



**MEET
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**Meet Our Neighbours Erasmus+ KA2 Project
International Report Findings
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Aim of the research

The research aims to understand the perceptions of young people living in six Balkan countries concerning the Balkans and the EU. This research used Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity scale, which describes the developmental stages along which people can progress toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of cross-cultural differences. "Bennett Scale" describes how people experience, interpret, and interact across cultural differences. It proposes a developmental continuum along which people can progress toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural variance and a more excellent social facility when negotiating cross-cultural dissimilarity.

As a developmental continuum that progresses from ethnocentric (denial, defensiveness, and minimisation) to ethno-relative worldviews (acceptance, adaptation, and integration), the model has been widely used as an educational tool to help people progress toward a deeper understanding of cross-cultural differences.

The research questions are:

1. What is the intercultural cultural sensitivity level of young people in Balkans?
2. Does their intercultural sensitivity level differ according to age, gender and country?
3. How they perceived the distinguished characteristics of the Balkans, the country they live and the EU.

The sample

This research is implemented in 6 Balkan Countries Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Türkiye. The sample consisted of 295 males, 455 females, and 18 people who did not prefer to say their gender. The total number of samples was 768. While 434 of participants were 14-18 years old the 334 of them were 19-30 years old.

Methodology

A quantitative research method was used in the research. The data was collected via Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity scale. The scale was uploaded on google drive, and the link was sent to the participants. The collected data was analysed with the SPSS statistics program.

Findings

The means of intercultural sensitivity level of Balkan youth is ($X=3,32$) in the range of 5 degree Liker scale.

There is no difference in the intercultural sensitivity level of participants in ethnocentric, ethno-relative and the total score of scale according to their age. According to gender, there is a difference between male and female participants. The female participants have a higher mean than male participants in the ethno-relative sub-dimension and in the total score of the



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questionnaire, while the male participants have a higher mean in the ethnocentric sub-dimension. The female participants have a higher level of intercultural sensitivity.

Looking at the intercultural sensitivity level of youth by countries, the mean of all Balkan countries approximately have similar scores. While the lowest score is, $X=3,21$ and the Highest score is $X=3,40$. These differences, in our sample, have limited statistical explanatory power. The intercultural sensitivity level among the youth population in the Balkans is, in average (approximately 3.32 over 5 in general).

Country	Mean
Bulgaria	$X=3,35$
Greece	$X=3,29$
Macedonia	$X=3,39$
Romania	$X=3,21$
Serbia	$X=3,40$
Türkiye	$X=3,28$

What can contribute to good relations between the Balkan countries in the future?

	All %	BG%	GR%	MK%	RO%	SRB%	TR%
Economic cooperation and exchange	18,6%	17,9%	15,7%	19,6%	12,6%	16,0%	18,2%
Cultural cooperation	14,4%	19,7%	11,3%	17,6%	18,2%	13,5%	19,7%
Intercultural education in schools	13,0%	17,4%	18,1%	11,8%	19,4%	12,8%	20,5%
Non-interference of great powers	8,0%	19,7%	14,6%	22,5%	6,7%	26,4%	10,1%
Regional association based on common needs and interests	9,1%	25,9%	8,5%	20,4%	10,0%	14,9%	20,4%
Increasing awareness of mutual respect and feeling of closeness and togetherness	14,9%	15,5%	16,7%	24,8%	12,7%	16,4%	13,9%
Visiting and getting to know better other Balkan countries	11,5%	16,9%	15,7%	32,3%	18,1%	9,8%	7,1%
Demonstrating sincerity, empathy, and friendship with other Balkan nations	10,6%	26,9%	17,9%	23,9%	12,0%	16,2%	3,0%



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As can be seen from the table, %18.6 of the participants believe that economic cooperation and exchange is the best way to establish good relations in the Balkan countries. While participants are, firstly, interested in the improvement of economic relations, they also have considered the advantages of increasing awareness of mutual respect and feeling togetherness. This response is in line with cultural cooperation. It is clear that young people in our sample supports the cultural cooperation among Balkan countries to have good relations in the region. 13.0 % of the participants argue that intercultural education in school is a way to promote good relations in the Balkans. Giving preference to cultural dialogue, participants also highlighted the need to visiting and getting to know each other better, and thus, to demonstrate an understanding and developing a friendship with each other.

Distinguishing Characteristics of Being European

	All %	BG%	GR%	MK%	RO%	SRB%	TR%
Freedom	12,5%	16,2%	15,5%	20,8%	16,4%	11,6%	19,4%
Democracy	12,4%	18,2%	18,2%	15,4%	18,4%	13,6%	16,1%
Human rights	15,1%	17,4%	15,2%	22,3%	15,5%	13,6%	15,9%
Environmental protection and sustainable development	8,3%	0,0%	13,5%	22,5%	18,0%	23,5%	22,5%
Support for vulnerable groups and assistance for disadvantaged individuals	6,1%	20,6%	15,0%	23,4%	16,8%	16,8%	7,5%
Equality	8,2%	15,7%	16,8%	25,9%	16,8%	28,9%	16,1%
High living standards	10,9%	21,1%	8,2%	23,7%	7,4%	18,7%	21,1%
Low living standards	2,1%	20,4%	10,6%	25,0%	10,0%	17,8%	16,1%
Security	7,9%	16,3%	15,6%	24,3%	13,8%	15,6%	14,5%
Cooperation	7,7%	15,7%	28,7%	15,7%	12,3%	3,7%	15,7%
Conflict	3,2%	19,6%	20,5%	8,9%	25,0%	8,0%	19,6%
Racism	4,2%	16,2%	18,9%	8,1%	18,2%	16,2%	16,2%
Dictatorship	1,5%	11,1%	18,5%	3,7%	27,8%	7,4%	11,1%

As can be detected from the table, a very high number of participants argue that respect to human rights is the distinguishing characteristic of being European. In line with European Union's core values, participants also claim that freedom and democracy are the second and third most distinguishing traits of being European. High living standards are also defined as an essential trait for the definition of Europeans. In line with the most rated answers, which support freedom, democracy and human rights, the least rated answers were voted as low living standards, dictatorship, and racism.



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1. National Distinguishing Characteristics

	All %	BG%	GR%	MK%	RO%	SRB%	TR%
Freedom	12,3%	18,3%	15,2%	24,7%	14,7%	17,6%	9,5%
Democracy	9,7%	17,0%	20,4%	28,4%	19,1%	6,2%	9,0%
Human rights	7,1%	17,3%	19,8%	21,1%	15,2%	16,0%	10,5%
Environmental protection and sustainable development	2,5%	0,0%	14,5%	19,3%	33,7%	15,7%	16,9%
Support for vulnerable groups and assistance for disadvantaged individuals	6,5%	14,4%	13,5%	11,2%	13,0%	22,3%	25,6%
Equality	5,0%	15,2%	21,2%	20,0%	13,3%	21,2%	9,1%
High living standards	2,3%	32,1%	20,5%	7,7%	23,1%	7,7%	9,0%
Low living standards	16,2%	20,4%	10,6%	25,0%	10,0%	17,8%	16,1%
Security	5,2%	14,5%	13,3%	26,6%	18,5%	14,5%	12,7%
Cooperation	8,6%	14,6%	13,9%	13,9%	20,2%	18,5%	18,8%
Conflict	10,3%	4,7%	14,8%	31,4%	12,8%	17,4%	18,9%
Racism	9,2%	23,9%	18,3%	19,6%	13,7%	11,1%	13,4%
Dictatorship	5,0%	16,8%	7,8%	15,0%	8,4%	23,4%	28,7%

As can be seen in the table, young people in the Balkans define low living standards as the most rated distinguishing characteristics of their nations. While the same sample population defines Europe with high living standards, young people in the Balkans have some concerns about their living standards. It is visible that young people in the Balkans do not define their national identity as European by contrasting national and European distinguishing characteristics. While young Balkans define their national identity with conflict and racism, they surprisingly adopt freedom and democracy as national distinguishing characteristics.