



# The European Study of Youth Mobilisation REPORT

*Listening to Radicals: Attitudes and Motivations of Young People Engaged in Political and Social Movements Outside of the Mainstream in Central and Nordic Europe*

Commissioned by the British Council Active Citizens Programme  
March 2011

# Foreword

This report is the result of a collaboration involving a number of partners. The topic emerged in 2008 in the early stages of the British Council's work supporting global citizenship in north, central and eastern Europe. In 2009, the British Council launched **Active Citizens** a programme which aims to build trust and understanding between communities and across borders of all types: geographical, ethnic, faith, gender. And an important part of this programme is to identify issues of current concern in Europe and through further enquiry and study to contribute to a better understanding.

One area of common concern is the role young people play in our communities. Mobilisation around their beliefs and values is a common feature of young people in many countries and continents. Most enthusiasm fosters positive change, through and within their organisations, communities and societies. Increasingly, perhaps, violence is also being seen as a means for achieving social change.

Over the last few months, the actions and reactions of young people in different countries and the way these appear through the filter of the media – where terms like “extremism” and “radicalism” are frequently employed – show that this subject is, if anything, becoming more relevant for the world we live in.

The British Council commissioned Dr Jeffrey Murer of St Andrews University's School for International Relations, to lead a multi-sited project involving the participation and cooperation of many people, to discover more about radicalisation and the perceptions of young people who see themselves as radicalised, including their perceptions on violence and violent activity.

This report on The European Study of Youth Mobilisation (ESYM) is one of the products of that research.

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## Acknowledgements

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## ESYM: Our starting-point

Many young people are searching for meaning in a world where they feel excluded and ignored. Alienated young people are rejecting mainstream political values and norms to explore their own political and social spaces. Violence is part of the everyday experience for many of these young people, and the fact that they reproduce violence or discuss violence is merely a reflection of their everyday surroundings. Rather than seeing these responses as abnormal, ESYM aims to place these expressions of radicalism within the larger realm of politics and social mobilisation.

This study was commissioned by the British Council as part of their work in the areas of global citizenship.

It matches the results of a series of panel discussions among experts – both those who research and those who deal with the radicalised youth in their professional lives – with a survey of members of radical groups, in which the young people themselves tell us who they are, what they do and what they think.

In this study we adopt the meaning of “radical” as being beyond the mainstream, being intense, and perhaps being unwavering in the desire to achieve one's social and political goals.

We also use the term “activist” as these are highly active young people, engaged in the world, doing things in attempts to achieve their desired political outcomes. In this these young people are “mobilised”; they are out there, working for change, even if that change is inspired by politics that the mainstream might reject.

The study includes in its definition of radical youth, some positions which in certain countries might be considered within the political mainstream, such as gay rights activists in UK, for example, but in others, as in Central Europe, are seen to be a position of contention. We recognize that all of these young people consider themselves activists, and therefore treat them, for the purposes of this study, as similar and equal.

## ESYM in a Nutshell

The European Study of Youth Mobilisation consists of two parts, a series of Expert Panel discussions held in three Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) and a Survey among young people outside the social and political mainstream in 4 countries in central and Eastern Europe – Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

These countries were chosen to represent two geographical regions in Europe where the British Council has been running a specific programme on Active Citizenship and where radicalisation is a theme we wish to investigate in some depth. In choosing these countries we did not attempt to be inclusive or exhaustively comprehensive but were looking for interesting similarities as well as contrasts in the views held by self-styled young radicals.

This report first defines the terminology used and the approach adopted.

The panel discussions explored key concepts which were central to the overall study namely: violence, radicalisation, the relationship between gender and radicalisation, the causes for young people joining as well as exiting from extremist groups. It broadly concluded the following:

1. That a number of different forms of violence must be recognised: violence in language; violence as a way of life with its own rules, rituals and behaviours; violence as a spectacle. To these can be added spontaneous acts of violence occurring under peer pressure and symbolic violence directed at those in authority.
2. The concept of radicalisation is best understood as a social process dependent on individuals and their specific context .
3. There is no one single motivation for joining groups outside the social, and political mainstream; family tradition, an individual quest, a sense of being an outsider are some reasons. But each provides the group with its shared identity. There is a lot of fluidity of movement into and out of these groups. Only a few stay and those who do tend to move up the hierarchy.
4. Despite assumptions, there is not a big gender disparity in membership of radicalised groups.

The Survey asked questions of 800 self-styled radical activists aged 18-31, members of groups ranging from neo-Nazis through religious evangelicals and civil rights activists to far-left Radical Socialists. What they mostly have in common is that they collectively feel outside the mainstream – they are highly mobilised and motivated, politically strongly engaged.

The profile they present echoes the Expert Panel conclusion that there is no single path to radicalism: they are from different socio-economic groupings, though they almost all have completed secondary education and many feel that their occupation undervalues their educational background.

## Eight findings emerged from the survey.

1. Almost all felt the political and social system in their country was not functioning well. However, for many this did not prevent a feeling of patriotism.
2. Most have little trust in political institutions, which they feel do not represent their or their parents' interests.
3. They participate in a wide variety of activities: almost all vote but most are ambivalent about the difference voting makes. Beyond voting, activities include: petition-signing, political demonstrations, lawful and unlawful. A few have taken part in acts of political violence.
4. Activists from both ends of the spectrum, far-right supporters particularly, agreed that violence including using physical force to strike back at the police might be legitimate. Most respondents felt that violence was a legitimate means to change a government if it was not doing its job.
5. Despite expectations, the survey showed that there is no gender disparity in support for violence, though only male respondents said they had committed such acts.
6. Most respondents felt the government did not do anything for their group. The more strongly young activists felt they were discriminated against, the more they thought violence was justified.
7. Young radicals are more likely to join a group to find a sense of security or belonging rather than a strong belief in one particular cause. Once inside the group however they are likely to adopt views common to the group.
8. Almost all the young radicals believed the future of their country was bleak. Most, however, felt that their own job and personal position would, if anything, improve.

The results of the study suggest eight conclusions, presented on page 25.

## What is Radicalism?

*The concept of radicalism in Anglo-American politics is a very old one, even if the term seems only to have become popular after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York and of 7 July 2005 on the London transport system.*

*In 1964, Daniel Bell was writing on the American Radical Right, and in the early 1970s the Institute for the Study of Conflict produced a report on the dangers of Marxist and radical infiltrations of British higher education. In these two examples we can see the association of "radical" with both political extremes and potentially with violence. Revolutionary Marxism and neo-Fascism/neo-Nazism were seen as polar opposites on a political spectrum, with liberalism in the middle, and both were associated with political violence as a means of accomplishing their ends.*

*By the 1980s a new literature began to emerge which connected radicalism with terrorism and by the early 1990s it was being suggested that people who joined radical groups suffered from shared "psychological disorders". The lasting effect of this approach was to shift attention from the political message of the group to the behaviour and personality of individuals. In this way the politics was emptied out of the analysis of "radical" political action.*

*Following 9/11, and especially 7/7, much interest has focused on the "processes of becoming a terrorist." Two assumptions are implicit: that "radicalisation" precedes a terrorist act and that a "terrorist act" is the culmination of radicalisation. Books like John Horgan's *The Psychology of Terrorism* (2005) or Andrew Silke's *Terrorists, Victims and Society* (2003) explored how and why young men become involved in terrorism. However, the focus in these books, and many others, was exclusively on young Muslim men, their connection to jihadi groups, and their possible involvement in the Global War on Terror.*

*Since the middle of the last decade there has been renewed interest in the social processes involved in political recruitment and group activities, as developed in Marc Sageman's book *Understanding the Terrorist Network* (2004).*

*Since 2006, several writers have focused on the local aspects of political violence, and the connections between the global and the local in motivating and inspiring young people to become active.*

# Who was involved in the Study?

## The Expert Panels

Three panel discussions, hosted by the Finnish Youth Research Network, the Danish Institute for International Studies and Project EXIT in Stockholm raised issues and provoked discussion that would anticipate many of the findings and bring insights to the survey data from Central Europe. Experts participated from universities in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the UK. Police and law enforcement practitioners as well as representatives from the Danish, Finnish, Swedish Ministries of Justice, Immigration, Integration, and the Prison Service, and finally but perhaps most importantly, community workers, social workers, mental health practitioners, and NGO workers from Estonia to the Netherlands, across Finland, and from Denmark and Sweden all contributed to the conversations. In all nearly 200 people participated in four days of workshops.

## The Survey Groups

The survey was carried out in five cities and four countries of central Europe: Warsaw and Krakow in Poland; Budapest, Hungary; Brno, Czech Republic; Bratislava, Slovakia.

In each it engaged young people who are members of groups outside the social and political mainstream. Most do not believe they are represented by mainstream social and political institutions, but that they need to do all they can to change the world and their communities for the better, and for many this may mean the use of violence.

The respondents represent six different types of motivation: faith (Christian, Jewish, Muslim political activists); ethnic identity; left-wing activists (Anarchists or Revolutionary Socialists); right-wing activists (self-proclaimed neo-Nazis or neo-Fascists); environmental activists; social activists (particularly gay, feminist, and civil rights activists).

In all, just over 800 young activists were interviewed.

# Panel discussions: The Key Themes

The themes which emerged from panel discussions are central to the investigation: **What is violence? What is radicalisation? What makes young people join extremist groups? How do they exit? What is the relationship between gender and radicalisation?**

## 1 What is violence?

Violence would seem to be a very straight forward concept. However, the discussions in the Nordic workshops, proved that that was far from the case. The first workshop in Espoo, Finland, held in the context of two mass shootings in Finnish schools, dealt specifically with youth violence. Through the three panel discussions, it has been possible to identify three forms of violence affecting young people in Europe today.

### i. Violence as discourse

Groups have their own vocabularies and even grammars of violence. Young people who wish to join or participate in groups must master the language of the group.

The challenge of these discourses is the way in which they become ubiquitous, and normalise an element of violence into a community's everyday life. As one participant put it "words are very big when you are young, but they shape the way you see the world."

Talking about violence appears in many forms. A national hymn may include language about dying for what one holds dear. In this way, talking about violence can be a means of demonstrating group identification and loyalty.

### ii. Violence as a way of life

For many groups, violence is a way of life. In some groups, "violence is the initial phase you must go through to become a member, and that you must return to, to be active." Many young people associated with far-left and far-right groups, arrange fights and violent confrontations.

One expert suggested that this violence was "recreational" for these young people. There are even rules governing the types of weapons and technologies that can be used and there are moralities that go with them. However, as one participant pointed out, there is a distinction between these "voluntary encounters" of violence, and instances of attacking and being attacked on the street

In one pattern noted in Sweden, the far right begins by attacking gays, and then people of colour and immigrants. These kinds of attacks are generally physical confrontations, beatings or stabbings. However, occasionally they also include shootings. Left-wingers may attack neo-Nazis and political groups and institutions with whom they disagree.

In such cases participating in violence is the ritual of inclusion in the group. Violence is the performance of group membership, both reinforcing the connection to the group for the individual and demonstrating to others in the group that one is committed and reliable. It also shows that the group will support individuals; it demonstrates to many, otherwise marginalised, young people that "someone will stand up for you." Being defended in an attack, and defending others gives many insecure young people a sense of worth and purpose, the very basis of belonging.

### iii. Violence as spectacle

Since the events of 9-11 and 7-7, much attention has been given to trying to understand what leads up to a violence-spectacle, like a bombing or a mass shooting. The violence is seen as an exceptional state rather than the regular state of affairs.

The expert panels called for de-mystifying spectacular violence, and a closer focus on the connections between violence and modes of recruitment, retention and discipline across many different types of groups. Much attention has been given to the prevention of spectacular violence, at times at the expense of acknowledging the threat from the other forms.

*There is a fourth form of violence that was not discussed in the workshop panels: **spontaneous violence.** This form of violence can erupt in encounters between groups of youths that see one another as rivals, or more frequently when one young person believes that another has "disrespected" him. Rather than working through a conflict, particularly in the event of a perceived slight, many young people believe that they must demonstrate their strength of character through violence. Likewise, when challenged to demonstrate deference many young people, especially young men, believe that they must resort to violence lest their peers see them as weak.*

*Finally we must consider yet another form of violence: **symbolic violence.** The state is a very complex object and one that is often difficult to engage for many marginalised young people. Institutions become conflated with one another, disparate bodies come to be seen as synonymous or identical. Investment banks and fast food chains can be seen as equal parts of a global economy, untethered from local neighbourhoods and local concerns. The police are often the object for youthful rage, as they come to stand for all forms of authority, not merely juridical authority. Violence directed at these targets, especially those that are seen as synonymous with authority, are symbolic in nature; the act of violence is the act of rebellion itself.*

## 2 What is Radicalisation?

This question stimulated lively debate among the expert panels. On the one hand radicalisation can be seen as "the acceptance of the use of violent or undemocratic means to reach specific goals." However, in the light of the discussions on the nature of violence, this proposition is not so clear. Is there a difference between advocating violence as a life-style, as say with neo-Nazis or street gangs, and advocating spectacular violence to achieve a political end? Is there a difference between advocating a bombing rather than a stabbing?

This discussion also raised a number of questions regarding the distinction between conservative social or religious beliefs and "radical" political beliefs. People who articulate conservative religious positions are often confused with, or mistaken for, political extremists. It is possible that orthodox religious beliefs can coincide with extreme political positions, but they are not synonymous.

Radicalisation seems best understood not as the collection of particular positions or opinions on matters, but rather as a social process: "dependent on individuals and the specific background situations of all involved."

### 3 What makes young people join extremist groups?

Rather than there being one path toward radicalisation or extremism, the expert panels agreed on the value of recognising that there are many different types of people looking to join various social and political groups, each with their own motivations, hopes and goals:

Some people are outside of the political mainstream already, and come to be welcomed into more sophisticated social and political groups. Participation in the ritual practices of the group may lead to their adopting the values of the group as their own.

Others join social and political groups because they are searching for something; sometimes they do not even know what that is. Often it is a search to be a part of something. For many, especially those from working class or poorer backgrounds, belonging to a group gives them status, even if it is a “deviant” one. “You are not invisible; you can do things, gain mobility and interest,” said one researcher.

Others join these groups because of family traditions; either they follow other family members, including older siblings, into a group, or they do so to rupture family ties and escape traditions, rejecting other family choices.

With just these three approaches we can see a whole host of different types of people joining different groups for different reasons. The groups themselves need this variation, as some who join will be the new leaders and innovators, others will be loyal soldiers and followers, still others might become critics or even heretics who will contribute to the growth and change of a group.

Within a group there is a sense of camaraderie and security. The group understands; it also offers a way to understand the world. Many group members will have similar experiences. In some cases this is because the

experiences are very much the same, but in other cases the similarity arises from a shared way of understanding the world, and also a shared way of talking about those experiences and understandings. With many groups, the world is divided between those with the group and those against; identifying with the group means protecting it against all of its “enemies.”

Articulating grievances is another of the shared experiences within many groups. Identifying with the group’s sense of deprivation and experiences of injustice can often make meaning of their own sense of injustice. Just as feeling a member of the group means that some one will stand up for you, it is also important for the group to stand up for someone else. This transforms an individual “into an agent, not a victim.” Violence may become a currency of the sincerity or the lengths to which one would go to stand up for someone else.

### 4 How do they exit the group?

Surprisingly, people come and go from groups all of the time. One researcher stated “the fluctuation is enormous; only a small minority stays and it becomes the hard core who stay for a long time.” For these, however, leaving is often not easy. The longer someone has been in a group, the higher up they have been, the more responsibilities they have shouldered, the more difficult it is to leave.

For many within these groups, living with the ideology and the worldview of the group has meant abandoning their own critical thinking skills. Often it can be difficult to redevelop these skills.

To support those wishing to disengage from violent political and social groups, it is possible to point to some of the weaknesses of a group. For example, there may be double standards between the leadership and the rank and file, or hypocrisy between what is said and what is done in the name of group values.



To help young people exiting a group build new relationships and to develop new outlooks on life and the world, it is important that those who engage with them do not come across as preaching and judging. Panel members assisting in this process at the community level repeatedly stated that an important source of their organisational strength is that “they are not part of the government.” For them, whether a professional or a volunteer, the task is all about approach – “to see the person behind the opinions”.

### 5 What is the relationship between gender and radicalism?

There has long been an assumption that violent action was associated with men. However, many participants on the expert panels reported increases in the number of women participating in socially and politically radical groups.

One researcher reported that in the Netherlands, women are much more active and another observed that the white power movement in Sweden has been actively recruiting women for the past ten years, linking this with the group’s explicit goal of producing more “white” families. Other researchers agreed that they have empirical evidence to suggest something similar.

Another conclusion was that women are becoming a strategic resource. This appears also to be the case among many Islamist groups: “women are becoming a resource; increasingly more of the people who are active on-line are women.”

Indeed it appears that women are present in significant numbers in many of the more extreme social and political groups. “We should not be surprised because women have always been along in the movement. The question should be: why are there not more women?”



# The Survey

## 1 Who did we speak to?

Organised by the University of St Andrews (UK) in partnership with Higher Education institutes in each of the host countries and the British Council, our interviewers asked 100 questions of over 800 young people, aged 18-31, in Warsaw and Krakow in Poland; Budapest, Hungary; Brno, Czech Republic; Bratislava, Slovakia.

The survey engaged young people who pronounce themselves radical activists through their membership of a wide range of political or social groups, with agendas commonly considered outside the mainstream.

Of the 805 activists interviewed 376 (47%) were women.

Gender Participation by City *figure 2*

	Bratislava	Brno/Prague	Budapest	Krakow	Warsaw	Total
Participants	97	127 (110/17)	431	76	74	805 *
Female	47	54 (42/12)	201	39	35	376
	48.8%	42.5%	46.2%	52%	47.3%	46.4%
Male	33	73 (68/5)	230	35	39	410
	41.3%	57.4%	52.8%	46.7%	52.7%	50.7%

\* of the total 805 participating in the survey 19 declined to declare their gender (376+410=786)

With Whom did we Speak? *figure 1*

	Bratislava	Brno (Prague)*	Budapest	Krakow	Warsaw	Total
Far Left/ Radical Socialist	8	10 (0)	52	2	5	77
Earth Defence/Animal Rights	5	19 (6)	27	7	9	67 (6)
Gay/Feminists	16	17 (2)	84	16	13	146 (2)
Civil Rights	21	20 (0)	--	9	12	62
Ethnic Jewish	--	--	41	6	4	51
Roma	--	--	47	--	--	47
Religious	47	0 (9)	--	8	10	65 (9)
Baptists	--	--	48	--	--	48
Evangelicals	--	--	47	--	--	47
Ethnic	0	16 (0)	--	7	11	34
Ethnic Polish	--	--	--	11	2	13
Fidelitas	--	--	36	--	--	36
Jobbik	--	--	49	--	--	49
Far-Right / Neo-Nazi	--	28	--	10	8	46
Total	97	110 (17)	431	76	74	788 (17)

\* numbers in brackets are for Prague which are not included in the analysis but represent full interviews, giving a total of 805 participants.

## 2 What did we learn about them?

### They feel outside the mainstream

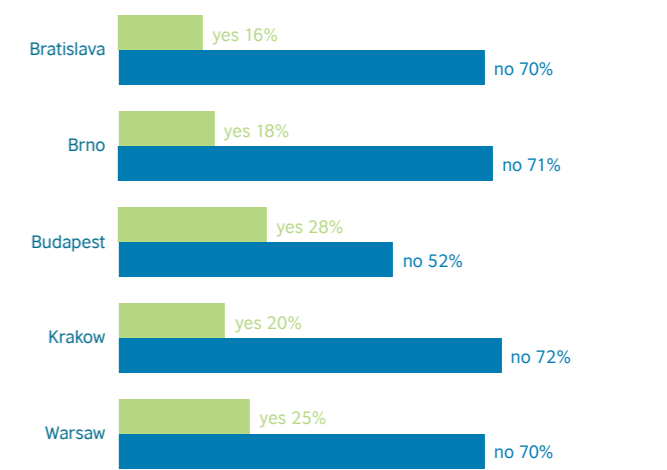
Less than 20% of the radical activists in Warsaw, Brno, Bratislava and Krakow agreed that they held mainstream political beliefs.

In fact half of all respondents felt that they must veil or hide their views. 62% in Krakow, 53% in Brno, 52% in Budapest, 50% in Bratislava, and 47% in Warsaw felt that the mainstream "was not ready for their position" and that is was necessary to "veil their opinions."

This feeling was more acute among certain groups. For example, 60% of all Radical Socialists, 83% of Ethnic Jewish, and 90% of Baptist activists felt that they need to veil their opinions and positions. → *figure 3*

### I hold mainstream social and political views. *figure 3*

Percentage of Respondents



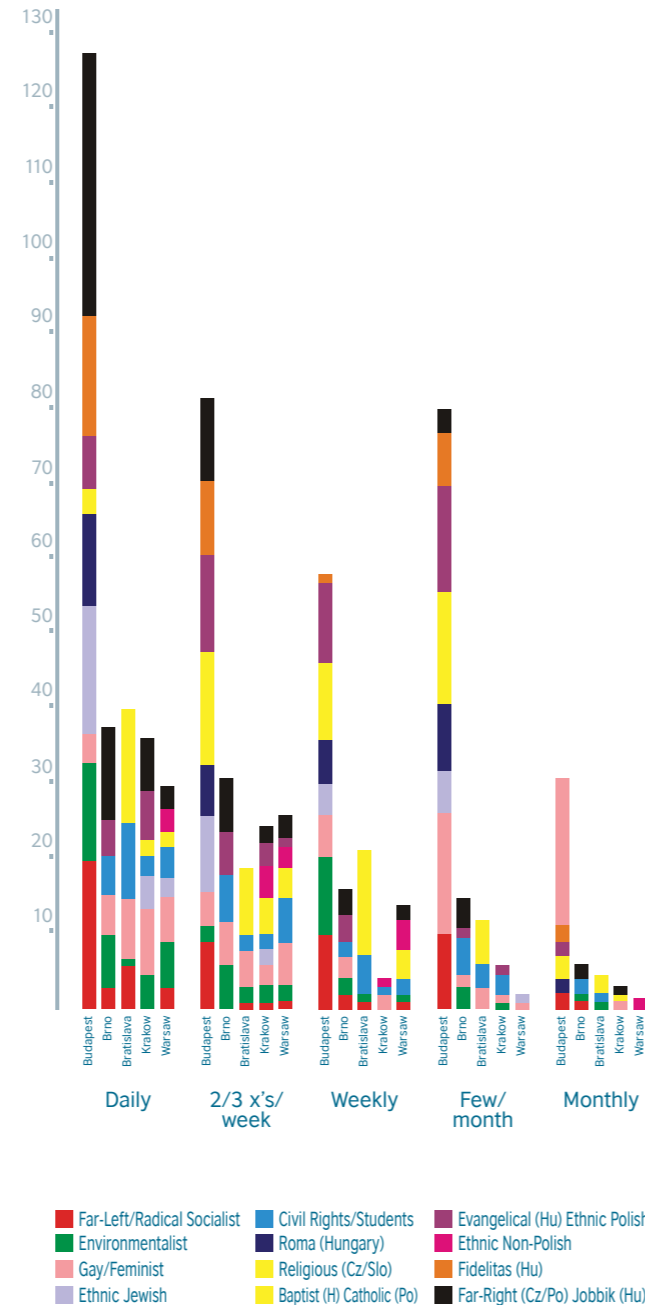
### They are highly motivated

The young radicals showed themselves as highly mobilized and active. 35% of all respondents stated that they participated in a political action, conversation or discussion daily. Nearly 60% engaged in a political action, conversation or discussion either daily or two to three times a week, and nearly three quarters of all respondents engaged in such activity at least once a week.

This is in stark contrast to the findings of political interest among the wider public in the countries in which the ESYM took place. For example, among the young radicals interviewed in Budapest, 62% responded that they participated in a political action, discussion or conversation at least on a weekly basis. In comparison, exactly the same proportion (62%) of the Hungarian citizens responding to the European Values Survey (EU, 2008) stated that they were either “not very interested” or “not at all interested” in politics. An equal lack of interest was shown in the general populations of Poland (60.3%) and the Czech Republic (57%). When a similar survey was conducted back in 2008, 51% of Slovaks surveyed stated that they were not very or not at all interested in politics.

The radical activists’ rates of participation are even more impressive in certain groups. In Brno, for example, engaging at least twice a week in political activity are 68% of the far-right and ‘Earth Defence’ environmental activists and 71% of gay and feminist activists. In Budapest, an astounding 71% of the far-right Jobbik activists engaged in activities daily, and a further 16% 2-3 times per week. 56% of the Radical Socialists, 66% of the 41 Ethnic Jewish activists, and 72% of the far-left and Fidelitas activists engaged in at least twice weekly activities. In Krakow, 90% of the 10 far-right, and both far-left activists interviewed engaged either daily or 2-3 times per week. In fact, over 80% of those interviewed in Krakow stated that they engage in a political activity daily or every other day. Comparative figures for Warsaw are 100% for far-right and 67% overall. → figure 4

How frequently do you discuss political or social issues? figure 4



### There is no single path to radicalism

It is clear that there is no single profile that identifies a young radical.

**The importance of belonging to a family that is politically active was found to vary** dramatically from group to group and place to place.

For example, in Budapest, 52% of the young people surveyed said “yes” they did come from an active household or family, and 48% did not. However very few (only 12%) of far-right Jobbik activists stated that they did **not** come from a political family or household. In contrast, 68% of gay rights activists come from households “not at all politically active.” In Brno only 10% felt they came from an active household or family, in Bratislava 26%, in Krakow 32% , whereas Warsaw was closer to Budapest in that almost half ( 47%) answered “yes” that they come from active homes.

### Independence, Education and Employment and class all play a role.

While the ESYM respondents were nearly evenly split between living on their own and still living with their parents, the level of education was found to be one significant factor linking the group. Virtually all (90%) of the respondents have completed secondary school. Of those who have not finished, many are currently enrolled.

Employment and Qualification figure 5

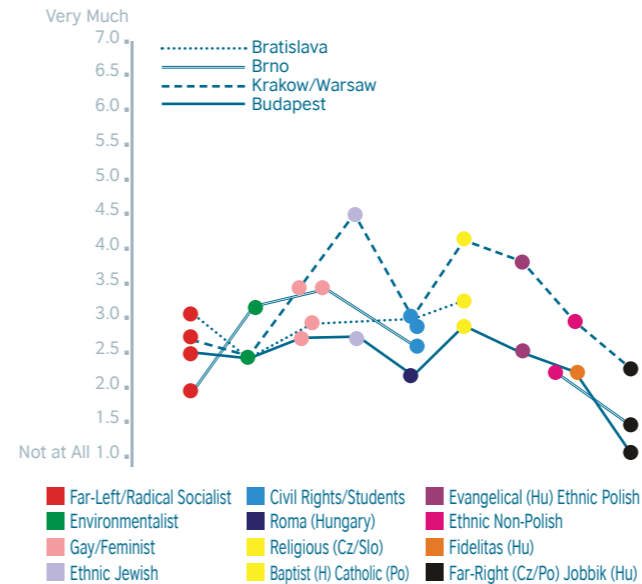
Do you have a paid job?	Bratislava	Brno (Prague)	Budapest	Krakow	Warsaw	Total
Yes, full time in line with my qualifications	17	22 (2)	256	10	16	323
Yes, part time in line with qualifications	16	10 (1)	16	4	8	55
Yes, full time but NOT in line with qualification	4	13 (2)	21	2	4	46
Yes, part time but NOT in line with qualification	9	9 (0)	13	3	9	43
Yes, but odd jobs; not one position	20	27 (0)	31	14	11	103
No, I do not have a job at the moment	20	22 (1)	91	39	25	198
Refuse to respond	10	3 (1)	2	3	0	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>106 (7)</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>787</b>

The figures in this table show that in spite of secondary school graduation, only 41% of respondents have full-time jobs that they feel are appropriate to their qualifications, 31% are under-employed, 25% have no job at all.

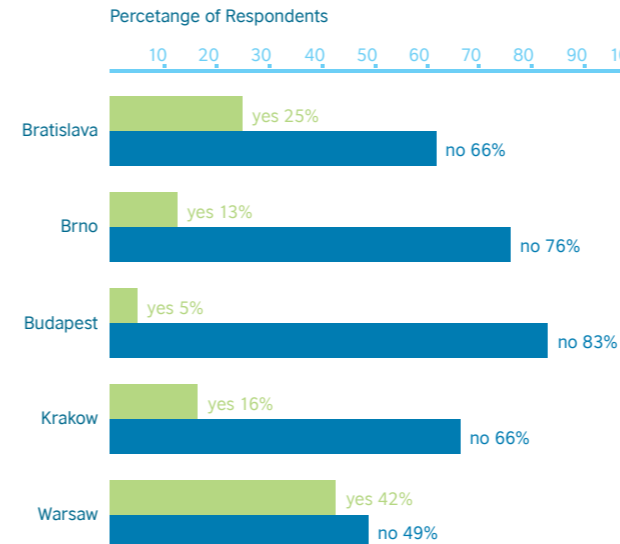
More than half (55%) of all the ESYM respondents identified themselves as belonging to the middle class, while another 28% identified as “working class” or poor. Because these terms have such deep political meanings, each class was defined in local terms and language. Even so, only certain of the groups had members who identified themselves as being other than middle class. Among activists from the far-right in all four countries, many respondents stated that they came from the working class or the poor.



### How well do you believe the System functions in your country? *figure 7*



### Do you believe the political system functions well? *figure 8*



# What the young radicals are telling us

## 1 “The system isn’t working”

None of the activists felt ‘the system’ functioned well. Across the board there was frustration with the organization of the political system and with representation within it. We asked them whether they believed the “system functioned” in their country. In Hungary 86% of the respondents stated that they did not think that the system functioned well, and a full 30% believed that the system did not function at all. Two-thirds of the young radicals in Krakow also thought that the system did not function well. Only 14% said they thought that it did function. In Brno, 76% believed that the system did not function, as did 67% in Bratislava, against 14% agreeing that it did work. Only in Warsaw did larger numbers believe that the system works: 42% believing that it does, to 48% believing it does not function well.

In each country the far-right political groups were the least satisfied with the system. In Brno all of the far-right and all of the ethnically motivated respondents gave the “system” lowest marks, as did all of the Jobbik supporters in Budapest, and all of the far-right in Krakow and Warsaw.

However lack of confidence in the system does not necessarily mean that they are unpatriotic. Many respondents from across the spectrum stated they were proud to live in their country. In both Budapest and Warsaw 57% of the respondents stated that they are proud to live in their country. In Bratislava and Krakow that number falls to just over a quarter at 26%, and in Brno only 13% of respondents said that they were proud to live in the Czech Republic. → *figures 7 & 8*

### Class Identification *figure 6*

	Bratislava	Brno (Prague)	Budapest	Krakow	Warsaw	Total
Poor	1	3 (1)	62	7	19	93
Working Class	6	12 (0)	62	17	15	112
Middle Class	68	62 (4)	225	28	22	409
Upper Classes	4	4 (1)	42	23	17	91
Don't Know	10	12 (2)	7	0	0	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>93 (8)</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>736</b>



## 2 “We don’t trust them”

The young people interviewed do not feel institutions – ranging from political parties in their home countries to the European Union and from the judicial system to the police – represent them or support their interests.

In all five cities more than 75% of respondents stated that they did not trust the government of the country in which they live. Similarly in all five cities, more than 70% of all respondents stated that they did not trust political parties. More respondents actually stated that they trusted the European Union more than their own government or many of its institutions.

They do not believe that their friends or members of the groups in which they are active feel they should support the system either.

16

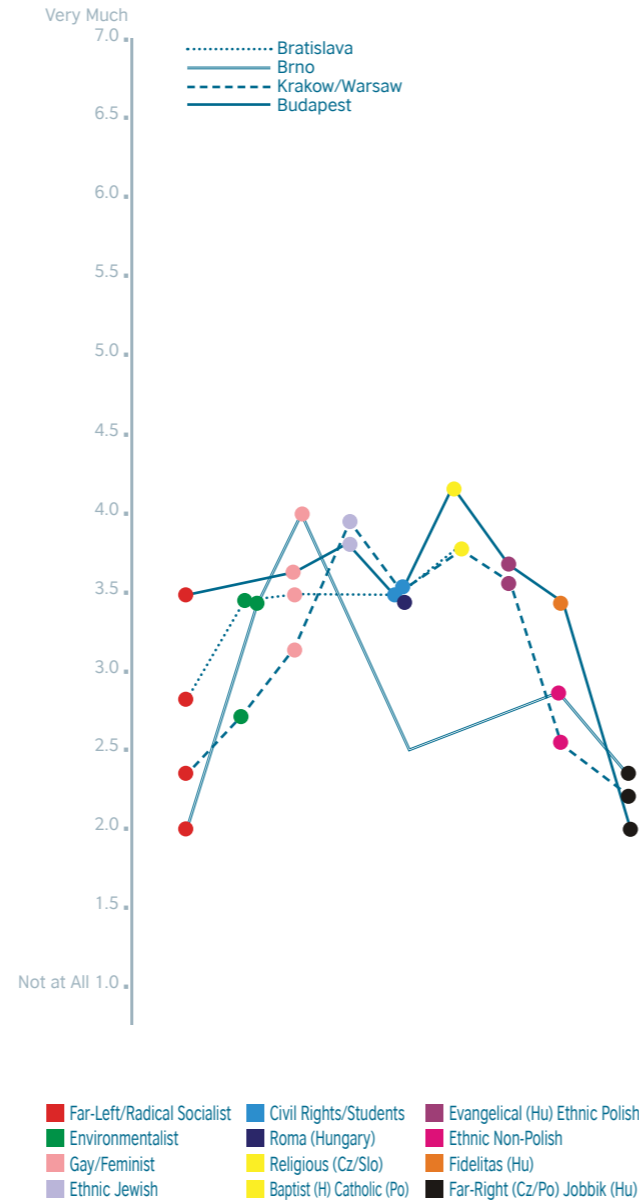
The young people do not believe the system of government represents their parents’ interests. 67% of respondents in Brno, 65% of respondents in Budapest and Bratislava, 50% in Warsaw and Krakow said that they did not believe their parents were represented in the system of government.

This distrust was particularly strong among certain groups. For example, in Budapest, not a single gay rights activist agreed that their parents were represented in the political system. Likewise only (17%) of the Roma activists, 12% of Radical Socialists, 7% of environmentalists and 2% of Ethnic Jewish activists agreed that they believed their parents are represented in the political system.

To establish the overall level of trust for the political institutions of the country, we asked each respondent to rate eleven institutions including political parties, the government, the school system, and the press.

Figure 9 presents the mean for each group’s aggregate level of trust. → *figure 9*

## How much do you trust the political institutions in your country? *figure 9*



## 3 “We’re hands on: from voting... to throwing stones”

Perhaps surprisingly, a very large majority of the radical activists surveyed said that they vote. In all five cities the respondents said that they thought voting and participating in the electoral process was extremely important. 85% of respondents in Warsaw, 84% in Bratislava, 80% in Krakow, 79% in Budapest, and 73% in Brno agreed that it was important to vote. → *figures 10 & 11*

However, the ESYM respondents also expressed a degree of ambivalence regarding what voting accomplishes. 72% of Bratislava respondents and 71% of those in Brno, 60% in Warsaw, 54% in Krakow and 35% in Budapest thought that voting only promotes the view of the mainstream.

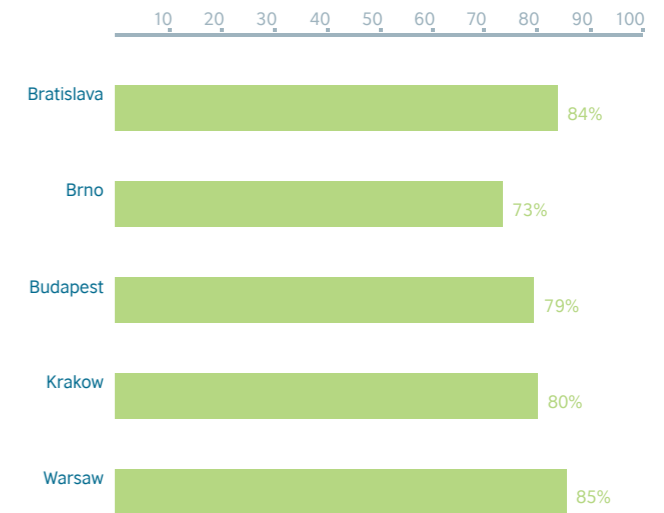
Only 4% of the total number of respondents stated that they would never vote. In Budapest the figure was 10%. Most of these were either Radical Socialists (11) or religiously motivated Baptists (16).

The radical activists also engage in a wide variety of activities beyond voting. They attend demonstrations, sign petitions and join boycotts. 80% of respondents in Warsaw and Krakow reported that they signed petitions. In Warsaw, only 14 of the 70 respondents had not participated in a lawful demonstration, and of these 12 said that they “might” participate in one. In Krakow, there appears to be rather less activity with almost half saying that they had not been on a lawful demonstration, and 6% stating that they would “never” do so. However, all of the left-wing activists, nearly all (94%) of the environmentalists and of the gay/feminist activists (90%) have attended legal demonstrations. In Brno (87%) stated that they had been involved in lawful political demonstration; the remainder claimed that they would consider engaging in lawful action.

In Budapest we found a split among the activists depending on their motivations. Among the far-right, 98% Jobbik supporters have been to a lawful demonstration,

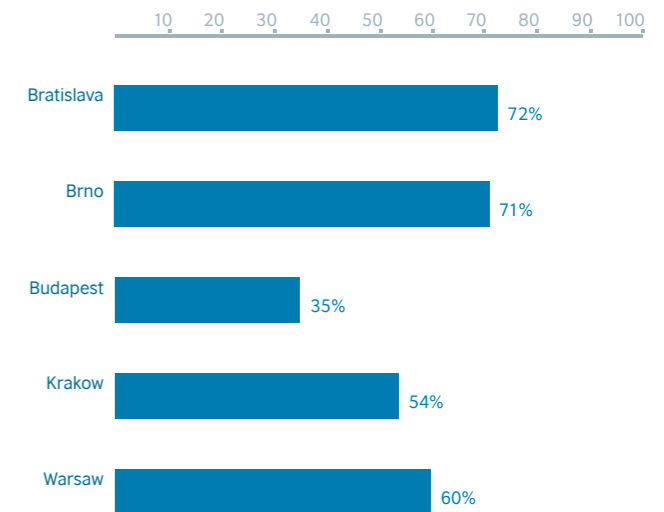
## I think it is important to vote and participate in the electoral process. *figure 10*

Percentage of Respondents who answered “Yes”.



## I think voting and elections only promote the views of the mainstream. *figure 11*

Percentage of Respondents who answered “Yes”.

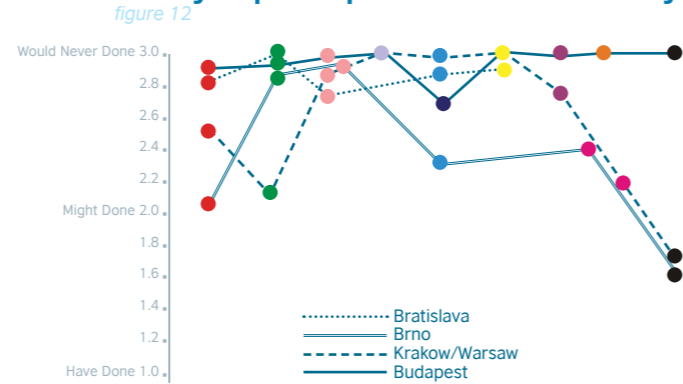


as have 63% of Radical Socialists and 51% of Ethnic Jewish activists. However, as in Brno and Bratislava, those with religious/ethical motivation tended to be less active, with the majority considering only that they “might do” lawful action. 55% of the gay rights supporters stated that they would “never” engage in a lawful demonstration. Likewise slightly less than half (48%) of both the Baptists and the Fidelitas supporters would “never” join a lawful demonstration.

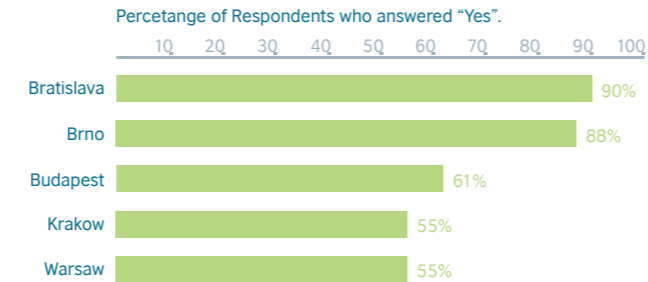
Many we interviewed have also engaged in illegal demonstrations, street blockades and building occupations, and many more say that they would consider joining in such activities. In Brno almost half (45%) of all the activists, and 63% of far-right activists said that they had participated in unlawful demonstrations. A further 42% said that they “might do so. Only 11% said they would “never” participate in an illegal demonstration. In Brno 24% had engaged in street blockades, and a further 56% would consider doing so. 19% had occupied a building or a factory, 14% of these coming from the far-right group. In Warsaw too we see a good deal of activity. 58% saying that they had participated in unlawful demonstrations, with a further 24% saying that they might do so. In Krakow the figures were a lower 27% and 45% respectively.

Some, although very few, relative to the number interviewed, have engaged in direct violence (such as throwing rocks either at other demonstrators or at the police.) As was consistent with the other self-reports of action, we find in Warsaw the left and right going at each other. Out of 72 respondents, 10 people reported that they had thrown rocks. Six were from the left of centre, with four environmentalists, and one left-wing and one gay/feminist reporting throwing rocks at other activists; the other four were right-wing activists. Among the 13 Warsaw respondents who stated that they “might” throw rocks at other activists, 10 came from the left of centre groups and 3 from the right-wing. → figure 12

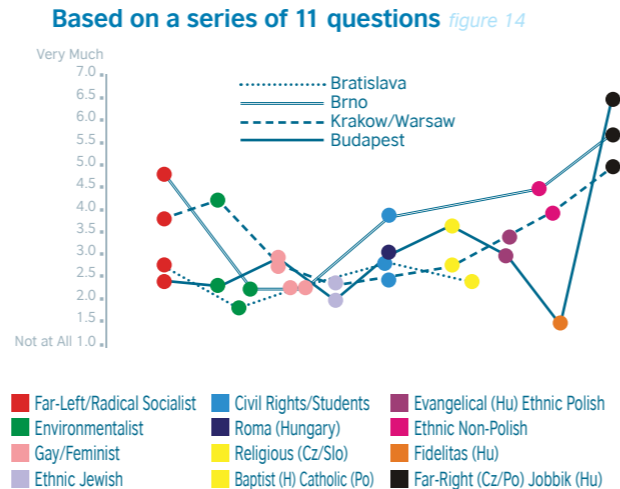
### Have you participated in violent activity?



### I encourage others to do more to change the world around them.



### Is Political Violence Justifiable?



- Far-Left/Radical Socialist
- Environmentalist
- Gay/Feminist
- Ethnic Jewish
- Civil Rights/Students
- Roma (Hungary)
- Religious (Cz/Slo)
- Baptist (H) Catholic (Po)
- Evangelical (Hu) Ethnic Polish
- Ethnic Non-Polish
- Fidelitas (Hu)
- Far-Right (Cz/Po) Jobbik (Hu)

In Krakow, of the seven who reported to have thrown rocks at other activists, all were from the far-right. Likewise of the eight that threw rocks at the police, five were from the far-right, two were Ethnic Poles or Polish Nationals, and the last was an environmentalist. It was also activists from the same three groups who stated they “might” throw rocks at the police. In Warsaw of the six who threw rocks at the police two each were from the environmentalists and the far-Right, one was ethnically (non-Polish) motivated, and one was from the Left. Among the 13 that would consider throwing rocks at the police, the break down followed the same patterns.

In Brno of the 19 respondents who stated that they had thrown rocks at other activists, 14 were from the far-right; nearly the same number (13) have exchanged missiles with the police. In Bratislava half of those who have thrown rocks at the police came from gay/feminist activists (5 of 10), and the same number have exchanged missiles with each other split 2 from the gay/feminist and 3 from the religiously motivated.

The young people we interviewed also indicated that they encourage others to do more politically. An astonishing 90% of activists in Brno, 88% in Bratislava, 61% in Budapest, 55% in Krakow, 45% in Warsaw, all reported that they “encourage others to do more to change the world around them.” In fact 82% in Brno and 74% in Bratislava agreed that doing something in public was doing something political. → figure 13

## 4 “Violence is justifiable”

The ESYM survey contained a significant number of questions that probed the young activists’ concept of violence, such as when they felt of the application of violence might be legitimate, and against whom they felt violence might legitimately be used. Activists from both the far-left and the far-right believed there were

a number of circumstances where violence might be legitimate. For example, when asked to what extent people who use violence against the government had reason to do so, 96% of those interviewed from the Hungarian far-right Jobbik group responded ‘a great deal’. 80% of far-right supporters in Brno also strongly believed this, giving a rating of 6 on a 7 point scale.

In both Polish cities too, while environmental activists and members of Ethnic Poles only ‘slightly agreed’, far-right supporters were stronger in their support for the view that violence against the government is justifiable.

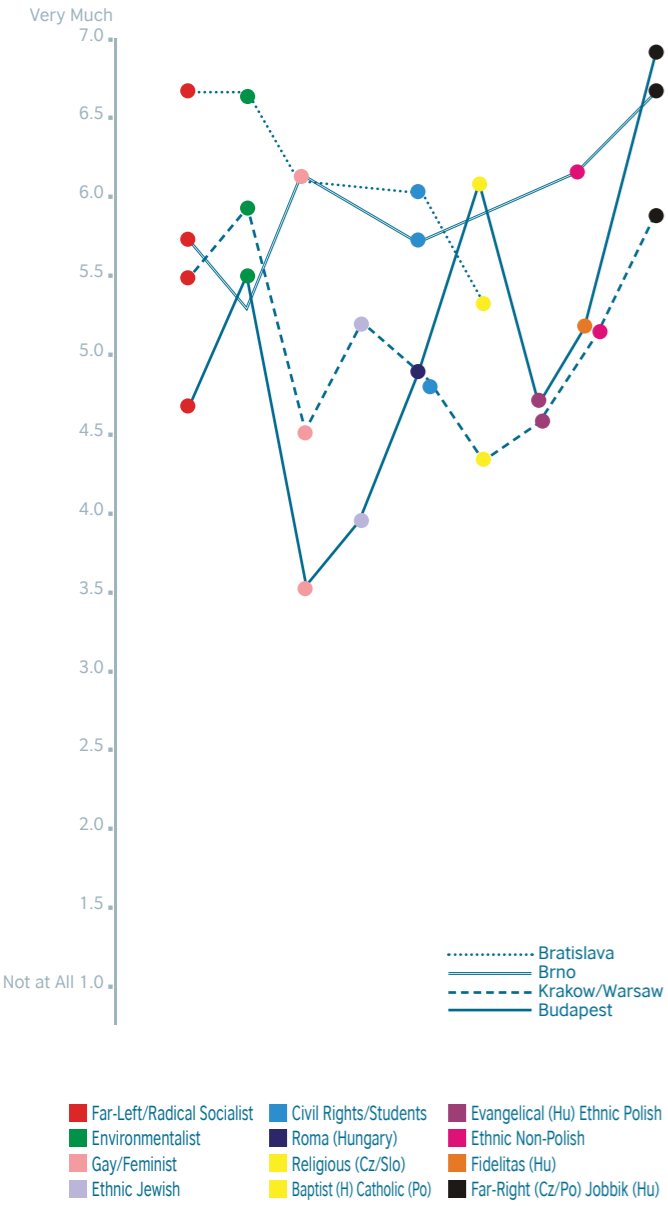
In all cities, members of the far-right believed that using physical force to resist the police can be justified. Again, the Jobbik supporters were most adamant, almost all agreeing ‘a great deal’ that such acts could be justified. The right-wing supporters from Brno also agreed with this proposition although slightly less strongly. However in Poland far right supporters like those from environmental and ethnic groups only ‘slightly agreed’.

In particular the right-wing activists thought it was legitimate to strike back at the police if they approached a demonstration in riot gear.

*It is important to remember that these endorsements of violence are for many young people a means of expressing their identity. Seeing violence as legitimate can be an expression of resistance, especially when there is the feeling of being discriminated against. Violence is seen as a legitimate means to change a government that is unresponsive to the group.*

Perhaps violence enters the respondents’ worldview more easily as at least half of all those interviewed believe that the world is becoming a more violent place (50% in Warsaw and Krakow, 67% in Bratislava and Brno, 70% in Budapest.) → figure 14

**To what extent do you believe it is incumbent upon citizens to change the government if they believe it is not doing its job?** *figure 15*



Large numbers of the respondents felt that it is incumbent on all citizens to do what they can and to take action against a government that it is not being responsive. 58% of all Budapest respondents (including all Jobbik supporters and all Baptist activists) agreed, as did 69% of all Krakow respondents and 64% of Warsaw respondents. Bratislava and Brno respondents were even more adamant, with 88% and 86% of respondents agreeing that “it is incumbent on citizens to change the government if they believe it is not doing its job.”

The graph on the left shows the intensity of many of the groups in this conviction. → *figure 15*

**5 “As for violence, women and men think the same... but may act differently “**

Of the 805 activists interviewed 376 (47%) were women.

In believing violence justifiable or legitimate, there was virtually no difference between men’s and women’s answers in all five cities. This finding is significant as, based on other research, it was not expected that women and men would be equally ready to recommend violence. It suggests that both sexes see the same connection between violence and politics.

Similarly, the survey showed nearly identical scores for men and women when asked if they had participated in, or would consider participating in “unlawful acts”. However, there was a considerable difference in the numbers of men and the numbers of women reporting that they had themselves taken part in acts of violence. While the definition of an act of violence used was very narrow (throwing rocks at other activists or at the police), only men reported that they had done so.

The graph on the right → *figure 16* shows the level of support according to gender for the proposition that violence can be justified divided by gender. As can be seen, the clustering of opinion is far more along group identity than by gender distinction. That is, the representations of the opinions of men and women from each group tend to cluster together regardless of gender. The graph also shows there is a good deal of agreement within groups across different political cultures.

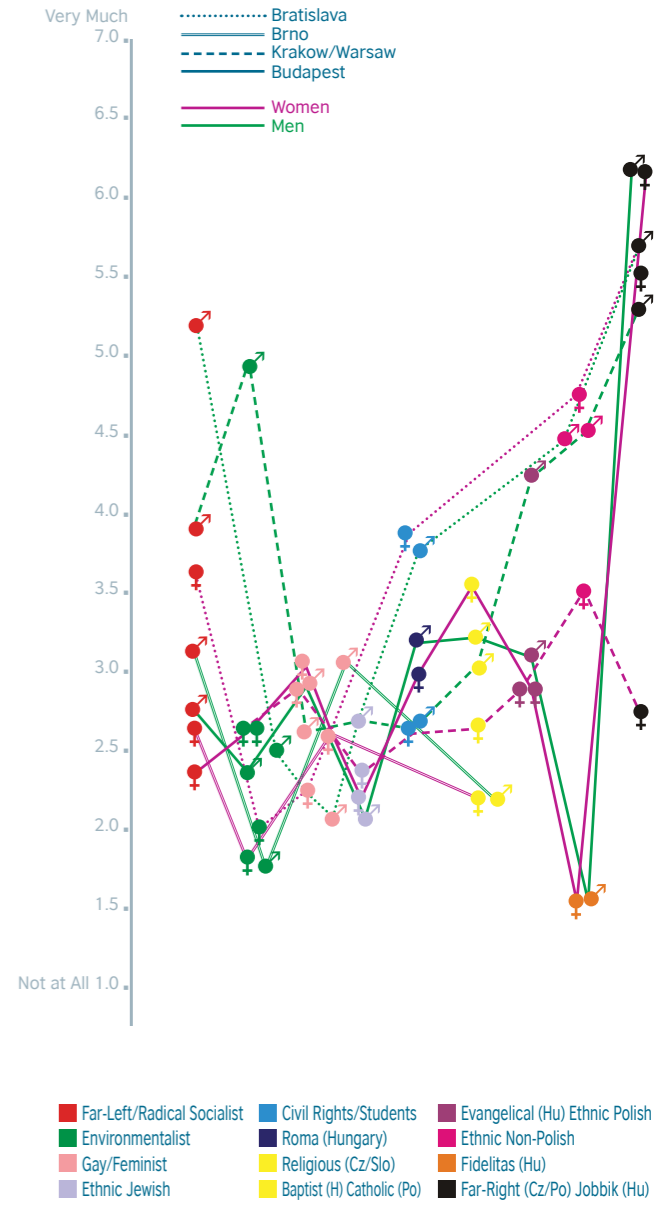
**6 “It’s unfair“**

A large number felt that the government did not work for them, and that it did too much for others. In Budapest, all Jobbik supporters agreed that the government does too much for other groups, as did all Baptist activists. In Poland all the ethnic Polish activists and 89% of the right-wing activists agreed. The same was found in Brno, where 88% of far-right and 93% of ethnic activists thought the government does too much for other groups. Only in Bratislava, where no right-wing activists were interviewed, do we find the vast majority (74%) of the respondents disagreeing with the proposition that the government does too much for other groups. In all of the other cities, because of the similarity of opinion among the far-right and ethnically motivated young people, more than half of all respondents agreed that they were unfairly treated.

The survey also showed that the more strongly the young activists believe that they are discriminated against, the more likely they are to believe that violence is legitimate in pursuing their own political goals, that violence against the police is justified and that it is incumbent on people to change a government that is not doing its job.

Although there is again a strong correlation between feeling their group is discriminated against and feeling that they personally are discriminated against, young extremists are also inclined to feel their group is discriminated against even when they themselves have not experienced such discrimination.

**Can violence be justified scale?**  
Results by Gender *figure 16*



## 7 “It’s the group that counts”

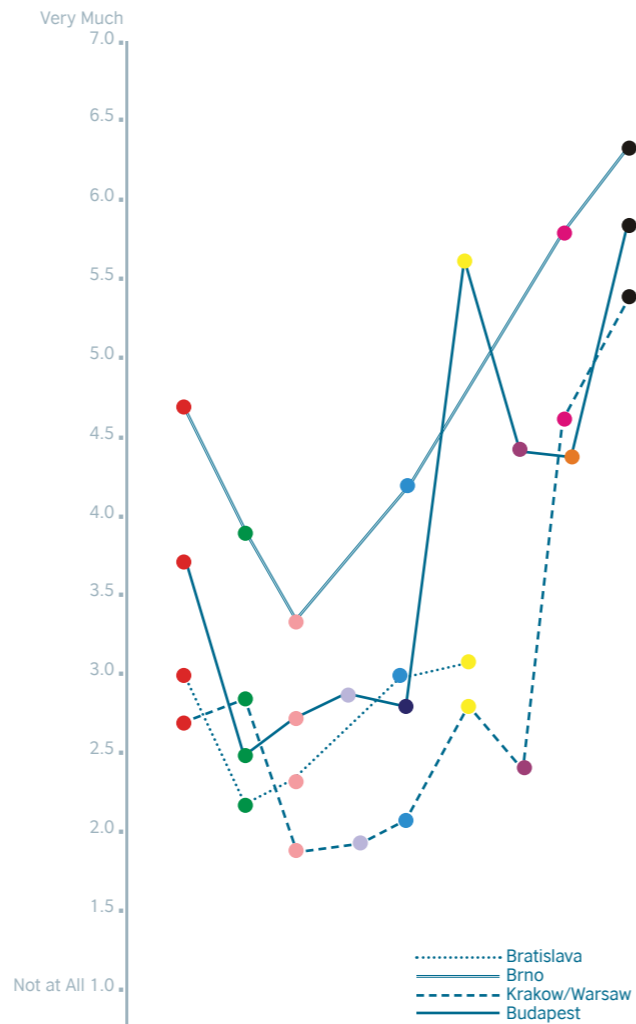
The survey showed there was a high level of agreement within each extremist group, especially groups with a political or environmental agenda. Members mostly consider those whom they share their ideas with as friends – although in many cases these friendships exist within large organised groups or associations.

Only among the gay activists did these friendships exist in less formal settings.

The survey results suggest that the members of the group join to find a sense of security, or ‘belonging’ rather than from a strong belief in a particular cause.

Once they become members of the group, however, they will often hold similar beliefs that they will articulate similarly. This is particularly true of those activists brought together by a particular political position as distinct from those of a social identity. For example, there was far greater variety of opinions held among gay activists, ethnic Jewish activists or Roma compared with the young people from the far-right, nationalist groups or environmentalists.

## Do you believe that the government does too much for other groups? figure 17



## 8 “The future’s bleak but I’m O.K.”

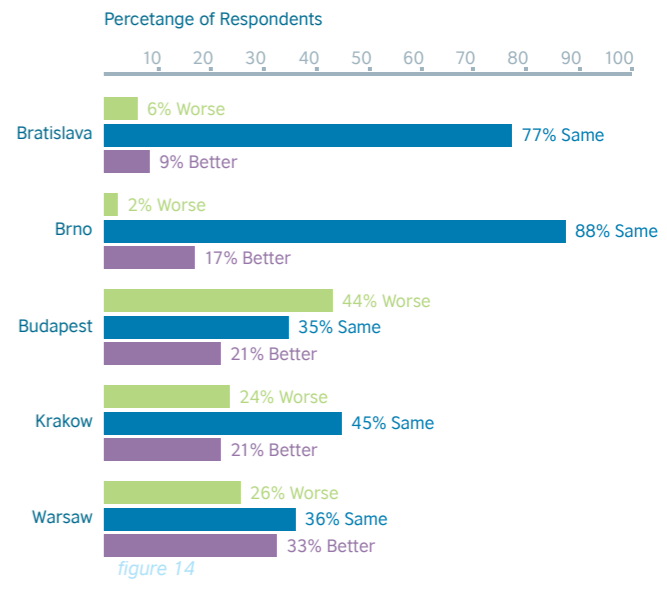
Across all the groups interviewed, in all the cities, both young men and young women extremists believed the future for their country, or even for their group, was largely negative.

Looking at their own lives, however, they also believed that their own future would either remain the same or be better. For example, in Bratislava and Brno when asked about the economic situation of their country over the next twelve months 72% thought that conditions would worsen and 80% that the employment situation would become worse. However only 14% thought their personal job situation would worsen and 6% that their personal life would worsen. Nearly two-thirds believed that their personal life would improve.

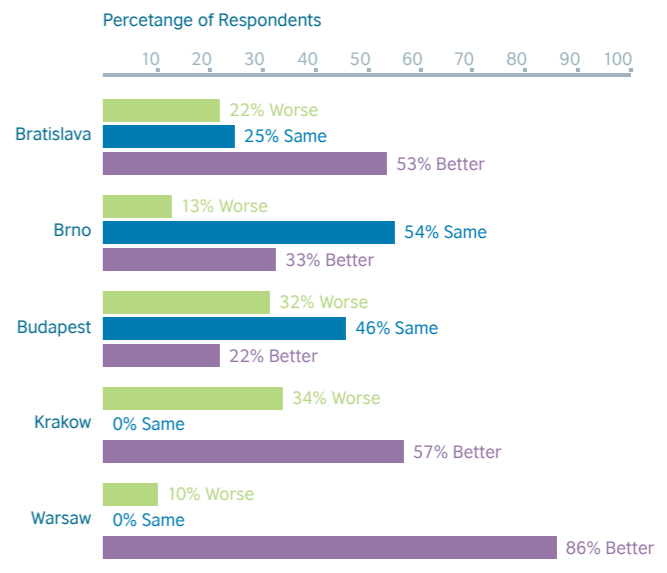
The same difference was found between expectations for their national and personal future in Poland and Budapest. In Hungary, the minority who thought their own lives (20%) and their personal job situation (14%) would worsen, was largely composed of Roma, Radical Socialists and gay rights activists. Even in the case of Bratislava, where 76% of young people reported that they thought their life situation in general would worsen over the next 12 months, they reported that they believed their personal job situation and household financial situation would improve. The Bratislava respondents were pessimistic about the economic and employment situation for the rest of the country, but for themselves they were positive. Similar patterns held for all five cities and across all groups of respondents. This suggests that these young people believe that they will have a better future than both their fellow citizens and, when asked, their fellow group members. These young people have the capability and confidence of a better future to be able to act on behalf of the rest of the group.

→ figures 18 & 19

## In the next 12 months, I believe the economic situation will be... figure 18



## In the next 12 months, I believe my financial situation will be... figure 19





## What do the ESYM results suggest?

- It is useful to make a distinction between radicalism and violence, and between illegal activities and potentially violent ones. Many activists are willing to consider some unlawful activities but this does not mean their intention is violent.
- It is important not just to look at individual incidents of violence but the larger social context in which violence takes place.
- Young people will seek out means to address a sense of social isolation. To whom they turn and to whom they listen largely rests on who takes young people seriously. Ignoring young people, or treating them as nuisances will have profound long-term effects on their attachment to their local communities. Conversely if young people are engaged and valued, on their own terms and not merely requiring the exclusive reproduction of mainstream norms, they will work to build a better neighbourhood, and contribute to strengthening the local social fabric.
- We are reminded that voters and communities look to see if they are represented in public institutions and if the institutions are working on their behalf. Once satisfied of this there is likely to be engagement in mainstream activities. Disregarding young people's social and political desires is, however, a sure way to create frustration and alienation, permitting an increase in violence.
- Young people who adopt radical positions can be agents for positive change. They are the people with talents, commitment and credibility in their community. Forming new partnerships with them, based on trust and respect can increase the success of mainstream initiatives.
- It is well worth engaging young people through the type of interdisciplinary cooperation experienced in the ESYM project. The combination of academics, with those from government, those with community connections, and those with personal experience in groups all help to better facilitate relationships in communities, direct dialogue and increased understanding.
- Every neighbourhood has its own needs, and there is no single solution to all social problems. Rather than "continually reinventing the wheel" cooperation and communication across Europe, relating successful programmes and approaches that contribute to the amelioration of social exclusion and violence can help initiate such programmes elsewhere sooner. In times of austerity and deep cuts, piloting programmes that have been tried elsewhere, can avoid the problems and stumbling blocks experienced in earlier initiatives, making the most of scarce resources, while also making the greatest impact on young people's lives.
- Often social intervention programmes to reduce violence focus solely on male participation. Yet if, as ESYM found, the women that young men encounter similarly advocate violence, or define their expectations of masculinity in general, or more importantly, of group identity in particular as being associated with violence, then social intervention programmes must address and engage both young men and young women.

# Active Citizens

## Globally connected, locally engaged

### What is it ?

**Active Citizens** is a British Council programme which offers people engaged in social action an opportunity to develop their capacity to achieve goals for their own community and to contribute to global development.

It is a programme that runs in regions as diverse as Europe, Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Its vision is a world in which people recognise their potential and exercise their responsibility to engage peaceably and effectively with others in the positive sustainable development of their communities at local and international level.

26 Its aim is to build trust and understanding between cultures by establishing an enduring global network of skilled community leaders, committed to learning together in addressing issues of local and global concern.

Globally, **Active Citizens** was launched in 2009. In Europe, it started in 2010, building on the foundations already set by the **Intercultural Navigators** project, which has created an international network of young and diverse influencers.

### How does it work?

#### Through Partnerships

The programme is run and funded via a network of over 100 third-sector (community and non-profit) partner organisations in 43 countries.

The British Council is the largest single partner - it funds the development and coordination of the programme, as well as many of the international exchange elements from the core grant it receives from the UK Government.

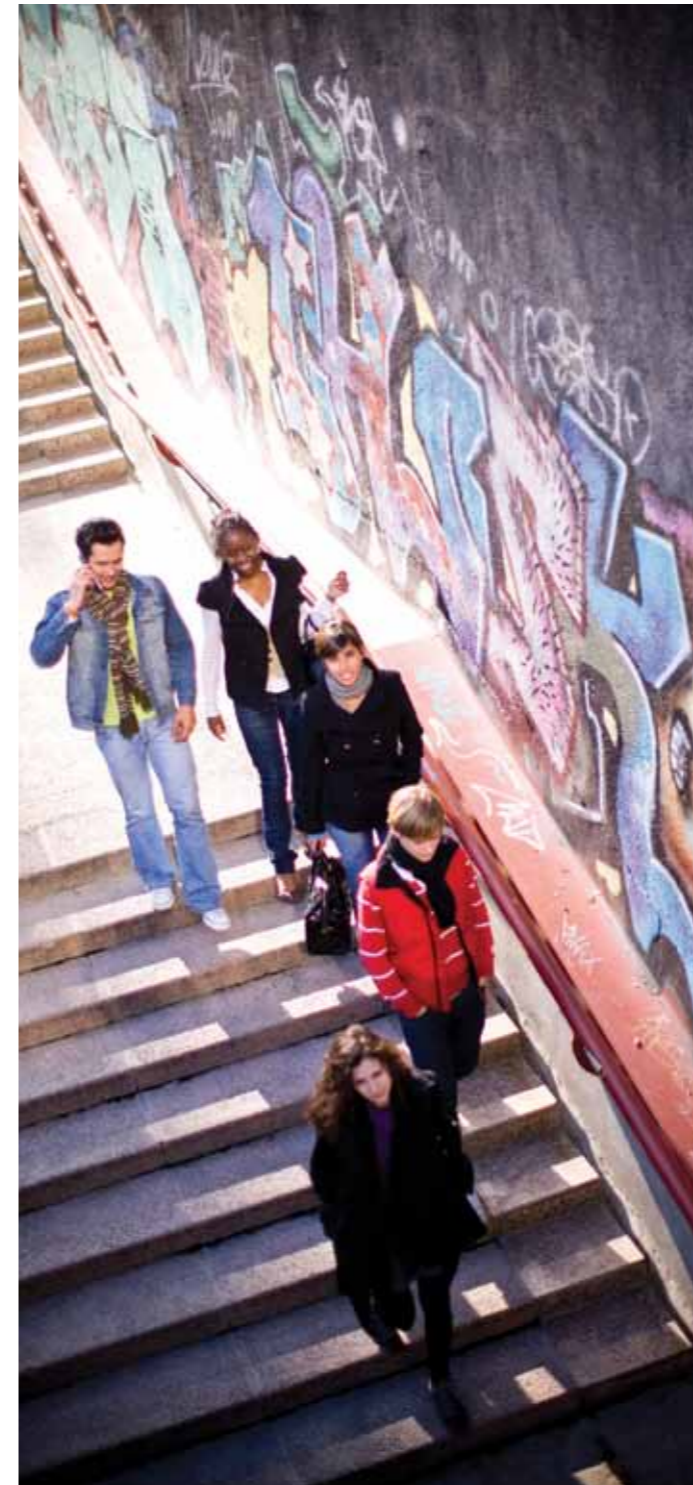
Local community partners provide significant contributions-in-kind particularly to local community training and social action. As civil society partners engaged in civic education and citizenship initiatives at community, national and international level, they also provide the participants for the programme.

#### Through training and action

**Active Citizens** works with leaders of youth, women's, cultural, recreational or religious groups, together with NGOs, the voluntary sector and local government workers, in developing their skills of leadership and their intercultural competences.

Major components of the programme are:

- ⦿ **Local training workshops** to build a common understanding of areas such as: local culture and identity, the local community, sustainable development, working effectively with difference, project planning and management, global citizenship, and global interdependency.
- ⦿ **Social Action Projects** planned and delivered by the participants promoting community cohesion and cross-community understanding.
- ⦿ **International exchanges and networking** to share best practice, develop new thinking, and strengthen partnerships.
- ⦿ **Research case studies and publications** on issues of concern in global citizenship, generating platforms for debate and dialogue.



### How is the UK involved?

Apart from British Council's global coordinating role, the programme contains key UK elements. In 2010-11 there are 23 participating communities. In Europe international exchanges involve these UK communities with their delivery partners including local voluntary sector infrastructure bodies, youth, faith, environmental and volunteering organisations, local government and UK wide bodies with local networks and consortiums of all of these. Communities have been selected for their diversity and ability to match up with their international counterparts. An especial focus is given to those communities which would not normally have a chance to engage in exchanges with other countries or which face particular challenges.

The **Active Citizens** programme aims to embed cultural relations in community activism and establish the British Council and the UK as a platform and resource in global citizenship. The British Council will work with its partners to produce high quality learning resources for community training, research on democratic engagement and seminar/conference opportunities for face to face engagement and learning.

#### What is the web resource?

<http://activecitizens.britishcouncil.org>

This network of civil society partners and community participants is supported with an ambitious on-line platform promoting the culture of participation and global citizenship in social development through social networking and training resources. It features the work of individual communities and their national development context.



For more information, access to the scholarly papers, and/or references for the materials contained in this précis, please contact the ESYM Principal Investigator:

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The British Council commissioned the European Study of Youth Mobilisation (ESYM) as part of its **Active Citizens** programme. The views expressed in ESYM report are those of the researchers and young people interviewed during the Study. The British Council does not necessarily agree with or endorse the views expressed within this Report.

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