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Youth of Borderland of Central and Eastern Europe - Similar or Different?

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ABSTRACT

The article presents the results of research into youth conducted with the use of the survey method in the borderlands in Poland, Ukraine and Hungary. The gathered data indicates that the attitudes and life aspirations are formed by three factors. The first one is connected with the type of the borderland, and the “borderland effect” is observed here. The second one regards socio-economic differences between countries. The most commonly observed differences between youth’s attitudes are observed on the West-East line. The third factor is of cultural character and mainly it is formed by psycho-cultural trends resulting from the processes of globalization and the specificity of being young. In this case we observe a global youths, who aims at fulfilling their needs beyond borders.

Introduction

The results of the research presented in this paper try to answer the main research question, i.e. if the cultural capital and social capital are factors of identity and social position formation of young people living in the border area of three Central and Eastern European countries: Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. It should be emphasized that the study included the Polish-German, Polish-Czech, Polish-Ukrainian, Ukrainian-Polish and Ukrainian-Hungarian borderlands. The operationalization of research issues came down to the question whether the cultural capital and social capital, as factors of identity and social position of the youngest generation, make the high school students of Polish, Hungarian and Ukrainian borderlands similar to each other. In the theoretical layer, the aim of this paper is systematic confrontation of Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and the theory of social capital with the social reality of border areas in five Central and Eastern European countries. This confrontation includes both theoretical reflection, focusing on the problem of the use of Bourdieu's theory and the theory of social capital formulated by other authors, in order to describe the societies of Central and Eastern European countries, and also the results of empirical research carried out among high school students living in Polish, Hungarian and Ukrainian border areas.

The results of the analyses presented in this article were obtained in the research conducted from March to June 2015 in three countries – Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. It needs to be pointed out that, although the research was conducted in three countries, it encompassed the borderlands of five countries. The research sample consisted of the secondary school students in: Slubice, Zielona Gora, Raciborz, Krosno, Rzeszow, Przemysl, Hrubieszow (Poland), Debrecen (Hungary) and Drohobych and Uzhhorod (Ukraine). The research was conducted with the use of the technique of a random survey conducted in the randomly selected schools. The total number of the research sample amounted to 2900 students.

1. The identity and social position of the youth of borderland of Central and Eastern Europe

The term “identity” also requires deeper analysis. Identity may give a crucial meaning to the process of one’s own perception in the society, their perception of others and, finally, their perception of the society (Wojakowski, 2007: 70), especially when it comes to borderlands. Borderland may be defined as an area where social and cultural contacts between two or more nations or cultural ethnic groups take place and the consequences of those contact, i.e. the formation of a new person and their culture (Sadowski, 1992).

The problem of differences and similarities, which exists among the representatives of the youth in the borderlands of East-Central Europe, is scientifically interesting. In sociology, the term “identity” most frequently refers to the sphere of auto-definition of a social actor – individual or collective. Therefore, we can define it as a set of concepts, opinions and convictions of that actor towards themselves (Bokszański, 2002: 252). The term “identity” is frequently used interchangeably with the term “identification” or “awareness”. It also needs to be emphasized that the classic sociological theories of identity (based on the model of healthy identity, interactive model of identity and ideological model of identity) rely on the assumption of individual identity. However, in many social studies we have been recently observing a tendency towards the generalization of the term “identity” and the expansion its scope into the collectivity. In this case we can consider various forms of collective identity: ethnic groups, social movements or nations (Bokszański, 2002: 252). To sum up, we can assume that identity is a solidified and, therefore, relatively stable form of awareness. Identification means individual identity. If an individual is able to define themselves, we can talk about their self-identification or auto-identification. This is a certain type of self-awareness, i.e. becoming aware of your own “I”, perceiving your own personality, views and behaviours. Individual or personal identity is also related to social identity, i.e. collective identification, social awareness or identity (Lewandowska, 2003). Social identity is a supra-individual set of auto-definitions irreducible to the auto-definition of an individual. It is based on a lived and internalized tradition, the present and the future defined by the group. It is, therefore, similar to the term “collective awareness”, “collective representations” and “collective concepts” (Banaszczyk, 1989). Considering the character of the research and treating the representatives of respective borderlands as subjects of the research analysis, I will focus on the social identity.

The intelligentsia was defined as a certain historic type of the educated strata whose fundamental internal awareness lied in the participation in rational knowledge universal for the entire European civilization. In the social context, the prominent role of the intelligentsia was expressed through the formation of the adequate groups and strata and the conceptualization of this phenomenon in the sphere of symbolical culture. The intelligentsia had separate bidding norms and separate lifestyle which went hand in hand with the network of social contacts and matrimonial policy (Sdvižkov et al., 2011: 16-17).

In the Polish sociological literature we encounter four concepts of the intelligentsia. According to the first concept, the intelligentsia is the collectivity of people who are different than others in terms of their high intellectual, artistic and moral qualities, regardless of their social condition. In this case, the intelligentsia makes a relatively small elite which stands out in a given society thanks to their distinguished features and merits. According to the second concept, the intelligentsia is the collectivity of people who do intellectual or artistic work. In this case, the criterion for distinguishing the intelligentsia from the rest of the society is the type of work they do, their source of income and a historically determined level of education necessary to do a given job. In comparison with the first concept, the collectivity of the professional intelligentsia is considerably bigger and more homogenous. We can say that the supporters of this concept try to present the intelligentsia as a numerous and complex meritocratic and professional group. It also needs to be pointed out that, in this case, the variable historic indicators of the adequate level of education are of vital importance, e.g. in the interwar period, in Poland, every person with the secondary school education belonged to the intelligentsia, whereas, after the Second World War, some of the supporters of this concept only considered people with the higher education as the intelligentsia.

According to the third concept, the intelligentsia is the collectivity of people who base their existence on intellectual work and, therefore, they have a certain position in the social structure. They also carry out specific functions in the society and the country. According to this concept, the intelligentsia is most frequently regarded as a social stratum situated between the higher and lower classes and can be compared to the middle class or bourgeoisie of the Western Europe. The fourth concept can be described as cultural. Here, the intelligentsia is a distinguished group not only because of the work they do or their documented education but also because of a particular type of an axiological orientation which results from their intellectual competences. The fact that the intelligentsia is better educated than other groups stimulates the formation of a pro-social orientation which consists in the actions in favour of the common good, limits the private or group interests and which, at the same time, is more socially universal than in other social groups. Using Florian Znaniecki’s definition, intellectual competences make the intelligentsia “the cultural guides” in a given society and their duty towards other collectivities may be

regarded as a mission. On behalf of and for other collectivities the intelligentsia serves the role of a guide in the sphere of values: super-arbiter, the leader – universal or local, or the representative of other groups and values (Kurczewska, 1998: 339). The concept of the intelligentsia evolved together with the political, social and economic changes taking place in the Polish society. In the common opinion, the intelligentsia, as a social stratum, played an important role during radical political transformations which started in Poland in the middle of 1989. According to Kurczewska, groups with a clear intelligentsia lineage played a key role in the process of the formation of the economic, civilization and cultural attitudes in the market economy and democracy. Moreover, Kurczewska points out that many theoretical, historic and cultural studies on the status of the intelligentsia in the new political system assume that it is a social category (the collectivity of people with higher education who do intellectual work), the social unity (internally diversified with a sense of internal identity and external distinctiveness, which is very often called a stratum rather than a class) or an ideological construction consisting in specific features and group tasks. It is characteristic for this concept to define the intelligentsia through the traditional or modified ethos (Kurczewska, 1998: 342-343).

Modern Polish intelligentsia is more and more often defined by the ethos characteristic for the Western middle class. Kurczewska emphasises that freedom, individuality, independence and responsibility for oneself perform a crucial role in the modern ethos of the intelligentsia. The intelligentsia, earlier than other social groups (i.e. in the 80s), learned the individuality in the sphere of private life, the instrumental collectivism in professional life and highly calculated life activity. At the beginning of the 90s, it was, apart from the business circles, the centre of life orientations assigned to the Western middle class. However, individualism, formed on the new basis, did not manage to eliminate the intelligentsia ethos of pro-social values, especially the value of national or group solidarity. Holding to certain pro-social values makes it difficult for the intelligentsia to transform into full middle class in the new political conditions (Kurczewska, 1998: 343).

The term “middle class” creates a number of problems for present researchers of the social processes. It is because of the fact that this collectivity is composed of so many different categories that it is difficult to pinpoint one denominator which would be a good referral point to regard certain individuals as middle class. If we used a classic definition of a social class, we would have to refer to a special aspect which would force us to situate the middle class in the middle of the social hierarchy. However, we cannot depict it only in these categories because, in such case, the middle class would have existed in every age and in all social systems. It is due to the fact that it would be possible to distinguish a middle position in all hierarchic social systems. Meanwhile, we are talking about the category which appeared in a particular age and in a particular economic and cultural context (Domański, 1999: 18). Commonly, the researchers think that the main indicators for belonging to the middle class are: ownership, good professional position, prosperity and lifestyle (Domański, 2012: 27). Permanent features of the middle class, confirmed by the research results, are their higher aspirations towards their children’s education and more ambitious plans for their professional carrier compared to the working class (Lamont, 1992). Parents of the middle class children not only give higher importance to education but also they are more aware than the working class of what needs to be addressed in the first place in the process of education, which school their children should attend and what they need to do to finish university and have a better professional start (Domański, 1999: 22). This discussion brings us to the conclusion that the middle class is a promoter of certain behaviour, orientations and lifestyle rather than a separate social class (Domański, 1999: 22). To sum up, we may say that the middle class is a wide collectivity of people who have different jobs which require various qualifications and the level of education. They also run their own companies or enterprises (mostly small ones) and, therefore, they have a decent, yet not elitist, material standard (Sztompka, 2012: 412).

Social position is the term of a high degree of generalization, which defines the place of an individual in the social structure. The understanding of a social position will change depending on the way we will define the social structure (Gorlach, Wasilewski, 2000: 164). An interesting characterisation of the term was performed by Piotr Sztompka who defined the social structure in four interconnected dimensions: 1) a normative dimension (“the way it should be”) in which the social structure is defined as institutionalized obligations. From the perspective of an individual this dimension is defined through the social role; 2) awareness – an ideal dimension in which social identity is defined as a set of convictions, opinions, ideas and thinking habits related to the things “as they are”. From the perspective

of an individual this set may be defined as “a positional mentality” – a set of opinions, typical for a given social position, particularly concerning the position of the group in relation to other collectivities; 3) an interactive dimension in which the social identity is defined through the main directions and channels of activities as well as the partners of the interaction. From the perspective of an individual this dimension is characterised by typical contacts with others – “interactive options”; 4) the dimension related to the interests, in which social identity is defined as an access to the desired goods and, at the same time, to the range of life opportunities. From the perspective of an individual different access to the goods (including prestige, wealth, power etc.) is usually defined as a social status (Gorlach, Wasilewski, 2000: 164). Sztompka says that the sociological explanation of what an individual does, thinks and aims at always requires to refer to the position an individual has in a society and in the social structure. At this point four structural correlates of the position need to be mentioned: the role, the mentality, the option and the status. Due to the correlation between the four dimensions of the structure, any single-dimensional explanation must be regarded as invalid (Sztompka, 1989: 58). When analysing various connotations of the term “social position”, stronger focus on certain aspects at the expense of others do not discredit a fundamental content of the term. “Social position” always refers to the position of an individual (group) in the social structure and it always takes into account a few dimensions (although one of them may be regarded as determinative). The position in the structure is always defined through the relations between various positions (Gorlach, Wasilewski, 2000: 167).

First analysed element of the social identity was a sense of connection with family, nation, place of residence of the respondents, region as well as Europe. Each dimension was analysed respectively for each nation participating in the studies. One of the analysed dimensions was a sense of connection with the nation. The strongest connection was declared by the youth in Ukraine and Poland. The respondents of those two countries were characterized by a strong and a very strong sense of connection with their own nation (a sense of being Polish – Ukrainian) and by the lowest number of declarations about the total lack of connection (4.4% and 8.4%). The youth living in Hungary declared the weakest connection with their own nation. One in fifth respondent did not feel any connection. The detailed presentation of the data is included in table 1.

Table 1: A sense of connection with the nation vs the country of origin (%)

How strong is your relation with YOUR OWN NATION	Country		
	Poland	Ukraine	Hungary
Very strong	20.5	19.1	4.2
Strong	42.1	47.3	26.3
Weak	29.0	29.2	49.4
I don't feel the connection at all	8.4	4.4	20.1

Source: own material

The second analysed dimension was a sense of connection with family. The level of declarations in respective countries was similar. The youth in Ukraine and Poland declared a slightly stronger sense of connection with family.

Table 2: A sense of connection with family vs the country of origin (%)

How strong is your relation with your FAMILY	Country		
	Poland	Ukraine	Hungary
Very strong	68.9	72.6	64.3
Strong	24.8	22.2	29.7
Weak	5.2	4.7	6.0
I don't feel the connection at all	1.1	0.5	0.0

Source: own material

The strongest relation with the place of residence was declared, once again, by the youth living in Ukraine and Poland. When it comes to the youth in Hungary, a sense of connection with their place of residence was on a noticeably lower level.

Table 3: A sense of connection with the place of residence of the respondents vs the country of origin (%)

How strong is your relation with the PLACE OF YOUR RESIDENCE	Country		
	Poland	Ukraine	Hungary
Very strong	16.3	15.2	7.8
Strong	44.9	48.4	37.7
Weak	30.7	34.2	43.4
I don't feel the connection at all	8.1	2.1	11.1

Source: own material

The analysis of the level of declarations on the identification with the region revealed that it is relatively dimly perceived by the youth in all three countries, regardless the geographical location. It can be related with the already discussed (in the literature) problem of the weak identification with the mezzo level of social structures. It is confirmed by the studies conducted by Bohdan Jałowicki and Grzegorz Gorzelak who discovered that the level of identification, regionalism and the attachment to the region in post-socialist countries is very low (Gorzelak, Jałowicki, 1993). The research results presented in this article also prove that our identification with the micro level (family, place of residence) and macro level (nation) is much stronger than with the region which can be regarded as the mezzo level of a social structure.

Table 4: A sense of connection with the place of residence of the respondents vs the country of origin (%)

How strong is your relation with the REGION	Country		
	Poland	Ukraine	Hungary
Very strong	5.1	7.8	4.2
Strong	25.3	39.3	16.9
Weak	49.1	43.2	53.9
I don't feel the connection at all	20.5	9.7	25.0

Source: own material

Also, similarly to a sense of connection with the region, the youth in all three countries was characterized by a relatively poor sense of connection with Europe.

Table 5: A sense of connection with the place of residence of the respondents vs the country of origin (%)

How strong is your relation with EUROPE	Country		
	Poland	Ukraine	Hungary
Very strong	8.7	10.2	8.3
Strong	27.2	30.1	21.9
Weak	41.4	41.5	36.9
I don't feel the connection at all	22.6	18.2	32.9

Source: own material

2. Cultural and social capital of the youth of borderland of Central and Eastern Europe

Social and cultural capital has recently become one of the most frequently used terms in the social studies. The theories on those two types of capital turned out to be particularly useful in the attempts to explain the transformations taking place in the social structure of the post-communist countries. Those transformations may be analysed in terms of the changes in the attitudes and behaviour of the representatives of various social categories. We can also aim at presenting the consequences of those transformations on the level of general mechanisms and the vertical mobility – strata and classes, or horizontal mobility – between various segments of the social structure (Bartoszek, 2003: 7). Ivan Szelényi said that Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, as well as the idea of cultural capital, is

very useful in the analysis of the changes taking place in the societies in East-Central Europe after 1989. He wrote that the unprecedented increase of the value of the cultural capital is strongly visible when we analyse the composition of the political class which has come to power in the past few years. The authorities in the post-communist societies are fully controlled by the intellectuals and the specialists. Presidents, prime ministers, minister, members of parliament, mayors and almost all leading personalities in the ruling parties and in the opposition are intellectuals or specialists. In the capitalist societies, specialists (usually lawyers or economists) play an important role in politics. Humanistic intelligentsia rarely reaches the top of political ladder. Meanwhile, in the post-communist societies, reaching the key positions in the political structure by the humanistic intelligentsia is more of a rule than an exception. The leading post-communist politics include playwrights, historians, sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers (Szelényi et al., 1995: 17).

In the scientific literature, the term “cultural capital” is mainly used with reference to the Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction, developed together with Jean-Claude Passeron. According to P. Bourdieu and J.-C. Passeron, the cultural capital of an individual is conditioned by the level of education and the profession of the father and has an influence on the school achievements of the children (Bourdieu, Passeron, Neyman, 1990, 130-131). Cultural capital of the students coming from higher classes gives them a clear advantage over the students coming from lower classes in winning the social selection, starting from the earliest educational years. They also take up prestigious courses at the university and they achieve better results (Bourdieu, Passeron, Neyman, 1990: 152-153). To sum up, we can say that the concept of such explicated cultural capital allows us to better understand the role of the social status of the parents in reaching higher positions by their children (Bartoszek, 2003).

In the research presented in this article, two factors were treated as the main measurement tools of the cultural capital acquired at home: the education of parents and the number of books in the home library. On the basis of the answers to the three questions, a synthetic indicator was developed which included the education of the father (importance 33.3%), the education of the mother (importance 33.3%) and the number of books at home.

Table 6: The indicator of a family cultural capital vs. the country of origin (%)

The level of the indicator	Country		
	Poland	Ukraine	Hungary
Low	35.1	20.9	31.3
Medium	32.1	47.5	31.0
High	32.8	31.6	37.6

Source: own material

The highest level of the family cultural capital characterised the youth living in Ukraine. A slightly lower level characterised the youth in Hungary and the lowest level – the youth in Poland. It is also worth noticing that, in general, mothers were better educated than fathers. Also, another interesting dependency was the fact that the level of education of parents determined the size of home library. On the basis of the gathered results concerning the level of the family cultural capital we can come to the conclusion that, in the case of the secondary school students, their inherited cultural capital may become a factor conditioning the access to higher education. This can be confirmed by the analysis of the answers to the question about the educational and professional future and the preferred field of studies. The youth with a higher level of cultural capital more often declared the willingness to undertake the studies and they more often chose those fields of studies which were socially prestigious, such as medicine or law.

Among the researchers dealing with the problem of social capital we may encounter subtle differences in what they think the fundament of social capital is. However, there is no doubt that, for the majority of them, the common structural element of social capital is social trust. Social trust is a fundamental element of social capital and one of its most precious varieties (Sztompka, 2007: 244). For many theorists, trust is a key category and value and its presence indicates a high level of social capital (Szawiel, 2006).

When analysing this dimension of social capital, a synthetic indicator of social trust, consisting of six elements – indicators, was prepared: 1) *Can the majority of your neighbours be trusted?* 2) *Are people*

living in your neighbourhood ready to take advantage of you? 3) Can the majority of the residents in my city/town be trusted? 4) Is your lecturer (teacher) a person you can turn to? 5) Can I count on the majority of my friends at school? 6) Are the majority of local authorities trustworthy?

Table 7: The indicator of social trust vs the type of borderland (%)

The level of the indicator	Country		
	Poland	Ukraine	Hungary
High	9.4	9.1	12.9
Medium	54.5	58.3	66.0
Low	36.1	32.6	21.1

Source: own material

The highest level of social trust was observed among the students in Hungary. The lower level was observed among the students in Ukraine and the lowest level – among the youth in Poland.

Conclusion

The research demonstrated differences in the level of analysis of identity and social position of young people - high school students living in the borderland of three countries of Central and Eastern Europe - Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. The aim of the research was to assess the level of identification with social structures at the following levels: macro - nation, Europe, mezzo – region, and micro - the family and the place of respondents' residence. The research has shown that the strongest connection with their own nation declares youth from Poland and Ukraine. The weakest level of declared connection with their own nation featured young people living in Hungary. The analysis of the level of declared identification with the region demonstrated that it is relatively weakly identified by young people, regardless of their geographic location. The strongest connection with their place of residence felt the young people living in Poland and Ukraine. The analysis of the sense of connection with the family showed that the level of respondents' declarations was similar in each country. For the Polish youth, the most important life plans concentrate on the following issues: happy family life, finding a good job, having friends, development of abilities and interests, as well as gaining other people's respect. The youth from Ukraine has similar plans and life goals as their Polish male and female peers. Young Hungarians paid their attention to other life plans. Like their peers from Poland and Ukraine, they pointed out a happy family life and having friends. But in contrast to young Poles and Ukrainians, the Hungarians indicate such values as: life just for pleasure and fun, development of skills and interests, as well as a quiet life away from any troubles. The indicator of social position used for the analysis was the variable showing what factor primarily determined the probability of finding a „good" job after finishing school. Young people from the three countries of Central and Eastern Europe were rather consistent in their opinions that factors that determine finding a "good" job are foreign language skills, high professional qualifications, connections and favouritism, solid and diligent work, and occupation - kind of work.

The analysis of cultural capital resources of youth from Central and Eastern Europe made it possible to capture several interesting issues. In order to find out the specificity of young people living in different parts of the three countries, the type of borderland was selected as the unit of analysis (the types of distinguished borderlands are described in the introduction to this paper). The highest level of the family cultural capital features young people living in the Polish - German, Hungarian - Ukrainian - Slovakian and Ukrainian - Polish borderlands, and the lowest one features the Polish - Czech and Polish – Slovakian borderlands. The most educated were parents of students from the Polish - German and Ukrainian – Polish borderlands. The research concerning the cultural capital resources allowed for drawing the following conclusion: in the case of high school students, the inherited cultural capital can constitute a factor determining the access to higher education. That can be evidenced by the analysis of answers to the question concerning the educational and professional future, and the field of study preferred by the respondents. Young people with a higher level of cultural capital more often declared taking up university studies, and often pointed out fields of study enjoying high social prestige, such as medicine or law.

The analysis of the resources of the cultural and social capital of the youth in East-Central Europe revealed a few interesting problems. In order to search for the specificity of the youth living in three

different countries, the type of borderland (which was described in the introduction) was selected as a unit of the analysis. The highest level of family cultural capital was observed among the youth living in the borderlands of Poland and Germany, Hungary, Ukraine and Slovakia as well as Ukraine and Poland. The lowest level was observed in the borderlands of Poland and the Czech Republic and Poland and Slovakia. Parents of the students living in the borderlands of Poland and Germany as well as Ukraine and Poland had the highest level of education. The highest level of social trust was observed among the youth in the borderlands of Poland and the Czech Republic. Slightly lower level of social trust was observed among the students in the borderlands of Poland and Germany and Poland and Slovakia. The lowest level of social trust was observed among the respondents in the borderlands of Hungary, Ukraine and Slovakia and Ukraine and Poland. It was also discovered that the synthetic indicator of social trust was correlated with the analysed elements of social identity: a sense of connection with family, nation, place of residence, region and Europe. High level of trust was related to a strong sense of attachment with the respective elements of social identity analysed in the research. When it comes to the analysis of the level of trust and a sense of connection with the nation, the Sommers' rank correlation coefficient d revealed the strongest relation in the borderlands of Poland and Slovakia (the value of Sommers' d coefficient = 0.315), Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia (Sommers' d coefficient = 0.276) and Hungary, Ukraine and Slovakia (Sommers' d coefficient = 0.252). The analysis of the correlation between the level of trust and a sense of connection with family was strongly visible in the borderlands of Poland and

Slovakia (Sommers' d coefficient = 0.307) and Poland and the Czech Republic (Sommers' d coefficient = 0.141). In the case of the analysis of the level of trust and the relation with the place of residence of the respondents, the strongest relation was observed in the borderlands of Poland and Slovakia (Sommers' d coefficient = 0.450), Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia (Sommers' d coefficient = 0.261), Poland and Germany (Sommers' d coefficient = 0.254) as well as Poland and the Czech Republic (Sommers' d coefficient = 0.234). The analysis of the correlation between the level of trust and a sense of connection with the region was strongly visible in the borderlands of Ukraine and Poland (Sommers' d coefficient = 0.309). The strongest relation between the level of trust and a sense of connection with Europe was observed in the borderlands of Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine – the value of Sommers' d coefficient was 0.262.

The conducted research represents just a fragment of very interesting scientific issue, i.e. the study of the youngest generation entering the world of adult social, civic and professional life. The analysis of social position of the young elites, their identity and cultural capital resources can be of crucial importance in the future. Since in the near future these young people will constitute the foundations of intellectual elite in the borderlands of Central and Eastern European countries.

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