

**Mihálik, Jaroslav: Political legacy and youth civic engagement in Slovakia.** Novo Mesto: Faculty of Organization Studies in Novo Mesto, 2015, 160 s. ISBN 978-961-93688-8-6.

Low voter turnout of young people as well as political and civic participation and generally no interest in politics is characteristic of young people in Slovakia. Nowadays, other discussed topics are the radicalization of young people, the rise of extremism and high number of young voters who voted for the neo-Nazi party – Ludova strana Nase Slovensko which has been elected to the Slovak parliament. There is evidence of significant inclination of young people to populist, radical and extremist groups or political parties which focus on topics such as euroscepticism, anti-migration, problems with Roma minority; therefore it is very important to explore these themes. Jaroslav Mihálik's publication „Political Legacy and youth civic engagement in Slovakia“ covers very useful findings about these mentioned topics and additionally more.

The publication contains results of the research project MYPLACE (Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement) which was project funded through 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission and was held between June 2011 and May 2015. The main aim of the project was to measure, explore and compare civic, political and social participation of young people, and also their knowledge about politics, history and concerns about social problems. The project was implemented in 14 European countries - Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Spain and United Kingdom. The selected countries represent different historical, social, economic and political conditions and therefore research brings both contrasting and interesting results.

The research in the Slovak Republic was conducted in two locations – Trnava and Rimavská Sobota – two contrasting and completely different sides of the country in various ways. The region of Rimavská Sobota has one of the highest unemployment rate in Slovakia, low level of education of citizens, bad conditions of transport, communication infrastructure as well as services and leisure sector. A very important difference is also that this region is ethnically heterogenous with significant ethnic Hungarian and Roma minority groups. These factors have impact also on the growth of extremism and radicalism, rise of nationalism and ethnic conflicts between majority and minority. These two towns were selected on purpose in order to find out and compare attitudes and behaviours of young people since their situations in these towns are different. I consider the selected regions and towns as very suitable choice what can be visible also in the results and findings of the research. The target group of research were young people until 30 years of age. The research was based on multi-

methods approach, that used quantitative and qualitative methods and included large scale surveys, in-depth interviews and ethnographic case studies. The publication includes and analyzes figures from quantitative sociological survey tested on 1200 respondents and 60 semi-structured interviews.

In the first part of the monograph, the author presents results of prior research focused on the same target group – youth in Slovakia and the topics associated with the main aim of the whole study which were conducted in the past. In the second chapter, the author analyzed the youth policy regime in the context of welfare regimes and evidence on young people civic participation. The author provides the main demographic and social information about Slovak youth, institutional framework of youth and youth work policies and evidence on young people participation. In these introductory chapters, the author addressed a variety of different sources what allowed him to summarize and provide to readers a better understanding of situation of young people in Slovakia. The author was also very well connected and explained the background of the role of civic education and non-formal education in the process of political learning. The third chapter includes context and research rationale where there are explanations of used methods, the selection of localities where research was done and also demographic profiles of the respondents.

The main fourth chapter reveals the research results and various interesting key findings regarding the interest in history and significance of several important historical events of our country, the knowledge about them among young people or who has the impact on their knowledge and interests. The author captures the attitudes of young people towards traditions and celebrations, their interest in politics on local, national or european level and the findings about who determines their political values. There also are presented the results regarding the satisfaction of young people with democracy, their level of civic and political activism, reasons of non-voting, the opinions of young people on the effectiveness of various activities how to affect politics but also their understanding of politics and the political elites. Its very interesting to read the opinions of young people towards politics and politicians, such as Robert Fico, Jan Slota, Marian Kotleba or Richard Sulik. The author also examines the results about understanding of the EU among young people, their information about politics and their level of trust in political institutions and organizations on national and international levels. At the end of the chapter the author underlines the reasons for the rise of extremism and intolerance against Roma and Hungarians, the discussions on young people attitudes towards ethnic minorities and their opinions towards national sovereignty, accession and membership in the EU.

The publication presents very interesting findings since the interviews were conducted also with young people who belong to ethnic Hungarian or Roma minority and also representatives of local youth organizations. The book contains citations of some interesting statements of respondents as well as very useful explanations by the author, who comments on findings with his opinions or with opinions of other authors and experts of the analyzed topic or question. It was very hard to find actually something what could be possible to criticize. There were only two cases of no actual data - notably when the author describes proportion of young people in the population of Slovakia, there are data from 2009, although there are newest data available or the information regarding the implementation of the EU program „Youth in Action“ which was implemented in 2007 - 2013, but there was no information regarding new EU program in the field of youth – Erasmus+ program (2014 – 2020), but obviously these inaccuracies are not essential.

I consider as very beneficial as well that in the conclusion author evaluates all findings and results and emphasize recommendations and possible solutions which could be taken in order to improve participation of young people, the problematic findings and their situation in general. The publication „Political legacy and youth civic engagement in Slovakia“ can be a great basis for further research by academics or youth workers but also for decision-makers to follow recommended steps. I strongly recommend this publication to all students, researchers and public interested in these topics. The readers will obtain a complex view of youth participation and opinions of young people but many surprising and also inspiring results and information.

Lenka Čurillová  
Department of Political Science and European Studies  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava