



THE MILLENNIAL  
DIALOGUE



**Hungary**

**Budapest, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016**

**FEPS  
Activity  
Report**

April 2016

POLICYSOLUTIONS 

FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN  
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES  
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE  
D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES



On **1 April 2016**, the **Policy Solutions** and the **Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)** held their joint conference, entitled '**Political Attitudes of the Millennial Generation in Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe**' at the **Andrassy University** in **Budapest**. The objective of the event was to **present the central and eastern European results** of the international **Millennial Dialogue** research and to debate the attitudes of the Hungarian millennials. Some **80 people attended the event**: researchers, journalists, diplomats and university students.



The conference started with the opening address of **István Hiller**, member of FEPS Scientific Council and former minister for education and culture. The opening remarks were followed by the presentation of **Maria Freitas** on the FEPS' Millennial Dialogue research program. Then, **Tamás Boros** summarized the study drafted by Policy Solutions on the values of the Hungarian and the central European youth. The conference featured **two panel discussions**. In the first one, sociologists and political scientists debated about the roots of the different values among the millennials in the central and eastern European countries. In the second panel, young leaders discussed how they see the political values of the Hungarian youth.

The list of speakers included **Bence Ságvári**, head of Research Department at Hungarian Academy of Sciences; **Andrea Szabó**, director in charge at Institute for Political Science, Hungarian Academy of Sciences; **Tibor Závecz**, director at ZRI Závecz Research; **Balázs Bárány**, politician and member of the Hungarian Socialist Party's presidium and **Balázs Gulyás**, sociologist, organiser of the biggest anti-government demonstration. The event was moderated by **Edit Inotai**, journalist at Figyelő.



Numerous hypothesis concerning youths have been confirmed during the conference and in the book written by Policy Solutions, while others appear to have been rebutted. Based on the results of the Millennial Dialogue research on the Millennial Generation in Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and Austria, it emerges clearly that **15-34-year-olds are considerably more optimistic both about the present and the future than one would often expect**. Ninety percent of youths in Bulgaria, Poland and Austria are happy with their lives, and 75-85% are also optimistic about their future. Hungarian youths are also more optimistic than what we have customarily observed in surveys of the general population – at the same time it is also obvious that **the age of roughly 25 is a watershed in Hungary**: youths older than that tend to be significantly less happy than those between the ages of 15 and 24.

Youths in all four countries unanimously said that **they consider happiness and good health as the most important goals**, and they also included the freedom to do and say as they want as one of the top five values. The low level of interest in politics was to be expected, though there were key differences: While roughly half of Bulgarian, Austrian and Polish youths professed some level of interest in political issues, in Hungary only a third of the millennials are interested in public life, and a negligible **6% evinced an in-depth curiosity about politics**. Overall, issues involving individual welfare and self-realisation weigh much heavier for youths in the region than community values.

**Non-voting youths in all four countries mentioned lack of trust in politicians as one of the main reasons underlying their political passivity**. Nearly half of all youths in Austria and Hungary, 54% in Poland and an even higher proportion in Bulgaria, two-thirds, indicated that their electoral abstention was caused by a lack of trust. Correspondingly, the majority view of non-voting youths in all four countries was that they would be more interested in elections if

they could trust politicians more. Sixty percent of respondents in Bulgaria, and roughly half in Austria, Poland and Hungary selected this factor among the potential answers. Based on the answers provided by respondents, **the second and third most frequently mentioned incentive to vote would be, respectively, if politicians paid more attention to youths and if youths felt that their vote really matters.**

**Electoral preferences are heavily influenced in all four countries by impressions about party leaders and information about local candidates.** The above is a good illustration of the **personalisation of politics, the pre-eminent role that party leaders play in the voting decisions** of youth when compared to party values or platforms.

Theoretically, the fact that **youths tend to consider leftwing issues as the top priorities could provide an opening for social democratic parties.** Healthcare, education and job creation are considered the most important policy issues by youths in the countries investigated. Eradicating poverty and environmentalism are also pre-eminent priorities for a decisive majority of youths in all four countries.

**There are multiple reasons behind the passivity of the Millennial Generation in Hungary, but the following three factors would surely increase their willingness to be involved in politics:**

**1.) More trustworthy politicians and party leaders**

Non-voters emphasized their lack of trust in politicians. They simply do not believe what they are told or promised during a campaign, so politicians need to work on their reliability in order to convince young voters. For millennials, the character of party leaders is more persuasive than the program they offer.

**2.) Feel the possibility to make a difference**

Hungarian youth thinks their opinion does not matter; nothing is ever going to change anyways. They have to be convinced about their importance in forming democracy, and they should feel that their vote counts.

**3.) More focus on younger generation in politics**

Young people feel ignored by politics, which somehow contributes to the low level of participation in elections, too. Politicians should address the younger generation more often, which would motivate them to be present in public life more actively.