

## Youth replies: How do we feel about Schengen?

Earlier this month, a conference was held in Bratislava on 13th May 2016, organized by IED in cooperation with Mladí Európania (Young Europeans). The main topic was discussing the safety of Schengen, if this project is at risk, and if so, can it be currently sustainable?

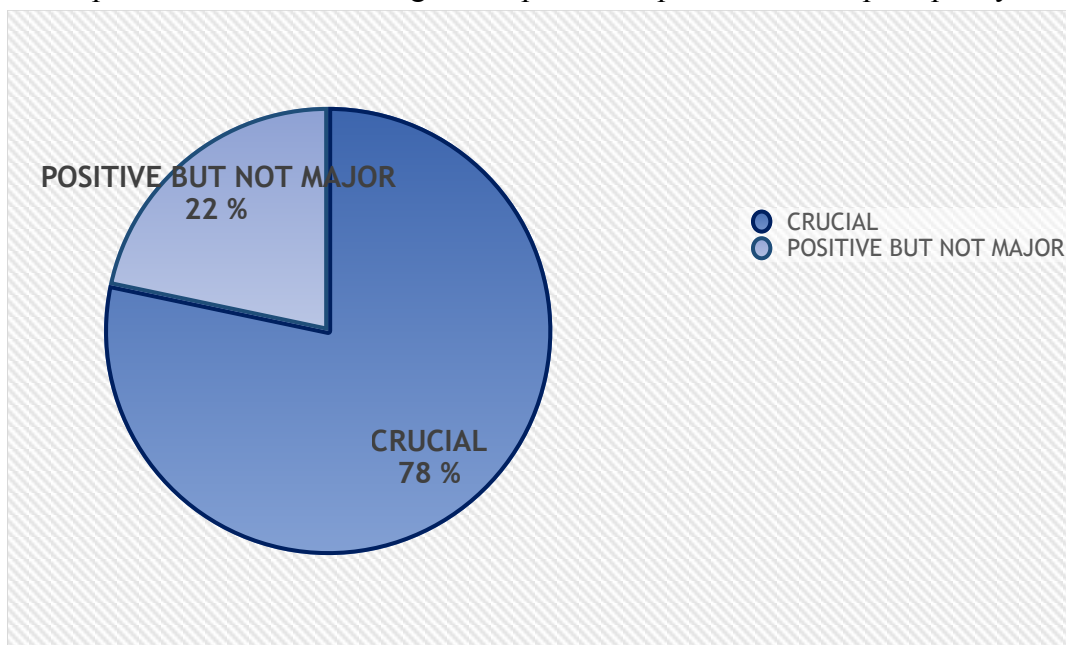
In the forth panel, Young Europeans together with members of Young Democrats for Europe presented the ideas and perspective on Schengen from the youth's point of view.

Young Europeans decided to create a survey, with aim to understand and discover the various youth's opinions on the subjects with the topic connected.

The survey consisted of 8 questions, focusing mainly on the attitude towards Schengen and youth's perception of Schengen, covering issues of security, protection of its external borders, or the impact of the Refugee Crisis on Schengen, to name a few.

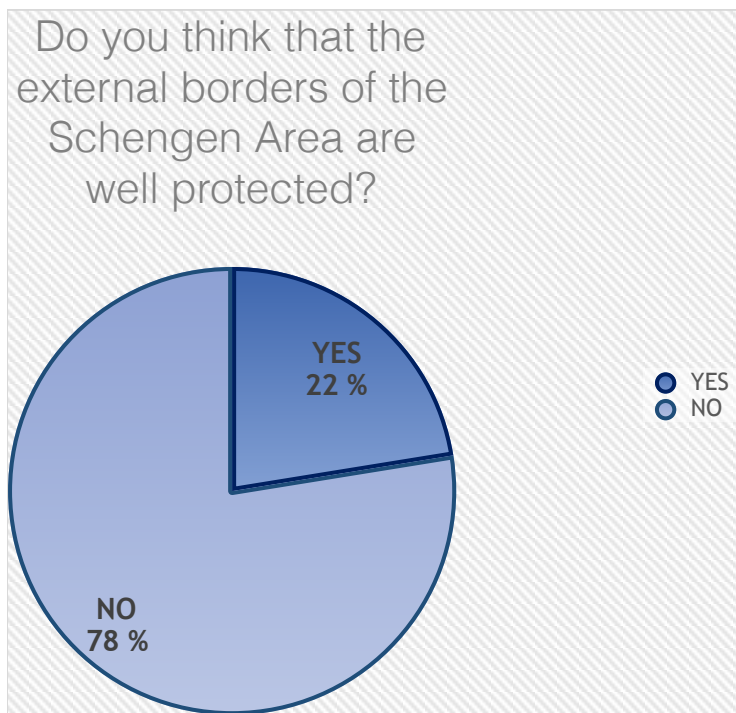
The number of respondents was 150 with age limit 35 year - old, currently living within the Central Europe.

1. 80% of respondents consider Schengen area as “a must” in today's European Union, creating easy access to education, youth projects, or overall encouraging mobility. These respondents also consider Schengen as the symbol of “Freedom”, especially “Freedom of Movement”, by limiting the unnecessary bureaucracy and encouraging the internal migration. All of the respondents consider Schengen as a positive aspect of the European policy.



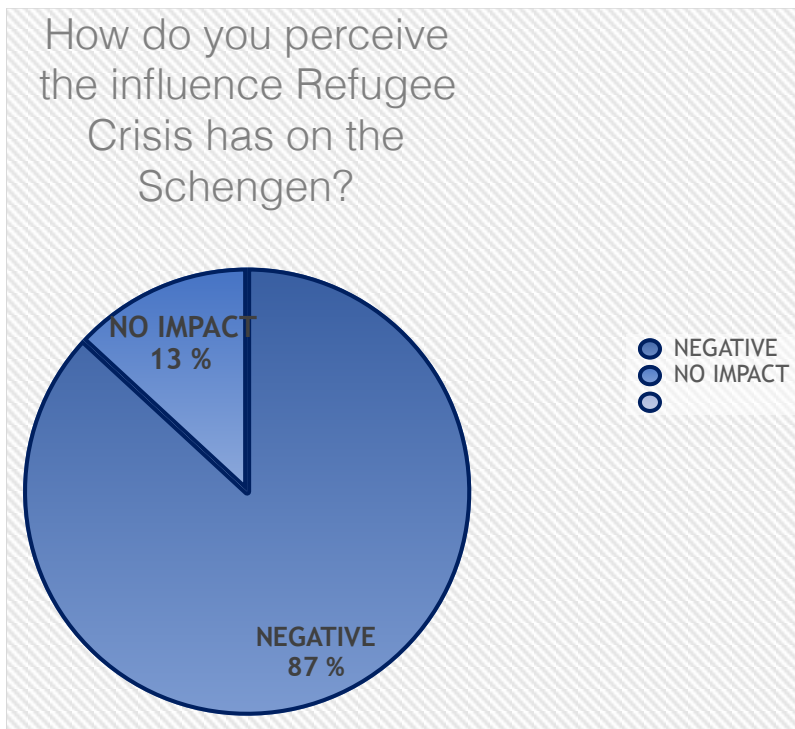
## Youth replies: How do we feel about Schengen?

2. However, the answers on how well the external borders of Schengen Areas are secured were not united.

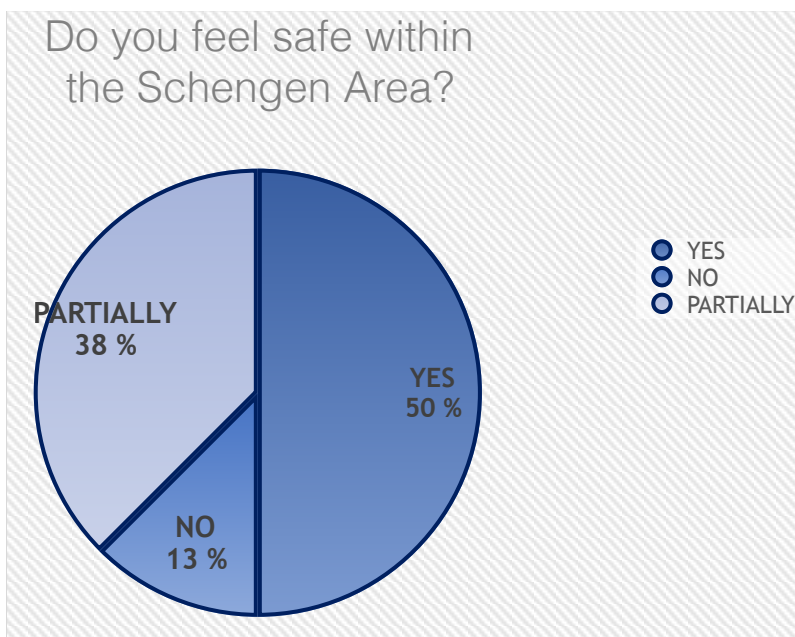


3. 87% of respondents consider external borders to be exposed and not sufficiently protected, arguing, that people started to feel less safe with criminal attacks occurring while traveling, which causes tense atmosphere. 78% of respondents think, that the Refugee Crisis created yet unknown pressure to the external borders, and suggest more strict controls and detailed identification of persons before entering the unlimited Schengen Area. Only 13% of respondents do not consider the impact of the Refugees Crisis grave, think of the strickt reactions as overrated, useless and irrelevant. "The Refugees Crisis does not mean a threat to The European Union."

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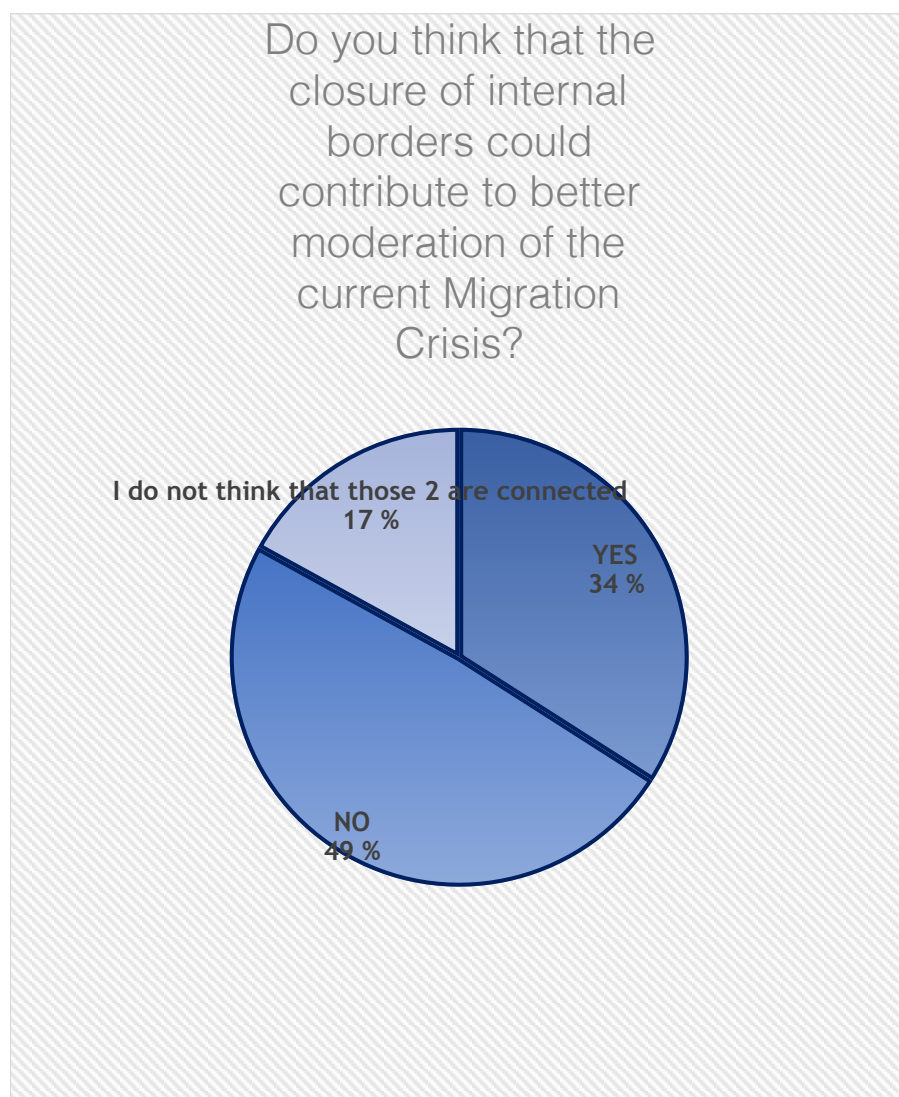
4. On question regarding safety, 50% of respondents do feel safe while traveling, think of the city and vicinity they live in, as a safe environment. 25 respondents consider living in The EU much safer in comparison to the neighboring country Ukraine, where is ongoing civil war. However, 38% of people feel “partially” safe, arguing, that the Refugee Crisis has not ended, so that the conditions are likely to change in the future. 13% of respondents declared, that they have lost the feeling of safety, due to the unlimited amount of not identified people crossing borders on daily basis.



5. Only 34% of asked young people replied, that the closure of internal borders could contribute to the better moderation of the current Migration Crisis, claiming, that each country

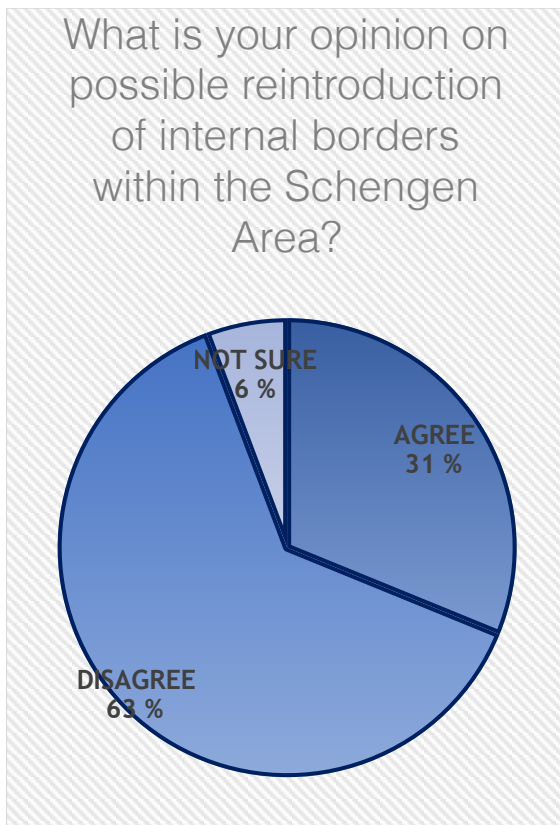
## Youth replies: How do we feel about Schengen?

would be responsible for checking and identifying persons entering the state, making it easier to monitor refugees. 17% of respondents do not consider these two cases to be connected, and therefore do not encourage the idea of closing the internal borders. 49% of respondents are against, arguing, that this change would not stop the Refugee Crisis, however, from economical point of view, it would certainly bring many disadvantages on daily basis. They consider better protection of external borders as the major issue, suggesting its better protection, especially of the Greek border. One respondent introduced a valid argument, that The UK is not part of Schengen, yet it has to face the Refugees Crisis as well.



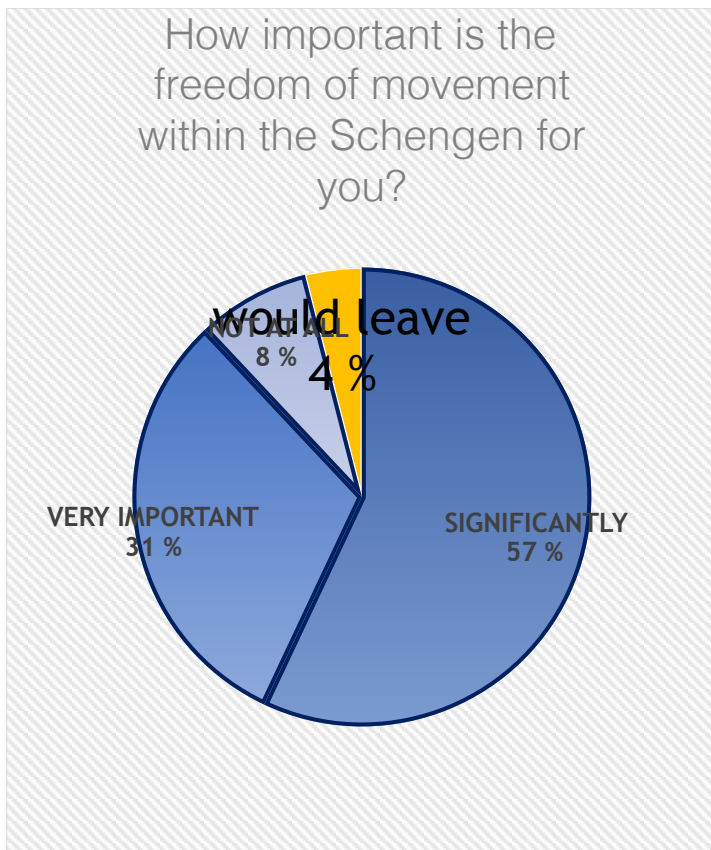
6. More than 60% of respondents more - or less strongly oppose the idea of reintroduction of the internal borders across the Schengen area, stating, that it would mean a major step back, not only regarding economy and business, but also causing disadvantages thousands of people, who regularly travel back and forth. However, 31% of respondents support the idea of closing the internal borders, calling it “a must” in the current situation. This policy would increase the safety and also provide a better control of persons entering the individual countries. 6% of respondents have not made their decisions yet, therefore remain hesitant.

## Youth replies: How do we feel about Schengen?



7. On question how significant role does Schengen play in respondents lives, and how much do they appreciate this system, the answers were varied. 67% of respondents perceive Schengen Area as significantly important, 31% of respondents think of Schengen as a crucial and very important part of their lives. However, 8% claim, that Schengen is not overly important, and 4% even declared, that they would support the idea if their country wanted to be excluded from the Schengen Area.

## Youth replies: How do we feel about Schengen?



8. The last question focused on exploring the perception of youth on the future development of Schengen Area. The responds were unexpectedly negative, 50% of respondents do not see the future of Schengen in bright colors. They do not consider, that Schengen can survive this massive Refugee Crisis, due to the slowly changing policies within this concept. 21% of respondents were less pessimistic, claimed that Schengen can survive this crisis, in case it would undergo massive change of its inner structure as well as the protection of external borders would have to be significantly strengthened. 80% of respondents do not want to loose Schengen area, but fear, that the slow implied protection policies will destroy this unique system. 29% strongly believe, that Schengen will not only survive this crisis, but lesson learnt, will be stronger, better functioning and safer than ever before.

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