

Survey Results

University Students from
Bosnia and Herzegovina,
Moldova, Montenegro,
Serbia and Slovakia

April 2019



The surveys were undertaken at **seven universities** located in **five countries**: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad), and Slovakia (Bratislava, Banská Bystrica).

- In April 2019 **1714** students were polled.

Surveys are part of a University Students Debates' project aimed at promoting democratic values among youth. The project is implemented jointly by MESA10 (Slovakia) and CEAS (Serbia) and supported by the National Endowment for Democracy.

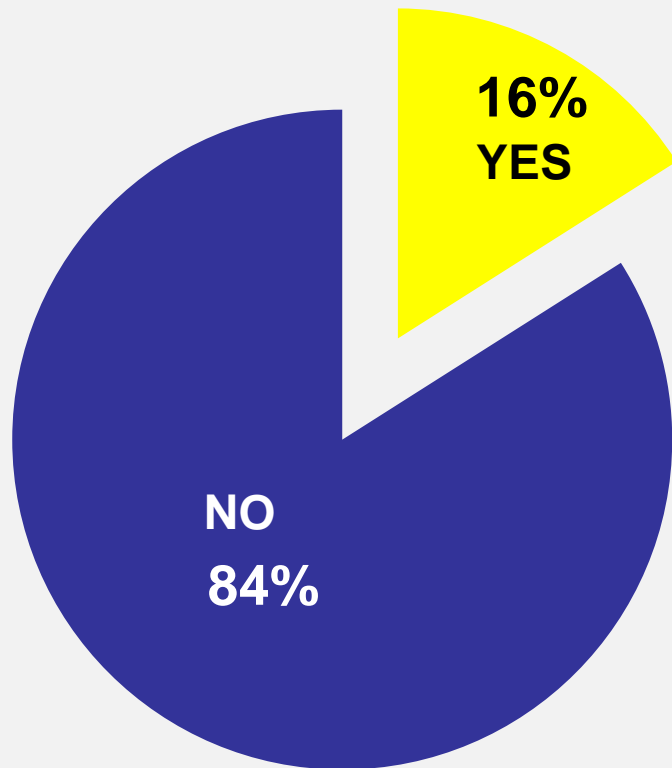
Debates among seven university teams took place
on April 8, 2019.

If not indicated differently, the following results are from two rounds of surveys- in November 2018 and April 2019.

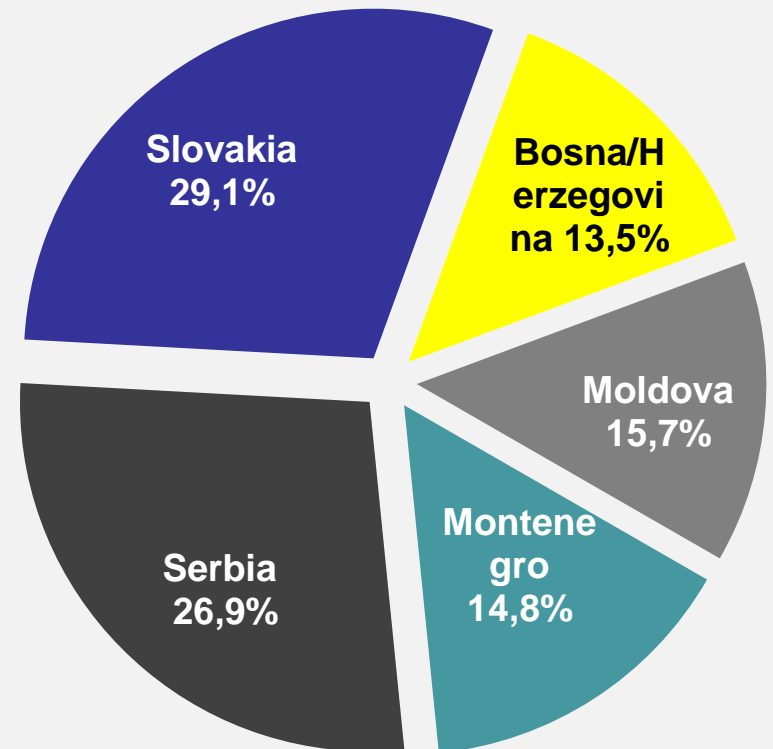
Students' debate survey: April, 2019

Sample structure

Did you attend/watch the students' debate on April 8, 2019?



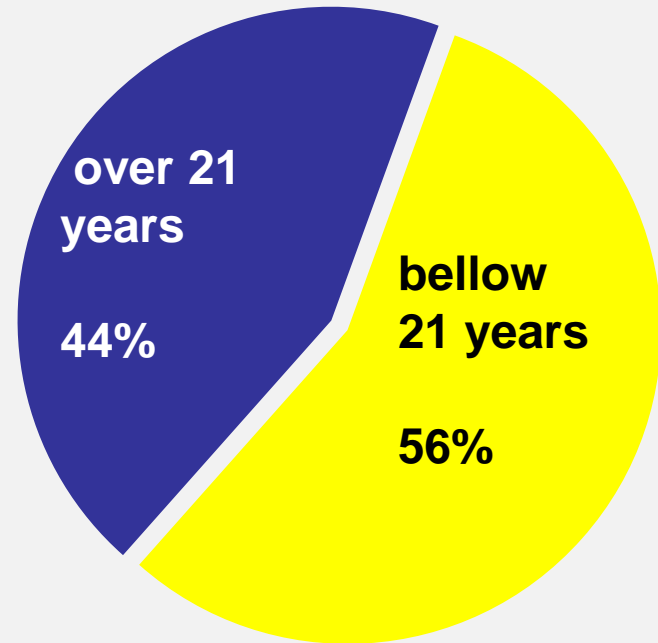
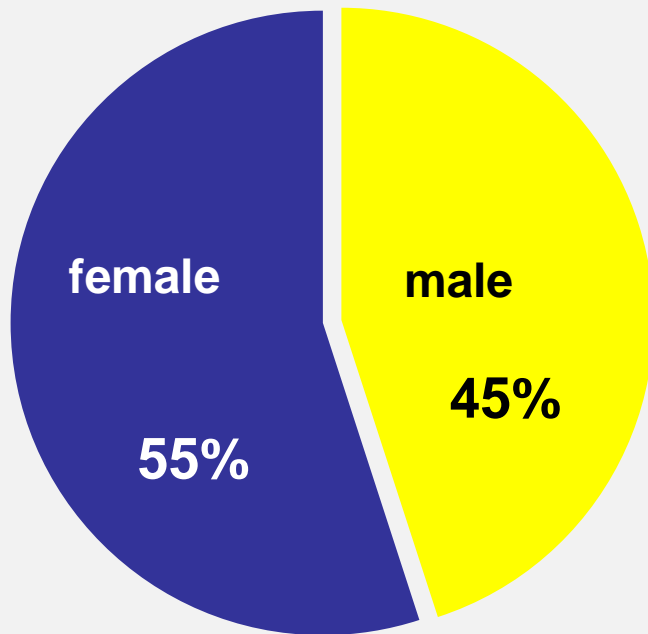
You are a student of a university in:



Total number of students participating in the survey = 1 714

Students' debate – November 2018:

Sample structure



Content:

- European Union and the European Parliament Elections
- NATO
- Perception of the history
- Civilizational belonging - East or West? + future prospects for my country
- Global developments
- Sources of information
- Students' own prospects for the future
- Conclusions

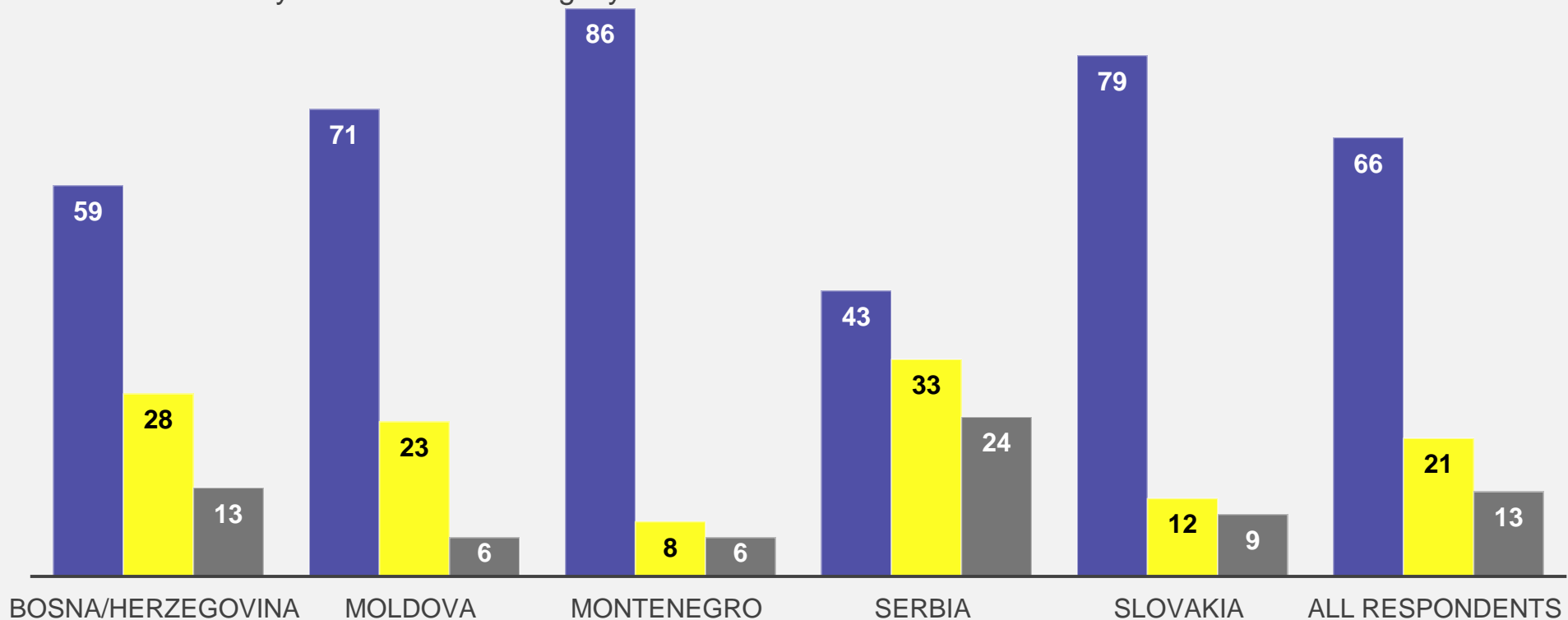
1. EUROPEAN UNION AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

EU improved its image – at least in some of the countries

Perception of the EU is better than in the Fall Survey – **2/3 of all respondents** see it as guarantor of national sovereignty and defender of values and interests (in the Fall 56%). The image of the EU is most positive in Montenegro and Slovakia, followed by Moldova, it is most critical in Serbia (Graph 1).

Graph 1: In your opinion, the European Union is: (responses in %)

- Guarantor of your national sovereignty and defender of values and interests
- A bureaucratic institution slowing your country's development
- A threat to your national sovereignty



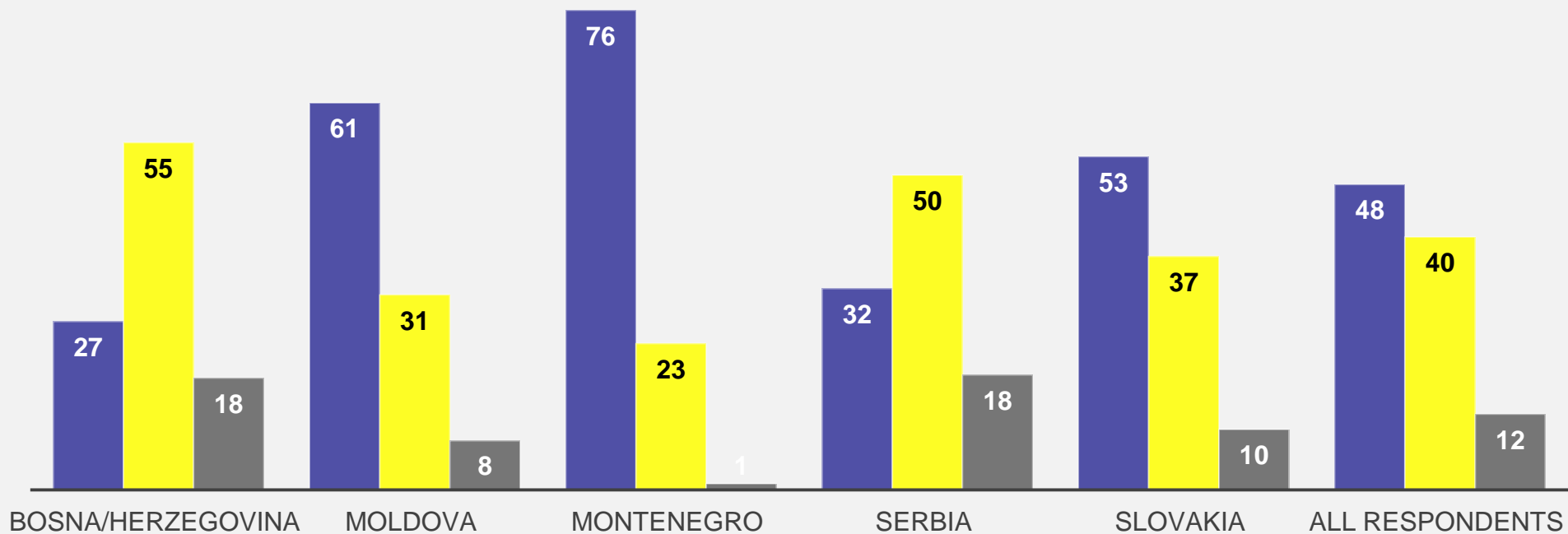
What the EP election would bring?

Expectations regarding the results of upcoming (at time of survey) EP elections are split – **48% expect strengthening of the pro EU forces**, 40% nationalist and xenophobic ones.

The students in Montenegro have most optimistic expectations, Serbia and Bosnia/Herzegovina are on opposite side (Graph 2).

Graph 2: In your opinion, the upcoming May 2019 EU elections will strengthen: (responses in %)

- Pro-EU parties
- Nationalist and xenophobic parties
- National and xenophobic parties so much that it will be very difficult to form the EU Commission

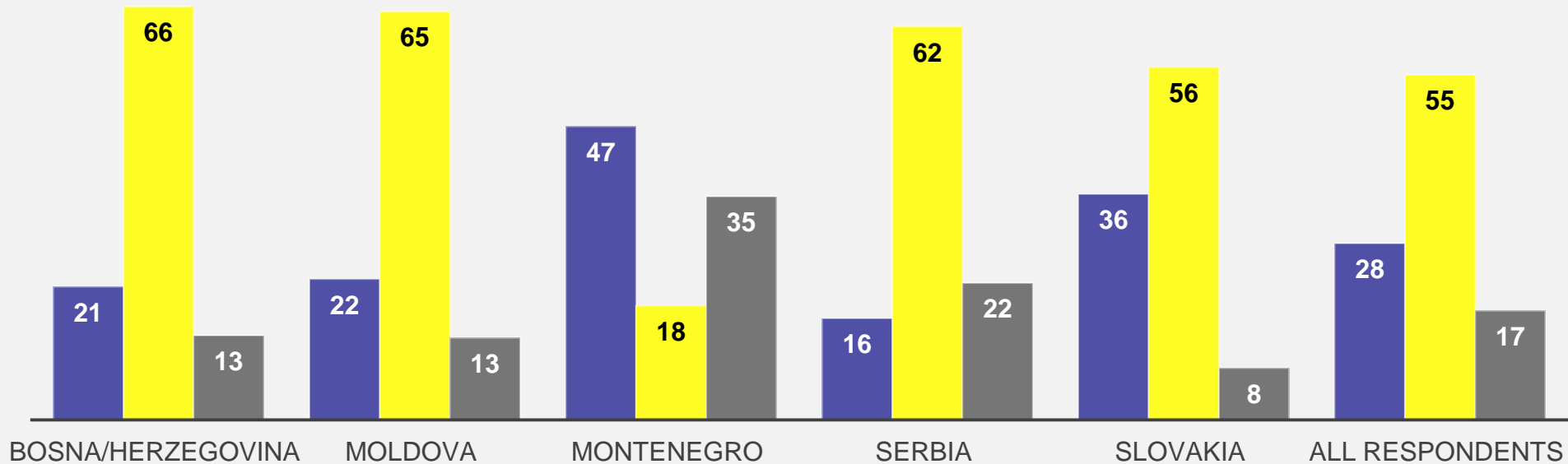


No enlargement hope related to the EP elections

As a consequence of the European Parliament elections **the enlargement process will be more difficult** – this opinion prevails in all the countries (Graph 3).

Graph 3: As a result of 2019 May EU elections, joining the EU by Western Balkans and EU's East will be: (responses in %)

■ Easier ■ More difficult ■ Impossible



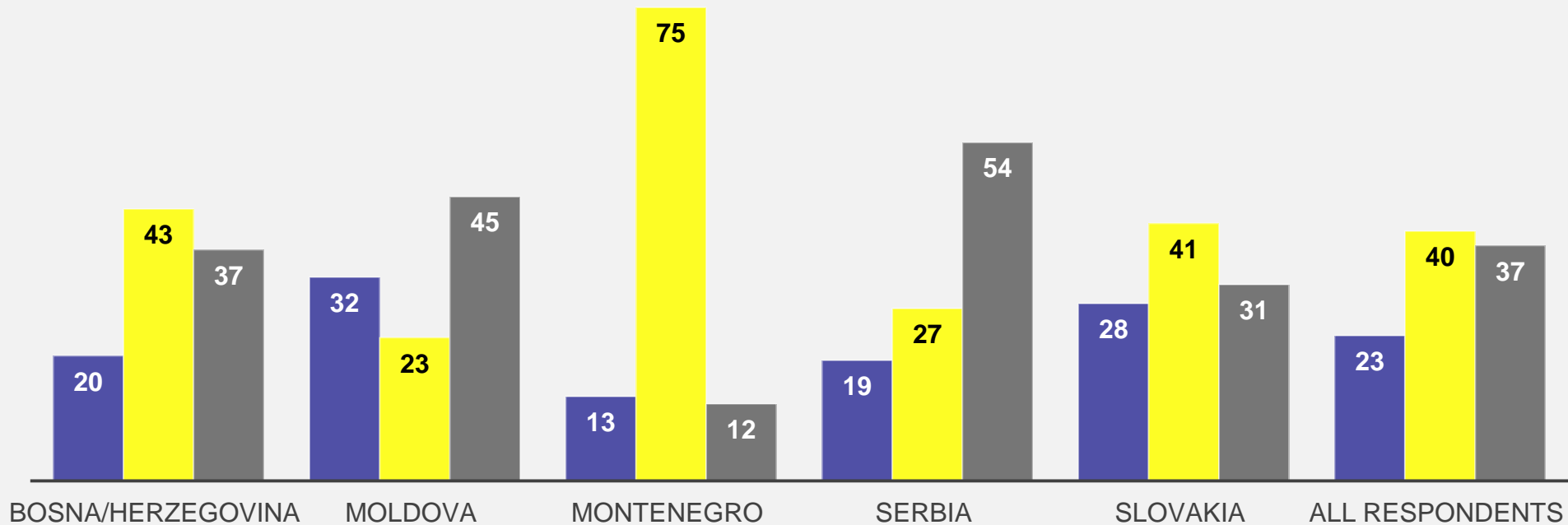
Source: April 2019

Enlargement pessimism prevails

Only minorities of respondents across the countries surveyed believe that **by 2025 all the Western Balkans countries will become EU members**, the strongest hope comes from Montenegro (Graph 4). The perception of probability of future enlargement reflects also the willingness to join the EU – Montenegro leads the Western Balkans countries in this respect.

Graph 4: In your opinion, by 2025, the EU will be enlarged by these countries: (responses in %)

■ All Western Balkans countries ■ Montenegro and Serbia ■ No country will enter the EU

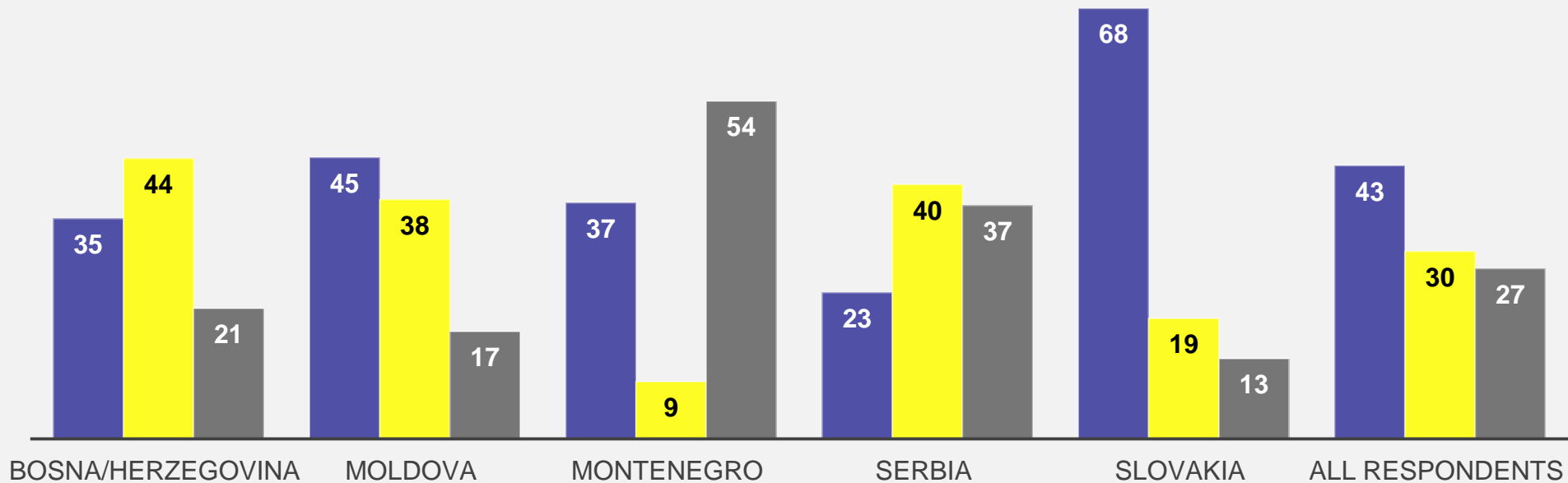


EU membership based on country's performance or EU's political decision?

Respondents from the candidate countries **do not believe that becoming an EU member depends on real progress and fulfillment of membership conditions.** On the contrary: most of them believe it would be an outcome of a political decision of the EU only or a decision of the biggest EU members (Graph 5).

Graph 5: If your country became/will become a member state of the EU, it was/will be on the basis of: (responses in %)

- Real progress and fulfilment of membership conditions
- Political decision of the EU only



Summary

- **EU improved its image – at least in some of the countries**

Perception of the EU better than in the Fall Survey – 2/3 of all respondents see it as guarantor of national sovereignty and defender of values and interests (in the Fall 56%). The image of the EU is most positive in Montenegro and Slovakia, followed by Moldova, it is most critical in Serbia.

- **What the EP election would bring?**

Expectations regarding the results of the upcoming (at time of survey) EP elections are split – 48% expect strengthening of the pro EU forces, 40% nationalist and xenophobic ones. The students in Montenegro have most optimistic expectations, Serbia and Bosnia/Herzegovina are on opposite side.

- **No enlargement hope related to the EP elections**

As a consequence of the EP elections the enlargement process will be more difficult – this opinion prevails in all the countries.

- **Enlargement pessimism prevails**

Only minorities of respondents across the countries surveyed believe that by 2025 all the Western Balkans countries will become EU members, the biggest hopes are in Montenegro. The perception of probability of future enlargement reflects also the willingness to join the EU – Montenegro leads the Western Balkans countries in this respect.

- **EU membership based on country's performance or EU's political decision?**

Respondents from the candidate countries do not believe that becoming an EU member depends on real progress and fulfillment of membership conditions. On the contrary; most of them believe it would be an outcome of a political decision of the EU only or a decision of the biggest EU members.

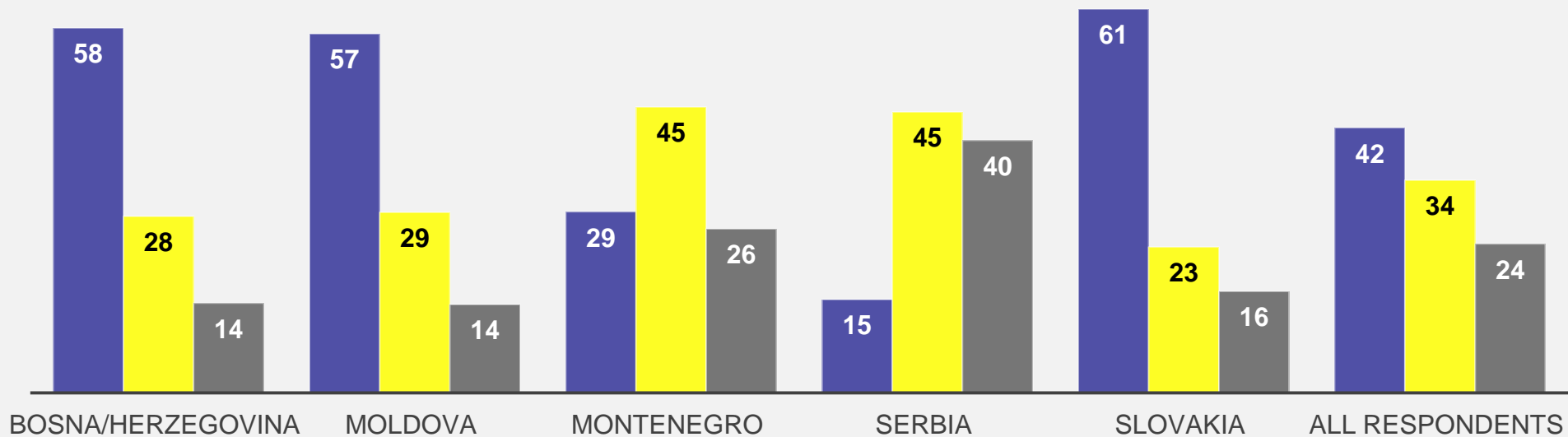
2. NATO

NATO after 70 years

On average, **43% of students see NATO 70 years after its founding more relevant than ever.** However, we see huge differences among the countries – positive view is shared by 61% Slovak students, but only by 15% in Serbia and 29% in Montenegro. In Serbia, there is also a high percentage of those who **see NATO as a threat to international peace and stability** (40%). Negative resentment towards NATO is a longstanding characteristic of Serbian students and we could presume that it is also wide-spread in the entire Serbian society. (Graph 6)

**Graph 6: In your opinion, in 2019, 70 years after its founding, NATO is:
(responses in %)**

■ More relevant than ever ■ Not relevant ■ A threat to international peace and stability

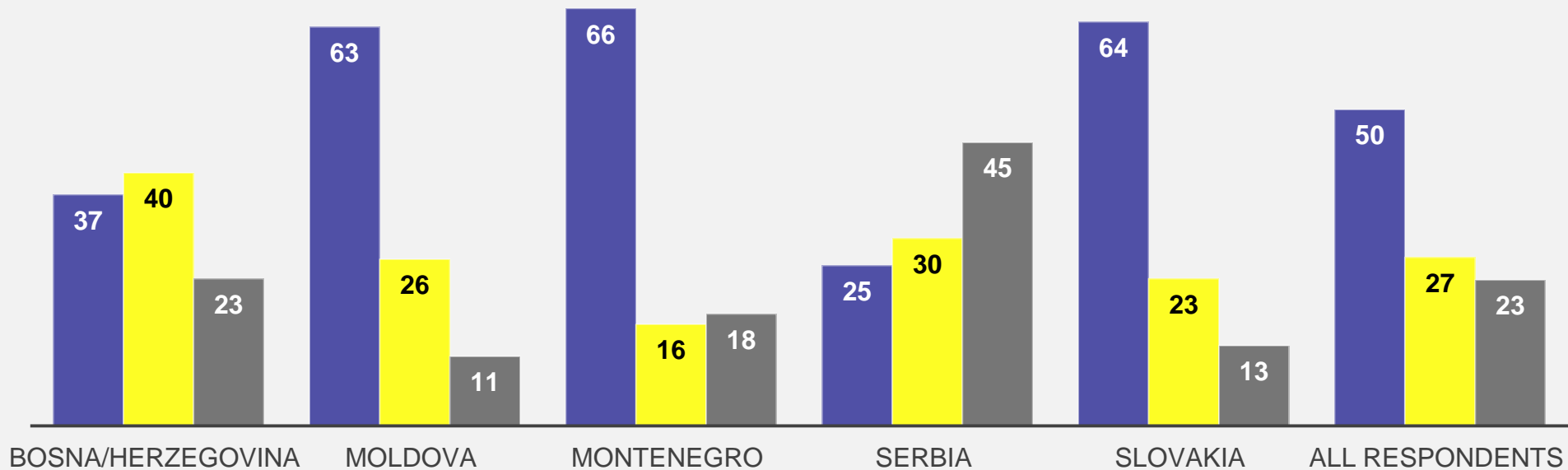


NATO members since 1999

Most students think that for the states that joined NATO since 1999, **the membership was their free and sovereign choice**. Of course, this views correlates with the overall perception of NATO. For example - in Serbia many young people think that the decision to join NATO was dictated by NATO or USA. (Graph 7)

**Graph 7: For the states that joined NATO since 1999, the membership was:
(responses in %)**

■ Their free and sovereign choice ■ A decision dictated by NATO ■ A decision dictated by the USA



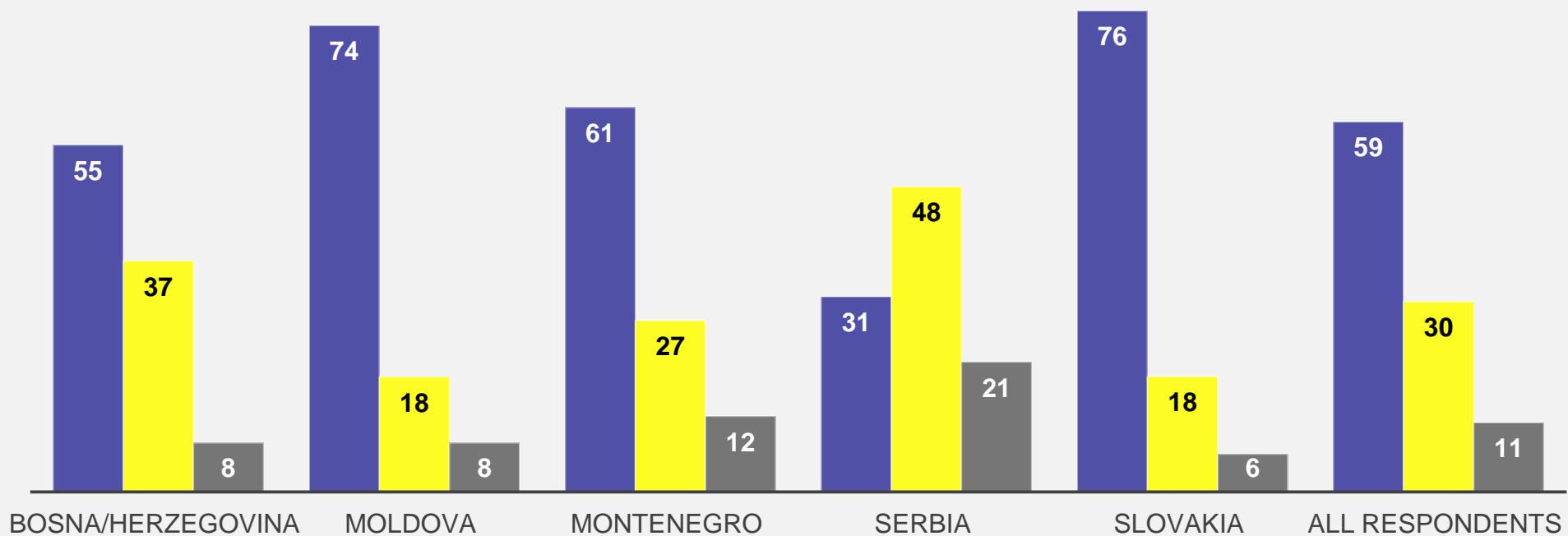
Source: April 2019

Role of NATO

We see a similar pattern in responses to question if NATO contributes to security and provides guarantees to its members – in Slovakia, **more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of young respondents agree** with that. (Graph 8)

Graph 8: In your opinion, the role of NATO is: (responses in %)

- Contributing to security and providing guarantees to its members
- Aimed against Russia
- NATO plays no role at all



Summary

- On average, 43% of students see NATO 70 years after its founding **more relevant than ever**. However, we see huge differences among the countries – positive view is shared by 61% Slovak students, but only by 15% in Serbia and 29% in Montenegro. In Serbia, there is also a high percentage of those who see NATO as a threat to international peace and stability (40%). Negative resentment towards NATO is a longstanding characteristic of Serbian students and we could presume that it is also wide-spread in the entire Serbian society.
- **Most students think** that for the states that joined NATO since 1999, the membership was their **free and sovereign choice**. Of course, this views correlate with the overall perception of NATO. For example - in Serbia, many young people think that the decision to join was dictated by NATO or USA.
- We see a similar pattern in responses to question if NATO contributes to security and provides guarantees to its members – in Slovakia, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of young respondents agree with that.

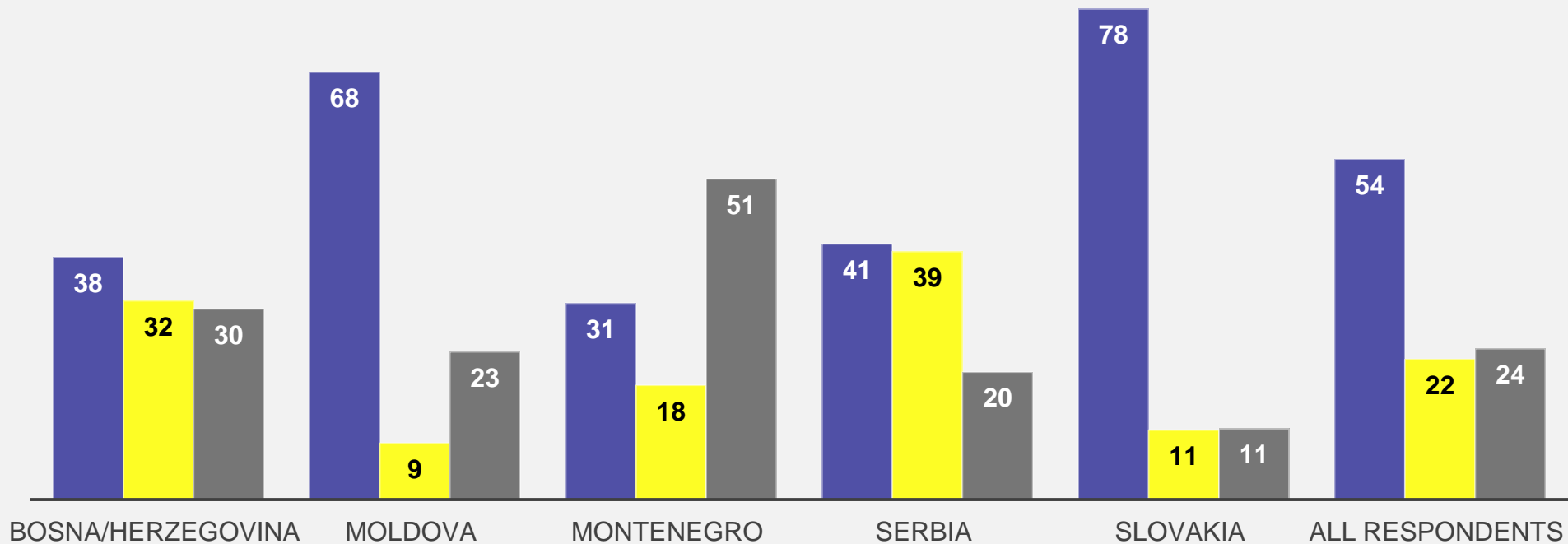
3. PERCEPTION OF HISTORY

Fall of the Berlin Wall

Respondents of our survey were born after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the revolutions of 1989 which torn down the communist regimes in CEEC. How do they see the significance of the end of totalitarianism? We have asked about two perspectives – personal and for the country. It is interesting **that the personal level** is valued more positively – **majority** agreed that „Our people became free and responsible for itself“. On the other hand, as for the country, **only 38%** responded in that way. No surprise that the Slovak students are most positive in their evaluations, whereas the Serbian students are more negative. (Graphs 9, 10)

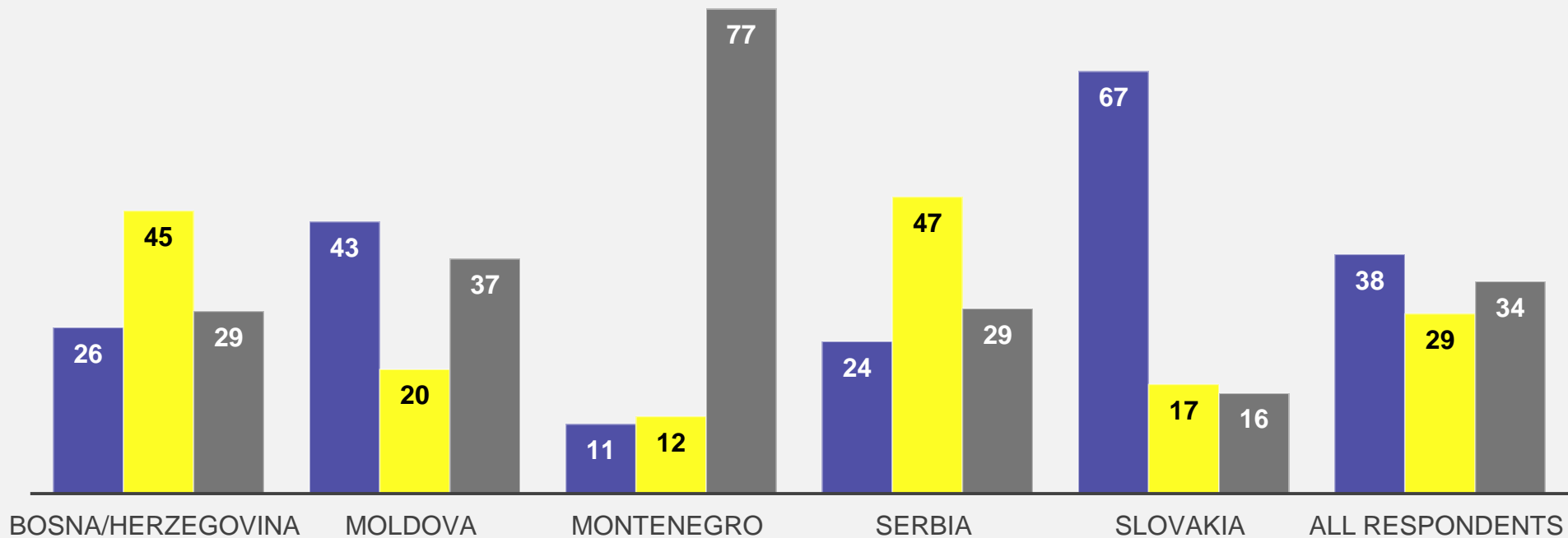
Graph 9: What significance has the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and of totalitarianism for you? (responses in %)

- Our people became free and responsible for itself
- Our people were thrown from stability to chaos
- It has no significance at all



Graph 10: What significance has the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and of totalitarianism for your country? (responses in %)

- It became free and could take responsibility for itself
- My country was thrown from stability to chaos
- It has no significance at all



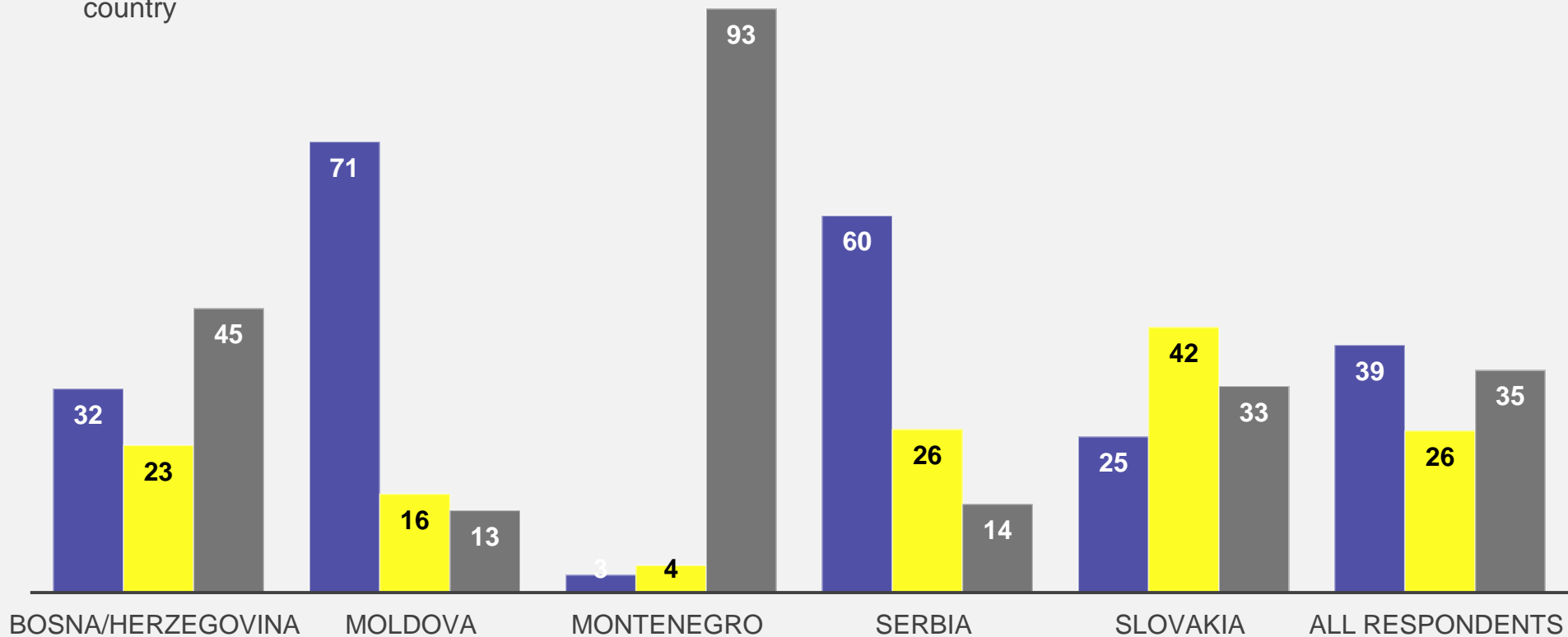
Historical achievements

We also see huge discrepancies in opinions about the biggest historical achievement of country's modern history – the Serbian and even more the Moldavian students are **looking into a more distant past** and value the end of the World War II, the other students put emphasis **more on the recent milestones** - fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of totalitarian regime and the present or future membership in the EU and/or NATO. Montenegro is leading in looking on future membership in western institutions. (Graph 11)

Graph 11: What would you consider to be biggest historical achievement of your country's modern history? (responses in %)

■ End of the World War II

■ Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of totalitarian regime in my country

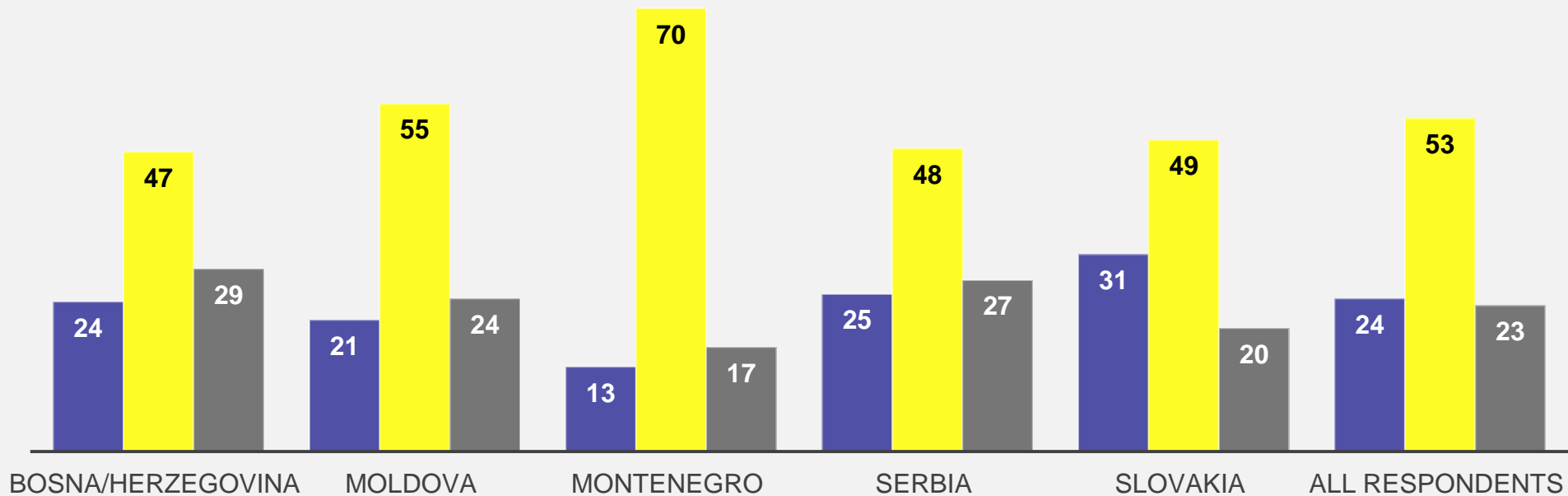


Discussing history

The transfer of intergeneration historical experience is relatively weak in all countries – it is not very often discussed with the parents. Students share the view that there is enough attention to the historical events in curricula – in Slovakia; the quest for more attention is comparatively strongest. (Graphs 12, 13)

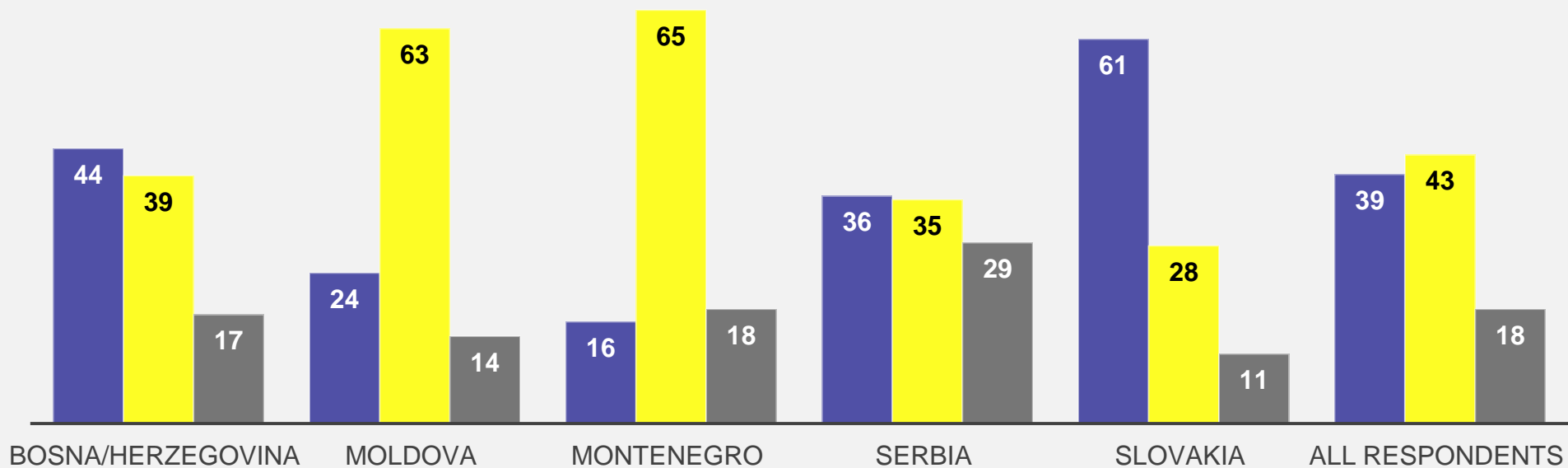
Graph 12: Did you ever discuss the Fall of Berlin Wall in 1989 and of totalitarianism with your parents? (responses in %)

■ Yes ■ Very rarely, almost not ■ Absolutely not, I do not consider these events worthy of a talk



Graph 13: Does the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and of totalitarianism deserve deeper and wider attention in the curricula of your country's school system, including universities? (responses in %)

■ Yes ■ No, it is OK as it is today ■ They do not deserve even the attention than they have



Summary

- Respondents of our survey were born after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the revolutions of 1989 which torn down the communist regimes in CEEC. How do they see the significance of the end of totalitarianism? We have asked about two perspectives – personal and for the country. It is interesting that the personal level is valued more positively – **majority agreed** that „Our people became free and responsible for itself“. On the other hand as for the country only **38% responded in that way**. No surprise that the Slovak students are most positive in their evaluations, whereas the Serbian students are more negative.
- We also see huge discrepancies in opinions about the biggest historical achievement of country's modern history – the Serbian and even more the Moldavian students are **looking into a more distant past** and value the end of the World War II, the other students put emphasis more on the recent milestones - fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of totalitarian regime and the present or future membership in the EU and/or NATO. Montenegro is leading in looking on future membership in western institutions.
- The transfer of intergeneration historical experience is relatively weak in all countries – it is not very often discussed with the parents. Students share the view that there **is enough attention to the historical events** in curricula – in Slovakia; the quest for more attention is comparatively strongest.

**4. CIVILIZATIONAL BELONGING -
EAST OR WEST?
+ *FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR MY
COUNTRY***

Civilizational belonging - present

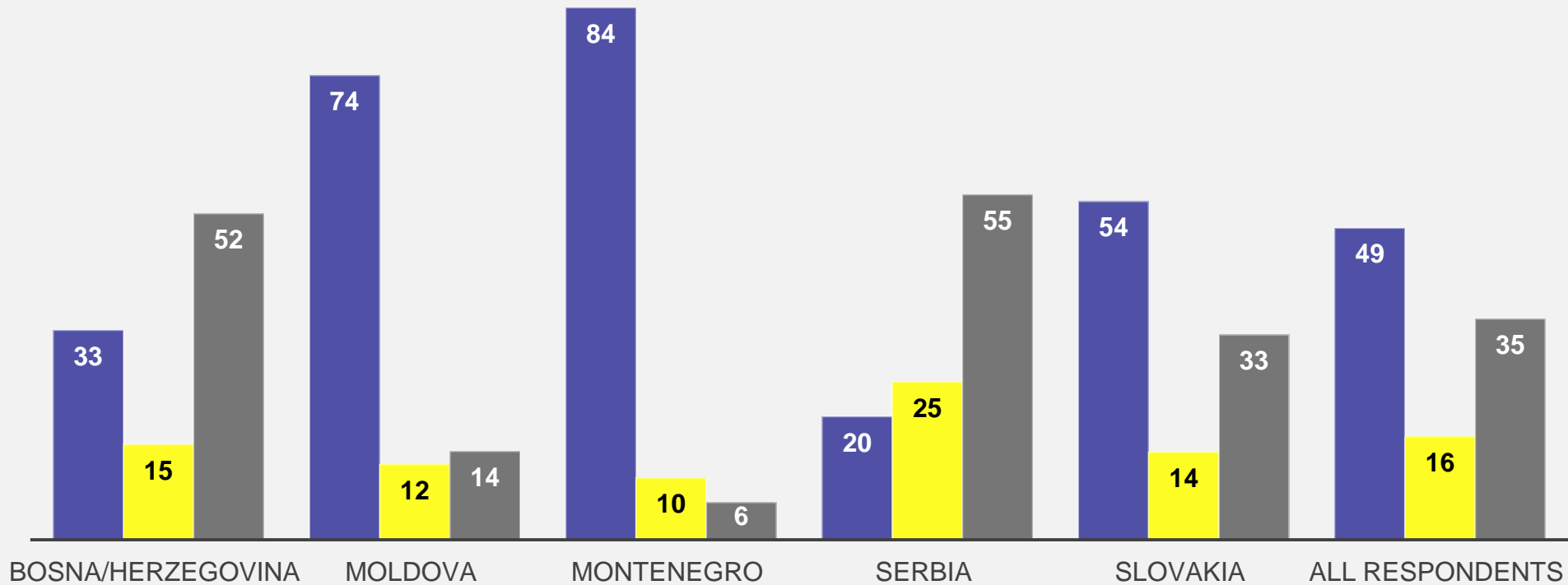
The question of civilizational belonging is very salient one – **majorities** in Montenegro, Moldova and also in Slovakia say yes to the West and its institutions. Only in Serbia the most frequent response is „**in between**“ – “my country has a special model of governance, I want it to be a part of neither the West nor the East”. Also, belonging to the East is most wide-spread in Serbia (25%). (Graph 14)

Graph 14: At the present time, where do you believe that your country belongs to: (responses in %)

■ The West

■ The East

■ In between. My country has a special model of governance and it belongs neither to the West not the East

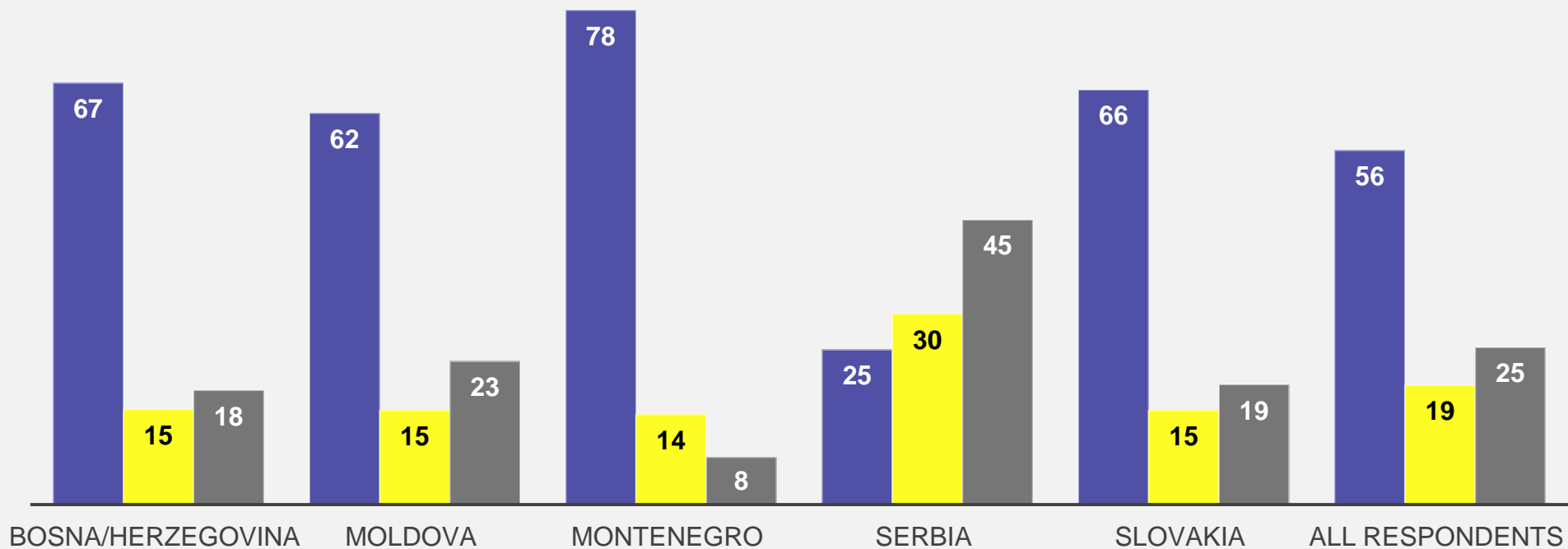


Civilizational belonging - future

With one exception – Serbia – students from all countries **want to belong to the West** in the future and to live in a system of democratic governance. (Graph 15)

Graph 15: In the future, where would you want your country to belong to? (responses in %)

- The West and its institutions (EU/NATO)
- The regimes with rising authoritarian governance
- A regime with a strong leader and substantial limitations of freedoms and liberties for groups of people

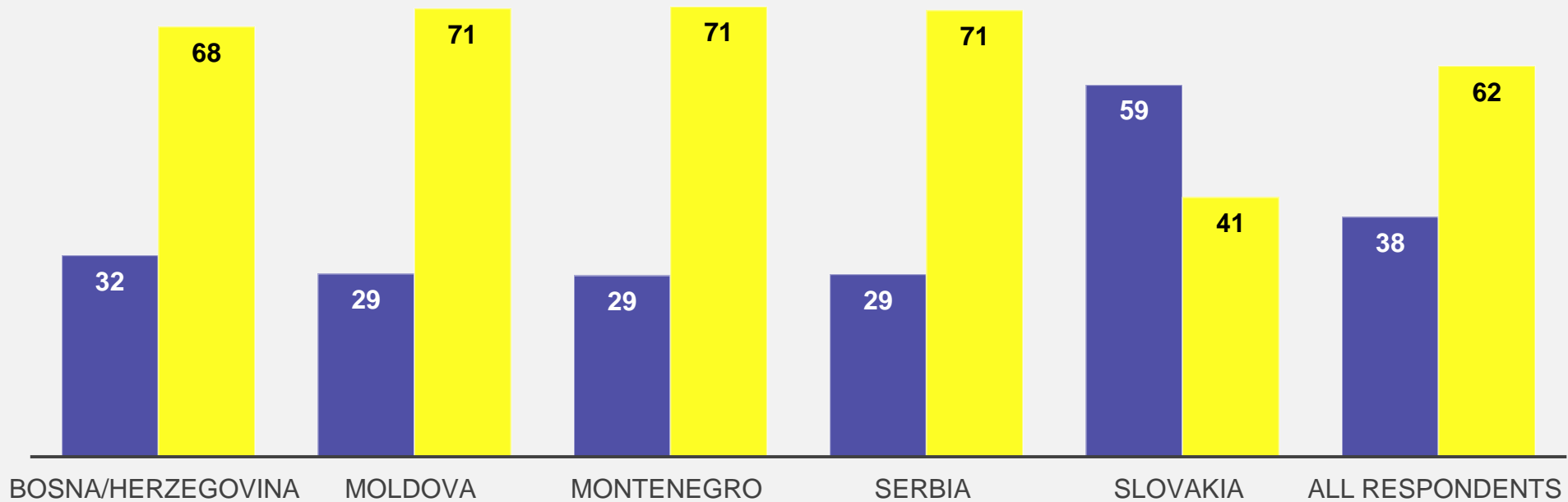


Successful countries?

However, there is a gap between reality and wishes. In all countries with the exception of Slovakia the students **see their countries as not successful**. In Slovakia, the majority of students consider the country to be successful. (Graph 16)

Graph 16: Do you believe that you live in a country that can be called successful? (responses in %)

■ YES ■ NO



Source: April 2019

Summary

- The question of civilizational belonging is very salient one – majorities in Montenegro, Moldova and also in Slovakia **say yes to the West and its institutions**. Only in Serbia the most frequent response is „**in between**“ – “my country has a special model of governance, I want it to be a part of neither the West nor the East”. Also, **belonging to the East** is most wide-spread in Serbia (25%).
- With one exception – Serbia – students from all countries **want to belong to the West in the future** and to live in a system of democratic governance.
- However, there is a gap between reality and wishes. In all countries with the exception of Slovakia the students see their countries **as not successful**. In Slovakia, the majority of students consider the country to be successful.

5. GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

Global governance

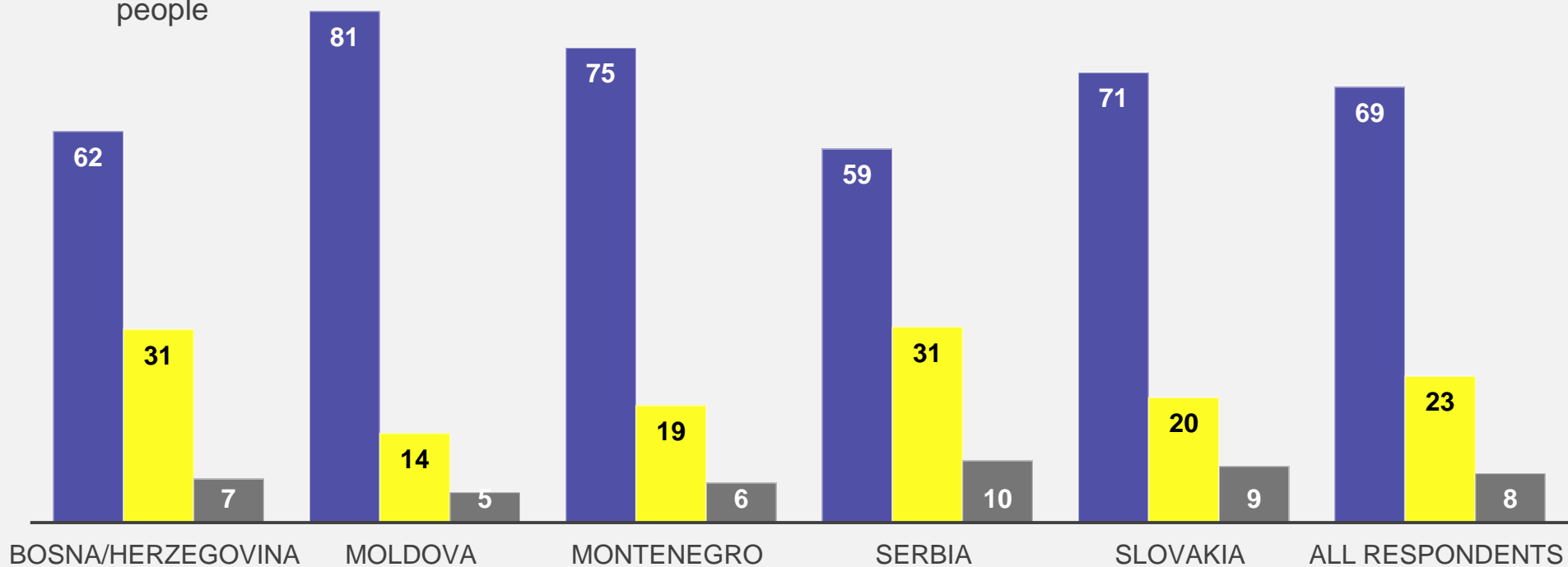
Global international affairs are **not seen with a lot of optimism** - many see that there is **more competition, nationalism and isolation and less cooperation**. More optimism is to be found in Moldova and Slovakia. As for the future, students in Montenegro are the most optimistic. (Graphs 17, 18)

Graph 17: In what kind of system of governance would you like to live? (responses in %)

■ Democracy with its institutions

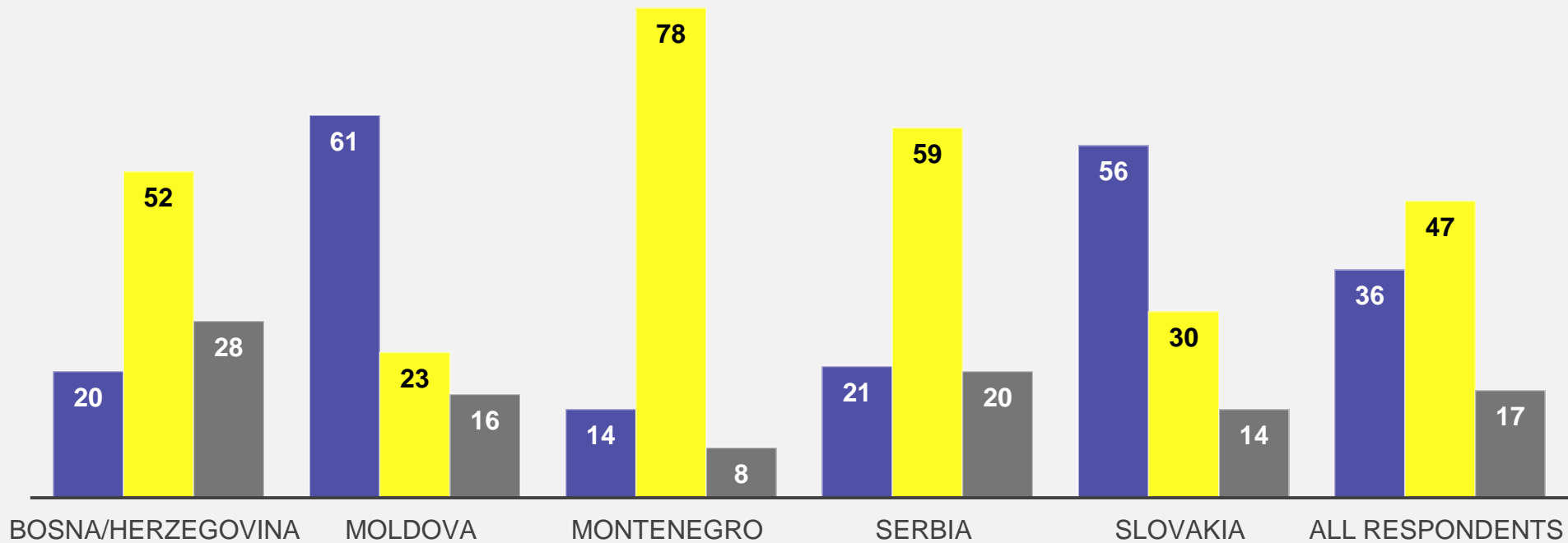
■ A regime with a strong leader and some limitations of freedoms and liberties for all citizens

■ A regime with a strong leader and substantial limitations of freedoms and liberties for groups of people



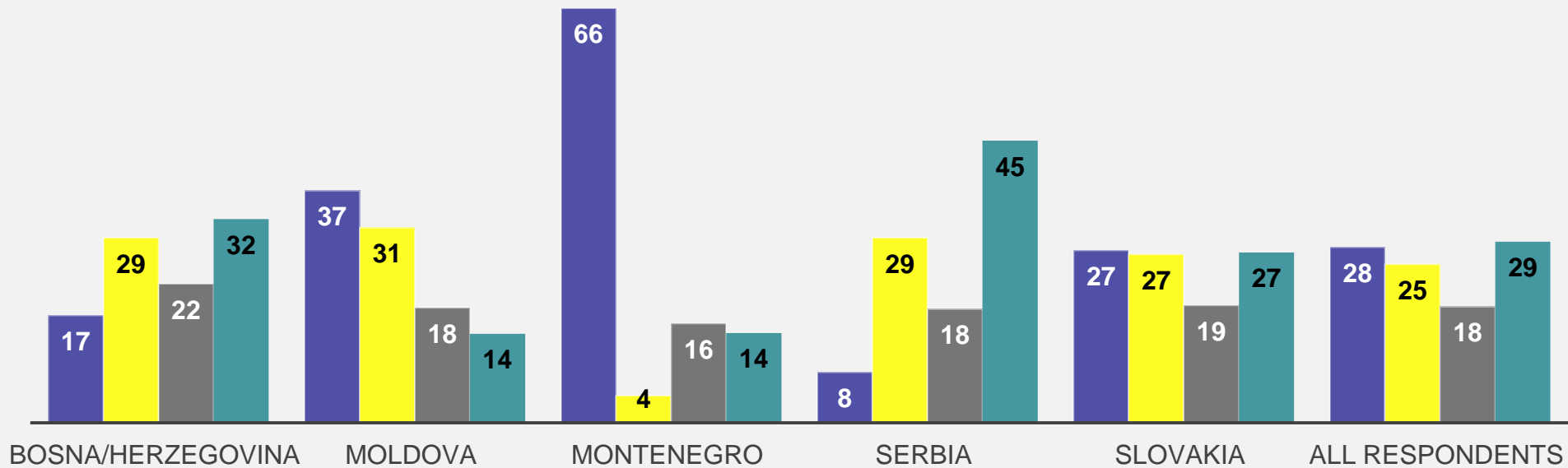
Graph 18: At present, in international affairs around the globe you are witnessing: (responses in %)

■ More cooperation ■ More competition, nationalism and isolation ■ The world is the same



**Graph 19: In the next 3-4 years, around the globe we can expect:
(responses in %)**

■ More cooperation ■ More competition ■ Same cooperation as today ■ More conflicts



Summary

- Global international affairs are **not seen with a lot of optimism** - many see that there is **more competition, nationalism and isolation and less cooperation**. More optimism is to be found in Moldova and Slovakia. As for the future, students in Montenegro are the most optimistic.

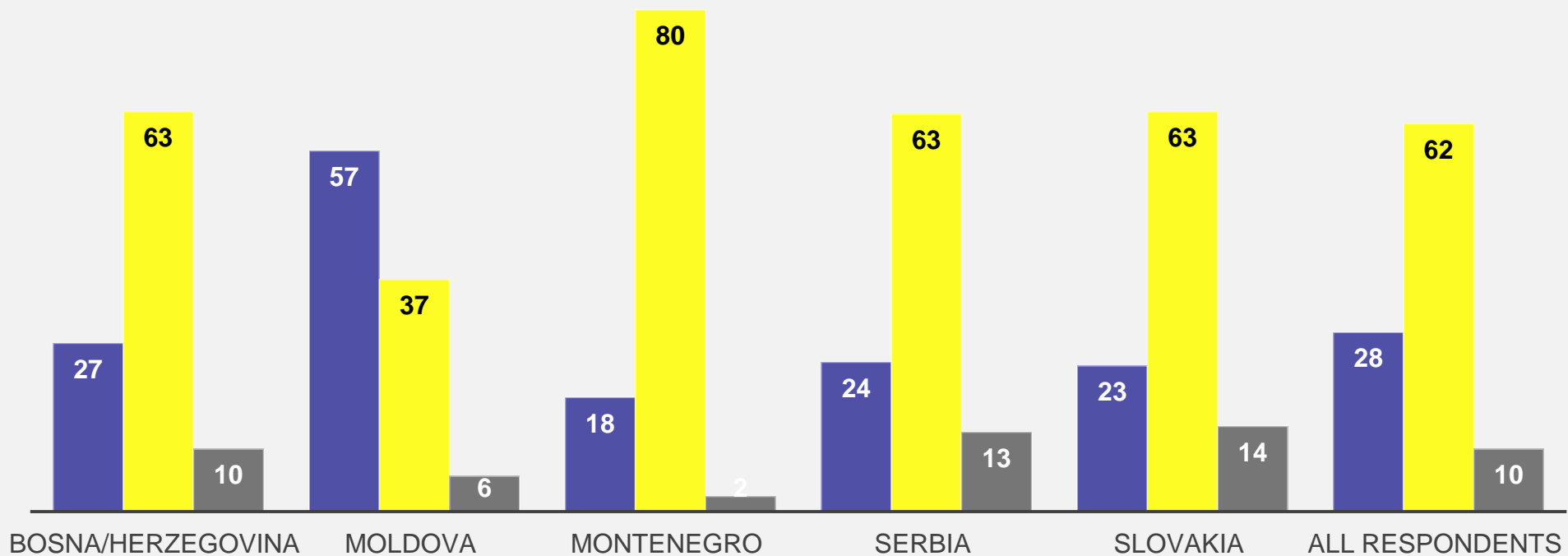
6. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Not only social media

- We know from other sources that young people take information above all from the internet and social networks, most of them do not take it for granted, **they check the information with other sources-** and that is a very positive signal. Moldovan students incline more than others to take such information for granted. Hoaxes or untrue information on social network are mostly ignored. (Graph 20, 21)

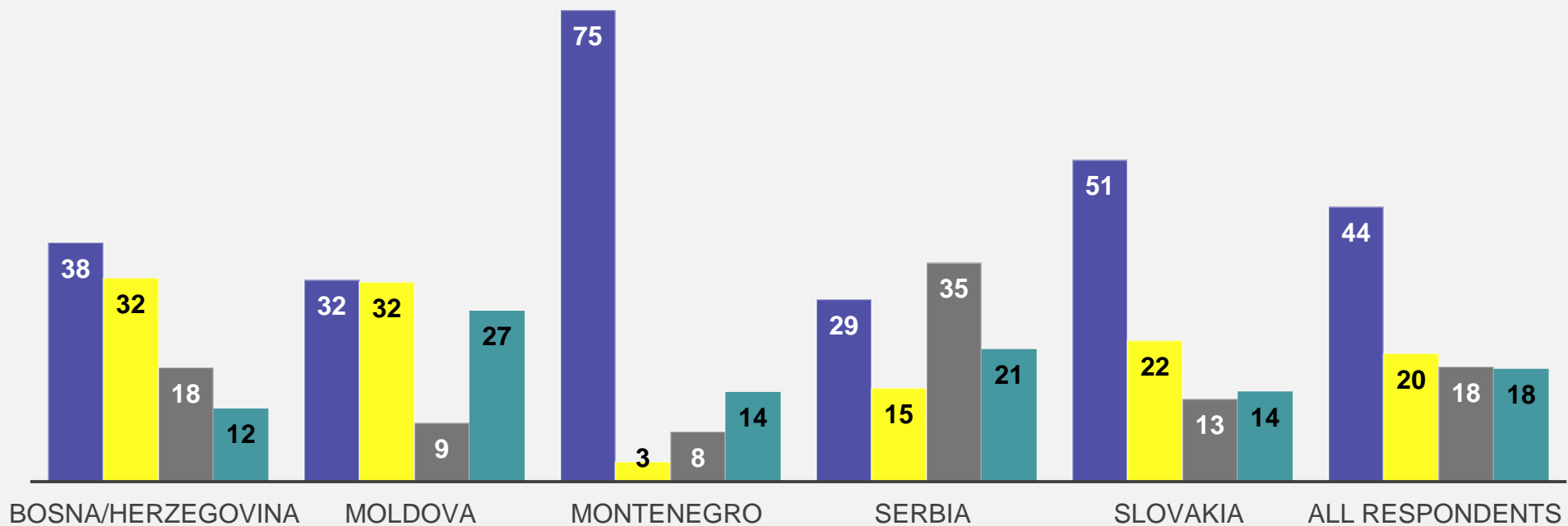
Graph 20: Do you take the information from the internet and social networks for granted? (responses in %)

■ Yes ■ No, I check it with other sources ■ Internet is not an infosource for me



Graph 21: When you encounter a hoax or untrue information on social network, what do you do? (responses in %)

■ Ignore it ■ Argue against it ■ Share it with your friends ■ Report it/Make fun of it



Summary

- We know from other sources that young people take information above all from internet and social networks, most of them do not take it for granted, they **check the information with other sources**-and that is a very positive signal. Moldovan students incline more than others to take such information for granted. Hoaxes or untrue information on social network are mostly ignored.

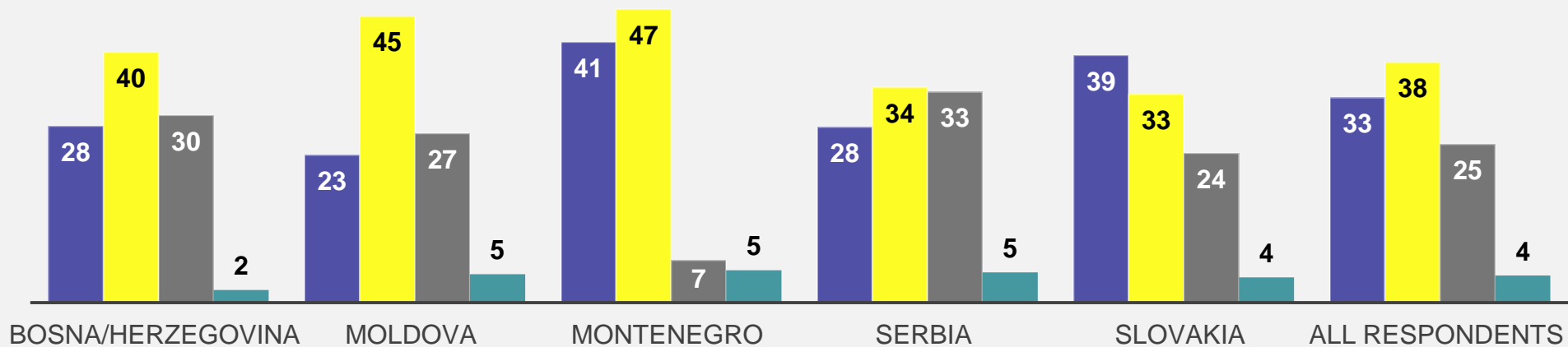
7. STUDENTS' OWN PROSPECTS AND FUTURE

Preferred job

- On average, **one third of respondents** want to work for the government or international governmental organization, the most wanted option is **to work for a private company.** (Graph 22)

Graph 22: After completing your studies, you would like to work for?: (responses in %)

- The government or international governmental organization
- Private company
- Yourself, i.e. to be self employed
- No to be employed at all

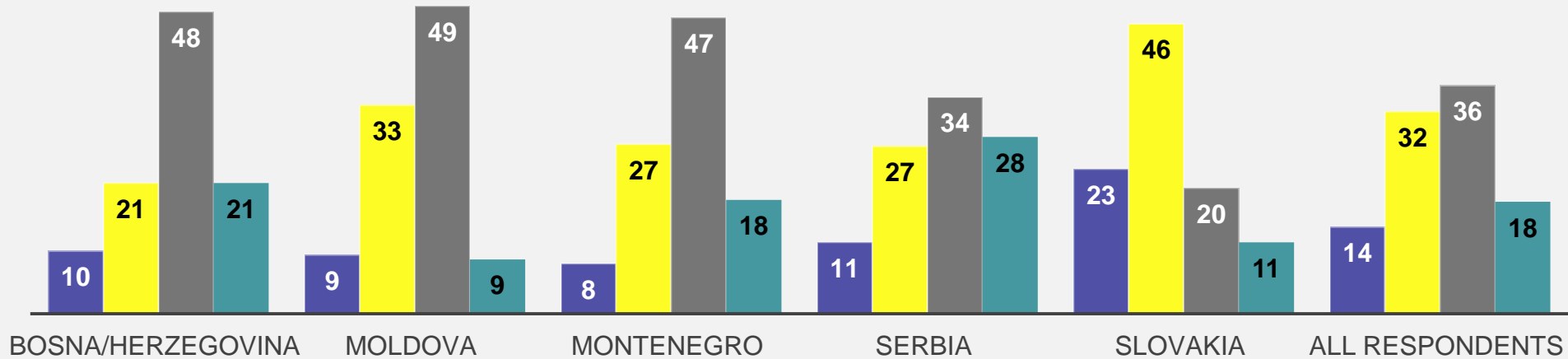


Vision of future at home

- However, young people are **not very confident about their country's future** – only minorities think it will improve significantly within the next 3-4 years whereas more think it will be worse. Regarding the countries' future development we see clear differences between the Slovak students and the students from other countries. We could conclude that **the young people living in a country which managed to join the EU and NATO see the country's future more positive**, and see the improvement of political situation. (Graph 23)

Graph 23: In your opinion, within the next 3-4 years, the political situation in your country will (responses in %)

■ Improve significantly ■ Improve slightly ■ Remain the same ■ Get even worse

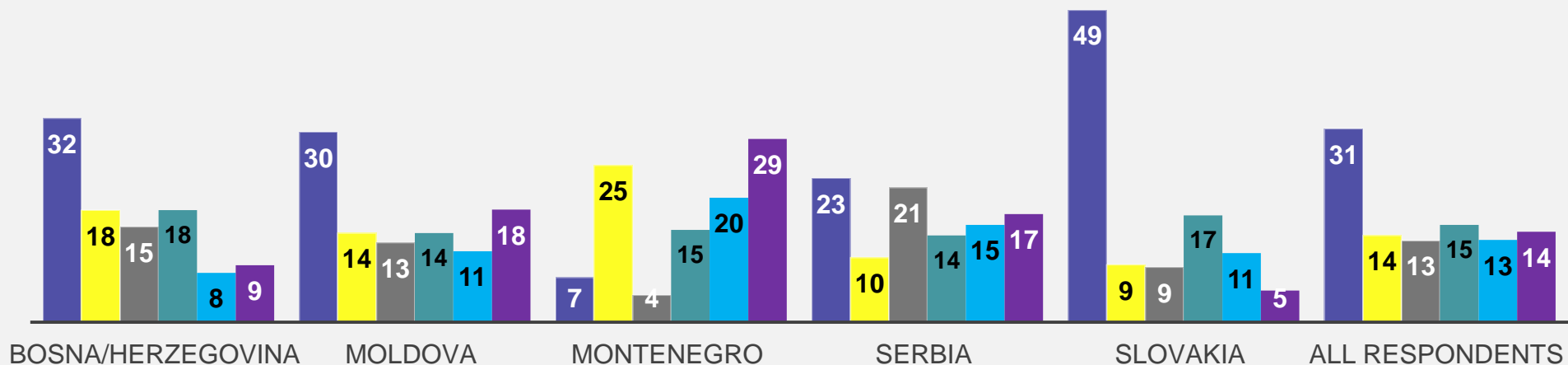


Impact on political life

- In all the countries voting is understood as the activity with greatest impact in political life participation, it is also most wide-spread. More than **half of the students (57%) see themselves as being active citizens**, in or outside the government. As for the being in the government the most active are students from Slovakia and Montenegro. (Graph 24, 25)

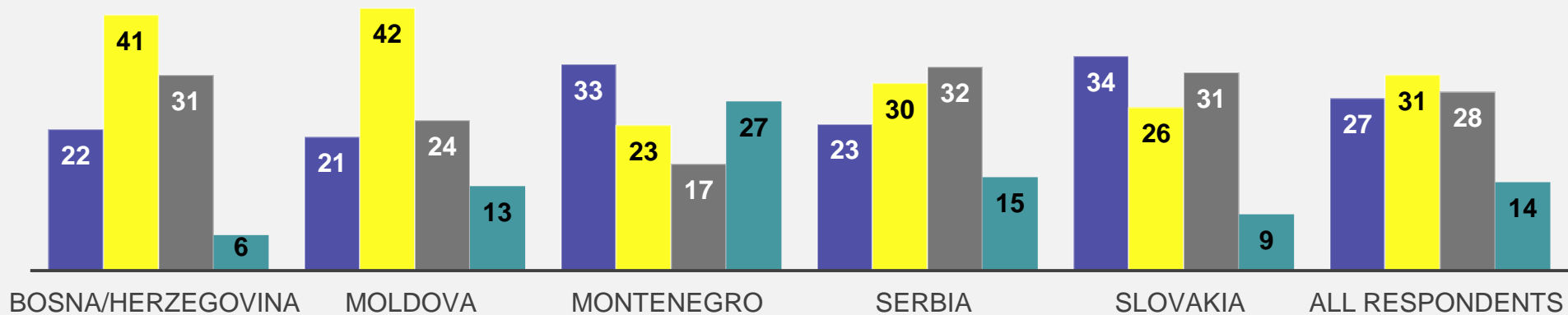
Graph 24: In your opinion, how can you have the greatest impact on political life in your country? (responses in %)

- Voting in election
- Supporting a petition
- Taking part in a demonstration
- Joining a political party
- Working in the government
- I can have no impact at all



Graph 25: What would be your most preferred way of participating in the political life of your country? (responses in %)

■ Being in the government ■ Active, but outside the gov't ■ Voting in the elections ■ No politics



8. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

- The April 2019 survey shows several similarities but also differences among the students from five countries with different political background.

Conclusions

- Above all we see that Slovak students who grew up in a country that is member of EU and NATO for 15 years are different in some views. It is most visible when we ask about the future prospects of their country (Q23) –23% of Slovak students see significant improvement, in all other countries the share of “optimists” is around 10%. Similarly – 59% of Slovaks see their country as successful, in all other countries the share of those (positively thinking) is only around 30% (Q16).

Conclusions

- The evaluations are not given by different personal characteristics but more by the objective political and social conditions which give the reasons for more optimism and belief for the future. Slovak students who have the experience from living in a country which is already integrated also more often believe that the integration process and the accession decision is based on fulfilment of criteria and the applicant's performance and not on voluntaristic decisions by outside actors (Q5, Q6).

Conclusions

- On the other hand – young people in the Western Balkans and Moldova see the integration into EU and/or NATO as good plan for their home countries – it clear from questions Q8, Q14 and others).