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**Social and Psychological Factors of Political  
Participation according to Recent European Social  
Survey Data**

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**Abstract<sup>1</sup>**

While people have an influence on current political decisions, and as ordinary citizens represent the basis for political participation, depicting such political engagement in an empirical/practical way creates a concerning amount of methodological questions. Data obtained via the European Social Survey Round 1-7 offers the opportunity to outline and broaden the picture in terms of the personal (demographic and psychological) features of individuals who participate in politics to a greater or lesser degree. Participants from the seven rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) were divided into three groups: higher, medium, and lower political participation ( $\alpha = 0.642$ ). A Scale of Political Participation was created based on 'yes' answers. It was found that those individuals who were female or had a lower level of education participated less, while older people were more politically participative than younger people. The psychological profile of these groups differs in terms of preferred values: attitudes, satisfaction, trust in people, and institutions.

*Keywords:* political participation, European Social Survey Round 1 - 7, values, social trust.

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## 1. Introduction

Almost every discussion on political participation starts with an emphasis on participation's direct link to democracy. But this connection does not seem to be so straightforward (Norris, 2003). Citizens' activities directed at influencing political decisions - the basis of political participation - can sometimes be perceived by political representatives positively, and at other times negatively.

There are many ways to preserve a semblance of *esprit démocratique*, as illustrated by the European Parliament (EP) election rules and turnout in 2014. The original intention, confirmed in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, called for a uniform system and process for electing members of European Parliament (MEPs), but this aim was disseminated only gradually into 'common rules' (for instance, the Amsterdam Treaty of 1999 declared only that the electoral system should be in accordance with the principles common to all member states) (EP electoral procedures, 2013). In fact, the EP election system is polymorphic, and electoral arrangements governed by national rules vary to a great extent. In a large number of countries, the right to nominate candidates belongs only to political parties and organizations. There are also huge differences in voting procedures; in some countries, voters can vote only for a list; in others they can express their preference for more candidates; while in others they have semi-open lists. To illustrate the differences, we offer a brief look at two 2014 national electoral systems: the Belgian and the Slovakian. In Belgium, voters in three language communities elected MEPs using a preferential voting system without an electoral threshold through compulsory voting, and with 89.64 per cent turnout; in Slovakia, voters elected MEPs in single national constituencies using a preferential voting system - voters could attribute preferential votes to two candidates from one party or coalition -, a voluntary voting system, and with 13.05 per cent turnout.

These different theoretical perspectives make it difficult to operationalize and construct instruments: the aim of depicting political engagement empirically raises a serious amount of methodological questions (e.g. Lamprianou, 2013). The concept of political participation refers to a wide range of activities, and the necessary operationalization for the purpose of construction of methods of analysis requires some classification. For example, Van Deth (2001) summarized a list of more than 70 activities contained in different studies that were considered forms of political participation. Since the 1970s (Barnes and Kaase, 1979) these have often been distinguished as conventional or formal methods (e.g. voting, party membership, campaigning, contacting politicians personally or via the internet), and unconventional or informal ones (e.g. taking part in demonstrations, boycotting products, signing a petition, blogging). Verba and Nie (1972), authors of a frequently cited typology, identified four categories of the former: voting, campaign activity, contacting public officials, and communal activities. Teorell et al. (2007) in their typology describe five dimensions of political participation: electoral participation, consumer participation (boycotting products, signing a petition, donating money), party activity, protest activity, and contact activity (contacting politicians, officials, or organizations).

Possibly the most complex attempt at constructing a political participation typology was introduced by Ekman and Amnå (2012: 295), in which they distinguished three basic dimensions: i) domain - political participation (manifest political), civil participation (latent political), or non-participation (disengagement); ii)

active vs. passive/formal participation; and iii) individual vs. collective forms of participation.

According to Hafner-Fink (2012: 550) ‘social surveys usually measure three aspects (or levels) of political participation: a) interest in politics, which is not yet real participation, but more a kind of motivational background for real political involvement; b) electoral participation as cyclical and rather “passive” involvement in politics, but nevertheless important for the functioning of a democratic system; and c) active and continuous participation in various forms of political activity.’

## *2. Method*

Our principal aim with this article is to identify potential differences between more and less participative Europeans using a Scale of Political Participation which we have created. Our goal is also to create their ‘psychological profiles’ from the variables included in the ESS questionnaire core module (repeated seven times since 2002 biennially on representative samples of participating European countries). We concentrate on the socio-demographic characteristics of politically participative individuals in terms of: preferred values; level of life satisfaction; trust in people and institutions; and selected attitudes, reflecting to some extent the level of tolerance (attitude to migrants, gays and lesbians) and solidarity (government should reduce differences in income levels).

The European Social Survey Round 1–7 data (ESS 1–7, 2016) offers the opportunity to outline some of the personal (demographic and psychological) characteristics of more and less politically participative individuals. Hafner-Fink (2012) in his analysis of ESS R1–5 data used seven items from the ESS Core module. The core module of the ESS questionnaire contains a set of ten questions which in self-reported answers cover the usual forms of civic political engagement. In our analysis of ESS R1–7 data, we included ten items answered by respondents in the ‘yes/no’ format:

- Contacted politician or government official in the last 12 months.
- Worked in political party or action group in the last 12 months.
- Worked in another organization or association in the last 12 months.
- Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker in the last 12 months.
- Signed petition in the last 12 months.
- Taken part in lawful public demonstration in the last 12 months.
- Boycotted certain products in the last 12 months.
- Voted in the last national election.
- Felt closer to a particular party than all other parties.
- Member of political party.

From the ‘yes’ answers, a Scale of Political Participation was created with a reliability coefficient  $\alpha = 0.642$ . Respondents from seven rounds of the ESS ( $N = 290,757$ ) were, according to their score on the scale, divided into three groups (score ranging from 0 to 1 - ‘lower political participation’; from 2 to 3 - ‘medium participation’; and from 4 to 10 - ‘higher political participation’). According to our results, 16.7 per cent ( $N = 48,546$ ; 51.5 per cent male; mean age  $M = 48.51$ ,  $SD = 15.29$ ) of respondents had a higher level of political participation; 37.1 per cent ( $N = 124,517$ ; 47.8 per cent male; mean age  $M = 50.68$ ;  $SD = 17.11$ ) a medium one, and

35.1 per cent ( $N = 117,557$ ; 42,8 per cent males; mean age  $M = 45.35$ ,  $SD = 18.06$ ) a lower level.

Items from the core model of the ESS (ESS 1-7, 2016) were used to measure different characteristics of respondents. The basic value orientation was measured using the Human Values Scale (Schwartz, 2003). Respondent satisfaction was measured using items on a ten-point scale (from 1 = extremely satisfied to 10 = extremely dissatisfied). Trust in institutions and people was measured on an eleven-point scale (from 0 = no trust at all to 10 = complete trust. Attitudes to immigrants were measured using three items on a four-point scale (from 1 = allow many, to 4 = allow none), three items on a eleven-point scale (0 = bad to 10 = good), while attitudes to gays and lesbians and reducing differences in income levels were measured on a five-point Likert-scale (from 1 = agree strongly to 5 = disagree strongly). The full versions of the items are shown in the tables.

A Pearson chi-square test and t-tests for two independent samples were used to compare low and high participative respondents in different areas. When processing the data, we respected the conditions of use of each method (Field, 2017). IBM SPSS v.21 was used for the statistical analysis.

### ***3. Results***

#### *3.1 Countries*

Political participation differs from country to country. Figure 1 shows the proportions of more and less politically participative respondents in European countries. Countries differ in terms of the proportion of more politically participative individuals, with Sweden (37.1 per cent), Norway (35.1 per cent), Finland (30.6 per cent), Denmark (27.2 per cent), and Germany (26.2 per cent) with the most, and Bulgaria (5.0 per cent), Hungary (5.5 per cent), Turkey (5.6 per cent), Russia (5.9 per cent), and Poland (5.9 per cent) at the bottom of the ranking. Non-weighted data were used in the calculation of the proportion of participative individuals in each country.

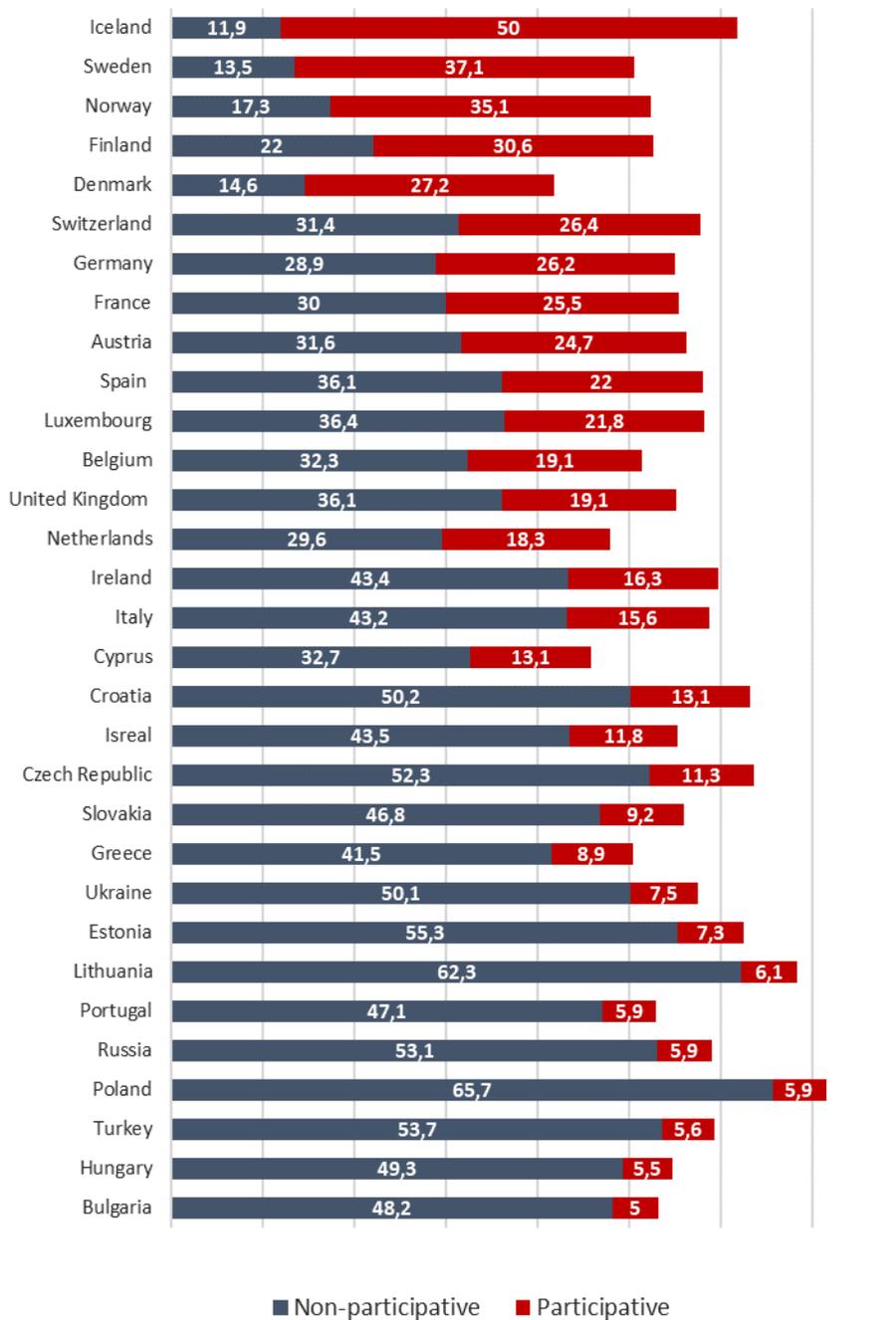


Figure 1 Political participation in selected countries (percent)

Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC

*3.2 Socio-demographic characteristics and political participation*

Statistical analyses (chi-square) showed significant differences between more and less participative groups in terms of some demographic characteristics. A Pearson chi-square test was performed to determine whether political participation is associated with gender. This found that males (51.6 per cent) are more politically participative than females (48.4 per cent). The non-participative group consisted of 42.8 per cent males and 57.2 per cent females. The result was statistically significant ( $X^2 (1, N = 166\ 103) = 1055.483, p < .001$ ). Less well-educated individuals are less politically participative; respondents with a lower level of education (ISCED 0-2) make up 35.8 per cent of all non-participative and 15.9 per cent of participative respondents. In the groups with a higher level of education (ISCED 3-6), 63.9 per cent may be classified as non-participative and 83.7 per cent as participative respondents. A Pearson chi-square test was performed to determine whether political participation is associated with education. It was found that there is a statistically significant association ( $X^2 (5, N = 165\ 770) = 10618.132, p < .001$ ); more educated respondents are more politically active. The association of age with political participation was also tested; in the younger group (under 37 years old) 38.5 per cent were non-participative and 25.7 per cent participative, while in the older group (over 55 years of age) 30.6 per cent were non-participative and 35.7 per cent participative. Age and political participation are also associated ( $X^2 (2, N = 165\ 488) = 2529.533, p < .001$ ).

*3.3 Values*

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare less and more participative respondents in terms of the values of power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. The lower the score, the ‘more like me.’

Table 1 Comparison of less and more participative individuals in relation to basic values (t-test for independent samples)

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Power	Less	3.495	1.132	-68.631	94 707.454	.000	-.253
	More	3.774	1.046				
Achievement	Less	3.136	1.221	-28.171	160 551.000	.000	-.085
	More	3.240	1.192				
Hedonism	Less	3.123	1.250	27.830	97 573.089	.000	.154
	More	2.936	1.122				
Stimulation	Less	3.522	1.237	22.025	94 863.971	.000	.162
	More	3.327	1.155				
Self-Direction	Less	2.543	1.014	69.662	99 751.039	.000	.381
	More	2.172	0.876				
Universalism	Less	2.299	0.813	75.145	98 824.022	.000	.357
	More	2.018	0.727				
Benevolence	Less	2.186	0.872	57.636	101 011.503	.000	.287

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Tradition	More	1.946	0.747	-36.067	86 846.689	.000	-.243
	Less	2.657	1.028				
Conformity	More	2.909	1.051	-56.954	81 641.872	.000	-.263
	Less	2.790	1.064				
Security	More	3.078	1.158	-68.729	77 353.852	.000	-.393
	Less	2.212	0.982				
OPENNESS TO CHANGE	More	2.615	1.122	48.350	103 608.656	.000	.256
	Less	3.079	0.961				
CONSERVATION	More	2.851	0.813	-68.197	81 955.186	.000	-.380
	Less	2.529	0.816				
SELF- TRANSCENDENCE	More	1.958	0.637	77.483	102 269.759	.000	.410
	Less	2.242	0.743				
SELF- ENHANCEMENT	More	3.549	1.001	-53.501	92 274.095	.000	-.289
	Less	3.252	1.048				

Source: *European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC*

Results show that there were significant differences in the scores for all values ( $p < .001$ ) with small effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = |.085 - .393|$ ). The psychological profile of two groups differs in terms of preferred values; while more participative individuals favor self-direction (MD = .355), universalism (MD = .308), benevolence (MD = .249), stimulation (MD = .142), and hedonism (MD = .180), less politically participative individuals favor tradition (MD = -.206), conformity (MD = -.359), security (MD = -.409), power (MD = -.411), and achievement (MD = -.188). These results suggest that non-participative and participative respondents clearly favor different sets of values.

Schwartz's model describes ten basic human values in a circular form - neighboring values are associated with similar motivation goals, counter-located values are opposites - organized into four general value orientations: self-enhancement (power + achievement); self-transcendence (universalism + benevolence); openness to change (hedonism + stimulation + self-direction); and conservation (tradition + conformity + security). Statistical analysis also confirmed the existence of significant differences between two groups at this level: while more participative individuals indicate openness to change (MD = .228) and self-transcendence (MD = 0.284), less participative ones prefer conservation (MD = -.325) and self-enhancement (MD = -.297).

### 3.4 Satisfaction

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare more and less participative respondents with regard to their satisfaction with economy, national government,

democracy, education, health services and well-being (happiness and satisfaction with life as a whole). The lower the score, the ‘more satisfied.’

Table 2 Comparison of less and more participative individuals in terms of satisfaction (t-test for independent samples)

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
How satisfied with present state of economy in country	Less	3.66	2.35	-50.562	87 288.897	.000	-.444
	More	4.33	2.47	-50.562	87 288.897	.000	
How satisfied with the national government	Less	3.63	2.41	-29.932	89 020.154	.000	-.316
	More	4.03	2.47	-29.932	89 020.154	.000	
How satisfied with the way democracy works in country	Less	4.34	2.47	-66.547	89 876.572	.000	-.464
	More	5.26	2.55	-66.547	89 876.572	.000	
State of education in country nowadays	Less	4.97	2.39	6.400	158 271.240	.000	-.120
	More	4.89	2.29	6.400	158 271.240	.000	
State of health services in country nowadays	Less	4.56	2.63	-51.291	98 212.319	.000	-.295
	More	5.25	2.41	-51.291	98 212.319	.000	
How satisfied with life as a whole	Less	6.22	2.51	-70.009	103 798.512	.000	-.456
	More	7.08	2.18	-70.009	103 798.512	.000	
How happy are you	Less	6.70	2.22	-76.071	113 312.381	.000	-.440
	More	7.48	1.76	-76.071	113 312.381	.000	

Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC

The results show that there were significant differences in the scores for all areas of satisfaction ( $p < .001$ ) with small and medium effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = |.120 - .464|$ ). Participative individuals are more satisfied with the state of the economy ( $MD = -.670$ ), government ( $MD = -.400$ ), the way democracy works ( $MD = -.920$ ), and health services ( $MD = -.689$ ), but less satisfied with the state of education ( $MD = .083$ ). Participative individuals score higher on both well-being indicators - they feel happier ( $MD = -.785$ ) and are more satisfied with life as a whole ( $MD = -.863$ ). The results suggest that participative individuals have a higher level of satisfaction.

### 3.5 Trust in people and institutions

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare less and more participative respondents along their trust in parliament, the legal system, the police, politicians, political parties, the European Parliament, the United Nations and in people. The lower the score, the 'more trust.'

Table 3 Comparison of less and more participative individuals in terms of trust in people and institutions (t-test for independent samples)

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Trust in country's parliament	Less	3.54	2.60	-92.407	95 625.380	.000	-.559
	More	4.81	2.48				
Trust in the legal system	Less	4.26	2.71	-79.049	96 042.755	.000	-.478
	More	5.38	2.57				
Trust in the police	Less	5.05	2.85	-75.557	105 850.375	.000	-.358
	More	6.09	2.43				
Trust in politicians	Less	2.69	2.30	-83.995	92 507.982	.000	-.614
	More	3.73	2.27				
Trust in political parties	Less	2.60	2.26	-86.203	78 736.052	.000	-.499
	More	3.73	2.25				
Trust in the European Parliament	Less	3.87	2.56	-39.164	94 314.606	.000	-.407
	More	4.41	2.43				
Trust in the United Nations	Less	4.40	2.67	-63.473	99 393.895	.000	-.568
	More	5.30	2.46				
Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful	Less	4.21	2.47	-98.937	97 853.179	.000	-.637
	More	5.45	2.27				
Most people try to take advantage of you or try to be fair	Less	4.97	2.42	-83.012	103 339.990	.000	-.239
	More	5.96	2.10				
Most of the time people helpful or mostly looking out for themselves	Less	4.27	2.46	-60.117	101 387.527	.000	-.408
	More	5.01	2.19				

Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC

The results showed that there were significant differences in the scores for all areas of trust ( $p < .001$ ) with small and medium effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = |.239 - .637|$ ). Participative individuals have more trust in parliament (MD = - 1.264), the legal system (MD = - 1.121), the police (MD = -1.047), politicians (MD = - 1.041), political parties (MD = - 1.130), the European Parliament (MD = - .547), the United Nations (MD = - .903) and in people (MD = - 1.244) than less participative individuals. The results suggest that participative individuals express higher trust in people, and also in national and international political institutions.

### 3.6 Tolerance and solidarity attitudes

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare less and more participative respondents in terms of their attitudes to immigrants, gays and lesbians, and in response to the question whether government should reduce differences in income levels. Attitudes to immigrants were measured by three items on a four-point scale (1 = allow many, 4 = allow none) – a lower score means more a positive attitude; three items on a eleven-point scale (0 = bad, 10 = good) – a lower score means a more negative attitude; while attitudes to gays and lesbians and reducing differences in income levels were measured on a five-point Likert-scale (1 = agree strongly, 5 = disagree strongly) – a lower score means a more positive attitude.

Table 4 Comparison of less and more participative individuals in terms of attitudes (t-test for independent samples)

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d																																															
Allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority	Less	2.30	0.94	83.796	105 240.483	.000	.469																																															
	More	1.91	0.79					Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority	Less	2.63	0.92	94.029	96 599.903	.000	.510	More	2.18	0.85	Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	Less	2.70	0.94	86.195	94 687.575	.000	.488	More	2.28	0.89	Immigration bad or good for country's economy	Less	4.33	2.49	-98.945	94 966.182	.000	-.525	More	5.64	2.37	Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants	Less	4.77	2.61	-106.075	93 870.149	.000	-.579	More	6.26	2.54	Immigrants make country worse or	Less	4.24
Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority	Less	2.63	0.92	94.029	96 599.903	.000	.510																																															
	More	2.18	0.85					Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	Less	2.70	0.94	86.195	94 687.575	.000	.488	More	2.28	0.89	Immigration bad or good for country's economy	Less	4.33	2.49	-98.945	94 966.182	.000	-.525	More	5.64	2.37	Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants	Less	4.77	2.61	-106.075	93 870.149	.000	-.579	More	6.26	2.54	Immigrants make country worse or	Less	4.24	2.36	-90.432	93 088.147	.000	-.490						
Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	Less	2.70	0.94	86.195	94 687.575	.000	.488																																															
	More	2.28	0.89					Immigration bad or good for country's economy	Less	4.33	2.49	-98.945	94 966.182	.000	-.525	More	5.64	2.37	Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants	Less	4.77	2.61	-106.075	93 870.149	.000	-.579	More	6.26	2.54	Immigrants make country worse or	Less	4.24	2.36	-90.432	93 088.147	.000	-.490																	
Immigration bad or good for country's economy	Less	4.33	2.49	-98.945	94 966.182	.000	-.525																																															
	More	5.64	2.37					Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants	Less	4.77	2.61	-106.075	93 870.149	.000	-.579	More	6.26	2.54	Immigrants make country worse or	Less	4.24	2.36	-90.432	93 088.147	.000	-.490																												
Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants	Less	4.77	2.61	-106.075	93 870.149	.000	-.579																																															
	More	6.26	2.54					Immigrants make country worse or	Less	4.24	2.36	-90.432	93 088.147	.000	-.490																																							
Immigrants make country worse or	Less	4.24	2.36	-90.432	93 088.147	.000	-.490																																															

	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
better place to live	More	5.39	2.30				
	Less	2.53	1.28				
Gays and lesbians free to live life as they wish	Less	2.53	1.28	95.957	104 933.790	.000	-.198
	More	1.92	1.11				
Government should reduce differences in income levels	Less	2.01	0.98	-31.242	81 006.730	.000	.459
	More	2.19	1.12				

*Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2016). Data file edition 1.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC*

The results showed that there were significant differences in the scores for all attitudes ( $p < .001$ ) with small and medium effect sizes (Cohen's  $d = |.198 - .579|$ ). Participative individuals have more positive attitudes to immigrants of the same ethnic/race group as the majority ( $MD = .385$ ), different ethnic/race ( $MD = .451$ ), and from poorer countries ( $MD = .428$ ). They expressed the view that immigration is good for the economy ( $MD = -1.310$ ), that cultural life is enriched by immigrants ( $MD = -1.486$ ), and that immigrants make a country better place to live ( $MD = -1.149$ ). Participative individuals have also a more benevolent attitude to gays and lesbians ( $MD = .611$ ). Less-participative individuals respond with a higher mean score to the question whether government should reduce differences in income levels ( $MD = -.194$ ). The results suggest that participative individuals are more benevolent and have more positive attitudes to immigrants and to gays and lesbians.

#### 4. Discussion

The data from seven rounds of the ESS that used representative samples of more than 30 European countries (old and new EU Member states and non-members) cover a 14-year period (2002–2016) and thus create a solid basis for opinion/attitudinal analyses. Political participation – the topic of interest in this article – in the ESS data is approached by registering the occurrence of a selected set of ten self-reported activities. Before we discuss the results, it might be appropriate to point out again that the set of items that were used represents standard/traditional, legitimate, and generally socially accepted forms of political activities only. The whole sample was then, according to scoring, divided into three groups: higher; medium; and lower political participation. For the purposes of our study we compared two groups – more- and less politically participative individuals – with a broad set of social and personal characteristics with the aim of outlining the ‘profile’ of a politically engaged European.

The results of the analysis confirmed the known differences (e.g. Karp and Milazzo, 2015; Hooghe and Quintelier, 2014) in civic engagement and political participation between countries; the list is headed by Nordic countries, followed by a group of Western countries, then Southern European countries, and finally a group of

Eastern European countries and non-EU member countries at the bottom of the ranking.

From the group of demographic variables, we concentrate our attention on the differences between more and less participative individuals as regards gender, education, and age. The concept and phenomenon of a gender gap in political participation, frequently used in contemporary political theory and research (Beauregard, 2018), expresses the difference in the 'proportion of eligible men and eligible women engaging in a particular type of activity' (Glatte and de Vries, 2015: 2). Our results confirmed the ongoing (Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010; Beauregard, 2014) higher general level of male political participation.

Regarding education; 'one of the most consistently documented relationships in the field of political behavior is the close association between educational attainment and political participation' (Berinsky and Lenz, 2011: 357). However, Kam and Palmer (2008) have argued that the relationship between education and political participation has not, until now, been tested properly. In reaction to this, Mayer (2011) conducted a study in respect of Kam and Parker's methodological objections. The results provided evidence that education does, indeed, increase political participation. Our results, based on ESS data analysis, also confirmed, as with Brade and Piopiumik (2016), close ties between education and political participation.

The results of the basic human values-political participation relationship analyses support the notion of a fundamental link between the motivational structure of human personality and engagement in political behavior (Hafner-Fink, 2012; DeGolia, 2016). The personal value orientations of participative individuals reflect their motivation to change social arrangements (openness to change) based on independent thought and action, the need for novelty and life enjoyment, and also for improving the welfare of others (self-transcendence) based on tolerance and an understanding of differences in individual needs, a sense of belonging, and meaning in life.

Flavin and Keane (2012), who examined the relationship between life satisfaction and political participation using data from the ANES 2000 (American National Election Study), concluded that this link is confined to non-conflictual forms of participation only; no relationship was found as regards engagement in political protest. Pacheco and Lange (2010) in the ESS 2006 data found that only one kind of political participation activity - membership or collaboration with a political party - has a positive effect on life satisfaction. In our results, not only were the well-being indicators - satisfaction with life as a whole and general happiness - of more politically participative individuals higher, but also satisfaction with different areas of social life (with government, the way democracy works, with the state of the economy and the state of health services). The only exception was satisfaction with the state of education, where the result was more negative. One of the factors that may potentially stimulate discussions about satisfaction-participation and the reverse relation is the cross-sectional nature of the data that was used, which creates a serious hindrance to making causal statements. To overcome this barrier, Pirralha (2018) used data from three waves of the SOEP (German Socio Economic Panel) with the intention of exploring the causal relationship between political participation and life satisfaction. Based on the analyses, the author confirmed the 'extreme stability' (2017: 803) of both variables over time, but found little evidence for the expected causal effect.

The link between social trust and political participation is also still an issue for discussion; while one group expected and found a positive relationship, the other found the connection to be weak, zero, or negative. The results of our analyses show that participative individuals trusted more in national political institutions (parliament, the legal system, the police, politicians, and political parties) than international institutions (the European Parliament and the United Nations) and also expressed a higher level of interpersonal trust than less participative individuals. Studies carried out on large comparative samples (ESS) over the last decade have confirmed close relations between these two complex and multifaceted concepts, but also stressed the role of the situational context (Bäck and Cristensen, 2011) and the need to differentiate the impact of trust on institutional participation (e.g. working for a political party, voting) and non-institutional participation (e.g. signing a petition, boycotting products) (Hooghe and Marien, 2013).

From the ESS Round 1-7 database, we also paid attention to the potential differences between two groups in terms of selected attitudes that reflect tolerance and solidarity. A common understanding of tolerance is willingness to respect individuals who belong to other (usually minority) groups (Finkel et al, 1999). The logic behind this is the nature of the relations between value hierarchy and the attitudinal system; if participative individuals favor values representing self-transcendence, then we are justified in expecting the existence of more positive (in a comparison of the two groups) attitudes in this area. The results we obtained confirmed this assumption; participative individuals expressed more positive attitudes towards immigrants, and also towards homosexuals.

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