presidency	No
Democratic People's Party (For the Future of Montenegro)	Yes	Youth Club	Not specified	No

FORCA (Albanian List)	Yes	Youth Forum	Not specified	The Youth Forum elects all its bodies, which must have at least 30% of members of the underrepresented sex in their bodies.
Democratic Montenegro (Peace is Our Nation)	Yes	Young Democrats	The President of the Young Democrats is also a member of the Congress, the Main Board and the Presidency	The Main Board consists of at least 30% of young people up to 30 years of age. At least one vice-president must be from the underrepresented sex and one from the youth.
DEMOS (Peace is Our Nation)	No	No	No	Young people under the age of 30 make up 20% of permanent members of the party

Table 3: Overview of the statutes of the parties that participated in the elections in relation to the provisions relating to young people

The project team did not have access to the statute of the Croatian Reform Party, as well as to the statutes of the constituents of the Albanian Coalition. When it comes to the constituents of the coalition “Peace is Our Nation”, we had access to the statutes of Democratic Montenegro and DEMOS, from the Albanian List the statute of FORCA, and from the coalition “For the Future of Montenegro” to the statute of the Democratic Front, Movement for Change and the Democratic People’s Party. From the constituents of the “In Black and White” coalition, we had access to the statute of GP URA.

As we can see, most parties envisage a party body that brings together young members. Also, most parties “reserve” a place for youth representatives in their highest party bodies. On the other hand, only a few political parties envisage quotas for young people in their party bodies.

The Social Democrats of Montenegro (SD), with their statute and party organization, recognize the SD Youth as its youth wing. The representatives of the SD Youth are also members of the Main Board and the Presidency, in accordance with the Statute. The SD Youth organizes

members and supporters of the party between the ages of 18 and 30. Their Statute defines that the SD Youth has the right to initiate a debate at all party bodies on various issues, and above all those related to the position and rights of young people. Young people are mentioned as a term in the SD's Statute only in the context of the organization of the work of the party's youth wing. The Statute states that the SD Youth organizes young members and sympathizers of the party, promotes the party's programme goals and social-democratic ideas, and that it has the right to initiate discussions at all Party bodies on various issues, especially those related to the position and rights of young people.

The Bosniak Party (BS) recognizes the Youth Forum as a party body and a special organizational form of a party that brings together young people. The fundamentals of the organization and operation of the Youth Forum are determined by the decision of the Main Board of the party. Based on this decision, the Youth Forum adopts the Statute of the Youth Forum and other acts.

The Croatian Civic Initiative (HGI) has defined in its statute that the Main Board makes the decision on organizing the party's youth. Municipal organizations can have both a women's forum and a youth organization, if the requirements for that are met. The presidents of these bodies are ex officio members of the Municipal Board. Young people are mentioned only in the context of the organization of the party's youth.

In its party scheme, the **Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (SDP)** recognizes its Youth Forum as a body that brings together young people whose delegates from the list make up the Congress. They nominate three candidates for the Congress. The SDP Youth Forum gathers and

organizes SDP members and supporters of young age, popularizes the SDP's programme and the social-democratic ideas, and has the right to initiate discussions in all SDP bodies on issues related to the position and rights of young people.

The statute of the **United Reform Action (URA)** states that the main goal in the field of youth policy and relations with young people is to improve the position of young people. In this sense, the statute of URA stipulates that at least one third of the members of that party must be young people, at positions in all party bodies and authorities. Young people are defined as legal adults up to 30 years of age. URA has a Youth Forum as one of the internal bodies of the party, whose president is a member of the Convention or Presidency. When it comes to candidacy for high positions in the party, at least one of the three candidates must be a young person, however, that young person does not have to be elected.

Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) has prescribed that at least 20% of local committees, municipal boards, the Board of the Old Royal Capital, the Board of the Capital and the Main Board should be made of young people. DPS has its youth wing (Youth Council of the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro), whose president is a member of the municipal board and a member of the executive board. This ensures progress in the party hierarchy. The manner and forms of organizing youth are determined by the decision of the Congress of the Youth Council (the Main Board gives its consent for the decisions made).

The New Serbian Democracy (NSD) organized its youth wing as a voluntary organization of members under the age of 30. The Youth Club actively participates in all programme activities organized by the NSD.

Municipal boards establish municipal youth clubs. In accordance with the decision of the executive board, the municipal boards delegate a representative for the presidency of the youth club at the party level. The president of the presidency of the club is elected by the representatives of the municipal boards with the consent of the executive board. The president of the youth club is, ex officio automatically also a member of the main board of the party, and the presidents of the youth clubs are ex officio members of the municipal boards.

Movement for Change (PZP) in its statute defines as its goal the commitment to a greater and more significant role of young people in Montenegrin society. Youth Network, whose president is a member of the party assembly, the main board and the presidency, is in charge of achieving that goal. The Presidency adopts statutes on the work of the PZP's Youth Network based on the proposals given by the Youth Network.

The Democratic People's Party (DNP) sees the inclusion of young people in the functioning of the community as its main statutory goal in relation to youth policy. The DNP has its own youth club, which is founded and dissolved by the party's competent municipal board. The youth club has its president elected by the main board on the proposal of the DNP's president. One of the goals of the youth club of this party is to connect and cooperate with youth organizations with similar goals at the national and international levels.

FORCA has defined in its statute that the Youth Forum is organized within the party. This forum adopts its own programme and statute, and elects all its bodies. It must have at least 30% of members of the underrepresented sex in its bodies.

Democratic Montenegro (DCG) has a party youth wing called the Young Democrats. The goal of this organization is to improve the position of young people, respect of the principles of improving the position of young people and greater representation in decision-making positions. Its main board consists of at least 30% of youth. The members of the Presidency consist of a maximum of 10 members from among the members of the Main Board whose public office has been terminated and from among the members of the youth and women's leaderships. As a rule, at least one vice president must be from the underrepresented sex, and one from the under-30s. At least 30% of people under the age of 30 and at least 30% of the under-represented sex must be represented on their electoral lists at the state and local level. Its Main Board consists of at least 30% of young people under 30. The Main Board adopts acts on the establishment of youth organizations. Young Democrats are adopting rules of procedure themselves.

DEMOS does not define in its statute a special party body that gathers young people, but it should be noted that the statute contains a quota for young people, which stipulates that 20% of the permanent composition of the party must be made of young people.

Based on the above, we can point out that most political parties in Montenegro normatively recognize young people through their intra-party policies. Their position and autonomy in relation to the highest party bodies are defined by the statutes, but there are certain differences in relation to who elects their leaders and establishes youth wings.

Almost all parties affirm through their statutes the need for guaranteed membership of a certain segment of youth (usually the leadership of the

youth organization) in the governing bodies – the differences are based on which body is in question, and at what level it is in the party hierarchy (Presidency, Main Board, Municipal Board). Finally, the six analysed political parties further strengthen the aforementioned obligation with quotas that precisely define the participation and general representation of young people in the governing bodies.

These statutory provisions should contribute to guaranteeing the presence of young people, both in party life and in national politics. However, we also see a discrepancy between the provisions and reality in the fact that at the end of the mandate of the previous, 26th convocation of the Parliament of Montenegro, only two young men were members of this body.

Young people in the previous convocation of the Parliament

The previous, 26th convocation of the Parliament of Montenegro, was constituted after the parliamentary elections were held in October 2016. At the end of the mandate of this body, there were only two MPs who could be considered as “young persons” by law.¹⁷ During the entire mandate of the Parliament in its 26th convocation, several young people were among the MPs, but they resigned, so that in the end there were only two left. These are Miloš Nikolić (born in 1994), who was the youngest member of the Parliament and one of the youngest in the history of Montenegrin parliamentarism, and Nikola Rakočević (born in 1989). Both MPs were part of the parliamentary group of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS). MP Nikolić was also the spokesman for the DPS, while MP Rakočević performed the function of the president of the club of MPs of the same party.

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According to the Youth Law (Official Gazette No. 025/19 from 30 April, 2019, 027/19 from 17 May, 2019),

The Network for the Affirmation of the Non-Governmental Sector (MANS) has implemented the project “Improving Parliamentary Oversight and Accountability in Montenegro”, which was supported by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). The project was related to monitoring the transparency and activities of the Parliament of Montenegro and its MPs; the duration of the project is two years and five months.¹⁸ Using the results of that report, we can analyse the activity of young MPs in relation to other MPs from November 2017 to May 2020.

	Miloš Nikolić	Nikola Rakočević
First semi-annual report on the activities of the Parliament of Montenegro (November 2017 – April 2018) ¹⁹	1) Activity index: 0.39 (group of inactive MPs) 2) No amendment activity	1) Activity index: 0.87 (group of inactive MPs) 2) No amendment activity
Second semi-annual report on the activities of the Parliament of Montenegro (May – October 2018) ²⁰	1) Activity index: 1.68 (group of somewhat active MPs) 2) No amendment activity	1) Activity index: 2.65 (group of active MPs) 2) No amendment activity
Third semi-annual report on the activities of the Parliament of Montenegro (November 2018 – April 2019) ²¹	1) Activity index: 2.38 (group of active MPs) 2) No amendment activity	1) Activity index: 2.71 (group of active MPs) 2) No amendment activity
Fourth semi-annual report on the activities of the Parliament of Montenegro (May – October 2019) ²²	1) Activity index: 2.80 (group of active MPs) 2) No amendment activity 3) Among the most active MPs in the areas of: Judiciary	1) Activity index: 4.46 (group of active MPs) 2) Amendment activity: Two submitted amendments with a group of DPS MPs; Three submitted amendments with DPS MP Marta Šćepanović 3) Among the most active MPs in the areas of: Tourism
Fifth semi-annual report on the activities of the Parliament of Montenegro (November 2019 – May 2020) ²³	1) Activity index: 0.68 (group of inactive MPs) 2) No amendment activity 3) Among the most active MPs in the areas of: Judiciary	1) Activity index: 1.28 (group of somewhat active MPs) 2) Amendment activity: Two submitted amendments with a group of DPS MPs 3) Among the most active MPs in the areas of: Elections, Tourism

Tabela 4: Activity of young MPs according to MANS’s reports

¹⁸ MANS’s official website: <https://www.mans.co.me/peti-polugodisnji-izvjestaj-o-aktivnostima-skupstine-crne-gore/>

¹⁹ http://www.mans.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Izvestaj_UNDEF.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.mans.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/IIpolugodisnji-izvjestaj-Skupstine.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.mans.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/3PolugodisnjiIzvestajSkupstinaCG.pdf>

²² <http://www.mans.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/%C4%8CETVRTI-POLUGODIJC5%A0NJI-IZVJE%C5%A0TAJ-O-AKTIVNOSTIMA-SKUPC5%A0TINE-CRNE-GORE.pdf>

²³ <http://www.mans.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PETI-POLUGODIJC5%A0NJI-IZVJE%C5%A0TAJ-O-AKTIVNOSTIMA-SKUPC5%A0TINE-CRNE-GORE.pdf>

As we can see, two young MPs in the 5 periods covered by the report moved from the group of inactive to the group of active MPs, just to return to the group of inactive MPs during the period covered by the last report. We also see that for more than half of the total time, these two MPs did not have any amendment activities.

Young people on the 2020 electoral lists

Another indicator of the position of young people in political life is their representation on electoral lists. The position and number of young people on the electoral lists serves as an indicator of how much political parties truly promote young people in decision-making positions. In that sense, we were interested in three indicators: the number of young people on the electoral list, how many young men and how many young women were represented on the lists, and what was the average age of these young people.

List	Number of candidates	Number of young people	Young women	Young men	Average age of young people	Number of seats won	Number of seats won by young people
SD	81	10	4	6	28	3	0
Bosniak Party	81	19	10	9	26	3	1
HGI	52	7	4	3	23	0	0
SDP	81	15	8	7	28	2	0
HRS	29	3	3	0	24	0	0
In Black and White	81	10	3	7	28	4	0
Albanian Coalition	49	10	9	1	26	1	0
DPS	81	6	1	5	27	30	1
For the Future of Montenegro	81	9	3	6	26	27	2
Albanian List	81	20	13	7	26	1	0
Peace is Our Nation	81	15	12	3	26	10	1
Total	778	124	70	54	26	81	5

Table 5: Review of the number and position of young candidates on electoral lists

Social Democrats – Ivan Brajović – We decide CONSISTENTLY nominated eighty-one candidates in this parliamentary election, including ten young people. The average age of the young people on the list was 28. Of the ten proposed young candidates, 4 are women, while 6 are men. The first candidate among the young people was among the top ten, and it was a man. Social Democrats won 3 seats, none of which went to a young person.

In this parliamentary election, the **Bosniak party – Correctly – Rafet Husović** proposed eighty-one candidates to the citizens, including nineteen young people. Their average age was 26 years, and women were slightly more represented than men (Women – 10, Men – 9). Most of these candidates were in the second half of the electoral list, only one was in the top ten on the list. In the parliamentary elections, this list won three mandates, including one young person.

HGI With all my heart for Montenegro! nominated fifty-two candidates in this parliamentary election. This electoral list had 7 persons under the age of 30 (Women – 4, Men – 3). The average age of young candidates was 26 years. This list did not win any seats in the parliamentary elections.

SDP – Strong Montenegro also proposed eighty-one candidates, including fifteen young candidates. Their average age was 28 years (Women – 7, Men – 8). On this electoral list, the first candidate that was legally a young person was in 12th place. Other candidates were mostly placed in the second half of the electoral list. This list won two seats in the parliamentary elections, among which there were no young people.

The Croatian Reform Party of Montenegro (HRS) had twenty-nine candidates on its electoral list, including three young women (there were no young men), whose average age was 24 years. The first young candidate was only in 13th place, while the remaining two were in 16th and 22nd place, respectively. This party has not passed the census, so it will not have any representatives in the national parliament.

Dr. Dritan Abazović – In Black and White – Dr. Srđan Pavićević – (Civic Movement URA, Party of Justice and Reconciliation, CIVIS Voter Group and independent intellectuals) – Citizens, proposed eighty-one candidates for MPs, including ten young candidates (Women – 3, Men – 7) whose average age was 28 years. This list did not include any young people among the top ten, and the first ones appear in 11th and 12th place, respectively. Other young candidates were mostly placed in the second half of the electoral list. This list won four parliamentary seats, among which there were no young persons.

Albanian Coalition “Unanimously” – Democratic Party, Democratic Union of Albanians and Democratic Alliance in Montenegro – this coalition proposed forty-nine candidates, and won only one seat that did not go to a young person. This list had 10 persons younger than 30 years (Women -9, Men – 1), while the average age of these candidates was 26 years.

Decisively for Montenegro! DPS – Milo Đukanović proposed eighty-one candidates for MPs, and won thirty seats. Of those thirty seats, one went to a young person. This electoral list had 6 young candidates (Men – 5, Women – 1), and their average age was 27 years.

For the Future of Montenegro – Democratic Front (New Serbian Democracy, Movement for Change, Democratic People’s Party), Socialist People’s Party of Montenegro, True Montenegro, United Montenegro, Workers’ Party, Party of United Pensioners and Disabled of Montenegro, Yugoslav Communist Party of Montenegro, Serbian Radical Party, the Party of Pensioners, Disabled and Social Justice of Montenegro, as a coalition, offered eighty-one candidates for MPs, among whom nine were young people (Women – 3, Men – 6) and whose average age was 26 years. Of the 27 seats this list won, only two went to young people.

ALBANIAN LIST – Genci Nimanbegu, Nik Gjeloshaj LIST SHQIPTARE – Genci Nimanbegu, Nik Gjeloshaj proposed eighty-one candidates, and they won only one mandate, that did not go to a young person. We did not have an insight into the age of all of their candidates, so we do not have more detailed data on the number of young people from this list.

Aleksa Bečić – Miodrag Lekić – “Peace is Our Nation” – Democrats, Democratic Montenegro, DEMOS, Party of Pensioners, Disabled and Restitution, Civic Movement the New Left is a coalition that had fifteen young people on its list in the last parliamentary elections, of which predominantly young women (Women – 12, Men – 3), whose average age was 26 years. This list won ten seats, one of which went to a young person. What we can add is that there were many candidates on this list between the ages of 30 and 35, among whom was Aleksa Bečić, leader of this coalition. In this category, in the first 15 candidates, in addition to the leader of this coalition, there were six other candidates aged 30-35, three of whom (with the leader of this coalition) entered the parliament.

The analysis of the electoral lists has shown that young people are less represented on the electoral lists than they should be in relation to the number of young voters. Out of 81 seats, only 5 or 6% went to young people who came from only 4 political coalitions (Bosniak Party, DPS, For the Future of Montenegro and Peace is Our Nation). Also, the fact that only 5 young people were elected suggests that they are most often placed in the second half of the list, i.e., outside the so-called “scope of theoretical electability”. If we take into account that young people make up about 20% of the electorate, we see how unrepresentative the Parliament of Montenegro is when it comes to young people. Finally, the fact that there are no young women among the 5 young persons who became MPs is particularly worrying. This indicator shows that despite all efforts, gender inequality in decision-making positions persists when it comes to future generations.

Also, from this analysis we see that 15.9% of candidates on the electoral lists were under 30. A total of 43.59% of young candidates were men and 56.45% were women. The average age of young candidates was 26 years.

Parties’ communication with young people

Another topic covered by this report is **parties’ communication with young people**. In this section we wanted to examine how and to what extent parties communicate with young people during the campaign. In order to answer these questions, we analysed election programmes, surveyed representatives of political parties, and analysed party profiles on the social networks Facebook and Instagram.

Communication on social networks

Today, social networks and politics have become inseparable and a significant part of political communication takes place on social networks. The ability of social networks to transmit information in real time has changed the way we consume it. It is this ability to transmit information, as well as direct communication with voters, that makes social networks important for political parties.

Part of our research was therefore dedicated to monitoring the social networks Facebook and Instagram. They have been monitored since the day the elections were called, i.e., since June 20 until the pre-election silence, i.e., until August 28th. The aim of monitoring was to determine how much the parties communicated with young people and whether they addressed youth problems during the pre-election period. We monitored and analysed posts that were of concern to young people. The criteria for determining if a post was youth-related were that the post addressed youth-related issues, talked about young people, and that the main actors were young people.

In the period we followed on all these platforms, there were a total of 163 posts about young people, of which 92 on Facebook and 71 on Instagram. The table shows the distribution of that number by parties as well as by social networks. A special part of the table is dedicated to posts related to young women. We can see that only 15 posts were dedicated to young women.

Party	Facebook – about young people	About young women	Instagram – about young people	About young women
SD	26	2	21	2
Bosniak Party	5	3	5	3
HGI	7	0	7	0
SDP	2	0	3	0
HRS	3	0	3	0
In Black and White (Monitoring URA)	14	1	10	1
Albanian Coalition	3	0	1	0
DPS	10	0	5	0
For the Future of Montenegro	6	2	7	0
Albanian List (Monitoring Nik Gjeloshaj)	2	0	1	0
“Peace is Our Nation” (Monitoring Democrats)	14	1	8	0
TOTAL:	92	9	71	6

Table 6: Number of posts dedicated to young people in the election period

When we talk about the topics that were represented in the given posts, we have the following division by topics:

Topic	Number of posts
General ²⁴	76
Education	28
Emigration of young people	20
Young people in politics	9
Young entrepreneurs	8
Housing policy	6
Sport	6
Youth service	4
Youth policy	2
Health	2
Women ²⁵	2

Table 7: Topics of posts dedicated to young people on social networks

²⁴ Generalne izjave o mladima i njihovom značaju

²⁵ Objave koje se tiču isključivo mladih žena

Today, young people in Montenegro are the dominant users of social networks. However, despite of that, there is an evident lack of content about young people and for young people on the profiles of political parties on social networks. Even when these posts get more frequent, they continue to deal with general topics rather than specific youth issues. If we look at the scale of youth participation, we can especially notice the tokenistic attitude – young people are only formally involved, as illusion of participation and “decorations”, while the essential interest and opening of space for true youth participation is missing.

When it comes to party communication through social networks, which are the dominant channel of information among young people, we can conclude that posts intended for communication with young people are relatively rare. According to the findings of the Centre for Civic Education²⁶, five electoral lists (For the Future of Montenegro, DPS, Peace is Our Nation, In Black and White, SDP) posted a total of over 1500 posts on the social network Facebook, and 653 (#IzboriCG) on Instagram.

Taking into account that the total number of posts about young people on all electoral lists is cumulatively 92 on Facebook and 71 on Instagram, it can be concluded that an unrepresentatively few posts about young people and for young people were posted.

26 2020 Parliamentary Elections in Numbers (Parlamentarni izbori 2020. u brojkama) <http://cgo-cce.org/infografici/parlamentarni-izbori-2020-u-brojkama/#.X5iC70eIPiV>

Election programmes as a way of communicating with young people

Election programmes are a kind of promise that parties make to their potential voters on the eve of the election and are thus a means of electoral communication. In this section we are interested in the extent to which the election programmes tried to communicate with young people during the pre-election period. To determine this, we analysed election programmes and tried to identify the elements in which young people or their problems appear as topics in them.

The policies offered by the parties through their election programmes mainly concerned economic measures to overcome the financial and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to this topic, the parties mainly placed emphasis on the fight against corruption and organized crime, as well as on offering plans on how to gain membership in the European Union as soon as possible. Finally, the parties focused on identity issues. In that sense, the general assessment is that very little space was dedicated specifically to young people and their problems.

This section will analyse each election programme of parties and coalitions individually, in order to gain better insight into the programme commitments of parties and coalitions in relation to how much importance they attach to young people and what they intend to do to improve their position.

Youth in Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro in 2020.

List	A separate chapter/ segment of the programme that directly deals with young people?	Name	Topics	Chapters/ segments of the programme that indirectly deal with young people?	Topics
SD	Yes	Youth policy tailored to all	1. Youth employment; 2. Support to young people 3. Social entrepreneurship; 4. Skills improvement; 5. Career counselling; 6. Young people creating youth policies; 7. Mobility programmes; 8. Youth centres; 9. Autonomous action of young people in the decision-making process; 10. Youth rights; 11. Suppression of emigration of young people; 12. State apartments for young people; 13. Sport	1. Balanced regional development; 2. Transformation of vocational training programmes; 3. Development of agriculture; 4. Free education for all; 5. Culture	1. Stimulus programmes for university students for their employment, 2. Loan programme for long-term employment of university students, 3. Grants for young farmers, 4. Investments in University of Montenegro, quality of education, free education, language learning, loans and scholarships, student exchanges, 5. Cooperation with young people in the field of culture
Bosniak Party (general party programme adopted in 2015)	Yes	Children and youth	1. Scholarships for pupils and students; 2. Sport	1. Culture and sport; 2. Education and schooling	1.Sport; 2. Education reform
SDP (programme Declaration from 2019)	No	/	/	1. Education, health care and social policies	1. Open education system, education reform
HRS	Yes	Youth	1. Entrepreneurship and scholarships; 2. Employment	1.Sports; 2. Social programme	1.Sports; 2. Support for young people
In Black and White (general programme of GP URA from 2016)	No	/	/	1. New model of economic development; 2. Progress in rural areas; 3. Modern political system; 4. Educated and dedicated society; 5. For the knowledge society; 6. Health care; 7. Culture; 8. Sport	1. Youth entrepreneurship; 2. Investments in rural infrastructure, which creates conditions for young people to stay in the rural areas; 3. Youth quotas – Each electoral list must contain at least one third of young persons 4. Measures for stabilization and reform of university education; 5. Young researchers, stopping emigration; 6. Mentoring to young doctors; 7. Assistance to young creators, support projects; 8. Sport

DPS	Yes	A country where young people open new horizons	1. Youth programme; 2. Encouraging innovation; 3. Open management; 4. Life and career support	1. New perspectives of the North; 2. Education and science; 3. Sport	1. Support to young people in agriculture 2. Innovation, continuation of education reform, new investments, innovation fund 3. Support to athletes, strengthening of sport associations
For the Future of Montenegro (coalition programme)	No	/	/	1.Ekonomija	1. General mention
Peace is Our Nation (coalition programme)	Yes	Young people are also our nation	1. Tax relief and subsidies; 2. New jobs	1. University is also our nation	1. University Autonomy, Academic Integrity

Table 8: Review of content about youth in party programmes

Social Democrats (SD): This party had a special chapter in its programme dedicated to youth. The title of this chapter is “Youth Policy Tailored to All”. Topics covered in this chapter are: youth employment, youth support, social entrepreneurship, development of youth’s skills and career counselling. It discussed mobility programmes, youth centres and their work and transformation at great length. It was noted that it is necessary for young people to create youth policy and to have autonomy in the decision-making process. This chapter also deals with the rights of young people, combating the phenomenon of young people leaving the country, as well as sport. An interesting topic in this chapter is the concept of state housing for young people in order to facilitate their process of starting to live on their own. Furthermore, in the election programme of the Social Democrats there are also chapters that indirectly mention young people. The topics it addresses are: Employment incentive programmes for university students, credit programmes for long-term employment of university students, grants

for young farmers. Also, when talking about education, topics such as investments in the University of Montenegro, increasing the quality of education, free education, language learning, student exchanges, as well as loans and scholarships are being promoted in the programme. Finally, great importance is attached to the cooperation of institutions with young people in the field of culture.

Bosniak Party (BS): The party's election programme was not available as a separate document. That is why we analysed its general programme adopted in 2015. The programme of this party directly deals with young people in the segment about children and youth. State scholarships for gifted students stand out as an important segment. Also, the importance of sport clubs and associations is underlined, which, as they state, must be subsidized from state and municipal funds. They point out that they will strive to enable talented young people, through state scholarships, to study at prestigious educational institutions abroad, and to employ the acquired knowledge in Montenegro, to find employment in it, and to stop their emigration. In the segment on culture and sport, the Bosniak Party reiterates the importance of the work of sport clubs, as well as associations that bring young people together. They state that more investments are needed in sport, as well as work on making sport more inclusive. They point out how they plan to work with young people, organize meetings, workshops, tribunes and lectures, that encourage the nurturing of a healthy life, socializing and sport competitions. In the segment on education, the need for reform of the education system at all levels is underlined.

Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (SDP): Instead of an election programme, this party created the so-called election leaflet. There was no

mention of young people in it. We also analysed the party's programme declaration from 2019. There is no special segment dedicated to young people in this declaration, but in the segment called Education, Health and Social Policy, it talks about the need to reform the education system and the need for it to be more open.

Croatian Reform Party (HRS): The election programme of this party has a special segment entitled *Youth*, which deals with young people and the goals of this party that are aimed at young people. In this chapter, it is noted that the success and economic strength of society is reflected in the position of young people and their business and life prospects. The possibility of employment and the creation of a quality business environment are listed as preconditions for young people to stay in the country. Great importance is attached to entrepreneurship, both through this chapter and within Chapter Eight, which deals with the economy. The importance of the secondary vocational education programme is stated, which is necessary to train young people for entrepreneurship. In the chapter dedicated to young people, it is stated that the goal is to further encourage and support scholarship programmes for the most talented (scientists, artists, athletes...) in order to further educate them, so that they can apply their knowledge and skills to work in Montenegro. As part of the last chapter, Chapter 25 on the social programme, young people are mentioned through youth support programmes. Chapters with topics related to youth are also chapters 13 and 18, related to education and sport.

Coalition gathered around the United Reform Action (URA): This party did not have a special publicly available election programme either, so we used the general programme of the Civic Movement URA from 2016.

There is no special segment on youth in this programme, but there is a large number of chapters that indirectly target youth. The aforementioned chapters are: New models of economic development, Progress of the villages, Modern political system, Educated and dedicated society, For the knowledge society, Health care, Culture and, finally, Sport. The topics covered by URA in these chapters, which concern young people, are: Youth entrepreneurship, investments in rural infrastructure to create conditions for young people to stay in the countryside, youth quotas, measures to stabilize and reform higher education, young researchers, stopping emigration, mentoring young doctors, helping young creators through support projects and investing in sport.

Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS): In the election programme of the Democratic Party of Socialists, there is a separate chapter that deals with young people, entitled “A country in which young people open new horizons.” Topics covered in this chapter include creating youth programmes, fostering innovation, open management and life and career support. In addition to that, there are chapters in the programme that indirectly deal with young people, namely: New Perspectives of the North, Education and Science, as well as Sport. They talk about providing support to young people in agriculture, innovation, continuing education reform, new investments, as well as the Innovation Fund. It also discusses supporting athletes and strengthening sport associations at length.

Coalition gathered around the Democratic Front (DF): The election programme of this coalition does not explicitly mention young people in its election programme, but pays attention to them through the 10 points of economic revival proposed by this coalition. In addition to

measures related to the regulation of the fiscal deficit and ways for borrowing, specific economic policies that can be linked to young people are the development and implementation of a strategy to attract foreign direct investments in the industrial production sector, establishment of agricultural development programme and drafting and implementation of processing industry programme. This political alliance did not offer anything more concrete than this in relation to young people.

Coalition gathered around the Democratic Montenegro (DCG): The election programme of this coalition paints a broader picture of social problems through fifty points, for which they offered one solution each. There is a separate section in the programme that addresses young people, called “Young people are also our nation”, which talks about tax benefits for young people who want to engage in entrepreneurship and provision of subsidies for youth employment. Also, in the chapter entitled “The University is also our nation”, the autonomy of the University and academic integrity are discussed. Finally, the main determinants of this election programme that can be linked to young people are the work on social cohesion, reconciliation and inclusion, the fight against organized crime and corruption, the respect of human rights, increasing the minimum wage, reducing imports, increasing investment in production.

The Albanian coalition “Unanimously” (Democratic Party, Democratic Union of Albanians, Democratic Alliance in Montenegro), the Croatian Citizens’ Initiative (HGI) and the Albanian List do not have publicly available electoral or general party programmes that we could analyse.

Most parties dedicated specific segments of their programmes to young people. However, there were those who did not even mention young

people as a specific group of society. Enthusiasm and noble goals can be seen in the programmes, but concrete ideas on how to implement these plans are often lacking. Special attention is paid to the education of young people, and business subsidies for young people are often mentioned. Among other ideas, scholarships and tax breaks are most often mentioned.

Parties' attitudes towards young people

In addition to analysing party programmes, we tried to get more information on how parties think about young people through a survey in which we asked questions about how many young people are party members, how they approach young people to rejuvenate their parties, whether they have special policies regarding their youth wings. We were also interested in whether they have young councilors in municipal assemblies and how many of them are women. We were interested to hear their comments regarding the fact that at the end of the previous convocation of the Parliament there were only two young persons in it, as well as their comments on quotas for young people and women. In relation to the election campaign, we asked how and in what way they approach young people who for the first time have the right to vote. We also asked what are, in the opinion of their parties, the main problems which concern young people, that need to be promoted and addressed more, and what their party has advocated in the field of youth during the previous two years at the national and local level. Finally, we asked about the impact of the coronavirus on young people, the plan to prevent young people from leaving Montenegro, the Law on Same-Sex Marriage and the increased suicide rate of young people in Montenegro.

The questionnaire was sent to all the parties and coalitions that participated in the elections, however, although the letter emphasized that a youth organization is interested in how the parties view certain problems concerning young people, most parties and coalitions did not respond to the questionnaire. This, among other things, confirms the already mentioned formal and tokenistic attitude that political parties often have towards young people. They are formally interested in what young people think, but not essentially. Social Democrats, Croatian Civic Initiative, the Democratic Party of Socialists, the coalitions “For the Future of Montenegro”, “Peace is Our Nation”, the Albanian List and the Albanian Coalition did not respond to the questionnaire.

An overview of the answers is presented in the tables that follow.

Youth in Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro in 2020.

Party	What is the number of young people registered as members of your party, and how many are young women?	Do you keep records on young people in your party, and in what form?	Do you have young councillors in any of the municipalities, and if so, how many, and how many of them are women?	How do you rejuvenate your party?	Currently in the Parliament of Montenegro, according to the criteria of the Law on Youth, only two MPs can be classified as young persons. How does your party explain such a low number of young MPs? What can parties do to change that?	Pursuant to Article 39a Paragraph 2 of the Law on Election of Councillors and MPs, on the electoral list for every three candidates on the list there must be at least one candidate of the underrepresented sex. What is your party's position on this quota?
SD	/	/	/	/	/	/
Bosniak Party	No concrete answer was given	No answer	No answer	The party points out that their election programme is very focused on young people, and they are trying to attract new members	They point out that the number of young people in the Parliament needs to increase, but they did not provide specific reasons for the problem	They believe that a quota is needed, and point out that they are the only party on whose list every third candidate was a woman
HGI	/	/	/	/	/	/
SDP	138 young persons; 69 of which women	They point out that they keep specific records through the Youth Forum	There are no young councillors	They point out that the party is rejuvenating itself through the Youth Forum, and that they usually get in touch with young people by organizing some activities of political, cultural or humanitarian nature.	They expressed regret for such a low number and stated that the reason is that the parties give priority to experience rather than youth.	They believe that even without quotas, it is necessary to give a chance to more women to become MPs or councillors
HRS	No concrete answer was given	They stated that they are a new party and still did not have specific records yet	They stated that they are a new party and still have not established all party bodies	They stated that they are a new party, but that they saw young people as an important part of their work	They state that providing young people a seat in the parliament just to meet the quota is not the solution, but that parties should support young people to gain experience and give them a chance to express their opinions.	They believe that the number of women in politics must increase and that their presence in the decision-making positions is necessary. They point out that only when men and women become equally represented at positions such as members of Parliament, we will be able to claim real gender equality.

Youth in Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro in 2020.

In Black and White (GP URA)	They do not have a specific number	There are no specific records on the number of young people in GP URA. There is a database of active young members and it currently contains 62 members.	There are three young councillors in the municipality of Podgorica, and one young councillor in the municipality of Cetinje	Through the Youth Forum, which brings young people together, works on their development and improvement of the status of young people in the society.	They stated that the parties could have given more space in their internal documents to the advancement of young people. They also believe that the principle of determining quotas would be of great importance to solving this problem.	They support quotas and point out that their party is a positive example of gender equality
Albanian Coalition	/	/	/	/	/	/
DPS	/	/	/	/	/	/
For the Future of Montenegro (SNP)	No answer	No answer	In the municipalities of Podgorica, Žabljak and Šavnik, they have one councillor each. In the municipality of Budva they have two young councillors, while in the municipality of Andrijevica there are three.	They state that there are several mechanisms, one of which is the recommendations and political involvement of individuals who want to join the SNP, the other is the public activities of the SNP which are recognized by young people, and finally appointing young people in party bodies, local authorities and in the future in the parliament and government as well.	As reasons for this, they noted the lack of interest of young people in engaging in politics, and as another reason, they noted the inability of young people to progress due to the rigidity of party bodies.	They support quotas
Albanian List	/	/	/	/	/	/
Peace is Our Nation	/	/	/	/	/	/

Table 9: Overview of the parties' replies (1)

All but one political party refused to answer the question on how many young members they have, and how many of them are women. On the one hand, it may be that it is a “business” secret, but it is also very possible that the parties do not keep this type of records at all. Several parties have openly acknowledged this.

A similar thing happened with the question on whether the party has young councillors and how many of them are women. Most did not provide an answer to this question, which indicates that they do not have this information.

When it comes to the so-called rejuvenation of the party membership, they mostly rely on their youth forums. No party mentioned any innovative approaches or use of modern technologies. Also, although all those who answered the questionnaire think that there are too few young people amongst their rows, very few of them offered concrete solutions. Additionally, all parties that responded to the questionnaire support quotas for women in the parliament and municipal assemblies.

Party	What do you think about the introduction of quotas for young people on the electoral lists?	How does your party communicate with young people voting for the first time? Do you run a special campaign for young people voting for the first time?	In the opinion of your party, what are the two main topics concerning youth in Montenegro, and why?	Which youth-related proposals did your party make at the local or national level during the previous two years?	How do you assess the work of the University of Montenegro during the corona virus pandemic?
SD	/	/	/	/	/
Bosniak Party	They believe that a discussion on this topic should be opened, but they did not propose any concrete activities in that regard	No answer	Education and emigration of young people	No answer	They believe that UCG has adequately responded to the challenges brought by the pandemic
HGI	/	/	/	/	/

Youth in Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro in 2020.

SDP	They believe that if the parties themselves do not change their approach to this issue, quotas should be introduced	They do not address young people in particular, considering that the policy of this party is to address everyone equally, regardless of their age	Unemployment and incompatibility of the education system with the labour market	As a result, they point out that the SDP, at the suggestion of its Youth Forum, managed to win an increase of the minimum wage at the national level from 196 to 220 euros, which they consider important for young people as well.	They find it partially effective
HRS	They express support in principle; however, they believe that quotas should not exist for the sake of quotas, but to fill the seats by, in their opinion, people who are ready to take responsibility.	Most often, they communicated directly and formalized their communication through the election programme	In their opinion, these are: lack of opportunities and unemployment	In the short period that the party has existed, they have advocated for the creation of youth councils at the local and national level. They have also advocated for giving more media attention to young people.	They respect the situation with the pandemic, but they believe that UCG could have better responded to the new challenges
In Black and White (GP URA)	They positively assessed the issue of quotas, but believe that existing politicians should pay more attention to youth policies.	In their response, they pointed out that in the campaign, through video materials, they tried to focus on young people, especially on those who are voting for the first time.	Education and unemployment of young people	The policies proposed by this party in the previous period are: 1. The state should introduce a zero VAT rate on baby products. 2. Establish a housing fund for young married couples. 3. Child allowance from unpaid tax debts. 4. URA Budva gave a proposal and succeeded in the construction of the day care centre. 5. State to establish an alimony fund. 6. Introduction of free public transport. 7. Introduction of free textbooks.	The work of UCG was assessed as unsatisfactory
Albanian Coalition	/	/	/	/	/
DPS	/	/	/	/	/
For the Future of Montenegro (SNP)	They believe that this proposal should enter the parliamentary procedure, which is what they will advocate for.	They directly developed communication with all voters, including young people	Unemployment and emigration	In the previous period, they advocated that there should be a quota of 30% of young people on the electoral lists, scholarships for students and for establishment of housing funds for young married couples.	The work and activities of UCG were assessed as extremely poor and not up to the task.

Albanian List	/	/	/	/	/
Peace is Our Nation	/	/	/	/	/

Table 10: Overview of the parties' replies (2)

When asked about the possible introduction of quotas for young people, various answers were provided. Most parties or coalitions believe that something needs to be done to increase the number of young people, but they do not show interest or enthusiasm for quotas.

Also, most parties did not run any specialized educational campaigns for young people voting for the first time. Some parties claim that their campaigns were such that they also included young people voting for the first time.

The parties identified unemployment, emigration and education as the most important problems of young people. When asked what should be done, i.e., what proposals did their respective parties make when it comes to young people, a large number of parties did not answer, and those who did mention the improvement of housing conditions, scholarships, benefits for young people and the like.

Finally, the parties dominantly assess the work of UCG during the pandemic as unsatisfactory, with an insufficient level of quality and readiness for a situation such as a pandemic, i.e., for a distance-learning system.

Party	How does your party see the impact of the corona virus on young people in Montenegro?	What is your party's position on the policy of giving affordable housing loans to the best students, successful young entrepreneurs and young married couples?	What is your party's position on the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex?	How does your party view the growing emigration of young people from Montenegro, and what are you doing to resolve that problem?	According to data from 2018, Montenegro has a worryingly high suicide rate, especially among young people. What is your party's response to this problem?
SD	/	/	/	/	/
Bosniak Party	No answer	They expressed support for such policies aimed at resolving one of the most important existential issues.	They stated that their fundamental goal is to protect the traditional family.	No answer	No answer

Youth in Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro in 2020.

HGI	/	/	/	/	/
SDP	They believe that the pandemic has had the most negative impact on young people professionally, but they especially point out the negative psychological impact.	They support the idea.	They state that they have always advocated for equality among people, regardless of nation, religion, sexual and any other affiliation.	They state that they are a party that, together with the leftist parties in the region, created a programme document "Together for a Better Region", which aims to point out the problems young people face	They believe that free psychological counselling should be introduced in such a way that a counselling centre would be opened in every city, where young people could always ask for assistance with their problems
HRS	They believe that the pandemic has greatly affected the mental health of young people	They support the idea.	They point out that the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex is a law that gives all people equal rights to choice and that is what we need to respect and work on to make Montenegro a better country for all of its citizens.	They point out that this problem can be solved only if young people are given an opportunity to be active in the decision-making process and support their ideas. Also, they consider it very important that the state supports entrepreneurship at all levels and enables young people to earn from their ideas, rather than relying solely on employment in the institutions of the system.	They point out that this topic should be discussed by experts, but they state that young people, as a very sensitive and important category for a society, must be protected by the state, i.e., their mental health must be taken into account.

				They explain that young people are surrounded by corruption and nepotism, and young people believe that employment and career advancement depend on political connections and power, and that the knowledge they possess is not being valued properly. They state that this can be solved through the establishment of the rule of law, reform of the economic, education and health system, as well as through sustainable development.	
In Black and White (GP URA)	They estimate that the pandemic affected young people both sociologically and psychologically	They think that this is a good idea and add that the repayment period should be between 20 and 30 years.	They emphasize that they are committed to respecting human rights and that they support this law		Socio-economic position of young people based on
Albanian Coalition	/	/	/	/	/
DPS	/	/	/	/	/
For the Future of Montenegro (SNP)	From this group, they believe that the pandemic had the greatest impact on the increase in youth unemployment.	They believe that the best students and scientists should get it, and not, as they concluded, party officials.	They emphasize that the rights of all its citizens must be respected in Montenegro, and the SNP will advocate for	They believe that this problem is crucial to the further survival of Montenegro	They promise to work on reducing this rate through already known mechanisms
respect of human and minority rights.	They believe that this problem is crucial to the further survival of Montenegro	They promise to work on reducing this rate through already known mechanisms	/	/	/
Albanian List	/	/	/	/	/
Peace is Our Nation		/	/	/	/

Table 11: Overview of the parties' replies (3)

The parties believe that the COVID-19 pandemic had the greatest impact on the professional advancement of young people. They advocate support programmes for young entrepreneurs. When it comes to the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex, the answers of the parties depend on their ideological orientation, while there is agreement that the emigration of young people and the increased suicide rate are important issues. More detailed answers provided by political parties are provided below:

Bosniak Party (BS) notes on several occasions the tendency and importance of young people being part of the decision-making process. They point out that the past period has been largely dedicated to the rejuvenation of the party and their greater representation in decision-making positions. They also emphasize that their programme is largely focused on young people, and they support that claim with the fact that a large number of young people are on their electoral list. We did not receive an answer to the question whether a special record is kept of how many young people are members of the party and whether any of them was given the opportunity to be a councillor in municipal parliaments. However, we were told that young people connect and act within the Youth Forum and that young people from 11 municipalities in Montenegro have been given that opportunity. They are optimistic about the problem of low representation of young people in the parliamentary benches and state that the new tendencies are such that more and more young people will be in the parliamentary benches, and they point out that they will also give their contribution with one young MP. The party's stance regarding quotas for both young people and women is positive. They state with great enthusiasm that one in three candidates on their

electoral list was a woman. They cite the problem of emigration as the biggest problem of young people. They point out that special attention should be paid to this problem, but they themselves did not give us a concrete proposal. They support ideas like affordable housing loans for young people by organizing discussions on these topics.

They point out that tradition is very important to them, so their position is grounded in it when it comes to the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex. Unfortunately, we were not able to get an answer to the questions about mental health, nor to the question whether the young party members had the opportunity for some of their proposals to be discussed on a higher level.

Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (SDP) at the time of the survey had 138 young members in its register, of which 69 were female. Young people come together and communicate within the Youth Forum. They state that the situation with the corona virus made it especially difficult for them to communicate with young people. However, young members of SDP are not currently councillors in any of the Montenegrin municipalities. What they point out as commendable is the fact that it was the members of the Youth Forum who managed to win an increase of the minimum wage at the national level.

They believe that the reason for the low number of young MPs in our parliament lies in giving priority to experience, that young people can hardly have. They propose the empowerment of the youth wing through their appointment in the boards and committees and higher placement on the electoral lists. They believe that if the trend of underrepresentation of young people in parliament continues, quotas for young people should be introduced. They point out that they do not

have a special strategy for young people who are voting for the first time and believe that they are treating them like all other Montenegrin citizens.

When it comes to quotas for women on electoral lists, they support them and believe that they should be regarded as a role model when it comes to the position of women in the party. They are especially proud of the fact that the president of their party is a woman and was the first female candidate for the President of Montenegro.

The main problem of young people from the point of view of the SDP is unemployment and the discrepancy between education and the labour market. They consider the idea of providing young people with housing loans to be a stimulating one. As for the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex, they expressed support, both by voting and, in their words, by advocating for all citizens, regardless of religion, nation or sexual orientation. When it comes to the emigration of young people, they believe that brain drain is one of the biggest problems facing Montenegro. When it comes to this issue, they stated that in cooperation with colleagues from the region, they created a document that aims to address the problems and propose solutions. When talking about the importance of mental health, they are of the opinion that it would be desirable to have free counselling centres, where young people would be able to seek help.

Croatian Reform Party (HRS) is a new party that was participating in the parliamentary elections for the first time this year, and considering that, they are still working on forming party bodies, both at the local and national level. They state that one of their principal goals is to place

young people in positions within the aforementioned bodies.

HRS sees a positive step forward when it comes to the inclusion of young people in the Parliament of Montenegro, but it is necessary that more young people get this opportunity. On the other hand, they cite the experience of individuals and reference work as prerequisites for those positions. Fulfilling the quota alone would not be a solution according to them, but rather educating these young people and enabling them to make thoughtful and correct decisions, and not just to “raise their hand to vote for something that (they) are being told to vote for”. They believe that parties can help young people by involving them in important party activities, giving them the opportunity to learn and express their opinions.

The HRS states that almost 70% of their electoral list was made of women, but also that men and women must be equally represented in positions such as being a Member of the Parliament and that only then we will be able to talk about real gender equality in politics.

When it comes to introducing quotas for young people on electoral lists, they believe it is a good idea. It would have been even better if all parties realized the importance of the presence of young people in such positions, but, as they say, it is important to be ready to actively participate, learn and work on themselves in order to achieve the right goals, not just meet the quotas.

The party states that they addressed young people in their programme, and that their older members also addressed this group. They also point out the initiative of their president Ms Marija Vučinović, current minister in the Government of Montenegro, regarding establishment of a body

for demography and population policy, whose set of measures would include young people. They also state that during the drafting of their political programme, they talked to a large number of young people, in order to find out first-hand what they are interested in.

Unemployment and lack of opportunities stand out as the most important problems of this group. They state that they advocate for the formation of a Youth Council at the local and state levels, strengthening youth organizations and giving more media space to young people, so that their needs are on the agenda and that those who participate in the decision-making processes have insight into their needs.

They interpret the emigration of young people from Montenegro as a problem that the authorities should influence by creating opportunities for young people, but they also point out that it is up to young people to direct their knowledge and energy towards their country, thus contributing to its well-being. Also, they consider it very important that the state supports entrepreneurship at all levels and enables young people to earn from their ideas, rather than relying solely on employment in the institutions of the system.

When it comes to the impact of the corona virus, they notice fear, stress, and even anxiety and depression among young people. As for the work of the University of Montenegro during the pandemic, they estimate that it was at a satisfactory level, and they expect that it will be at an even higher level now that we all are better acquainted with the situation.

When it comes to the worrying suicide rate, HRS believes that young people must be protected by the state, i.e., that their mental health must be taken into account.

The party is ready to support everything that would make life easier for young people and that would motivate them to work and create, and that includes giving favourable housing loans, scholarships, etc.

HRS stands for civil and European Montenegro; therefore, they support the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex.

The coalition gathered around the United Reform Action (URA) has a formal record of young members. However, within the URA Youth Forum, which is the central body for gathering young members of the party, there is a record of active members; These are members who regularly participate in the activities organized by the Forum. Also, at the municipal level, the party has young councillors.

When it comes to encouraging more significant involvement of young people, GP URA statute regulates this area and states that during the elections for various party functions, adequate inclusion of young people and women must be taken into account, and there is a rule on 30% representation of young people and women in party bodies.

They state that it is evident that the same MPs, mostly older ones, have been sitting in the Parliament's benches for years, and that it is necessary to refresh the Parliament with new faces.

They look affirmatively at the current quota on the number of women on the electoral lists and point out that female candidates for MPs were given every third place on their electoral list. Furthermore, they believe that there are a large number of quality young people in political parties, and that by introducing a quota for young people, they would get the opportunity to be adequately represented, but also more opportunities and more respect.

They emphasize that their campaign videos targeted young people, and that the young people themselves are the main actors and creators of these videos; Also, performances were organized that included young people or targeted issues relevant to them. They believe that, especially emphasizing the issue of perspective, the key problems of young people in Montenegro are education and the economic situation.

Some of the ideas they put forward at the national and local level, concerning young people, are: alimony fund, zero VAT rate on baby products as a subsidy for young couples, housing fund for young married couples, free use of public transport for children and young people, construction of a day care centre in Budva, etc.

GP URA believes that UCG has responded unsatisfactorily to the challenges created by the COVID-19 crisis and points out that young people have not received the quality of education they needed. Also, aware that young people are a social category that often spends time outside their homes, they appealed for respect of measures for combating the spread of COVID and placed proposals that, directly or indirectly, targeted young people.

GP URA, as it is stated, would have voted in favour of the adoption of the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex, if they were not boycotting the Parliament at the time of voting on that law. They believe that equality for all is the foundation of social development.

This party believes that brain drain is a significant problem that Montenegrin society is facing, which is becoming increasingly more evident and serious. They cite corruption and nepotism, as well as the partocratic functioning of social mobility, as some of the reasons that

contributed to such a situation. Furthermore, they point to five programme principles of their platform, the implementation of which would have a positive impact on the aforementioned problem: Establishing the rule of law with an uncompromising fight against corruption and organized crime, reform of the economic system, reform of the education system, reform of the health system, environmental protection and sustainable development; They point out that the overall socio-economic situation is the cause of the devastatingly high suicide rate among young people, so the improvement of the economic situation is the foundation for the improvement of the whole picture.

Young people in the role of voters

The last segment of the research aimed to determine what the election process looks like from the point of view of young people as voters. We were interested to see how they make the decision who to vote for, how they see the campaign and the problems that are addressed during the campaign. Finally, we were interested to find out if they felt involved.

We answered these questions using six mini-focus groups, with young people from the following categories: unemployed youth, employed youth, young women, young first-time voters, young people studying social sciences, young people studying technical and art faculties. Since data collection was organized during the COVID-19 epidemic, focus groups were interviewed over the internet.

Ordinal number	Target group	Date	Structure
1	Unemployed youth	29 July, 2020	3 m and 1 f
2	Young first-time voters	30 July, 2020	3 m and 2 f
3	Social science students (political science, economics and law)	4 August, 2020	2 m and 2 f
4	Students of technical and art faculties	6 August, 2020	2 m and 3 f
5	Employed youth	7 August, 2020	2 m and 2 f
6	Young women	10 August, 2020	5 f

Table 1: Mini-focus groups structure

The most important political and social issues addressed in the focus groups were: How do young people see themselves and the society? What do they consider to be the most important social problems? Do, and in what way, parties communicate with young people and address their problems and priorities? What is the political party scene in Montenegro like in the eyes of young people? How clear and diverse is the scene? What is the election campaign like in Montenegro? How involved are young people in the election process, how well do they know it? Where and how are young people getting their information? Do young people plan to vote? Why are they (not) planning that? How do they make the decision about who to vote for? Are there differences in political participation and interest between men and women? Why is it like that?

The following text analyses the answers given by young people to these questions.

Perception of one's position in the society and the most important social problems

Young people generally have a pessimistic view of the society in which

they live. Lethargy, comfort zone and disinterest are just some of the characteristics that focus group participants described their peers with. They perceive young people as uninterested and insufficiently motivated, but they consider it a “mistake” of the whole environment and a consequence of the small number of opportunities that open up for young people. However, respondents point out that there are always exceptions and that work and one’s own efforts are worthwhile. They emphasize that their generation is mostly preoccupied with issues such as night life, i.e., how to get some cash for partying.

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“Our generation is most concerned that pubs are open only until 12 (midnight), they are not interested in things that are of social importance, such as environmental issues.” Unemployed youth

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“I think the biggest problem is that they don’t know what to do next. They don’t know how to find a job, where to get a job and so on.” A girl from young women group

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On the other hand, they cite bad situation on the labour market as the main social problem. Employment and the future professional vocation are some of the biggest concerns that preoccupy young people.

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“Well, I generally see a lack of perspective as one of the biggest problems. The problem is the labour market itself, considering that we have hyper-production of university-educated human resources.

Very few people work in the field they studied for, because the market is oversaturated, there are no new jobs, no prospects and no chance that new jobs will be created, so I just think that unemployment is the biggest problem of young people at the moment and the reason why more and more young people leave and go to live abroad. They left to seek a better life for themselves.” A young employed man

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Respondents emphasize that young people are not able to work in their profession and see this as a big problem. In conversations with the respondents, they frequently pointed out that young people in Montenegro are basically being ignored and their voice is not being heard, and because of that they do not have the motivation to get involved in the decision-making processes. Also, nepotism and partocratic employment are identified by young people as major obstacles. One of the problems they also point out is prejudice, both prejudice for their choice of studies and prejudice regarding their gender and age. The current situation is also negatively affected by the current COVID-19 epidemic, which will deprive many of funding sources.

«

“They see the lack of employment opportunities as the main social problems, and where there are some jobs on the labour market, there is another problem embodied in nepotism or partocratic employment, which hinders quality people from getting a job they studied for and contributing to the community through their work. They agree that more needs to be done to promote all those opportunities that are available to young people. Also, young people feel

underestimated by older people, which hinders their development and leads to lower interest in politics. Furthermore, unemployment is marked as a broader social problem that affects young people. (...) I think that one of the problems is that students did not have the opportunity to work over the summer on the jobs on the coast, and those are the jobs they have relied on the most. As for tourism, I think it affected them the most because many of them finance their studies by working in that sector. I think that is the biggest problem now. Also, tourism is a sector Montenegro relied on the most. I think that has affected the state a lot, so these are the two biggest problems so far, and also a lot of people lost their jobs due to this situation because many companies were not able to withstand this blow economically, and that was that for them.” A young employed man

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In addition to the lack of opportunities and nepotism (which leads to corruption), young people cite another problem – they think that party membership is necessary for finding a job, especially in the public sector. Respondents state that all parties require one to show their support, and the same is true for both ruling and opposition parties.

«

“I would say the lack of opportunities... and the other disadvantage, I might be too direct and open here, but some are able to climb that political hierarchy, that ladder, no matter in which party. Because it is this kind of improper selection embodied in classical poltroonery the way in which the selection of young people is done, no matter which option and faction these young people belong to.” Young people studying social sciences

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Finally, young people point out the lack of opportunities and chances, but also the lack of support from adults.

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“There are no opportunities that would otherwise be attractive to young people, and those that do exist are either insufficiently highlighted or are simply uninteresting to young people.” Young first-time voters

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“We don’t have enough support from adults, from teachers. Many of them do not support activism and the changes that young people want to make on their own.” Young first-time voters

“

“Young people do not have many opportunities and even less habits to improve their knowledge and skills outside of high schools and faculties, and we are aware that the quality of education is not as good as it could be in all of faculties and study programmes.” Young people from technical studies and art faculties

Therefore, based on all the quotes above, we can conclude that young people see themselves as excluded, society as unpromising, and around them they do not recognize any opportunities or support. They are worried about how they will cope at the labour market, and they are especially worried about the situation that is aggravated by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Communication of political parties with young people

Focus group participants almost unanimously believe that political parties in Montenegro do not communicate enough with young people, and that young people are invited to join parties exclusively for parties' benefit.

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“In general, young people are most important to them before the elections.” A girl from young women group

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“Young people are generally, I won't say neglected, but uninteresting to political parties. There are not as many attempts to hear the voice of young people as, say, for other problems.” A girl from young women group

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They also recognize that young people are a very demanding segment of the electorate, apathetic and disinterested, that it is harder to convince them than adults, so dealing with them requires more time and costs than parties are willing to allocate.

“

“Young people around the world are generally apathetic towards the political process, the modern political process. Young people everywhere vote less than older people. That is why more resources need to be invested to win their vote.” Young first-time voters

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The participants did not know exactly how many young MPs there were in the previous convocation of the Montenegrin Parliament. »

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Do you know if there are young MPs in the Parliament, up to 30 years of age? - "I know that there are, but I don't believe that their number exceeds five." A young employed man

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Focus group participants are sceptical about the possibility of fulfilling the promises that parties give to young people. They say that the parties offer them a lot of things, but that the big question is how much of that can actually be realized.

When it comes to the parties' offers, the focus group participants said that the offers are mostly clear to them, but that those offers are not what they actually want, considering that the parties have turned to topics they thought were over and done and left in the past.

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I don't like it at all. Same ideas, same people, just a different schedule, all the same as it had been for the past 30 years.

»

When asked whether they would build a career outside the borders of Montenegro, the views of young people were divided. There are also those who would stay, but it seems that there's a larger number of those who would prefer to build a career outside the borders of Montenegro. Those who had the opportunity to go outside Montenegro for a certain period are seemingly more willing to do it again. One gets the impression that young people do not have too much trust in Montenegro and what

can be offered to them here.

“

When I left Montenegro for the first time, in the third grade, at the age of 16, I thought that I would return and that Montenegro was the place where I would like to live and work, because at the time I was not aware of the whole situation and I was not informed enough. But, the longer I am living abroad, the more it seems to me that it would be very difficult for me to return, because I think it is much harder to succeed if you are an expert compared to just being obedient.
(Young woman, 20, Podgorica)

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“

I want to build my career in Montenegro, primarily because I rely on this business environment, I want to do business on my own, not being part of any organization, especially not in a state-owned company, because I'm doing everything to avoid that scenario. (Young man, 23, Podgorica)

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Perception of the parties' offers at the elections

The young interlocutors believe that the parties' offers in Montenegro are not good and diverse enough. Some young people point out that no party has met their expectations, and state that they do not follow party programmes. Most young people do not know what is in the party programmes.

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“It seems to me that, as a rule, people do not even look at the party programmes. I personally think

that all parties have either the same or similar programmes. They are not ideologically too different within their general camps. That is why people decide who to vote for on the basis of their social environment, not on the basis of their personal opinion. Few people change their minds in relation to their herd. Most often, younger people ask their parents who they vote for. That's not entirely bad, because they're asking someone who should have some experience." A girl from young women group

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They say that they usually vote for the “lesser evil” or for the ones who will provide them with a job, and that the “programme” ties between voters and parties are very weak.

«

“Young people are increasingly voting for a party that will offer them a job. Not just young, but older people as well. Vote and we'll find you a job somewhere.” An employed young man

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The previously mentioned problem of great similarity between the parties and their publicly stated stances contributes to this.

“I think I will decide at 5 to 12 because I have barely decided that I will go out to vote, so this decision will be a little harder. I may get a little more information on that day, but I think that in the end I will do what I decide there and then.” A girl from young women group

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Young people claim that the choices of their peers mainly reflects the choices of their parents, or possibly some wider social group which has great influence on them. It is a pattern that is present in all environments. We will highlight just a few of the quotes that describe the answer to this question.

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“Most young people will vote, which is good. They will go out and vote for the party their Mom and Dad told them to vote for. Because Mom and Dad have a job or some other benefits from that party, so they’ll do as they’re told, without much thinking if it’s good or not good. Only as Mommy and Daddy say. Family voting. So, you don’t know anything about the party and its programme, but you will advocate for it and even tell others about how great that party is.” A young employed man

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«

When it comes to the parties’ offers, our interlocutors said that the offers are mostly clear to them, but that those offers are not what they actually want, considering that the parties have turned to topics they thought were over and done and left in the past. However, the majority will go to the polls, because they believe that their vote would be “stolen” otherwise.

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“I don’t know yet for whom I’m going to vote for, but I know for whom I’m not. I’m definitely going to the polls because I don’t want my vote to be stolen.” Unemployed youth

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Young people's perception of the election campaign

Most of the young people we spoke to said that they were not sufficiently informed about the election process. They say that they do not have enough knowledge about their rights and obligations, and they point out that the institutions responsible for informing young voters either do not have adequate activities, or those activities do not have sufficient visibility among young people.

“ *- I don't think so. None of my friends have any idea when they should be getting the official invitation to vote, i.e., an official confirmation that they are on the voter list, let alone anything in more detail. “ Young first-time voters*

They agree that these elections took place in light of a great lack of information among young people and believe that this should change. Their peers, especially those less socially active, do not have much knowledge about how things work during the election day.

“ *“As far as these elections are concerned, there is very little information and many people, even the elderly, do not even know when the elections are. Therefore I think that these elections are somehow rushed and many parties have not even conducted any campaigns, and we have just 20 days until the elections. So, as far as these elections are concerned, I think that people's awareness is very bad, and I would like to add to that, I think that lectures on this topic should be given to young people in high schools.*

I think everyone should know something about it because after all it is their civic duty that they should fulfil and they need to know what they are doing.”

Employed youth

»

All this is connected with the fact that they do not have a sufficiently developed awareness of the importance of voting, where the lack of activity of the competent authorities is also emphasized.

«

“I think that young people’s awareness on why it is important to vote is not raised enough. This topic is not sufficiently represented in our country.” A girl

from young women group

»

The prevailing opinion among young people who have more information is mostly negative, both towards the elections and towards the offers of political parties.

«

“I don’t like it at all. Same ideas, same people, just a different schedule, all the same as it had been for the past 30 years.” Unemployed youth

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When asked if they were able to find something positive during the election campaign, the focus group participants answered almost unanimously in the negative. They believe that the campaigns were not creative and that they failed to appeal to them as voters. The answer to the question asked to one of the participants if he could distinguish between the parties was:

“

“No, they are all the same to me. No party has bothered to animate anyone, yet alone us young people. It all comes down to the question of nationality, the anthem, the church, the national symbols.” Unemployed youth

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Young people also said that they are not aware of any content or service that can help them get acquainted with the election process. So, when asked whether state institutions deal with it, whether there is a campaign on these issues, such as how the election process looks like, what are their voting rights and obligations, how to report abuses, they unanimously answered in the negative.

“

“I think that young people are totally uninformed. I was informed, but I don't matter. Young people generally have no idea where their polling station is, or that there is a web site where they can check that. They are totally unprepared to go to the polls.” A girl from young women group

”

“

*Do state institutions deal with this? Is there a campaign on these issues? You can all state your opinion. E.g., how the election process looks like, what are your voting rights and obligations, etc.
D 1: No. D 2: No. M1: No. F: And outside the institutions, e.g., in the NGO sector. Has anyone dealt with young people voting for the first time? Well, I guess someone did, but I haven't seen that.*

”

Interlocutors assess the campaign as rather monotonous, and frequent

advertisements on social networks as counter-productive. Namely, they believe that the constant placement of advertisements, especially if they are negative, can irritate young people because it interrupts their online activities, which leads to a negative attitude towards the party that is advertised in this way.

“

“One party is getting on my nerves terribly, I won’t name it, but it constantly pops up on my Viber and in various other places, and that really gets on my nerves. There’s no way I’d vote for them, that’s how irritating it is to me.” A girl from young women group

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They prefer billboards and they think those are more efficient. According to them, billboards attract attention more easily, without interfering with young people in something they are doing when they come across a billboard.

“

“If I watch something that interests me and then an advertisement pops up, I think that party will only irritate me, while for example when I see a billboard while walking, it might get me interested more easily. If an advertisement interrupts some of my daily activities, that party will be more repulsive than attractive to me.” A girl from young women group

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“Billboard advertising and online advertising are two different types of advertising. When I see an advertisement on a billboard, I say to myself ‘Oh, that’s nice’ and I keep on walking. But when I

watch an interesting video, and then a 5-seconds advertisement pops up, without giving the option to skip it, or a 30-seconds one, and it can be skipped, the only thing it does is irritate me, gets my blood pumping.” A girl from young women group

»

They assessed the campaigns as “underestimating” in relation to young people. They feel that those who lead the parties do not appreciate the potential of young people enough. On the other hand, respondents state that this also happens because of young people themselves, since they do not believe in themselves enough.

«

“I also think that no one deals with young people, young people of course do not make decisions, but I think it has to do with the fear of people who sit in some high-level positions, because I think they are aware of how much young people can do. I think that on the other hand, young people don’t even know how much they can actually do if they work together and have the right ideas. That’s why the voice of young people is not heard well, that’s why they don’t focus on young people; because I think they are afraid of what we can actually do, that is, what we can do to make things better for us.” Young people from technical studies and art faculties

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Informing young people

Young people are informed primarily through the internet, especially the web portals. Additionally, a great source of information are social networks and various contents that are placed there. Focus group

respondents point out that their trust in the media is low.

“

“Um, so I get the most information from the web portals, more precisely from Vijesti’s web portal. It used to be from the newspaper, mostly daily newspaper Dan. I think that young people now have a lot of web portals and many other sources to find out information about everything that peaks their attention.” Employed youth

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In this election cycle, the so-called meme pages that publish satirical content on the topic of certain politicians, political parties and even the leaders of those political parties have been recognized as a source of information. When it comes to meme pages in particular, young people state that they can be a strong factor in informing and forming attitudes among young people who do not have attitudes that are firm enough or are characterized by indecision. They can certainly contribute to a better understanding of politics, especially when it comes to classical political comedy as a form of free artistic (multimedia) expression.

“

How do you get informed? Which communication channels do you use the most? - I read meme pages on Facebook to make me laugh a bit.

”

Young people follow the media, but also emphasize that one must always be careful with the media, due to the growing tendency of biased reporting. Everything that is consumed must go through “filters” in order to determine its credibility.

«

As far as obtaining information is concerned, it is mostly from the media, but all that must be filtered. There are media outlets that in 90% of cases convey the information truthfully, and there are also media outlets that are a disaster. Sometimes I follow even such people, just to see how they will report on a certain event that I have already been informed about.

»

In addition to the listed ways of getting informed, we should also mention direct contact with the representatives of political parties that some of our interlocutors have and which they also consider as one of the ways of informing themselves.

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Direct contacts, lately, are some forms of communication that I have with several different sources. Young people studying social sciences

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What can be noticed as a trend among our interlocutors is that they mostly read just the title, without going into the content of the article they saw. In principle, our interlocutors mostly trust the media from which they get information, but when asked who they trust more, the traditional media or meme pages, trust shifts to the side of meme pages.

Youth voting, attitude towards the act itself and the way they make a decision

Respondents were unanimous in their claim that they plan to go to the polls and give their vote to one of the electoral lists. When it comes to what determines their specific decision on who to vote for, they emphasize that they want concrete actions, significantly more precise

programmes, and leaders with clean biographies, uncompromised by suspicious dealings from the past. They point out that many believe that their vote is worthless and that when that changes, things will get better.

«

“That they can change something at any time, not just before the elections, and that they are not only good at words, but on actions as well. I think that would also depend on the people who are members of that party and who represent that party in the media. Who they are, how much they have worked on themselves to get to where they are now. I am annoyed by stories that a party president has done all sorts of things in the past, and now he promises me this and that, although I’m only 18.” A girl from young women group

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For most of our interlocutors, the common stance is that they make decisions on who to vote for at the last minute, which indicates a marked reluctance among young people. This trend applies both to those who have already had the opportunity to exercise their right to vote and to those who are voting for the first time.

«

“I think I will decide at 5 to 12 because I have barely decided that I will go out to vote, so this decision will be a little harder.” Employed youth

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«

“I know who I don’t want to vote for and I’ll decide for the lesser of the evils. I’m watching if they are plotting something or double-dealing.” Unemployed youth

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“It seems to me that there is no real choice between parties, and that there are no politicians who do not have a black stain in their CVs. They all fall into that category, it seems to me, more or less everyone.” A girl from young women group

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When asked if they believe that their vote has any worth or influences the outcome of the elections, they answered the following:

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“It should have some worth, I think everyone’s vote has worth, at least ideally speaking; in a democratic society we all have the right to make decisions, so everyone’s vote should count. No matter how some people want to put you down and say that you don’t have your say, it has been proven many times that every vote counts, especially at some local elections in some smaller municipalities.” Employed youth

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“I think the problem is that people think their vote is worthless. I think that is a problem, and when they change that opinion, I think things will be better, because many people do not want to go to the polls for that reason, and it is very important to go to the polls and I think it is a civic duty and it should be fulfilled. Well, no matter how much one follows politics or not, it is important that at a person gets at least a little informed and goes to the polls, because I think that is very important and that everyone’s vote counts.” Employed youth

”

On the other hand, although it is difficult for respondents to decide who

to vote for, they are very determined about who they would not vote for.

When asked if they know any contents that would aid political education in the election process, our interlocutors say that they are not familiar with such content and that they were predominantly informed through their parents or on the spot when they came to exercise their right to vote.

Young people value their vote and believe that it has an impact on the outcome of the elections, from which it can be concluded that young people have a high degree of motivation to participate in the election process. On the other hand, they are not satisfied with the offer and decide who to vote for by using the “elimination system.”

Differences in political participation and interest between men and women

Respondents tried to give their answer to the question on whether there are differences between young women and young men when it comes to attitudes towards politics, referring to the established opinion.

“

“I think discrimination certainly exists in part. It was less pronounced in my case. However, I think young girls just stick to some old value systems. As far as politics are concerned, I’m not too interested in the real reason, I don’t know exactly why there are fewer of them [women]. It has a lot to do with how others perceive women, it in the sense that they should just be housewives and the like.” Unemployed youth

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They generally agree with the assessment that women are less represented in decision-making positions, and that this is something they would like to see change. They also emphasize that they do not know many women / girls who would like to be involved in politics or who have such aspirations.

“

“I think it’s up to the society. Women’s rights are not equal to men’s, that is, they do not get as much space in politics as men do.” Unemployed youth

”

They emphasize that it is the society that shapes opinions and that politics in our country is seen as a dirty job intended for men. However, they state that these attitudes are changing and that they support legislation that would ensure a certain number of seats for women. They also notice practices of stigmatization and intolerance towards women when they want to be in decision-making positions or are already there.

“

“I have had situations where certain people think I am less capable because I am a girl and I hope, as we are witnessing, that that is changing. And we all need to try to eradicate those prejudices that are directed at girls.” A girl from young women group

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However, they point out that there is progress in the society when it comes to this issue and that certain positive steps are being taken to improve the position of women in politics and in the society as a whole. They especially emphasize the way of thinking of young people, which helps to improve the position of young women.

Summarizing the previous answers to the questions asked, we can conclude that there is a lack of adequate communication of parties towards young people on the one hand, but also a significant level of disinterest among young people, on the other. Young people see the parties' attempts to communicate with them as insincere and old-fashioned. On the other hand, the lack of interest among young people leads to a lack of understanding of what the parties offer through their programme policies.

There is a strong trend of using social networks, to the detriment of consumption of traditional media. In that regard, the so-called meme pages, which enjoy great popularity among young people, were one of the most important novelties and influencers in the 2020 campaign.

When it comes to voter education, young people believe that there is insufficient proactivity of institutions, and that they do not have basic information about the elections and their implementation. This is especially pronounced among young people who are voting for the first time.

On the other hand, a positive characteristic of these elections was the increased interest of young people to vote and thus participate in deciding who will lead the country in the coming period.

CONCLUSION

The main research question we tried to answer in this research was – how political parties involved young people in the electoral process. To answer that question, we focused on young people in the role of politicians and voters, as well as parties’ communication with young people. Also, we used different ways and methods to collect data with which we can get answers to research questions, we analysed the composition and activity of young MPs in the previous convocation of the Parliament of Montenegro, confirmed electoral lists, collected answers from political parties, monitored social networks and, finally, talked to young people.

The elections went peacefully, in accordance with the law, without incidents and disturbances of public order. Like the 2016 election campaign, this election campaign was marked by radical rhetoric about defending statehood on the one hand, and defending church-owned property on the other. The topics were mainly related to identity issues, and less to social and economic ones, and the least to those policies that were of relevance to the position and future of young people in Montenegro.

When it comes to young people in the role of politicians in these elections, we can conclude that young people were underrepresented on the electoral lists of parties and coalitions that participated in the elections. In addition, young people were very rarely within the electability margin – that is, in positions on the electoral lists of parties

or coalitions where they could have had realistic expectations of winning a seat in the Parliament. As a consequence of such positioning on the electoral lists, only five MPs in the new convocation of the Parliament of Montenegro can be categorized as young persons (6.1%). If we take into account that young people make up a quarter of the electorate, it is clear that their representation is significantly below average.

Although most parliamentary political parties prescribe the existence of youth wings within the party, the analysis of electoral lists and election results indicate that these bodies fail to provide an adequate place for young people in party structures.

Therefore, the following should be done:

- Amend the Law on Political Parties in such a way as to determine the obligation of political parties to have bodies that bring together young people within their organization;
- Encourage parties to determine, through their statutes, mandatory seats for young people in party governing bodies;
- Discuss the possibility of introduction of quotas for young people on the electoral lists;
- Support the campaigns of young politicians.

When it comes to party communication with young people through the analysis of social networks, we can conclude that political parties have targeted young people very little, both in their election programmes and in other forms of communication. This is also true for social networks

that young people most often use for obtaining information. The communication was uninventive, maladjusted to young people and uninteresting overall. Young people voting for the first time were not targeted at all with informative messages. From all the above we can recommend:

- Political parties should pay more attention and space to young people in their programme solutions, i.e., on party lists for some future parliamentary, as well as for local elections;
- The election programme should have a special section dealing with young people, and within it subsections covering issues of special importance, with additional sections that address all these issues in relation to young women and which concern this population (education, health, economy, etc.);
- When it comes to party communication through social networks, which are the dominant channel of information among young people, it is necessary to publish more posts about young people, use social networks to target problems that directly affect young people;
- Tools for collecting more age-disaggregated data should be developed together with the Statistical Office (MONSTAT), in order to gain a better understanding of voter turnout and behaviour among young voters, candidates and MPs;

When it comes to young people in the role of voters, we can conclude that focus group participants do not see young people in Montenegro as having a good perspective in our society. The unfavourable position on the labour market, prejudices, brain drain, nepotism and partocratic employment are just some of the key social problems that they see as those that hinder young people from using their potentials. From the

answers of our interlocutors in regard of party communication with young people, we can say that they do not see this communication as frequent enough, nor of high quality, and if it sometimes does exist, then it exists purely to collect political praise. They also believe that the Montenegrin political scene needs rejuvenation, considering that, in their opinion, existing politicians are not capable of dealing with young people with the policies they offer. They assessed the party's offer presented through the election programme as only declaratively dedicated to young people, but they believe that concrete plans are lacking, if the politicians want to achieve the set goals. Regarding gender equality, we can conclude that our interlocutors see some positive developments, but point out that strong prejudices still exist.

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ANNEXES

A guide for focus groups with young people

Unit	Auxiliary questions
Introduction	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Research objective</p> <p>Participant rights</p> <p>Focus group goal</p> <p>Expectations</p>
Introductory part	<p>Tell us something about yourself?</p> <p>How would you describe your usual day?</p>
How do young people live in Montenegro?	<p>How are you these days?</p> <p>What brings you most joy?</p> <p>What worries you the most?</p> <p>Which problems drive you?</p> <p>What are the most important social problems?</p>
Young people about themselves	<p>How do I see myself in society?</p> <p>Are young people decision makers? Are they respected?</p> <p>Politics and youth – Are the problems of the youth population addressed in general?</p>
Campaign and youth	<p>How do they see the election process and the parties?</p> <p>Do parties communicate with young people? How do they communicate with young people, can you give examples of good and bad communication with young people?</p> <p>In your opinion, what are the current problems of young people (list them)? Were they addressed in the election campaign?</p> <p>How clear is the parties' offer – Are they able to clearly distinguish between the parties and what they stand for?</p> <p>How concrete are the parties' solutions? Can you remember any?</p> <p>Are there any young MPs? What are their activities?</p> <p>Is there a young politician that you trust and like?</p>

<p>How to reach young people?</p>	<p>Where do young people get information and how? What are their acceptable channels for receiving messages (social networks – which ones, YouTube, podcasts, meme pages – If yes, which specifically)? Who is their acceptable carrier of information? Who do they trust?</p>
<p>Women and political activism ¹</p>	<p>Are women sufficiently involved in socio-political life? How to increase women’s participation? Who is more socio-politically active – men or women? Who is harder to “activate”? What challenges do young women face? How ambitious are they? Did they encounter any campaigns that were specifically aimed at involving women in political issues?</p>
<p>Determinants of who to vote for</p>	<p>Will you use your right to vote for the first time in the August elections?² Are you planning to go to the polls – What can condition that decision? How will you decide who to vote for – Which factors affect how you vote? How did you make that decision? Do you consider your vote as valuable? Do you consider yourself an informed voter?</p> <p>How familiar are you with the election process? Do you know what your voting rights and obligations are? Do they know about any activities intended for voters who are exercising their right to vote for the first time? Would such activities be useful? What do they think are the most important issues that a party should deal with when it comes to young people who turn 18?</p>
<p>Ending</p>	<p>Thank the participants</p>

¹ For a focus group where there will be only girls – We can only briefly ask other groups about it; NOTE: In this focus group, the questions from the first part will also be restructured and refer more to young women than to all young people.

² This section also refers in part to a specific focus group, in which we will talk to young people who will have the right to vote for the first time (QUESTIONS IN BOLD LETTERS)

Surveys for parties

Research on the position of young people in the electoral process

The Office of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in Montenegro, in cooperation with young people from the Montenegrin Association of Political Science Students (MAPSS), is conducting a monitoring campaign for the upcoming parliamentary elections with a focus on young people during the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The subject of our interest are young politicians as voters, but also the way in which parties communicate with them in Montenegro.

We would appreciate it if your party could take the time to answer the questions, thus contributing to the involvement of young people in the electoral process in Montenegro.

Note: Pursuant to Article 2 of the Youth Law of Montenegro, young people in the sense of this law are persons from 15 to 30 years of age.

1. What is the number of young people registered as members of your party, and how many are young women?
2. What do you think about the introduction of quotas for young people on the electoral lists?
3. How does your party communicate with young people voting for the first time? Did you organize a specific campaign targeted at young people voting for the first time?
4. In the opinion of your party, what are the two main topics concerning youth in Montenegro, and why? What youth-related proposals did your party make at the local or national level during the past two years?
5. How do you assess the work of the University of Montenegro during the corona virus pandemic? How does your party see the impact of the corona virus on young people in Montenegro?
6. What is your party's position on the policy of providing favourable housing loans to the best students, successful young entrepreneurs and young married couples? What is your party's position on the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex?
7. How does your party view the growing emigration of young people from Montenegro, and how are you working to resolve that issue?
8. According to data from 2018, Montenegro has a worryingly high suicide rate, especially among young population. What is your party's response to this problem?

The questionnaire was filled by (please specify the position you have in your party):



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