

# WHAT, WHERE AND WHOSE DEMOCRACY?

**Resetting Democratisation in  
Southeast Europe amidst  
Autocratic Temptations**

# DEMOCRACY VERSUS AUTOCRACY. WHY THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IS SUPERIOR AND HOW IT CAN DEFEAT AUTOCRACY

WHAT, WHERE AND WHOSE DEMOCRACY?  
RESETTING DEMOCRATISATION IN SOUTHEAST  
EUROPE AMIDST AUTOCRATIC TEMPTATIONS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research paper sheds light on the stagnation of the democratisation process in Southeast Europe amidst the still-unfolding Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's war against Ukraine. It particularly explores how the epidemiological crisis has put democracy on hold, and how the turmoil in Europe's eastern neighbourhood has further eroded democratisation in the region. It also assesses how democratisation itself risks slide into irrelevance in light of the EU's sleepwalking and the autocratic temptations of external actors that win the heart of most citizens. This research paper concludes with providing a series of policy recommendations aimed at tackling people's dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in the region, and supporting already-existing good practices of civic activism and participation that defuse autocratic methods of doing politics.

### Social Media summary

This paper points out that already-existing good practices of performing democracy in SEE can unleash potential change and defuse autocratic methods of doing politics.

### Keywords

#democratisation #southeasteurope #localdemocracy #europeanunion  
#civilsociety

### Short bio

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BiH – Bosnia-and-Herzegovina  
CSO – Civil Society Organisations  
CEE – Central-East Europe  
DNR – People's Republic of Donetsk  
EE – Eastern Europe  
EU – European Union  
LNR – People's Republic of Luhansk  
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation  
NIT – Nations in Transit (index)  
RoL – Rule of Law  
SEE – Southeast Europe  
WB6 – Western Balkans

# INTRODUCTION

The biennial of 2020-2022 has compromised the status of liberal democracy worldwide. In Europe, along with the retrenchment of the welfare state, the immigration flows and, above all, the economic recession (Müller, 2017:96), the Covid-19 pandemic has further jeopardised what, even less than two decades ago, counted as the only ground for knowledge, power and accountability. When most EU states presumed the pandemic shockwaves were at least predictable, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine overshadowed the epidemiological crisis and even compromised consolidated democracies.

In this regard, SEE is Europe's Achilles' heel due to the re-emergence of competitive authoritarian regimes (Bieber, 2020), whose autocrats joined efforts against EU's broken promises and the quest for democracy (Vurmo 2021:14). While the long and winding democratisation was compromised by institutions enacting a state of emergency, at present Vladimir Putin's claims over Ukraine alert scholars and pundits for some similarly unpacified identity issues that might erupt within the region.

This paper addresses the most-debated concerns over the status of democracy in SEE vis-à-vis the still-unfolding epidemiological crisis and Russia's war against Ukraine. It does not exhaustively assess how both events have put democracy on hold, but it rather explores how they expose the darker side of the liberal order and the limits of re-nationalisation (Krastev, 2022:12) in SEE. Three sections lead the following analysis: (1) a comparative overview of democratisation in SEE; (2) an assessment of how democratisation risks slide into a different pivot on a geopolitical level, and (3) a focus on already-established good practices of doing democracy on a local ground. Seen from this threefold angle, this paper concludes with an already-existing series of pro-democratic actions that might win the ground against autocratic temptations and illiberal methods of doing politics.

# WHAT DEMOCRACY AFTER DEMOCRATISATION IN SEE?

Although international indices do not corroborate any theory about democratisation and the status of democracy (Elbasani, 2019:63), Freedom House<sup>1</sup> confirms how democratisation has entered a phase of stagnation in SEE. A slight deterioration of the democracy score occurred between the post-2007 Great Recession and the last biennial (Table 1). When comparing these two periods, what makes the only concrete difference is that the former was dominated by the assumption that liberal democracy was the only path to full-fledged democratisation, while, in the latter, disillusion with democracy has been on the rise even within SEE countries that are already EU members (Table 2).

Neither older issues fade away, nor can a new phase be born, stirring an organic crisis at all levels of institutions and democratic representation. Most ordinary citizens invoke democracy without openly rejecting it, whereas discomfort and distrust with multiculturalism and pluralism reassert old proneness to authoritarianism and nationalism (Dvornik, 2019:5). After surviving through banal reproductions in national holidays, folklore and the similar (Billig, 1995), nationalism is again visible and militant in SEE. Often verbalised by politicians who had been involved in war crimes and/or recycled themselves after 1989, this renewed nationalism dominates democratic arenas and undermines viable political alternatives (Bechev, 2022; Bieber, 2019:20-21). Nationalism is neither constitutive to most SEE regimes nor impinges on democratisation in a procedural sense<sup>2</sup>. However, it never ceases to be a constant resource. In North Macedonia, France's proposal for the EU accession talks enshrines nationalism (Esteso Perez, 2022), while in BiH a sustainable democratisation has not yet defused ethno-nationalisms and overcome radical extermination ideologies of the 1990s (Kraske, 2019:7). The latest elections held in early October 2022 have confirmed that three main ethnic political parties have won yet again (Latal 2022), leaving BiH with more questions than answers about a future which remains hard to decipher.

Putin's politics of imitation in CEE (Krastev & Holmes 2019) links the current unrest in Ukraine with the 1999 Kosovo War – a precedent which, in his perspective, justifies the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the current war (Bieber, 2022: 181). This link might leave space for further imitations in SEE by example. To a certain

<sup>1</sup> Here I refer to the Nations in Transit (NIT), which is a project aligned with Freedom House index. For more details about methodology: <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/nations-transit/nations-transit-methodology>

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Goran Ilik, Prof. and Dean at the Faculty of Law, University of "St. Kliment Ohridski", Bitola (North Macedonia), 11/08/2022.

extent, Bulgaria's veto on North Macedonia's EU accession reminds the Kremlin discourse over Ukraine's national identity and language. Moreover, Russia-backed illegal referenda in DNR and LNR might encourage Miroslav Dodik to go further with his rhetoric over the secession of Srpska Republika from BiH<sup>3</sup>, thereby endangering the already-fragile institutional architecture of the country.

After the post-accession disappointing performance of Bulgaria and Romania, EU's new and more rigorous approach towards the EU membership conditionality and accession (Wunsh, 2018:6) led to Croatia's "model of success" in 2014. Touted as such by Ursula von der Leyen for the only eight years of accession period, the new strategy failed to smooth WB6's route to the EU. Albania, for example, was still unprepared to open the accession talks between 2018 and 2020. The EU enlargement lends itself into the vernacular politicisation of populist and Eurosceptic parties that entered the institutions by harnessing social discontent.

In a time of crisis-ridden climate, far-right discourse and conspiracy theories increased (BiePAG, 2020:2), often echoing the Orbán-like model of illiberal democracy. Old and new forms of nationalisms have fertilised most SEE's political arenas, such as the "medical nationalism" (Pitty, 2022:10) which, after the pandemic breakup, recycled ubiquitous histories of ethno-nationalisms and scapegoated vulnerable social groups, such as Roma minorities (Trupia, 2021).

In Romania, the best performing country throughout the postsocialist predicament, Russia's aggressive posture in the Black Sea resonates with far-right rhetoric in the wider public, especially through social media<sup>4</sup>. Between 2017 and 2018, Romania's civil society was mobilised by anti-government protests which lost momentum due to the breakup of the first pandemic shockwave.

Likewise, Bulgaria's waves of mass-protests calling for the resignation of Boyko Borisov's cabinet in 2020 led only to an institutional standoff. After the rise of anti-systemic political parties, such as "There is Such a People", and the birth of the new far-right force, "Revival", the latest voter turnout confirms an alarming disaffection of most Bulgarians toward exerting their right to vote (Kodzhaivanova 2022). At present, Bulgaria's election results saw the return of GERB, which proved its political incapacity to tackle the structural issues of the country, and the growth of Revival, which continued to gain consensus after bashing EU's vaccination campaigns, the Europeanisation project and its enlargement policy. Undoubtedly, both political parties benefitted from a high level of abstention, with less than 40% of citizens who went to vote on 2 October 2022.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Stephen Sobonya, Peace & Conflict Resolution expert currently based in DC (US), 21/07/2022.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with a political scientist from Romania who preferred to remain anonymous, 28/07/2022.

## WHERE IS DEMOCRATISATION HEADING?

The integration of former socialist countries into the post-1989 institutional structure could not guarantee that the new ideological network could constrain a change in states' behaviour by default (Voeten, 2021:105). Citizens had understood what democracy could offer, and what they could never achieve otherwise. Yet the West has never been alone in enduringly shaping the future of the region according to its own ideas. Foreign stakeholders such as Russia, Turkey, China and Arab states have also broadened their scope of influence (CBAP, 2021).

EU's almost evaporated soft-power in SEE seems leading the region to either a reset of democratisation westward, thereby recognising the indisputably pivotal role that SEE will play if completely integrated into the EU, or a new and deeper period of uncertainty eastward. At present, a potential U-turn does not seem to completely derail the region from its democratisation. In other words, democratisation is not currently being destabilised due to the current geopolitical disorders, at least for now. If anything, SEE's transition to a full-fledged democracy may be further eroded by the decline of people's trust toward a set of values which constituted democracy. Beyond any doubt Serbia is the worst-case scenario. After the start of the war in Ukraine, Belgrade refused to implement trade and financial sanctions against Moscow. The political ties between Aleksandar Vučić and Kremlin's inner circle have instead highlighted the ambivalent position of Serbia toward the EU. Meanwhile, Russia and China win the heart of most Serbs, whose opinion is shaped by several news channels hosting high level officials from Russia and offering questionable analyses on Ukraine's "denazification"<sup>5</sup>. This sentiment uncritically duplicates in the Serb-majority clusters of BiH, Kosovo and Montenegro (BiEPAG, 2021:10).

The so-called 'personal diplomacy' is here also worthy of mention. Personal meetings between foreign autocrats and SEE representatives have so far played a pivotal role in strengthening interstate relations. Yet the one-to-one personal relations have not moved SEE, with the exception of Serbia, out of the Western orbit. The established ties between the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and his Albanian and Kosovo representatives, have not refrained both countries to express their support to Ukraine and warn the Euro-Atlantic institutions to act immediately in order to avoid similar escalations in the region. Nevertheless, manifestations of 'personal diplomacy' impact on democratization and legitimize illiberal practices in the state administrative procedures, such as in Kosovo and Albania (Madhi, 2021). In North

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Shary Mitidieri, PhD Candidate at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" (Italy), 05/08/2022.

Macedonia, too, back in 2018, the then Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski, sought refuge in Hungary escaping from the two-year sentence for his unlawful influence over government officials.



*Flags of Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (in Turkish: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) in the Skopje Old Bazar, North Macedonia © Francesco Trupia*

On an ideological ground, SEE's kinstate relations with foreign actors are also stable. Kosovo Albanians look at the West in spite of some religious sympathies with Turkey and Arab states. Conversely, Serbs are more likely to see Russia as the main guarantor of their interests in the countries they live in. The recent incidents at Serbia-Kosovo's contested borders have reaffirmed such a trend along geopolitical lines. While a prompt reaction from NATO and KFOR has guaranteed the peace-keeping operations and reaffirmed the role of US diplomacy, the war in

Ukraine has pushed some SEE countries to reset their national security and political ties. Romania froze all China's projects in the country, for instance (Kaczyński, 2022), but the Chinese diplomatic efforts may differently spoil democratisation in the WB6. The Kosovo-Serbia reconciliation process may be hijacked by Chinese officials' new campaign of de-recognition of Kosovo's statehood. In the Global South, countries in need of China's economic support and investment for the post-pandemic recovery may withdraw their recognition to Pristina authorities. As a bargaining chip, Kosovo will mirror the Taiwan dispute as a similar issue (Krstinovska & Demjaha, 2022). Hence, France's push for a "strategic autonomy" does not only introduce a rather nebulous concept that foresees less NATO on Europe's security and defence; Paris also does not meet SEE's and EE's views on the role of US and security measures along their national borders (The Economist, 01/2022).

Although the Russian war against Ukraine has spurred talks of jumpstarting enlargement efforts westward, major acceleration is unlikely to happen soon (International Crisis Group, 2022). However, the Ukrainian scenario is causing changes in SEE. Similar to Romania-China relations, Bulgaria's pro-western government of Kiril Petkov supported all EU sanctions against Moscow and refused to pay the imported Russian gas in roubles after the President, Rumen Radev, publicly remarked that "Crimea is Russian" in November 2021 (Todorov, 2021).

## WHO'S (UN-)DOING DEMOCRACY IN SEE?

The thorny questions about democratisation address related issues of how to perform and promote democracy in SEE. After the pandemic breakup, the EU accounted for 68.8% of the WB6's international trade, while China, Russia and Turkey accounted only for 7.8%, 3.8% and 4.8%, respectively (BiEPAG, 2021:5-8). Only for the WB6, the EU is providing almost 762 million to support recovery from the social and economic impact of the epidemiological crisis (European Commission, 2021). However, appreciation toward external and foreign actors is on the rise, echoing the kind of transnational views of Poland and Hungary. Moreover, the Russian war against Ukraine has brought long-standing policies that seemed to be settled long ago, enter a new phase of contestation (The Economist, 03-04/2022).

While European leaders act rather passively, becoming the first promoters of stabilitocracies (Zweers et al, 2022), France's new proposal for the WB6 shows how the region is not part of the French domestic agenda. The reopening of the EU membership talks for Albania and North Macedonia does not seem to restore the EU's political credibility. The already-deteriorating narrative of "Macedonianism" has become another source of nationalist forces backed by the Kremlin's rhetoric against the West and the EU. In addition, Albania needs instead to settle the status of war with Greece in force from the 1940s and discuss the status of the Greek minority in the country<sup>6</sup>.

Over the last years, Western organisations and EU representatives have also miscalculated political support in most SEE regimes. Montenegro is here instructive: after supporting political forces which lasted in power for age without participating in a change of government in an election since the fall of the Berlin Wall (Tadić, 2019:75), society is now polarised along generational divides: old and pro-Russian supporters on one side, and young pro-Western and pro-democracy citizens on the other<sup>7</sup>. Montenegro also reminds of the case of EU leaders found barely outspoken against Bulgaria's democratic backsliding in the same way it did for Poland's and Hungary's (Table 3).

The knot of Kosovo's statehood comes again to the front. The five EU's non-recognisers - namely, Spain, Slovakia, Greece, Cyprus, and Romania - have de facto contributed to the Ukrainian cause. Yet their polity seems to equate domestic minority groups with suspicion (Dvornik, 2019:3), especially in the case of Greek-Turkish diatribe over the Cyprus' divided island, and in that of Romania aligning

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Gentola Madhi, policy researcher from Albania, currently based in Italy, 22/08/2022.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Dino Sabovic, independent researcher, 22/07/2022.

with Serbia to disengage the Orbán-backed Hungarian community. At the same time, however, Spain and Greece have been recently most active in promoting different forms of cultural diplomacy and cooperation with Pristina authorities. If compared, the scores of local and national democratic governance show how the status of democracy is slightly healthier on a local ground (Freedom House, NIT 2005-2022). In general, the renowned deficit of accountability is caused by the erosion of the local communities (Taylor et al 2022:13) and coupled by a counter-reaction via civil society (Bechev 2022). In particular, SEE has seen a long wave of democratic mobilisation that has unfolded from the grassroots level up to a series of national campaigns of civic participation and green activism led mostly by youngsters. Since the 2010s, examples include the so-called “Colourful Revolution” in North Macedonia (2016), the anti-corruption protests in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Romania (2017-2019). An array of progressive political platforms have also been born with the scope of moving the “hurry-up moment” to a potential road of change into the institutions. Among others, *Ne Davimo Beograd* (Don’t Drown Belgrade) in Serbia, or *Spasi Pirin* (Save Pirin) in the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, and *Možemo* (We Can) in Croatia are the most successful cases in terms of participation and mobilisation of ordinary people.



*“Out the Corruption, and then what? Capitalism feeds Corruption!” Mass-protest in Sofia, Bulgaria, May 2020 © Francesco Trupia*

In Croatia, the establishment of a pro-democratic political platform inspired by a participatory and progressive model of doing politics against any form of exploitation and in defence of workers’ rights, has led to the election of today’s mayor of Zagreb, Tomislav Tomašević, in 2021. These good practices of performing democracy do not come out of the blue. The EU enlargement policy had already stimulated, at all levels, a large number of CSOs not only in their country, but also across the WB6. Pro-democratic platforms have collectively acted in support of

RoL, anti-corruption and human rights, becoming a horizontal driver of change (Wunsh, 2018:129). CSOs have kept open the window of transnational collaboration, providing lessons-learned across borders and involving intellectuals who, especially when residing in the region, have something important to tell about current time and political affairs (Kerski, 2019:12). This transnational feature of the EU enlargement saw the birth of Platform 112, the Croatian monitoring coalition, which managed to

pull 70 CSOs together and transferred knowhow and expertise to PrEUgovor, Serbia's monitoring coalition. With the aim to best coordinate grassroots activities and engage EU-level actors, Platform 112 voiced concerns over much-debated issues such as the ban of same-sex marriages, the inclusion of Serb minority and recognition of Cyrillic alphabet, among other issues (Wunsh, 2018:53-55).

Critical voices against corruption and unfair methods of doing politics did not tone down after the Covid-19 pandemic breakup. In Kosovo young people mobilized themselves beyond ethnic background in order to help citizens in need by setting up online platforms and social media for exchanging information and good practices<sup>8</sup>. A new generation of protesters and activists became the inconspicuous yet real novelty of anti-corruption campaigns, thereby representing a new potentially emergent citizenship in the region (Krasteva, 2020). Other protests have been regularly organised in defence of women's rights and gender equality, where feminist practices have been promoted against women's misrepresentation in politics<sup>9</sup>.

Once again on a local level, spontaneous actions have been led by Serbs and Albanians in Shtërpca, southern Kosovo, against the construction of Brezovica's hydropower plant. Green activism shows potential to overcome interethnic divisions in war-torn countries and establish long-term campaigns for tackling the new issues of today's democracies. When Kosovo's Supreme Court overturned the earlier ruling of the Court of Appeals by suspending the hydropower, thousands of young activists were rewarded for their efforts in standing against it. This spontaneous grassroots mobilisation was not a mere act of civic participation but reflected a broader willingness of teenagers and local communities in providing new alternatives for living sustainably and in respect of nature (Trupia & Madhi, 2022). The establishment of the Groups for Legal and Political Studies in Kosovo shows how citizens can unleash, from their local space of action, the potential change through cooperation across the country. On the contrary, BiH's organizations struggle to do the same, especially in the case of Republika Srpska.

## CONCLUSION

If the Covid-19 pandemic has shed light on SEE's democracy issues, the Russian war against Ukraine is giving the EU a greater chance to jumpstart enlargement efforts. Catching the momentum is centrally paramount for Europe. This paper shows a two-way speed transition driving SEE's democratisation: (1) on the international arena, global disorders push for a personalisation of the foreign agenda and interstate

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Mary Drosopulos, Researcher at Eurobalkan Youth Forum, Thessaloniki (Greece), 01/08/2022

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Margarita Spasova, Gender Policy expert from Bulgaria, 29/08/2022.

relations with foreign actors, yet without destabilising SEE's geopolitical pivot; (2) instead, at a domestic level, illiberal practices would continue eroding the status of democracy by hitting civil society the hardest and undermining political alternatives. Citizens deem democracy necessary, but already-EU countries in SEE experience a serious growth of dissatisfaction with the way democracy itself works (Table 3). Against this, political cooperation of citizens and younger generations at the local level has shown to be the anchor point in times of crisis. Fragmentation and lack of accountability among CSOs, NGOs and other communities affect the already-shrinking space of democratic actions. Yet civic participation and inclusion of critical voices in the wider public remain key instruments to unleash change in the long run.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish long-term and EU-oriented feasible cooperation between EU and non-EU member states, thereby including not only countries currently under threat of external factors in EE, but also the WB6. It is indeed crystal clear that the next challenges that the EU must face cannot but include WB6 and SEE in the future plans for Europe in terms of ecological transition, EU external border security, labour and migration policies, digital rights and cybersecurity, etc.
- Speak a common language between SEE countries already in the EU and WB6s to restore cooperation in the former countries and restart democratisation in the latter. Although scholars and EU policy makers might fear potential disruptions or/and polarisation for accelerating EU enlargement policy eastward, such as in the case of Kosovo-Serbia dispute or in that of North Macedonia-Bulgaria, there is little doubt that the Russian war against Ukraine has indisputably placed SEE at the centre of Europe's political landscape and future challenges.
- Persuade EU leaders to walk away from autocrats in SEE, especially with those whose political agendas have proven to serve vested interests and damage non-yet consolidated democracies. Granted that the EU has served its purpose well, more coherent relations need to be thought of wisely. Today's Russian posture on the SEE forces de facto the EU to find new (geo)political alternatives and new partners. The latter, however, shall not uncritically replace former partnerships and equally continue to erode the postsocialist transition in SEE.
- Avoid alternatives such as the Open Balkans which can only boost autocracies in leading trade relations and, in turn, furthering democratic backslidings. The new energy partnerships established by the EU, as well as Greece and Bulgaria and

Serbia, with Azerbaijan<sup>10</sup> need to also include a strategy to prevent further erosion of democratisation and stagnation of democracy in SEE.

- Restart democratisation by looking at the outcomes of “models of success”. If Croatia benefited from a new EU enlargement approach after the poor results of the post-accession period in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia, renewed nationalism can damage the new EU enlargement methodology not only in WB6, but also in already-EU countries.
- Counter the rhetoric over NATO’s aggression against Serbia in the case of Kosovo vis-à-vis the Russian war against Ukraine and China’s ambiguous position on the international arena. Although not immune from controversies, the 1999 military intervention was undertaken to cease a decade of anti-Albanian policies by Belgrade and not against Serbs, thereby avoiding another event of gross violation of human rights and ethnic cleansing such as in BiH and Srebrenica in particular.
- Be honest about both pros and cons of Europe’s current issues, as well as future uncertainty. Through better and more transparent information and awareness campaigns, the EU shall regain consensus by bringing its institutions closer to SEE citizens and thereby dismiss anti-Western campaigns conveying biased and wrong messages and increase polarisation. Against “democracy spoilers” that currently destabilise most of SEE regimes, the EU shall also continue to promote participatory democracy and transnational solidarity against external threats roaming in/outside Europe.
- Support political communities, especially on the local level, and engage in supporting pluralism and performing good practices of participatory democracy through civic activism. In this, the role of NGOs as the only cure against the counterrevolution of the civil societies, needs to be rethought. In fact, NGOs remain instrumentally dependent on international donors. Especially in war-torn societies, such as BiH and Kosovo, NGOs often reinforce ethnocentric approaches while developing projects and initiatives at the grassroots level. Moreover, CSOs’ professionalization disempowers other spontaneous initiatives of ordinary citizens whose space of civic action has been shrinking and their critical voices unheard by institutions at all levels.
- Strengthen political cooperation between local communities across SEE, especially those engaged in environmental and “rights for all” actions in order to move “hurry-up moments” up until empowerment.
- Support green activism and civic education in SEE. While teachers have shown a high level of resilience in the last two academic years, green initiatives continue to surprise the political landscape in the region. Hence, it does come as a surprise that the rise of progressive political platforms have happened to shape local

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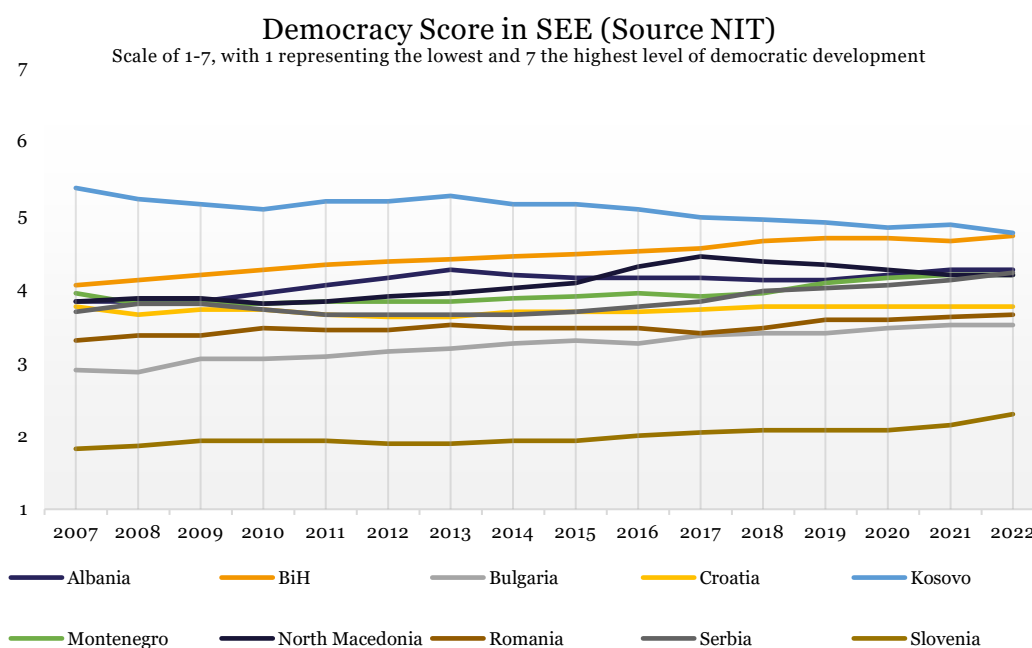
<sup>10</sup> Read more about the [Ukraine war: How has Russia's invasion changed Europe? | Euronews](#).

politics in SEE. EU support toward the already-established bedrock of civic, green and progressive platforms might propose a more coherent and sustainable democratisation and EU future goals (e.g. ecological transition, security policy) from the core to the peripheries of the European context.

- Better identify partners on a (geo)political level in order to avoid any support of other political monopolies and autocrats that might disunite the EU from within and impinge on its democratisation eastwards.
- Monitor the geopolitical pivot of SEE vis-à-vis the current sleepwalking of EU and Western institutions from the region. This is indeed important to mitigate potential turmoil that might follow up a resolution of the Kosovo-Serbia dispute, and include the five EU-non recognisers of Kosovo for solving other regional disputes over history matters, such as the Bulgarian veto against North Macedonia and the Greek-Albanian border demarcation.

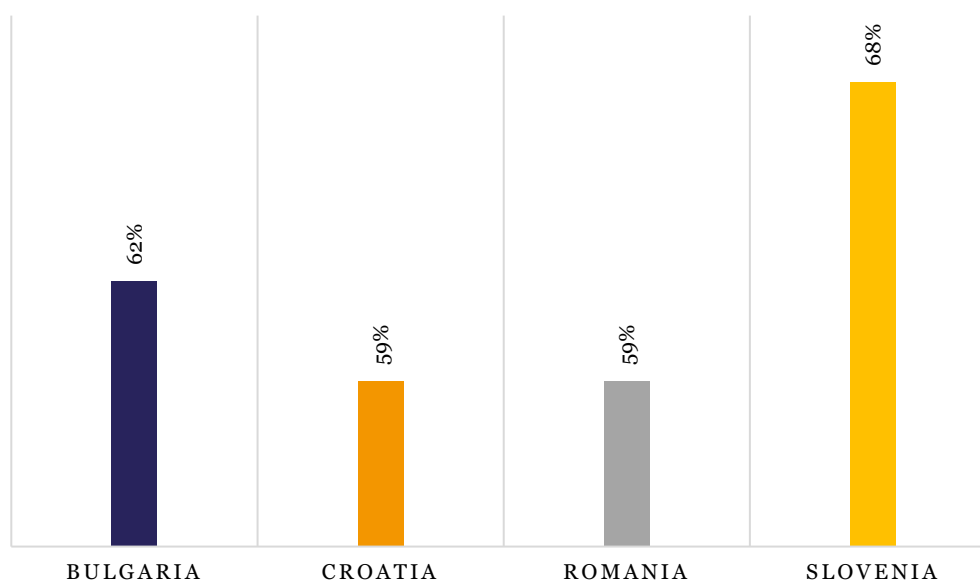
## KEY FIGURES

**Table 1**



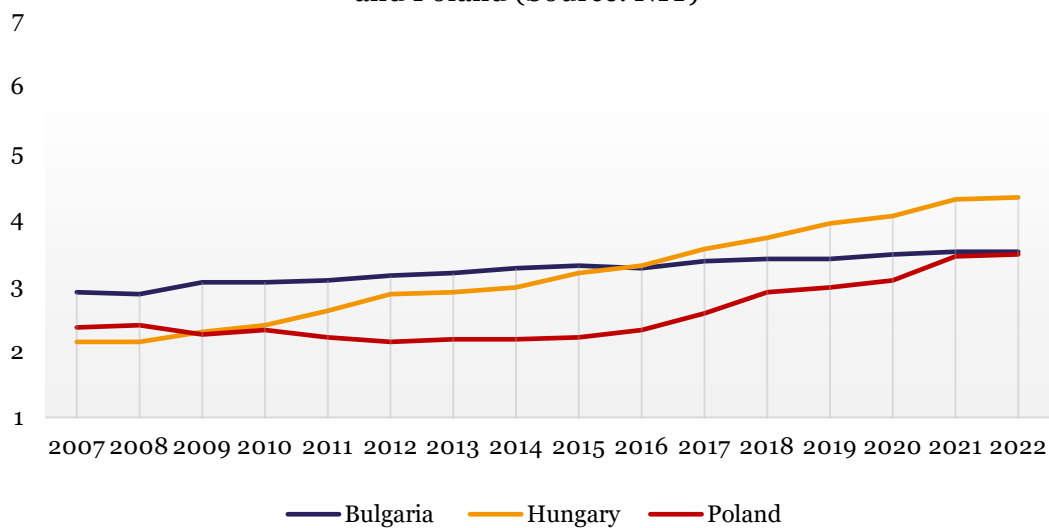
**Table 2**

% of citizens 'Not Satisfied' with the way democracy works in (THEIR COUNTRY)  
 Source: Autumn Parleментар 2021, Eurobarometer 96.2 – Autumn 2021



**Table 3**

Comparison of Democracy Score between Bulgaria , Hungary  
 and Poland (Source: NIT)



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