

YOUTH ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION: EVIDENCE FROM POLAND

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Abstract

Low voter turnout is usually seen as a negative but growing trend. The structure of the non-vote typically contains a large portion of youth. My interest lies in uncovering reasons of poor youth participation in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) through the example of Poland. The existing theories give a wide range of explanations to the phenomenon usually referring to the particular regions, primarily USA and Western Europe. My hypothesis is that besides the difference between youth and adults in reasons for non-voting, there is an even more important distinction as for the ultimate factors behind those reasons. I intend to answer the research question by applying both qualitative and quantitative methods, in particular doing a statistical analysis of the Polish election to the European Parliament in 2004, and comparing youth and adult absentees upon different factors.

*To the young people of Belarus with a hope
that once they will recall their right to vote*

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Introduction

1. Background & Objectives

A wide range of literature is devoted to election turnouts. Almost all authors agree that there has been a tremendous decrease in the percentages of citizens voting in elections since the 1960-s. Mostly such a trend is seen as a negative situation. However, some academics do not share the idea that bigger turnouts are desirable. Thus, many scholars disagree that participation in elections means support for the political system (Franklin 1999), some authors do not consider a low turnout to be a problem for the democratic system of governance (Rosema 2007) and a few academics do not even regard that turnout matters at all (Lutz and Marsh 2007).

Nevertheless, low turnout creates a series of problems. The lack of participation is usually seen by the majority of scholars as a serious problem for democracy. Often the negative impacts are widely visible in politics. The notions of representation and legitimacy are questioned by low participation, because politicians represent less and less citizens, and the new electoral cohorts show even less attention to politics. Such a situation leads to speculation that a decreased turnout creates difficulties primarily for the ruling political elite but not as many problems to the concept of democracy per se.

Another threatening tendency are disproportions within the political system in favor of the groups with higher participation that become over-represented as a result (Lijphart 1997), like senior citizens or the less prosperous. Such misbalance leads to the dissatisfaction of those people who feel underrepresented, like for example the youth. Such discontent provokes even further disproportions because the underrepresented groups of the electorate generally feel disappointed with the whole political system and their voting patterns become even more

passive than before. The most important dimension where the inequality of representations is especially obvious is the budgeting policy.

Finally, the common habit of non-voting among young people and their unfamiliarity with the electoral process creates a negative trend. Such a tendency could develop in the long run into a potential further decrease of civil participation and a hard time for democracy. The supporters of the life-cycle theory do not see a big threat in such a current situation and tend to be optimistic about the future voting of today's youth. However, the today's predominant theories of new electoral cohorts say that this negative trend has to be changed today, otherwise the young people will grow up without a habit to vote and this will predetermine their voting, in fact non-voting behavior for the rest of their lives.

Usually when the problem of low turnout is discussed, the young voters are seen responsible in first place (Ballington 2002, 111). It has become a commonplace to mention the youth and its role in decreasing turnout, to accuse them of being thoughtless, apolitical and careless. A major academic debate is going around the factors influencing the turnout. Those policy-makers that consider non-voting a potential threat to their legitimacy are concerned with finding a magic formula of a successful youth-mobilizing campaign. The election consultants and managers look to bring the additional youth cohorts to the political arena that in their mind can change the whole picture of a fragile party balance of today's democracies in favor of their candidates. Therefore, the question of youth electoral participation and a general population turnout as a whole has never been just an academic issue, but an unresolved question, an answer to which has been demanded by politicians.

Although great attention of the scientific community is being constantly given to the potential factors resulting in electoral absenteeism of the youth, I consider the existing research in the field to be nevertheless limited. The straightforward reasons for absenteeism as reported by the non-voters themselves do not reveal the differences in voting behavior

between youth and the adults. Although the reasons can be dissimilar or alike, even in the latter case there might be a significant difference in rationale behind them for the two age groups. My ambition in this thesis is to find out the most important factors that influence the establishment of one of the non-voting patterns and to compare them for young people and adults. Such findings would help to understand the fundamental motives for non-voting of the young electorate.

2. The Field

Since the proposal of the famous voting formula $PB + D > C$ (Riker and Ordeshook 1968), where P stands for probability of voting, B for benefit, D for duty and C for cost, the major debate has revolved around the factors that influence turnout, although there are influential scientists who still doubt the significance of voting decrease (McDonald and Popkin 2001; Mair 2005). There are both general theories clarifying the total population turnout and the particular explanations for youth turnout. The total range of arguments existing in the field of general theories can be coded into three major groups.

In the first group, psychological features are predominantly used to explain the variation in turnout. One of the most outstanding and original theories is the one of habitual voting behavior where the election process is seen in terms of habits and therefore it takes time for a new voter to get used to it (Plutzer 2002, Fowler 2006). Thus, Plutzer (2002) defines everyone as a “habitual voter” or “habitual nonvoter” with the young people being at first the non-voters. As defined by Franklin et al. (2004, 115) “Voting is a habit. People learn the habit of voting, or not, based on experience in their first few elections.”

The above-mentioned formula was to a certain degree amended by the theory of altruism (Jankowski 2002, Edlin et al. 2007) that declares that a person might be interested in

augmenting the well-being of the representatives of his or her group. Edlin et al. (2007) even combine the altruism with the rational choice theory so that it becomes rational for a person to vote if his or her utility-maximizing voting behavior brings benefit in form of moral satisfaction for the action. Finally, Powell (1986) claims that such personal characteristics as trust in government, general interest in politics, and a belief in voting have an influence on the turnout.

The second group of socio-economic features is represented mostly by a person's education and income (Sigelman et al. 1985, Blais and Dobrzynska 1998, Geys 2006). It is proved that there is a positive relationship between the level of education and income and the probability of voting on the election day. Though there are some other determinants in this group, education and income are probably the only ones that nobody doubts.

Finally, the ultimate category of influential factors is institutional. Many scholars agree that such features as compulsory voting (Franklin 1999) and proportional representation electoral system (Lijphart 1997) have a strong effect. Two subcategories of institutional aspects can also be subdivided by time when they matter, whether during the campaigning procedures or on the election day. It has been noted that negative campaigns strongly discourage people from voting (Kahn and Kenney 1999, Niemi and Weisberg 2001). However, Kahn and Kenney (1999, 877) specify that people make a difference between "useful negative information presented in an appropriate manner and irrelevant and harsh mudslinging." According to their findings, the increase of legitimate criticism stimulates people to vote, and when the campaign becomes a series of unmotivated mutual attacks between the candidates, the voters are more likely to stay at home. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) claim that less attention to get-out-the-vote campaigning with its peer-to-peer contact, and orientation on expensive TV and other media have made voters less involved in campaigns, and so is a substantial reason for decrease in the electoral participation.

A very diverse range of criteria represents the second subcategory of elections themselves that matter with respect to turnout. The general lack of real electoral competition is believed to play an important role in reducing turnouts (Franklin 2004). The easy procedure of registration (in the United States) and voting itself can produce a higher turnout (Highton 1997, Fitzgerald 2003). Finally, the high stakes of the elections and a hard competition are seen to create a bigger outcome (Lijphart 1997, 6). In particular, Lijphart proposes two options for increasing the turnout, which he considers an important task. The first one suggests voter-friendly rules for registration, a proportional representation electoral system, and the combination of national and local elections held less regularly, and weekend voting. The second option is compulsory voting (Lijphart 1997, 1) that by itself stimulates electoral participation.

As for my research both literature on general turnout issues and youth participation are of a great importance. In the study of youth, there has been a shift from the life-cycles theories to the study of new electoral cohorts and their influence on the turnout decrease (Franklin et al. 2004, Franklin 2005).

The life-cycle theory that has been popular in recent times claims that the non-voting patterns of the youth could be explained simply by the fact that these people are young: “Low participation among the young, however, appears to be a lifestyle phenomenon. As young Americans marry, have children, and develop community ties, their turnout tends to increase” (Abramson et al. 1998 as in Highton and Wolfinger 2001). Usually the young are assumed to give preference to finding a job and a spouse in their early twenties instead of being concerned about voting. Highton and Wolfinger test such a claim on a model but their research results contradict the above-mentioned assumption: “These inconsistent and often negative findings point to the conclusion that transitions to adult roles are an incomplete and predominantly inadequate explanation of youth turnout” (2001, 207). However, there are

scholars who say life cycles are still relevant today though perhaps to a smaller extent (see Phelps 2004, Iyengar and Jackman 2003) and those who oppose their validity (Hill and Louth 2006).

The mainstream theory of new electoral cohorts declares that “recent cohorts of young people are politically distinct from previous generations” (Phelps 2004, 238). In that sense politicians concerned with increasing the turnout can not simply wait for their potential voters to grow up but have to mobilize them as soon as possible, because otherwise, having grown, they would keep their non-voting habits. Mark Franklin (2005, 2) considers that the turnout change “is led by the youngest members of the electorate who, as they age, become set in their ways at a level to which their turnout returns after any perturbation.”

Youth voting behavior can be understood in terms of socialization. Thus, education is named as one of the key factors (Bennett 1997, Print 2007). Andolina et al. (2003, 275) look for a wide range of factors that influence the civic engagement of youth. They point out as the most relevant those habits from home formed in the family, lessons taught at school and the opportunities provided by the outside groups and organizations.

Much research in the field shows that young people remain reluctant even after the great effects of governments and parties to motivate them to vote. The youngsters usually say voting does not help them to achieve the important goals like “improving their communities and generating positive social and political change” (Fields 2008, 10). A study of British young people showed that they support the democratic process as such and are in favor of “more participative and direct” politics but are skeptical about the organization and conducting of the political system (Henn et al. 2005, 556, 573). The youth in the United Kingdom is not satisfied with the “conventional party politics” with politicians acting *de jure* on behalf of the youth inclusive, but being in fact “self-serving, unrepresentative and unresponsive to the demands of young people.” (2005, 574) A solution could be found in a

fundamental reform of the political organization of society that would make it more open, fair and in general youth-friendly (Strama 1998).

Overby and Barth (2006) have done a study of the specific political communication tools. In particular, they have investigated the usage of radio in election campaigning and found that young people “report a greater impact from radio ads than do older Americans.” (2006, 19) Looking for the explanations the authors claim based on the US survey data that the youth usually feels excluded from the mainstream political communications (2006, 19). Such a conclusion leads to the necessity of regarding other communication techniques to reach the young voters. Another finding by Overby and Barth, supplementing the above-mentioned one, is that being the most mobile individuals, the young people may find radio the best accessible media for receiving political information (2006, 11).

Many scholars, focused on specific mobilization issues, believe that tactical changes in campaigning procedures can increase participation of the young people. Among such mobilization means are the usage of modern digital technologies (Iyengar and Jackman 2003) including Internet (Levine and Lopez 2004, Bennett and Xenos 2005), sending text messages (Dale and Strauss 2007), employing celebrities in political campaigns (Payne et al. 2007) and applying personalized messages (Burgess et al. 2000). The studies also show that the old methods, like canvassing, phone calls and direct mailing (Gerber and Green 2000, Green and Gerber 2001) or party mobilization (Niemi and Hanmer 2006, 14) are still demanded by the audience.

However, there are authors that point out the specificity of youth-targeted campaigning (see *Young Voter Mobilization Tactics* 2006, Bondelli 2007). They say that general strategies do not apply to youth and there must be a fundamental understanding by campaign specialists of this fact. The most significant findings by Bondelli (2007) reflect that young people are more affected by peer-to-peer contact. Another outstanding research result

claims that “habitual voting trends indicate that a person voting in two consecutive elections will likely be a voter for life and voting for a political party in three consecutive elections will likely identify with that party for life.” (Bondelli 2007, 2). Having this finding in mind, a candidate or party that is able to elaborate a successful youth-based campaign, can secure a sustainable support in future.

Despite recognizing the existence of some minor tactics for involving the young people, some specialists, like Anna Greenberg (2003) believe that mostly political parties and candidates do not pay attention to the youth at all, probably because they evaluate the costs of doing so to be extremely high. Political scientists and campaign consultants commonly suppose that young people do not vote and it is not worth spending the limited campaign resources on motivating them. For that reason, the youth is typically excluded if not from campaigning as such, so at least from its mainstream efforts, meaning that the youth is never in the major focus of the electoral mobilization techniques.

It seems reasonable and rational for the campaign managers, political consultants and candidates themselves to focus the resource-consuming campaigns only on those big segments of the electorate that have a high probability to vote on election day. From such a perspective, running a campaign focused on a 10-15 % youth age group is not the best strategy for winning elections. Therefore, insignificant campaigning seems to be caused by the anticipated and expected low participation of the youth.

Greenberg considers that the reason why none of the mobilization techniques applied to youth works in the United States, is because parties “have largely chosen to communicate the same, older-oriented message to all voters” and not the messages “that young people are tuned to” (2003). Greenberg supposes that the young people are not seriously influenced by the adult-targeted campaigns because they are not concerned exactly with the same issues as the adult population and have other priorities in their lives.

In my work, I investigate the problem through the example of Poland. The reason for such a case selection is that Poland is a key country in Central and Eastern Europe. The region generally lacks scientific interest to it and is less studied than the United States or West European countries. Besides, Poland provides an example of extremely low electoral participation.

3. Contributions

I am sure that my research will contribute to the better understanding of reasons for non-voting among young people in Poland and probably in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. The thesis will propose a different viewpoint of distinguishing between the reasons for non-voting and their underlying factors. I also believe that the research will have a practical value and could be used for building mobilizing strategies for increasing the youth electoral participation in elections.

4. Structure

The thesis consists of four major parts. Following the introduction, the first chapter describes the Polish campaign for the European Parliament (EP) in 2004 and pays attention to turnout issues for both the general population and the youth. It also goes into detail of the campaign itself, including the strategies and electoral profiles of the major political parties. Finally, the major findings of the campaign analysis and the literature review are used to address the theoretical part of the work. The first chapter elaborates the research question and proposes the hypothesis. Afterwards it concentrates on methodology of the study, and in particular justifies the case selection. The chapter also contains clarifications on terminology

that might quite often seem contradictory. Here, the basic definitions are given to the concepts of ‘youth’, ‘political participation’, and ‘non-voting/abstention.’

The second chapter of the thesis is devoted to the statistical analysis, testing the hypothesis and presenting the results. First, I look at the self-reported reasons by youth and adults and compare the significance of difference between them. The second step is finding differences between the age groups in the factors behind those reasons. The conclusion describes the major findings of the research and proposes prospective area for further study.

Chapter I – The Turnout in the Polish Elections to the European Parliament

A. The Turnout

1. Total Turnout

The 2004 election was the first European election in Poland, except for the accession referendum. That is why it has been attracting the attention of analysts from Poland and the rest of the European Union as being a reflection of attitude towards the European integration in the new member state.

Probably one of the most remarkable results of the first Polish election to the European Parliament in 2004 was its tremendously low turnout with only 20.87% of eligible citizens that casted their votes. It was a striking result for several reasons. Polish population at large was reasonably considered to be clearly Eurooptimistic and such a conclusion has been given by every survey run before the accession to the European Union in May 2004. For example, Public Opinion Research Center was monitoring the attitudes towards European integration and according to its findings during the period from January 2003 till the very accession in May 2004 the 'For' answer varied from 58 to 71% and 'Against' – from 18 to 31% (Chan 2008, 8).

For that reason, a much better turnout was expected. Actually, the Eurobarometer forecast in the beginning of May 2004 reported 41% of Poles likely to vote (and 31% definitely voting), 25% somewhat likely to vote and only 24% not intending to vote (Chan 2008, 26).

Besides, the election took place on June 13, 2004, just one and a half month after the accession to the European Union. The Polish leadership was concerned that such a low

election turnout would harm the country's image from the beginning of its very first steps in inter-EU history.

Another sad fact was that this turnout became the worst Polish turnout ever in its democratic post-communist history (see more on Polish turnouts in Czesnik 2004). From that perspective, the European elections have just prolonged the clear trend of low citizens' engagement in electoral participation. However, the 2004 result was still extraordinary and in Riedel's words, even "alarming" (2004, 63).

Table 1. Turnouts in post-communist Poland (%)

	<i>1990</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>Local</i>	42.3			33.8				45.5			44.2		
<i>President.</i>	60.6 (1) 53.4 (2)				64.7 (1) 68.2 (2)				61.1				
<i>Parliam.</i>		43.2	52.1				47.9			46.2			
<i>Referend.</i>						32.4	42.9					58.9	
<i>European</i>													<i>20.87</i>

Source: Szczerbiak 2004, 7.

In addition to setting a new Polish record, this turnout was also remarkable in the European context as far as it was the second lowest in the whole European Union after neighboring Slovakia (16.96%). The overall EU turnout in 2004 reached 44.03% (Hastings 2007, 149), twice that of Poland. Nevertheless, the low turnout was a typical election outcome for all the Central and East European new member states except for Lithuania (Greffet 2007, 1). Still, the rest of the member states, although having higher turnouts, in a long run are experiencing a tremendous decline of the voters' participation in European Parliament elections (see more at Manow 2005).

However, there are some important objections to the relevance of any comparisons of turnout level between different EU countries as it can be biased by many factors. As the major

reason for incomparability is named the huge diversity of voting procedures in different EU member states (Hastings 2007, 148).

There are at least three major arguments proving the unique nature of European elections in each member state. First, in some countries (Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece and Cyprus), participation in elections is fully or partially compulsory and this explains high turnouts (Hastings 2007, 149). Second, in Belgium for example, the elections to the European Parliament were combined with the regional elections, that also secured a higher participation. Third, in different member states the elections were held in different days, ranging from June 10 (Thursday) to June 13 (Sunday). Previous elections showed a trend of higher turnout when the elections are scheduled on Sundays. However, the 2004 election in Poland and Slovakia was performed on Sunday and the two countries have in fact presented the lowest results.

Besides, the election day in Poland was June 13, 2004 that appeared to continue a long four-day weekend caused by the important Catholic holiday Corpus Christi that gave a chance for people to move out of cities for the weekend. On the other hand, the Christian holiday itself gave a chance to the Catholic Church that is known in Poland for its great role in politics to make a call for participating in elections (Riedel 2004, 62).

2. Youth Turnout

The youth turnout in the Polish European Parliament elections was even lower than for the total population. One of the most known Polish survey research companies Public Opinion Research Center (*Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej*) has performed a survey on June 18-21, 2004 on a sample size of 961 respondents and has found that only 18% of the people aged 18-24 participated in the elections (Cybulska 2004, 1). However, as the report itself reasonably

notices, such surveys are typically receiving the over-reported results. That is why the level of 18% is most probably higher than the youth participation in reality.

The European Election Studies (EES) database that I use for the further research has a similar proportion of youth voting that can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Polish electoral participation in European Election Studies database (%)

	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Adults</i>	<i>Total Population</i>
<i>Voted</i>	27.1	34.7	33.6
<i>Did not vote</i>	72.2	65.1	66.0
<i>Don't know</i>	0.8	0.2	0.3
<i>Sample size</i>	133	827	960

However, it seems reasonable to correct this numbers with the real participation result (20.87%) for all of the voters. The proportion allows compiling the relative numbers:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{EES total participation (33.6\%)} - \text{EES youth participation (27.1\%)} \\
 & \text{real total participation (20.87\%)} - \text{real youth participation (x \%)} \\
 & x = \frac{20.87 \times 27.1}{33.6} = 16.83\%
 \end{aligned}$$

Such a relative number can be used as an estimation of real youth electoral participation (about 17%) and abstention (about 83%). It also corresponds to the above-mentioned results by the Polish Public Opinion Research Center.

According to the surveys performed in other European Union member states, the average youth non-voting for these countries was estimated at the level of 67% (Muxel 2007, 11) that is 16% less than the Polish result.

B. The Campaign for the European Parliament in Poland

1. Background: Political Situation before the Election

The period of the elections to the European Parliament was a hard time for the domestic political situation in Poland. The party coalition in office of the Democratic Left Alliance – Labor Union (SLD-UP: *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – Unia Pracy*) was extremely and unprecedentedly unpopular in Polish democratic history. The reason for a tremendous loss of popularity, since the last parliamentary election in September 2001 where SLD-UP did very well, was the terribly bad performance of the Government.

The coalition in power led by the post-communist SLD was suffering from huge corruption scandals and a bad economic situation. Unemployment was exceptionally high and had reached a level of 20%. The Government had failed to reform the health sector and to deal with the macroeconomic situation in general. Thus, a spiraling budget deficit made the coalition begin the implementation of the new recovery plan characterized by rather harsh and unpopular measures. As a result, the support for Leszek Miller's cabinet had almost vanished till the time of the EP election.

The relations of Poland with its major partners in the EU – Germany and France – were as problematic as never before though the country was going to join the Union in May 2004. Poland had strongly supported the position of the United States on Iraqi war, had sent a relatively large amount of its troops to the battle line and was promised to lead one of the three occupation zones. At the same time, France and Germany were the major antagonists for

the military solution of the Iraqi problem, and from that time, Poland had begun to be associated as an American Trojan horse in Europe.

Another trouble Poland had made for Germany and France was its position together with Spain on the voting shares in the European Council. Poland and Spain had backed up the Nice Summit decision with them having the voting weight almost equal to the biggest countries of the European Union. It is interesting that all the major Polish parties, including the most pro-European liberal Civic Platform (PO: *Platforma Obywatelska*) supported the Government's position on this issue. However, Poland's standpoint on voting weights had moderated to a readiness to compromise when the only ally – the Spanish government led by People's Party – was defeated by the Socialists. Finally, Poland was in the vanguard of the group of countries that called for mentioning Christian values in the preamble to the project of Constitution.

In spite of extremely low popular support, the Miller's Government could guarantee a majority in the Polish *Sejm* (the Lower House) because of the big fragmentation of Parliament and relatively high number of independent MPs and small parties, generally loyal to the Government. However, the situation changed enormously when the ruling coalition split. The governing parties SLD and UP were left by a group of MPs founding a new party Social Democracy of Poland (SdPi: *Socjaldemokracja Polska*) led by the speaker of Lower House Marek Borowski. Thus, SLD-UP lost its majority in Parliament and the Cabinet had to resign. The Prime Minister Leszek Miller announced his decision to leave the position the day after the accession to the European Union.

The new provisional government of Marek Belka was quite similar to the previous one as far as Belka kept all the key ministers in their positions. For that reason, the new elections were to make a decisive change of faces on the Polish political arena. All the major parties

were concentrating forces on the next *Sejm* elections and perceived the elections to the European Parliament at best as just a test of powers before the national campaign.

2. General Characteristics of the Campaign in Poland

Before evaluating the campaign itself, the principal aspects of the campaign as such should be distinguished in order to trace their relevance and impact on voting behavior. One of the major contexts is the previous experience of the campaign actors that are political parties in performing such kind of campaigning. As far as it was the first Polish election to the European Parliament, all the parties lacked experience. Besides, one of the major parties (SdPI) was just some months old and had very little time to prepare itself well for the competition and another party (UW: *Unia Wolności*) was an extra-parliamentary grouping since the previous *Sejm* elections.

Government performance is another factor that should be analyzed precisely. It is especially important in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe where the governments are rarely reelected. According to the existing research in the field, the performance of the national Government is usually the main driving force for making choices on the European arena (Hastings 2007, 149).

Media coverage might tell the researcher how the voters saw the campaign, what was the tone of the media, how visible the campaign was and what kind of messages did political parties try to transmit. Besides the media, another way of analyzing the campaign is looking at the predominant issues in the parties' rhetoric. In terms of the European Parliament election, it is important to see the balance between national and European issues.

Finally, the specific party campaigns have to be analyzed. Here I apply the two-stage approach developed by Dr Alex Szczerbiak with the first step of looking at the campaign

focus and defining the perspective electorates. Next, I define the electoral profiles of the parties, in other words, those people who really voted for the party. Such an approach allows for the evaluating of the success of the party's campaign.

The analysts, speaking on and evaluating the campaign to the European Parliament in Poland usually have a range of views between no campaigning to have taken place and a very poor campaign that had been performed. Dr Szczerbiak has characterized it as “dull and lifeless” that has “failed to capture the public's imagination” (2004, 1, 4-5). The general expectation was that the EP campaign would be similar to the campaign on EU accession referendum on June 7-8, 2003, where the turnout was 58.85% with 77.45% saying ‘yes’ to the Polish return to Europe and only 22.55 saying ‘no’ (Riedel 2004, 72).

However, the major parties faced the necessity to run an EP campaign for the first time, therefore no political party knew exactly what kind of campaign it was expected to perform. Besides, an EP election meant additional spending of the resources that were preserved for the next *Sejm* election. That is why the high national stakes made an EP election much less important and serious for the political actors.

At the same time, the Government did not find it necessary to launch any information campaign providing voters with the basic knowledge on the European Union in general and the European Parliament in particular. However, this election was the first real European election to the Polish voters where they had to make a choice for a specific political power and not just to support straightforwardly the accession of Poland to the Union like it was during the 2003 referendum.

An opinion poll by Gallup in May 2004 had found that the most common reasons for non-voting were connected with little knowledge of the European Parliament and precisely its role (71%) (Szczerbiak 2004, 9). However, Riedel concludes using the Eurobarometer findings that the level of political knowledge in Poland was not lower than the European

average (2004, 72). Anyway, the sociological research and qualitative analyses (Chan 2008, 16) have shown that the voters were frustrated by the necessity to make a choice and had very little idea of the purpose of the election.

The media could potentially have filled the gap of knowledge on European Parliament, as it was the case during the 2003 referendum campaign. This time the major Polish media, especially the public TVP that is the main source of information for the Poles, did not cover the campaign appropriately for stimulating the citizens' intention to express their political positions (Szczurbiak 2004, 7).

Vreese et al. (2006) have made a research on the EU-related news in the media covering the 2004 European Parliament elections in all member states. Their findings on Poland show that according to the three major features studied, Poland has a position close to average. The visibility of news on EU topics was a little higher on the television than in newspapers, and the tone of such news as for the unambiguous evaluations of the EU was at a minimum negative level while the majority of other member states showed much bigger levels of EU skepticism in the media.

For the reasons listed above, the first expectation is that adults with the major non-voting reason "insufficient information on the election" will be characterized by low trust to the EU institutions, unlike the youth that has wider access to information on the EU. At the same time, adults are expected to be more influenced by media than the youth that do not typically devote time to political programs and articles.

The balance between the national and European issues in the campaign in favor of the first clearly describes Polish EP election as a second-order election because the politicians treated them just as a trial run before the main Parliamentary contest (Riedel 2004, 64). As it has been already mentioned above, the difficult political situation in Poland provoked the predominance of national issues in the campaign rhetoric. After the bad performance of the

SLD-UP Government and the poor situation in the economy, the most important issues became the economic ones (high unemployment, pension and taxation systems) and corruption (Kurpas et al. 2004, 4).

The second expectation refers to the non-voters, protesting against the way Poland is governed. The adults, due to the predominance of national issues in the campaign, are more likely to be driven in their decision to abstain by low trust in Polish governing institutions. However, for youth I expect the impact of dissatisfaction with the entire Polish politics.

Though all the major parties tried to adopt an image of corruption-fighters, the previous scandals led many Poles to distance themselves from politics as such. As a result, the President, Alexander Kwaśniewski, later described the 2004 low electoral participation as “the defect of our civil society and democracy” (as in Chan 2008, 27).

That is why, the non-voters choosing the reasons of “single vote will not change anything” and “lack of interest in politics” are expected to be highly influenced by low trust to Polish institutions and by dissatisfaction with national politics. For the young non-voters with a similar motivation I expect the negative relationship with the media influence.

The corrupted political power made many Poles, who did cast the vote, punish the Government. Hastings (2007, 149) thinks that it was, however, the all-European trend of the 2004 EP campaign, typical not only for Poland, but for many other countries as well, for example, Germany. The ‘punishing-the-Government’ explanation also implies that a voting result reflects to a large extent the protest vote and thus explains the good performance of the radical Polish political parties in the European Parliament election.

There is also another reason explaining the Eurosceptic success that is the unfulfilled expectations of the fast welfare growth after the accession to the European Union (Szczerbiak 2007, 43). However, in another work Szczerbiak proposes a vision that “non-mainstream parties did well in this election because they were (or appeared to be) genuinely popular”

(2004, 11). This Szczerbiak's idea allows expecting the influence of low satisfaction with Polish politics on the non-voters, predominantly motivated in their decisions by Euroscepticism.

Practically all the major parties focused their campaigns on the individual characteristics of the party leaders. That was especially strange because almost none of the top Polish incumbent politicians (ministers, MPs and senators) ran for the European Parliament. That was caused by the prohibition to combine positions in Brussels and in their national office. That is why the extra-Parliamentary parties, and in first place the liberal Freedom Union (UW), that had been unsuccessful in getting into the Parliament in 2001 election, received a big benefit of nominating their well-known experienced top leaders.

The 2004 European Parliament campaign in Poland was also remarkable as for one episode related to youth and at the same time reflecting the establishment of a proud-to-be abstainer position that is mentioned by Zalewski (2007). A group of second-school students in a town of Opole founded a committee. In their statement for the media one of the members said:

Our abstention in elections does not mean that we are not interested in politics. It is even the contrary, but we want politicians to have a certain background. The legitimating by a party or posing on a picture with a powerful politician is not enough to govern in my name (Zalewski 2007, 391).

3. Party Campaigns and Their Electoral Profiles

The former ruling coalition of SLD-UP tried to provide the voters with a pleasant image of the European Union, the purpose of which for Poland was to be a donor. In particular, the party introduced the EU as a place where unemployed Poles could find well-paid jobs, the Polish regions with large rural population could find structural funds and the least prosperous citizens could benefit from the EU social standards. The idea of mutual help

between Poland and the Union was formulated in the campaign slogan “Europe for Development – Development for Poland” (Szczerbiak 2004, 5). Since the previous 2001 elections SLD-UP coalition was the first real Polish catch-all party and that is why its appeal was very broad but especially targeted on the left side of the political spectrum. However, the coalition’s strongly negative record made it unpopular even in spite of the generally good practical pro-European strategy. The post-communist party managed to secure just 9.35%¹ of the votes. This result was based on its core electorate of the senior citizens with typically secondary education.

The major rival for the loosing power SLD-UP became the liberal-conservative Civic Platform (PO). The party seriously intended to fight for power in the next Parliamentary elections and was leading in the opinion polls. Being a major opponent to the SLD-UP Government, PO focused its campaign largely on national issues and on a critique of the coalition and personally the Prime Minister Leszek Miller. Standing aside of the corruption scandals with ‘clean hands’ PO was actively using anti-corruption rhetoric. PO’s propositions also contained a populist package of simplification of the national electoral process that was considered by the public to be a panacea from the diseases of Polish political system. The attempts of the Civic Platform to form a pro-European coalition for the European Parliament election failed. On the European issues, PO was proposing bigger expenditures on the new member states, a possibility for the Poles to work in the other EU countries, a support for entrepreneurs and farmers. PO was also known for its tough position on voting weights in the EU and stood for a “Nice or Death” position. Having an ambition to gain power in the next *Sejm* elections, PO was trying to go beyond its ideologically liberal-conservative domain and the above-mentioned populism or anti-corruption public speaking was one of such measures. Considering the result of 24.10%, Civic Platform was a clear winner though it was a worse

¹ Source for the official election results: *Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza* (www.pkw.gov.pl)

outcome than the pre-election surveys were giving to PO. Remarkably, the Civic Platform received the third of its votes from the youth and 38% of all the young people casted votes for PO (Riedel 2004, 71). Therefore, PO was a clear winner for the youth vote.

The populist leftist Self-Defense (SO: *Samoobrona*) was another opponent to the SLD-UP but from the other side of the political spectrum than the liberal PO. The charismatic party leader Andrzej Lepper was calling for new negotiations with the European Union on Polish membership conditions. In case it was impossible, SO was ready to withdraw from the Union. At the same time, the party called its position Euro-Realist. The Self-Defense was trying to defeat the loosing popularity rural PSL and to collect the ballots of the urban marginal groups and modernization-losers. The party's result of 10.78% was achieved largely thanks to the workers and half of the votes came from rural citizens.

During the 2003 accession referendum the Catholic traditionalist League of the Polish Families (LPR: *Liga Polskich Rodzin*) was campaigning against the European Union. However, having received a clear message from the predominant number of Poles supporting the Polish membership, the party had to redefine its position on EU membership. Although LPR used again its old referendum slogan "Yesterday Moscow, today Brussels" (Szczurbiak 2004, 5), they had a clear developed vision of the EU, although highly critical, especially because of the modern European secularism and somewhat anti-Christian understanding of tolerance. Additionally, the League was actively supporting Christian values to be mentioned in the text of the Constitutional Treaty. Besides, the party with one of its slogans "They wanted war" was criticizing the decision of the Government to send troops to Iraq and was proposing a referendum on that issue, knowing that the majority of Poles opposed the Polish military involvement in Iraqi war. The LPR's appeal was targeting the old and mostly rural population with a special emphasis on the more traditionalist South-Eastern Poland. LPR

received a 15.92% share of the votes with the support of elderly citizens, women and dwellers of the small towns.

The slogan of the moderately Eurosceptic Law and Justice (PiS: *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) called for an “Honorable representation in Europe.” PiS sided together with the LPR supporting Christian values to be mentioned in the European Constitution and called for keeping the Nice voting agreement. Law and Justice, although being relatively Eurosceptic, still had a rather detailed program “Europe for Solidaristic Nations” (Chan 2008, 18) with re-distribution of the wealth within the inter-governmentalist European Union in favor of the least economically advantaged nations, like Poland. The ambition of PiS was to define itself as a right-wing party; however, it was mostly considered a far-right party for the old. The 12.67% of the votes received by PiS came predominantly from the elderly population.

The Polish Peasant Party (PSL: *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*) had to bear the consequences of being an ally to the unpopular SLD-UP Government. Its clearly defined rural electorate was also challenged by the populist Self-Defense. PSL with its neutral position on the European issues guaranteed 6.34% of the total votes. PSL was the only parliamentary party nominating its top leadership for the European Parliament and thus loosing the *Sejm* mandates in case of obtaining MEP positions.

The former part of the SLD-UP coalition that institutionalized itself in a form of the Social Democracy of Poland had just a couple of month to get prepared for the election campaign. At the same time, the EP election was the first try for the party and the result was to show whether the party had any future in politics. Its ideological position was close to SLD-UP and even the campaign slogan “Let’s take advantage of European opportunity” sounded similar to the SLD-UP’s (Chan 2008, 17). The position on European issues of the leftist party was quite predictable and contained a claim for more structural funds for Poland

and a right for Poles to work everywhere within the European Union. The result of 5.33%, just above the threshold, was a great success for a newly born party that now received a signal from the society that its further development was possible. However, the blank voting record did not allow the party to define a specific core electorate.

Finally, the EP election was the greatest challenge for the liberal Freedom Union that was trying to get back to politics after failing to reach the threshold in the *Sejm* elections of 2001. The party has nominated the well known in the European context Polish politicians. Besides, the UW was creating an association with youth candidates, trying to attract the young electorate, especially students. The clear pro-European position of the Freedom Union brought it 7.33% and activated the political life of the considered to be dead party.

The final expectation is that the people who did not vote because of their own party's campaigning, were determined in this decision by candidates' inappropriate argumentation they had used during the campaign.

Thus, the previous analysis shows many possibilities for the campaign itself to influence the desire of voters to accomplish their civil duty. The researches agree that the campaign was extremely poor. The political parties did not care about the European issues and treated the European Parliament election as a national pre-election. Only a few political parties made a clear appeal to the youth electorate – the Civic Platform and the Freedom Union were the only two political forces that made their youth component obvious in party platforms and in visual advertisement. However, these parties represented a liberal part of the political spectrum and targeted mostly the educated urban youth. The Polish Government and public media also did not do well its job on providing citizens with information on the European Parliament and its functions. All these reasons will find reflection in the selection of the independent variables.

C. Theoretical Framework

1. Research Question & Hypotheses

The growing political apathy that is becoming widespread in today's democratic world has already reached the region of Central and Eastern Europe. The countries that experienced a huge political upheaval and mass politicization in the early 90-s are now providing examples of poor electoral concern. Paradoxically, Poland that had been home to a ten-million Solidarity movement, became in the beginning of the twenty first century one of the worst cases of non-voting both in the region and in the whole Europe.

My research question is to find out whether the young non-voters differ from the adult absentees from the perspective of their motivations for choosing the specific non-voting patterns. The general reasons for electoral abstention can be extracted from the major post-election surveys where respondents report directly their motives for non-participation. However, such results could and probably would be biased with a non-sampling error coming from human inability to understand his or her motives and hiding from the interviewers the fact of non-voting.

That is why I distinguish between conscious reasons and unconscious factors (ultimate reasons) for non-voting, assuming that with some variables it is possible to explain a large part of actual reasons as reported by non-voters. The general hypothesis is that even if the young people do not significantly differ from the adults in terms of the self-reported reasons, there are still different factors behind reasons for non-voting. Thus, the expectation is that young people and adults have dissimilar factors behind the chosen reasons as reported in the European Election Studies (EES) survey. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is that the youth does not differ significantly from the adults in their factors that explain the non-voting motives.

According to a number of reasons contained in the EES database, there are six hypotheses. First (H1), ‘insufficient information on the election’ would be characterized by low trust to the EU institutions for the adults but not for the youth because of the better knowledge of European issues among young people. Besides, adults are expected to be more influenced by media.

Second (H2), ‘protest against the way the country is governed’ could be explained by low trust in Polish institutions from the side of adults and by general dissatisfaction with Polish politics from the side of young people. The reason is that youth is considered to be more apolitical than the adults. As for the latter, the clear predominance of national issues in the campaign and negative campaigning against the incumbent Government and its Parliamentary fraction could lead to dissatisfaction with the performance of these institutions.

Third (H3), ‘single vote will not change anything’ is expected to be explained for adults by media influence, that created a negative image of the corrupted politics before the campaign and by dissatisfaction with Polish politics and generally skeptical views on politics for the youth.

Fourth (H4), ‘lack of interest in politics’ may also be influenced differently for the two age groups. For the adults I expect a relationship with low trust in Polish institutions and dissatisfaction with national political life. For the young non-voters with the similar motivation I expect the negative relationship with the media influence.

Fifth (H5), ‘disagreement with Polish EU membership’ may be explained by low education level for the adults and by low satisfaction with the political processes within the European Union for the youth.

Sixth (H6), the young non-voters choosing ‘didn't like own party campaign’ reason could have been determined in this decision by personal candidates’ qualities and the inappropriate argumentation used during the 2004 campaign. Considering the adults, their

abstention may be explained with dissatisfaction with domestic politics and low trust to the institutions. One of the logical justifications for this would be a huge loss of popularity of the incumbent SLD-UP Government that most probably had made its previous supporters frustrated about politics.

2. Methodology

My dependent variables are the reasons for non-voting and thus low electoral turnout in the elections of 2004 to the European Parliament in Poland. The explanation for such case selection is that although the elections to the European Parliament are not the most typical kind of political competition, it is characterized by the lowest turnout as compared to presidential, parliamentary and regional elections (see Hastings 2007). That is why the voters at EP elections are the minimum ‘voting core’ of politically conscious citizens in the country and are the most likely to participate in the rest of the above-mentioned elections. So studying the elections to the European Parliament gives the widest range of non-voters for the analysis.

Besides, the elections to the European Parliament are usually seen to be closer to the youth than any other form of election. The young people everywhere in Europe are reasonably assumed to be more pro-European than the older population because they are already widely absorbed in practice by the framework of European Union, in the first place thanks to the Erasmus student exchange programs and visa-free travel. That is why the young people are expected by the political scientists to show a better voting level than they do in reality. As professor Jadwiga Staniszkis has noted, “I am wondering where the youth are, who should be voting?” (as in Riedel 2004, 64). This situation runs to what Muxel (2007) calls a paradox, because although the young people are in fact more pro-European than the adults, at the same time they are the least voting age group in the European elections.

The region of Central and Eastern Europe, and Poland in particular, is not the mainstream area for turnout studies and that is why there is a gap of knowledge in the field caused by concentration of the major research efforts on the cases of the United States or West European countries. Poland has been chosen for the research because it has one of the lowest levels of turnout among the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. The 2004 election to the European Parliament that has happened a month after the accession of the new EU member states even worsened the stable negative trend. Poland has showed the turnout result of 20.87% that became the second lowest result in the whole of the European Union after Slovakia.

Although the turnout is known for the general population, the Polish election commission (*Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza*) does not keep record of youth participation. For that reason, I use the survey-based data from the dataset of European Election Studies (EES) and from the survey by Polish Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS). I assume those findings on youth electoral participation to be representative for the whole youth population. Nevertheless, I compare the total percentage from the EES survey result on participation to the real election turnout in order to estimate the accuracy of the survey and in case of a big difference to compile the relative numbers.

Following the case selection stage, I provide an overview of the campaign of 2004 in Poland and the turnout. I review the parliamentary election campaigns run by the major political parties and look at their electoral profiles that are the voters attracted by the party. I also try to evaluate the campaign in general and to define whether the campaign itself could explain the relevance of some variables in the following statistical analysis.

Next I do a comparative analysis of the factors behind the reasons for non-voting among the youth and the adults using the European Election Studies database that is the most appropriate source for the quantitative analysis for the purpose of this research. The EES

database on Polish elections to the European Parliament contains 960 survey responses that are based on face-to-face interviews that have taken place immediately after the June 2004 election campaign.

The database is especially valuable and relevant for this thesis because it contains a large number of prospective independent variables that cover a wide range of respondent's answers on many aspects of his or her political life in general and the positions on EU-related issues in particular.

With the first step, only the cases of non-voting are extracted from the database and coded according to the respondent's age into the groups of youth and adults. The responses to the six questions that show a non-voter's reasons for abstention by two age groups are compared in order to find a significant difference between them. For that purpose, I apply the most typical tests, that are the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test (KS test), the independent two-sample t-test and finally the Mann-Whitney test that allow determining whether the variation between the reasons for non-voting depending on age is significant.

In the second part of the statistical analysis, I study the factors behind the reasons for abstention. I have chosen for the independent variables those that are theoretically relevant and might influence the voter's position on electoral participation from one of the seven following groups: influence by the media and by the 2004 election campaign, trust in Polish and EU institutions, views on politics in general, views on the European Union and finally, the socio-demographic variables.

I do a regression analysis by each out of six non-voting reasons for finding out the coefficients of determination for the factors behind the non-voting. Thus, I see how much of the reasons could be explained with the selected motivations.

Finally, I compare the explanatory power of these factors for each reason for both the youth and the adults.

3. Terminology

It is necessary to give terminological definitions to some of the major concepts used in the thesis. Some of the terms are often used in different academic traditions with different meanings and thus need to be clarified.

The accent in the thesis is made on youth electoral participation so there is a problem of setting the age borderlines between the groups of young people and the adults. I consider the definition by the United Nations to be the most typical and widely accepted. The UN considers those people to be characterized as “youth” that are aged between 15 and 24. However, for the purpose of this thesis, this definition is corrected with the minimal voting age in Poland, that is 18. So here in the work the term “youth” or the “young people” that are used interchangeably, refer to the people falling between 18 and 24. Accordingly, the people aged 25 and more are described as “adults”.

The political participation is defined by Haerpfer et al. (2002, 4) as an involvement to some form of political organizations, typically in form of parties or political movements. However, for the sake of this research, political participation is narrowed down to electoral participation that is taking part in the elections. For the chosen topic the actual participation is interesting only as a single binary action that can be either voting or not. The questions of voter's choice and the validity of the casted ballot lie outside of this paper.

The “non-voting” or “abstention” is described by Greffet (2007, 1) as a “form of electoral behaviour that can be defined as the inability or unwillingness to participate in a voting ballot.” However, it is hard to distinguish ex post the elections between the inability and unwillingness, because people in the survey may want to hide the latter reason for non-voting. Besides, there is no way to test the alternative behavior of the unable to vote people if they had such a possibility. For these reasons, here in the thesis by term ‘abstention’ I mean

the fact of non-voting for whatever reason, although this number would definitively include some part of people that really did not have a chance to vote.

Chapter II – The Analysis and Results

A. Self-Reported Reasons of the Non-Voters

The database of the European Election Studies on Polish 2004 campaign to the European Parliament contains six variables, explaining the decision to abstain from participation in elections. The non-voters were offered to evaluate each of these options on a seven-point ordinal scale, ranging from ‘definitively yes’ to ‘definitively no’. Here are the variables explaining abstention:

- ‘Why didn't vote: insufficient information on the election’
- ‘Why didn't vote: protest against the way the country is governed’
- ‘Why didn't vote: single vote will not change anything’
- ‘Why didn't vote: lack of interest in politics’
- ‘Why didn't vote: disagreement with Polish EU membership’
- ‘Why didn't vote: didn't like own party campaign’

Table 2. Evaluation of reasons for abstention by Polish non-voters (%)

<i>Reasons for non-voting</i>	<i>Category of non-voters</i>	<i>The self-reported reasons for abstention by Polish non-voters (%)</i>					
		<i>Insufficient information on the election</i>	<i>Protest against the way the country is governed</i>	<i>Single vote will not change anything</i>	<i>Lack of interest in politics</i>	<i>Disagreement with Polish EU membership</i>	<i>Didn't like own party campaign</i>
<i>Definitively YES</i>	<i>Youth</i>	41.7	41.4	25.4	37.1	13.8	12.2
	<i>Adults</i>	43.8	49.2	42.3	37.1	14.7	18.2
	<i>Total</i>	43.5	48.1	40.0	37.1	14.6	17.4
<i>Mostly YES</i>	<i>Youth</i>	11.7	12.1	3.4	8.1	5.2	0
	<i>Adults</i>	14.4	11.5	9.1	9.0	5.0	6.5
	<i>Total</i>	14.0	11.5	8.3	8.9	5.0	5.6
<i>More YES than no</i>	<i>Youth</i>	10.0	3.4	1.7	14.5	12.1	0
	<i>Adults</i>	6.6	6.1	7.1	8.2	5.0	4.2
	<i>Total</i>	7.1	5.8	6.4	9.1	6.0	3.7
<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Youth</i>	8.3	8.6	18.6	11.3	13.8	6.1
	<i>Adults</i>	9.1	5.9	8.8	12.5	9.7	10.1

	<i>Total</i>	9.0	6.3	10.2	12.3	10.3	9.6
<i>More NO than yes</i>	<i>Youth</i>	0	5.2	11.9	6.5	0	12.2
	<i>Adults</i>	3.6	3.9	4.7	8.8	6.2	3.6
	<i>Total</i>	3.1	4.1	5.7	8.4	5.3	4.8
<i>Mostly NO</i>	<i>Youth</i>	5.0	10.3	11.9	8.1	8.6	12.2
	<i>Adults</i>	5.8	3.4	5.8	6.6	8.6	8.1
	<i>Total</i>	5.7	4.3	6.6	6.8	8.6	8.7
<i>Definitively NO</i>	<i>Youth</i>	23.3	19.0	27.1	14.5	46.6	57.1
	<i>Adults</i>	16.6	20.1	22.3	17.8	50.7	49.2
	<i>Total</i>	17.6	20.0	22.9	17.3	50.1	50.3

The table above shows the distribution of the responses between young and adult non-voters compared to the general population. However, these are the subjective evaluations by people of their reasons not to vote and it might be claimed that they do not fully correspond to the real underlying motivations.

In order to estimate the significance of the difference in answers between the young people and the adults I apply the several most common and appropriate for such purposes statistical tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Independent two-sample t-test and Mann-Whitney test) that allow finding out such a difference if there is any.

Table 3. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test

	<i>Why didn't vote</i>					
	<i>Insufficient information on the election</i>	<i>Protest against the way the country is governed</i>	<i>Single vote will not change anything</i>	<i>Lack of interest in politics</i>	<i>Disagreement with Polish EU membership</i>	<i>Didn't like own party campaign</i>
<i>Kolmogorov- Smirnov Z</i>	0,481	0,697	1,996	0,387	0,726	1,347

Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0,975	0,717	0,001	0,998	0,668	0,053
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Grouping Variable: age

Table 4. Independent two-sample t-test

	<i>Why didn't vote</i>					
	<i>Insufficient information on the election</i>	<i>Protest against the way the country is governed</i>	<i>Single vote will not change anything</i>	<i>Lack of interest in politics</i>	<i>Disagreement with Polish EU membership</i>	<i>Didn't like own party campaign</i>
Sig. (2-tailed)*	0,473	0,286	0,003	0,670	0,477	0,019

Grouping Variable: age

* Equal variances assumed, except for the "Why didn't vote: Didn't like own party campaign"

Table 5. Mann-Whitney test

	<i>Why didn't vote</i>					
	<i>Insufficient information on the election</i>	<i>Protest against the way the country is governed</i>	<i>Single vote will not change anything</i>	<i>Lack of interest in politics</i>	<i>Disagreement with Polish EU membership</i>	<i>Didn't like own party campaign</i>
Mann-Whitney U	10307,0	9550,0	8403,0	11353,0	9301,5	6465,5
Wilcoxon W	75648,0	73811,0	74833,0	13306,0	11012,5	53743,5
Z	-0,629	-1,045	-2,792	-0,372	-0,703	-1,697
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0,530	0,296	0,005	0,710	0,482	0,090

Grouping Variable: age

The result of the tests is that only one out of six reasons, namely ‘Single vote will not change anything’ shows a significant difference between the answers of youth and adults at 95% confidence level for all the three tests. Another reason of ‘Didn’t like own party campaign’ is significantly different at the T-test and is very close to 95% confidence level for the Kolmogorov-Smitnov test. Therefore, it can be derived from the tables above that the two out of six reasons for non-voting are different for youth and adults. This proves that age makes a difference for people choosing reasons for abstention, although youth and adults have much more common answers.

B. The Choice of Independent Variables

According to the existing literature in the field, the possible explanatory variables can be coded into several groups. The general literature on turnouts usually points out three major groups of variables that are commonly believed to have an impact on non-voting. The psychological aspects are represented by an outstanding theory of habitual voting (Plutzer 2002, Franklin et al. 2004, Fowler 2006). The socio-economic prospective variables (Sigelman et al. 1985, Blais and Dobrzynska 1998, Geys 2006) are typically limited in practice to the impact of education and income. A group of institutional factors contains certain characteristics of the electoral system (Lijphart 1997, Franklin 1999). Here also belong the specific campaign strategies and election procedures, like negative campaigning (Kahn and Kenney 1999, Niemi and Weisberg 2001), get-out-the-vote campaigning (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), electoral competition (Franklin 2004), or stakes of the election (Lijphart 1997).

The literature on youth participation and turnouts proposes such variables as education (Bennett 1997, Print 2007), civic engagement (Andolina et al. 2003), and media influence (Overby and Barth 2006). The youth itself when being studied, usually report reasons like low

visibility of electoral outcomes for their lives (Fields 2008), skepticism on the political system (Henn et al. 2005).

Finally, the analysis of the Polish 2004 campaign for the European Parliament shows other potentially explanatory variables, like low visibility of campaigning activities (Szczzerbiak 2004), insignificant Governmental and parties' mobilization efforts, extremely low media coverage of EU-related issues (Vreese et al. 2006). One of the most typical characteristics of the 2004 campaign in Poland was a little knowledge of population on the European Union in general and on the European Parliament, its role and functions in particular. Neither the Government, nor the political parties explained these issues to the voters. Because of a highly heated domestic political situation, the national issues were predominant in the campaign messages of all the major parties while the topics of European integration were much less visible (Riedel 2004, 64).

The European Election Studies database has its own constraints on availability of the prospective independent variables. Thus, according to the literature existing in the field and the study of the campaign of 2004 in Poland, the variables that have been chosen for the further analysis could be coded into several blocks.

1. *Media influence*: 'How many times a week watches the news on TV'; 'How many times a week reads newspaper and magazines'

According to the findings of Overby and Barth (2006), youth is more affected by some specific media than adults. That is why media can influence the motives for the non-voting decision differently for youth and adults. At the same time, the importance of media variables in terms of politics can show how effective the parties were in transmitting their messages to the voters through the most accessible tool.

2. *Evaluation of the campaign*: ‘Candidates used trivial, superficial argumentation during the campaign’; ‘Candidates talked more about political strategies than about substantive issues during the campaign’

The analysis of the Polish 2004 election shows that the candidates and their parties were performing generally a campaign that raised little interest of the voters. Therefore, the expectation would be that there is a relationship between this evaluations of the candidates and the dissatisfaction with the own party’s campaign.

3. *Trust in the European Union institutions*: ‘How much trust in the European Parliament’; ‘How much trust in the European Commission’

One of the most typical features of the campaign of 2004 was the low knowledge of the voters about the European institutions, in particular the European Parliament. The research on this issue (Chan 2008, 16) has shown a tremendous lack of knowledge on the mechanisms of work, functions and the role of European Parliament. For that reason, an insufficient knowledge on the election could possibly be related to low trust to the EU institutions.

4. *General view on the European Union*: ‘Satisfaction with the EU democracy’; ‘Membership of the European Union for Poland is ...’

The position of the voters was important from the perspective of Euroscepticism. In a situation of low knowledge on the European Parliament election, the moderate voters preferred to stay at home and did not take part in a “second referendum” on accession. However, the supporters of the radical political forces were more likely to show up at the election day in order to express once again their protest against the European Union. That is why presence of evaluation of the EU may explain the choice of disagreement with Union membership for Poland as a major reason for abstention.

5. *View on the Polish domestic political situation*: ‘Satisfaction with Polish democracy’; ‘Evaluation of SLD-UP government to date’; ‘How much trust in the Polish Government’; ‘How much trust in the Polish Parliament’

The protest vote that is one of the most typical characteristics of the European Parliament campaign in the majority of the EU member states (Hastings 2007, 149) was however controversial in Poland. An analysis of the 2004 campaign allows one to assume that the extreme unpopularity of the incumbent SLD-UP Government made people to elaborate a negative vision of politics as such. Therefore, they could prefer to abstain from voting at all than to participate in the election, protesting by voting for the radical parties. Because of it, these variables may have a significant influence on the reason “protest against the way the country is governed”.

6. *The general vision of politics*: ‘Does political parties care about ordinary people’; ‘Are political parties necessary’

The view on politics in general and on political parties as the major campaign actors in particular are largely supplementary to the evaluation of current Government, but might also absorb the voters that have developed a negative attitude towards politics not just recently, but well in advance the 2004 election. So lack of interest in politics may be explained with these variables.

7. *Socio-demographic variable*: ‘Education’

Education is the most typical variable used in the research on youth. Thus, the higher level of education among young people can result in different non-voting reasons comparing to the adults.

C. Factors Explaining the Reasons for Non-Voting

The linear regressions have been used for finding out the coefficients of determination and explaining the dependent variables (reasons for non-voting) with a range of independent variables (factors). The results are presented below in Tables 6 and 7 separately for the youth and adults.

Table 6. Coefficients of determination for youth non-voters

<i>Why didn't vote</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>Adjusted R²</i>
<i>Insufficient information on the election</i>	60	0.734	0,738	0,200	-0,073
<i>Protest against the way the country is governed</i>	58	1.029	0,446	0,269	0,008
<i>Single vote will not change anything</i>	59	1.418	0,182	0,331	0,098
<i>Lack of interest in politics</i>	62	3.333	0,001 **	0,521	0,365
<i>Disagreement with Polish EU membership</i>	58	1.920	0,049 *	0,407	0,195
<i>Didn't like own party campaign</i>	49	0.600	0,854	0,214	-0,143

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table 7. Coefficients of determination for adult non-voters

<i>Why didn't vote</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>Adjusted R²</i>
<i>Insufficient information on the election</i>	361	1.249	0,233	0,052	0,010
<i>Protest against the way the country is governed</i>	358	0.996	0,459	0,042	0,000
<i>Single vote will not change anything</i>	364	2.494	0,002 **	0,098	0,058

<i>Lack of interest in politics</i>	377	7.159	0,000 **	0,230	0,198
<i>Disagreement with Polish EU membership</i>	339	3.361	0,000 **	0,136	0,095
<i>Didn't like own party campaign</i>	307	1.659	0,058	0,079	0,032

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

The analysis provides the following results. The coefficients of determination for youth and adult non-voters can explain the same two dependent variables – reasons for abstention ‘Lack of interest in politics’ and ‘Disagreement with Polish EU membership’. At the same time, there is one reason that can be explained only for the adults (‘Single vote will not change anything’). Besides that difference, there is a clear trend that the independent variables are much more explanatory for the youth than for the adults. Thus, 52% and 41% respectively of two of the youth abstention reasons can be explained but only 10%, 23% and 14% for the adults. All the rest of the cases, that have an insignificant F test coefficient, can not be explained with the chosen independent variables.

Following that stage, the coefficients (B) for each of the independent variables should be considered for those two reasons for youth and three for the adults that have shown significance of the F test in the tables above. The rest of the reasons contain no significant coefficients and thus are not reported.

Table 8. Youth: Lack of interest in politics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>How many times a week watches the news on TV</i>	0,168	0,153
<i>How many times a week reads newspaper and magazines</i>	0,291	0,017 *
<i>Candidates used trivial, superficial argumentation during the campaign</i>	-0,105	0,581
<i>Candidates talked more about political strategies than about substantive issues during the campaign</i>	0,089	0,624

<i>How much trust in the European Parliament</i>	0,000	0,977
<i>How much trust in the European Commission</i>	0,002	0,876
<i>Satisfaction with the EU democracy</i>	-0,381	0,009 **
<i>Membership of the European Union for Poland is</i>	-0,313	0,196
<i>Satisfaction with Polish democracy</i>	0,183	0,375
<i>Evaluation of SLD-UP government to date</i>	-0,220	0,121
<i>How much trust in the Polish Government</i>	-0,004	0,879
<i>How much trust in the Polish Parliament</i>	0,009	0,696
<i>Does political parties care about ordinary people</i>	0,073	0,776
<i>Are political parties necessary</i>	-0,227	0,192
<i>Education</i>	0,072	0,644

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Out of the fifteen independent variables, that were considered potential factors, explaining the non-voting reasons for the young people, reporting as their abstention reason ‘Lack of interest in politics’, only two have shown the significant coefficients: ‘How many times a week [a respondent] reads newspaper and magazines’ and ‘Satisfaction with the EU democracy’.

Table 9. Youth: Disagreement with Polish EU membership

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>How many times a week watches the news on TV</i>	-0,017	0,904
<i>How many times a week reads newspaper and magazines</i>	0,040	0,771
<i>Candidates used trivial, superficial argumentation during the campaign</i>	0,155	0,508
<i>Candidates talked more about political strategies than about substantive issues during the campaign</i>	0,299	0,162
<i>How much trust in the European Parliament</i>	0,004	0,770
<i>How much trust in the European Commission</i>	-0,013	0,256
<i>Satisfaction with the EU democracy</i>	-0,348	0,048 *
<i>Membership of the European Union for Poland is</i>	-0,860	0,013 *

<i>Satisfaction with Polish democracy</i>	0,174	0,491
<i>Evaluation of SLD-UP government to date</i>	-0,016	0,923
<i>How much trust in the Polish Government</i>	-0,084	0,017*
<i>How much trust in the Polish Parliament</i>	0,064	0,035 *
<i>Does political parties care about ordinary people</i>	0,136	0,660
<i>Are political parties necessary</i>	-0,171	0,401
<i>Education</i>	0,050	0,788

* $p < 0.05$

For the second significant for the youth reason ‘Disagreement with Polish EU membership’, there are three independent variables with the significant coefficients: ‘Satisfaction with the EU democracy’, ‘Membership of the European Union for Poland is’ and ‘How much trust in the Polish Parliament’.

Considering the adults, there are three reasons for non-voting (dependent variables) that can be explained with the selected fifteen independent variables. The results are presented in Tables 10, 11 and 12.

Table 10. Adults: Single vote will not change anything

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>How many times a week watches the news on TV</i>	-0,128	0,036 *
<i>How many times a week reads newspaper and magazines</i>	0,004	0,730
<i>Candidates used trivial, superficial argumentation during the campaign</i>	-0,084	0,193
<i>Candidates talked more about political strategies than about substantive issues during the campaign</i>	0,028	0,654
<i>How much trust in the European Parliament</i>	0,008	0,101
<i>How much trust in the European Commission</i>	-0,009	0,055
<i>Satisfaction with the EU democracy</i>	-0,002	0,975
<i>Membership of the European Union for Poland is</i>	-0,082	0,218
<i>Satisfaction with Polish democracy</i>	-0,369	0,001 **

<i>Evaluation of SLD-UP government to date</i>	0,006	0,938
<i>How much trust in the Polish Government</i>	-0,001	0,924
<i>How much trust in the Polish Parliament</i>	0,004	0,665
<i>Does political parties care about ordinary people</i>	-0,017	0,907
<i>Are political parties necessary</i>	-0,028	0,733
<i>Education</i>	0,091	0,126

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

For the reason ‘Single vote will not change anything’, there are two factors with significant coefficients that give explanation to the adult non-voting: ‘How many times a week [a respondent] watches the news on TV’ and ‘Satisfaction with Polish democracy’.

Table 11. Adults: Lack of interest in politics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>How many times a week watches the news on TV</i>	0,005	0,812
<i>How many times a week reads newspaper and magazines</i>	0,016	0,116
<i>Candidates used trivial, superficial argumentation during the campaign</i>	-0,187	0,001 **
<i>Candidates talked more about political strategies than about substantive issues during the campaign</i>	-0,025	0,642
<i>How much trust in the European Parliament</i>	-0,003	0,505
<i>How much trust in the European Commission</i>	0,002	0,597
<i>Satisfaction with the EU democracy</i>	-0,101	0,056
<i>Membership of the European Union for Poland is</i>	0,070	0,210
<i>Satisfaction with Polish democracy</i>	-0,198	0,034 *
<i>Evaluation of SLD-UP government to date</i>	-0,094	0,134
<i>How much trust in the Polish Government</i>	-0,001	0,863
<i>How much trust in the Polish Parliament</i>	-0,001	0,927
<i>Does political parties care about ordinary people</i>	-0,027	0,831
<i>Are political parties necessary</i>	-0,195	0,004 *
<i>Education</i>	0,044	0,385

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

The abstention reason ‘Lack of interest in politics’ for the Polish adult non-voters is explained with the three independent variables: ‘Candidates used trivial, superficial argumentation during the campaign’, ‘Satisfaction with Polish democracy’ and ‘Are political parties necessary’.

Table 12. Adults: Disagreement with Polish EU membership

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>How many times a week watches the news on TV</i>	0,034	0,123
<i>How many times a week reads newspaper and magazines</i>	0,020	0,063
<i>Candidates used trivial, superficial argumentation during the campaign</i>	-0,040	0,510
<i>Candidates talked more about political strategies than about substantive issues during the campaign</i>	0,059	0,324
<i>How much trust in the European Parliament</i>	0,006	0,202
<i>How much trust in the European Commission</i>	-0,001	0,772
<i>Satisfaction with the EU democracy</i>	-0,085	0,136
<i>Membership of the European Union for Poland is</i>	-0,065	0,302
<i>Satisfaction with Polish democracy</i>	-0,212	0,049 *
<i>Evaluation of SLD-UP government to date</i>	0,039	0,585
<i>How much trust in the Polish Government</i>	-0,001	0,870
<i>How much trust in the Polish Parliament</i>	-0,007	0,407
<i>Does political parties care about ordinary people</i>	-0,234	0,095
<i>Are political parties necessary</i>	-0,065	0,392
<i>Education</i>	0,124	0,028 *

* $p < 0.05$

Finally, the adult non-voting reason ‘Disagreement with Polish EU membership’ has two explanatory independent variables that are ‘Satisfaction with Polish democracy’ and ‘Education’.

D. Results and Interpretation

The statistical analysis above has shown two major results according to the hypotheses of the thesis. First of all, out of the six reasons for abstention, the Polish youth and adult non-voters choose the same ones except for two: 'Single vote will not change anything' and 'Didn't like own party campaign'. Thus, the first conclusion is that although there is a difference between reasons for abstention, there is much more in common in that sense between the two age groups.

Next, the 15 independent variables, selected based on the prospective factors indicated in the literature existing in the field and coming from the Polish 2004 campaign analysis, show significant explanatory power for two reasons out of six for the youth and three for the adults. That means the hypotheses H1, H2 and H6 cannot be tested with the existing database. For the H3 only the results for adults are statistically significant and no comparison can be done with the youth.

The coefficients of determination differ and for the youth the explanatory power of the factors is much bigger on average than for the adults, that means the adult absentees have more factors behind their non-voting decisions than the young people possess. The regression analysis has also revealed the difference between the independent variables with the significant coefficients. Two reasons for abstention (H4 and H5) can be compared by the factors that have a significant explanatory power. The results of comparison are presented below in the Table 12.

Table 13. The difference between age groups in factors behind the non-voting reasons

<i>Reason for non-voting</i>	<i>Significant Factors</i>	
	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Adults</i>
↑ <i>Lack of interest in politics</i>	↑ How many times a week reads newspaper and magazines	↓ Candidates used trivial, superficial argumentation

(yes→no) (H4)	(never→everyday); ↓ Satisfaction with the EU democracy (yes→no)	during the campaign (yes→no); ↓ Satisfaction with Polish democracy (yes→no); ↓ Are political parties necessary (yes→no)
↑ <i>Disagreement with Polish EU membership</i> (yes→no) (H5)	↓ Satisfaction with the EU democracy (yes→no); ↓ Membership of the European Union for Poland is (good→bad); ↓ How much trust in the Polish Government (no→yes); ↑ How much trust in the Polish Parliament (no→yes)	↓ Satisfaction with Polish democracy (yes→no); ↑ Education (elementary→higher)
↑ <i>Single vote will not change anything</i> (yes→no) (H3)	N/A	↓ How many times a week watches the news on TV (never→everyday); ↓ Satisfaction with Polish democracy (yes→no)

The table contains no similar independent variables for the youth and adults, that means, corresponding to the hypothesis, the two age groups have different factors behind their non-voting patterns. However, not all the six reasons can be compared for youth and adults but just less than a half (two and three respectively) because of the coefficients' significance of the factors.

The results of the regression analysis are as follows. The reason 'lack of interest in politics' (H4) has shown different factors for the age groups. Partially following the expectation, for the young people media matters as for the interest in politics, but just the newspapers and magazines and not TV. Thus, the less a young person reads printed editions, more his or her interest to politics is. Besides, low satisfaction with the EU democracy can also explain a weak interest to the political life. For the adults the factors appeared to be

others than had been hypothesized. People, considering the candidates to be using trivial argumentation, those with low satisfaction with Polish democracy and the non-voters regarding that parties are unnecessary, tend to choose lack of interest as their major abstention reason.

The non-voters, reporting as their major motive disagreement with Polish EU membership are also influenced by different factors (H5). Again, the factors partially correspond to the ones hypothesized. Thus, for the youth with Euroscepticism as a main reason for non-voting the most crucial factors are their dissatisfaction with the EU democracy and opposition to the EU membership. Besides, these young people show little trust in the Polish Parliament and paradoxically, a significant trust to the Polish Government. The potential explanation for this paradoxical outcome can be that such support of the national Government for the anti-EU youngsters is probably more of a “patriotic” position than an approval of the policies. The adult absentees with the same motives tend to have lower education as it was expected with the hypothesis. In addition, the adult Eurosceptics are also dissatisfied with Polish national politics.

Finally, the factors influencing the reason ‘single vote will not change anything’ cannot be compared for the two age groups because all the independent variables showed insignificance for the youth. However, as for adults the important factors are the media influence, that corresponds to the hypothesis (H3) and satisfaction with Polish politics. Thus, the people who are pessimistic about the power of their votes show a low approval of the Polish domestic politics and besides, tend to watch often the news programs on TV.

Other conclusions can also be derived from the comparison that was initially not anticipated by the hypotheses. It is seen from the table above that the youth’s common factor for its both reasons for non-voting is ‘Satisfaction with the EU democracy’.

Regarding the adults, the three considered non-voting reasons contain a common explanatory variable that is ‘Satisfaction with Polish democracy’. Besides that, the lack of interest in politics is partially explained by candidates’ poor performance during the campaign (as subjectively evaluated by the non-voters) and a high dissatisfaction with the political parties. That proves the claim by Chan (2008, 27) that a combination of the bad political and economic situation with an insignificant campaigning led to a distancing of some voters from politics. Another interesting finding is that for the adult Eurosceptics, unlike the young ones, education is an important explanatory factor. Szczerbiak (2004, 5) considers that the adult Poles opposing the European Union membership for Poland are those elderly population mostly with a low education. Thus, this finding proves Szczerbiak’s claim.

When compared between each other, the youth and adult age groups, although do not contain the same explanatory variables, however, have some common trends. If to generalize, the majority of the factors can be coded into a group of dissatisfaction with the political life as such. The young people that are more influenced by the information about the European Union, report the negative relation to the political processes within the Union. The adult population, that has less information on it, shows not a single explanatory factor related to the EU. However, the negative vision of politics is typical for both age groups and refers to the national level. In case of the young people, it is the Polish governing institutions, and in case of the adults, it is general dissatisfaction with the political situation in Poland without further specifications.

Thus, a general conclusion is as follows. The youth and the adults have mostly the same self-reported reasons for non-voting, although there are some significant differences. As for the factors, just five out of twelve reasons can be statistically examined. All of these five factors are different for the two age groups. However, they differ according to the existing in

the EES database independent variables, but some generalizations can be made and thus the similarities are present.

Conclusion

This work has made an attempt to look behind the straightforward reasons for non-voting as they are reported by the absentees themselves. I tried to answer the question whether the young non-voters, that are typically blamed to be the most reluctant to vote age group, differ from the adult absentees from the perspective of their motivations (ultimate factors) for non-voting.

My hypothesized assumption was that although the young people may not significantly differ from the adults in terms of the self-reported reasons, there might be still the different factors behind these non-voting reasons. The expectation was that the young people differ from the older generation in that sense. The findings of the analysis at large prove the general hypothesis. However, numerous statistical limitations allow for answering the research question only partially.

The argumentation and the major findings are as follows. The analysis of the Polish 2004 election to the European Parliament shows that campaigning itself was almost not visible and badly carried out and besides that, the time of the elections was a difficult period for the Polish national politics. The Government crisis made it clear that the new Parliamentary elections were inevitable and thus all the parties were concentrating the powers and resources for the upcoming campaign. At the same time, the European election gave them a possibility to verify their strength and the major parties treated the EP election as a trial contest. Regarding the youth electorate, only two parties, representing the liberal part of the political spectrum, made a clear call for the young educated urban voters.

The European Election Studies database that I use for the research, contains six possible reasons for non-voting that people were offered to evaluate in case they did not cast a ballot. First of all, I analyze the answers given by the non-voters and compare if they differ

for the two age groups. What I find with the help of statistical tests is that young people and adults tend to choose mostly similar reasons for abstention. Out of six proposed variants, only the preferences for two reasons are significantly different at the 95% confidence level.

Next, I analyze the independent variables that are indicated by the literature in the field and by the analysis of the campaign. I use regression analysis in order to estimate the percent of the self-reported reasons that can be explained by the factors (fifteen independent variables), potentially influencing the non-voting.

The statistical analysis shows that out of twelve reasons (six for each of the two age groups) only five can be explained by the chosen factors (two for youth and three for adults). Having this as a major constraint of the second part of the research, I have had to limit the following analysis to the five statistically significant categories.

Looking at the each factor within the selected five reasons, I extract the ones that have an explanatory power and use them for a comparison between the youth and the adults. The result is that none of the two similar reasons for non-voting contain the same factors. That proves the hypothesis of the thesis that the factors behind the abstention reasons are different for the age groups.

Besides that, I have found the additional results that have not been anticipated in the beginning of the research. The interpretation of the comparison of the factors leads to other conclusions when the factors are grouped together. The two youth non-voting reasons contain a general trend of a great role of low satisfaction with the political situation within the European Union for non-voting. Besides, the young Polish Eurosceptics show very little trust to the national power institutions. This can be explained by the above-mentioned political situation in Poland that made many people, especially the young, disillusion in the entire politics and fail to accomplish the civil duty.

Another trend is derived from the analysis of the adult non-voters. The three analyzed reasons show similar factor that is low satisfaction with Polish democracy. This can be explained by the difficult domestic political situation before the elections. Besides, the poor campaign of 2004 was reflected in the disappointment of the adult non-voters with the candidates' performance.

Returning to the level of comparisons between the age groups, it is clearly seen that dissatisfaction with politics is a common most typical factor for all the non-voters. The difference is that for the young people, the object of this discontent is the European Union and for the adults – the Polish domestic politics. The young absentees also show displeasure with the Polish politics, but in their case, it is more targeted at the specific institutions, namely the Parliament.

The analysis carried out in this thesis has its limitations. First of all, the European Election Studies database had very few cases of youth non-voters. It is very likely that a bigger database would make it possible to find other statistical relationships that were not revealed in this analysis due to the sample size of the youth. Another limitation is that the analysis of the youth abstention was done on the election to the European Parliament that no doubt differs from the national elections of all kinds. For that reason, it might be problematic simply to transfer the conclusions of this analysis to the elections of other types.

The undertaken analysis indicates the directions that would place the current findings into a wider context. The clear way of doing so is to analyze the position of age in general in the role of different factors in forming the non-voting preferences of the citizens. One of the possible directions is to introduce more diversified age groups. It might be very subjective and thus theoretically difficult to categorize age, but what can be done is introducing at least one more age group that would be the elderly population.

Finally, such an amendment of a new age group could be the clearest direction for the further research in the field of youth non-voting. In that case, it would be possible to compare the three groups between each other and see whether the youth differs just quantitatively or the nature of its difference from the rest of the population is of a qualitative character.

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