



The Image of the Other According to History Textbooks and in the Perceptions of Bulgarian Youth

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(The material was prepared based on an analysis of the content of history textbooks, conversations with teachers and textbook authors, a survey among students and young people, and two thematic workshops.)

The portrayal of Balkan neighbors in Bulgarian history textbooks has been a subject of controversy over the years. It is widely accepted that they sometimes encourage a biased and negative view of neighboring countries. These negative images of Balkan neighbors in Bulgarian history textbooks can contribute to tension and conflict in the region, as they reinforce stereotypes and fuel nationalist sentiments. In addition, they can hinder the joint work of countries in the region and the development of constructive relationships. In recent years, efforts have been made to popularize a more objective and balanced view of Balkan neighbors in Bulgarian history textbooks. In some textbooks, there is already an emphasis on the common cultural and historical links between countries, as well as on the positive aspects of their relationships.

Apart from textbooks, and even more than them, the media environment also has an influence in this regard. Media stereotypes play an important role in shaping the image of Balkan neighbors in the Bulgarian press, and often enter into sharp debate with the history curriculum and textbook. Increasingly, this is also happening through social media. It can be said that at present, the media environment more successfully dominates and controls the consciousness of young people than schools do.

The Battle for the Textbook: Political Context

The political and social context in which history textbooks in Bulgaria are written has been shaped by various factors over the years. From the end of the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century, Bulgaria was a monarchy and the textbooks reflected nationalist and patriotic sentiments of that time. **These textbooks emphasized the historical struggles of the country against Ottoman rule and the creation of an independent Bulgarian state.**

During the socialist period from the 1940s to the 1980s, history textbooks were focused on promoting communist ideology and the role of Russia and the Soviet Union in Bulgaria's history, with an emphasis on social history in the development of society, and special attention was paid to class struggles, uprisings, and wars based on clashes of ideologies, such as the fight against fascism during World War II. These textbooks aimed to encourage a sense of social unity and solidarity among the different ethnic groups in the country.

After the fall of communism in 1989, the country transitioned to democratic governance and history textbooks underwent significant changes. **The new textbooks aimed to present a more objective and balanced view of Bulgarian history, including both the positive and negative aspects of the country.** The textbooks also aimed to promote democratic values and the country's European integration. However, debates about the content of history textbooks in Bulgaria continue, with some critics arguing that the textbooks still promote a nationalist and biased view of history, while others argue that the textbooks are too critical of the country's past and do not instill a sense of national pride.

In recent years, there have also been concerns about the influence of external factors, such as Russia and Turkey, on the content of Bulgarian history textbooks. Some critics argue that these countries are trying to push their own interests and ideologies into the textbooks, leading to biased and inaccurate presentations of Bulgarian history.

Criticism of History Textbooks

The content of Bulgarian history textbooks has been subject to debates and discussions over the past three decades. Although efforts are made to promote a more objective and balanced view of Bulgarian history, there are still criticisms that the textbooks are biased and promote a nationalist perspective.

One of the main criticisms of Bulgarian history textbooks is that they heavily focus on the country's struggles against Ottoman rule and the creation of an independent Bulgarian state. While these events are undoubtedly important, some critics argue that the textbooks emphasize them too much

at the expense of other important aspects of Bulgarian history, such as cultural and intellectual achievements.

Another criticism of Bulgarian history textbooks is that they promote a nationalist and patriotic view of history, which can lead to a sense of superiority and exclusion of other ethnic groups. For example, some textbooks have been criticized for presenting Bulgaria as a "great" and "heroic" nation, while downplaying the contributions of other ethnic groups in the country.

There are also criticisms in the opposite direction, such as that Bulgarian history textbooks take a minimalist approach to the country's past and do not instill a sense of national pride. For example, some textbooks heavily focus on the negative aspects of Bulgarian history, such as the country's collaboration with Nazi Germany during World War II or the suppression of political dissent during the socialist period from 1944 to 1989.

School and Teaching History

School is the most powerful tool with which the state can reach every member of society. It provides an answer to the question "Who am I?" and introduces us to the national narrative, which teaches us who we are, where we are and what we strive for. Therefore, according to most researchers, the school textbook, especially in the field of history and literature education, can be seen as an "ideological product" that constructs the image of a desired and "ideal" society and then "suggests" to young people what they should be like in order to preserve this image. In this sense, the textbook is an instrument for transmitting select knowledge that perpetuates values, traditions, norms, and myths. The subjects of history and literature are key to building collective identity in modern European states from the 19th century onwards. There are different perspectives through which this is done:

- The Romantic perspective from the mid-19th century, which presents the relationship of the national state with history, culture, and language by emphasizing the importance of emotions, imagination, and individualism. This approach encourages people to emotionally connect with the past of their country and to see themselves as part of a larger national community with a common cultural heritage. In this way, the Romantic

approach to history helps to create a sense of national identity based on shared cultural traditions and experiences. In the Romantic approach to teaching history, historical events are not simply presented as a series of facts and dates, but rather as stories that evoke emotional reactions in the reader or listener. These stories often focus on heroic figures, events, or places that are seen as examples of the spirit and values of the nation.

- The empirical or factual approach after the mid-20th century, which presents the teaching of history as the transmission of knowledge based on critical thinking, where students learn to evaluate sources for bias, accuracy, and reliability. In the process of building national identity, it provides a factual basis for understanding history by presenting it as a series of objective facts and events and helps establish a common understanding of the past among different social and regional groups in a society.
- The competence-based approach - which views history as a tool for shaping civic competencies among young people and which has gained ground in the past three decades in curricula, textbooks, and especially in the methodology of work inside and outside the classroom. This approach recognizes that history is not only relevant to the past, but also has significance for the present and future. The civic approach to studying history focuses on instructing students about the institutions, values, and processes that shape society. It emphasizes the importance of democratic participation and encourages students to become active and engaged citizens. Through studying history, students learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the principles of democracy and the importance of civic engagement. It also fosters a sense of collective identity based on shared values and principles, rather than ethnic or religious affiliation.

Thus, we could summarize that the first two approaches view history as a key tool for building national identity, while the third emphasizes history and literature education as a means of building a form of collective identity - cosmopolitan and European - that transcends national identity and is more closely related to what is now called civic education. For this purpose, it is necessary to "disarm" history and detach it from the romantic narrative and empirical approach, based mainly on political and military factology.

Educational program: Structuring and Emphasis in Content

Before we examine how history education is structured in Bulgaria and what the main emphases are in the current curriculum, let us note that both the textbooks and the history program have undergone several reforms since 1989, the first of which was in 1991 when history textbooks from the previous period were banned. Since then, regular competitions for educational programs have been held, reflecting the desire for history to be seen as a tool for "reintegration" and the return of Bulgaria to the European cultural space, which would build national identity and contribute to the formation of a European identity. In this sense, history programs and textbooks had to be in sync with general European trends on the one hand, and to maintain specific national achievements and priorities on the other.

And it is precisely this that has opened the door wide to the so-called competence-based approach in teaching history, which can most tangibly be seen in the methodical guidelines for teachers, as well as at the level of the curriculum. To what extent this has been reflected in the presentation of educational content in textbooks or on the teaching process itself in the classroom is another question and we could say that to some extent romantic, factual and competency-based approaches coexist in the classroom and fight for the hearts and souls of students.

At present, history as a separate subject enters the so-called gymnasium, i.e. from 5th grade or, in other words, at the beginning of adolescence - at the age of 12. Up to this point, students have studied elements of history in the subject of Man and Society. In our opinion, it is precisely here, between 1st and 4th grade, that a strong foundation is laid on which the cornerstones of collective identity are placed. Given the age, the narrative in the classroom here is rather in the spirit of the romantic approach and the desire to build a deep emotional connection with significant personalities, events, and places of memory.

During the first two years - 1st and 2nd grade - of the four-year cycle of primary education, the main idea is for children to form the idea of Bulgaria as the homeland of all Bulgarian citizens. The leading ideas in getting to know it are related to the formation of values such as patriotism, respect for the way of life, culture and traditions of our people, respect for moral virtues and

heroism of ancestors, and respect for rules. The feeling of belonging to the homeland is illustrated with examples of famous **personalities** (*St. St. Cyril and Methodius, Vasil Levski, Hristo Botev*) and **events** (*May 24 - the Day of Slavic Alphabet, March 3 - the Day of Liberation from Ottoman Rule, September 6 - Unification Day, May 6 - St. George the Victorious, patron saint of the Bulgarian army*) related to the past and present of the native land.

The development of the temporal and spatial references of national identity continues in the following two years of 3rd and 4th grade. In addition to the bright personalities and events from Bulgarian history, the role of language, religion, and traditions for the preservation and development of the Bulgarian community (*Khan Asparuh - the Founder, Khan Krum - the Lawmaker, Knyaz Boris I - the Baptizer, Simeon the Great - the Warrior and Bookman*) is also added to the textbooks. However, the educational program formulates the task and responsibility of teachers to make students aware that, in addition to **being a citizen of Bulgaria**, the Bulgarian has formed his identity in a European context, which makes him a **citizen of Europe as well**. Based on fragments from the history of Bulgarian statehood and society in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, awareness of Bulgarian and European identity, of inalienable human rights, and civic duties as a value of modern democratic society is enriched and developed (Christianity, the role of secular education, the salvation of Bulgarian Jews, our acceptance into the EU). This also determines the appearance of the theme of "the other", which is done through lessons on the holidays and folklore of the different ethnic groups in Bulgaria.

From here on, from 5th grade to 10th grade, when compulsory secondary education ends, the history program is constructed in 2 three-year cycles:

- The first is from 5th to 7th grade, i.e. in the gymnasium or at the age of 12-14.
- The second is from 8th to 10th grade, when general education is completed.

The program is based on the principle of synchronous study of national, world and European history, which is violated at the end of both cycles, i.e. in 7th and 10th grade, which end with the study of only national history. Thus, the traditional task of the history program in modern Europe since the 19th century and until now, namely to affirm the national monopoly over time,

territory, and heroes even before the creation of the national state, is balanced by the inclusion of the geographical and civilizational context in the face of Europe and Christian values, which gradually become European ones.

Grade	Distribution of the Curriculum
5th grade	Prehistory - synchronous study of the historical heritage on Bulgarian lands; Ancient history of Europe and the Mediterranean with synchronous study of Thracian antiquity.
6th grade	European Middle Ages (5th to the end of the 15th century) with synchronous study of Bulgarian medieval history, including the Late Bulgarian Middle Ages (15th-17th centuries).
7th grade	National history (18th to the beginning of the 21st century): Bulgarian Revival and new and modern Bulgarian history.
8th grade	History of modern Europe with synchronous study of Bulgarian history (15th to the beginning of the 20th century).
9th grade	Contemporary world history with a focus on Europe and the Atlantic world with synchronous study of Bulgarian history from the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century.
10th grade	National history from the Prehistoric era to the present - beginning of the 21st century.

Foundational Accents for Building Bulgarian Identity:

The Promised Land: Regardless of whether it is for grades 1-4, 5-7, or 8-10, the beginning of Bulgarian history is invariably situated in deep antiquity, as far back as Prehistory, so that the population and its heritage living in the "Bulgarian lands in the prehistoric era" are part of the monopoly of the modern Bulgarian state. But this, as paradoxical as it may sound, is a common practice in every European history textbook and a traditional approach to identity-building - **our land belongs to us even before the appearance of the nation-state**, and it is the state's function to defend it from the outset.

Control over the ethnogenesis: In the context of what has been said above, it seems normal that the process of forming the Bulgarian nationality begins even before the appearance of the nation-state: in its formation, not only the Slavic and Bulgarian tribes that arrived with the Great Migration of Peoples but also the old autochthonous population of the Bulgarian lands before the time of the state - the Thracians - take part. Thracian golden treasures are part of Bulgarian cultural heritage, heroes like Spartacus and Orpheus are "ours," the kingdom of Odrysians and even Thracian heroes who participated in the Trojan War. From the Bulgarian point of view, the natural and only recognized competitor in the dispute over antiquity are the Greeks, who firmly and sustainably control Antiquity. Our other neighbors - the Turks, Romanians, and Serbs - are absent from the curricula and lessons related to the history of the Old World. The case of ancient Macedonia is particularly interesting - according to the textbook, on the one hand, the ancient Macedonians are not Greeks - they spoke a different language, but on the other hand, the textbook does not provide any possibility for contemporary Macedonians to find legitimacy for their antiquity in the way we do with the ancient Thracians.

Why the Middle Ages are important: In our perception, the Middle Ages once again **give Bulgarians a sense of superiority based on its chronological advantage over its neighbors.** "Our history" begins right from the beginning and only the history of the Greeks, who have integrated not only ethnicity but also the history of Byzantium into their national narrative, can compete with the Bulgarian national myth. Romanians and Macedonians are absent from textbooks as a narrative of state. The Turks appear at the end of the Middle Ages, and Serbia is only spoken of as a political factor in the Balkans from the end of the 12th century, the time of Stefan Nemanja, and often the emphasis is on the fact that the Serbian clergy and rulers sought their legitimacy through the Bulgarian state and church, even when, as during the time of Stefan Dushan, they had political and military domination.

The Middle Ages have a special role in shaping modern Bulgarian identity - **it reinforces the initial right of Bulgarians as a European people.** Lessons about the Far East are absent from the textbook. The East is present only insofar as it is related to Islam, the Arabs, and later the Ottoman Empire. That is, the Middle Ages are a "European affair" in which we actively participate. The important narratives for our identity here are the participation of Khan Tervel as the savior of

Europe, Constantinople, and Christianity from the Arab expansion of 717-718, the expulsion of the Avars from Central Europe and the establishment of the Bulgarian-Frankish border during the time of Khan Krum, the transformation of Bulgaria into the third European empire alongside Byzantium and Francia, and most importantly, **the thesis about the Bulgarian contribution to the Slavic world** - the credit of the medieval Bulgarian state for the success of the Cyrillic Methodius project and the dissemination of Christian literature translated to the West to the Serbs and to the East to the Russians. The so-called "Golden Age" of Bulgarian culture from the end of the 9th and the first half of the 10th century, during the time of the first Bulgarian Christian ruler Knyaz Boris (851-893) and his son Tsar Simeon (893-927), is important not because the borders of the Bulgarian state extend to three seas, but because of the influence of Bulgarian medieval culture in the Slavic world - a sense of self-confidence in contacts with other Slavic peoples belonging to the Orthodox culture and Slavic literature.

Medieval times and the image of the other: It is precisely the medieval era that clearly establishes the idea of the parallel and conflict-ridden development of Christianity and Islam. Although the program includes references to shared values on an ideological level and good neighborliness on an everyday level, the examination of history in its political and military manifestations primarily leaves the imprint of conflict and establishes the most enduring image of the other in the face of Islam. This image persistently creates the most important and somewhat axiomatic line of purely ideological opposition, which we see visible among all Christian states on the Balkan Peninsula, and which manifests itself in an epiphenomenal way in relation to the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. And although the history textbook for the last 30 years stubbornly presents the Ottoman Empire as a multinational and multicultural structure in its official narrative, through other channels and narratives - folklore, literature - the Ottomans are presented as Turks and Muslims, which builds on the religious opposition with the ethnic one.

The second line of division is along the axis of **Western Europe and the Byzantine oikumene**. The concept of Western Europe appears and becomes dominant as early as the lower secondary stage, while we Bulgarians belong to the Byzantine world. The division passes through religion - Catholics - Orthodox, but also through places of prestige and urban culture - Universities, City,

reflexively relating them to the West, while in the Byzantine oikumene, their parallels as places of prestige are Monasteries, Churches, Palaces.

Orthodoxy - the backbone of Bulgarians: The message has been clear since teenage years: the Christian religion makes us Europeans, but as Bulgarians we survive through Orthodoxy.

Ottoman rule or Turkish slavery: Although history textbooks and curricula have been trying to analytically examine the period from the end of the 14th to the end of the 19th century, when the Bulgarian state was conquered by the Ottomans, based on a documentary and critical reading of the events, with an emphasis on everyday forms of contact in a multinational, cultural, and religious environment, the emotional attitude towards the period continues to be dominant in Bulgarian society. The term "Turkish slavery" is a direct reflection of the 19th-century Renaissance literature and historiography and is deeply ingrained in the genes of several generations. Today, any attempt to provoke the emotions of Bulgarians through reason encounters resistance. Society as a whole finds it difficult to part with a romantic notion of the period of Ottoman rule as a time of national suffering, heroic battles, and resistance, which feeds the negative image of the Turks, as we wrote above.

The Bulgarian Revival and the image of the other - a time when civic values built upon national identity along the line of "national school - national church - national political project". Here, the image of the Greek spiritual leader and teacher actively appears as an anti-Bulgarian factor. The other neighbors, Romanians and Serbs, appear as hosts to the Bulgarian political emigration. Ideas for common Balkan projects arise, which remain in the realm of romanticism and disintegrate under the weight of unresolved national issues in each of the Balkan states. The latter introduces the image of Europe in the face of the Great Powers and Russia in their capacity as arbitrator.

National Catastrophes: The image of Bulgarians outside the borders of the "free state" inevitably requires and imposes on this state to lead wars and policies for unification. It is here that the images of our Balkan neighbors are most palpable, and history constructs the notion of them as competitors, rivals, often enemies of the Bulgarian national cause. **The national**

narrative primarily goes through political history. What happened after the First Balkan War during the Inter-Allied period, as well as events following World War I, left traces of stereotypical negative images of neighbors in national and family memory, with which the history textbook leads the battle.

Summary of the Hierarchies of Closeness

If we have to make some conclusions about the hierarchies of closeness based on the history textbook and our observation of its teaching in Bulgarian schools, we can structure the following line:

The Ideal Other: Generally speaking, this is the model to follow and a source of hope for help. Here, we can recognize the generalized image of Europe, which pushes the image of Russia out of this role, but the latter still actively appears through political history in textbooks and curricula. This is a quite controversial and painful topic in our society, and part of it is ready to "rewrite" history. Concepts we associate with this image are "enlightenment," "civilization," "humanism," "fashion," "revolution," "freedom," "urban."

The Close Other: In this image, our Greek and Serbian neighbors can be recognized. Although often enemies in history, Bulgarians trust them because of their cultural and religious proximity.

The Faraway Other: Things here are dynamic. Generally speaking, this refers to the Ottoman Empire, which for Bulgarians is synonymous with modern-day Turkey. The image is largely constructed by the official narrative in literature education, which has a strong interpretive influence on the teaching of history in schools and the family environment, and heavily features the trauma of **losing the Bulgarian state** (*A Slavonic-Bulgarian History, Paisiy Hilendarski*), **the concept of slavery** (*folklore, patriotic revival songs, Ivan Vazov's Under the Yoke*), **the thesis of the violent imposition of Islam**, which strikes at the foundation of national identity - Orthodoxy, **martyrdom** (*Balkandzhi Yovo - folklore, Epic of the Forgotten - Ivan Vazov*). However, it can be said that this image as a trend is slowly being discredited, especially at the everyday level of contact between Bulgarians and Turks. Literature in the 20th century creates a number of other images, such as the famous May cart driver Sali Yashar, the images of noble

bandits - Shibl, Mehmed Sinap in the works of the novelist as a Yovkov, Lyudmil Stoyanov ect. In their daily contact, Bulgarians have always valued their friendship with their Turkish neighbors and recognized their moral qualities - honesty, hard work, and loyalty. The opening of the borders may have had the greatest impact in this regard - the feelings of anyone returning from a trip to Turkey are extremely warm, not only as a neighbor but also as a friend. So, I have no doubt that this image will gradually evolve into the so define before Close Other.

The Neutral Other: This is how we could define the image of the Romanian, who does not appear so prominently in his role as a neighbor in our history and literature. The history of the Second Bulgarian State neglects our territories and contacts north of the Danube. Although the most significant part of the Bulgarian political emigration resides in Wallachia, this positive role of the Romanian is not fully appreciated. The neutral attitude can also be observed in our relationship with our neighbors during the Interallied War. Although Romania attacks Bulgaria unprovoked, the common anger and disappointment of Bulgarians are directed more towards our allies who betray us - the Serbs and Greeks. Perhaps because Dobrudja is not romantically colored with the strong desire and thrill of Bulgarians for Macedonia and Thrace. Somehow, in our own perceptions, Dobrudja has always been ours.

Our Other Self: This is perhaps the image under which modern-day North Macedonia is recognized in our society. History and literature textbooks do not form any other attitude towards controversial historical figures and events except a positive one, because from a Bulgarian point of view, they are part of the heroic Bulgarian Pantheon - Tsar Samuil, the Miladinov brothers, Gotse Delchev, Dimitar Talev, Nikola Vaptsarov ect. Until a quarter of a century ago, Macedonia was "the most romantic part of Bulgarian history," according to the then Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov.

Through the lens of history, the Bulgarian sees the Macedonian as the benevolent and sympathetic Dr. Jekyll, who through the optics of contemporary political relations becomes for most Bulgarians his alter ego - Mr. Hyde.

Is it possible to do politics without history, to build an identity without control over territories, ethnogenesis and heroes, is a question whose answer is debatable and so far rather negative.

Europe, the Balkans, and Us in the Minds of Young People

The tools we used to form our conclusions on the topic were primarily:

- A survey conducted among 142 young people aged 16-30
- 2 thematic workshops held in 2 schools among young people aged 16-18 and 2 groups of young people aged 20 and over.

The results of the survey, whose data will be separately applied in a comparative analysis with the results obtained from the project partners, show the following general trends:

- The percentage of those who disagree and agree on the question of whether our cultural differences with Europeans are negligible is equalized. The highest, 37%, is among those who are neutral on the issue. Apparently, a large part of young people still consider that our path to Europe is not yet walked or they doubt whether it should be walked.
- There is a high percentage of those who believe that there are significant differences between Balkan cultures - 67% versus 20%. A small percentage are neutral. It is suggested that this does not refer to Balkan culture as a whole, but rather that the group includes representatives of the so-called stereotypical image of the distant other.
- The young Bulgarian, in a higher percentage - 45% to 30% - believes that he has to defend his cultural values when in the company of other young Europeans and is a little more optimistic about such a need in the Balkan environment - 37% to 31%. This result contradicts the above conclusion and shows that it is indeed a pars pro toto situation.
- Regarding whether they feel better as a European, we have an extremely high percentage of 42% of neutral opinion, which is dominant. However, the percentage of those who consider themselves better in their Bulgarian identity dominates the European identity - 39% to 21%.
- A higher percentage of young Bulgarians, 44% compared to 29%, believe that cultural differences with Europeans can be overcome through communication.
- The young Bulgarian considers himself tolerant, trying to understand the other person, even if they differ in values and beliefs - almost 90%.

- Interestingly, when in contact with their European counterparts, 57% of Bulgarian youth believe that it is necessary to adapt to fully communicate, while this need is seen by 45% of the respondents when in contact with peers from the Balkans. Nevertheless, in both cases, we consider this percentage to be high, and young Bulgarians still have barriers to overcome.
- As evidence of the above, 47% believe that it is important to integrate elements of the European identity into their own identity in order to build a common European one.
- There is a high percentage of 51% expressing a neutral position regarding the expansion of the EU with countries from the Balkan Peninsula, but among those who express a position, the positive attitude dominates - 38%.
- Regarding the idea that religion has mainly brought conflicts, 55% approve of this statement compared to only 10% disapproval. And yet, there is a neutral stance of 35%.
- "High standards," "human rights," and "democracy" are the three most frequently used concepts describing the young Bulgarian's idea of a European. Here, the idealistic idea of the ideal other is clearly reflected, while the three concepts describing his idea of a Bulgarian are strongly negative - "low standards," "racism," and yet "freedom." Here, the influence of the media factor is quite evident.

These results also reflect the impressions received from workshops with students and young people on the topic "Imagining Europe". In all groups of students, a dividing line is evident according to geographic location. In the center of the puzzle is the "ideal other" in the form of United Europe, on one side of which are the images of faces and events related to Western Europe, and on the other side are the symbols associated by young people with Bulgaria and the Balkan Peninsula. The images coming from the East, Russia, are also present, because according to the young people, "they have had an influence here". The young people note the serious infiltration of politics into people's lives, which they associate with wars - in this case, in the face of the symbolic map of Napoleon. In general, we can say that for the students, the idea of a united Europe remains at the level of a mechanical combination of two worlds with different history and cultural background. This could be attributed to the still strong influence of textbooks and the lack of sufficient social experience.

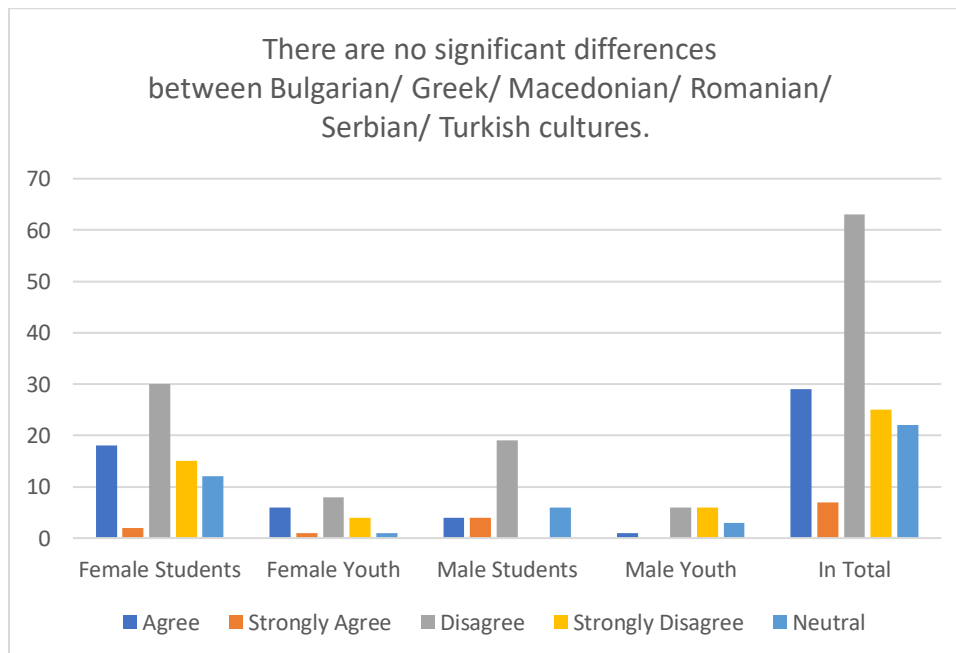
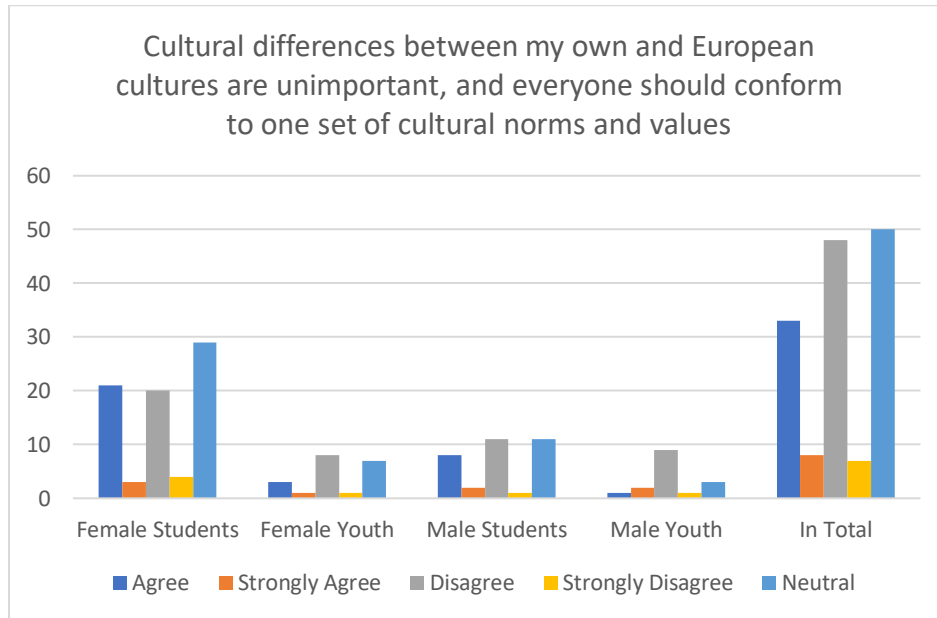


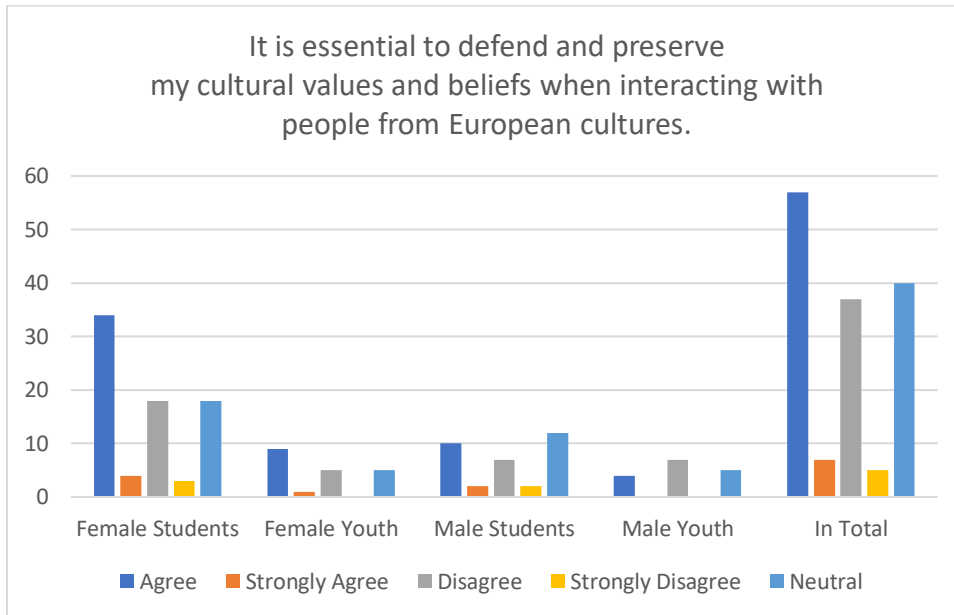
The reasoning and decisions that came from the workshop reflect the participants' greater social experience. Here, in both groups, there is a desire for symbols to be structured outside of their geographic origin by being united around certain themes, between which there are transitions, or arranged concentrically and thus equally distant from selected symbols, representing common civil and European values, which are in the center of the composition.

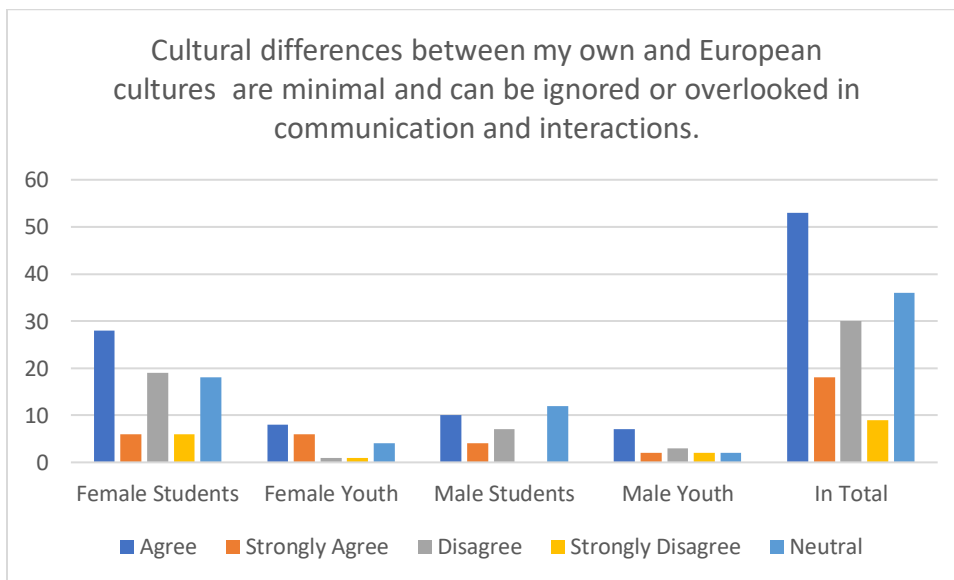
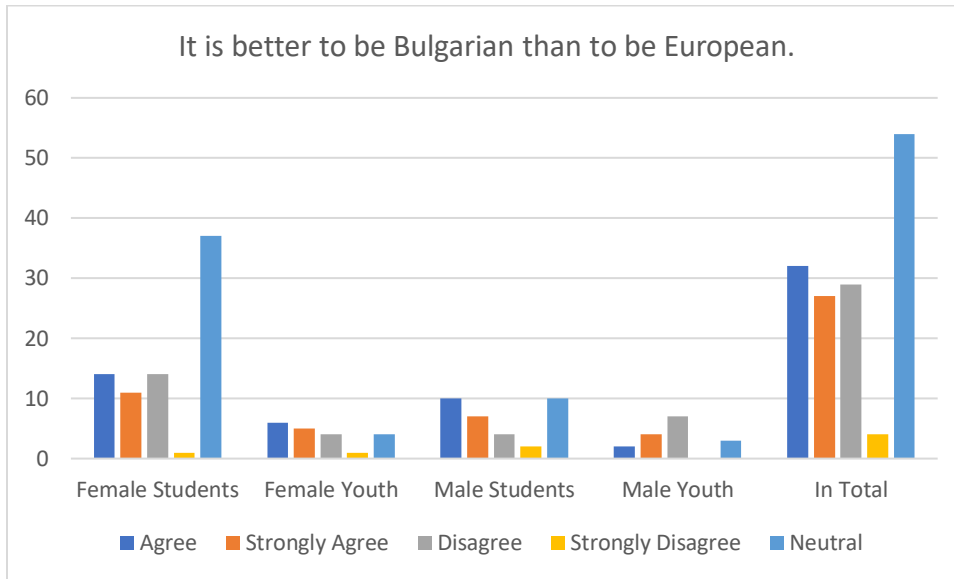
During the second workshop, both young groups did not express a desire for change, although they energetically discussed the topic and knew the facts well. Here, their experience as citizens of Europe and the possibility of free movement was interestingly demonstrated. Instead of dramatizing the lost territories, which they still considered unfair and shortsightedness from the Versailles system of treaties, they showed the pragmatism of contemporary European youth, who are accustomed to mobility and know that they can easily visit any territory and thus compensate for its loss - "Look where the Black and Aegean Seas are. What is important is that, as Europeans, we can go where we want." It was also interesting to note the opinion that the wars that have destroyed Europe have actually shown the way to overcome the tragedy - the unification of Europe.



Annex: The Results of the Questionnaire

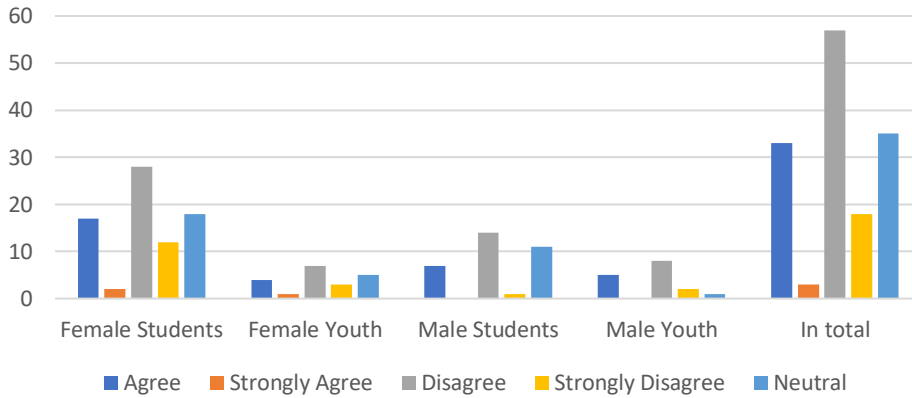




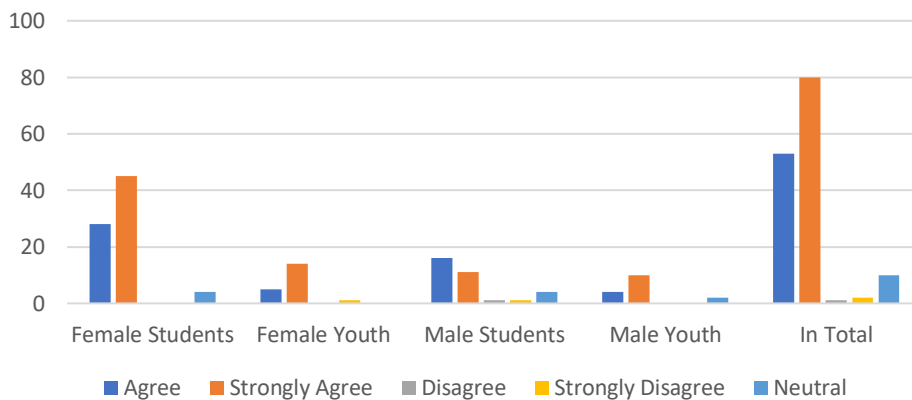




Values, beliefs, customs, traditions, and practices between Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian, and Turkish cultures are minor and insignificant.

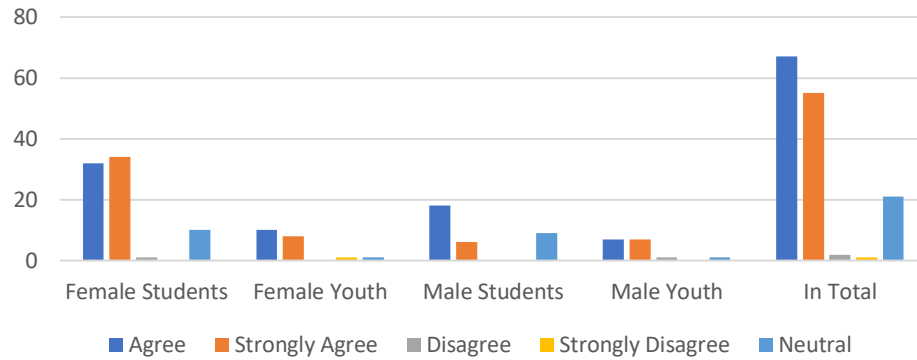


When interacting with people from European cultures, I try to understand and respect their values, beliefs, and behaviours, even if they differ from my own.

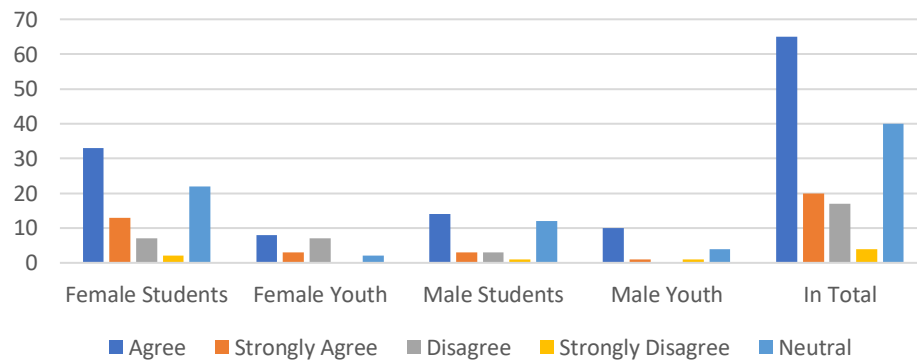




When confronted with cultural differences between Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian, and Turkish cultures, I try to find common ground and appreciate diversity.

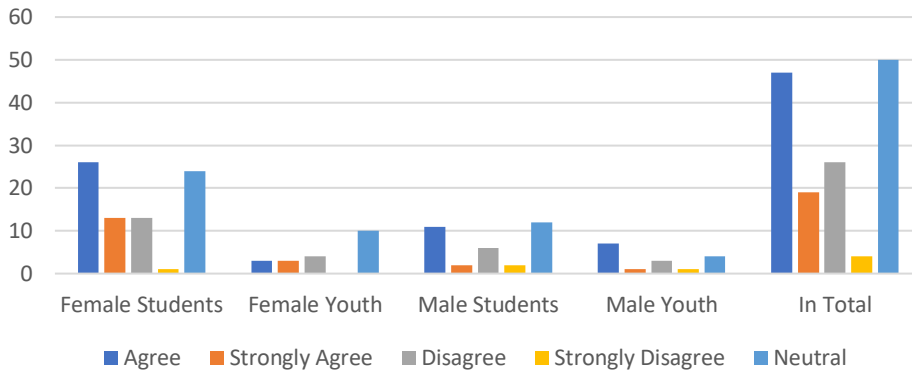


It is essential to adapt and adjust my communication and behaviour when interacting with people from European cultures to communicate and collaborate with them effectively.

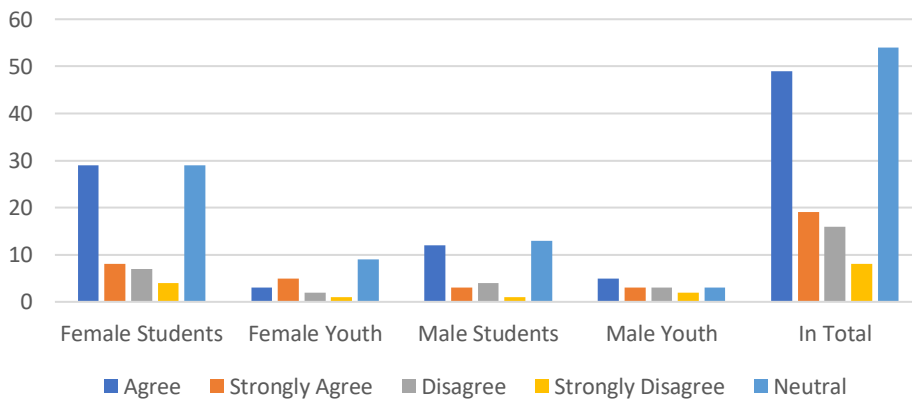




In my interactions with people from Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian, and Turkish cultures, I tend to adapt my behaviour or communication style to fit in with these cultures by avoiding my cultural practices and expectations.

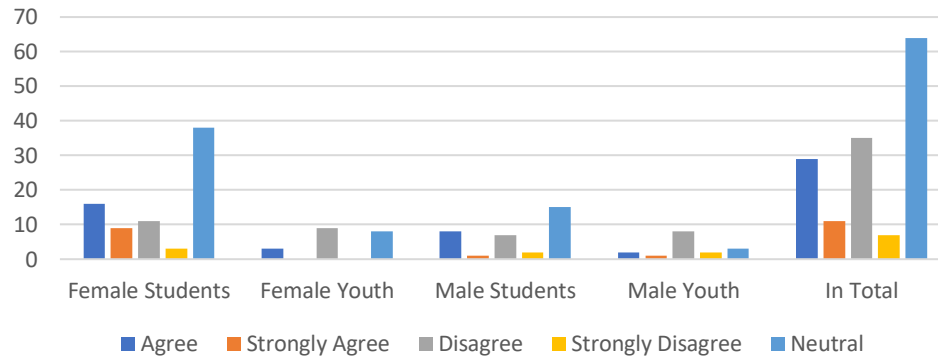


Integrating and incorporating elements from European cultures into my own is crucial to building a more inclusive and diverse community or society.

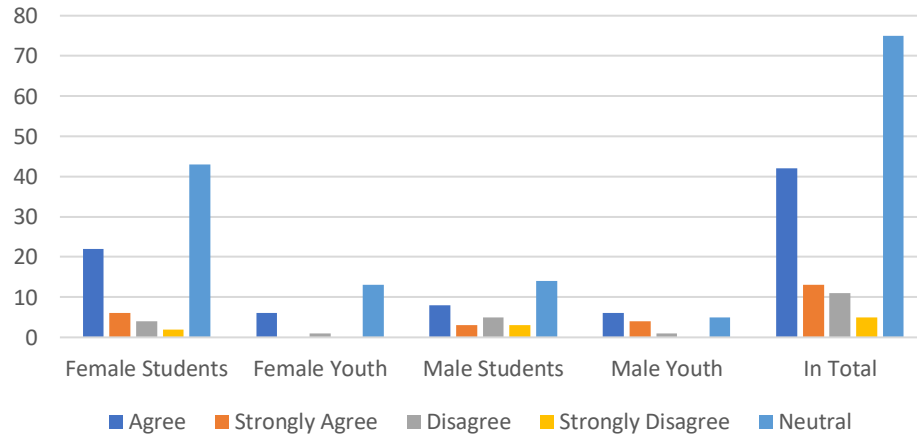




Since Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian, and Turkish cultures intersect and influence each other in terms of language, customs, traditions, and values, I try to integrate aspects of these cultures into my own.

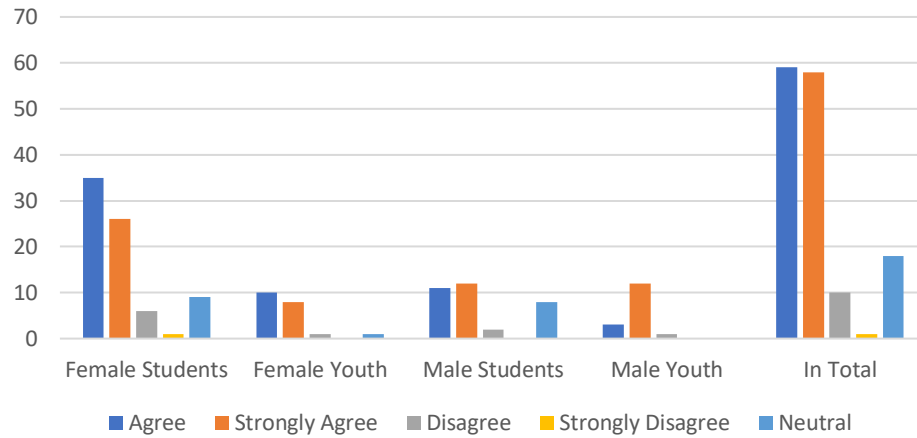


I want the EU to expand by accepting new countries from the Balkan Peninsula.

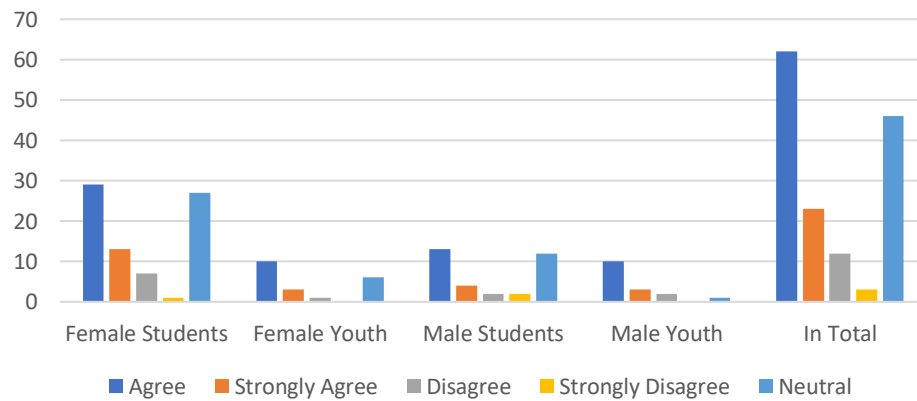




The food is one of the points of contact between Balkan cultures.



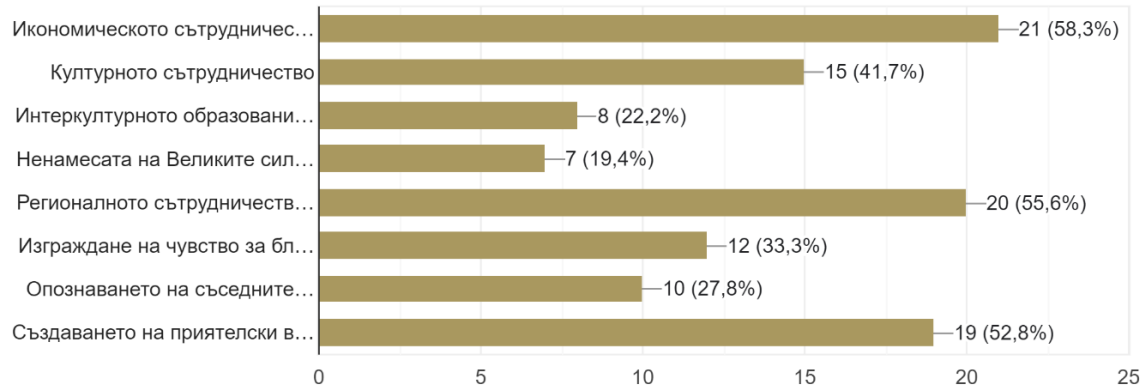
The differences in religion between Balkan nations have contributed to conflicts or divisions between Balkan societies.





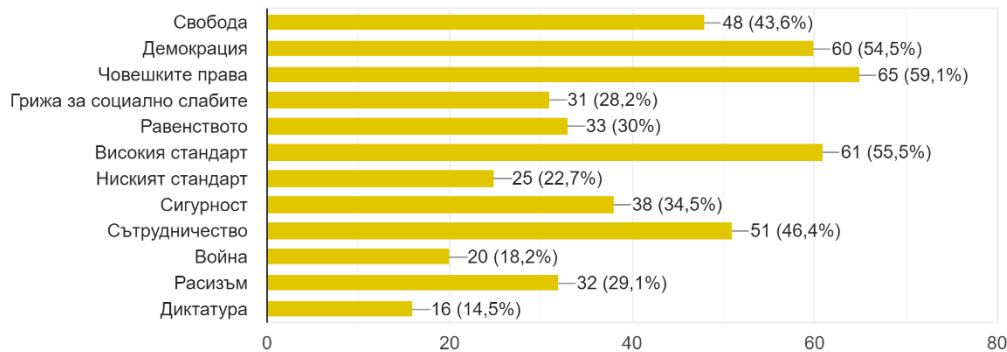
Какво според вас може да допринесе за добрите отношения на балканските страни в бъдеще? Посочете до 3-те най-важни според Вас.

36 отговора



Кои от следните понятия бихте избрали, ако трябва да опишете европейца? (Избери до 5)

110 отговора





Кои от следните понятия бихте избрали, ако трябва да опишете българина? (Избери до 5)

110 отговора

