

EUROPEAN UNION PERCEPTION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA’S PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this article is to measure and analyze the perceptions, attitudes, behaviors and knowledge of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s public opinion about the Bosnian Herzegovina-EU relations and the EU. The study used three key dimensions regarding the EU perception of the Bosnian Herzegovina people: Political, economic and cultural. Each dimension identifies the EU perception of the Bosnia and Herzegovinian public opinion. This provides us with important data on how the public perceive the EU. Does the public opinion see the EU as a key to solve internal economic and political problems of the BiH? According to public opinion what are the main obstacles in front of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s EU membership? The answers to these questions were sought in the study.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, European Union, Perception, Identity, Public Opinion.

BOSNA HERSEK HALKININ AVRUPA BİRLİĐİ ALGISI

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı Bosna Hersek halkının Bosna Hersek-AB ilişkileri ve AB konusundaki algı, tutum, davranış ve bilgi düzeylerini; nedenleriyle beraber kavramak ve analiz etmektir. Çalışma, Bosna Hersek halkının AB algısı ile ilgili üç ana boyut belirlemiştir. Bunlar politik, ekonomik ve kültürel boyutlardır. Her bir boyut, Bosna Hersek kamuoyunun AB algısını belirlemektedir. Bu da bize Bosna Hersek halkının AB’yi nasıl algıladığına dair önemli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bosna Hersek kamuoyu, AB’nin Bosna Hersek’in iç ekonomik ve siyasi sorunlarının

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çözümünde kilit rol oynadığını düşünüyor mu? Söz konusu kamuoyuna göre Bosna-Hersek'in AB üyeliğinin önündeki başlıca engeller nelerdir? sorularının yanıtları çalışmada aranmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bosna Hersek, Avrupa Birliği, Algı, Kimlik, Kamuoyu.

Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to measure and analyze the perceptions, attitudes, behaviors and knowledge of Bosnia and Herzegovina's public opinion about the Bosnian Herzegovina-EU relations and the EU. The survey was conducted using a quantitative method – face-to-face field survey of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The data acquisition process in the survey was provided by applying survey forms to randomly selected 284 citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. Face-to-face interview method was used to collect data. Interviewers read the questions and answers out loud from the questionnaire and marked down the respondents' answers. For this survey, a probability random stratified sample representative of the current population of Bosnia and Herzegovina was used. The sample universe for this survey is population of citizens of the Bosnia and Herzegovina 16 years of age and older. The other basic information regarding the survey is the period of survey. Survey period is from July 5th to October 5th, 2017.

In this study aimed at revealing the perceptions, attitudes, behaviors and views of Bosnia and Herzegovina people about Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership, the data obtained from the fieldwork carried out with this target are as follows:

- According to your opinion, what is the most important problem in the relations between Bosnia - Herzegovina and EU?
- According to your opinion, what is the most important value of the European identity and culture?
- Do you think the EU is a 'Christian Club'?
- Do you think Bosnia and Herzegovina is a part of European identity and culture?
- Do you support the membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the EU?

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Subsequently, the results are also evaluated in comparison to the Gallup Balkan Monitor studies, Balkan Eurobarometers conducted by the Regional Cooperation Council, *Eurobarometer: Public Opinion in Bosnia and Herzegovina* conducted by the Prism Research and *Sources of Insecurities in Western Balkans and Turkey: Human Security Barometer 2016* conducted by the The Cross-Border Citizens' Network for Peace and Inter-Communal Reconciliation and Human Security average for corresponding topics.

This survey is carried out by the Department of International Relations of the Faculty of Economics of Anadolu University. This research project was supported by Anadolu University Rectorate as the Scientific Research Project with the 1705E137 project number. The survey is expected to shed light on Bosnian public opinion about the EU, EU integration and identity issues. In this process, the economic structure of the country, democratic rights and freedoms, the rule of law and human rights will be examined. In this respect, this study aims to find out the perception, attitude, behavior and knowledge levels of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian people about Bosnia and Herzegovina-EU relations and the EU. The study also explored the possible obstacles Bosnia and Herzegovina may face in the EU accession process. The students, academics and decision-makers in foreign policy matters, non-governmental employees, media professionals, the private sector and the public interested in the subject will be able to benefit from the project results.

1. BiH-EU Relations: Historical Background

The process of setting up the EU's economic and political relations with the Western Balkans began in 1996 with the adoption of the idea of the 'Regional Approach' by the Union. There are two basic dimensions of the Regional Approach, which will bring the Western Balkan countries closer to the EU. These are political and economic bases.¹ This approach also established political and economic conditionality for the development of bilateral relations between BiH and the EU, in terms of trade, financial assistance and economic cooperation.² Immediately after this date, in 1998,

¹ European Commission Bulletin of the EU No: 1-2/1996, <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9fc9465a-490b-4c96-8196-9ddd89927af1/language-en>, (18.04.2018).

² European Commission, 2003rd Council Meeting - General Affairs - Luxembourg, 29/30 April 1997 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-97-129_en.htm?locale=en, (18.04.2018).

The Consultative Task Force was established for peace building and protection civil population between the EU and BiH.³ In 1999, the EU presented a comprehensive cooperation proposal for the five countries of South-Eastern Europe including BiH in the region called as Stability and Association Pact (SAP).⁴ In August of the same year, the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH expressed its commitment to the EU. The SAP aims to enhance institution building, economic reconstruction and regional cooperation of the countries in the region for the future EU membership.⁵ That year also, the EU External Relations Commission published an “EU Road Map” that identified 18 essential steps BiH needed to complete before a feasibility study of its potential suitability for EU membership.⁶

In June 2000 the Feira European Council officially explained that all the SAP countries are “potential candidates” for EU membership.⁷ After this development, another important step about the regional approach of the EU towards the Balkans was taken at the Zagreb Summit in 2000. This Summit is very important because in this Summit the EU launched the SAP in order to develop a strategy towards the countries in the region including BiH.⁸ This approach reiterated and confirmed at the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003. In this Summit, the Council of the European Union declared that on the Western Balkans: “The future of this region is in the European Union.”⁹ Thus, BiH - along with other Western Balkans countries—was identified as a potential candidate for European Union (EU) membership. With this framework, the EU showed its aim to support the Europeanization of the Western Balkans

³ D. Šuško, “EU Enlargement and the Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Brief Historical Sketch”, *Journal of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences International University of Sarajevo*, (2), 2012, p. 99-119.

⁴ European Parliament, *The Western Balkans and EU Enlargement*, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_5.5.2.pdf.

⁵ European Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations* https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/sap_en, (10.05.2018).

⁶ G. O. Tuathail. “Embedding Bosnia-Herzegovina in Euro-Atlantic Structures: From Dayton to Brussels”, *Eurasian Geography and Economic*, 46 (1), 2005, p. 51-67.

⁷ I. G. Bărbulescu and M. Troncotă, “The Ambivalent Role of the EU in the Western Balkans- ‘Limited Europeanisation’ Between Formal Promises and Practical Constraints: The Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina”, *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, 12 (1), 2012, p. 5-26.

⁸ V. Džihic and A. Wieser, “Incentives for Democratisation? Effects of EU Conditionality on Democracy in Bosnia & Herzegovina”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63 (10), 2011, p. 1803-1825.

⁹ Thessaloniki and After I: The EU’s Balkan Agenda, *International Crisis Group*, *Balkan Briefing*, 2003, p. 2. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/27833/b027_eu_balkan_agenda.pdf, (21.06.2018).

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towards their future inclusion into the EU institutional structure.¹⁰ In 2004 the EU decided the first European Partnership for BiH.

After the Thessaloniki Summit, in September 2007 visa facilitation and readmission agreements were signed and entered into force between the BiH and EU. And also since 2008 the EU and BiH have Interim Agreement on Trade and Trade-related issues. On 25.11.2005 Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) negotiations were officially started in Sarajevo and on 04.12.2007 EU initial Stabilization and Association Agreement. The SAA was signed on 16 June 2008 in Luxembourg, established the framework for implementation of legal, administrative, institutional and economic reforms that will lead the country closer to the EU. And also the SAA became the main driving force behind democratisation in the Western Balkans.¹¹

On 31.07.2008 BiH and EU signed the finance agreement for the instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA). As a result, the free trade area between EU and BiH was established and the EU is the main trading partner of the country. Additionally, BiH benefits from the EU's unilateral autonomous trade preferences for countries and territories participating in or linked to the Stabilisation and Association process. In May 2010 Commission adopted the proposal allowing citizens of Albania & Bosnia and Herzegovina to travel to Schengen countries without a short-term visa. After Commission's decision visa free regime for Schengen area introduced for all BiH citizens having a biometric passport. Statement of the EU External Action Service (EEAS) about the EU and BiH relations is the another important development in 2010. According to this statement EEAS described BiH in early 2010 as "the most unstable corner of Europe".¹²

In June 2012 The EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina launched the High Level Dialogue on the Accession Process. Following this process SAA has

¹⁰ L. Demetropoulou, "Europe and the Balkans: Membership Aspiration, EU Involvement and Europeanization Capacity in South Eastern Europe", *Southeast European Politics*, 3 (2-3), 2002, p. 87-106.

¹¹ T. Gromes, "The Prospect of European Integration and Conflict Transformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Journal of European Integration*, 31 (4), 2009, p. 431-447.

¹² Gerard Toal and Adis Maksić, "Is Bosnia-Herzegovina Unsustainable? Implications for the Balkans and European Union", *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 52 (2), 2011, p. 290.

been ratified and entered into force on 1 June 2015 between the partners.¹³ In February 2016 BiH submitted its application to join the EU. The EU adopted Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the Union on 16 September 2016, and promptly asked the European Commission to examine the extent to which the country conforms to EU criteria.¹⁴ On completion of the negotiations, a Treaty of Accession was signed and ratified by the Member States and the European Parliament gave its assent. BiH has Potential candidate membership status in the EU in today.¹⁵ And also, The statement made by the European Commission on 6 February 2018 has created a very promising situation for Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership process. The European Commission has announced ambitious plans for a grand, new push toward enlargement, hoping to welcome western Balkan states in the EU within the next seven years. According to Johannes Hahn, the Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations "It's important to 'export stability to the region rather than importing instability to the EU'. Therefore, he believes that by 2025, the countries will be able to become more democratic, constitutional and competitive.¹⁶ Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) EU membership perspective and relations with the Union have developed in this context so far.

2. BiH-EU Relations: Financial Assistance and Trade Relations

Between 1995 and 2008, EU assistance to Bosnia amounted 2.8 billion Euro under the CARDS and Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). Between 2007 and 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina benefited from 615 million euro from the IPA which aims at providing targeted financial assistance to countries which are candidates and potential candidates for membership to the EU.¹⁷ For the period of 2014–2020 165 million Euro allocated for Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁸ In particular, IPA has found financial support for the realization of projects in various fields in Bosnia and

¹³ European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations, Bosnia and Herzegovina, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/bosnia-herzegovina_en, (10.04.2018).

¹⁴ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/bosnia-herzegovina/>, (02.04.2018).

¹⁵ Bărbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁶ EU announces ambitious expansion plans in western Balkans, <http://www.dw.com/en/eu-announces-ambitious-expansion-plans-in-western-balkans/a-42473497>, (07.02.2018).

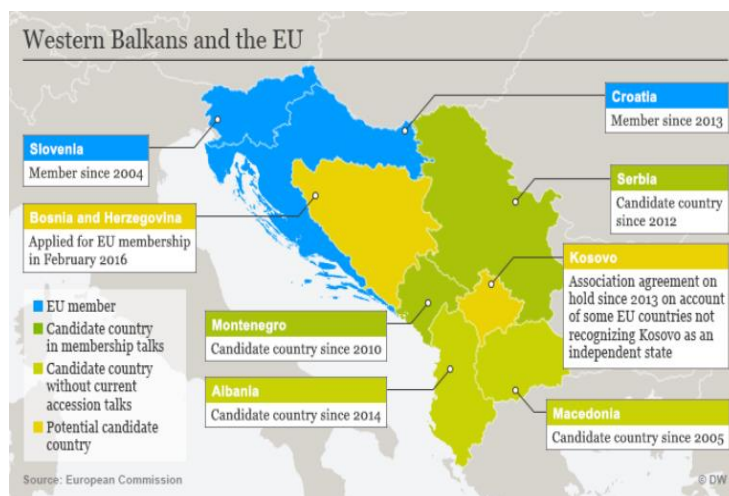
¹⁷ Financial assistance and trade relations, http://europa.ba/?page_id=480, (02.04.2018).

¹⁸ A. E. Juncos "Member State-Building Versus Peacebuilding: The Contradictions of EU State-Building in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *East European Politics*, 28 (1), 2012, p. 58-75.

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Herzegovina. These projects were prioritized in economic and political areas. Respect for human rights as well as minority rights and gender equality are among these projects. Other political projects are: support the development of civil society and strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, reform in public administration. Apart from these areas IPA accomplish economic reforms, push forward regional co-operation, and help to sustainable development and reduction of poverty.¹⁹

The EU is the basic trading partner of BiH. BiH has gained EU market access through the EU since 2000. After come into force of the Interim Agreement, access of products from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the EU spreaded, and the EU exports to the country have been granted as trade preferences. According to the last three progress reports,²⁰ BiH has achieved a high level of trade integration with the EU. In addition to that the EU still the main trading partner of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The share of exports to the EU increased to 73,5%, while imports from the EU decreased slightly to 60% of total imports.²¹ The most important EU countries trade partners are Germany and Croatia.



¹⁹ Delegation of the European Union to the Bosnia and Herzegovina, *EU Funding in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, <http://projects.europa.ba/About>, (02.04.2018).

²⁰ European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2016 Report*, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_bosnia_and_herzegovina.pdf, (02.04.2018).

²¹ Financial assistance and trade relations, http://europa.ba/?page_id=480, (02.04.2018).

3. The Survey Results

Table 1: Demography

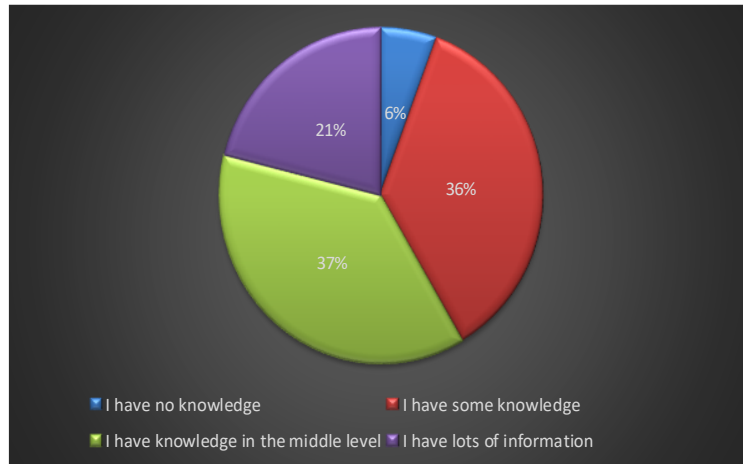
Demography	Frequency	%	Demography	Frequency	%
Gender			Education		
Female	171	62,0	University Degree	167	65,7
Male	105	38,0	Master Degree	37	14,6
Total	276	100,0	PHD	9	3,5
			High School	41	16,1
			Total	254	100,0
Age			Occupation		
16-24	140	49,6	Unemployment	6	2,2
25-29	47	16,7	Student	140	50,9
30-34	34	12,1	Housewife	2	0,7
35-39	36	12,8	Civil servant	12	4,4
40-44	12	4,3	Private sector	71	25,8
45- +	13	4,6	Volunteer Non-Governmental Organization Employee	2	0,7
Total	282	100,0	Other	42	15,3
			Total	275	100,0

In the survey, 38% of respondents are male and 62% are female. 49,6% of respondents younger than 25 years old. 16% of the survey participants are between 25 and 29 years old. 12,1% of the survey participants are between to 30-34 and 12,8% of them between 35-39 years old,. 8,8% of the partipants are 40 and older years old.

When it comes to the highest degree completed of formal education, 16,1% of respondents have high school degree, 65,7% both academy/vocational school and university education, 14,4% of respondents have completed master degree and 3,5% of respondents have completed Phd. In the survey, 50,9% of respondents are student, 25,8% respondents are working in private sector, 4,4% respondents are civil servant.

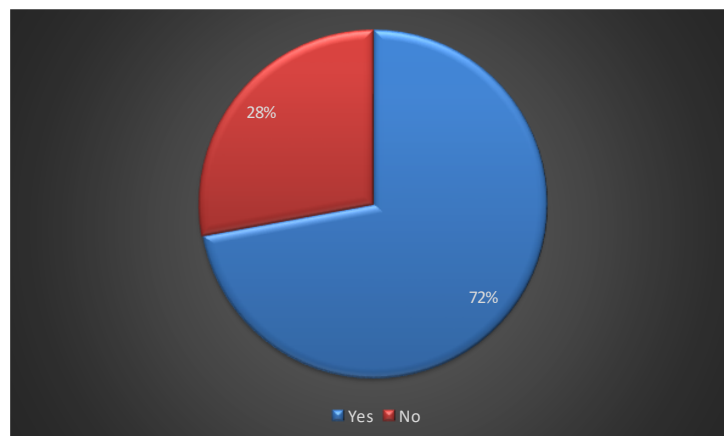
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Graphic 1: How do you think you have information about the European Union?



In this survey, 94% respondents (268 people) said that they have knowledge about the EU. 6% of the participants (16 people) said that they don't have knowledge about the European Union. 37% of the respondents (106 people) said that they have knowledge in the middle level, 36% participants (102 people) have some knowledge, and 21% participants (60 people) have lots of knowledge about the EU.

Graphic 2: Do you support the membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the EU?



According to the responses of the participants the support for EU membership is quite high in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 204 of the 283 participants supported Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership. This number corresponds to 72%. 79 participants opposed Bosnia Herzegovina's EU membership. This number corresponds to 28%.

According to research conducted by the Gallup Balkan Monitor in BiH in 2006, 66% of the respondents thought that EU membership was *a good thing*, according to 8% of the respondents thought that EU membership was *a bad thing*. For the 16% of the respondents EU membership was *neither good or bad*.²² When we look at Gallup's 2008 research only half of the respondents (48%) thought that membership of the EU would be *good* for their country, approximately one-third thought (31%) it would be *neither good nor bad* and one in 10 thought that it would be a *bad thing* (11%). Again according to the same research sixteen percent thought that BiH would never be accepted in the EU as a member and one in 10 thought that this would only happen in the distant future, after 2020. One in five respondents expected the country to be ready for accession between 2016 and 2020.²³ In 2010 respondents thought that membership of the EU would be *good* for their country 69% in 2010. In addition, respondents in the survey were pessimistic about the entry date of their country to the EU and did not expect membership before 2018.²⁴

A similar question was asked in the research of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The question was: "*Do you think that EU membership would be (is-for Croatia) a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?*". According to the work the rate of those who say "EU membership is good thing" is 33%. The rate of those who say "EU membership is bad thing" is 21%. The rate of those who say "EU membership is neither good nor bad" is 42%. The results of the RCC's 2017 study are as

²² Gallup Balkan Monitor 2009, Focus On: Perceptions of the EU in the Western Balkans, 2009, https://wbc-rti.info/object/document/7242/attach/Gallup_Balkan_MonitorFocus_On_EU_Perceptions.pdf, (23.01.2018).

²³ Gallup Balkan Monitor Insights and Perceptions: Voices of the Balkans 2008 Analytical Report. http://www.esiweb.org/enlargement/wpcontent/uploads/2009/02/2008_Analytical_Report.pdf, (23.01.2018).

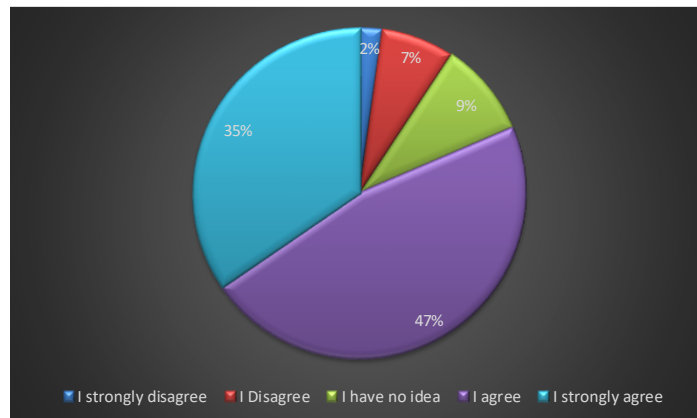
²⁴ Gallup Balkan Monitor Insights and Perceptions: Voices of the Balkans, 2010, p. 21-24. http://www.esiweb.org/enlargement/wpcontent/uploads/2009/02/2010_Summary_of_Finding_s.pdf, (23.01.2018).

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follows: “EU membership is good thing” is 31%, “EU membership is bad thing” is 18%, “EU membership is neither good nor bad” is 46%.²⁵

What does the European Union personally mean for you?

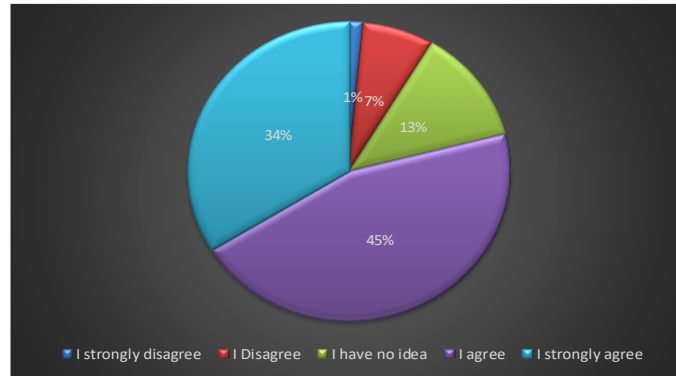
Graphic 3: For me, the EU means freedom of travel to any EU member country.



280 of the 284 participants answered this question. Related with this question 131 of 280 people said that “I agree”, 91 of them said that “I strongly agree.” The total percentage rate of the “I agree and I strongly agree” is 82%. The percentage of respondents who answered “I do not agree” and “I strongly disagree” with this question is 9%. This rate corresponds to 26 people. Only 7 percent of respondents say “I Disagree” and only 2 percent say “I strongly disagree.” The percentage of respondents who answered “I have no idea” is 9% (26 participants). In the study conducted by the RCC in 2016, the response to the similar statement was 23 percent. This ratio was measured as 28 percent by the RCC in 2017.

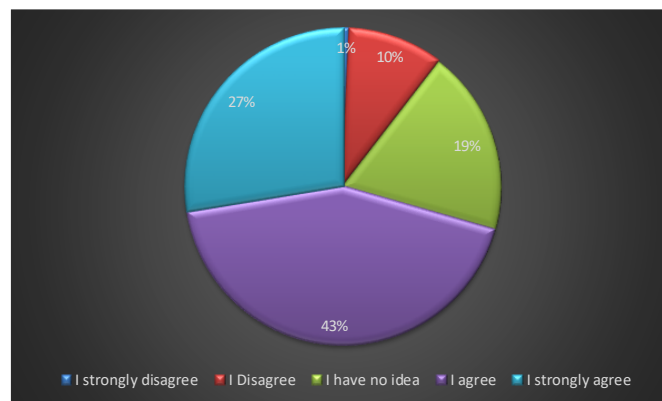
²⁵ Regional Cooperation Council, Balkan Barometer 2017–Public Opinion Survey, Sarajevo, 2017, p. 54. http://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2017.pdf, (16.01.2018).

Graphic 4: For me, the EU means freedom of work in any EU member country.



79 percent of the respondents said they “agree” with this idea. Among them, the rate of “I agree” is 45%. The rate of “I strongly agree” is 34 percent. The total number of people who say “I disagree and I strongly disagree” is 24. The percentage of this figure is 8 percent. Only 1 percent of respondents said “I strongly disagree.” These figures show us that Bosnian Herzegovina citizens are primarily associate EU membership with freedom of work in any EU member country. 13% of the participants did not give any opinion. We can compare these results with works of the RCC. The results of the RCC in 2016 and 2017 are as follows: 19% and 23%.

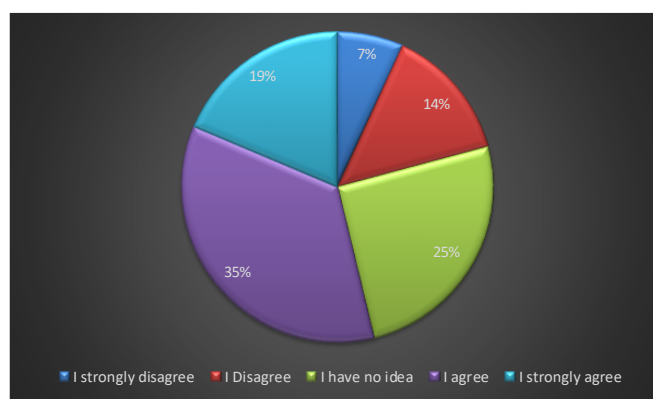
Graphic 5: For me, the EU means freedom of learning for any EU member country.



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The percentage of the participants who say “For me, the EU stands for freedom of learning in any EU Member State” is 70% (197 people). Among them, the rate of “I agree” is 43%. The rate of “I strongly agree” is 27 percent. The percentage of the participants who “disagree” with this view is 11% (29 people). 19% of the participants did not give any opinion (53 people). The total number of respondents who answered this question is 279.

Graphic 6: For me, the EU means economic prosperity.

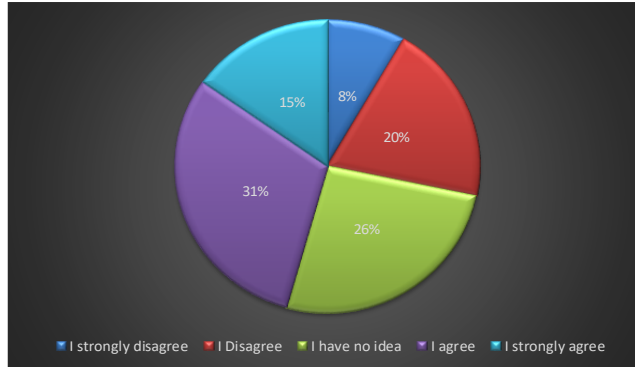


Weak institutions and lack of democracies are the most important obstacles in front of the political and economic development of the BiH. Again these two basic problems make it hard to realization of the reform programs in the country. This leads to a very low performance of the country's economy. This situation leads to declining living standards, rising unemployment and increased poverty.²⁶ Therefore, considering the high amount of the young population among the survey participants, we can say that a significant proportion of the participants regarded the EU as a force that could overcome the economical and political problems of the state. In this perspective, a little more than half of the participants (54% of the participants means 150 person) have stated that the EU has come to mean economic prosperity for them. The percentage of those who say “I strongly agree” is 19 percent. The percentage of those who say “I agree” is 35%. The total number of people who do not share this view is 58. This number corresponds to 21%. At this rate, the participant saying “I strongly disagree” is 7%, the participant saying “I disagree” is 14%. 25% of the participants did not give any opinion (71 people). It is also possible to compare these numbers with other field

²⁶ Demetropoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

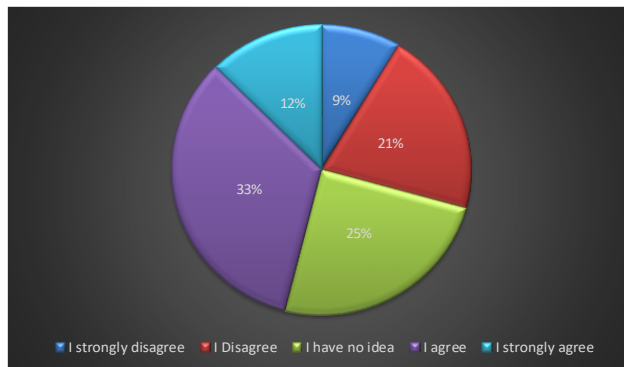
researchs. The results of the RCC in 2016 and 2017 are as follows related with this comment: 29% and 31%.

Graphic 7: For me, the EU expresses peace.



The percentage of the participants who say “For me, the EU expresses peace” is 46% (126 people). The percentage of those who say “I strongly agree” is 15 percent (42 people). The percentage of those who say “I agree” is 31% (84 people). The total number of people who do not share this view is 78. This number corresponds to 28%. At this rate, the participant saying “I strongly disagree” is 8%, the participant saying “I disagree” is 20%. 26% of the participants did not give any opinion (72 people). The total number of respondents who answered this question is 276. The results of the RCC in 2016 and 2017 are as follows related with this comment: %20 and %22.

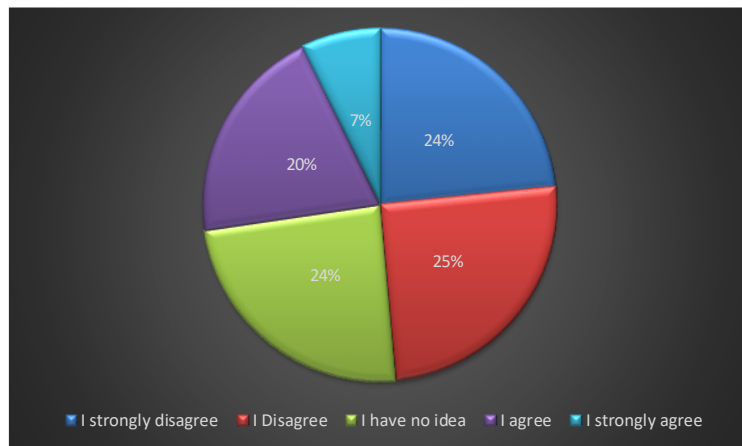
Graphic 8: For me, the EU expresses democracy.



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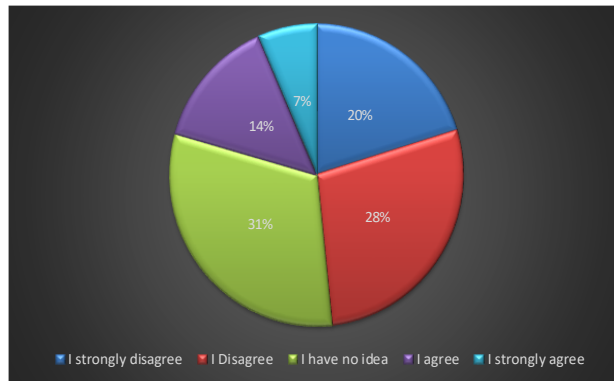
45% of the respondents indicated that they participated the expression of Graphic 8 while 30% of the respondents stated that they did not participate in this opinion. The percentage of those who say “I have no idea” is 25%.

Graphic 9: If Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a member of the EU, our cultural identity will be lost.



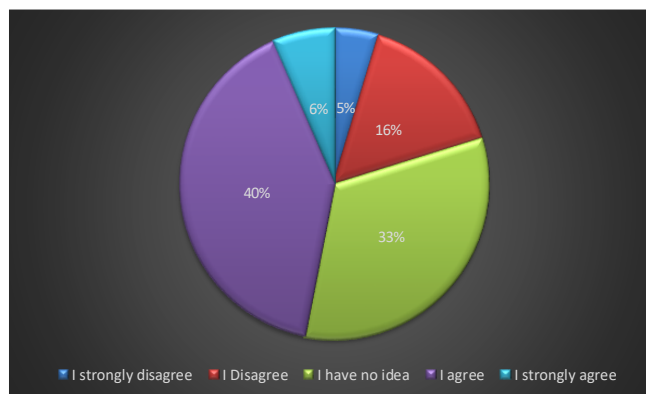
This data shows us almost half of the participants defend that If Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a member of the EU their cultural identities will not be lost. The total rate of those who defend this view is 49%. This rate corresponds to 135 people. The percentage of respondents who say “I strongly disagree” is 24%. The proportion of respondents who say “I Disagree” is 24%. Whereas, the percentage of those who defend the idea that cultural identities will be lost is 27 percent. This rate corresponds to 135 people. 278 of 284 participants answered this question. 67 of 287 participants did not give any opinion.

Graphic 10: If Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a member of the EU, unemployment will increase in the country.



The rate of survey participants who think that If Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a member of the EU, unemployment will increase is 21%. This ratio indicates 57 of 277 people who answered this question. Whereas 48% of the participants do not agree with this view. This ratio indicates 134 of 277 people who answered this question. 31 percent of respondents preferred “I have no idea” option. This ratio indicates 86 of 277 people who answered this question.

Graphic 11: For me, the EU is the provision of social protection.

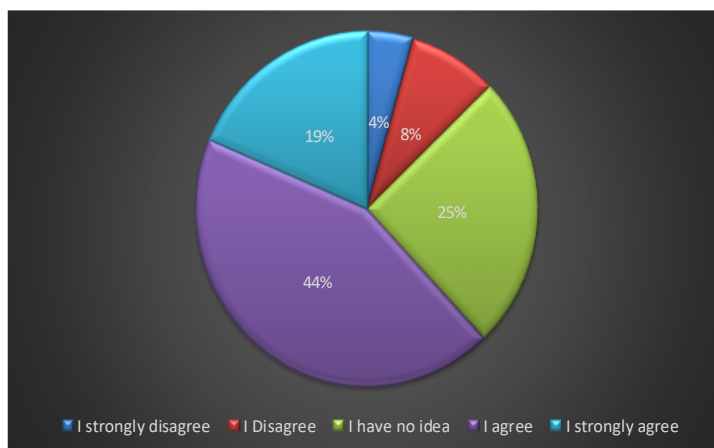


According to 46% of respondents, EU means the provision of social protection. This rate corresponds to 130 people. While the percentage of those who do not think in a similar way is 11%. This rate corresponds to 56 people.

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In the survey, the answer “I have no idea” with the maximum number was measured here. This rate is 33%. This rate corresponds to 91 people. The results of the RCC in 2016 and 2017 are as follows related with this comment: %12 and %16.

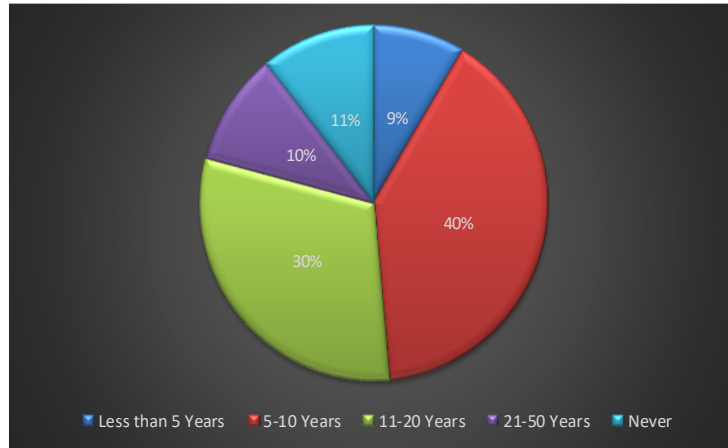
Graphic 12: For me, the EU is cultural diversity.



According to 63% of respondents (170 people), the EU is for cultural diversity. 12% percent of respondents (25 People) do not agree with this view. 25% of participants (69 people) said they did not have information. The total number of respondents who answered this question is 274. On the other hand, in a survey conducted by Prism in 2010, the participants defend that process of joining BiH to EU threatens its specific domestic culture. The question related with this expression was: “Process of joining BiH to EU threatens its specific domestic culture”. According to results nearly one half of respondents (41%) tends to generally agree with this statement. A total of 15% of respondents disagree with this statement. 33% of the participants preferred “neither agree nor disagree” option.²⁷

²⁷ Prism Research, Eurobarometer Public Opinion in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Final Report, Sarajevo, September 2010. <http://mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/Culture%20participation%20study.pdf>, (18.01.2018).

Graphic 13: Do you think when Bosnia and Herzegovina can be a full member of the EU?



282 of 284 respondents answered this question. 252 of 282 people (89%) are in the expectation that Bosnia Herzegovina's EU membership will take place in different time intervals. According to results majority of participants are optimistic about the Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership in the near future. Because, the results gave the percentage of participants who chose between 5-10 years is 40%. This rate corresponds to 113 people. Also, from the participants who have chosen the option "Less than 5 Years" is 9%. This rate corresponds to 24 people The second largest group is those who choose between "11-20 years." Their rate is 30%. This rate corresponds to 86 people. The rate of those who prefer between "21-50 years" is 10%. This rate corresponds to 29 people. Also, the percentage of those who think that EU membership will never happen is 10%.

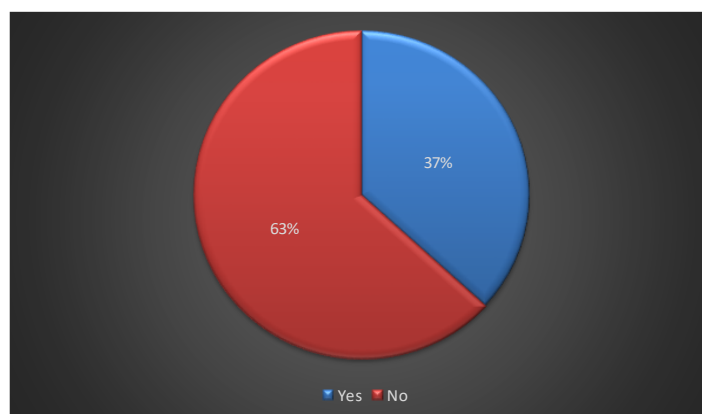
We can compare this results with the field researches of RCC in 2016 and in 2017. In the work carried out by the RCC in 2016 the proportion of participants who responded by 2020 is 20%. The proportion of respondents who responded by 2025 is 18% and the proportion of respondents who respond by 2030 is 15%. The percentage of those who think that EU membership will never happen is 33%. According to the RCC's 2017 study the results are as follows: the proportion of participants who responded by 2020 is 15%, the proportion of respondents who responded by 2025 is 23%, the proportion of respondents who respond by 2030 is 15%, the percentage of

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those who think that EU membership will never happen is 33% as the same previous year.²⁸

The main reason for this differences between the author survey and RCC survey is that the participants of the survey made by the author have a younger population. 221 of the 282 participants have a “16-34” age range. This figure corresponds to 77,7%. On the other hand, this rate is 27% in the research of RCC. In this respect, we can say that young people look at the EU membership process more positively than the middle and older people.

Graphic 14: Do you think that the EU is acting frankly towards Bosnia and Herzegovina?

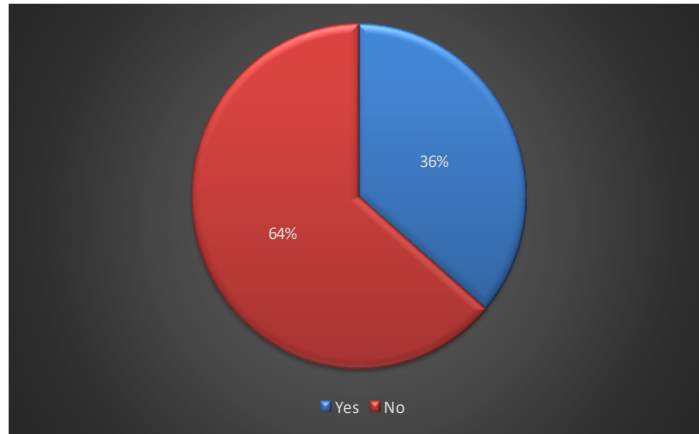


The answer to this question provides us to concrete data on Bosnia and Herzegovina's people's confidence about the EU. This result shows us that a significant part of the public does not trust the EU. We can say that the most important reason for this situation is the identity and culture that the country has. Because Muslim identity, which is widely owned by the public in BiH, is seen as an obstacle in front of the to the BiH for its EU membership. Indeed, there have been suspicions regarding the willingness of the EU to incorporate a state with such a large Muslim population. Therefore an uneasy relationship exists between EU and Bosnian Muslims. The change of this situation depends on the EU's promise to the people of Bosnia and its fulfillment of these promises. Mixed signals from the EU, wrong approach or

²⁸ http://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2017.pdf, (14.01.2018).

tough conditions without the necessary assistance could spoil the process of integration of Bosnia into the EU.²⁹ In this framework, 269 of 284 respondents answered this question. 63% of respondents think that the EU is not acting frankly towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. This rate corresponds to 170 people. Whereas, 37% of respondents think that the EU is acting frankly towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. This rate corresponds to 99 people.

Graphic 15: Do you think that the Bosnia and Herzegovina is acting frankly towards EU?

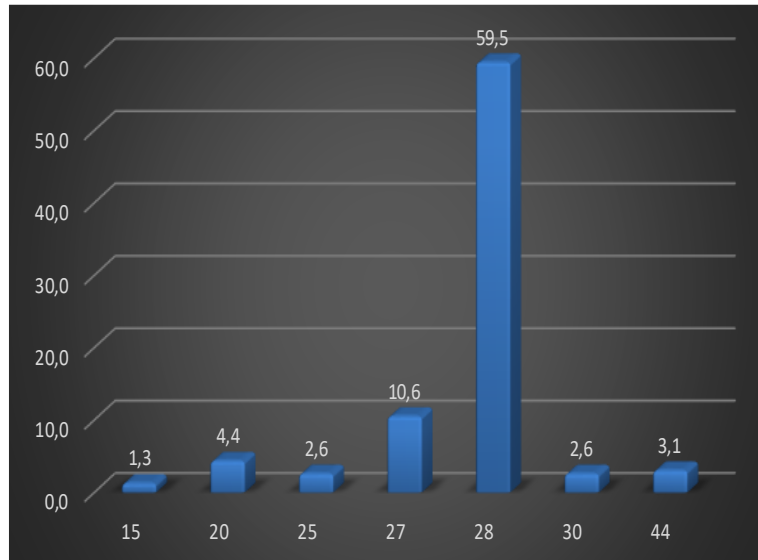


The proportion of respondents who indicated that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not acting frankly towards EU is 64 percent. This rate corresponds to 165 people. Whereas, 37% of respondents think that Bosnia and Herzegovina is acting frankly towards EU. This rate corresponds to 94 people. 259 of 284 respondents answered this question.

²⁹ A. E. Juncos, “The EU’s post-Conflict Intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina: (re) Integrating the Balkans and/or (re)Inventing the EU?”, *Southeast European Politics*, 6 (2), 2005, p. 88-108.

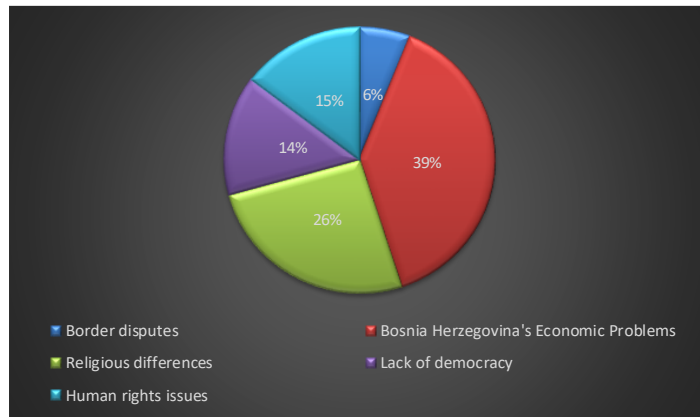
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Graphic 16: How many countries are members of the European Union?



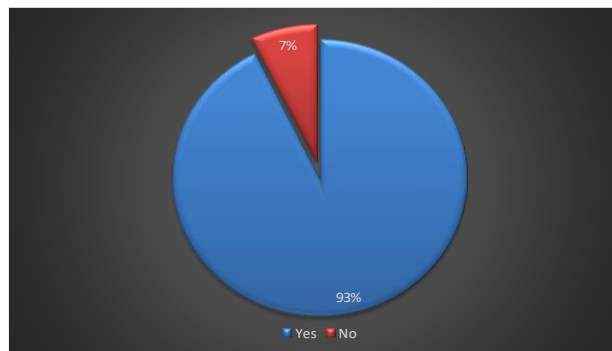
This question was asked to participants to measure their knowledge about the EU. 227 of 284 respondents answered this question. The correct answer to this question is 28. 135 of 227 responded correctly to this question. This figure means 59,5% of the participants. 10,6% of the respondents answered this question as 27. This rate corresponds to 24 people. According to the answers given to this question, it shows that a little more than half of the participants have knowledge about the EU. The most important reason for this outcome is that 49,6% (this rate corresponds to 140 people) of the participants are between the ages of 16-24 and 65,7% (this rate corresponds to 167 people) of the participants are university graduates or university students.

Graphic 17: According to your opinion, what is the most important problem in the relations between Bosnia-Herzegovina and EU?



Within the scope of this question, five different options were offered to participants. According to 39% of participants “Bosnia Herzegovina's Economic Problems” is the most important problem between the BiH and EU relations. This rate corresponds to 109 people. This is followed by the option of religious differences (26%). This rate corresponds to 72 people. The third place is the human rights issue with a rate of 15%. This rate corresponds to 41 people. It is followed by a lack of democracy with 14%. This rate corresponds to 41 people. 6% of respondents considered border disputes as a important problem between the Bosnia Herzegovina-EU relations. This rate corresponds to 17 people. 280 of the 282 participants answered this question.

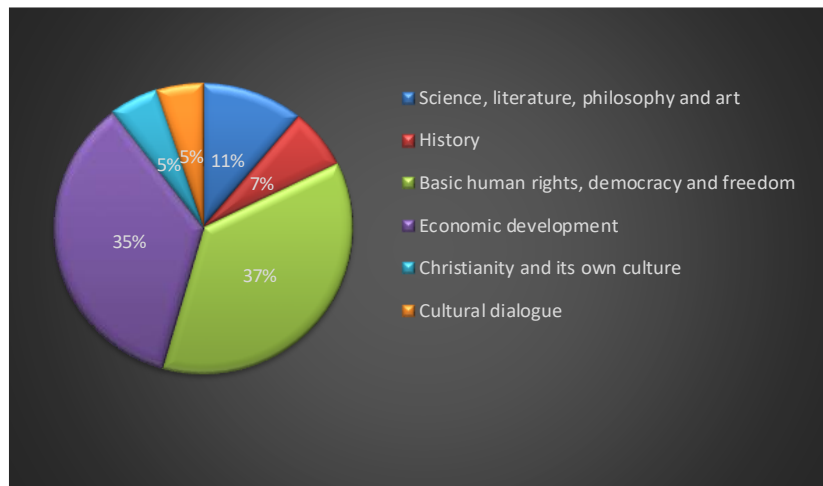
Graphic 18: Have you ever been to any European countries?



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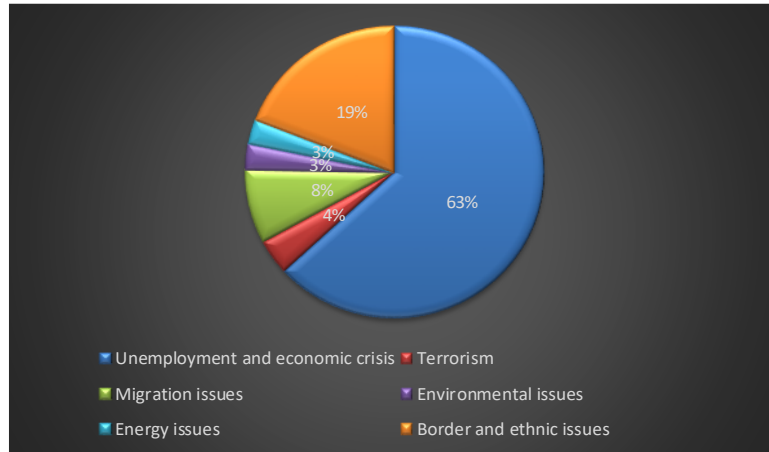
Nearly majority of respondents stated that they were in a European country before. The percentage of respondents is 93%. Only 7 percent of participants said that they were not in any European countries before. The most important reason for this outcome is that 49.6% (this rate corresponds to 140 people) of the participants are between the ages of 16-24 and 50,9% (this rate corresponds to 140 people) of the participants are university students.

Graphic 19: According to your opinion, what is the most important value of the European identity and culture?



Within the scope of this question, six different options were offered to participants. 37% of the participants saw the concepts of “basic human rights, democracy and freedom” as the most important values of European identity and culture. This rate corresponds to 103 people. This response is followed by “economic development” with 35%. This rate corresponds to 99 people. Third place is “science, literature, philosophy and art” with 11%. This rate corresponds to 31 people. This answer followed by “history” with 7%. this rate corresponds to 19 people. According to 5% of participants, “cultural dialogue” is the most important value of European culture and identity. Again according to 5% of participants, “Christianity and its own culture” is the most important value of European culture and identity.

Graphic 20: According to your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Bosnia Herzegovina currently?



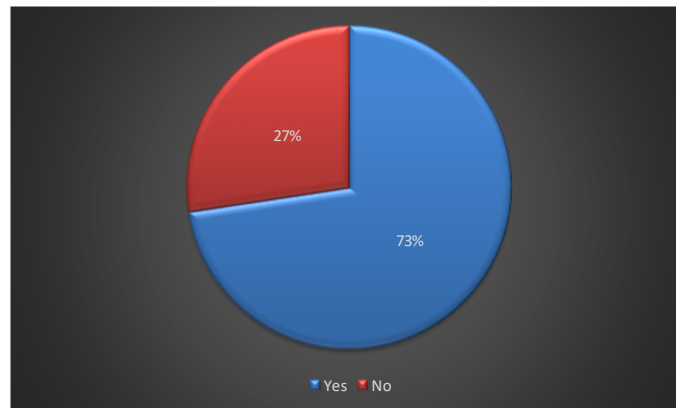
The EU initiated in December 2014 a renewed approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina which provides for the re-sequencing of the conditionalities in order for the country to progress towards the EU and address the socio-economic challenges it faced. In this framework as the results of other research unemployment is clearly a worrying issue for citizens in the BiH. In this survey according to 178 of the 281 participants who answered this question the most important issue facing Bosnia Herzegovina currently is unemployment and economic crisis. The rate of this answer is 63%. According to participants the second important issues facing Bosnia Herzegovina currently is border and ethnic issues. The rate of this answer is 19%. The other ratios are as follows: Migration issues 8% (23 participants), terrorism 4% (11 participants), Environmental issues and Energy issues 2,8% of both (8 participants of both).

The same pattern can be seen in the other work carried out by the Regional Cooperation Council in 2016. According to the survey main concerns of the BiH population are unemployment 72% and economic situation 45% in their economy, followed by corruption in third place 27%.³⁰ In this context, unemployment is parallel to the results of both research.

³⁰ Regional Cooperation Council, *Balkan Barometer 2016-Public Opinion Survey*, Sarajevo, 2016, p. 42. http://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2016.pdf, (14.01.2018).

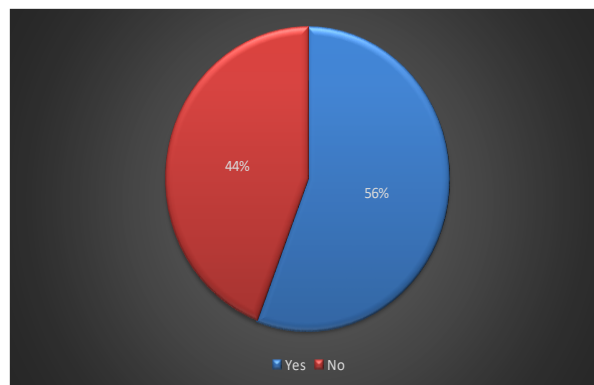
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Graphic 21: Do you think that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a part of European identity and culture?



According to 73% of respondents, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a part of European identity and culture. Whereas, 27% of the participants do not think that way.

Graphic 22: Do you think that the EU is a 'Christian Club'?



267 of the 282 participants answered this question. 56% of the participants think that the EU is a "Christian Club". This rate corresponds to 149 people. 44% of the participants think that the EU is not a 'Christian Club'. This rate corresponds to 118 people. Also, 56 participants of the 149 people who say the EU is a 'Christian Club', have stated that EU membership will cause the losing of cultural identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However,

only 21 out of 149 people who consider the EU as a ‘Christian Club’ think that BiH will never be a member of the Union.

Conclusion

The study identified three key dimensions regarding the EU perception of the Bosnian Herzegovina people. These are political, economic and cultural dimensions. Each dimension identifies the EU perception of the public opinion. This provides us with important data on how the public perceives the EU. Does the public opinion see the EU as a key to solving internal economic and political problems of the BiH? And According to public opinion what are the main obstacles in front of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s EU membership?

The political dimension is also discussed in two ways within itself. Firstly, Will EU membership solve Bosnia and Herzegovina’s internal political problems? And secondly what are the political obstacles in front of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s EU membership? The most important finding is here that Bosnia and Herzegovina’s EU membership is supported at a very high rate by the participants. Results are: 204 of the 283 participants supported Bosnia and Herzegovina’s EU membership; this number corresponds to 72%. In fact, the expectation of membership in the next decade is around 50 percent. On the other hand, lack of fundamental political principles such as liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law still the important political problems in the BiH. Therefore, nearly half of respondents see the EU as a peace and democracy. At the same time they perceive the EU as a key player solving these problems.

When we come to the economic dimension, we are faced with the same questions. Will EU membership solve Bosnia and Herzegovina’s economic problems? What are the economic obstacles in front of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s EU membership? Majority of the participants think that the most important issues facing Bosnia Herzegovina currently is unemployment and economic crisis. Therefore, more than half of the participants (54% of the participants means 150 person) have stated that the EU means ‘economic prosperity’ for them. Also 48% of the participants do not agree unemployment will increase in the country when the Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a member of the EU. Hence according to results of the Graphic 19 participants

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think that the most important value of the European identity and culture is 'economic development'. These results show us the EU perceived as a key for the solving economical problem of the BiH by the participants. Finally, participants regard Bosnia and Herzegovina's economic troubles as the most important obstacle to membership.

Thirdly, we examined how the Bosnian Herzegovinian people perceive the EU in the context of the cultural dimension. The information we obtain from the public survey here is closely related to the following question: Does the Muslim identity, which is widely represented by the public in BiH, is seen as an obstacle in front of BiH for its EU membership? 56% of the participants think that the EU is a "Christian Club." However, according to 73% of respondents, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a part of the European identity and culture. Also, 37% of the participants saw the concepts of "basic human rights, democracy and freedom" as the most important values of European identity and culture. Whereas, just 5% of participants, "Christianity and its own culture" is the most important value of European culture and identity. But at the same time, Muslim identity of the BiH is perceived as an invisible barrier by the participants for their membership to the EU.

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