

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA

FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

Registration number: 106007/D/2024/ 36122176491194116

**WOMEN ON THE SLOVAK POLITICAL SCENE AND
THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE YOUTH**

Diploma Thesis

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA
FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

**WOMEN ON THE SLOVAK POLITICAL SCENE AND
THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE YOUTH**
Diploma Thesis

Study Program: Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication

Field of Study: Philology

Consultation center: Department of Intercultural Communication

Tutor: PaedDr. Žaneta Pavlíková, PhD.

2024

Bc. Andrea Budayová

Affirmation

I hereby affirm that this thesis portrays my own true research and writing and that I have referenced all appropriate sources used.

Date:

.....

(Student's Signature)

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my tutor PaedDr. Žaneta Pavlíková, PhD. for her help and support throughout the process of researching and writing this diploma thesis, as well as for her advice and guidance.

Abstrakt

BUDAYOVÁ, Andrea: Ženy na slovenskej politickej scéne a ich vplyv na mládež. - Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave. Fakulta aplikovaných jazykov. – Školiteľ: PaedDr. Žaneta Pavlíková, PhD. – Bratislava: FAJ, 2024. (69) s.

Cieľom tejto diplomovej práce je zistiť, ako ženy na slovenskej politickej scéne ovplyvňujú mladých, s dôrazom na vplyv prezidentky Zuzany Čaputovej. V slovenskej politike je skutočne mnoho významných a vplyvných žien, ktoré tvoria jej neoddeliteľnú súčasť. Zuzana Čaputová sa stala prvou ženou, ktorá zastávala úrad prezidentky Slovenskej republiky a zároveň vo veku 45 rokov aj najmladším človekom, ktorý kedy zastával túto funkciu. Pred svojím zvolením do úradu prezidentky pracovala ako advokátka a občianska aktivistka. V tejto práci sme sa zamerali hlavne na prezidentku, no spomenuli sme samozrejme aj iné významné slovenské političky.

Práca je rozdelená na dve časti – teoretickú a empirickú. V teoretickej časti venujeme našu pozornosť hlavne pôsobeniu žien v politike, ako sa dostali k volebnému právu a prečo je ich účasť v tejto oblasti dôležitá. Táto časť taktiež popisuje významnosť žien v politike vo svete a na Slovensku a vplyv Zuzany Čaputovej. V empirickej časti je bližšie popísaný vzťah mladých ľudí k politike a dôležitosť EÚ a demokracie pre mladých Slovákov. Popisujeme tu taktiež cieľ a metodológiu nášho výskumu a vyhodnocujeme výsledky dotazníku, ktorý sme použili ako hlavný nástroj na získanie informácií.

Kľúčové slová:

Čaputová, mládež, politika, rodová rovnosť, vplyv

Abstract

BUDAYOVÁ, Andrea: Women on the Slovak political scene and their influence on the youth. - University of Economics in Bratislava. Faculty of Applied Languages. Department of Intercultural Communication. – Tutor: PaedDr. Žaneta Palíková, PhD. – Bratislava: FAJ, 2024. (69) p.

The aim of this thesis is to find out how women on the Slovak political scene influence young people, with an emphasis on the influence of President Zuzana Čaputová. There are indeed many important and influential women in Slovak politics who form an integral part of it. Zuzana Čaputová became the first woman to hold the office of President of the Slovak Republic and, at the age of 45, the youngest person ever to hold this office. Prior to her election to the office of President, she worked as a lawyer and civic activist. In this paper we have focused mainly on her, but of course we have also mentioned other prominent Slovak women politicians.

The thesis is divided into two parts - theoretical and empirical. In the theoretical part we mainly focus our attention on women in politics, how they got the right to vote and why their participation is important. This part also describes the importance of women in politics in the world and in Slovakia and the influence of Zuzana Čaputová. The empirical part describes in more detail the relationship of young people to politics and the importance of the EU and democracy for young Slovaks. It also describes the aim and methodology of our research and evaluates the results of the questionnaire we used as the main instrument for gathering information.

Key words:

Čaputová, youth, politics, gender equality, influence

CONTENT	p.
Introduction.....	9
1 THEORETICAL PART	11
1.1 Impact of women in politics	14
1.2 Women’s voting right	15
1.3 Women in politics in the world	17
1.4 Women in politics in SR	19
1.5 Zuzana Čaputová as a role model for the youth.....	22
2 EMPIRICAL PART	27
2.1 Young people’s perception and interest in politics.....	27
2.2 Importance of membership in EU and what young people think about it.....	29
2.3 Aims and methodology of the research.....	32
2.4 Evaluation of the questionnaire.....	34
Conclusion	59
Resumé	62
Bibliography	67

List of tables and graphs

Graph N. 1.....	12
Graph N. 2.....	34
Graph N. 3.....	34
Graph N. 4.....	35
Graph N. 5.....	36
Graph N. 6.....	36
Graph N. 7.....	39
Graph N. 8.....	41
Graph N. 9.....	41
Graph N. 10.....	43
Graph N. 11.....	44
Graph N. 12.....	48
Graph N. 13.....	50
Graph N. 14.....	51
Graph N. 15.....	52

Introduction

In the realm of politics, the influence of women has been a topic of increasing significance, with a growing recognition of the unique perspectives and contributions they bring to the table. In this thesis, we will focus on women in Slovak politics and their influence on young people. Our attention will be aimed mainly at the President of the Slovak Republic Zuzana Čaputová, but we will also mention other influential Slovak women politicians. This diploma thesis aims to explore the impact of women on the Slovak political scene and how this influence resonates with the youth population. Understanding the dynamics of this relationship is crucial for shaping the future of political engagement and decision-making processes in Slovakia.

The objective of this thesis is to delve into the intricate connections between women in Slovak politics and the younger generation. Through an examination of how female politicians shape the viewpoints and attitudes of young individuals towards politics, we can acquire a valuable understanding of the significance of gender diversity in political representation and its effect on societal progress.

We have used several methodologies in our work. To obtain important information for the theoretical part we used research. Subsequently, we used analysis to analyze our topic in more detail, to examine the information that are really necessary for our work. We used a questionnaire to obtain the necessary information and the opinion of young people, which we later evaluated. This methodological approach not only allowed for the collection of rich and nuanced data but also facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the relationship between women in Slovak politics and their influence on the youth demographic.

The theoretical part of this thesis will provide a comprehensive overview of various aspects related to women in politics. It will explore the historical struggle for women's voting rights, the representation of women in politics on a global scale, the specific context of women in politics in Slovakia, and a detailed analysis of the political career of Zuzana Čaputová, the first female President of Slovakia. By examining these dimensions, we aim to contextualize the role of women in shaping political narratives and influencing the youth population.

Transitioning to the empirical part of the thesis, the focus will shift toward understanding the perceptions of young people towards politics in Slovakia, female politicians, and Zuzana Čaputová as president of this country. By exploring their attitudes,

beliefs, and engagement with political processes, we can gain insights into how women in politics impact the youth. The thesis also emphasizes the significance of EU membership for Slovakia's youth, with a focus on Zuzana Čaputová's views. Čaputová is a leading Slovak politician who advocates for the advantages of EU membership, particularly in terms of future and political outlook. Furthermore, an evaluation of the questionnaire will also serve us to confirm or refute the hypotheses we set at the beginning.

Through this comprehensive exploration of the influence of women on the Slovak political scene on the youth population, this thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between gender, politics, and generational perspectives. By shedding light on these dynamics, we hope to pave the way for informed discussions and policy recommendations that promote gender equality and inclusive political representation in Slovakia.

1 THEORETICAL PART

“No country can ever flourish if it stifles its women and deprives itself of the contribution of half of its citizens” – Michelle Obama

Throughout the years, it is visible that there is a growing acknowledgement of the underutilized potential and skills of women and their leadership abilities. Over the past twenty years, the proportion of women in national parliaments worldwide has gradually risen from 11.8 per cent in 1998 to 17.8 per cent in 2008 and further to 23.5 per cent in 2018. Certain regions have experienced notably significant increases, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, where the percentage of women in parliaments has increased from 11 to 23.6 per cent in the last two decades, and the Arab States region, which has seen a rise from 3.1 to 17.5 per cent. Despite these improvements, global female representation still falls below the commonly recognized 30 percent threshold considered necessary for achieving a "critical mass" – a substantial minority of legislators with significant influence, rather than just a token few individuals. This level of representation also falls short of reflecting women's status as half of the world's population.

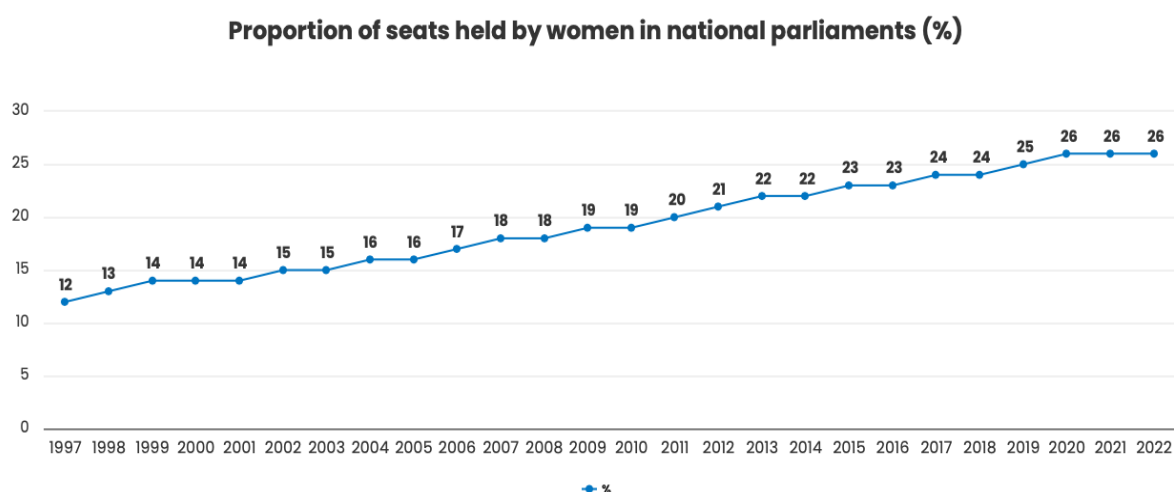
Governments and parliaments did not promise to advance gender equality in all spheres of political life until the 1985 Nairobi World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Ten years later, the Beijing Plan of Action, which was endorsed at the Fourth World Conference on Women, further codified the measures. During this summit, violence against women was also recognized as a barrier to women's growth that needed special attention.

Since the Beijing Plan of Action, there has been a major focus on women's representation in parliaments and their influence on political decision-making. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which has conducted research and gathered data on women in parliaments, has actively supported United Nations efforts to ensure women's complete involvement in politics. While the IPU has expressed its commitment multiple times, its most notable declaration was made in 1992:

In September 1997, the IPU (International Parliamentary Union) approved the Universal Declaration on Democracy, which emphasized the importance of authentic collaboration between men and women in a democratic society. This collaboration should

acknowledge and embrace differences, while men and women should work together as equals, supporting and enhancing each other. The IPU considers this principle as fundamental to their work, ensuring that gender partnership is a central aspect of all their activities.

IPU has been actively engaged in promoting gender equality and partnership by supporting men and women in their parliamentary roles and advocating for the advancement of women in political decision-making. Moreover, IPU has also taken measures to mobilize parliaments in order to address the issue of violence against women and work towards its eradication. The organization acknowledges that violence against women is a grave form of discrimination and a violation of their fundamental human rights, making it a concern that should be addressed by both men and women. These initiatives were undertaken with the objective of reinforcing parliamentary democracy and necessitated the involvement of political leaders from both genders to bring about the necessary changes.



Graph Nr. 1: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments in % between years 1997 and 2022 according to The World Bank Data

On Graph Nr. 1, we can see what percentage of seats in national parliaments are represented by women from 1997 until 2022. In 1997 it was only 12% percent; this number has been growing slowly and in 2022 it was 26%.

The positive outcome of the global focus on the importance of women's involvement in politics is encouraging. However, a significant portion of parliaments, about a quarter of them, still have less than 10 per cent female participation. Although progress is being made, it is happening slowly and not uniformly. The hindrances of prejudice, societal

beliefs about women's roles, limited financial resources, and institutional insensitivity persist, preventing women from accessing and participating in politics. Undoubtedly, this situation highlights the necessity for more efforts and actions to address the issue.

1.1 Impact of women in politics

The participation of women in politics has a meaningful impact. Women contribute unique perspectives and abilities to politics, which helps shape the political agenda. The presence of women in parliaments has brought about positive changes, including improved language and behaviour, a different prioritization of issues and policies, increased gender sensitivity in all aspects of governance, including budgeting, and the introduction of new laws and amendments.

The involvement of women in government decision-making has significantly increased the political visibility of women's rights globally. While women are a diverse group, they tend to support each other and have played a crucial role in highlighting women's issues and concerns in the parliamentary agenda. One major concern that women have brought attention to is violence against women. Although not exclusively an issue affecting women, it is notable that there has been a growing focus on eradicating all forms of violence against women.

Whether it is through passing laws, overseeing government actions, or changing societal mindsets, women's involvement in political decision-making empowers us and strengthens our democratic institutions. The potential that can be achieved when parliaments truly embody equality, where the voices of men and women are equally respected and valued, and where both genders work together to bring an end to violence against women is remarkable.

Nevertheless, achieving gender equality in politics goes beyond simply having an equal number of men and women in leadership positions. It requires ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds have equal access to these positions and can actively participate and advocate for women's interests. This goal can be achieved by creating an inclusive work environment, promoting equal access to leadership roles, and addressing socio-economic barriers to political participation. The low representation of women in politics is not solely due to their lack of interest or qualifications, but rather the external conditions that hinder their involvement. Women face numerous obstacles that their equally capable male counterparts do not, including societal, personal, and institutional barriers. These barriers are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Institutional factors, such as party structures, candidate recruitment methods, and electoral systems, also impact the representation of women in politics.

1.2 Women's voting right

The choices made by women tend to differ from those made by men, although the reasons behind these differences are not fully understood. However, there is increasing evidence that suggests women prioritize the well-being of children and the provision of public goods to a greater extent. These gender differences have led many to see the promotion of gender equality as a powerful tool for human development in impoverished nations, rather than just a significant goal in itself. In particular, empowering women is believed to lead to increased investments in children.

From a historical perspective, the idea of gender equality was introduced during the French Revolution, but it wasn't until the mid-19th century that efforts to remove barriers to equality for women began. Over the next fifty years, England saw a fight for voting rights, but women were still excluded from participating. Only when suffragettes realized that women were entitled to the same universal suffrage and human rights as men, the progress was made. Suffragettes were advocates for women's rights, criticized, and accused of losing their femininity.

In the late 19th century, women in several countries gained the right to vote. New Zealand, in 1893, was the first self-governing country to grant voting rights to all women over the age of 21 although women were not allowed to run for election until 1919. In 1920, women in Czechoslovakia gained the right to vote before countries like France and Great Britain. Women's protests in the USA, Britain, and France also played a role in this change. Czechoslovakia's transition to a new democratic state after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy allowed women to obtain voting rights.

At that time, not only women, but all citizens of this country gained the right to vote, because before it was limited by the electoral censor. This implies that only individuals who could demonstrate ownership of property were eligible to vote. One year prior to obtaining the right to vote, women in Czechoslovakia were able to pursue higher education and employment opportunities. Before this, societal expectations dictated that women should marry young and rely on their husbands for support. Despite the first Czechoslovak Republic permitting young women to work, there was still an expectation that upon marriage, a woman would prioritize her family responsibilities and vacate her position for another unmarried woman.

In 1920, 15 women were elected in Czechoslovakia, with two representing the Slovak part. One of them, hailing from Banská Štiavnica and working in a tobacco factory, successfully put an end to the practice of intermittent breastfeeding, a role held by nursing mothers since medieval times. This involved breastfeeding not only their own children but also those of wealthier women who could pay for the service. While medieval breastfeeding women received benefits like food, this was no longer the case in 1920. Despite being paid for their services, it often resulted in their own children being undernourished. Another elected woman, Anna Chlebounová, a mother of six, represented the common people.

However, the first Slovak women politicians appeared already in the times when Slovakia was part of Hungary and later in Czecho-Slovakia. One of the first prominent female politicians here, was Milada Horáková, who was active between the World Wars and during the communist regime. Horáková was involved in politics as a member of the Czechoslovak People's Party and later became one of the leaders of the Democratic Party, which sought to democratise the regime. Horáková was executed in 1950 for her active participation in the resistance against the communist regime.

Another important figure was Alžbeta Mrázová-Filipčíková, who was an active member of the Slovak national movement in the 19th century. Mrázová-Filipčíková fought for women's rights and their education, and actively participated in cultural and political activities during the period of Slovak national awakening.

These women were among the first political personalities in Slovakia who were involved in the struggle for political rights and the democratisation of society. Their efforts and courage opened the way for future generations of Slovak women politicians.

1.3 Women in politics in the world

The active involvement and leadership of women in political and public spheres play a vital role in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Nevertheless, the goal of achieving gender equality in political participation still remains a significant challenge.

As of January 10, 2024, there are 26 countries with a total of 28 women serving as Heads of State and/or Government. However, at the current pace, it will take approximately 130 years to achieve gender equality in the highest positions of power. Out of the 15 countries with a woman Head of State, and 16 countries with a woman Head of Government, data compiled by UN Women as of January 1, 2023, shows that women make up 22.8% of Cabinet members leading Ministries and policy areas. Only 13 countries have achieved gender parity, with women holding 50% or more of the Cabinet Minister positions in policy areas. The most common portfolios held by women Cabinet Ministers include women and gender equality, family and children affairs, social inclusion and development, social protection and social security, and indigenous and minority affairs.

At the current pace of advancement, it is projected that achieving gender parity in national legislative bodies will not occur until 2063. In terms of women's representation in national parliaments, Latin America and the Caribbean have 36 per cent female parliamentary seats, while Europe and Northern America have 32 per cent. Sub-Saharan Africa follows with 26 per cent, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia with 22 per cent, Oceania with 20 per cent, Central and Southern Asia with 19 per cent, and Northern Africa and Western Asia with 18 per cent of women Members of Parliament.

The internationally agreed objective, as stated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, is to achieve balanced political participation and power-sharing between women and men in decision-making. While most countries have not yet attained gender parity, the implementation of gender quotas has significantly contributed to progress. In countries with mandated candidate quotas, there is a five-percentage point increase in women's representation in parliaments and a seven-percentage point increase in local government compared to countries without such legislation. There is growing evidence that women's leadership in political decision-making processes has a positive impact. For instance, research conducted in India revealed that areas with women-led councils had 62 per cent more drinking water projects compared to those led by men. In Norway, a direct

correlation was found between the presence of women in municipal councils and improved childcare coverage. Women demonstrate political leadership by collaborating across party lines through parliamentary women's caucuses, even in challenging political environments. They also advocate for gender equality issues such as combating gender-based violence, implementing parental leave and childcare policies, ensuring fair pensions, enacting gender equality laws, and reforming electoral systems.

1.4 Women in politics in SR

On November 20th, 2014, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the National Strategy for Gender Equality for the period of 2014-2019, along with the corresponding Action Plan. These two documents are closely linked and provide a comprehensive framework for promoting gender equality in practical terms. The Strategy and Action Plan are based on key strategic documents of the European Union and the Council of Europe, which require member states to implement affirmative actions to achieve gender equality.

The judiciary sector exhibits the highest level of women's representation, with women outnumbering men by approximately 70%. In the Supreme Court, nearly 60% of judges are female, including the chairwoman and vice-chairwoman. The Slovak Constitutional Court also surpassed the third representation threshold, with women accounting for 36.4% in 2018. Additionally, women hold leadership positions in these courts, with a female presiding over each. Furthermore, a woman serves as the head of an independent body in the Slovak Republic responsible for safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms as the Public Defender of Rights, as well as representing the Slovak Republic before the European Court of Human Rights.

The election of Slovakia's first female president in 2019 was considered a significant step towards achieving gender equality. However, the question arises as to why there is a notable scarcity of women in the country's recent government. During the lead-up to Slovakia's recent general election, a particular matter emerged as a representation of the country's struggle for gender equality: the Istanbul Convention. This international treaty focuses on addressing violence against women and became a significant topic of discussion among candidates during their campaigns. Politicians from conservative and far-right parties, predominantly male, strongly opposed the convention, arguing that it imposed a particular ideology that blurred gender distinctions and threatened traditional family values. The MEPs also noticed the situation in Slovakia, where the parliament refused to ratify the convention in 2020 and requested that the national authorities fight against misinformation about the Istanbul Convention. Efforts were made by women activists and politicians, including President Zuzana Čaputová, to refocus the discussion on the real issue at hand, which is domestic abuse and various forms of violence based on gender.

The statistics mentioned above, combined with the limited representation of women in managerial and board positions within companies, contribute to Slovakia's ranking as the 24th out of 27 EU countries in the most recent Gender Equality Index published by the European Institute for Gender Equality. Lower ranking has Hungary, Romania and Greece, whereas top three are Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands (The EU Gender Equality Index, 2022).

President Čaputová is not the first Slovak woman to have a significant impact in high-level politics. In 2010, Iveta Radičová, a sociology professor, led a right-wing coalition government, although her tenure was short-lived. She resigned when her coalition failed to reach a consensus on an EU bailout plan for Greece in 2012. Before that in 2010, Iveta Radičová made history by becoming Slovakia's first female prime minister, a position she held until her government collapsed in 2011. Prior to her political career, Radičová was known for her activism and academic background. She initially entered the political arena as a minister in 2002, leveraging her expertise in the field. Later, in 2006, she joined partisan politics and secured a seat in parliament as an independent candidate on a party list. Eventually, she became a member of the centre-right SDKU-DS party.

In 2009, Radičová ran for the presidency and, although she did not win, she advanced to the second round with the second highest number of votes. In 2010, she assumed the role of electoral leader for her party and became the prime minister when her party was tasked with forming the government. During her tenure, Radičová prioritized anti-corruption measures, government transparency, and addressing the lingering effects of the 2008-2009 economic crisis in Slovakia. While she did not specifically campaign as a "women's candidate" or emphasize gender, she also focused on labour code reform, unemployment, and other initiatives benefiting women.

Although her time as prime minister was relatively short and did not immediately lead to a significant increase in women's representation in politics, Radičová's career serves as an exemplary model for what women can achieve in Slovakia. Her distinguished record of public service and accomplishments across various domains showcases the possibilities for women in leadership roles. Iveta Radičová has initiated a shift towards a distinct style of politics that diverges from the traditional norms. Portraying herself as a refined and empathetic individual, she rejects the aggressive tactics commonly employed by her male counterparts, transforming the political arena into a battleground. Emphasizing her stance that she would rather relinquish her political career than compromise on the value of civility, Radičová, the sole female figure in a high-ranking government position, introduced a novel

approach to political discourse. Instead of making allegations regarding the misuse of social services, she chose to address the plight of the less fortunate individuals who were facing dire circumstances through no fault of their own, advocating for the state's responsibility to offer them support.

Currently, Radičová is a professor of sociology, the dean of the Faculty of Media Studies at the Pan European University, teaches sociology at BISLA, and is the European coordinator for the European Commission. She is a member of the Oxford Society, New York Academy of Sciences, International Sociological Association (ISA), and Cambridge Union Society. She is also actively involved as a member of the Madrid Club and Council of Global Women Leaders. She owns a trademark for a scientific method in social sciences. She has received several awards, such as Woman of the Year (2006, Slovakia), Medal of the Military Intelligence Service, 3rd degree (2012), Bronze Medal of the Faculty of Education at Comenius University in Bratislava (2011), Women of the Year Award (2010, USA), Pelican Award (2011, Czech Republic), The Fund for American Studies - Freedom Award (2013, Washington DC), Slovak women of the Year, special award (2017), Women Political Leader Award (2017), Women Political Leaders Global Forum, and Anton Srholec Freedom Award 2019.

1.5 Zuzana Čaputová as a role model for the youth

Zuzana Čaputová, born in Bratislava on 21 June 1973, graduated from the Law Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava. She is a mother of two daughters. During her studies and after graduating, she worked for the local self-governing authority in Pezinok, initially as an assistant in the legal department and eventually becoming the deputy head of the municipal office. In 1998, she transitioned to the non-governmental sector, focusing on public administration, and advocating for children who suffer physical or sexual abuse. She later became a project manager for the civic association EQ Klub, working on local community development initiatives.

From 2001 to 2017, Čaputová collaborated with the civic association VIA IURIS, serving as a lawyer starting in 2010. Her work involved issues related to the rule of law and the promotion of justice, particularly in areas such as the functioning of the judiciary, accountability of public officials, transparency in public asset management, and strengthening public oversight of authorities. President Čaputová had been involved in environmental issues long before taking office.

For over ten years in Pezinok, she led a public campaign against the approval of another waste landfill that would pollute the soil, air, and water in the city and its surroundings. The Pezinok landfill case is a Slovak environmental case and one of the largest environmental cases in modern Slovak history. The civic association VIA IURIS, led by lawyer Zuzana Čaputová, was involved in the case. Zuzana Čaputová legally represented the residents of Pezinok and was one of the leading figures in the civic initiative "The landfill does not belong in the city." In recognition of her contribution, she was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2016. The recipients of this prize are selected by an international jury and experts from around the world for their lasting and significant contribution to environmental protection. She received this international accolade, often compared to the Nobel Prize in the field of environmentalism, in San Francisco.

In December 2017, Čaputová made the announcement that she intended to join the political party Progressive Slovakia, and in January 2018, she was elected as its deputy leader. In May 2018, she declared her candidacy for the presidency of the Slovak Republic, aiming to rebuild trust in society and reinvigorate the core values that unite the country, including justice, the protection of human dignity, and Slovakia's alignment with democratic

Europe. One of the reasons that influenced her decision to run was the tragic murder of a young journalist and his fiancée in February 2018.

On 30 March 2019, Čaputová was elected as the president of the Slovak Republic in the second round of the presidential election, securing 1,056,582 votes, which accounted for 58.41% of the total ballots cast. In May 2019, she opted to resign from Progressive Slovakia and is now not affiliated with any political party. Following her inauguration on 15 June 2019, she officially assumed her role as president of the Slovak Republic.

President Zuzana Čaputová made an announcement on 20 June 2023 stating that she will not be running for re-election in the upcoming spring 2024 elections. In a released statement, she expressed that the past four years have been the most challenging period professionally and personally, and she does not possess the necessary strength to serve another term as the highest authority in the country with complete dedication. There were initial discussions about her potential decision not to seek re-election when she postponed her announcement from April to a later date.

In the first round of election in 2019, 13 candidates were vying for the position, and it had a voter turnout of 48.74%. The candidate from the Progressive Slovakia party, Zuzana Čaputová, received the highest number of votes (40.57%), followed by independent candidate Maroš Šefčovič with the support of the Smer party (18.66%). Both candidates advanced to the second round.

The second round had a voter turnout of 41.79%. Maroš Šefčovič received 41.59% of valid votes, while Zuzana Čaputová received 58.40% of valid votes, making her the newly elected President of the Republic. She assumed office during the inauguration on June 15, 2019, becoming the central European country's first-ever female president. Čaputová's liberal values also appealed to young voters in the Slovak republic that persists in being conservative in many areas. Her win is a rare progressive victory in a central Europe where nationalist rhetoric has grown.

Čaputová frequently asserts that there is a lack of equal application of justice in Slovakia. In her role as president, she aimed to put significant pressure on both immediate and systemic reforms within the police, prosecutor's office, and judiciary. She strongly believes that the police should operate as an independent entity, free from political influences, and led by qualified professionals. Additionally, she advocates for transforming the prosecutor's office into an institution subject to public oversight.

Regarding her claim that she serves not only as the president of the Slovak people but also of the various national minority and ethnic groups residing in Slovakia, she has

made the decision to create a fresh custom. This entails forming a group of advisors specifically dedicated to the concerns and needs of these minority communities. On June 7, 2019, she publicly introduced the individual advisors through her social media platform.

Upon assuming the role of President, she discussed the importance of an equitable society that provides an equal opportunity for everyone to lead a happy life, regardless of their nationality, faith, gender, sexual orientation, or other affiliations. A key focus was the protection and advancement of the rights of all families, including those in the LGBTI+ community. She expressed support for registered partnerships and the adoption of children by same-sex couples. On the topic of abortion, she voiced opposition to it but also argued against stricter regulations or a complete ban, emphasizing the need to address the underlying issues. She consistently drew attention to the detrimental effects of the climate crisis and stressed the urgency to resolve it.

Despite her continued advocacy for equality and women's rights, Čaputová faces challenges in effectively safeguarding the rights of women and minorities against the conservative Slovak parliament. Slovakia has consistently refused to ratify the Istanbul Convention, and while Čaputová is making efforts, she has not been successful in this endeavour. Nevertheless, she strives to raise awareness about violence against women and children. On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, she engaged with representatives from non-governmental organizations dedicated to combating such violence. She unequivocally denounced all forms of violence, emphasizing the need to set aside ideological differences and unite in condemning societal violence and the prejudices that often precede it. Mid the coronavirus crisis, she raised awareness about the increasing incidents of violence. She made an appearance on Slovakia's most-watched TV station to address the issue of violence against women and children during the pandemic. Furthermore, she facilitated discussions between non-governmental activists and law enforcement at the Presidential palace to tackle and prevent violence. She fully endorsed the development of an app by these groups to aid women in abusive situations in seeking help more efficiently and safely. Additionally, she publicly backed various anti-violence campaigns, such as the "Let's Stop Violence Against Women" campaign. This marks the first instance in Slovakia's history where a president has acknowledged the efforts of non-governmental organizations dedicated to eradicating violence and assisting women and children.

In terms of foreign policy, Čaputová advocated for Slovakia to firmly align itself with the structures of the European Union and NATO. Soon after assuming office, she

strongly criticized China for its human rights violations and the detention of activists. Additionally, she vehemently denounced the Russian military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, expressing unwavering support and solidarity for the Ukrainian people, the country's leadership, and President Volodymyr Zelensky.

In recognition of her efforts, she was honoured with the European Personality of the Year award in May 2019. Furthermore, Politico ranked Čaputová among the 28 most influential individuals in Europe during the same year.

Under Čaputová's presidency, there have been a total of five prime ministers, with the most recent one being Robert Fico, who also assumed the position of chairman of the Smer party. In the early parliamentary elections of September 2023, Fico's party emerged victorious and formed a coalition government with the Voice and SNS parties.

However, Čaputová's tenure has not been without missteps. In May 2022, she posthumously awarded the Order of Ľudovít Štúr 1st Class to three members of the White Legion group: Albert Púčík, Anton Tunega, and Eduard Tesár. The White Legion was a nonviolent resistance movement against communist oppression. Nevertheless, those honoured were also supporters of the wartime Slovak state, which raised concerns. The President acknowledged that bestowing the honour upon White Legion members was a mistake. *"State honours should be given to people whose life story cannot give rise to a dispute as to whether they have served democracy. I will do everything to ensure that such controversies do not recur in the future,"* she said of the case.

According to Za ľudí lawmaker Marcinková, the absence of women in the new government reflects a broader scarcity of women in politics. She considers it a small miracle to have a female president and believes that young girls now see her as a role model, inspiring them to aspire to leadership positions. It is worth noting that statistics indicate that Slovak women are more likely than men to pursue higher education, suggesting that a lack of merit or qualifications should not be a hindrance in politics.

Marcinková aspires that her presidency will motivate women in Slovakia and the broader region to engage in politics, an arena that is predominantly male-occupied. In the initial phases of her campaign, while gathering signatures to support her candidacy, a few individuals criticized her, stating that it was not appropriate for a woman to seek high office. Conversely, some found her inspiring. However, the majority were drawn to her ideas and demeanour. Čaputová mentioned that some voters viewed her candidacy as a symbol of change, believing that women can offer a different approach to communication and collaboration. Despite this perception, she clarified that she did not actively promote this

message during her campaign. In her characteristically modest manner, she remarked, "I simply aimed to be the most qualified candidate."

2 EMPIRICAL PART

"The vast majority of our society is aware that in order to continue being part of successful and prosperous countries in the world, we must not only invest sufficient resources into education, upbringing, and science, but also make the development of science and education a priority for the Slovak Republic."

- Zuzana Čaputová

2.1 Young people's perception and interest in politics

Politics is about more than just making decisions; it's also about working together to solve issues, negotiate, and improve society as a whole. Perhaps because they are more mature, experienced, and wiser than younger generations, adults come to mind first when discussing politics. Children and teenagers are usually left out of any political conversation or topic. We often assume that they have no interest in politics or that it is not a subject matter that interests them, but is this truly the case?

Teenagers are not being educated about politics enough because the way it is taught to them is often incorrect; instead, we need to teach the next generation that politics is about doing the right thing and not simply about older politicians preaching what should be done for the neighbourhoods, the country, and the globe. Politics is the study of right and wrong, rules that govern any society, and how process can shape one's future for the better or worse. They would be perhaps more interested if we could explain to them that politics affects everyone, regardless of age. Even while political education is crucial for the younger generation, it is lacking still.

Thanks to social media and other sources, the younger generation is becoming more and more engaged in global events these days. It's less difficult for them to become interested in and knowledgeable about politics. If given the chance, the younger generation might come up with really good ideas or solutions; in fact, being younger does not preclude them from thinking or creating just as good or better than the older generation.

It is essential to provide the younger generation with education on political matters. Merely stating that they are the future without equipping them with knowledge about global issues and the decision-making processes is insufficient. While there is an improvement in the relationship between young individuals and politics, there remains a significant portion of youth disinterested in political affairs. Therefore, efforts should be made to actively engage and motivate them to participate in political discourse.

Youth can participate in politics in a wide range of traditional or non-conventional ways. Examples of these include voting, joining political parties, serving on local youth councils, working through youth organizations, participating in online political activism, boycotts, or protest movements. The modern environment in which young people are participating in politics includes dwindling space for civil society, fast digitalization, growth of populist ideologies, rising inequality, emergence of international youth movements, and a pandemic.

2.2 Importance of membership in EU and what young people think about it.

President Čaputová has consistently emphasized the numerous benefits of Slovakia's membership in the European Union (EU) and democracy. According to her, the most significant advantage is immeasurable: being a part of one of history's most successful peace initiatives, which has replaced centuries of conflict with cooperation, trade, free movement, and, above all, freedom, and democracy. While acknowledging that complete agreement on all matters may not be achievable, the President asserts that what truly matters is Slovakia's active participation in shaping the EU's future as an equal member that can vote, veto, propose, and negotiate.

Since 2011, Slovakia has commemorated EU Accession Day, which marks the country's entry into the EU. On 1 May 2004, Slovakia, along with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, and Slovenia, joined the 15-member EU in its largest expansion to date.

While education can provide a solid foundation of knowledge, it is equally important to communicate the work of European institutions in a way that is easy to understand and relatable in everyday life. The message should resonate with all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic status or geographic location, be it urban or regional, East or West.

Establishing a connection between the EU and everyday life can bring several benefits and enhance the sense of belonging among EU citizens. Initiatives such as Erasmus+ or free railway trips within Europe already target young people and offer them unique experiences. Similar opportunities should be expanded to other citizens to increase their sense of being EU citizens.

As per the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Institute for Public Affairs, the parliamentary elections in 2020 saw 213,000 first-time voters aged 18-21, based on exit poll statistics. In the European elections of 2019, there was an increase in participation compared to the previous 2014 elections. According to Eurobarometer results, youth participation in the 18-24 age group rose from 6% to 11%, while the number of young people aged 25-34 also increased to 25%. Despite this, Slovakia had the lowest electoral turnout among all EU member states in the European elections, standing at 22.74%.

Lastly, the overall lack of voting interest among young people in Slovakia may be attributed to ineffective communication channels employed by the EU. While EU institutions use social media, their approach often lacks flexibility, appears generic, and fails to capture the interest of young individuals. (Ondria, 2019)

In this context, we can also see the positive influence of President Čaputová, whose interest, active meetings with ambassadors and diplomats and heads of the European Union bring the Slovak nation closer to a sense of belonging. In 2022, she made an important speech to Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg in which she called for unity, cooperation, and solidarity after the corona virus crisis. In her speech, she focused on the protection of democracy.

The Economist Intelligence Unit rated Slovakia a "flawed democracy" in 2022. However, what is the reason for this situation?

The Representation of the European Commission in Slovakia, in partnership with the civil association DEMDIS, initiated a dialogue in 2023 with the aim of examining the current state of freedom and democracy in Slovakia. Despite the reliability of democratic mechanisms in the past, it is evident that they have encountered various crises and obstacles in recent times. Slovakia has observed a significant decrease in citizens' enthusiasm and involvement in the political sphere.

The division within society, widespread discontent, and increasing lack of trust in institutions have resulted in disinterest and detachment from both democracy and society as a whole.

During the DEMDIS discussion in November 2022, titled "Defining the ideal democracy," it became apparent that the issue does not lie with democracy itself but rather with its effectiveness, or lack thereof, in Slovakia.

The discussion groups reached a collective consensus that the victor of elections should uphold the rights of minority groups and refrain from meddling with the independence of the judiciary, as well as the freedom of speech and media. Another concern raised revolved around the inefficient operation of political parties, which lack democratic principles and transparency. Consequently, it was unanimously agreed that democracy demands fresh methods to engage citizens in its processes, as participation should extend beyond the sporadic act of voting once every four years.

The discussion titled "Assessing the State of Freedom and Democracy in Slovakia" saw the participation of over 390 voters, with 278 individuals divided into two opinion groups, labelled A and B. The debate occurred from June 11th to June 23rd, during which the

participants collectively casted 14,870 votes and submitted more than 130 original comments.

The dividing factor between the two groups revolved around the perception of whether democracy in Slovakia is experiencing a decline. The results indicate that the assertion of democracy being within normal limits in Slovakia holds true. While 62% of Group A agreed with this assertion, 52% of Group B disagreed. The majority of Group A believed Slovakia was on a trajectory towards authoritarianism, a notion that was refuted by discussants in Group B.

Group A prides itself on holding strong pro-democratic attitudes and harbouring concerns regarding the potential shift towards authoritarianism. This sentiment is exemplified by the overwhelming agreement, at 90%, amongst this group that populism poses a threat to democracy. The scepticism of Group A members is further evident in the majority's belief that Slovakia is heading towards an authoritarian regime. In addition, the role of civil society is viewed as crucial by Group A discussants, with 40% of them emphasizing the lens provided by universities to analyse democracy-related issues.

Citizen participation is a crucial element for the existence of a democratic society. It serves multiple purposes such as allowing the expression of interests, educating citizens, influencing life satisfaction, serving as a check on decision-makers, and affecting government responsiveness. The ongoing decrease in voter turnout, a significant form of political participation, and also no interest in politics is a cause for concern worldwide. This decline has been occurring since the 1950s, with a more rapid decrease since the mid-1980s. The trend is seen globally, affecting all regions of the world. Consequently, this decline presents a major challenge for democracies worldwide, as confirmed by official voter turnout statistics available for most democratic countries. As far as Europe is concerned, the decrease in participation has been especially apparent after the 1990s, regardless of the country's communist or non-communist history.

Consequently, when the public has access to sufficient information, resources, time, and opportunities for deliberation, the formulation and implementation of public policies can result in superior, more insightful, and legitimate outcomes (*ibid.*). Notably, widespread political participation is observed in the most successful communities, irrespective of economic factors, and is associated with high living standards and well-functioning institutions (Levine 2007, 30).

2.3 Aims and methodology of the research

In this thesis we have defined one main objective and several auxiliary objectives. The main objective is to find out what influence women in Slovak politics have on the young generation. By analysing the theoretical and empirical part, we will be able to evaluate this influence and also how young people perceive it. The auxiliary objectives of this thesis are to find out what are the most influential Slovak female politicians, according to the sources we have managed to obtain but also according to young people, then the influence of Zuzana Čaputová on young people, also in terms of the facts presented in the theoretical part but in terms of young people presented in the empirical part as well, and what is the general opinion of young people on this topic.

During the empirical phase of our research, we utilized a questionnaire to obtain qualitative data. Our primary objective was to gain insight into the perspectives of young individuals on politics and women in politics. Additionally, we sought to gather their opinions on a range of topics relevant to our study and determine their desired areas for change. As we embarked on our research, we formulated three hypotheses:

1. The majority of young individuals regard residence within a democratically governed nation as a significant priority.
2. There is a propensity among a greater portion of young individuals to align with liberal ideologies as opposed to conservative viewpoints, exhibiting an inclination towards endorsing a liberal executive leadership.
3. The political orientation and actions of President Čaputová significantly influence the ideological perspectives, civic engagement, and socio-political attitudes of the young generation.

Thanks to the answers of our respondents, we expect either to refute or confirm these hypotheses, which will be stated in the conclusion of the thesis.

Using a questionnaire to collect data for our diploma thesis is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, questionnaires allow us to gather data efficiently from a significant number of respondents, as demonstrated by the sample size of 286 participants in our study. This broad reach ensures a diverse range of perspectives and insights, which improves the strength and reliability of the findings.

The questionnaire contained 18 questions, most of which were closed, but some were also open-ended for a more precise expression of opinion. Initially, we were interested in how our respondents felt about politics in general. We asked about their attitudes towards

the representation of young people in politics and also towards the representation of women in politics. We asked what influences their views. Other questions were devoted to women in politics, in particular, Zuzana Čaputová and her influence. At the end of the questionnaire, there are two open questions for free expression of opinion about politics and the President. The questionnaire was sent to students at high schools in Nitra and students of the University of Economics in Bratislava.

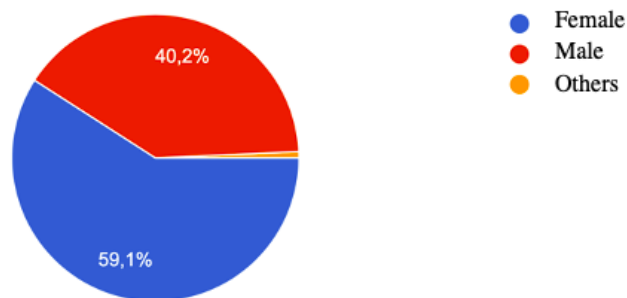
In evaluating the questionnaire, we focused on each question separately, with the help of graphical representations. We checked all the answers and ensured they were correctly evaluated. We analysed all the data collected and supported it with the theoretical knowledge gained. Finally, we evaluated the questionnaire as a whole and compared it with our hypotheses.

By implementing a questionnaire in the research, we can gain valuable insights into the perceptions and opinions of both men and women on the impact of female politicians on youth, thereby broadening the depth and scope of the thesis.

2.4 Evaluation of the questionnaire

We used a questionnaire to find out what are the opinions of young people on the researched topic. Using this method, we gained a closer insight into the perspectives and attitudes of young people. We tried to reach the highest number of respondents to make the research as relevant as possible.

1. Gender

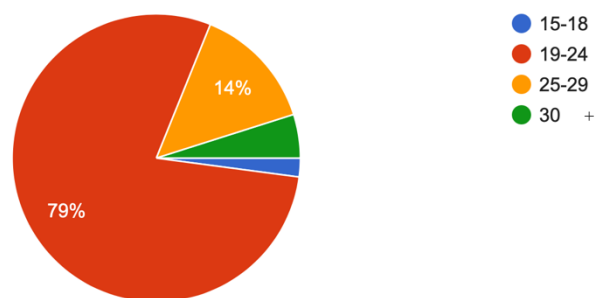


Graph 2: Question Nr.1 Gender

The questionnaire was aimed at young people aged from 15 to 30 years. There were 286 participants in the questionnaire, of whom 115 were men (40.2%) and 169 women (59.1%). Two respondents indicated their gender as "other".

The majority of respondents were between 19-24 years old, the second largest group was 25-29 years old, followed by the 30+ group and then the 15-18 group.

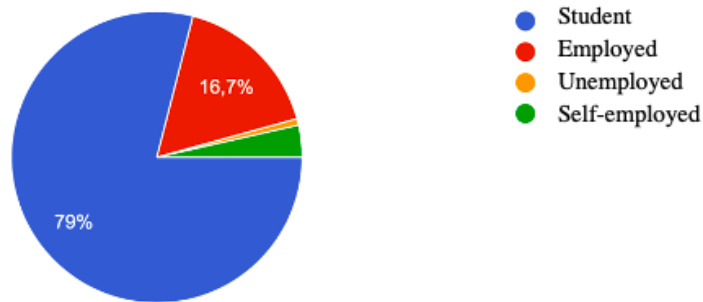
2. Age



Graph 3: Question Nr. 2 Age

In terms of occupational status, students ranked first, employed ranked second and self-employed ranked third. Two respondents chose the fourth option - unemployed.

3. Employment status

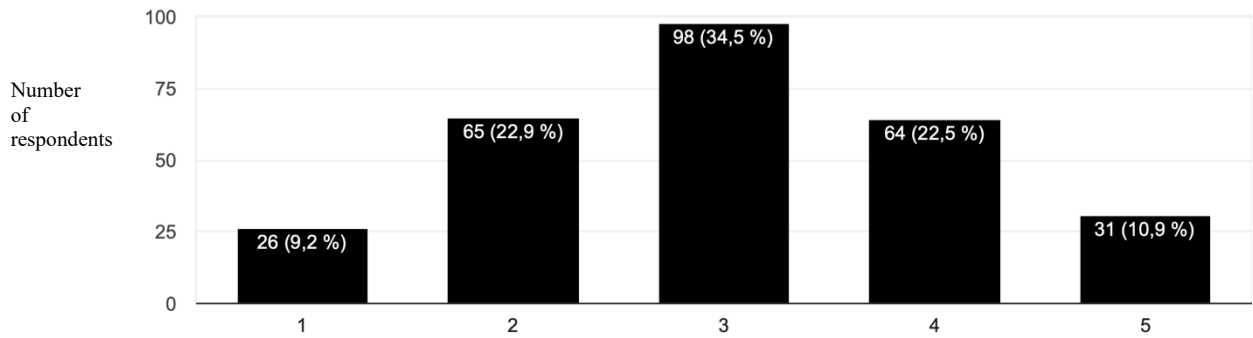


Graph 4: Question Nr. 3 Employment status

Next, we turn our attention to questions, where respondents had to collect their thoughts. Initially, we focused the questionnaire on more general questions about politics in Slovakia, and gradually the questions focused on women in politics.

Question number 4 was: How interested are you in politics on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 not interested, 5 very interested). The largest number of respondents chose number 3, indicating a neutral answer. Subsequently, the number decreases proportionally to the left and to the right on the Graph Nr. 5 which means that approximately the same number answered that they are very interested in politics as those who are not interested in politics at all.

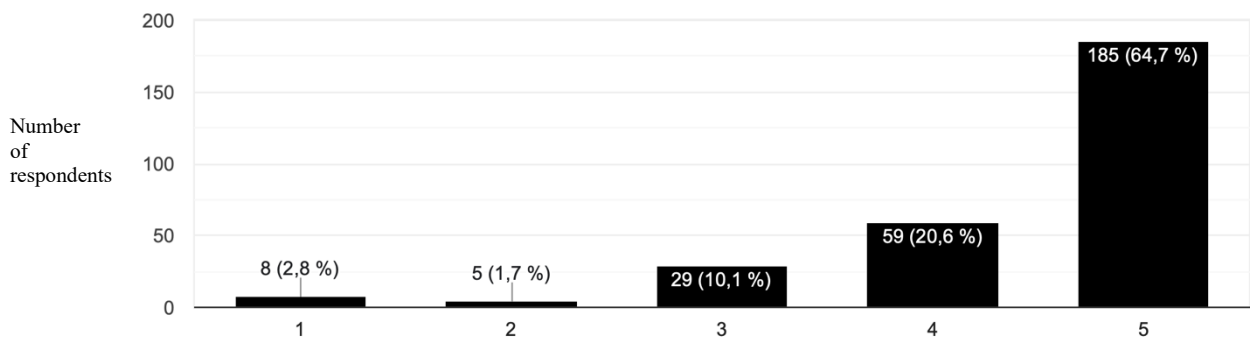
4. How interested are you in politics on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 not interested, 5 very interested)



Graph 5: Question Nr. 4

Answers to question number 5: How important is it for you to live in a democratically governed country? (1 not important, 5 very important) were very unambiguous. It is evident from the graph associated with this question that living in a democratically governed country is very important to most of the young people interviewed.

5. How important is it to you to live in a democratically governed country? (1 unimportant, 5 very important)



6. Graph 6: Question Nr. 5

The Economist Intelligence Unit rated Slovakia a "flawed democracy" in 2022. However, what is the reason for this statement?

Although democracy is essential to many people in this country, in the following section we will take a closer look at why it is important to young people in particular, and

why the current president's efforts to promote democratic values are well connected with them.

Democracy is important for youth because it provides them with a voice and a platform to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. It allows them to express their opinions, advocate for their rights, and contribute to shaping the future of their society. Democracy also promotes transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, which are essential for ensuring equal opportunities and protecting individual freedoms. By engaging in democratic practices, young people can learn about civic responsibility, critical thinking, and the value of diversity in a pluralistic society. Ultimately, democracy empowers young people to become active and informed citizens who can drive positive change and build a more inclusive and just society for themselves and future generations.

When young people live in a democratically run country, it can have a significant influence on their lives and development. Here are some ways in which democracy can impact young people:

- **Participation and Engagement:** Democracy encourages young people to actively participate in civic and political processes, such as voting, volunteering, and advocacy. This engagement helps them develop a sense of agency and responsibility in shaping their communities.
- **Rights and Freedoms:** In a democratic society, young people have access to fundamental rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech, assembly, and expression. This allows them to voice their opinions, pursue their interests, and challenge injustices without fear of reprisal.
- **Education and Opportunities:** Democracy promotes equal access to education and opportunities for young people, regardless of their background or circumstances. This enables them to acquire knowledge, skills, and resources that are essential for personal growth and success.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** In a democratic system, government officials are accountable to the people they serve. This transparency helps young people develop

trust in their institutions and encourages them to hold leaders accountable for their actions and decisions.

- **Social Cohesion and Diversity:** Democracy fosters a culture of tolerance, respect, and inclusivity, which allows young people to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. This exposure helps them appreciate different viewpoints, build empathy, and promote social cohesion.

Overall, living in a democratically run country can empower young people to become active, informed, and responsible citizens who contribute positively to society and work towards a more equitable and sustainable future.

As the current leader of democratic Slovakia, Čaputová expressed appreciation for having the opportunity to live in both communist and democratic societies. This experience has given her a strong understanding of the contrast between freedom and oppression, as well as the tactics used by potential dictators to restrict civil liberties. The rise of authoritarian regimes anywhere poses a threat to democracies worldwide. Čaputová emphasized the heightened risks faced by young democracies like Slovakia, where democratic principles and institutions are still developing compared to older democracies. She urged established democracies not to ignore or abandon their younger counterparts.

The next part of the questionnaire contained open-ended questions, of which one was aimed at the respondents' political ideologies. We were interested in whether they lean more towards conservatism or liberalism, and to justify their answer. The answers to this question were very interesting. Opinions differ and the total number of responses to this question was 225. The number of people who consider themselves either completely or mostly liberal was 152, which was 67.5% and definitely an absolute majority. In addition to those who did not answer, some respondents also wrote "I don't know" or "I don't care about this topic". The number of people who did not hold either view or responded "I don't know" was 18, which is 8%. There were 23 people who lean more towards a conservative political ideology, which is 10.2% of the 225 respondents. However, there were also those who lean partly towards conservatism and partly towards liberalism, to be specific, it was 24 out of 225 young people, which is 10.6%.

The reasons for the responses varied. The most common reasons for political liberals were importance of freedom, tolerance, equality between genders, nationalities and races, cooperation between European countries, getting closer to other European countries,

but also ecology, a greener future or same-sex marriage. As for the political conservatives, they justified their claims as follows: the upbringing and environment in which they grew up, Christian principles and beliefs, the importance of state interference, traditional values and patriotism.

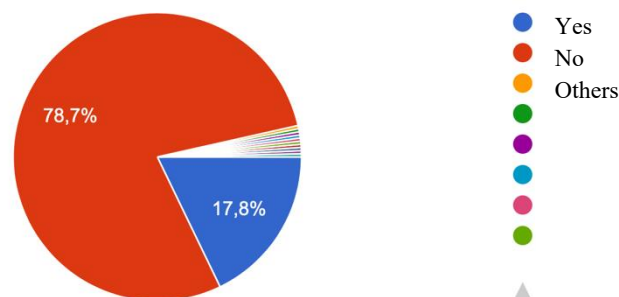
Liberal and conservative political ideologies each have their own set of perceived benefits and drawbacks. One of the perspectives on the benefits of liberal politics in a country is that these policies often focus on promoting social progress and inclusivity, which can lead to greater diversity and tolerance within society. This can result in a more dynamic and innovative economy, as diverse perspectives and ideas are encouraged.

On the other hand, conservative policies tend to prioritize stability and tradition, which can help maintain social cohesion and preserve cultural values. This can provide a sense of continuity and security for individuals within the society.

Ultimately, a balance between liberal and conservative principles can help create a well-rounded political system that addresses the needs of a diverse population while also ensuring stability and continuity in governance.

Thereafter, we continue with question number 7, which read:

7. Do you think that the voices of young people are sufficiently represented in Slovak politics?



Graph 7: Question Nr. 7: Do you think that the voices of young people are sufficiently represented in Slovak politics?

The majority did not comment further on the question after clicking the yes or no option, but as we can see, almost 80% of the respondents think that the voices of young

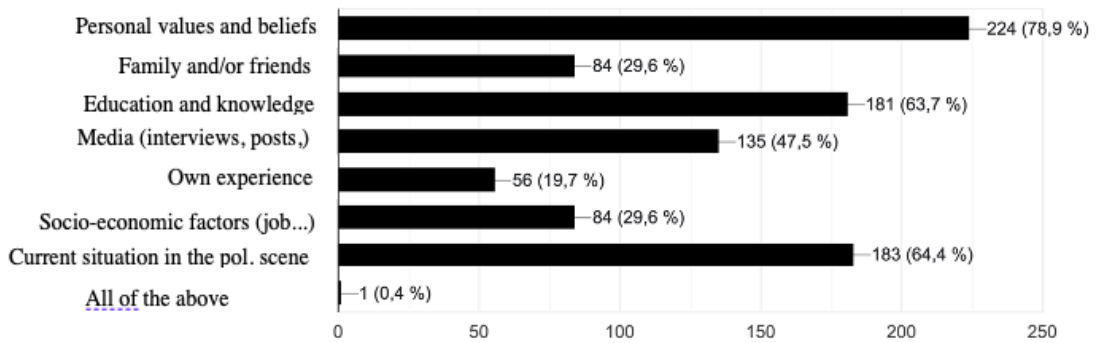
people - their needs and interests - are not sufficiently representative in Slovak politics. However, a specific political party was also mentioned, which is trying to do this: "There is a PS party in the parliament, which claims at least with its rhetoric that it represents young people, and depending on how many votes it received in the elections, it is quite sufficient representation. Anyway, at the moment everyone has the right to vote, so in my opinion the excuse of whether someone is sufficiently represented should not apply." Others who did not choose either option "yes" or "no" said: "Yes but there could be more", "I don't know" and "I am not sure".

Ensuring that the perspectives and concerns of young people are taken into account in political decision-making processes is essential for creating policies that address the needs and aspirations of the younger generation. This can be achieved through various means, such as engaging with youth organizations, conducting surveys and consultations with young people, and creating platforms for youth participation in political discussions.

By actively seeking out and incorporating the opinions of young people in policy-making, politicians can better understand the challenges faced by the youth demographic and work towards solutions that benefit all members of society. Ultimately, fostering a culture of inclusivity and representation in politics can lead to more effective and responsive governance that reflects the diversity of voices within the population.

In question number 8, we asked what are the main factors that influence the political opinions of our respondents. It is important to mention that in this question, multiple choices could have been chosen as the answer. By far the most frequently option, chosen by 78.9% of people, was personal values and beliefs. The second most common answer, chosen by 64.4% of the answerers, was the current situation in the political scene. Other answers followed in this order: education and knowledge, social media (interviews, posts, articles), socio-economic factors (job, income), family and/or friends and own experience. Young people's opinions on politics can vary widely based on a multitude of factors.

8. What are the main factors influencing your political views?

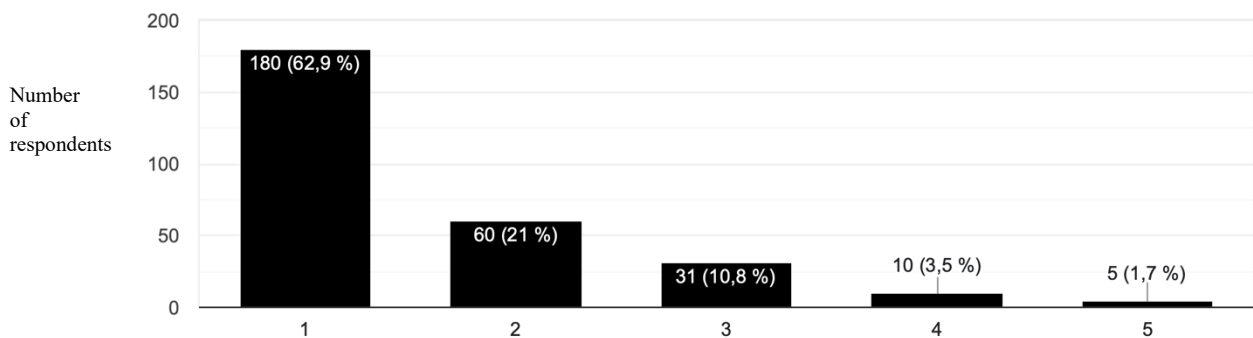


Graph 8: Question Nr. 8

Some young individuals may be highly interested and actively involved in political discussions and activities, while others may feel disinterested or disillusioned with the political system. Overall, young people's opinions on politics can be diverse and influenced by a combination of internal and external factors.

The questionnaire continued with question No. 9, where we were interested in how satisfied young Slovaks are with the current political situation in Slovakia and the result was clear – they are not.

9. How satisfied are you with the current political situation in the Slovak Republic (1 not at all satisfied, 5 completely satisfied)



Graph 9: Question Nr. 9

There are several reasons why people in Slovakia may not be satisfied with their parliament and government in the Slovak Republic. One of the key factors contributing to this dissatisfaction is the perception of corruption and lack of transparency within the government institutions. Corruption scandals and allegations of misconduct among politicians have eroded public trust in the government and its ability to serve the best interests of the people.

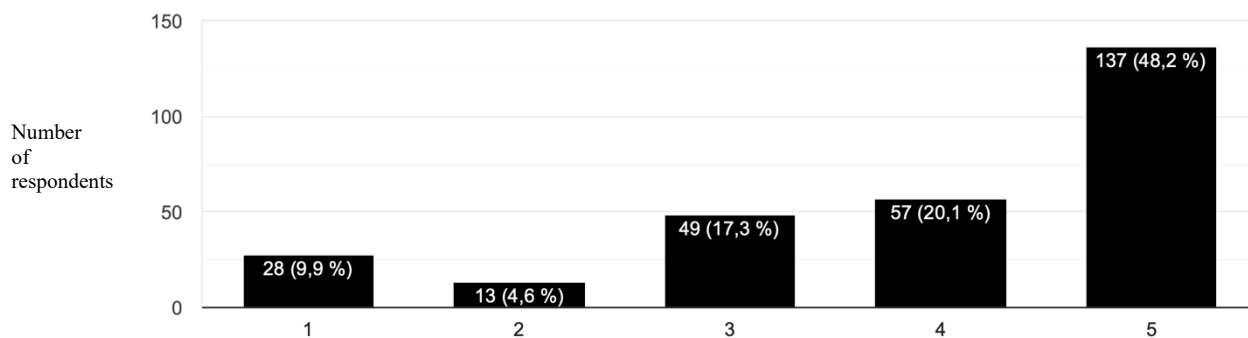
Additionally, there is a sense of disconnect between the political elite and the general population, with many feeling that their concerns and priorities are not adequately represented or addressed by the government. This lack of responsiveness to the needs of the citizens can lead to frustration and disillusionment with the political system.

Furthermore, economic issues, such as high levels of unemployment, income inequality, and a lack of opportunities for young people, can also contribute to dissatisfaction with the government. The perception that the government is not effectively addressing these socio-economic challenges can lead to a sense of alienation and discontent among the population.

Overall, the combination of corruption, lack of transparency, disconnect between politicians and the public, and economic hardships can all contribute to the dissatisfaction that some people in Slovakia feel towards their parliament and government. Addressing these issues through increased accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to the needs of the citizens is crucial for rebuilding trust and confidence in the political institutions of the Slovak Republic.

Answers to question no. 10: How satisfied are you with the current President of the Slovak Republic? were much more positive than the previous one. As many as 137 respondents (48.2%) answered that they are completely satisfied, and 57 respondents (20.1%) said that they are rather satisfied. 28 respondents were dissatisfied, which is 9.9% of the total number of responses.

10. How satisfied are you with the current President of the Slovak Republic? (1 I am not satisfied at all; 5 I am completely satisfied)



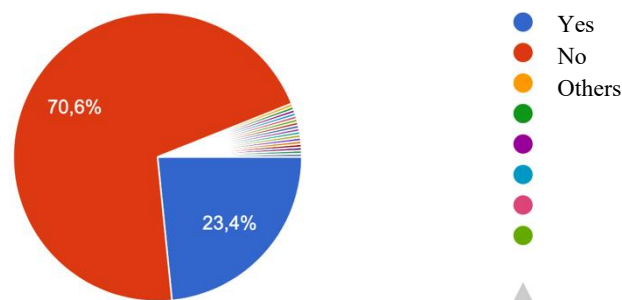
Graph 10: Question Nr. 10

Zuzana Čaputová emerged as a significant figure not just within Slovakia but also across Europe. She has shone a positive spotlight on Slovakia and the broader Visegrad region (comprising Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland), which is currently facing human rights challenges. Through successful foreign engagements, such as meetings with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, she has garnered international recognition. Additionally, she has been honoured as The European Personality of the Year and received the European Prize for Political Culture. Čaputová serves as a symbol that by maintaining an open mind, a compassionate heart, and a strong work ethic, each of us has the potential to make a positive impact for change, even in challenging circumstances.

As of the most recent data available, women make up approximately 20% of the Slovak National Council. That’s the women who won mandates in the National Council in early parliamentary elections since 2023, when early parliamentary elections were held. Most of them, sixteen to be exact, are on the candidate list of the Progressive Slovakia (PS) party. The least, only one, got into the parliament on the SNS candidate. In addition to the fact that women bring unique perspectives and experiences to decision-making processes, Issues that disproportionately affect women may not receive the attention they deserve if women are not adequately represented in parliament. Equal representation in parliament is a fundamental aspect of a democratic society. When women are not equally represented, it can undermine the principles of democracy and lead to a lack of trust in the political system. Studies have shown that gender-balanced decision-making bodies are more effective and lead to better outcomes. By excluding women from parliament, countries may be missing out on the potential benefits of diverse representation. What we have just substantiated with

numbers, young people really think. To question no. 11: Do you think that women are sufficiently represented in Slovak politics? more than 70% answered no as you can see on the Graph 11. However, 23% answered yes and as for the other answers, you can see them below under the graph.

11. Do you think that women are sufficiently represented in Slovak politics?



Graph 11: Question Nr. 11

Others:

- *“I do not emphasize gender in my selection.”*
- *“I don't see that a certain gender must be "sufficiently" represented in politics, if the shared idea is correct and there are fewer women in politics and the loudest ones are the ones who should not be heard at all.”*
- *“In some parties they are, but according to the number of women in parliament they are not.”*
- *“Since the women who are there don't represent women in a positive light, there could be more of them.”*

- *“They are there, but apart from the president, they don't have a strong voice in the way men do.”*
- *“I hear more about men than women.”*
- *“It's getting better and more often women are seen in politics.”*

As is apparent, some young people stated in the questionnaire that they do not consider equal or similar representation of women and men in politics to be important. We discussed the significance of women's equal participation in politics and leadership in the theoretical part.

Based on a survey conducted by AKO for TV JOJ24 from 29 August to 6 September 2023, nearly 52% of respondents expressed the importance of increasing the representation of women in public positions and politics. Specifically, almost 14% considered it very important, while 38% deemed it quite important. In contrast, approximately 40% of respondents did not view this as a significant priority. The survey revealed that those who valued greater female representation were predominantly women, individuals in the youngest (18-30 years) and oldest (60+) age groups, university-educated individuals, residents of the Trnava, Bratislava, Košice, and Prešov regions, Hungarian citizens, residents of larger settlements (over 100,000 inhabitants), and residents of settlements with populations ranging from 5,001 to 20,000.

We continued with question No. 12 in which we wanted to find out whether young people really know women in politics and, if so, which ones specifically. The question was: 12. How many women do you know in Slovak politics? Could you name the ones you can think of?

The most frequent answer given by respondents was, unsurprisingly, President Zuzana Čaputová. However, many respondents gave numerous names not just this one. Another name mentioned by respondents was Romana Tabák, a former Slovak professional tennis player, politician, and member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. In the February 2020 elections, she ran as the 44th candidate on the candidate list of the movement Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLANO), NOVA, Christian Union (KÚ), Change from Below (ZMENA ZDOLA). She was elected to the National Council of the

Slovak Republic. From the fall of 2022 to March 2023, she was a member of the governing parliamentary club of the movement SME RODINA, for which she unsuccessfully ran for mayor of Staré Mesto in the combined regional and municipal elections of 2022. In an interview with THE BUSINESS SOIRÉE from April 2023, Tabák was asked how she feels about the position of women in politics and if it is still a primarily male-dominated world. This was her answer: “Indeed, there is still a significantly higher number of men than women in politics. But I can tell you from personal experience that men see women as equal partners in the field. However, I see another issue – women often refrain from entering politics due to the pressure coming from the media and the constant criticism they are subsequently subjected to. I believe that women belong in politics, that they make politics much better and the enacted changes much more empathetic. If a woman does decide to enter politics, however, she should be assertive, make herself a visible and audible presence, and fight vocally for her goals. She should not try and blend into the background as is sometimes the case today. I have been able to handle the darker side of politics primarily thanks to my experience in professional sports, I would have a difficult time without it.”

Jana Bottó Cigániková, who is a member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, currently serving on the Health Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, was also mentioned very often. She is affiliated with the Freedom and Solidarity party, where she holds the position of health team leader. Additionally, she has established a network of nurseries and kindergartens. In 2012, Cigániková joined the Freedom and Solidarity party (SaS) and successfully campaigned for a seat on the regional council of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region the following year. Following the 2016 elections, she was elected as a member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and appointed to the Health Committee. While serving in the parliamentary club of SaS, she has focused on healthcare, participating in internships at various healthcare facilities and institutions such as hospitals, insurance companies, clinics, and pharmacies. In 2020, she retained her position as a member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and assumed the role of chairwoman of the Health Committee.

Next is Mária Kolíková, Slovak lawyer, politician, and former Minister of Justice of the Slovak Republic. On 8 September 2021, she resigned from the political party For the People along with 6 other MPs of the Slovak Parliament. They operate under other platform, which is a member of the SaS parliamentary club (6 MPs) and the SaS ministerial club. Kolíková is a member of the SaS ministerial club. She joined the SaS party in June 2022. On 13 September 2022, her resignation was accepted, after which she left the ministry and

the government. She became a member of the National Assembly, where she serves in the SaS parliamentary club.

From the parliamentary club of SaS, Vladimíra Marcinková also appeared in our questionnaire. In Parliament, she was Vice-Chairwoman of the Committee on Human Rights and National Minorities and a member of the Committee on Social Affairs. She volunteered for Andrej Kiska's presidential campaign in 2014 and subsequently became part of the president's team. In her role, she led the regional policy department and oversaw initiatives related to innovation and the business environment. In May 2021, she was elected by the Parliament as the Chairwoman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Slovak Parliament, thus becoming the first woman to hold this position. She has long supported the participation of women and young people in politics.

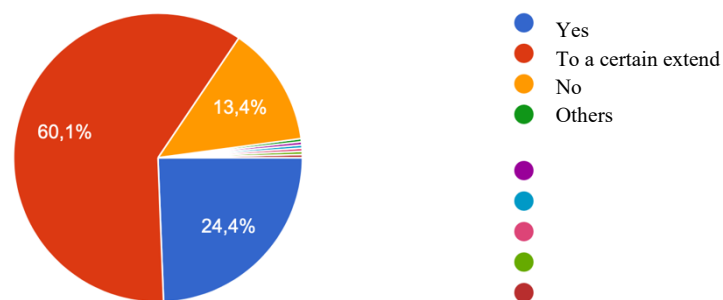
This is followed by the current Minister of Culture, Martina Šimkovičová. She entered Parliament for the first time in 2016. In 2023, she stood for election to the National Assembly of the Slovak Republic on the Slovak National Party candidate list and was elected as a Member of Parliament.

We will also mention another member of the SaS party - Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, Slovak liberal politician and former journalist, currently Member of the European Parliament. Her political career has focused mainly on social issues, human rights, minorities, and justice. In the 2016 elections, Ďuriš Nicholsonová was appointed as the vice-chairwoman of the National Council and took on the role of leading the Freedom and Solidarity party's programs for marginalized communities. Beyond her focus on social issues, she gained recognition for her vocal criticism of government corruption scandals, such as the misallocation of euro-funds in agriculture and questionable social and labor policies. Ďuriš Nicholsonová gained recognition for her proposed reform as an opposition figure aimed at enhancing the quality of life for the Romani population in Slovakia and halting their ongoing socio-economic marginalization. This reform included initiatives such as early childhood education for children from marginalized communities and improved, specialized, and motivational social assistance programs. Throughout her European election campaign, she emphasized issues related to employment and social welfare, advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities and promoting active aging. Additionally, she commended the work-life balance incentives offered by the European Parliament.

The names of these Slovak female politicians appeared most frequently in our questionnaire, but of course there are many other significant female politicians in Slovakia who were mentioned by our respondents.

In question 13, we focused on the barriers women face when entering politics. We asked respondents whether they thought that women still face barriers to entering politics today, and the answer was not entirely clear. In fact, most respondents chose perhaps to a certain point.

13. Do you think that even in the 21st century women still face barriers to entering politics?



Graph 12: Question Nr. 13

Others:

- *“A woman is addressed in more ways than a man (whether she is pretty, whether she does not want to marry, have children, staying at home). Entering politics may be ok, but then staying in it...”*
- *“I can't evaluate.”*
- *“Certainly, in Slovakia - the hatred and insults that certain parties - especially those in government - use as their political tool.”*

- *“Career and family to some extent, but these things are faced by probably everyone who has a family or a career that is well established in some way. “*
- *“These barriers were more visible at the beginning of the century, but today they are not there anymore.”*

Female politicians in Slovakia, like in many other countries, may face various barriers when entering politics. These barriers can include gender stereotypes, cultural norms, lack of representation in leadership positions, unequal access to resources and opportunities, and discrimination based on gender.

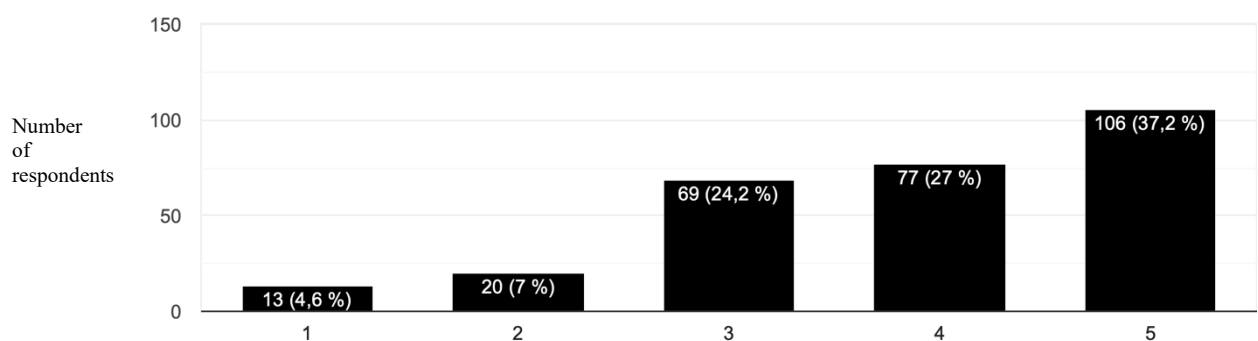
According to Friedrich Naumann Foundation, In the realm of women in political office, there is a complex interplay of internal and external pressures. Women often face heightened expectations compared to men when seeking office, yet they may harbor doubts about their own capabilities, particularly when balancing familial responsibilities. This lack of confidence can be attributed to limited support networks, a scarcity of female role models, and a dearth of mentors to encourage and guide them. Consequently, successful women in politics must work harder to validate their competence and serve as inspirations for others. Gender biases also influence the types of political roles available to women, with a tendency to be assigned positions in social, cultural, or educational sectors rather than prestigious roles in fields like economy, defence, or foreign affairs. This bias stems from entrenched stereotypes that equate masculine traits with power and leadership, while feminine traits are associated with nurturing and organizational skills. As a result, women often find themselves in supportive roles, such as vice-chair, rather than assuming leadership positions. Despite being valued for their expertise and organizational abilities; women may still encounter barriers to assuming roles involving execution and decision-making.

President Zuzana Čaputová's political activities were positively evaluated by our respondents, as we can see in the graph below regarding question 14.

Čaputová is known for her passion for environmental protection. For several years now, she has been trying to deepen this interest among young students through the Climate Academy project. During the Summer Climate Academy, students can acquire knowledge, skills, and contacts useful for their future work in tackling this major societal challenge in the public and private sectors.

The programme consists of a series of expert lectures, excursions and workshops led by experts with professional experience in the field of climate change. She also gave a speech on December 2023 at the UN COP28 climate conference held in Dubai. She has attended several such conferences and said that she wants to be a voice for the youth at these conferences. She also created the Green Seal project to motivate other authorities, organizations and institutions or the private sector to adopt the standards of a green institution and steer the renovation of their buildings and their operations towards sustainability. "I will be presenting the Presidential Green Seal for the superior renovation of public buildings. This is where the substantial funding from the EU funds and the Renewal Plan are dedicated. We want to make the best use of these funds." Last but not least, she presented the plan for a carbon neutral and green office, addressing topics such as waste reduction, global warming, supporting beekeeping and deforestation. Her attention is also focused on justice and social policy. She has often discussed current crises, poverty and living standards with experts and has sought to take action to improve them. In a society marked by poverty, the President believes that inequalities are deepening, and social tensions are increasing. She often met people and travelled to cities to show her concern. She expressed her support for nurses, the Red Cross, volunteers, social workers and many other groups.

14. How would you rate the political activities of President Zuzana Čaputová so far? (1 very bad, 5 excellent).

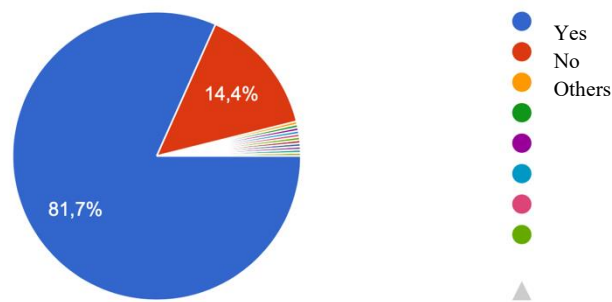


Graph 13: Question Nr. 14

More than 37 percent of the young people surveyed rated Čaputová's activities as excellent, 27 percent as very good. Only 4.6 percent consider them as very bad.

Her activities were indeed extensive and influential, which also explains the answers in the following question, which shows that the majority of respondents (more than 80%) think that Zuzana Čaputová has positively influenced the political scene in Slovakia. Those who chose the answer no were just over 14%. Some have even stated that she is a role model for both women and men as a calm and sensible leader. Of course, it is clear that the powers of the President are limited in the Slovak Republic, which was also mentioned in some answers.

15. Do you think that President Zuzana Čaputová has positively influenced the political scene in Slovakia?



Graph 14: Question Nr. 15

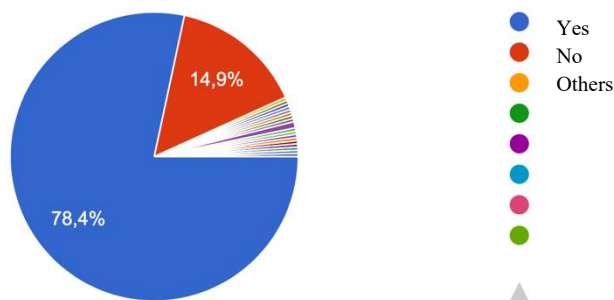
Others:

- *“It is impossible to give a clear answer, because the President was certainly not only "representative" actor on the political scene, but she really had a lot to do nationally in the past and this term. She has been dragged into political campaigns quite often and quite a lot. Therefore, it is hard to say whether she had a positive influence: yes or no. Both.”*
- *“300% yes. Among other things, she is a role model and hope for many girls and women, but also for men, in terms of setting an example of calm and sensible politics and performance.”*

- *“I’m not sure.”*
- *“In the sphere of popularity, yes, but in certain decisions most Slovaks disagree with her.”*
- *“Within her competence, yes, but it is still more of a representative function.”*

Positive responses also appeared in the following question, where we asked our respondents whether they thought Čaputová was a role model for young people. She has carried out her role responsibly and has made real use of her powers. She often spoke up for the young people herself, pointing them out and advocating for them, which may also have contributed to the positive responses in this questionnaire.

16. In your opinion, is President Zuzana Čaputová a role model for young people?



Graph 15: Question Nr. 16

Others:

- *“For some.”*
- *“I wouldn't say quite a role model but certainly more than other politicians.”*
- *“I can't judge, I can't imagine that people in Slovak politics are a role model for anyone.”*
- *“I don't know, but she should be.”*
- *“In certain aspects.”*
- *“I can't give an objective answer, it depends on the individuals.”*

The last two questions of our questionnaire were open. In question 17, we asked our respondents to indicate specific activities of Zuzana Čaputová that they evaluate as positive or, on the other hand, that they disagree with. The answers to this question were very interesting.

17. What specific policies or actions of President Zuzana Čaputová do you support or disagree with? (102 answers)

Many respondents insisted that they liked how reasonable she was and that thanks to her Slovakia maintain its status as a stable partner in the EU and NATO, but they criticized her for not being firm enough in some conflicts with members of the Slovak government. Here are some responses that reflect views of our respondents on this topic:

- *“She positively represents Slovakia, so foreign policy is a positive thing. She is an excellent lawyer; legal topics are her domain where she can be assertive. Environmental policy is also one of her priorities, which she has set out well.”*
- *“I support politeness in politics and value authentic performance in line with her values and representation abroad. “*

- *“I support her inclusive approach to all minorities, her principled approach, her championing of pro-European ideas, her appropriate approach to sensitive topics and her interest in environmental issues and young people.”*
- *“Čaputová is an educated woman, who has a professional way of expressing herself, knows how to react and should be a role model for many politicians, and I personally think that her decisions in everything are correct.”*
- *“I support her as a person, she doesn't bring anger, aggression, hatred into politics. From what I have seen and read, she represents our country so well and most importantly decently. That's how a president should be.”*

The above-mentioned responses were overwhelmingly positive, accounting for 51.6 percent. Some respondents indicated points with which they were satisfied but also those with which they disagreed. These accounted for 12.04 percent. Here are some examples of these responses:

- *“For my part, the most positive is the unequivocal support for Ukraine and support for our membership of the EU and NATO. The negative is perhaps her slightly more left-wing ideological anchoring, but that is not the specific policy.”*
- *“Excellent representation at home and abroad, not afraid to veto laws passed by the government. I disagree but respect her decision not to stand in the next elections.”*
- *“I support international speaking; I have a problem with too much liberalism on some issues.”*
- *“I like her official support for minorities, her efforts to be moderate in her political speeches. I do not like the often too great restraint on important topics.”*
- *“I support her inclusive approach to all minorities, her principled approach, her championing of pro-European ideas, her appropriate approach to sensitive issues and her interest in environmental issues and young people. I disagree with the*

restraint and moderation with which she reacts to attacks and the political situation.”

While some individuals may expect a president to be firmer and more aggressive in certain topics, others may value a more diplomatic and collaborative approach. President Čaputová's leadership style and decision-making are influenced by a range of considerations, including the complexities of the issues at hand and the broader political landscape. Ultimately, the expectations placed on President Čaputová are subjective and may differ among the Slovak population.

Negative answers to this question, i.e. young participants who do not support at all the activities of the current President of Slovakia and disagree with her, were 10.3%.

- *“I do not agree with supporting Ukraine, supporting a war in which we should not meddle.”*
- *“I do not agree with the corresponding support for Ukraine.”*
- *“I disagree: Not strong enough, not confrontational enough, even where she should be (towards the coalition).*
- *“Disagree with pro-Americanism.”*

It is obvious that probably no president will have 100% support from the residents of a given country since people's opinions differ. Individuals have diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and priorities. People's opinions are shaped by various factors such as political ideologies, personal experiences, cultural influences, and socioeconomic status. It is natural for a diverse population to have differing perspectives on governance, policies, and leadership styles. Additionally, the complexity of societal issues and the inherent trade-offs involved in decision-making mean that not all citizens will agree with every decision made by a president. Therefore, some level of disagreement and varying levels of support are to be expected in a democratic society. However, based on the data obtained, we can confirm that the majority of young people participating in our survey support the activities of the current president.

Question 18 is the last question of our questionnaire and also the most comprehensive. It read as follows:

18. What changes or improvements would you like to see in the political scene of the Slovak Republic?

With this question we wanted to find out the general opinion of young people about the political situation in Slovakia and what changes they would like to see. Although it is quite a general question, it could also lead our respondents to comment on what they consider important and where they see room for improvement. Some of them even mentioned concrete steps and expressed their opinion in a comprehensive way. Although they have already expressed their satisfaction in the previous questions, instead of a yes or no option, this question allows us to look deeper into their views. Many respondents said that there are many changes they would like to see. Some also commented on corruption, which is unfortunately a common political issue in Slovakia. A frequent response has also been a change of government.

Other topics on which respondents commented were real estate and food prices, financial literacy of the population, education not only of the citizens but also of politicians, retirement, and standard of living.

Here are examples of some of the answers:

- *“Perhaps most of all improved business environment and reduced tax burden, reduced energy dependence on Russia's energy industry, and increased investment in domestic nuclear power plants and renewables. Likewise, greater decentralization and financial autonomy of regions and municipalities to the state and higher investment in culture.”*
- *“Much could be written, but we need to start from the basics. The biggest problem is the voters. So far, we still have democracy, i.e. power comes from the people. “*
- *“In order to form a strong opposition that has something to offer the voters. At the moment it is so fragmented that people do not know who to vote for, even if they know who they do not want to vote for. The opposition is very weak, even though it has a lot to offer in terms of plans and values.”*

- *“An end to the use of vulgarisms, a reduction in the amount of misinformation, empty populist talk. More professional debate, more decency, more contact with the regions. Emphasis on topics that really matter (the national debt, healthcare, education, tax burden, the state of roads, differences between regions).”*
- *“So that it is not vulgar, and people are nicer to each other, so that it is rather 'boring', that there are experts and not populists, so that they don't lie and don't attack basic human instincts.”*
- *“That the liberal parties start to address the older generation of people and also not only the western Slovakia and so convince them not to vote only for evil because the older generation and the eastern Slovakia do not understand the views of the liberals and this needs to be explained to them.”*
- *“That such positions should be held by people educated in the field and with experience, so that people who have been prosecuted or accused cannot hold office or be a member of a political party.”*
- *“To solve long term problems for which there is no courage (reduction of pensions, partial charging for health care, ecological transformation...).”*

It is clear from the answers that young people do call for change, but as some respondents also said, there are many answers to what could be changed in Slovakia, as in many other countries. Improving the political situation in the country is a very complex issue involving many aspects. The answers of our respondents show their interest in politics, their desire to express their opinion and also their desire for improvement. At the same time, they show frustration and fear.

Such concerns affect not only young people but the whole population. Zuzana Čaputová also commented on this topic in a recent interview for TA3 television where she said: *“I think there is a high level of frustration, fear and disappointment in Slovakia after the last few years associated with the corona virus, inflation, food prices, war and so on. It is this frustration and anger that is often misused by some political parties. They give people a specific target, which group, which politician is to blame. Politics has been reduced to a struggle to eliminate the enemy. Politics naturally involves disputation, finding the best solutions. But here the conflict is politics. The problem with this is that if it remained only between political parties, it wouldn't hurt so much. Now the huge problem is that the conflict*

and hatred is being carried further - into families, workplaces and so on. Groups of people are being formed who are being led to resist.” (Zuzana Čaputová, 2023)

Conclusion

The participation of women in politics is crucial in promoting gender equality and influencing the range of policy issues that are considered, as well as the types of solutions proposed. Having more women in politics brings many benefits for both women and men. As evidenced by this thesis, increasing the number of women elected to office results in more policies that prioritize quality of life and reflect the needs of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities. Women's participation in politics has a profoundly positive and democratic impact on communities, legislatures, political parties, and the lives of citizens, and it helps ensure that democracy delivers results.

In the theoretical section of the thesis, our initial focus was on the historical journey of women obtaining the right to vote and the struggles some women faced in achieving this right. We also discussed the role of women in global politics, transitioning from world leaders to Slovak female politicians, including the first Slovak women who entered the political arena. While today, entities like the European Union support our efforts towards gender equality, women in the past encountered greater challenges. We highlighted the notable figure of Iveta Radičová, a prominent and vocal politician who served as Slovakia's first female prime minister. Her impressive track record in public service and achievements in various fields exemplify the opportunities available to women in leadership positions. In addition to other Slovak politicians, we mainly focused on Zuzana Čaputová, the current Slovak president, who is already better known to the younger generation, on whom we later focused. Undoubtedly, she has a huge influence on Slovaks with her activities, communication with the public, and overall appearance.

In the empirical part, we created a questionnaire that was used to find out the opinions of young people on the specific questions we were interested in. We later evaluated the questionnaire and also added a graphic representation of our respondents' answers. Before creating the questionnaire, we made three hypotheses, which we can now confirm or refute thanks to the questionnaire.

1. Hypothesis: The majority of young individuals regard residence within a democratically governed nation as a significant priority.

When considering this hypothesis, question No. 5 in the questionnaire helped us: How important is it to you to live in a democratically governed country? As many as 64.7% of respondents answered that it is very important for them and 20.6% that it is

important for them. Based on these answers, we can say that the hypothesis was confirmed.

The subject of democracy is a very important topic for President Čaputová, as it is for many young Slovaks, and that is why we included it in our questionnaire. We comment more on this issue in the empirical part during the evaluation of the questionnaire.

2. Hypothesis: There is a propensity among a greater portion of young individuals to align with liberal ideologies as opposed to conservative viewpoints, exhibiting an inclination towards endorsing a liberal executive leadership

According to the results of our questionnaire, the hypothesis that the majority of the respondents consider themselves as liberal has been confirmed. Specifically, 67.5% of the respondents consider themselves as completely or mostly liberal, based on their response to question 6. To further support this hypothesis, we also related it to Zuzana Čaputová, who is a liberal head of state. The responses to questions 10 and 14 indicate that more than 60% of the respondents are satisfied with the government of Zuzana Čaputová and her activities so far.

The inclination of young people in Slovakia towards liberalism rather than conservatism can be attributed to several factors. One key reason is the generational shift in values and attitudes that has been observed in many societies, including Slovakia. Younger individuals often prioritize progressive ideals such as individual freedoms, social equality, and diversity, which are typically associated with liberal ideologies. Čaputová's background as a lawyer and activist symbolizes a break from traditional political elites, offering a fresh and alternative perspective on governance. Her emphasis on dialogue, cooperation, and consensus-building appeals to young individuals who seek a more collaborative and participatory approach to decision-making.

3. Hypothesis: The political orientation and actions of President Čaputová significantly influence the ideological perspectives, civic engagement, and socio-political attitudes of the young generation.

The findings of this diploma thesis highlight the significant influence that women in Slovak politics, particularly figures like Zuzana Čaputová, have on the youth population. The research has shown that young people in Slovakia hold a positive view of Zuzana Čaputová, appreciating her progressive stance and commitment to change, which confirms the third hypothesis of this diploma thesis.

Moreover, the study has underscored the importance of having more women in politics, not only as representatives but also as role models for young individuals. Women bring unique perspectives, experiences, and priorities to the political arena, enriching the decision-making process and promoting inclusivity. By embracing the contributions of women in politics and nurturing the aspirations of the younger generation, Slovakia can pave the way for a more inclusive, equitable, and vibrant political landscape that reflects the diverse voices and aspirations of its citizens.

Resumé

V tejto diplomovej práci sa venujeme najmä vplyvu žien v slovenskej politike na mladých ľudí. Na získanie potrebných údajov sme použili rešerš a následnú analýzu týchto informácií. Pre lepšie pochopenie problematiky sa v teoretickej časti venujeme významu volebného práva žien, ich dôležitej úlohe v politike, konkrétnym ženám v Slovenskej politike, pričom podrobnejšie rozoberáme pôsobenie a vplyv Zuzany Čaputovej. V empirickej časti popisujeme spočiatku vzťah mladých ľudí k politike, dôležitosť informovanosti a vzdelania. Poslednú kapitolu venujeme vyhodnoteniu dotazníka, ktorý sme zvolili ako kvalitatívnu metódu pre získanie informácií.

V prvej kapitole sa venujeme veľmi významnej časti tejto práce, a to prečo je zastúpenie žien v politike dôležité. Otázka rodovej rovnosti je dnes pomerne často spomínanou témou, no ženy v politike prinášajú omnoho viac než rovnosť a vyváženosť. Ženská účasť v politickom procese môže viesť k vytváraniu inovatívnej politiky a efektívnym riešeniam pre spoločnosť, pretože majú sklon kreatívne pristupovať k problémom. Ich zapojenie do politiky prináša širokú škálu perspektív a skúseností. Ich životné cesty, problémy a priority sa môžu odlišovať od tých mužských, čo prispieva k lepšiemu pochopeniu potrieb celej spoločnosti. Zvolenie viacerých žien do politiky zabezpečuje, že politické rozhodnutia budú lepšie odzrkadľovať rozmanitosť spoločnosti. Taktiež môžu slúžiť ako vzor pre mladé dievčatá a mladých ľudí vo všeobecnosti. Keď vidia ženy zastávať významné politické funkcie, môže to posilniť ich sebavedomie a presvedčiť ich, že aj oni môžu dosiahnuť veľké úspechy. Mladí ľudia potrebujú pozitívne vzory, ktoré im pomôžu veriť vo vlastný potenciál.

V druhej kapitole sústreďujeme našu pozornosť nato, ako sa dostali ženy k právu voliť. Volebné právo žien má svoje korene v dlhej a bohatej histórii. Po celom svete ženy bojovali za svoje práva, vrátane práva voliť a byť volené. Tento boj nebol ľahký a často bol sprevádzaný odporom. Napriek tomu sa ženy postupne presadzovali a získavali právo vyjadriť svoj hlas prostredníctvom volebných práv.

Ďalšia kapitola rozoberá už konkrétne mená významných slovenských političiek. Slovensko, ako mnohé iné krajiny, má svoju históriu v politike, kde sa ženy postupne začínali presadzovať. Prvé významné ženy v politike na tomto území evidujeme už z čias Československa. Právnička a politička Milada Horáková zastávala demokratické, socialistické a feministické hodnoty no jej život bol tragicky ukončený, keď sa stala obeťou politicky motivovaných súdnych procesov v 50. rokoch 20. storočia. Alžbeta Mrázová-

Filipčíková bola významnou osobnosťou slovenského národného hnutia v 19. storočí. Bola zástankyňou práv žien a vzdelanosti a aktívne sa zúčastňovala na kultúrnych a politických aktivitách v období slovenského národného povstania. Jej úsilie prispelo k posilneniu úlohy žien v spoločnosti a k podpore slovenskej národnej identity. Približujúc sa bližšie k dnešnej dobe, Ivetu Radičovú možno považovať za jednu z významných žien v slovenskej politike. Ako prvá žena zastávala funkciu premiérky Slovenska v rokoch 2010 až 2012. Predtým, než sa stala premiérkou, zastávala viaceré významné funkcie v slovenskej politike, vrátane funkcie ministerky práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny. Jej prítomnosť na politickej scéne priniesla zmenu a predstavila nový prístup k politike. Bola významnou postavou v politickom zjednotení krajiny v období počas ekonomickej krízy a politických zmien. Celkovo je Iveta Radičová považovaná za významnú osobnosť slovenskej politiky nielen pre svoje politické postavenie, ale aj pre svoje úsilie o reformy a prelomy v tradíciách politického vedenia na Slovensku.

Ďalšou významnou postavou v slovenskej politike je Zuzana Čaputová, ktorá sa stala prvou ženou zvolenou za prezidentku Slovenska v roku 2019. Jej víťazstvo symbolizuje posun k rovnosti a tolerancii v Slovenskej politike. Ako prezidentka Slovenskej republiky sa zasadzuje za hodnoty transparentnosti a právneho štátu, čo je kľúčové pre spravodlivý a demokratický systém. Jej odhodlanie bojovať proti korupcii a nepriaznivým praktikám v politike prispieva k zlepšeniu integrity verejných inštitúcií a posilneniu dôvery občanov vo vládu. Okrem toho, Zuzana Čaputová sa venuje aj otázkam životného prostredia a ľudských práv. Jej aktívna účasť v týchto oblastiach ukazuje jej záväzok k ochrane životného prostredia a zabezpečeniu rovnakých práv pre všetkých občanov. Tieto témy sú dôležité nielen pre Slovensko, ale aj pre celosvetovú politickú agendu.

Vplyv žien v politike na mladých ľudí je zreteľný. Ženy v politike slúžia ako vzory a inšpirácie pre mladú generáciu. Ich prítomnosť dokazuje mladým ľuďom, že aj oni môžu dosiahnuť vysoké pozície a ovplyvňovať spoločenské zmeny. Ženy ako Zuzana Čaputová ukazujú mladým ľuďom, že odvaha a oddanosť môžu mať veľký vplyv a že aj jednotlivci môžu mať hlas v politike.

Hlas mladých ľudí v politike je čoraz dôležitejší. Mladá generácia je budúcnosťou každej krajiny a ich zapojenie do politického procesu je nevyhnutné pre demokratické fungovanie spoločnosti. Ženy v politike majú potenciál motivovať mladých ľudí k účasti vo verejnom živote a podnecovať ich k aktívnemu zapojeniu sa do politického rozhodovania.

Možno konštatovať, že úloha žien v politike je nevyhnutná a neoceniteľná. Ich prítomnosť prispieva k rôznorodosti, rovnováhe a lepšej reprezentácii záujmov celej spoločnosti.

Slovenské političky poskytujú mladým ľuďom vzory a inšpiráciu, ktorá ich motivuje k účasti vo verejnom živote a aktívnemu zapojeniu sa do politického rozhodovania. Ich úspechy ukazujú, že aj ženy môžu dosiahnuť výnimočné veci a ovplyvňovať priebeh dejín.

V úvode empirickej časti popisujeme vzťah mladých ľudí k politike a prečo je ich účasť v politickom dianí významná. Politika ovplyvňuje všetky aspekty života a je základnou súčasťou demokratického procesu. Vzdelávanie mladých ľudí o politike im pomáha pochopiť, ako funguje ich krajina a spoločnosť a ako môžu ovplyvniť tieto procesy svojimi názormi a hlasmi. Taktiež ich motivuje k aktívnemu občianstvu, čo zahŕňa účasť vo voľbách, sledovanie verejných politických diskusií a angažovanie sa v dobrovoľníckych aktivitách. Vzdelávanie o politike tiež pomáha rozvíjať kritické myslenie a analytické schopnosti u mladých ľudí, čo im umožňuje lepšie rozlišovať medzi rôznymi politickými názormi a informáciami. Ďalej je dôležité pre prevenciu manipulácie, keďže s narastajúcim vekom sú mladí ľudia viac vystavení politickým správam a informáciám. Pomáha rozpoznať manipuláciu, klamstvá a skreslené informácie, čím sa stanú menej náchylní k politickému zneužitiu. Napokon, vzdelávanie o politike umožňuje mladým ľuďom pochopiť rôznorodosť politických názorov a perspektív, čo môže viesť k tolerancii voči iným názorom a k schopnosti konštruktívne diskutovať o politických témach. Celkovo vzdelávanie detí a tínedžerov o politike je kľúčové pre budovanie informovaných, aktívnych a zapojených občanov, ktorí sú schopní podieľať sa na demokratickom procese a prispievať k lepšiemu fungovaniu spoločnosti. Mladí ľudia predstavujú budúcnosť spoločnosti a ich zapojenie do politiky zaručuje, že ich hlasy a názory budú vypočuté v rozhodovacích procesoch. Je dôležité sa rozprávať o politických témach už s tínedžermi, pretože to pomáha budovať ich politickú gramotnosť a vedomosti o spoločenských otázkach. Vedie ich to taktiež k občianskej a politickej angažovanosti aj v neskorších fázach ich života.

V porovnaní s tínedžermi majú mladí dospelí zvyčajne rozvinutejší zmysel pre občiansku angažovanosť a hlbšie chápanie politických otázok. Je pravdepodobnejšie, že si vytvorili vlastné názory na základe osobných skúseností, vzdelania a oboznámenia sa s rôznymi inými názormi. Mladí dospelí sa tiež častejšie aktívne zúčastňujú na politických diskusiách, volia vo voľbách a zapájajú sa do politických aktivít s cieľom dosiahnuť pozitívne zmeny vo svojich komunitách a v spoločnosti ako celku.

Pre mnohých mladých ľudí je dôležité členstvo Slovenska v EÚ, čomu sa venujeme v druhej kapitole empirickej časti. Členstvo v Európskej únii prináša krajinám niekoľko výhod. Jednou z hlavných výhod je ekonomická prosperita, pretože členstvo v EÚ umožňuje

voľný pohyb tovarov, služieb, kapitálu a ľudí medzi členskými krajinami. To podporuje obchod a investície, čo môže viesť k hospodárskemu rastu a tvorbe pracovných miest.

Okrem toho, členstvo v EÚ prináša aj politickú stabilitu a bezpečnosť. Spolupráca medzi členskými krajinami v rámci EÚ pomáha riešiť spoločné problémy a konflikty, čím sa zvyšuje bezpečnosť celej Európy. Členstvo v EÚ tiež umožňuje krajinám spolupracovať na riešení globálnych výziev, ako sú zmena klímy, migrácia a terorizmus.

Ďalšou výhodou členstva v EÚ je možnosť využívať finančné prostriedky EÚ na rozvoj infraštruktúry, vzdelávania, vedy a inovácií. Tieto fondy môžu pomôcť krajinám zlepšiť svoju konkurencieschopnosť a životnú úroveň obyvateľov. Niektorí Slováci môžu byť nespokojní s členstvom Slovenska v Európskej únii z rôznych dôvodov. Medzi tieto dôvody môžu patriť obavy o stratu suverenity a nezávislosti, obavy o ekonomické dôsledky členstva, kritika byrokracie a regulácií EÚ, alebo nesúhlas s niektorými politikami a rozhodnutiami prijatými na úrovni EÚ. Nespokojnosť môže byť aj spôsobená nedostatočnou informovanosťou alebo nedorozumeniami o výhodách a nevýhodách členstva v EÚ, čo len znova vyzdvihuje dôležitosť vzdelania a komunikácie o týchto témach už s mladými ľuďmi. Mnoho mladých na Slovensku vidí výhodu členstva v možnosti štúdia a práce v iných členských štátoch EÚ. Týmto spôsobom sa otvárajú nové príležitosti na získanie vzdelania a pracovných skúseností v zahraničí. Mladí ľudia môžu využívať rôzne programy mobility a financovania, ako napríklad program Erasmus+ alebo Európsky sociálny fond, ktoré podporujú vzdelávanie, odbornú prípravu a zamestnanosť mladých ľudí v rámci EÚ.

V poslednej kapitole empirickej časti sme vďaka dotazníku dokázali bližšie nahliadnuť na názory mladých ľudí na Slovensku. Dotazník obsahoval 18 otázok a odpovedalo naň 286 respondentov. Jednalo sa prevažne o študentov stredných a vysokých škôl ale aj o mladých pracujúcich ľudí do 30 rokov. Dotazník bol rozdelený na tri hlavné časti. V prvej časti sme zisťovali demografické údaje našich respondentov (pohlavie, vek, pracovné zameranie). Ďalej nasledovali otázky o politickej situácii na Slovensku, o ich politickom presvedčení či dôležitosti demokraticky riadeného štátu. Pýtali sme sa ale aj na to či majú pocit, že je hlas mladých v politike dostatočne vypočutý a zastúpený alebo či si myslia, že je na Slovensku dostatok žien v politike. Väčšina mladých ľudí však uviedla, že sa o politiku zaujímajú len do určitej miery, nemajú pocit, že ich hlasy sú v Slovenskej politike dostatočne zastúpené a nie sú spokojní so súčasnou vládou na Slovensku. V tretej časti dotazníku, ktorý sa zameriaval viac na zastúpenie žien v slovenskej politike a konkrétnejšie na činnosť Zuzany Čaputovej ako prezidentky tejto krajiny však mladí ľudia

uviedli, že sú spokojní s aktivitami a vládou súčasnej hlavy štátu a je pre nich dôležité žiť v demokratickej krajine.

Z odpovedí respondentov vyplýva určitá frustrácia a nespokojnosť z nedostatočnej reprezentácie ich záujmov a názorov v politickom procese, čo môže viesť k ich pasívnejšiemu postoju. Zároveň im však záleží na budúcnosti tejto krajiny a nie sú voči politike ľahostajní. Mnoho mladých ľudí dokázalo v dotazníku vyjadriť svoj nesúhlas veľmi konštruktívnym a slušným spôsobom a zároveň pochváliť a vyzdvihnúť to, s čím boli spokojní a čo sa im páčilo.

Z dotazníku ale aj z celkovej štúdie vyplýva, že mladí ľudia túžia po zmene a zlepšení fungovania krajiny, no zároveň oceňujú správne kroky a snahu niektorých politikov. Väčšina respondentov vyzdvihla súčasnú prezidentku Slovenskej republiky Zuzanu Čaputovú na ktorú sme sa v tejto práci zamerali najviac spomedzi významných slovenských političiek. Vyjadrujú súhlas a chválu, ktorú u iných prezidentov a politických lídrov nevideli. Aj vďaka tomu predstavuje Zuzana Čaputová inšpiratívnu a vplyvnú osobnosť pre mladých ľudí na Slovensku.

Bibliography:

UNWOMEN. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation (2023). Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

WOLCHIK, Sharon. Women Presidents and Prime Ministers in Post-Transition Democracies : Iveta Radičová: The First Female Prime Minister in Slovakia. Washington, (2017). DOI:10.1057/978-1-137-48240-2_12. Retrieved from:: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315066885_Iveta_Radicova_The_First_Female_Prime_Minister_in_Slovakia

GLOBSEC. Centre for Global Europe: Before the EP Elections: Young People in Slovakia Not Too Interested. Bratislava, (2019). Retrieved from:: <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/ep-elections-young-people-slovakia-not-too-interested>

TASR. Slovensko: Čaputová: Členstvo v EÚ prináša Slovensku mnohé benefity i investície. (2023). Retrieved from:: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/caputova-clenstvo-v-eu-prinasa-sl/711347-clanok.html>

President of the Slovak Republic - Office of the President. Official program: Prezidentka vystúpila s prejavom v Európskom parlamente. (2022). Retrieved from:: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/prezidentka-vystupila-s-prejavom-v-europskom-parlamente/>

ZASTÚPENIE NA SLOVENSKU. Zastúpenie na Slovensku: V akom stave je sloboda a demokracia na Slovensku? (2023). Retrieved from::

https://slovakia.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/v-akom-stave-je-sloboda-demokracia-na-slovensku-2023-06-14_sk

ŽGRLÍKOVÁ, Katarína. Predčasné voľby 2023: Slovenské ženy boli medzi prvými. Ako sa im podarilo získať volebné právo? (2023). Retrieved from::

<https://www.ta3.com/clanok/902413/slovenske-zeny-boli-medzi-prvymi-ako-sa-im-podarilo-ziskat-volebne-pravo>

MORGAN, Melissa. All FSI News: Slovak President Optimistic about Democracy, but Warns about Russian Misinformation (2024). Retrieved from:

<https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/slovak-president-optimistic-about-democracy-warns-about-russian-misinformation>

WALKER, Shaun. Europe: Zuzana Čaputová, the spiritual liberal who beat Slovakia's populists. Bratislava (2019). Retrieved from:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/13/zuzana-caputova-slovakia-president-spiritual-liberal-progressive-values>

Volden, Craig, Alan E. Wiseman and Dana E. Wittmer (2010) "The Legislative Effectiveness of Women in Congress," Retrieved from:: [http://polisci.osu.edu/faculty/cvolden/VWWomenLEP.pdf](http://polisci.osu.edu/faculty/cvolden/VWWWomenLEP.pdf).

PEPERA, Sandra. Gender, Women, and Democracy: Why Women in Politics? (2018).

Retrieved from:: <https://womendeliver.org/why-women-in-politics/>

YOUTHWIKI. Youth participation in representative democracy: Young people as voters. (2023). Retrieved from::

<https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/slovakia/52-youth-participation-in-representative-democracy>

GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ, Oľga, MESEŽNIKOV, Grigorij, ZAGRAPAN, Jozef. Európske voľby 2019 a výsledky na Slovensku: Výsledky a súvislosti (2019). Retrieved from::

<https://www.kas.de/documents/280702/280751/IVO+-+Európske+voľby+na+Slovensku+2019.pdf/9a78332e-6d1d-69e4-9855-ccfce5ccacc2?version=1.0&t=1575970045104>

TRUBANOVÁ, Mária. Women Against Violence Europe: Inspiring Thursday: Zuzana Čaputová (2020). Retrieved from: <https://wave-network.org/inspiring-thursday-zuzana-caputova/>

SPROUL, Jana. Female forward Int.: Understanding the Barriers and Benefits to Female Representation in Politics (2022). Retrieved from::

<https://www.freiheit.org/european-union/understanding-barriers-and-benefits-female-representation-politics>