



LOUD AND PROUD

Loud and Proud Youth in Liberal Political Parties

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BDF
BORIS DIVKOVIĆ
FOUNDATION



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YOUTH IN LIBERAL POLITICAL PARTIES

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The Boris Divković Foundation was established in 2013 with the aim of advancing political science and political practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. Since then, the Foundation has promoted a responsible policy, which serves all citizens and operates on the principles of equality, coexistence and solidarity. The Boris Divković Foundation is marked by the desire to harmonize political activity with basic moral principles, which is the idea that Boris Divković advocated during his engagement. The widespread opinion that a combination of morality and politics is impossible is only a consequence of the decades-long rule of irresponsible politicians. The Boris Divkovic Foundation starts from the assumption that a combination of morality and politics is possible, but that it is necessary to carry out ideological decontamination of the notion of politics in public space, which would create conditions for including honest and responsible people in political processes in the Western Balkans.

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Abstract

This research focuses on four liberal EU parties and their strategies for the advancement and promotion of youth political participation, not just within the party but also in their respective countries. The aim of this analysis is to review the current standpoints on youth representation in politics in European liberal political parties, to map their roles and strategies for advancement of youth political inclusion, and to increase the visibility of successful examples. Political, legal and policy contexts and frameworks in Sweden, Spain, Croatia and Poland are reviewed and assessed through an analysis of their (non)implementation of quota systems, and include an overview of current youth representation in the parliaments of their respective countries. Previous research indicates that political parties often do not support young politicians' participation in the processes of political program development, despite having adopted youth programs and policies. This research is designed as a case study of four liberal parties in the aforementioned countries and their strategies for development and promotion of youth political participation within the party, as well as in their respective countries. Comparative analysis was conducted using a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of primary and secondary data and quantitative analysis of primary data collection to triangulate the information to the highest extent possible. In order to develop a new regional story, this research examines intra-party democracy in these four liberal parties, map their current views on youth and politics and see what types of activities could be introduced and adjusted to the needs of their parties and party systems.

Key words: case study, decision-making, education, EU, inclusion, initiatives, legislatives, liberal parties, political participation, politics, youth, youth organizations.

List of abbreviations

ALDE – Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
 B&H – Bosnia and Herzegovina
 BDF – Boris Divković Foundation
 BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina
 C – Centerpartiet (The Centre Party), Sweden
 Cs – Ciudadanos (Citizens), Spain
 CSI - Centerstuderter International (Center Student International)
 CUF – Centerpartiets ungdomsförbund (Centre Party Youth), Sweden
 ELF – European Liberal Forum
 EU – European Union
 HQ – Headquarters
 IFLRY – International Federation of Liberal Youth
 IPU – Inter-Parliamentary Union
 Jcs – Jóvenes de Ciudadanos (Young Citizens), Spain
 LIBSEEN - Liberal South East European Network
 LYMEC – European Liberal Youth
 MP – Member of Parliament
 NGO – Non-governmental organization
 OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
 PR – Public relations
 UN – United Nations
 UN IANYD – The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development
 UNDP – United Nations Development Program
 WB – Western Balkans

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1

Introduction

The significance of political engagement of youth has been acknowledged by the international community, and a number of international conventions and UN resolutions support the formal participation of youth in national political institutions such as parliaments. Nevertheless, not many young people are represented in political processes, institutions or as leaders. Previous studies show that young people mistrust political processes due to this, and that they are unwilling to take part in elections. In addition, political parties often claim that young people are unwilling to participate in political processes, while youth often struggle to understand complex political structures and levels of governance (Lemes et al, 2021).

Lack of familiarity with democratic principles and voting procedures is one of the main reasons of political absenteeism, particularly among young people who are often discouraged from using elections as a way to voice their concerns, demand reform and hold governments responsible. In addition, as young people struggle to understand the complexities of political structures, levels of governance and formal political processes, their membership in political parties is declining across Europe (Deželan, 2018), and as a result, youth representation in politics and governance is relatively low. Consequently, this discourages the youth from viewing elections as means to express their disagreement, demand change, and hold governments accountable. Furthermore, as living standards are even harder for young women and youth growing up in poverty, finding a decent work has become a daily struggle for many young people, especially young women and youth growing up in poverty. However, for most of them, the solution to this problem is not to be found in politics as they do not encounter many young politicians with a sizeable political force who would be able to solve their problems.

To make a difference in the long term, the Boris Divković Foundation

(BDF) has recognized how essential it is for young people to engage in formal political processes and have a say in formulating current and future politics. Inclusive political participation is not only a fundamental political and democratic right, but is also crucial for nurturing peaceful societies and developing policies that respond to the specific needs of youth. Young people should be aware of their rights and acquire the knowledge they need to effectively participate in political institutions and decision-making processes at all levels, particularly when it comes to elections.

BDF's research Loud and Proud, supported by the European Liberal Forum (ELF), is concerned with the participation and position of youth in liberal political parties across Europe, including their levels of participation in decision-making processes, access to party resources, etc. This study provides an overview of current problems faced by young people and presents effective forms of youth political participation. It also expands on a previous study, "Liberal Western Balkans on the Move: Youth in Liberal Political Parties", conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia in 2022, which concluded that the position of youth within liberal parties is unsatisfactory, and that many changes and improvements need to occur. Although party documents define the roles of youth or youth wings within the party, their inclusion in political process (in practice) was weaker in the WB. For all parties, access to finance for youth activities was limited. Participation

Do liberal political parties of the EU consider youth to be an important factor for their party development and the future of liberal Europe and how do they promote the political participation of youth to ensure their greater political engagement?

in internal decision-making was also at a low level. There was a lack of inclusion of youth in the external promotion of the party and in on candidate lists during elections. It is therefore crucial to enhance the role of youth in political parties to improve youth-related issues.

This study aims to assess the representation of youth in politics within the organizational and general structures of liberal parties: (i) Ciudadanos (Citizens - Cs) of Spain, (ii) Nowoczesna (Modern) Party of Poland, (iii) Centerpartiet (Centre Party) of Sweden, and (iv) Centar (Centre) Party of Croatia. With the purpose of guiding the parties towards increasingly greater youth involvement in their organizational structures and political program developments, this publication also aims to offer practical, impartial recommendations and specific guidelines that they can address and implement swiftly and efficiently. It should be noted that three additional liberal political parties from Germany, Spain and Sweden were invited to participate in the study; however, we did not receive a response from them¹.

The findings obtained from this analysis address the main research question: Do liberal political parties of the EU consider youth to be an important factor for their party development and the future of liberal Europe and how do they promote the political participation of youth to ensure their greater political engagement? By responding to this question, the study offers concrete recommendations on what political parties can do to i) improve their appeal among young people, ii) improve youth turnout in the elections, and iii) improve the position and role of youth in liberal political parties, as well as to promote liberal ideas among young people, while countering illiberal regimes' political and ideological indoctrination.

It is important to highlight that very few studies have conducted an analysis on political participation of youth within specific political parties, such as liberal parties. Previous research indicates that political parties often do not support participation of youth in high-level political developments, despite the adopted policies within the parties (Chapter II). This is illustrated by BDF's research findings on political and civic engagement of youth in the Western Balkans (2022), indicating that political parties and politicians lose interest in responding to

¹ See Chapter II, Limitations.

the needs of young people if they cannot secure their votes. This, in turn, leads to the exclusion of young people from decision-making processes and debates about key socio-economic and political issues of importance to them. For this reason, BDF is driven to closely examine and compare practices regarding the political participation of youth within these liberal parties in Spain, Sweden, Croatia and Poland, and thus assist leading liberal organizations in formulating policies that foster the emergence of new generations of young political representatives from across EU countries and the broader European region. Unlike many formal analyses on youth in politics, BDF's research focuses on liberal parties and their strategies, standpoints and practices towards the advancement and better promotion of political participation of youth within their parties, and in their countries.

The study employs a mixed-methods approach that includes a comparative analysis of youth policy frameworks, programs and practices regulated by the parties themselves, and prior research and case studies (Chapter III). This facilitates an understanding of key distinctions among the observed parties and the environment in which they operate. A qualitative analysis of information from key-informant interviews provides a first-hand explanation of the context in which the party frameworks and programs are created. This research also reviews the organizational culture in the political parties, with the aim of examining the relationships, networks, support mechanisms and general perception of youth participation in politics. An anonymous survey conducted among the party members is another significant source that helps understand perceptions of youth political involvement among the party membership.

The analysis utilizes available secondary data and direct inputs gathered from the parties' official communication channels, key informant interviews and the online survey. The gathered data helped to identify the internal and external circumstances in a party's operating environment that exert influence the feasibility of certain measures undertaken by liberal parties to promote the political engagement of youth inside the party and ensure that young candidates are elected and participate in government bodies. The qualitative analysis and

comparison of these liberal parties across several points, including types of interventions and measures applied, is useful in determining why some achieve more success than others when it comes to policy agendas and age distribution across key party functions.

Chapter IV presents findings from case studies of the four liberal parties mentioned above. It includes reviews of intra-party democracy, observations about current perspectives on political participation of youth, and suggestions for activities that can be introduced and adjusted to correspond to the needs of individual parties and party systems. It also identifies the commonalities and differences between these liberal parties in their approaches to devising and implementing policy frameworks for youth. Some of the identified differences relate to the country's specific contextual and legislative framework, different internal party regulations, implementation methodologies or the general role of the party and the in-country support structures. All of these factors vary across the region and the objective of this study is to identify specific strategies and techniques that each party can apply to achieve greater representation of youth in politics.

In conclusion, this BDF study focuses on four liberal parties and their strategies, standpoints, and practices toward advancing and promoting the political participation of youth within their organizations and in their countries. In order to guide the parties towards increasingly greater youth involvement in their organizational structures and political program developments, this publication offers practical and impartial recommendations for making political parties more youth friendly, developing relevant action plans and specific guidelines that can be implemented quickly and efficiently (Table A).

The presentation of findings from the case studies of the selected liberal parties is an essential part of this research. It includes reviews of intra-party democracy in these parties, observations about current perspectives on youth political participation, and impartial suggestions for activities that can be introduced and adjusted to the needs of the individual parties and party systems. It also identifies the commonalities and differences between the liberal parties in their approaches to devising and implementing policy frameworks for youth. Some of the identified differences relate to the country's

specific contextual and legislative framework, internal party regulations, implementation methodologies, party size and the in-country support structures.

Summary of the findings for developing a youth action plan

Table A Checklist of criteria for becoming a youth-friendly party

Criteria	
Institutionalize youth participation	Party statutes, policies and programs include and regulate youth participation in all party decision-making bodies.
Ensure youth representation in key party bodies	Youth are actively involved in all party decision-making bodies.
Adopt a Party youth strategy	Specific youth programs are developed to help improve youth political representation.
Cooperate with grassroots initiatives and movements	Policies that give voice to all young people are prioritized.
Give a role and resources to youth Organizations	Youth organizations are well organized and promote party values so as to attract new members and party voters.
Support young candidates	Specific priorities related to youth political representation are laid out and emphasized; some of these priorities are included in the electoral campaigns and promises of the party.
Get feedback	Regular youth audits are undertaken to identify processes and practices that can discriminate youth, and to assess progress towards their greater political inclusion.

Criteria	
Ensure Financial Equality	Party resources are distributed fairly between all members and candidates, regardless of their age.
Take advantage of peer-to-peer programs	A formal mentorship program is established where new, inexperienced young members collaborate with and receive advice and guidelines from their politically more experienced mentors.
Use Media and Social Networks to reach young people	An appropriate media platform is provided to young members/candidates.
Run academies and training programs for youth	The party's budget provides for financing programs and mechanisms within the party intended for strengthening youth political engagement.
Meet young people online and offline	Social media 'influencing' methods are combined with traditional campaign styles to promote discussion, spread information and get feedback from youth.

The research results reveal that the liberal political parties of the EU consider youth to be an important factor for their party development and the future of liberal Europe, as they all take significant interest in young people and their wellbeing, promote their interests and strive to include them in the decision-making bodies of their respective parties and on candidate lists. In order to ensure greater political engagement of youth, the liberal parties support the activities and programs of their youth organizations, address youth priorities in their initiatives and ensure their voice is heard through various participation mechanisms in key party governance processes. A summary of the recommendations for the liberal parties' Youth Action Plan is presented in the conclusion of this study.

Methodology

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2

Methodology

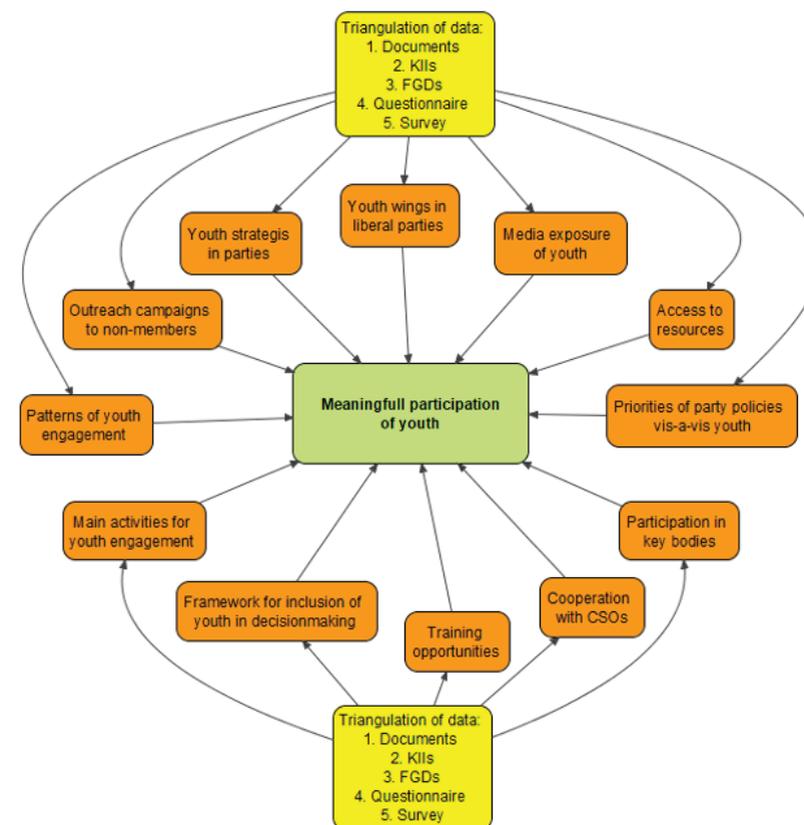
This study is designed as a case study of four liberal parties from Croatia, Poland, Spain and Sweden, and their strategies towards the development and promotion of youth participation within their party structures. The same methods were applied to the analysis of each individual country; the final report also provides a meta-analysis of all countries included in the study, as well as a comparative analysis of the four liberal parties. After gathering the primary data, the research team evaluated whether it would be methodologically feasible to compare the results of this study to those of a similar study conducted previously on the subject of youth's meaningful participation in political parties in the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia) and concluded that it would be feasible.

This research relied on a mixed methods approach combining qualitative analysis of primary and secondary data and quantitative analysis of primary data-collection to triangulate the information to the highest extent possible. The understanding related to the triangulation of the information helped determine the answer to the main research question: Do European liberal political parties consider youth to be an important factor for their party development and the development of society; how do they promote and ensure political participation of youth?

The following approaches in data collection were used:

- literature review of documents of liberal parties, and other relevant documents;
- key informant interviews with key members of the selected liberal political parties including persons occupying various positions in the party (mainly in leadership structures);
- questionnaire for the political parties (secretariat);
- survey carried out among the party members.

Illustration 1: Key research questions and obtaining of data



In order to accomplish the research objectives, this study examines the integration of internal party legislation and programs aimed at increasing youth engagement within the party, and reviews the party strategies designed for political empowerment of youth and advancement of their political careers, as well as the methods used for proposing more young members on candidate lists. This study also discusses the support young members receive from their parties in the political campaigns and their representation in the media and

among the public. In addition, it investigates the extent to which young male and female members are represented in the party's decision-making bodies and/or government bodies. Data gathering also includes measures to assess youth access to resources (both material and non-material).

Secondary research (desk research) relies on available resources (a comprehensive literature review of pertinent documents, including studies and assessments conducted by donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the governments and the academic community; documents of liberal parties: statutes, rulebooks, current strategies, strategic implementation plans and evaluations; and internal party initiatives aimed at improving youth participation) related to existing patterns of youth political participation. The main goal of the desk research is to identify opportunities and gaps that can be translated into specific measures, as well as conduct a participatory review of key youth needs in political parties, in the context of meaningful participation in the 'life' of political parties. For comparative purposes, recent international research and recommendations issued by relevant organizations in the field of youth political participation were also used.

Primary research was conducted using

- qualitative methods: semi-structured key informant interviews with key respondents to collect qualitative data, including their reasons, motives, interests, behaviours, possible solutions, or dissatisfaction related to recent practices aimed at youth involvement in political parties; and
- quantitative methods: a questionnaire for the secretariats of political parties in order to obtain information on party mechanisms, demographics, funds, youth representation in party structures and bodies, and an online survey for all party members to determine their attitudes or opinions (descriptive statistics) and understand (analytics and narratives) the main challenges that they face as party members.

The interviews included both party decision-makers and youth members. They were conducted via electronic communication platforms.

In order to obtain the information related to youth participation in political parties, a total of 30 individual interviews were conducted using an interview protocol that contains inquiries related to key questions from the study. In order to ensure the participation of interlocutors, the selected political parties received a cover letter with clear instructions and the purpose of the interview.

The main purpose of the questionnaire for the secretariats of the political parties was to fill in the gaps that were identified through secondary research. It was also necessary to obtain basic information (ID) about each political party in order to learn more about the party's methods, demography, funding, youth representation in its structures and bodies, and 'success rate' (parliamentarians, ministers, etc.).

The purpose of the survey was to obtain key information on various aspects of quality and potential future interventions regarding youth participation in political parties. Due to the pandemic and the increased efficiency of data collection, the survey was conducted online. It was completed anonymously in order to reduce the threat of identity disclosure, which could affect the sincerity of respondents' answers. The only demographic data collected was related to respondents' country, gender and age.

This researcher abided by the norms and standards laid out in the ethical conduct guidelines and codes of conduct and adhered to Data Protection Principles to

This study is designed as a case study of four liberal parties from Croatia, Poland, Spain and Sweden

maintain confidentiality. The data was collected in the period from February to June 2023.

Limitations

In the process of research design, tools development and data collection, several limiting circumstances were identified. They may reduce the strength of the study's findings.

- Data was collected during the coronavirus pandemic; this epidemiological situation directly affected the response rate of respondents, e.g. several key contact persons were infected at the time of this research, which made it impossible to adequately collect data within the prescribed timeframe.
- A number of political parties did not respond to the research team's request to remind party members to complete the questionnaire, even after being contacted multiple times. It was difficult to motivate the party members to complete the survey, and the research team could not engage in internal communication within the political parties that forwarded the invitation text with links to their members. In addition, there was a weaker response on the part of some political parties, who were reluctant to discuss the participation of youth in their own structures. This limitation affected the delivery date but not the main outcomes.
- The focus of this research was also on the quality of youth participation. Quality is difficult to measure objectively without a direct external evaluation led by experts from various scientific and professional fields. Unfortunately, when it comes to youth participation in party activities, there are no such quality measures.
- Given that many people may have felt overwhelmed by the numerous online surveys they received during the pandemic, the research team was forced to create relatively short survey instruments that could be completed "in one sitting". The research team clearly emphasized this in the invitation email and in the survey's introduction so as to motivate potential respondents to

complete the survey and thus arrive at a satisfactory response rate. At the same time, this means that some compelling points had to be left out.

Political, legal
and policy context

CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3

Political, legal and policy context

The significance of youth political engagement has been acknowledged by the international community, with a number of international conventions and UN resolutions supporting the formal participation of youth in national political institutions such as parliaments. Added to this, constitutional and legal frameworks are the strongest mechanisms for ensuring youth-friendly electoral policies and practices. In this way, young people and other vulnerable groups are able to access the necessary legal support, which advances their inclusivity.

Every functional democracy relies on citizen participation in creating, adopting and executing public policies. Clear legal measures usually ensure greater inclusivity. The Electoral Knowledge Network (ACE project, 1998- 2022) concluded that political parties must formally ensure the inclusiveness of young people and that “legal and voluntary quotas for youth participation are one option for certain contexts reforms”.

However, many studies have found that youth interest in how their governments work is on the decline and that voter turnout is gradually decreasing, particularly among younger generations. For instance, the European Parliament Election Study (Schmitt et al, 2014) revealed that young people do not vote in European or national elections “with EU28 average abstention at around 70% for the 16/18-24 and 25-29 age groups” (Deželan 2018). Kitanova (2019) concludes that socio-demographic characteristics are an important factor in structuring individuals’ political participation, especially when it comes to youth. Previous studies show that young people mistrust political processes and they choose to boycott the elections (Lemes et al., 2021). In addition, Lemes et al also find that the political parties often claim that young people are unwilling to participate in political processes, while

youth, on the other hand, struggle to understand complex political structures and levels of governance. Similarly, researchers of the ACE project (1998- 2022) argue that, although democracies are based on inclusion, youth, women and other vulnerable groups remain excluded from formal politics due to the biases and practices that are traditionally present in political parties.

Moreover, the research results of Deželan and Maxon (2022) indicate that youth is no longer motivated to join political parties in order to become politically active. In their study, they argue that members of Generation Y nowadays prefer a fluid membership and engage in politics through internet activism, social media or blogging rather than joining traditional political organizations for their political expression. Likewise, Weiss (2020) states that although young adults are less likely to vote or join political parties, they do engage in protests, social movements, grassroots initiatives, volunteering and civil activities to express political opinions. The same author finds that having an insufficient number of young representatives in political bodies results in fewer opportunities for them to participate in decision-making processes. Deželan and Maxon’s study (2022) concludes that “the extent of the perceived problem is fully revealed in the voter turnout in elections to political arenas (national, subnational and European) from which young people are significantly more absent than other parts of population”, and that the party membership among youth is similarly decreasing. Hooghe and Stolle (2005) argue that it is not only a question of whether young people are interested in politics nowadays, but also of whether the political parties themselves are interested in youth.

To address this issue and reach as many young adults as possible, the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 has established a framework and outlined eleven EU goals to promote meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political engagement of young people; the strategy is centered on three key words: “engage”, “connect”, “empower” (Official Journal of the EU, 2018). This is especially important as the IPU Parline’s global data on national parliaments reports that current youth representation in the parliaments remains fairly low. Under 5% of the members of parliament of Croatia, Poland and Spain are 30 years old or younger, whereas in Sweden, 6.59% of MPs belong to this

age group. In fact, less than 5% of MPs in the Polish Senate and under 10% in the Spanish Parliament are under 40, while in the Croatian Parliament, Polish Sejm, Spanish Congress of Deputies and Swedish Parliament slightly over 20% of MPs are under 40 (Table 1).

Table 1: Current data on age of members of parliaments in four EU countries

Country	Croatia	Poland		Spain		Sweden
Official name of the parliament	Croatian Parliament	Sejm	Senate	Congress of Deputies	Senate	Parliament
Number of members	151	460	100	350	265	349
Youngest member (age)	29	26	36	23	27	23
Percentage of young members: 30 or under	0.66%	4.35%	0%	3.43%	1.89%	6.59%
Percentage of members under the age of 40	22.52%	22.39%	4%	22.86%	11.36%	28.94%
Average age of MPs	51.6	50	58.5	47	52.7	46.7

(Retrieved from IPU praline, <https://data.ipu.org/content/parline-global-data-national-parliaments>)

Similarly, the Global Parliamentary Report, UNDP (2012) revealed that,

even though youth constitute a fifth of the world's population, only 1.65% of parliamentarians around the world are in their 20s and 11.87% are in their 30s. According to this report, the average age of parliamentarians on the global level is 53 for men and 50 for women in parliament; moreover, young people under the age of 35 are rarely found in political leadership positions. The results of a UN IANYD survey conducted in 2012 also indicate that limited opportunities for effective participation in decision-making processes present the main challenges for youth, which lead them to feel excluded and marginalized socially, economically and politically. To mitigate this deficit, political parties can adopt measures to enhance youth political participation, improve their social and economic status and break the cycle of mistrust between the political parties and youth. These can include adopting legislative measures that support youth engagement, mentoring and leadership programs that encourage and support youth networks, ensuring financial aids to facilitate access to political finance, and introducing party quotas to increase youth representation (OSCE, 2015). Political parties should take steps to motivate youth to join their youth wings, develop necessary skills and participate in political processes of the party. Strengthening party youth wings ensures that young people entering the political and electoral environment establish new connections and are provided with opportunities for their voice to be heard.

In addition, active young politicians can be a channel through which parties can attract young voters. Allaste et al. (2020) recommend setting up cross-party networks to provide skills and training for young people in order to equip them to perform effectively and sustainably on the political scene, and participate in cross-party dialogue and initiatives. They further claim that meaningful youth participation in political parties is essential for their healthy and inclusive representation in the future.

Luhrmann et al. (UNDP, 2013) have summarized the recommendations and good practices and strategies on how to achieve the overall goal of progressive and substantive inclusion of young people in political and decision-making processes at all levels. First, it is important to establish youth-friendly legal frameworks, policies and plans that will enable youth political engagement. To remove barriers to youth political involvement, they find that the party activities should give attention to three periods:

the pre-electoral period, electoral period and post-electoral period, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of recommendations and good practices on progressive inclusion of young people in political and decision-making processes.

Recommendations on how parties can achieve progressive inclusion of young people in politics		
Period	Evaluation	Party activities
Pre-electoral period	Crucial for encouraging and supporting youth to participate in elections. Civic engagement of youth and youth-friendly political parties are important building blocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage continuous youth participation and civic education in schools and universities. • Design training programs as incubators for new projects. • Support youth-led community development and volunteering organizations. • Provide flexible support with low access barriers to innovative, small-scale youth projects. • Bridge the digital divide with mobile phones and radio. • Use online platforms for knowledge sharing and networking among politically engaged youth. • Encourage affirmative action measures such as youth and women quotas within political parties. • Support the development of strong political party youth wings. • Provide capacity-building for young political party members in a multi-partisan setting. • Address training and mentoring needs of young women separately.

Recommendations on how parties can achieve progressive inclusion of young people in politics		
Period	Evaluation	Party activities
Electoral Period	Important for bringing youth to ballot boxes so that they can participate actively in the democratic life of their countries, as they tend to participate in elections less than older citizens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure youth involvement in all phases of voter education campaigns. • Implement entertaining methods and multimedia strategies that will be engaging to youth. • Include youth in electoral management body advisory boards, as poll station workers and election observers. • Develop interactive online tools to reach out to computer-literate young voters
Post-Electoral Period	Enables citizens, including youth, to be able to hold their elected representatives accountable. Avenues for communication and advocacy should be open to all, even after the polls close.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the voices of youth heard in parliament and government. • Invite youth groups to visit national parliaments. • Facilitate youth-led national youth councils and/or parliaments. • Initiate internship schemes for students in parliaments. • Train and support young members of parliament. • Initiate and support youth councils at the local level.

Source: Luhmann et al. (UNDP, 2013)

BDF’s research on youth in liberal political parties in the Western Balkan region (2022) focused on how to create a cycle in which youth can develop the skills and motivation necessary to successfully take part in the work of political parties, and to encourage political parties to create space for youth and their active political participation. The study concluded that the liberal parties of the Western Balkans recog-

nize the importance of establishing of youth wings and encouraging their effective engagement. It further examined the extent of power the liberal parties give to youth wings, and the influence they have in the nomination processes or party policy agenda setting.

In addition, one of the conclusions of an earlier BDF study (2021) on youth activism is that there is a sense that political parties and their political leaders do not include young people and their well-being in party initiatives. As a result, young people tend to feel disillusioned with politics in their countries. The authors find this to be important as in BiH, unlike in the majority of other democracies, this disillusionment is the consequence of a long-standing neglect of all problems affecting youth. Because of this, most young people avoid engaging in any type or form of politics, yet, it is only through politics that their issues can be resolved – a Catch 22. This research identified the following issues as the main obstacles to young people’s participation in political parties at the structural level: (i) financial costs for candidate nomination and campaigning and the lack of financial support make it even more difficult for youth to embark on a political career; (ii) social and cultural traditions in most societies of the WB region consider the political arena to belong to older, often male, citizens - this has resulted in the systematic exclusion of young people from politics and their underrepresentation in decision-making bodies; and (iii) young women are often subjected to “double discrimination” based on their age and gender and are thus also underrepresented in politics and decision-making bodies.

However, for a political system to represent and address youth-related issues and improve their position in society, young people must participate in formal political processes and voice their opinions in their political parties. Therefore, the overall goal of this study is to ensure that liberal political parties create mechanisms to actively encourage the greater direct participation of youth in initiatives that are of interest to them, and consider them vital to party development and society in general. It further aims to help youth in solving their issues and fostering a sense of their importance and value; this could also benefit the parties with potential new youth votes. This is why BDF continues to examine the issue of youth participation and their

position in liberal political parties across the EU, including the role of youth in decision-making bodies and processes, access to party resources, and promotion of young candidates. Its conclusions are aimed at enhancing the role of youth in liberal political parties and addressing related issues.

The overall goal of this study is to ensure that liberal political parties create mechanisms to actively encourage the greater direct participation of youth in initiatives that are of interest to them, and consider them vital to party development and society in general

Liberal parties and youth

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4

Liberal parties and youth

4.1 Case Study: The Ciudadanos Party of Spain

Ciudadanos - Partido de la Ciudadanía (Citizens – Party of the Citizenry) – ‘Cs’ party is a liberal political force founded in 2006 in Spain. Following the regional elections in 2017, this party was the largest single party in the Parliament of Catalonia receiving 25.4% of the votes, and it had a steady vote growth in the elections that followed in 2010 and 2015. In 2015, Cs won 40 seats (13.9%) in the parliament in the general elections. Cs has been a full member of ALDE since 2016 and it promotes a united and diverse Spain within the EU. Today Cs has 1/265 seats in the Senate, the Spanish upper chamber, and 9/50 in the Congress of Deputies, the Spanish lower chamber. The Party also has seven members in the European Parliament and governs more than 20 million citizens of Spanish regions and municipalities.

The party’s legislative framework, its internal regulations and general structure highlight the importance of political inclusion of youth. The Young Citizens (Jcs - Jóvenes de Ciudadanos) is the name of the party’s youth organization, which is led by a National Youth Coordinator. According to the party’s Statute:

- Persons up to 35 years of age can join the Young Citizens.
- The National Youth Coordinator is a member of the party’s National Committee, and forthwith, is a member of the General Assembly and General Council, the highest governing bodies of the party.
- The National Youth Coordinator, whose term of office lasts two years, presides over the National Youth Board of Directors, prepares an annual budget for Young Citizens and runs the organization, operation and general activities of the Young Citizens.

Together with the regional youth coordinators, the National Youth Coordinator formulates a national strategic plan, which requires approval from the National Committee.

- The members of the Young Citizens have a fixed number of delegates in the General Assembly, determined by the percentage of youth affiliates of the party at the national level, ensuring a minimum of one delegate per autonomous community.
- The Young Citizens organization adopts its own Young Citizens Regulations that regulate the manner of coordination, organization and supervision of the activities of the youth organization, which must be approved by the National Committee of the party.

Young Citizens aims to familiarize the young people of Spain with Cs’ objectives, and also to familiarize party members with issues affecting and of importance to youth. The Young Citizens youth wing is a full member of LYMEC and also adopts its own Statute (Jóvenes de Ciudadanos).

75% of survey participants believe that it is important that the Statute of the Party ensures balanced participation of youth in all party decision-making bodies, on electoral lists and for all nominated and appointed positions (see Chart 4.1). The party confirms that youth representation is regulated and evident in all internal levels of Citizens, including the national and regional boards, as well as the electoral committees.

Likewise, 85% of respondents agree that Cs includes younger members in intra-party initiatives and cooperation (see Chart 4.1). Moreover, all our interviewees confirm that youth participate in party decision-making processes, and that their contribution is greatly valued by the party leadership. The interviewees also indicate that they regularly discuss youth-related issues at party meetings and assemblies, including natality, employment rates, regulations that concern purchasing first house or property, pension systems, etc.

They further explain that although the national politics in Spain do not usually address youth issues unless elections are to be held soon, they are confident that Cs is one of the few Spanish parties that regu-

larly addresses issues that are important to youth: education, post-covid effects on mental health, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy. The party also states that they have specific electoral programs which address youth policy proposals, such as youth employment, dual vocational training, access to housing, etc.

Added to this, all survey respondents (100%) agree that the party actively promotes youth participation in politics; likewise, they all (100%) state that the party prioritizes youth-related issues and includes some of them in their electoral campaigns (see Chart 4.1). Moreover, 87% of respondents agree with the statement that Cs cares about youth wellbeing, and they hope that more young members, especially those who are competent and have relevant skills, will make up a greater part of the party leadership in the future. In addition, 81% of them agree that the party provides sufficient training opportunities for its younger members abroad.

On the other hand, the survey results highlight that little is known among the party membership about the innovative party policy platforms for greater political participation of youth, as only half of them (50%) say that they are familiar with this. They did, however, state that they regularly receive surveys and newsletters informing members about congresses, activities of Young Citizens and updates on regional and national programs. The party also frequently organizes regional activities, workshops, visits to the European Parliament and other events where members from the same cities or regions have the opportunity to meet and discuss contemporary issues.

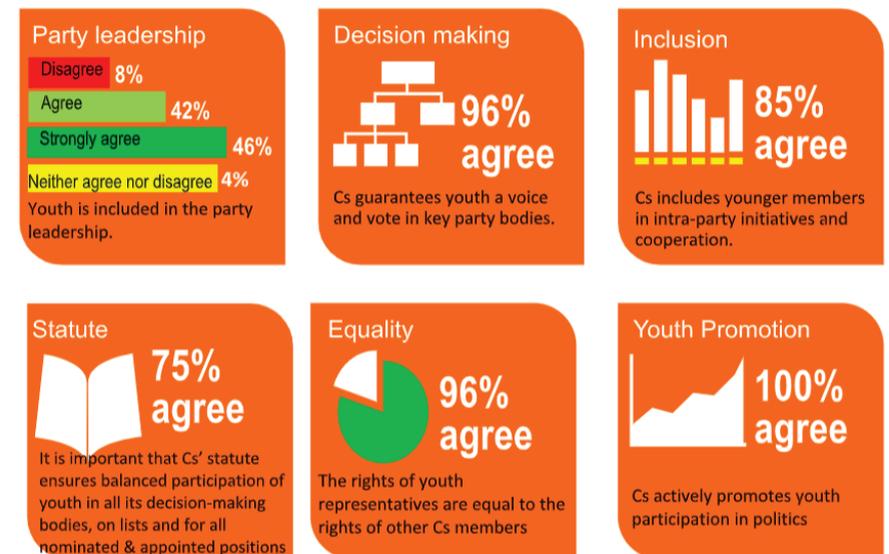
When asked about whether young people are treated equally and whether they enjoy the same rights as other party members, 96% of respondents say that Cs treats all generations of its members fairly, regardless of their age (see Chart 4.1). Likewise, 87.5% of the respondents agree that young party members are treated the same as older ones in Cs. Another 96% of the survey respondents believe that Cs provides guarantees that the voice of youth is heard in key party bodies (see Chart 4.1).

Furthermore, the interviewees also say that they are aware of the

cooperation Cs has established with international organizations, various NGOs and foundations, and they appreciate the benefits of cooperation, including valuable regional and cross-party exchange of experience and knowledge through various trainings, workshops, lectures and seminars organized to develop strategies for advancement of political careers of youth.

They highlight that they are always happy to work on EU projects, as well as on strengthening cooperation with other European liberal parties and across the globe. In addition, all the survey participants (100%) agree that it is important that the Party establishes and supports permanent youth academies and training programs for young party members, in order to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to run and navigate institutional politics effectively as young candidates. Another 78% of the respondents agree that Cs offers guarantees youth representation in key party forums, e.g. as speakers at party congresses and program conventions.

Chart 4.1 Survey results for Cs



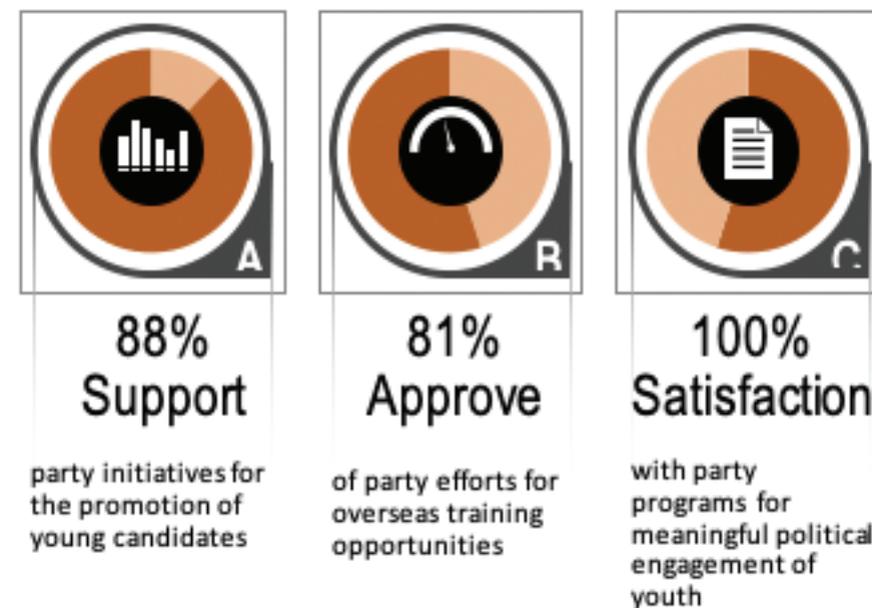
In regard to candidate lists, the majority of research participants say that the party pays attention to age balance and actively promotes political participation of youth in its electoral campaigns.

However, the analysis reveals that Cs does not use youth candidate quotas for elections at any level (only 4% of the respondents say that Cs uses the quota system for this purpose). The interviewees also explain that the party does not use the quota system because it does not believe it can help achieve quality; however, youth is evidently included on candidate lists and in campaigns.

When it comes to the state legislative framework, the Electoral Law of Spain has addressed the issue of gender equality since 2007 and mandates that political parties include a balanced proportion of men and women on every electoral list so that at least 40% of either gender is included on the lists for every election. However, the Law does not regulate youth quotas nor does it introduce specific legislative guidelines for the inclusion of young politicians on election lists in Spain. Cs has undoubtedly taken a step forward in their internal management organization and aims to ensure and promote a higher participation of its young members, not only in the elections, but in the political life of Spain.

In fact, 75% of respondents believe that the party has introduced measures to include representatives of the Jóvenes de Ciudadanos and/or young people in key party bodies, including candidate selection panels at all levels. Likewise, 88% of respondents express their satisfaction with the party's activities for the promotion of young candidates (see Chart 4.2). The interviewees state that, although the party does not believe in quota systems, young members are always included on candidate lists, and they are usually placed high on the electoral list. They also explain in more detail that the challenge Cs faces in this regard is the fact that the party takes into consideration many important segments and criteria when creating electoral lists or nominating and appointing the candidates: equality between different age groups, gender equality, competence, and candidates' professional background, their experience in a given field, engagement in party activities and programs, and their political reputation.

4.2 Survey results for Cs



As this process is very demanding, it is understandable that it may be challenging to nominate a balanced number of young candidates to lead candidate lists. Related to this, all survey participants (100%) state that there are specific programs developed by the party that actively support meaningful youth participation in politics (see Chart 4.2). Thus, they confirm that the party aims to include a greater number of its young members on the electoral lists in a fair manner.

As a result of such practices, 79% of responses believe that party resources are fairly distributed between all candidates. It is important to note that Cs is not a large party and that there are certain financial limitations; however, youth representatives are included in party decision-making bodies and equally participate in making decisions related to budget distribution. The interview participants also confirm that the party is always ready to financially support what Young Citizens needs for its activities, and that it usually grants greater

allowances in case a higher amount of money is needed for trainings, workshops and projects organized by this wing of the party.

In addition, 84% of survey participants agree the party should organize annual audits to review youth related-policies and practices or to identify potential misconduct in the party when it comes to youth-related issues.

Furthermore, the survey results demonstrate that the majority of participants (96%) agree that it is important for the party to have an autonomous, active and publicly-visible organization, such as Young Citizens. Moreover, all respondents (100%) believe that it is important that the party supports youth wings in organizing events and conferences aimed at youth and that these events are attended by a meaningful number of the Cs leadership members.

Similarly, 91% of participants aged 18-35 agree that Young Citizens is doing a good job and they generally agree that this organization successfully promotes its activities and party achievements, especially on social media. In this way, party members are aware of the main events that concern the party, national politics and are given a direct opportunity to read about recent successful activities of the party and its members. Young citizens also invests a lot of effort in engaging their members, especially new ones, in various activities, including visits to EU institutions, meetings with EU delegations, joint watching of Eurovision, and visits to the national parliament. They state that these activities are approved by members and the news about it are generally well received by youth, so they hope this practice will help attract new party members.

- 84% of research participants, who are between 18 and 35 years of age, indicate that Young Citizens should have a stronger and more meaningful role in the party.
- Interviewees are satisfied with Young Citizens' leadership; they are very active and cooperate well with the party HQ. They emphasized that all party members, including Young Citizens, receive the party newsletter once a week via email, which informs them about the party's recent work, achievements and announcements.
- New members of Young Citizens are regularly invited to partici-

pate in projects or attend events planned by the Young Citizens or the party which are of importance to the community. The party leadership participates in these important events.

- Young Citizens is a member of LYMEC and it enjoys its collaboration with them and other liberal youth on various projects.
- Respondents are generally satisfied with the fact that Young Citizens is directly connected and involved in the work of Cs as they receive the same notifications and invitations as the other members of the party.

The study results also indicate that party members are familiar with the party's policy platforms to encourage greater political participation of young people: almost all survey respondents (96%) believe that the party has a clear strategy to address youth issues, and this could be used to entice new voters. Cs engages in a variety of initiatives to promote the political inclusion of youth so as to ensure that young members are the focus of its political activities and it is evident that such policy platforms are clearly communicated to the party membership.

Some respondents explained that, although the party does not believe in quotas, it values the work of its young members, and members of the Young Citizens have established good communication and cooperation with the rest of the party. All members are offered the opportunity to take part in various workshops and trainings that are aimed at helping them grow into skilled, competent, educated and experienced members and participate in politics as councilors or political representatives. In this way, young, less experienced members receive the training, advice and support required for higher and more demanding political positions.

Moreover, 81% of study participants claim that the party provides adequate overseas training opportunities to its younger members to increase their likelihood of pursuing a political career, as well as to improve their general wellbeing (see Chart 4.2). The interviewees claim that the party supports the work of Young Citizens overall and is always looking forward to aiding their new initiatives, programs and ideas.



Young Citizens' performance

91% of the participants think Young Citizens is doing a good job and 83% of them believe they have good communication with Party HQ.



Financial independence of Young Citizens

83% of participants support the idea that Young Citizens should be independent in handling financial resources for its activities, without prior approval from Cs and 75% of them state that youth has equal access to all resources (financial and decision-making).



Financial resources for Young Citizens

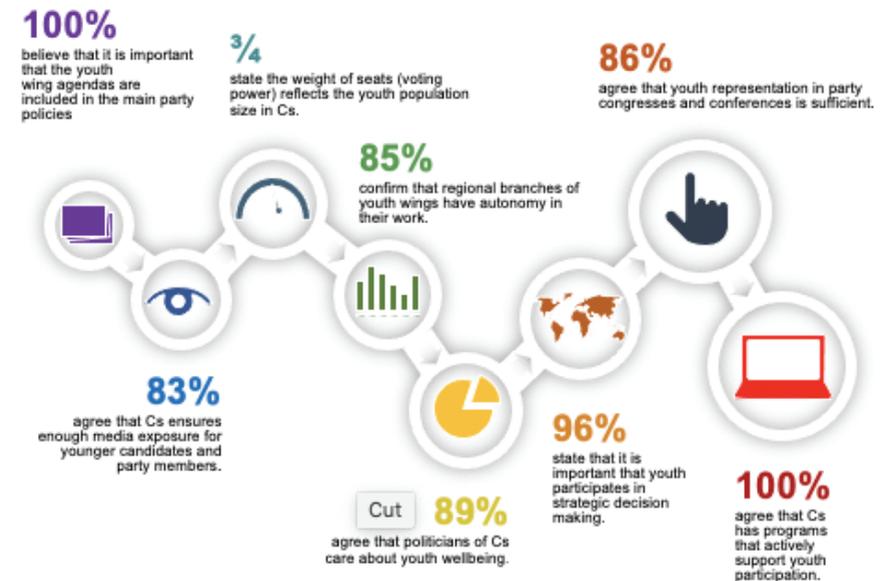
92% of participants agree that party policies and regulations should guarantee a stable provision of adequate financial resources for Young Citizens (e.g. fixed monthly allowance or percentage of the party's budget).

When it comes to youth mentorship programs, study participants state that there is no formal strategy that covers this important task in Cs. Nevertheless, it is common practice in the party that members with an extensive background in politics frequently meet with new members to explain the party's programs and objectives in more detail. They also claim that activities, trainings, workshops and seminars organized by the party often address topics that are relevant for the future political careers of its members. At these events, members are given the opportunity to discuss their experiences, review current issues in society and help new members become more involved and improve their confidence; research participants hope that youth issues will receive even more attention in the future, as less experienced members often need more advice and training on public speaking, writing initiatives and guidance on how to overcome the obstacles they are likely to face during their first political appointments. When it comes to media representation, 83% of respondents believe that young candidates in Cs are sufficiently represented in the media. Likewise, the majority of them note party efforts to advance its communication strategies and equally promote young candidates on increasingly popular social media channels, so that Cs supporters and voters, and citizens in general, can

follow and obtain first-hand information about their political ideas, programs and activities prior to elections. Research participants also say that they are under the impression that some Spanish media outlets (including some of the main broadcast channels) sometimes do not report on messages of Cs (and some other parties as well) so it can be difficult for them to reach the general public, especially as not all citizens use social media platforms.

On the other hand, youth has the advantage of easily adapting to continuous technological advancements, and interviewees confirm that Young Citizens and its members use online social networks for the promotion of their work, activities and ideas. As we live in the digital age, where visual content plays a key role in every part of life, youth heavily rely on their social media profiles as to communicate important messages to a wider audience, especially to the young citizens of their country.

4.3 Survey results for Cs



The research also explored whether there are any new and emerging issues in youth political engagement in the Cs, and participants provided several suggestions on how the party can help its young members to advance their political participation and improve their communication strategies and public speaking skills.

First of all, although there is not always much space for youth in media, Cs encourages and sends a considerable number of young members to participate in radio, TV and other programs, in order to help their members acquire public speaking skills and to support their political promotion. Respondents believe that it is important that the party's external communication with society through public media channels becomes more available to Cs, and they hope this situation will improve in the future.

Moreover, participants hope that media and educational institutions will recognize the importance of political education for youth, so that young people understand the significance of the power of voters on election day. They should, furthermore, ensure youth involvement in all phases of voter education campaigns, and that adequate methods and multimedia strategies are implemented which will capture young people's attention.

Respondents also note that youth are generally not interested in politics in Spain, and this is why more needs to be done to motivate them to exercise their democratic right to vote. Respondents state that Cs continuously invests efforts to ensure that the voice of their young members is heard on the political scene in Spain; however, they noticed that some of their messages are intentionally not reported by some media outlets.

Finally, respondents note that Cs and Young Citizens support cross-party cooperation among liberal and other parties, both from the EU and non-EU countries. The party has developed internal legal frameworks to ensure that youth are fairly represented at all intra-party levels and that they participate in all party decision-making bodies. The participants of this study confirmed that the party has established ongoing cooperation of youth in EU projects and across EU institu-

tions that has helped strengthen the political capacities of youth in liberal parties.

Participants hope that media and educational institutions will recognize the importance of political education for youth

4.2 Case Study: The Nowocześnie Party of Poland

The Modern (Nowocześnie) Party is a liberal party founded in 2015 in Poland. In 2015, the party participated in the parliamentary elections and received 7.6% of votes, winning 28 seats in the Polish Parliament. In 2018, it became part of an alliance called Civic Coalition and it has been part of this parliamentary group since 2019, holding eight seats in the state Parliament (134/460 seats within the Civic Coalition). Modern is a member of ALDE and promotes the principles of liberalism and Polish EU membership.

Modern's Statute recognizes the youth organization within the party, the Młodzi Nowocześni Association (Nowocześnie Youth), whose rules and details of operation are specified in regulations adopted in consultation with the Management Board of Modern. The association was established in 2016, and has been a legally registered association since 2021. Its objectives, tasks, organizational principles and operation are governed by the Statute of the Młodzi Nowocześni Association; its provisions prescribe that

- Persons over 13 years of age can join this youth association.
- The association's decision-making bodies are Chairman, National Board, National Council and Audit Committee, whose term of office lasts two years.
- The President regulates the appointment and dismissal of the Vice-Presidents, the Secretary General, the Treasurer and the National Board Members of the Youth Association.
- The president of this association is also a member of the party's management.
- The structure of the this association consists of the National Board, Audit Committee, International Committee, Internal Affairs Bureau and regional structures across Poland.

Internationally, Nowocześnie Youth are a full member of LYMEC and IFLRY, with whom they cooperate and participate in programs that focus on taking action on specific regional or thematic issues. According to a formal response from the party, the Nowocześnie Youth is an independent association subject only to Polish law.

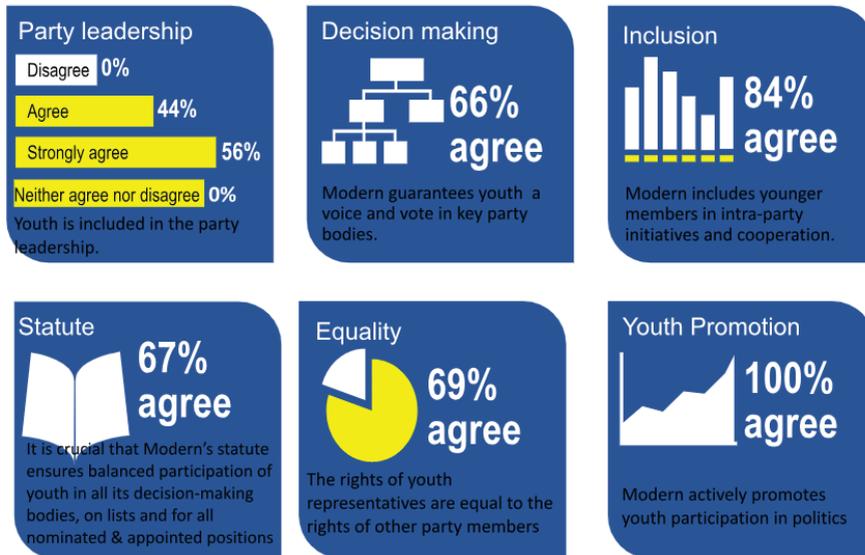
Nowocześnie does not propose policies for specific age groups - there is no youth policy just as there is no policy for 40 year-olds. They estimate that currently about 15% of their party members are aged between 18 and 30.

In this regard, the results of this research indicate that 67% of survey respondents agree that it is crucial that the Statute of the Party institutionalizes the involvement of youth in a balanced manner across all party decision-making bodies and processes. Likewise, 66% of respondents confirm that the party guarantees youth representation and participation in key party bodies and 84% of them support Modern's practices for inclusion of younger members in intra-party initiatives. The interviewees further confirmed that members of the Nowocześnie Youth actively engage in party decision-making processes and their opinions and contribution are greatly valued by the party leadership. Most participants (90%) also confirm that Modern successfully promotes the political engagement of youth, while 67% of them say they are satisfied with party's youth programs (see Chart 4.4).

Moreover, 69% of respondents believe that Modern promotes equality among its members and that rights of youth representatives are equal to those of other party members; another 51% of them agree that the Modern Party treats all party members equally, regardless of their age (see Chart 4.4).

They estimate that currently about 15% of their party members are aged between 18 and 30

Chart 4.4 Survey results for Modern



When it comes to the candidate lists, Modern's members are nominated in accordance with the procedure outlined in the party's statute. It is interesting to note that interviewees say that electoral lists support the balanced political participation of youth and that they are satisfied with the party's approach to youth participation in political campaigns. Likewise, 89% of respondents expressed their satisfaction with the party's support to young candidates (see Chart 4.4).

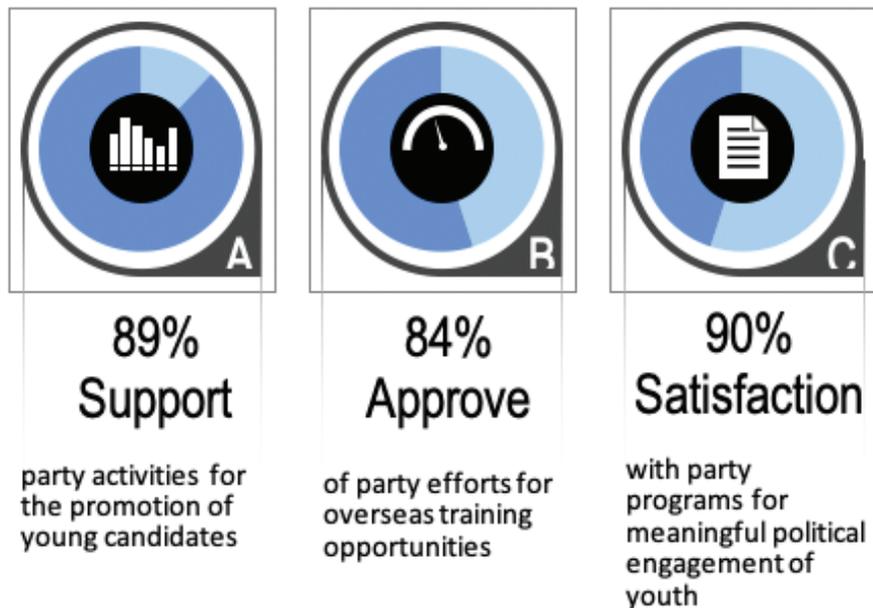
Our research also finds that 70% of participants think that the party should conduct annual audits to review its youth-related policies and practices or to identify any policy breaches.

Nevertheless, only 45% of respondents believe that party resources are distributed fairly among all candidates, and the same percentage state that they do not know how the party resources are distributed among candidates. Furthermore, 67% of participants agree that youth should have equal access to all resources (financial and deci-

sion-making). Meanwhile, interviewees explained that the party usually provides financial support for its candidates, including young candidates, but that the Modern Party is not a big party and thus has some financial constraints. They also pointed out that it distributes the budget in accordance with the adopted plan for the specific circumstances. In addition, they say that there are youth representatives in the party decision-making bodies and that they engage equally in decision-making related to budget distribution. As an example, the interviewees of this study point out that the current president of Nowocześnie Youth is also a vice-president of the party and that some members of the youth organization are also members of the party's council, and that the party board considers the initiatives of youth representatives to be very important.

The party's official program for 2022 contains the issues that concern Polish youth the most, including Poland's position within the EU, their support for the Eurozone and Euro, education, issues of parenthood, etc. Study results also reveal that 59% of party participants are unsure whether the party has any official innovative policy platforms that encourage greater political participation of young people. Slightly over half the respondents (52%) state that the party does not have a clear strategy that articulates its view on resolving youth issues, although this could be used to entice new voters. On the other hand, respondents explained that, despite the party's lack of such platforms, Modern engages in a variety of initiatives to promote political inclusion of youth. To ensure that young members are the focus of political activities of the party, the interviewees explain that they frequently encourage young members to run as candidates in local elections for city councils and they are always happy to discuss any legal amendments with youth which could help solve youth-related issues in the country. The party does not have youth quota system, and election lists are based on how competent the candidates are. This is why it is important that the party provides enough training opportunities for its young members; 84% of participants claim that the party provides enough overseas training opportunities to its younger members to strengthen their chances of pursuing political careers as well as their general wellbeing (see Chart 4.5).

4.5 Survey results for Modern



When it comes to media exposure of young candidates of Modern, 76% of respondents believe that young candidates are adequately represented in the media (see Chart 4.6). Similarly, interviewees emphasized that young members have had multiple opportunities to participate in debates or order programs as representatives of the youth organization. They also participate in debates organized by other youth political organizations or youth media channels and members of Nowocześnie Youth are also sometimes involved in panel discussions at Campus Polska which is a political event organized for youth democrats of Poland.

Some particular events held by youth are even broadcast live on the most prominent TV channels, which is also a good opportunity for media promotion of Nowocześnie Youth. The youth also relies on social networks and online posts where they can directly communicate with their supporters and voters. They further explained that the

party encourages youth to participate in public debates and as moderators/chairs of events or press conferences, and that they usually select the person who is most familiar with the topic and who has good communication skills.

Generally speaking, young adults are tech-literate, and our interviewees confirm that Nowocześnie Youth often use online tools to promote their work, activities and ideas, and the party shares many of their social media posts on its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts.

The social media profiles of Nowocześnie Youth are one of its key channels for communicating important messages, policy papers, and initiatives to a wider audience, especially to young Poles. They hope they will be able to attend more professional trainings to advance their skills on usage of online tools and social media promotion in the future. They also hope that they would be able to spread liberal ideas more efficiently this way, especially among their peers.

In addition, 90% of survey participants believe it is crucial for the party to have an autonomous, active and publicly recognized organization such as Nowocześnie Youth. Interestingly, almost all respondents, 91% of them, believe that the party should support youth wings in their efforts to organize conferences and events for young people. The same percentage of respondents (91%) also believe that the presence of Modern's leadership at these events constitutes good practice; in this way, they not only show their support for Nowocześnie Youth, but also share their knowledge, assistance and expertise with youth.

The interviewees claim that the party overall their work overall and looks forward to aiding youth's new initiatives, programs and concepts. They also say that the party does not have enough resources to be able to assign a budget for Nowocześnie Youth, but that it supports the youth wing's activities and provides as much funding as possible for its operations.

The party's official response states that there are no money transfers

between the party and its youth, as those are two separate, independent organizations, although the party's MPs often support the youth financially in organizing congresses.

- 71% of research participants indicate that Nowocześnie Youth should have a stronger and more meaningful role within the party, this statement was supported most by participants aged 18 and 35.
- The interviewees are satisfied with the leadership of the Nowocześnie Youth; they state that they are very active and meet regularly with their members.
- As all young adults are welcome to Nowocześnie Youth panel discussions, seminars and similar events, many activists attend these sessions and this practice contributes to the party's membership growth. The interviewees state that because the youth wing receives so much support, appreciation and assistance from the mother party, many young people are persuaded to become party members.
- The party leadership always participates in important events organized by that Nowocześnie Youth.
- 82% of participants agree that Modern guarantees youth representation in the key party forums, e.g. as speakers at party congresses and program conventions.

Furthermore, our research confirms that Nowocześnie Youth cooperates intensively with international organizations, NGOs, civil associations, and especially LYMEC and IFLRY to develop programs where key achievements are related to the political empowerment of youth, particularly young liberals.

In fact, all survey respondents (100%) believe that it is important that the party establishes and supports permanent youth academies and training programs for young party members which will equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to run and navigate institutional politics effectively as young candidates.



Nowocześnie Youth's performance

91% of participants believe that Nowocześnie Youth is doing a good job and 74% of them believe they have established good communication with party HQ.



Financial independence of Nowocześnie Youth

90% of participants support the idea that Nowocześnie Youth should be independent in handling financial resources for its activities, without prior approval from Modern Party.



Financial resources for Nowocześnie Youth

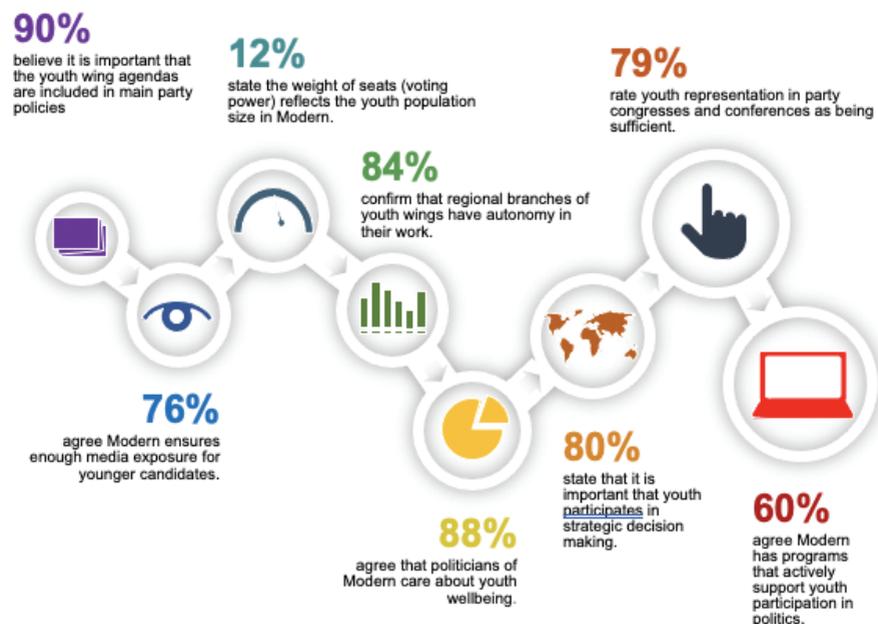
69% of participants agree that party policies and regulations should guarantee the stable provision of adequate financial resources for Nowocześnie Youth (e.g. fixed monthly allowance or percentage of the party's budget).

The interviewees further point out that, along with the youth wing activities, there is an informal practice of mentorship where the Modern's members who are experienced in politics advise mentor new, young members through workshops, education and informal communication. They say that some members of Nowocześnie Youth are official "social assistants" to party MPs and that they voluntarily help in organizing their office. They claim that such work may be even more efficient than official mentoring programs due to its flexibility and lack of formal constraints. Nevertheless, the interviewees of this study support the idea of mentorship in the party and believe it will consider introducing a formal program where steps for the advancement of its young members' political career will be outlined.

Study participants highlight several emerging issues in regards to the political engagement of youth that the party plans to strengthen through its existing mechanisms. For instance, Nowocześnie Youth is a very active, independent association that enthusiastically promotes the participation of youth in politics and civic activities, especially those that relate to raising awareness among youth about the importance of partic-

ipating in elections, social movements, and advocacy efforts. The Modern Party is very pleased with the dedicated work and promotional activities of their youth. Such activism encourages Polish youth to take an interest in politics and helps them learn how they can contribute and improve the overall socio-economic situation in their community and country. Party representatives hope that Nowocześnie Youth will continue to organize trainings and workshops to help its members prepare for higher levels of governance, and to advance their careers and communication skills. Likewise, young party members hope the party will strive to include more young candidates on its lists. The participants believe that, as the party gives the opportunity to youth to show their talents, knowledge and ambitions through the activities of Nowocześnie Youth, it will be easier for the party to identify and nominate the most competent young members for certain assignments, positions and managerial duties.

4.6 Survey results for Modern



Study participants suggest, among other things, that more attention should be given to members of the youth association who are inactive and do not maintain contact with the Nowocześnie Youth headquarters so as to ensure that membership dropout is kept at a minimum. In addition, internal communication between regional branches of the youth association should in some cases be better. Moreover, as it is important to always work on recruiting new young members, the interviewees suggest improving how the youth organization is advertised so as to attract new young members who are ready to participate in politics by becoming grassroots activists and who will advocate for their rights before relevant institutions. Youth should be more represented in media so that the Polish public learns more about their activities and work.

Last but not least, respondents point out that Nowocześnie Youth needs to ensure regular organizational funds as nationwide campaigns, events and congresses are expensive, and that costs should be split between members by, for example, introducing a membership fee within the youth association. They are also happy with the international cooperation and gatherings of liberal parties within the EU, and they find the idea of sharing good practices, positive and negative experiences with each other to be very significant. Nowocześnie Youth members are looking forward to more projects that require inter-regional cooperation and address issues regarding the political engagement of youth; these will provide them with opportunities to express their opinions and find a way to become a part of positive political practice in the EU.

4.3 Case Study: The Centre Party of Sweden

The Centre Party (Centerpartiet – abbreviated C) of Sweden is a political party founded in 1910 in Sweden and which values liberal ideology. C currently holds 24/349 seats in the Swedish Parliament, and 2/20 Swedish seats in the European Parliament. It has numerous representatives in state and municipal councils: 155/1696 country councilors and 13% (1603/12700) municipal councilors come from the Centre Party. It is also important to note that this party held the position of Prime Minister of Sweden three times, in 1939, and between 1976-1978 and 1979-1982. The Centre Party is a member of ALDE and the Liberal International.

The Statute of the Centre Party recognizes the formation of a youth organization within the party, the Centre Party Youth (CUF) as well as the Center Students Organization (CSO); the Statute and the party's Rules of Procedure regulate the following:

- A representative of CUF, usually a chairman/chairwoman of CUF, and a representative appointed by the CSO are members of the Board, the party's highest decision-making body between party meetings which includes 16 members.
- CUF and CSO each appoint five representatives of C's party meetings and two representatives of C's Trust Council; appointed members each have one vote.
- All party organizations, including CUF and CSO, must be adequately represented at all local, regional and national levels of governance, and this has to be taken into account when determining eligible persons for candidates lists.

CUF was founded in 1919 and its headquarters are in Stockholm. It brings together and represents all young people in Sweden who follow and accept the principles of liberalism, liberal democracy and free society. They are part of European and international liberal networks and alliances - LYMEC (European Liberal Youth) and IFLRY (International Federation of Liberal Youth), as well as the Nordic Centre Youth League (NCF). CUF adopts its own policy program from which the "idea program" is also derived, and the main focus of their

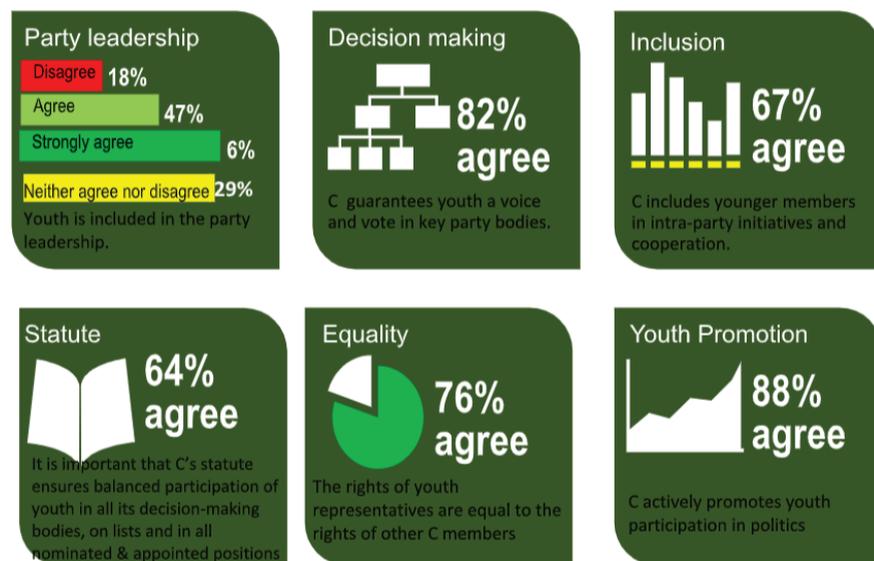
work and activities is on issues of equality, migration and integration, democracy, international politics, economy, housing, and infrastructure.

Added to this, Centerstudenter International (CSI) is Center Students' committee for international affairs that actively develops Center Students' policy on international affairs and networks with like-minded individuals and organizations from abroad. CSI organizes election parties, seminars and other similar activities that aim to stimulate discussion about international politics and is elected on an annual basis by the national bureau. CSI also operates within LYMEC and NCF, the Nordic umbrella organization, which works towards the Nordic council.

The study reveals that 64% of survey respondents agree that is important that the Statute of the C Party ensures balanced participation of youth in all party decision-making bodies, on candidate lists and in all nominated and appointed positions (see Chart 4.7). According to the official response received from the party, youth political engagement is actively promoted and supported by the party Statute, where it is stated, among other things, that being a member of a "sister" organization to the party grants one the right to representation in the national party board, and also with representatives at party meetings and councils of trustees. According to the Statute, their membership rights are equal to those of other party members. In addition, the Statute provides guidelines for nominating board members and their work. The survey results reveal that younger members are included in intra-party initiatives and cooperation (67% of respondents agree with this) (see Chart 4.7). Likewise, 68% of respondents say that young members are included in the running of the party (see Chart 4.7). In its official response to our questionnaire, party representatives explain that it does not have a quota that sets the minimal percentage of young members appointed in the party's decision-making bodies. However, they further elaborated that the party's Statute regulates the relationship between the youth association and the student association and their representation in key party bodies. The youth organization has one seat in the board of the party and therefore is a full member of the national board of the party. That gives

the youth organization the opportunity to engage in decisions and debates relevant to the future of the party. They also state that the youth organization always has a seat in working groups for development of new policies.

Chart 4.7 Survey results for C



Moreover, 88% of study participants agree that the party actively promotes youth participation in politics and, similarly, 82% of them believe that the party actively promotes its young candidates (see Chart 4.7 and Chart 4.8). Moreover, 83% of respondents believe that the party cares about youth's wellbeing, and another 53% agree that this political party provides enough training opportunities for its younger members abroad (see Chart 4.8). However, the research results also reveal that party members are not familiar with the party's innovative policy platforms intended for increasing youth participation, as only 12% of them are aware of the existence of these party policy platforms. The official response from the Centre Party emphasizes that it takes youth wellbeing within society very seriously and lists a few of its policies that concern

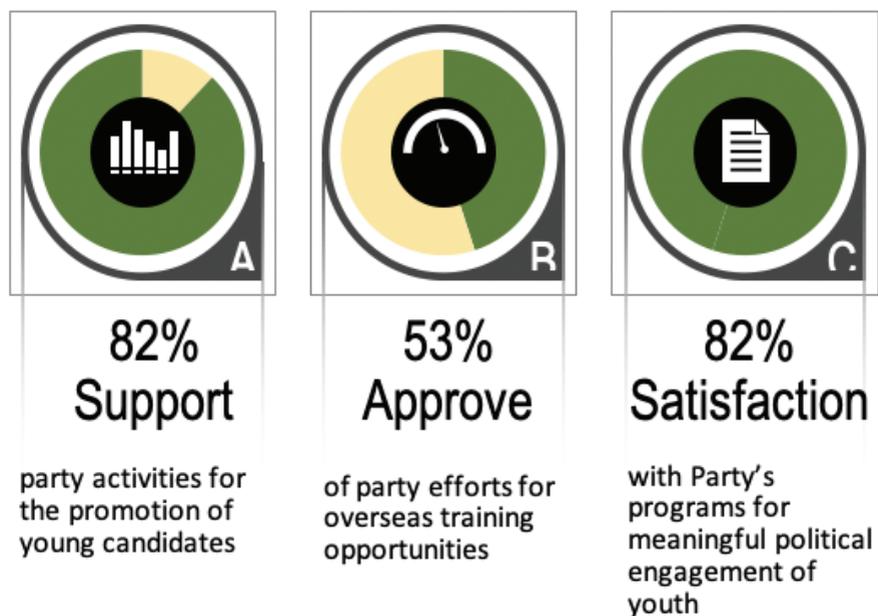
young people. These policies are focused on, among other things, youth employment and their position in the labor market, affordable housing opportunities, education, and mental health.

Another promising finding of this research is that 76% of respondents agree that C treats youth representatives equally and guarantees them the same rights as other party members (see Chart 4.7). On the other hand, only 17% of respondents state that young members of the Centre Party are treated equally to other party members and it is recommended that the party officials further investigate the background of such a claim. Furthermore, 82% of respondents believe that the party guarantees youth a voice and vote in key party bodies (see Chart 4.7). As the Statute mandates that the representative(s) of the youth organization is also a member of the party's Board and party meetings, this guarantees youth a voice in key decision-making bodies and equal participation in the creation of key party policies and conclusions. Likewise, all survey participants (100%) find it important that youth participate in strategic decision making. Additionally, 94% of respondents agree that it is important that the party establishes and supports permanent youth academies and training programs for young party members in order to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to run and navigate institutional politics effectively as young candidates. It should be noted that almost half the research participants (59%) also agree that C guarantees youth representation in key party forums – for instance, as speakers at party congresses and program conventions. It is important to note that the interviewees' contact information was not provided in a timely manner, and therefore interviews with members of the Centre Party were not conducted. For that reason, further clarification of the survey results is in some ways lacking.

As far as the creation of candidate lists is concerned, the majority of study participants state that the party pays attention to age balance and that it actively promotes political participation of youth in its electoral campaigns. However, 41% of respondents state that C has formally set quotas for elections in legislatures at all levels. The official response received from the party explains that it does not use quota systems but follows the Statute and the party rules and regulations on nomination of young members for election in legislatures. Likewise, 52% of participants

state that the party has introduced measures of reserved seats for young members in key party bodies, including candidate selection panels, at all levels. Meanwhile, 71% of respondents state that the party has set youth-related priorities and that some of these priorities are included in electoral campaigns. Party representatives explained that the party ensures broad representation at all levels and that competent, committed policy-makers with experience and relevant background are considered for nomination. Aspects such as commitment, background, experience, skills and interests are important and taken into account when selecting candidates for candidate lists. As this process may be limiting in certain aspects, it can be challenging to nominate a balanced number of young candidates for the given elections. It should be noted that 82% of respondents state that programs developed by the youth organizations are addressed in main party policies, which means that youth issues have a significant impact on the party agenda (see Chart 4.8).

4.8 Survey results for C



On the other hand, only 24% of respondents believe that the party resources are distributed fairly among all candidates. It is interesting to note that 47% of respondents are unsure whether all candidates and members receive fair financial support and therefore it is recommended that such important information is shared and communicated to party members.

Furthermore, when asked about the work of the youth organizations of C, CUF and CSO, the majority of participants (94%) say that it is important for a party to have well-established, autonomous, active and publicly-visible organizations, such as the CUF and CSO. Another 76% of respondents believe it is important for the party to support young liberals in organizing events and conferences aimed at youth and that these events are attended by representatives of the party leadership. Although 87% of respondents claim these youth organizations should have a stronger and more meaningful role within the party, 86% of them also say that the young liberals of C are doing a good job.

The following are policies and initiatives proposed by the party to assist young people:

- break down barriers which prevent young people from entering the labor market by reducing the amount of contributions paid by employers' when hiring youth. This proposal could encourage more businesses to hire young employees, and also create new job opportunities for youth;
- help those who are new on the labor market gain skills and experience which will lead them to higher-paying job opportunities in the future;
- help young adults to obtain mortgages and afford their own home by adjusting taxes for first-time homebuyers or tax breaks for developers who build affordable housing;
- increase counselling support for students in schools by providing more counsellors and educators with a background in behavioral science. This would help students to better cope with personal issues and improve their mental wellbeing, ultimately leading to improved academic performance. Students would thus receive

immediate help, which is significant as queues at medical institutions often lead to further difficulties;

- provide equal education and employment opportunities and living standards for all citizens across Sweden. Education and training, protection against disease and poverty, unconditional protection against violence and humiliation inside and outside the home are fundamental for every child to be able to feel secure and free to grow and develop, from primary schools to higher education programs.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that only 47% of participants believe that party has a clear strategy on improvement of youth issues which could attract new voters. This implies that the abovementioned policy platforms and other initiatives of the Center Party need to be clearly communicated to the party membership (and the public).



C's youth performance

86% of participants believe that C's youth organizations are doing a good job and 49% of them believe that they have established good communication with party HQ.



Financial independence of CUF and CSO

88% of participants support the idea that CUF and CSO should be independent in handling financial resources for their activities, without prior approval from C and 59% of them state that youth has equal access to all resources (financial and decision-making).



Financial resources for CUF and CSO

94% of participants agree that party policies and regulations guarantee the stable provision of adequate financial resources for CUF and CSO (e.g. fixed monthly allowance or percentage of the party's budget).

Another promising finding is that the party allocates funds to its youth organizations from its annual budget. Party representatives further

explained that the party provides about 70% of youth organizations' budgets in this way, and that the organizations themselves raise remaining funds through specific activities. Moreover, in an election year, the party provides even more financial support to them.

Moreover, 80% of respondents agree that C should organize annual audits to review youth-related policies and practices that could help the party better respond to youth-related issues.

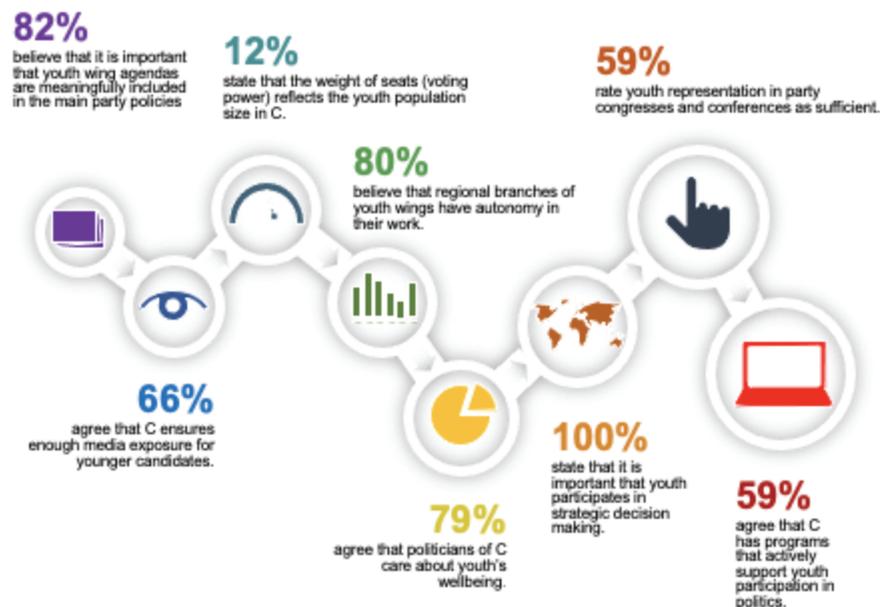
As far as a youth mentorship program is concerned, where party members who have more experience in politics offer guidance and advice to new, usually young, party members to help them advance their political careers, there is no record of such programs in the party Statute or in the data obtained in this research.

As the interviews were not conducted, it could not be confirmed whether the party organizes opportunities for its members to discuss their experiences and exchange ideas and give informal advice to new members to help overcome their current challenges.

It should be noted that 66% of respondents say that the Centre Party provides enough media exposure for its young candidates. Interviewees also point out that the youth of C is working very hard and their activities and contribution are of great help for the party campaigns.

Both, CUF and CSO, have their separate webpages and profiles on social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), and they use these platforms to promote their activities and ideas. Social media enables youth to communicate with their peers and supporters and to express their political views. Social media networks can also be used to increase group engagement and can lead to a greater political engagement of youth of Sweden.

4.9 Survey results for C



When it comes to innovative policy platforms, the party has outlined several programs that concern youth and their issues, including the Party's Future Agenda 2030. In addition, it has a separate chapter entitled "For Students" where it aims to explain what the Center Party plans to do for young people, youth rights, better employment rates, education, and benefits. Therefore, C considers itself to be a party which addresses youth issues with exceptional sensibility, and it estimates that about 5.9% of its members are young members between 18 and 30 years of age.

It is further important to emphasize that CUF creates and proposes its programs to the Center Party and there are many examples of proposals that CUF has pushed which are now Swedish law. It is important to state that CUF has a long history being founded in 1919, and has played an active role in Swedish politics since then. It is seen as a sibling organization of the Center Party. They have developed a com-

plete policy in the form of the CUF policy program, along with proposed solutions to Swedish societal problems. The program is divided in separate chapters and it concerns issues of democracy, human rights, equality, migration and integration, environment, training, economy, international politics and housing and infrastructure. Another sibling organization of the C party is the Center Students which have developed their own Manifesto of Ideas and political reform programs that the Center students' general meeting adopts, including the Housing Policy Program, International and Defense Policy Program, Education Policy Program, Environmental and climate Policy Program, Democracy and legal Policy Program, Social Policy Program, Migration and Integration Policy Program, Economic Policy Program.

However, 50% of respondents state that the party does not have a clear strategy on improvement of youth issues, even though such strategy could be used to attract new voters. It is important that social media accounts of CUF and CSO are always up-to date and active, as exposure to political content on social networks is likely to lead to greater voter turnout among youth over time. In addition, respondents point out that the party often employs interns on a part-time basis, usually over the summer, who are usually selected from the youth wing. The party representatives state that they hope to encourage all young Swedish citizens to change their everyday life through local politics, regardless of where they come from or where they live.

Party provides about 70% of youth organizations' budgets

4.4 Case Study: The Centar Party of Croatia

Center (Centar) is a Croatian liberal political party founded in 2015 when it transformed from a citizens' initiative "For smart people and a smart city" into a political party. It participated in its first parliamentary elections that same year and gained its first seat (as part of the opposition) in the Croatian Parliament at the parliamentary elections in 2020, winning 5.42% of the votes in coalition with two other parties. Center's headquarters are in Split, where it won 7/35 seats in the city council at the local elections in 2017 and 2021. The current mayor of the City of Split is Dr. Ivica Puljak, President of the Center Party. Center has been a full member of ALDE and LIBSEEN since 2017.

The Statute of Center, adopted in 2021 in Split, does not mention the term "youth" nor does it set the number of youth members/representatives in its decision-making bodies. The structure of Center currently does not have a youth wing and youth is not mentioned in the Rules on Party Membership and Organization or in its Code of Ethics.



Youth Forum

The establishment of a youth organization is planned in the annual program of Center. In cooperation with the party, this youth organization will develop specific policies and initiatives for young people and participate in the creation of the party programs.



Party programs

The party's program considers the wellbeing of youth and states that one of the values and goals of Center is to ensure employment and professional opportunities for youth of Croatia so that they remain in their homeland. Here, the program pays special attention to the education reforms, which should result in a better quality of education for children and young adults.



Quota System

The party does not use rely on a quota or minimal percentage of young members appointed to the party's decision-making bodies. Active young members have equal opportunities to stand out and be elected or nominated; the party takes into account the structure of its members, the policies they represent, regionalism, gender equality, and science and education.

The majority of respondents (63%) believe that it is important that the Statute of Center ensures a balanced participation of youth in all party decision-making bodies, on party electoral lists and in all nominated and appointed positions (see Chart 4.10).

The interviewees confirm that the political participation of youth is highly encouraged and supported by the party leadership and that most members of Center are young adults. They further point out that young party members are included in party leadership. In addition, 72% of respondents state that young members are included in intra-party initiatives and cooperation. 57% of respondents have a positive view of youth's inclusion in party leadership (see Chart 4.10).

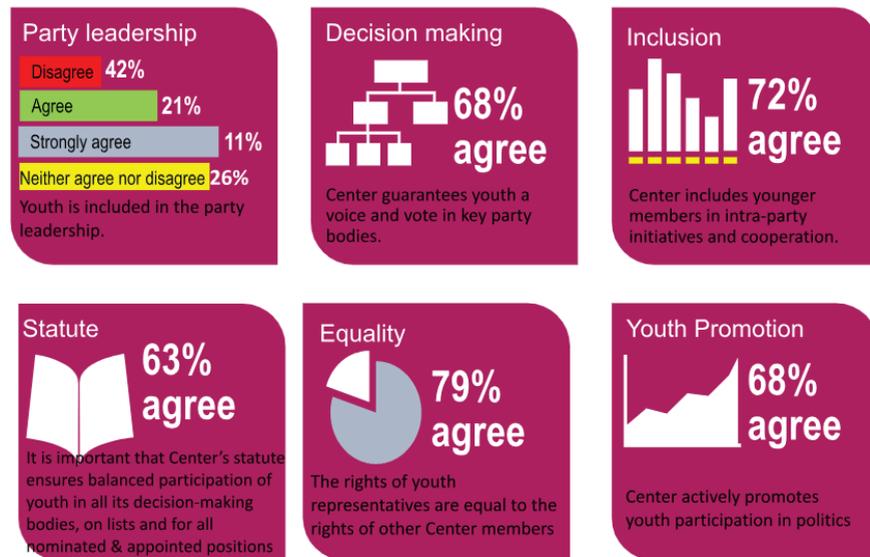
Similarly, only 42% of research participants say that Center has introduced measures of reserved seats for young members in key party bodies, including candidate selection panels, at all levels.

The interviewees explain that, although there is no formal procedure for targeting young members for nomination and election to party bodies, young members are frequently elected and appointed in practice. They agree that the party values the work and options of its young members and confirm that the party leadership takes their suggestions and objections into account.

When it comes to the equal treatment of young members and ensuring that the rights of youth representatives are equal to the rights of other members within Center, 79% of survey respondents believe that internal practices of the party ensure equal treatment of all its members, regardless of age (see Chart 4.10). Another, 68% of respondents say that the party guarantees youth a voice in key party bodies (see Chart 4.10).

However, as the Statute of the party does not regulate youth participation in party bodies, it is highly recommended that this be officially defined in Center's legislative framework.

Chart 4.10 Survey results for Center

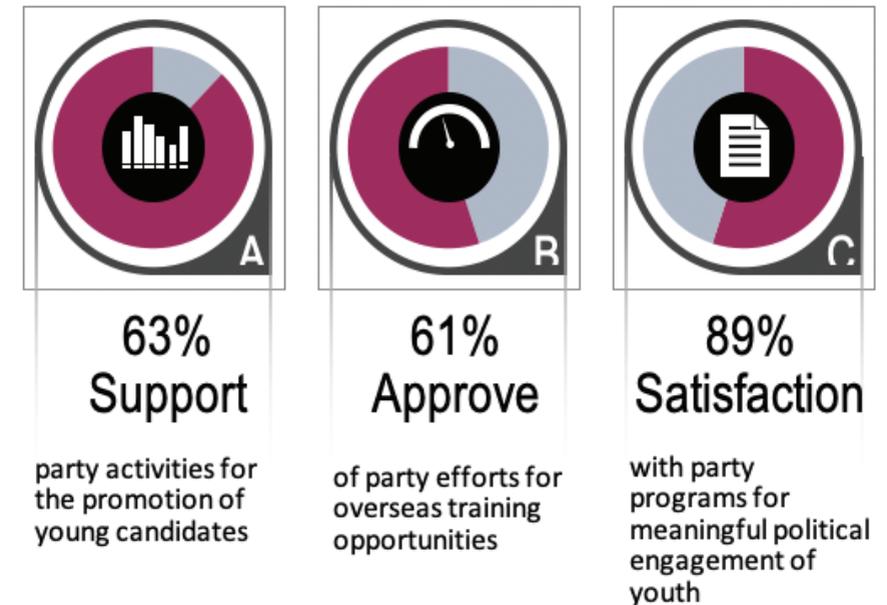


As far as the election lists are concerned, the interviewees further explain that the party strives to nominate a balanced number of young candidates on the election lists. They think that it is beneficial to the party to introduce new, young candidates on candidate lists as the public is eager to see new politicians on the political scene of Croatia whose names are not associated with scandals, corruption or other wrongdoings. The interviewees also believe that young members will enhance their political skills through more trainings, workshops and seminars intended to advance political engagement of youth. This is why 95% of the participants find it important to establish and support permanent youth academies and training programs for young members in order to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to run and navigate institutional politics effectively as young candidates.

Moreover, 68% of respondents say that Center actively promotes youth participation in politics and, similarly, 63% of them also agree that the party actively promotes its young candidates (see Chart 4.11). Added to this, 85% of respondents believe that party cares about

youth’s wellbeing, while 61% of them think that Center provides enough training opportunities for its young members abroad (see Chart 4.11). Furthermore, 47% of respondents agree the party has set youth-related priorities and that some of these priorities are included in electoral campaigns.

4.11 Survey results for Center



It should also be noted that most respondents are not familiar with any of the policy platforms created for greater youth political participation; only 21% of them say that the party has innovative policies for improving youth political engagement. In addition, under half the respondents (42%) believe that the party resources are distributed fairly among all candidates, while around a third (32%) are not sure how these resources are distributed among candidates. Meanwhile, 72% of respondents agree the party should organize annual reviews to address youth issues.

Furthermore, respondents state that the party currently does not have a formal youth mentorship program. The respondents do say, however, that informal mentorship meetings and discussions among party members do take place and that a professional network is gradually being built. However, they hope Center will also establish a formal mentorship program to provide support to youth. As far as a youth organization within the party is concerned, Center is a fairly new party and has plans to establish a separate organization led by young people that would develop programs and policies to address youth-related issues and help young people advance their political careers. Respondents believe it is crucial to focus on altering the political models and the social climate in general to stop youth migration from Croatia. The annual plan and program of the party contains an estimate of the budget necessary for the establishment of a youth forum and their activities in the first year of its foundation. This amount is tentative, and the future budget will depend on the proposed plan and program activities of the forum itself.

Below is an overview of the some of the most important research findings:

- 79% of respondents believe that it is important that Center supports young liberals in setting up an autonomous, active and publicly visible organization within the party.
- 95% of respondents agree that the party should support its youth in organizing their own events and conferences and all of them (100%) believe that it is important that these events are attended by members of the party leadership.
- 54% of respondents are satisfied with the results achieved by youth in the party and think they are doing a good job. The interviewees confirm that youth support the initiatives and work of the party through their activities.
- 74% of respondents agree that a stable provision of adequate financial resources for projects organized by youth (e.g. a fixed monthly allowance or percentage of Center's budget) should be guaranteed in party policies and regulations, and 53% of them believe that youth should have independent access to these resources, without prior approval from the party.

Another aspect analyzed within this research is media exposure, and 63% of respondents say that young Center candidates receive adequate media coverage (see Chart 4.12). The interviewees also explained that social media continues to be an important platform for communication and advocacy. They believe that Center uses online tools efficiently to share its promotional material and that they are successful in reaching young adults and informing them directly about Center's current activities. The number of Center followers on various social media platforms is on the rise. However, not all interviewees are sure whether Center has separate youth groups on social media platforms to promote of their materials and activities, and therefore it is recommended that such information is shared and communicated among members of the party.

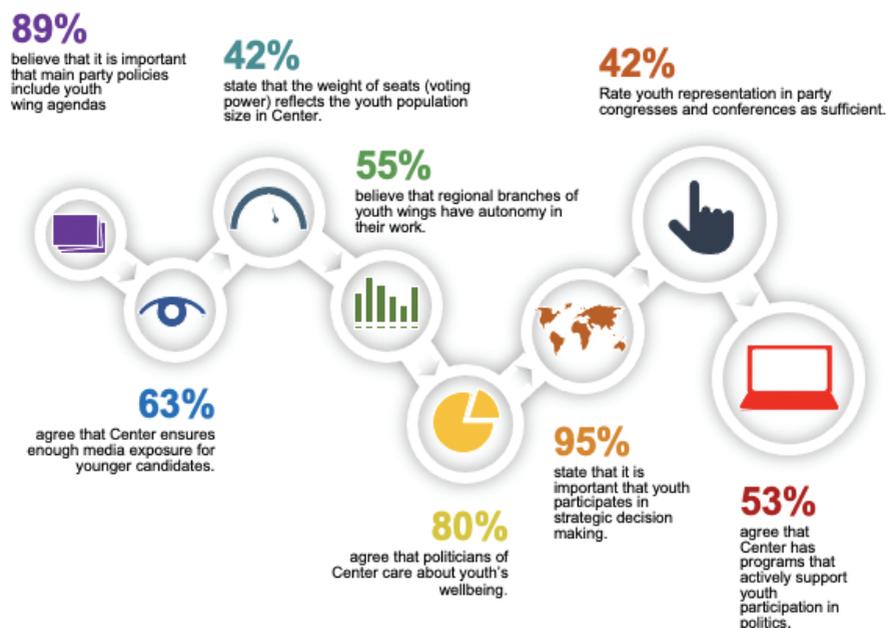
Respondents emphasized several emerging issues in regard to youth political engagement that Center should address. To begin with, the participants say that they hope that a formal youth organization will be established within the party in the future, which will deal with issues of concern to this population rather than have them addressed through general party politics. All parties face challenges when it comes to recruitment of new, young members, and although a significant number of young people have joined Center so far, there is currently no program aimed at approaching and recruiting Croatian youth. Respondents said that youth is generally not very interested in politics, regarding it as something very distant and

The participants say that they hope that a formal youth organization will be established within the party in the future

unnecessary. This is why the party should continue to support the organization of seminars, trainings and workshops aimed at empowerment of the youth and invite them to take part in such programs and education.

The interviewees believe that what could be attractive to youth is more media representation of politically active youth, including on social networks, where their politics can be introduced in an accessible way. This approach might encourage young people to give thought to their democratic rights and why it is so important to vote. Respondents also say they hope the organizations, foundations and youth organization bring politics and its purpose closer to young adults through school and university curricula, panel discussions and participation in talk shows. In this way, youth may become more interested in political activism.

4.12 Survey results for Center



They further emphasize that they have carried out activities to promote of their political party that turned out to be very successful in attracting new party members in their local communities; these activities include lecturers on various issued delivered by the party president at schools, universities and cultural centers. Respondents state that these activities were welcomed by citizens and local media and were well received by youth. The interviewees also point out that the main reason why young people are not engaging in politics is due to the fact that the majority of them are currently dealing with unemployment, high housing prices and inflation, and they are focused on finding ways to solve these crucial issues. Joining political parties that offer employment within public institutions is currently a common pattern that motivates youth to join big political parties regardless of their ideologies; however, Center does not promote itself as “a political employer”.

Respondents also believe that it is important to formalize the structure of a youth forum, as well as to institutionalize the position of youth in the party’s Statute and regulations so that youth rights and inclusion in decision-making bodies are clearly defined and maintained.

In addition, the interviewees say that the party should consider advancing its digital marketing by hiring professional companies for its promotion on the increasingly popular social media platforms and other channels, so that the supporters and voters of the Center Party and citizens in general can follow and obtain good-quality first-hand information about their political ideas, programs and activities prior to elections. Respondents also point out that young party members receive more support from the party in media once they are elected. Although this may be costly, the participants believe that the party would benefit from exceptional and first-rate promotion of their candidates, programs and ideologies.

Finally, 43% of respondents are of the opinion that the party should have a clear strategy to address youth issues in order to attract new votes. The interviewees explain that the primary concern is to help youth overcome the growing barriers that come with inflation,

expensive housing and youth migration. Members of Center hope that more citizens will see that their approach to solving these crucial issues of concern to youth will help reverse the “brain drain” and encourage youth’s sustainable return to Croatia. They also hope that there will be more members who will join them in their activities.

Respondents also emphasize that interpersonal relations within the party are outstanding and that the party actively supports anyone who wishes to become more involved in politics. As a result, they hope that young people’s involvement and long-term support for the party, whether as members or supporters, will increase and be sustained. So far, these intra-party relations have ensured a constant increase in Center’s membership.

Conslusion

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Political parties play a key role in addressing the issue of youth political participation and its institutionalization within party policies, procedures and practices. Likewise, young party members are expected to make a commitment to be proactive and participate in the implementation of party initiatives and programs focused on youth empowerment. As a key electoral gateway, political parties directly influence the extent to which young people are active in representational politics. In a move to ensure substantial participation of youth within political parties, the ultimate objective of BDF's efforts and this research is to identify and highlight the importance of greater political participation of youth and their engagement in formal political processes, and thus influence the development of peaceful societies and policies that will respond to the specific needs of youth.

Previous research has identified that one of the most serious problems affecting modern democracies today is a decline in youth political participation. Namely, the average youth abstention rate in European or national elections is at around 70% (Dežlan, 2018); membership in political parties is diminishing and as a result, representation of young people in democratic institutions is weak. Political parties need to address these negative trends for a number of reasons: most importantly for developing a steady support base for elections and establishing a constant influx of qualified, project-oriented candidates and staff members who will contribute new ideas to the party and provide clear visions of future policy developments.

In 2021, the Boris Divković Foundation published a study entitled *Awakened in Need: Political and Civic Engagement of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Youth*, followed by the publication of *Youth of Liberal Political Parties in the Western Balkans (2022)*; most participants of both studies stated that political parties do not consider active youth essential for their party's development or the development of their society. Therefore, BDF's idea was to obtain a more comprehensive overview and expand on earlier research on young people's political engagement within liberal parties. *Loud and Proud: Youth in Liberal Political Parties* provides a continuation and more extensive insight

into the participation of young people in liberal political organizations. The study focuses on the challenges faced by youth and their inclusion in procedures and processes within liberal organizations. The study also addresses the possibilities of their political promotion among the public.

Studying the ways in which to attract young people is necessary to reverse this negative and worrying trend of their decreased political participation. Moreover, it is urgent to find solutions and develop perspectives for young people so that they are informed, empowered, and aware of the political systems of their countries to be able to develop a sense of civic responsibility. In the previous decade, academic institutions, as well as national and international organizations, have published studies on the many challenges that young people confront nowadays. This publication offers advice to liberal parties on how to involve and support more young people in order to inspire them to engage in politics and actively strive toward a better future.

The publication *CPLA: Loud and Proud: Youth in Liberal Political Parties* presents four case studies in four countries. These are the *Nowocześnie Party of Poland*, *Ciudadanos (Cs) of Spain*, *Centerpartiet (C) of Sweden*, and *Centar of Croatia*. It uses a combined method of primary and secondary research and qualitative and quantitative analysis. The primary research contains in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The secondary analysis looks into available materials from previous research, data, different internal party documents, etc.

The study was conducted at the end of the Covid 19 pandemic and, due to restrictions, researchers conducted interviews and questionnaires online. The ultimate objective of BDF's efforts and this research is to identify and highlight the importance of greater political participation of youth and their engagement in formal political processes, which would have a positive effect on building peaceful societies and designing policies that will respond to the specific needs of the youth.

In order to guide the parties towards increasingly greater youth involvement in their organizational structures and political program

developments, this publication also offers practical and impartial recommendations and specific guidelines that can be addressed and implemented quickly and efficiently. The study uses a mixed-methods approach that included a comparative analysis of youth policy frameworks, programs, and practices regulated by the parties. The presentation of findings from the case studies of the aforementioned liberal parties is an essential chapter of this research. It includes reviews of intra-party democracy in the liberal parties, observations about current perspectives on youth political participation, and impartial suggestions for activities that can be introduced and adjusted to the needs of these parties and party systems. It also identifies the similarities and differences between the liberal parties in their approaches to devising and implementing policy frameworks for youth.

The general conclusion of the study is that the position of youth within liberal parties in selected EU countries is quite satisfactory, yet some changes and improvements need to occur. While party documents do define the position and roles of youth or youth wings within the party, their inclusion in political processes (in practice) is in some instances weaker. For all parties, access to finance for youth activities is limited. On the other hand, youth participation in internal decision-making is sufficient and in line with party policies, but there is a lack of sufficient inclusion of youth in the external promotion of the party and in some cases, in the placement of candidates on candidate lists during elections.

It is crucial to emphasize that the youth organization is generally a party's strongest force for progress and modernization. In total, 89.7% of respondents agree that it is important for a party to have an autonomous, active and publicly visible organization for youth, one that is respected within the party.

Politics means constantly learning new things; therefore, members of youth organizations need to be educated through programs offered by the EU, NGOs or parties so as to be capable political action. Some key potential activities were highlighted, such as intensifying training for public speaking. Many young people are afraid to take part in poli-

tics because of their insecurity relating to public speaking and debates. Because of this, young party members are reluctant to make media appearances; therefore, they need to be taught to overcome their stage fright. Social networks can play a significant role in attracting young people and can serve as excellent PR tools. Young people can utilize social networks to gather supporters and attract potential new members of youth organizations.

Respondents also emphasized the necessity of organizing education on political responsibility, as well as on employment, housing, preserving mental health and other related issues. It is also necessary to include as many topics of importance to young people as possible in party discussions, and that young people are present at party meetings and in all contexts that seem relevant and valuable to them. They also indicated that they hope that more youth-related issues will be discussed at party meetings and assemblies, and that it is expected of youth associations to address topics that concern the political engagement of youth, but that youth organizations often lack adequate financial resources.

For the Centre Party of Sweden, the research data shows that participants are pleased with the fact that the party has established two youth organizations: Centre Party Youth, CUF, and Center Students. CUF was founded in 1919 and has a lot of experience in representing all young people in Sweden who adhere to the principles of liberalism, liberal democracy and free society. It has played an active role in Swedish politics and is regarded as a sibling organization of the Centre Party. It creates and proposes its own programs within the Centre Party and to the public, and there are many examples of proposals that CUF has pushed which are now Swedish law. Another sibling organization of the C party is the Center Students which have developed their own Manifesto of Ideas and political reform programs.

Young members of C are generally happy to attend the events the youth organizations invite them to, such as training, workshops, lectures, and seminars intended for the advancement of youth political engagement, and research participants generally agree that the

party cares about youth wellbeing. Programs developed by the youth organizations are addressed in main party policies, which means that youth-related issues are taken seriously by the party and incorporated into its agenda.

It is very promising to see that 88% of study participants agree that the party actively promotes youth participation in politics and, similarly, 82% of them believe that the party actively promotes its young candidates. On the other hand, only 17% of respondents state that young members of the Centre Party are treated the same as older ones and only 24% of them believe that party resources are fairly distributed among all the candidates. As these percentages are quite low, it is recommended that party officials further investigate these issues.

When it comes to the Ciudadanos (Cs) Party, 81% of respondents agree that the party provides enough training opportunities for its younger members abroad. They emphasized that training is oriented towards EU projects, as well as towards strengthening cooperation with other liberal parties. The party also often organizes regional activities, workshops, visits to the European Parliament and other events where members from the same cities or regions have the opportunity to meet and discuss contemporary issues.

Young Citizens, the party's youth organization, also invests a lot of effort in engaging their members, especially new ones, in various activities, such as visits to EU institutions and meetings with EU delegations. They state that these activities are welcomed by the members and well received by youth in general, so they hope this practice will help attract new party members. However, 84% of the research participants, who are between 18 and 35 years of age, believe that Young Citizens should generally be more influential and stronger as an organization.

The interviewees also pointed out that the primary reason that youth are not joining Cs in great numbers is that most young people in Spain are generally not interested in politics, and this is why more needs to be done to motivate them to vote during elections. Young people are focused on solving crucial issues in their lives, such as finding

employment, and Cs continuously invests efforts to ensure that Spanish youth is aware that the party represents and fights for their interests; however, they have noticed that some of their messages are intentionally not reported on by the media.

According to findings, Young Citizens is well-structured and has a good relationship with the mother party. Its members are very active and cooperate well with the party HQ. A very good practice is that all party members, including Young Citizens, receive the party's newsletter once a week via email, which informs them about the party's most recent activities, achievements and announcements.

The case of Nowocześnie Party presents another good example of youth wing satisfaction with youth involvement within the party bodies. Nowocześnie Youth is a very visible and independent youth association with clear and separate political initiatives, which are subject only to Polish law.

Their financing is independent from the party and, according to respondents, Nowocześnie Youth activities reflect an active youth. The respondents state that Nowocześnie Youth needs to take care to ensure regular organizational funds as nationwide campaigns, events and congresses are expensive and every member should participate in the costs, possibly by introducing a membership fee within the youth association. Similarly, 45% of participants state that they do not know how party resources are distributed among candidates. For this reason, it is recommended that the party considers introducing a set of criteria on the basis of which financial support will be given to candidates and that this is clearly communicated to party members.

In addition, 67% of participants agree that youth should have equal access to financial resources they are to exert any real influence on the national level. Respondents pointed out a number of examples of good positioning of young candidates on candidate lists, which shows that the party values its young candidates; this is also a way to potentially attract new party members.

Croatian Centar should, as a first step, form a youth wing and include

youth in key political activities. Even though most of the current leadership consists of youth, a formal youth association would likely attract more members and would clearly define the role of youth in party activities. Having in mind migration rates of youth in Croatia, and that most of the interviewees believe that youth is uninterested in politics, constant educational support and creating youth leaders within the party might be an opportunity to have a more visible and active youth and thus attract more youth members.

BDF's research focuses on liberal parties and their strategies, standpoints, and practices toward advancing and promoting the political participation of youth within their parties and in their countries. Some of the identified distinctions are related to the country's unique cultural and legal framework, various internal party regulations, implementation methodologies, or the general role of the party and the presence of in-country support structures. The proposed recommendations and voluntary measures (Table A), grounded in extensive research, are intended to increase the political participation of youth in the four liberal parties/organizations discussed above. All these factors vary across the countries, so the parties should consider them within their national and political context:

Summary of recommendations

Table A

Recommendation	
Institutionalizing youth inclusion in the party Statute	Ensures that youth participate in all important political processes, especially in electoral processes. It is important to have the party's stand on youth political engagement clearly defined in the Statute and other legislative frameworks of the party. It is then easier to introduce measures in support of political representation of youth into existing party policies, processes and structures.

Recommendation	
Introducing a formal mentorship program	Mentorship programs are crucial in preparing young party members to become candidates/nominees for certain positions or to develop their skills to become campaign managers, election observers or party activists. Mentoring programs can be designed to pair candidates from different backgrounds, so that new, young party members are given practical and personal support.
Introducing leadership and topic-specific capacity training opportunities	Appropriate trainings can help youth advance their communication skills, work with the media and/or build voter contact and establish outreach programs. International cross-party networks and workshops can also empower youth for greater and more efficient participation in political processes.
Establishing /strengthening the party's youth organization	The party's youth oriented organizations (e.g. Youth Forum) can help the party actively promote and run its programs for political participation of youth and the advancement of their political careers and it is important that these autonomous organizations continue strengthening their capacities. Party leadership should also take youth organizations seriously as they are the powerbase for the party membership which can easily reach and communicate political messages to young voters.
Determining access to financial resources and campaign funds	Allocating existing resources to young party members or youth clubs is essential for political participation of youth. The parties need to ensure transparent internal rules on the allocation of party funds and address the economic and financial obstacles faced by young candidates.

Recommendation	
Introducing /implementing youth quotas	Parties can introduce/implement voluntary quotas to ensure a minimum number of young candidates on their candidate lists and in the party's decision-making bodies. It is recommended that this should not be less than 30%.
Establishing and publicizing youth programs	It is important that parties have programs that encourage and support political engagement of youth within the party; reasonable targets and timelines should be set with regular program monitoring reviews to track the results. The parties should publicize the efforts and achievements of such programs, and identify other parties' shortcomings in this regard.
Retaining young members	It is essential that parties work on retaining young party members before beginning any extensive initiative for recruiting more new members. Learning more about the young people who are already active party members, their reasons for joining the party, and professional qualifications can help the party better manage the skills and expertise already at their disposal. This approach can also prevent a decline in membership.
Ensuring MEDIA representation	Youth should be visible in campaigns and parties should actively promote their young candidates by including them in posts published on party websites, campaign posters, TV, video and radio messages, printed media, and online social networks. Considering youth's engagement with social networks, these platforms are key tools for young party members to build new connections and inform young voters about their political program, election campaigns, etc.

Recommendation	
PRESENTing party views at universities, sport, artistic and cultural centers to attract new voters	Student unions, clubs and similar bodies can be a medium for reaching a greater audience of young voters through informal education programs about political processes. First-time voters are likely to maintain their voting choices and habits later.
Invite youth groups to visit national parliaments	Parties should ensure that the voice of youth is heard in parliament and other government bodies, and members of youth organizations should occasionally be invited to visit national/cantonal parliaments and local level governing bodies to familiarize themselves with governing processes and enable them to hold their elected representatives accountable.

One of the essential findings of the study is the question of support for youth in the pre-election, election, and post-election periods. The activities implemented by BDF to engage and support youth in the pre-election period is a good example and can be seen as a recommendation for other NGOs that want to focus their activities on encouraging young people to become politically active. Post-election activities are also included in the recommendations of this research, and can serve as guidelines for future activities of the parties. Recommendations for the progressive inclusion of young people in politics consist of:

Pre-electoral period:

- Designing training programs as incubators for new projects;
- Providing flexible support with low access barriers to innovative, small-scale youth projects;
- Encouraging affirmative action measures such as youth and women quotas within political parties;
- Providing capacity-building for young members of political parties in a multi-partisan setting.

Post-electoral period:

- Ensuring youth voices are heard in parliament and other government bodies;
- Inviting youth groups to visit national parliaments;
- Initiating internship schemes for students in parliaments.

This study also identified the strategies and techniques that each party can individually apply to achieve a more meaningful representation of youth in politics as the "one-size-fits-all" approach can not apply due to each country's specific legislative framework, different internal party regulations, implementation methodologies, size of the party, and the in-country support structures. The above are the key findings presented as criteria and recommendations for creating a more youth-friendly party.

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Annexes

Annex I. About the Boris Divković Foundation

The Boris Divković Foundation (Foundation) is currently recognized as a leading institution for research and praxis in the field of youth activism, as well as youth participation in political parties. Its research aims to understand the position of youth within liberal political parties in the Western Balkan region.

In this study, the Foundation offers detailed insight into what would make youth in liberal political parties a “force to be reckoned with”. Consequently, the findings of this study can be used to enhance communication between the decision-makers in parties and young party members.

The study outlines the optimal environment in which parties and youth can build more effective systems that will ultimately lead towards stronger partnerships at local and national levels between stakeholders with the same agendas and objectives. In addition to shedding light on the crucial role of youth in political processes, this study argues for the need to modernize trends in political parties.

Annex II. Questionnaire for political parties

Thank you for participating in our research! This questionnaire has been forwarded to your political party in order to collect information on youth participation in liberal parties in Sweden, Spain, Croatia and Poland.

This questionnaire will assist BDF in identifying essential and important information on the issue of meaningful youth participation in political parties. Based on this information, we will compose a report, which will be presented to you and other BDF partners, and which will contain recommendations on how youth participation can be improved through specific activities and policy adjustments.

1. Is youth mentioned in your

- i) statute,
- ii) specific (youth) policy(ies), and
- iii) party program(s)?

Please elaborate for each inquiry.

2. Are there any party platforms/bodies/initiatives/policies aimed at youth?
3. What is the percentage of young members (18-30 years of age) in your party?
4. Is there a quota for youth on your candidate lists?
If YES, please elaborate.
5. Is there a quota for youth in party bodies?
If YES, please elaborate.
6. Does your party’s annual budget provide for financing youth wings, youth-related mechanisms and youth-related policies/strategies within the party? Please elaborate (e.g. annual budget, percentage, specific activities, etc.).

Annex III: Interview Protocol

Thank you for participating in our research! This interview is conducted in order to collect information on youth participation in liberal parties in Sweden, Spain, Croatia and Poland. This interview will assist BDF in identifying essential and important information on the issue of meaningful youth participation in political parties.

Based on this information, we will compose a report, which will be presented to you and other BDF partners, and which will contain recommendations on how youth participation can be improved through specific activities and policy adjustments.

The purpose of this interview is to learn about your thoughts and experiences on this topic. Your insights will help us understand the current activities, practices and shortcoming related to youth political participation. All of your comments are confidential and you will not be identified by name in any report, presentation, or publication.

[NOTE: Make sure to note the interviewee’s name, position, party, and contact information]

1. Does your party actively promote youth participation in party "life"?

PROBES:

- Does your party take a political stand on youth-related issues?
- Has your party broadened, in comparison to other political parties, its party policy agendas on youth-related issues?
- Are there any innovative party policy platforms for youth?
Is there a clear strategy that articulates the party's view on youth-related issues so as to attract new voters?
- Does your party diversify electoral strategies by diversifying (male and female, young and old, etc.) candidates?
- To what extent can election results be linked to party vs. national frameworks for youth?

2. Is your party "youth friendly"?

PROBES:

- Does the party cooperate with CSOs to address youth issues in different levels of state governance?
- Does your party serve as a conduit between youth NGOs in civil society, parliament and government?
- Does your party statute ensure a balanced participation of men and women in all party decision-making bodies, such as on party electoral lists and for all nominated and appointed positions?
- Are specific youth-related priorities elaborated? Are some of these priorities included in electoral campaigns and party promises?
- What does your party do to recruit new young members and how do they plan to retain them?
- Does your party have a strategy for attracting new young party members who have specific skills important for the development of the party?

3. What are the formal/non-formal frameworks for promotion of youth participation at your party's disposal?

[NOTE: Frameworks include statutes, bodies, trainings, guidelines, rulebooks, and regulations]

PROBES:

- What are the main activities for youth engaged in political parties?
- What is the priority of policies that are relevant to young people in party programs, election manifestos, and in key political debates?
- What are the modules and patterns of youth engagement in decision-making in political parties?
- How did internal party frameworks develop?
- How effective are internal party frameworks?
- Which framework is the best and why?
- Does your party expand the party's pool of skills, knowledge and expertise through trainings and education?
- What role do young people have in shaping party agenda and public policy?
- Does your party organize training for young candidates to prepare them for higher levels of governance or career advancements?
- Are senior members engaged in mentoring younger individuals within the party and sharing their experience, skills and knowledge to help them advance their political careers?
- What is the nature and purpose of outreach campaigns to non-members, grassroots initiatives and movements, who are otherwise aligned with the party's values and policies?
- Has the party created and implemented youth outreach strategies and campaigns?

4. Which internal factors influence party politics?

[NOTE: Internal factors include equal access to resources and decision making]

PROBES:

- Is youth representation in key party bodies and other representative institutions adequate and meaningful?
- Are party resources distributed fairly between men and women, young and old members, and candidates?
- Is there equal opportunity to participate in decision-making?
- Do you believe that your party enables young people to assume leadership positions and, if yes, how?
- Does the party have a youth wing? What is the role and resources of the youth wing?
- Does your political party budget provide for financing the youth

wing, youth-related mechanism and youth-related policies/strategies within the party?

- What are the main formal and non-formal networking mechanisms?
- Who are the leaders of networking?

5. Are young candidates visible in the party campaign?

PROBES:

- Do they have same financial resources and same party infrastructure support as their older colleagues?
- Do they have same “air-time”?
- Does the party provide enough media exposure to its young members?
- Do they only discuss ‘youth-related issues’ or are they focused on a broad spectrum of more universal issues and a wide-set legislative agenda?

6. Which external factors have influenced party policies regarding youth participation?

[NOTE: Country-specific legislation, quota systems, and similar]

PROBES:

- To what extent do laws, policies, and/or regulations explicitly or implicitly contribute to lack of youth participation?
- Which cultural norms and beliefs influence youth participation?
- Youth is sometimes referred to as “irrational, immature and impulsive”; how does that influence their chances at political participation?

7. Is youth in your political party more oriented towards online/digital activities and activism?

8. Are young politicians in your party a “political copy” of older politicians or are they original and authentic?

9. What are the major opportunities to empower youth in this country at the moment?

² Designed in accordance with the recommendations outlined in Youth and Political Parties: A Toolkit for Youth-friendly Politics in Europe (Deželan, 2018).

Thank you for your time. We will forward the final results of the study to you once it is finished.

Annex IV: Survey Questionnaire²

For the purpose of strengthening youth political participation, we provide you with a questionnaire designed to identify the key issues facing political parties in ensuring increased and more meaningful youth political participation.

The purpose of this survey is to collect feedback from you that will be presented to BDF partners in the form of a research study.

Completing the Questionnaire will not take you more than 15 minutes. Your support in completing all the questions is much appreciated, and we are very grateful for your time. Your responses are anonymous. Aggregated results from this survey will be used to strengthen BDF's work and that of its partners.

Please reply no later than XXX

General Information

Q1. Are you a member of a political party?

1. Yes
2. No

Q2. Are you a young person (age 18-30)?

1. Yes
2. No

Q3. What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female
3. Other

Q4. Have you been appointed/elected to a party body(s)?

1. Yes
2. No

Q5. How long have you been active with your political party?

1. 1 year
2. 2 years
3. 3 years
4. 4 years
5. More than 5 years

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. In general, political parties in my country care about youth wellbeing.					
b. My political party cares about youth wellbeing.					
c. People care about youth wellbeing.					
d. Politicians care about youth wellbeing.					
e. Politicians from my party care about youth wellbeing.					

Youth in politics

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. On the whole, older individuals make better politicians than young individuals and therefore should be elected to public office.					
b. Public life activities are "closer" to older individuals than young ones.					
c. Youth tends to behave irrationally and immaturely in politics.					
d. Priority sectors of young politicians are typically youth-related issues.					
e. On the whole, young politicians are more liberal than older politicians.					

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
f. On the whole, young politicians are more democratic than older politicians.					
g. On the whole, young politicians are more progressive than older politicians.					

Party politics

Q8. Does your party actively promote youth participation in politics?

1. Yes
2. No

Q9. Are there some innovative party policy platforms for youth participation?

1. Yes
2. No

If YES, please elaborate below.

Q10. In your opinion, does your party have a clear strategy to improve youth issues in order to attract new voters?

1. Yes
2. No

Q11. In your opinion, does your party actively promote young candidates?

1. Yes
2. No

Q12. Does the party set any specific youth-related priorities and are some of these priorities included in electoral campaigns and party promises?

1. Yes
2. No

Q13. In your opinion, are young party members treated the same as older ones in your party?

1. Yes
2. No

Q14. In my opinion, youth does not shape party culture.

1. Yes
2. No

Q15. In my opinion, my party has programs that actively support youth participation.

1. Yes
2. No

Q16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. The youth wing of my party should assume a stronger and more meaningful role.					

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
b. My party needs to conduct an annual review of internal youth related-policies and practices.					
c. My party ensures enough media exposure for younger candidates.					
d. Young people are included in "running" my party.					
e. My party provides enough training opportunities for younger members abroad.					
f. My party includes younger members in intra-party initiatives and cooperation.					
g. Regional branches of youth wings have good communication with party HQ.					
i. Regional branches of youth wings have autonomy in their work.					

Q17. In my opinion, it is important that:

	Y	N	DNK
a. The party's statute ensures balanced participation of younger persons in all party decision-making bodies, on party electoral lists and for all nominated and appointed positions.			
b. The party keeps updated records of party members at local, regional and national levels, including members of the board; all data should be disaggregated by sex.			
c. An autonomous, active and publicly visible youth wing is established and respected within the party.			
d. The party's resources are distributed fairly between all members and candidates.			
e. Youth participates in strategic decision making.			
f. Youth has equal access to all resources (financial and decision-making).			
g. The party guarantees youth representation in key party forums (e.g. speakers at party congresses and program conventions).			
h. The party guarantees youth a voice and vote in key party bodies.			
i. The party introduces youth candidate quotas for elections in legislatures at all levels.			

Q18. In my opinion, it is important that:

	Y	N	DNK
a. A stable provision of adequate financial resources for youth wing operation and projects is ensured (e.g. a fixed percentage of the mother party's budget).			
b. Autonomous use of those financial resources is guaranteed (without prior approval from the mother party).			
c. Youth wings receive party support in organizing events and conferences aimed at youth.			
d. Youth wing events are attended by a sizeable and meaningful representation of the party leadership.			
e. Youth wing agendas have meaningful inclusion in main party policies.			
f. Party introduces measures of reserved seats for representatives of youth wings or young people in key party (executive) bodies, including candidate selection panels at all levels.			
g. The weight of seats (voting power) reflects the youth population size.			
h. Rights of youth representatives are equal to the rights of other members.			
i. Permanent youth academies and training programs for young members are established and supported so that youth are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to run as young candidates and navigate institutional politics effectively.			

Review 1

Youth participation in the activities of liberal political parties

By **Bàlint Gyévai**

Dear readers,

I would hereby like to write a few lines on behalf of LYMEC, the European Liberal Youth. We have been very happy to support the preparatory work that made this publication a reality, by mobilizing our network and bringing youth organizations from different countries and backgrounds to contribute and provide the necessary data.

They represent the diversity of our continent and studying youth representation and inclusion within our own structures is the starting point in advocating for youth at any level of governance. We truly believe that in order to be credible, it is necessary to fully act in accordance with one's principles. The importance of this cannot be overstated. This is why this publication is so important. It reflects on how our own structures work, their shortcomings, and how youth engagement and participation can be improved on a larger scale.

Moreover, this publication also identifies the key factors that should be taken into account in order to enhance meaningful youth engagement in political structures. Determining access to financial resources and campaign funds, establishing/strengthening the party's youth organization, and establishing a formal mentorship program within the

party structure are important steps in ensuring that the position of young people is strengthened within their political parties.

As a pan-European political youth organization, we really want to emphasize the importance of taking youth seriously, the advantages of creating a youth branch, their active involvement in the work of the party, and placing them in decision-making positions; these are key for any political structure to be a credible force in the field of youth engagement.

Finally, what we can learn from this publication is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution as countries and parties operate in different realities and thus have divergent approaches towards youth inclusion. In the study, respondents described their personal experiences, which are all linked to their countries' situations in specific ways, highlighting in that way their different needs and areas for improvement. This study enables the considered organizations to reflect on their own realities and act on their shortcomings.

Now that we know what to do, let's do it!

Thank you for your attention and I hope you found this study insightful.

Liberal regards!

Review 2

Youth in liberal political parties

By Amer Osmić

Youth are a dynamic force in liberal political parties and are reshaping the contours of the contemporary political landscape. Analyzing youth, youth political participation, liberal tendencies, and strategies for engaging youth in the political process is an extremely demanding, responsible, and complex process of extraordinary social importance. The main goal of the study, as the authors themselves point out, and which is made clear throughout the text, is to examine four EU liberal parties and their strategies to encourage youth political participation, not only within the parties themselves but also in their respective countries. The aim of this analysis is to review the current positions of European liberal political parties towards youth political representation, identify their roles and strategies for promoting inclusion of youth in politics, and highlight successful examples. The political, legal and policy context and framework in Sweden, Spain, Croatia and Poland are reviewed and assessed by analyzing their (non-)implemented quota systems and outlining the current situation of youth representation. Previous research has shown that political parties often do not support the participation of young politicians in processes of developing political programs, even when they have adopted youth programs and policies.

In the first part of the study (Methodology),

the authors describe the research process with methodological precision and clearly convey the primary purpose of their study which is to conduct case studies of liberal political parties in four selected European countries and their strategies for developing and promoting youth participation in political parties. Each country is analyzed separately using the same methodology; the final report also includes a meta-analysis of all countries in the study and a comparative analysis of the four liberal parties. After collecting primary data, the research team assessed whether it was methodologically feasible to compare the results of this study with similar studies conducted in the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia). The authors begin by posing the main research question: "Do European liberal political parties consider youth to be an important factor for their party development and the development of society and how do they promote and ensure political participation of youth?" (p. 9). After defining the research problem, the authors use a mixed methods approach that includes a literature review of documents of liberal parties and other relevant documents; key informant interviews with key members of the selected liberal political parties, including both persons occupying various positions in the party (mainly in leadership structures); a questionnaire for the political parties (secretariat); and a survey carried out among the party members.

As already mentioned, four case studies from four different nations are presented in the study "CPLA: Proud and Loud, Youth in Liberal Political Parties". These are the Centerpartiet (C) of Sweden, the Centar of Croatia, the Nowoczesna Party of Poland, and the Ciudadanos (Cs) of Spain. The authors employ a triangulation technique that combines primary and secondary research. The study's overall finding is that, while youth representation in liberal parties in these selected EU countries is generally adequate, some reforms and improvements are still necessary. While party documents list the positions and responsibilities of youth or youth wings inside the party, their presence in practice is occasionally less pronounced. Access to funding for youth activities is limited in all parties. On the other hand, while youth participation in internal decision-making is adequate and consistent with party principles, there is insufficient youth involvement in the party's external

promotion and, in certain cases, in the selection of candidates for candidate lists.

A dynamic element that alters the outlines of modern political landscapes is the role that youth play within liberal political parties. This topic is thoughtfully explored in “CPLA: Loud and Proud: Youth in Liberal Political Parties”, which explores the various obstacles and contributions made by young people in forming liberal beliefs and policies. A relevant bibliography of local, national, and international sources is used in this BDF (Boris Divković Foundation) study to define youth political engagement in general and its significance. The study offers extraordinary applicative value for promoting young people’s participation in political processes, especially for liberal parties, based on empirical research. By conducting this study, the authors join a select number of academics who have looked at the political engagement of young people and made suggestions for how to strengthen their position in liberal-leaning political possibilities.

I believe that the publication will be very helpful for the general public as well as decision-makers and experts working in this field, primarily with the goal of enhancing political literacy. This study outlines the next steps for party bodies, including the development of short-, medium-, and long-term strategies, within which they can plan and adopt tactics to address the issues identified and elevate the status of youth within their own ranks. I gladly support the publication of this study for the reasons listed above.

About the authors

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Adisa Memišević is a researcher with many years of experience in project activities and research focusing on topics that relate to European integration and economic transition. Over the last seven years, she has also participated in the study of various NGOs examining contemporary issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkan region.

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Bàlint Gyévai (BE/HU) is LYMEC's Secretary General. He started his career there as an International Officer of FEL (Fédération des Etudiants libéraux), after which he became a delegate for the Individual Members' Section, and also as part of the Committee of Arbitrage and Discipline of the organization.

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