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## **The Use of Social Media by Young Georgians in Social and Political Activities to Support Ukraine**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the paper is to diagnose the use of social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) by young Georgians (understood as people aged 18-35) in social and political activities to support Ukraine in the context of the ongoing war. The authors assumed that young Georgians use social media to a large extent to support Ukraine as a kind of socio-political activity, thanks to which the attitudes of young people towards the war itself and Georgia's place in this conflict are visible. To meet the above research objective and verify the initial hypothesis, the following research methods were used: (1) the method of analysing existing data – a review of the literature representing Polish researchers was conducted regarding terminological and conceptual issues related to “social activity” and “political activity”; (2) a statistical method with the technique of analysing secondary statistical data collected by the Caucasian Research Resource Centre; (3) the method of qualitative analysis with the technique

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of researching new media, namely social media, which is currently an important source of information about young people. The research allowed for a preliminary analysis of the importance of this type of new media in socio-political activity undertaken by young people, especially in expressing their opinions and presenting attitudes. The article does not exhaust the selected subject; it is only a study that made the analysis of the meaning and topicality of this issue possible. Such recognition of the research area also provided the opportunity to find a number of empirical methods that can fill the research gap in the context of studying young Georgians, as well as the role of social media in their social and political life.

#### Keywords

young, young generation, Georgia, Georgians, social media, political activity, social activity, war in Ukraine

### Preliminary remarks

Currently, the world is facing many political, economic, and cultural challenges. These challenges are related to the changes in the balance of power in the international arena, which is mainly related to the war between Russia and Ukraine, which has been ongoing since February 2022, and also to the “cold” conflict between Russia and the West. This clash destabilizes not only the situation in Europe, but also in states which, on the one hand, are involved in the democratization process, and on the other, have developed certain ties with Russia (on the basis of belonging as a former Soviet republic, or through strong economic ties). Georgia is in such a situation – a post-Soviet state with a visible political tendency and orientation towards democracy and Western values (it is undoubtedly worth emphasizing that this democratization has been subject to many stumbles, especially in recent years). In addition, due to the current crisis of democracy in the Western world, global renegotiations after the economic boom, acceleration of the climate change, the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the trajectory of democracy and activities supported by the West, including the European Union, has changed.

It is in such conditions that young Georgians, who in the near future will constitute the new elite of the state, live and develop socially and politically. Their actions and understanding of the processes taking place in the political space will guide the state not only internally, but also in the context of cooperation with other international entities. This youth, as the “connected” generation (i.e., the generation of young people strongly connected with the Internet), shifts part of their lives and identity into cyberspace, using social media as a place to express their views and attitudes and to undertake various types of activities, including the forms of support for specific people or social groups. It should be emphasized that the activities of young people in cyberspace can be understood as a kind of socio-political activity characteristic of modern times. According to Katarzyna Skiert-Andrzejuk (one of the authors): “(...) the generation born in the 2000s is the Generation Z, that is, the Connected Generation—connected to the network, the Internet. They cannot function without the new media as it is part of their everyday life. They are mobile people, open to other cultures, and open to changes.”<sup>1</sup>

The paper aims to diagnose the use of social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) by young Georgians (understood as people aged 18-35) in social and political activities to support Ukraine, in the context of the ongoing war. We would like to emphasize that only the society will be studied, we shall not refer to the attitudes of the Georgian government towards the war in our research. Only certain aspects will be mentioned in the context of the lack of understanding between society and the ruling elites regarding the political narrative, visible, for instance, during protests. It should be noted, however, that these studies are preliminary and do not exhaust the subject, and therefore constitute a contribution to further analysis – also due to a research gap in the literature on the subject. This analysis therefore boils down to mapping the research area and an indication of the above deficiencies, which can be verified using other theoretical and empirical methods.

The adopted preliminary hypothesis indicates that young Georgians use social media to support Ukraine as a kind of socio-political activity, thanks to which the attitudes of young people towards the war as such and Georgia’s place in this conflict are visible. To meet the above research objective and verify the initial hypothesis, the following research methods were used: (1) the method of analysing the existing data – a review of the literature on the subject was carried out representing Polish researchers regarding terminological and conceptual issues related to “social activity” and “political activity”; (2) the statistical method with the technique of analysing secondary statistical data collected by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre; (3) the method of qualitative analysis

1. K. Skiert-Andrzejuk, *Generational Specificity of Socio-Political Transformation in Georgia: Between Tradition and Modernity*, “Polish Journal of Political Science”, 2021, Vol. 7, Issue 4, p. 90.

## Review of Literature

with the technique of researching new media, namely social media, which is currently an important source of information about young people.

The literature on the subject of young Georgians in social and political life is extremely poor and does not fully address the issues related to socio-political activity through any medium. Worth pointing out, however, are a few items describing young Georgians themselves – one of the more detailed studies is *Generation in Transition. Youth Study 2016–Georgia* prepared by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, which covers the issues of young Georgians in political life, as well as their life and professional goals. The report contains not only statistical data, but also quotes the answers to the questions asked during in-depth interviews, which allows for a better understanding of young people. However, it should be pointed out that this report was prepared in 2016 and should undoubtedly be updated.<sup>2</sup> In the context of statistical data, an important source of information is the Caucasus Research Resource Centre, which conducts surveys among societies in the South Caucasus, where age is distinguished as one of the variables, and the young generation is also analysed.<sup>3</sup> As mentioned by K. Skiert-Andrzejuk: “In the context of other research on young people in socio-political life worth mentioning is the article by Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik (2006) on youth’s participation in the electoral revolutions in Slovakia, Serbia, and Georgia, which is centered on the young generation’s issues. The same issues are studied in the article by Olena Nikolayenko (2007) on youth movements in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, as well as in the article by Taras Kuzi (2006) on youth and social mobilization in democratic revolutions (Rose Revolution in Georgia is a case study there). In the literature on the subject there are also references to building a civil society (Ghia Nodia’s policy paper on civil society development, 2005; Orysia Lutsevych’s briefing paper on civil society and democracy in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia, 2013) and the role of kinship networks in this process (Aliyev, 2014).<sup>4</sup>

Also worth pointing out is an article written by us, which focuses on the political activity of young people,<sup>5</sup> based on the research of one of the authors (K. Skiert-Andrzejuk), which was conducted as part of two research trips in 2016 and 2017 and until 2019 through numerous in-depth and expert interviews and surveys conducted among Georgian university students. Other articles by K. Skiert-Andrzejuk that focus on young Georgians should be also pointed out, such as: *The (Un-)Importance of Generational Dialogue in Georgian Political Tradition*,<sup>6</sup> *The Status and Role of the Young Generation in the Socio-Political Space in Georgia*,<sup>7</sup> *Analiza modelowa procesu adaptacji gruzińskiej młodzieży studenckiej do rzeczywistości społeczno-politycznej a rola szkolnictwa wyższego w tym procesie* [Eng.

2. S. Omanadze, N. Gachechiladze, A. Lebanidze, et al., *Generation in Transition: Youth Study 2016 – Georgia*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2017, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/13150.pdf>, (access 01.01.2023).

3. *Caucasus Barometer*, <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/about/>, (access 20.12.2021).

4. K. Skiert-Andrzejuk, *The Degree of Satisfaction with the Democratization of Georgia in the Opinion of Georgian Students: A Research Report*, “Eastern Europe – Regional Studies”, 2022, Vol. 1, p. 4. See more: H. Aliyev, *Civil society in the South Caucasus: kinship networks as obstacles to civil participation*, “South-east European and Black Sea Studies”, 2014, Vol. 14, Issue 2, pp. 263–282; O. Lutsevych, *How to Finish a Revolution: Civil Society and Democracy in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine*, Chatham House 2013; O. Nikolayenko, *The Revolt of the Post-Soviet Generation: Youth Movements in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine*, “Comparative Politics”, 2007, Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 169–188; V.J. Bunce, S.L. Wolchik, *Youth and Electoral Revolutions in Slovakia, Serbia, and Georgia*, “The SAIS Review of International Relations”, 2006, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 55–65; T. Kuzi, *Civil society, youth and societal mobilization in democratic revolutions*, “Communist and Post-Communist Studies”, 2006, Vol. 39, Issue 3, pp. 365–386; G. Nodia, *Civil Society Development in Georgia: Achievements and Challenges*, Cauca-

*A Model Analysis of the Process of Adaptation of Georgian Students to the Socio-Political Reality and the Role of Higher Education in This Process,<sup>8</sup> Generational Specificity of Socio-Political Transformation in Georgia,<sup>9</sup> and The Degree of Satisfaction with the Democratization of Georgia in the Opinion of Georgian Students: A Research Report.<sup>10</sup>*

The literature on the subject specifically concerning the use of social media in the context of political or social activity of Georgians (older and younger generations) is also extremely poor. It is worth emphasizing, however, that the analysis of the area related to the new media, and especially social media, is an extremely interesting area of research due to the fact that these platforms are now part of the lives of individuals – one can read not only about the attitudes towards social or political issues (issues of the use of social media by political parties)<sup>11</sup> but also in all other areas of life (the impact of social media on society in the context of economic transition;<sup>12</sup> religion in cyberspace).<sup>13</sup> The research on social media itself is extremely popular in terms of research and in the literature on the subject. When looking for key “social media” one can find hundreds of articles that describe both the activities of social media as well as definitions, functions, and place in socio-political life from various perspectives; however, as indicated above, there are no studies on the activities of young Georgians in social media.

Research on young people is extremely important in the context of the current global situation, the crisis of liberal democracy, renegotiation of world powers, and emerging nationalism in many countries. In addition, the pandemic and the war in Ukraine have caused young democratizing countries to look for security guarantors. Usually, this guarantee is supported by the implementation of democratic values; however, even the global superpowers are afraid of a chain of conflicts that may now arise owing to the numerous tensions visible on the international political scene – and it is the young who will decide about the future of these countries as well as the interpretation of power on the international arena. It is also worth pointing out that, according to a CRRC study from December 2022, 26% of Georgian respondents aged 18–34 indicated that the war in Ukraine is the reason for their sense of insecurity in the country.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, research on young people has a practical dimension, because by analysing socio-political activity on any level, it is possible to study the formation of civil society in Georgia, and democratization requires building a civil society as one of the basic standards of democracy.<sup>15</sup>

sus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development 2005.

5. M. Skiert, K. Skiert-Andrzejuk, *Political Activity of the Young Generation of Georgians in 2011–2019*, “Studia Orientalne”, 2021, No. 2 (20), pp. 67–81.

6. K. Skiert-Andrzejuk, *The (Un-)Importance of Generational Dialogue in Georgian Political Tradition*, “Studia Politologiczne”, 2021, Vol. 61, pp. 215–230.

7. K. Skiert-Andrzejuk, *The Status and Role of the Young Generation in the Socio-Political Space in Georgia*, “Nowa Polityka Wschodnia”, 2021, Vol. 1 (28), pp. 22–42.

8. K. Skiert-Andrzejuk, *Analiza modelowa procesu adaptacji gruzińskiej młodzieży studenckiej do rzeczywistości społeczno-politycznej a rola szkolnictwa wyższego w tym procesie*, in: *Między tradycją a modernizacją. Teoria i praktyka badań politologicznych państw eurazjatyckich. Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Tadeuszowi Bodio*, ed. A. Wierzbicki, Wydział Nauk Politycznych i Studiów Międzynarodowych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-JR 2021, pp. 251–266.

9. K. Skiert-Andrzejuk, *Generational Specificity of...*, op. cit., pp. 73–97.

10. K. Skiert-Andrzejuk, *The Degree of...*, op. cit., pp. 1–17.

11. K. Kakachia, T. Patariaia, M. Cecire, *Networked apathy: Georgian party*

**Social and  
political  
activity of  
Georgians**

An undoubted challenge, which is the condition of numerous polarizations and tensions in Georgian society, is democratization, which for its proper functioning needs a civil society, i.e., a society made up of conscious individuals, active in the social and political spheres. The lack of this component does not fit into the discourse of EU democracy, which has become the form within which Georgia is building its democracy. Nevertheless, a fully participatory and inclusive civil society has not yet been achieved in the country. Democratization requires involvement of society in the process of transformation of the state at the socio-political level, in particular the activity of the young generation. This activity manifests itself not only in the context of access to power or the desire to change the situation in the country, but also in the context of readiness for social changes within the state and in the world.

In the PWN dictionary, the term “social activity” is defined as “all socially regulated activities of individuals, performed within specific social roles.”<sup>16</sup> As Monika Mularska-Kucharek and Agnieszka Świątek point out, “colloquially, social activity can be understood as the energy of people directed at others”<sup>17</sup> and according to them, “many authors perceive social activity primarily as working for the benefit of another person or group (...) quite often it is associated with political activity.”<sup>18</sup>

Krystyna Skarżyńska recognizes political activity as a kind of behaviour and readiness to take action in the political sphere. Among others, she mentions political information as a behavioural approach to political activity. According to her, political information includes knowledge of political parties as well as offices and people who hold them.<sup>19</sup> Following K. Skarżyńska, it does not have to translate into activity, it may be associated with political passivity. Participation means all activities that exert political pressure on those in power. The forms of such influence are elections, referenda, and participation in demonstrations and strikes.<sup>20</sup> According to Daniel Mider, political activity can be divided into the activities related to electoral participation and those not related to elections, i.e., the activities related to cooperation with other citizens in order to solve internal problems and support state and international activities.<sup>21</sup>

In the literature on the subject, political and social activity related to online activity is also distinguished. According to Andrew Chadwick, activity in cyberspace influences political actions,<sup>22</sup> while Jakub Nowak believes that: “Informational use of the Internet is conducive to civic engagement and development of civic activity; people looking for political information online more often show a

*politics and the role of social media*, “Demokratizatsiya The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization”, 2014, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 255–275.

12. G. Griffin, M. Noniashvili, M. Batiashvili, *The Implementation and Results of the Use of Social Media in the Republic of Georgia*, “Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research”, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 1–8.

13. S. Zviadadze, *I ‘like’ my Patriarch. Religion on Facebook. New Forms of Religiosity in Contemporary Georgia*, “Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet”, 2014, Vol. 6, pp. 164–194.

14. *Caucasus Barometer...*, op. cit.

15. L. Tsuladze, *Online Media in the South Caucasus*, “Caucasus Analytical Digest”, 2014, No. 61–62, pp. 1–19, <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CAD-61-62.pdf>, (access 01.01.2023).

16. *Aktywność społeczna*, [Social activity], <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/aktywnosc-spoeczna;3867107.html>, (access 01.01.2023).

17. M. Mularska-Kucharek, A. Świątek, *Aktywność społeczna mieszkańców Łodzi. Analiza wybranych wymiarów*, “Studia Regionalne i Lokalne”, 2011, No. 4 (46), p. 69.

18. Ibidem, p. 70.

high level of social capital; and using the Internet to exchange political information generates higher levels of trust than obtaining them from traditional electronic media.”<sup>23</sup>

**O**ur previous research (2021) on the political activity of young Georgians indicates that the negative attitude of young people to socio-political life and the lack of activity in this area are attributed to political processes that do not take their interests into account. Political activity in Georgia mainly takes the form of participation in protests and strikes – there are still psychological, social, and political barriers to building a civil society. Civic activism in Georgia is primarily emotional. “Understanding civic activism has more to do with political aspects and less with non-political issues. According to G. Nodia, the political activity of young people has been visible especially since 2000 in business, the media, and civil society. This tendency occurred in the United Nations Movement (2004), when many (probably most) top officials were very young, and the appointment of 20–30-year-olds to top government positions had become a habit.”<sup>24</sup> However, according to Tornike Turmanidze, there are different groups with different views and interests among the young generation of Georgians – some are more active in political and social life, joining various political parties, interest groups, and social movements, others are less active and more career-oriented.<sup>25</sup>

**Z**urab Davitashvili argues that a significant number of young people try to remain apolitical, “passively participating in the socio-political activities that take place in the state. Such a low level of political activity is a threat to democracy, one of the critical determinants of which is the participation of citizens in governing, e.g., by exercising the active right to vote. Special attention of practitioners, politicians, researchers, and activists of various civic organizations should be focused on passivity and weaker interest in the sphere of politics of the youngest voters because they are the future of a democratic society.”<sup>26</sup> This research was completed in 2019 and the current situation related to the war in Ukraine may change the issues of activity, as can be seen in the examples of activities and statistical research that was carried out in March of this year, which will be described in the following sections.

19. K. Skarżyńska, *Podstawy psychologii politycznej*, Zysk i S-ka 2002.

20. Ibidem.

21. D. Mider, *Partycypacja polityczna w Internecie. Studium politologiczne*, Elipsa 2008.

22. A. Chadwick, *Internet Politics. States, Citizens, and New Communication Technologies*, Oxford University Press 2006.

23. J. Nowak, *Aktywność obywateli online. Teorie a praktyka*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej 2011, p. 112.

24. M. Skiert, K. Skiert-Andrzejuk, *Political Activity of...*, op. cit., p. 73.

25. Ibidem, p. 78.

26. Ibidem.

## Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as platforms for young people's socio-political activity

Little socio-political activity on the real level does not mean absence of activity in cyberspace. Definitely, more and more often, young people transfer parts of their lives to virtual reality, attributing the same importance to it. According to Freedom House (data from 2018), 60.5% of the population uses the Internet.<sup>27</sup> It is worth adding, however, that according to the same institution, online content is censored and manipulated by the Georgian authorities and Internet service providers. YouTube, Facebook, and international blogs are free to access; however, in some periods (2016) they were restricted as international platforms since the authorities tried to block certain content hosted on these sites. However, no similar cases of lockdowns and restrictions have been reported since then. Creating a profile on social media platforms is becoming a new reality, which is reflected in statistical data. An example is Facebook, which is extremely popular in Georgia. According to Statista data from 2021, 3.3 million Georgians used Facebook,<sup>28</sup> and according to META it was 2.7 million in 2022. As per Statcounter, in 2021, 70.79% of the population used Facebook, 6.11% used Instagram, and 5.75% used Twitter. According to the Digital Report, there were 3.10 million social media users in Georgia in January 2021. The number of social media users in Georgia increased by 400,000 (+15%) compared to the previous year (2020).<sup>29</sup>

The use of Facebook for political information, expression, and participation in socio-political life is growing steadily in Georgia. This social network facilitates the discussion of public issues and communication during political crises and uncertainties. "Facebook serves as an important platform for discussion and information exchange among the more liberal segments of Georgian society."<sup>30</sup> According to the CRRC data from 2021, in response to the question of what is main reason why social media is treated as a phenomenon that has a positive impact on their users, more than half of the respondents aged 18-35 (57%) considered that it was helping others and staying informed, and 21% felt that there was access to information (Figure 1).

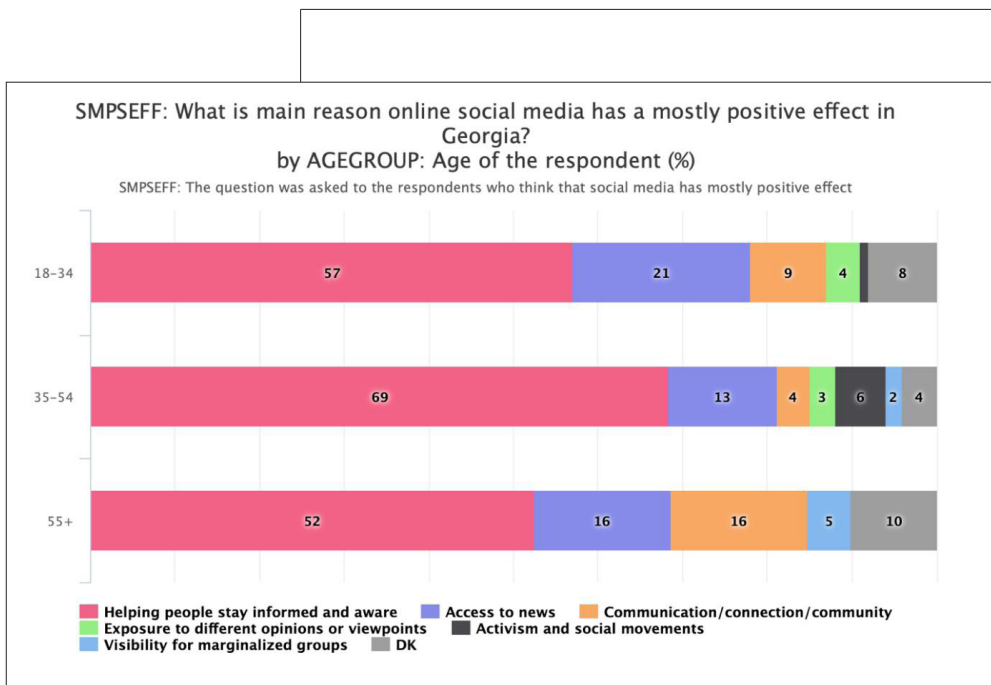
27. Freedom House, *Freedom on the Net 2018: Georgia*, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/freedom-net/2018>, (access 01.01.2023).

28. *Facebook users in Georgia from September 2018 to July 2021*, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1029753/facebook-users-georgia/>, (access 01.01.2023).

29. *Digital 2021: Georgia*, <https://dataportal.com/reports/digital-2021-georgia>, (access 01.01.2023).

30. Freedom House, *Freedom on the Net 2011: Georgia*, pp. 141-146, [https://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline\\_images/Georgia\\_FOTN2011.pdf](https://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/Georgia_FOTN2011.pdf), (access 01.01.2023).





**Figure 1.** Answers to the question: “What is main reason online social media has a mostly positive effect in Georgia?”

In the general group of social media, Facebook is considered the most popular platform, also among young Georgians – Twitter and Instagram are used by a smaller number of young people. In the following part of the study, elements such as the number of followers and the number of posts (also views in the case of YouTube) will be analysed. A more detailed analysis of the involvement and reach of profiles on social media platforms will be carried out in further research aimed at deepening the knowledge on the use of social media by young Georgians in the context of their socio-political activity. Detailed research requires the use of

Source: CRRC 2021.

specific tools for social media analysis, thus involving high research costs. The use of data that is available free of charge is certainly a significant limitation of the study; however, as it was emphasized in the introduction to the article, this study aims to create a map for further research. Therefore, when analysing groups and Facebook pages, the following ones can be distinguished (the initiatives were chosen in accordance with the previous research on youth organizations; we checked all of youth organizations for profiles on social media platforms and whether there were posts on supporting Ukraine, and, if the answer was yes, we added them to our study below), where the activities of young people to support Ukraine are visible:

- (1) **Young Ambassadors to the European Union** is an initiative addressed to young people within the EU Neighbours East (currently in the 2020-2024 project), which aims to facilitate the exchange of common ideas and information about the Eastern associated countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, and Ukraine) in EU countries. Observing the social profiles of this initiative, one can notice numerous aid campaigns aimed at Ukrainians. The involvement of ambassadors from Georgia is visible on the website. One of their recent initiatives is the preparation



of a video in support of Ukraine, which highlights the solidarity of Georgian youth.<sup>31</sup> It is worth paying attention to other social platforms of this initiative—these are Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Profiles on EU Neighbours East social media platforms

|           | Facebook | Instagram | YouTube | Twitter |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Followers | 126,000  | 18,000    | 611     | 11,300  |
| Posts     | -        | 1,747     | -       | 12,000  |
| Views     | -        | -         | 392,298 | -       |

Source: Own study.

(2) **The Young Ambassadors Program in Georgia** “is a project initiated by the LEPL International Education Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. In 2016, the program was run by the Office of the Minister of State for Diaspora Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.”<sup>32</sup> The main objective of the program is to promote Georgian history, culture, and language, as well as the socio-economic situation in different countries. Every young Georgian living abroad can apply for the title of Young Ambassador of Georgia for a year. The Facebook profile for Young Ambassadors of Georgia has 5,600 followers; however, each Ambassador in a given country also has their individual profile on Facebook (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Facebook profiles on

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Hungary                | 944   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to the Kingdom of Belgium | 2,000 |
| Young ambassador of Georgia to Austria                | 1,800 |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Germany                | 958   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Denmark                | 691   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to the United Kingdom     | 3,100 |
| Georgia’s young ambassador to Ukraine                 | 1,200 |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Canada                 | 73    |
| Young ambassador of Georgia to the Netherlands        | 2,100 |

31. “This friendship will last longer than the war” – Georgia in support of Ukraine, <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news-and-stories/stories/this-friendship-will-last-longer-than-the-war-georgia-in-support-of-ukraine/>, (access 01.01.2023).

32. *The Young Ambassadors Program in Georgia*, <https://www.facebook.com/ICMPDinGeorgia/posts/the-programme-of-georgias-young-ambassadors-is-a-project-initiated-by-the-lepl-i/688101444674325/>, (access 01.01.2023).

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Lithuania          | 713   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Ireland            | 662   |
| Young ambassador of Georgia to the Czech Republic | 1,200 |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Latvia             | 285   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to China              | 738   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Israel             | 228   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to South Africa       | 209   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Estonia            | 701   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to France             | 672   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Switzerland        | 784   |
| Young ambassador of Georgia to Spain              | 2,100 |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to South Korea        | 124   |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Bulgaria           | 600   |
| Young ambassador of Georgia to Italy              | 2,000 |
| Young Ambassador of Georgia to Japan              | 659   |
| Young ambassador of Georgia to Turkey             | 2,100 |
| Young ambassador of Georgia to Poland             | 2,200 |

Source: Own study based on data from Facebook.

- (3) The “Youth for the World” (YFW) Youth Educational Organization based in Tbilisi is a non-profit organization managed and run by young people. YFW has organized a Facebook group supporting Ukraine, where numerous entries are posted daily regarding financial aid, transport, accommodation, etc. There are 5,1000 followers and 4,700 likes on the Facebook page.
- (4) The EU Neighbours East website states that an NGO **Helping Hand** (ჰელპინგ ჰენდ) is now also actively involved in an initiative supporting Ukraine. As part of this initiative, young volunteers not only collected humanitarian funds through Facebook, but also prepared handwritten letters to support the Ukrainians. Analysing the data from social networking sites of this organization, it can be seen that Facebook is also the most popular platform here (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Profiles on Helping Hand social media platforms

|           | Facebook | Instagram | Twitter |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|
| Followers | 18,000   | 878       | 0       |
| Posts     | -        | 750       | 14      |

Source: Own study based on data from Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

(5) **USAID YES – Georgia** (ახალგაზრდების და ქალთა მენარმეობის მხარდაჭერა მხარდაჭერა მხარდაჭერა) is a program supporting the activities and entrepreneurship of young women. This program has also openly supported Ukraine's actions in the fight against Russia since February 2022, and young people have been posting information about other aid programs. The analysis of profiles on three social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), as in the previous cases, shows that Facebook has the largest number of followers (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Profiles on USAID YES social media platforms

|           | Facebook | Instagram | Twitter |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|
| Followers | 8,400    | 247       | 6,296   |
| Posts     | -        | 73        | 1,350   |

Source: Own study based on data from Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

In addition to the programs described above, there are also the Youth Centres Association (1,500 followers on Facebook) and EuroClub Kvareli (6,100 followers on Facebook), which have also emphasized their support for Ukraine in several posts and posted about aid campaigns.

It should be pointed out that not only youth organizations support Ukraine, but also various types of institutions related to young people, including, above all, universities, which undoubtedly reflect the activity of academic youth. On university profiles (on Facebook) one can find posts with activities of students supporting Ukraine. Analysing these activities, one can clearly see the dominance of those activities that have taken place at the university – such as fund raising, collections of food and hygiene products.

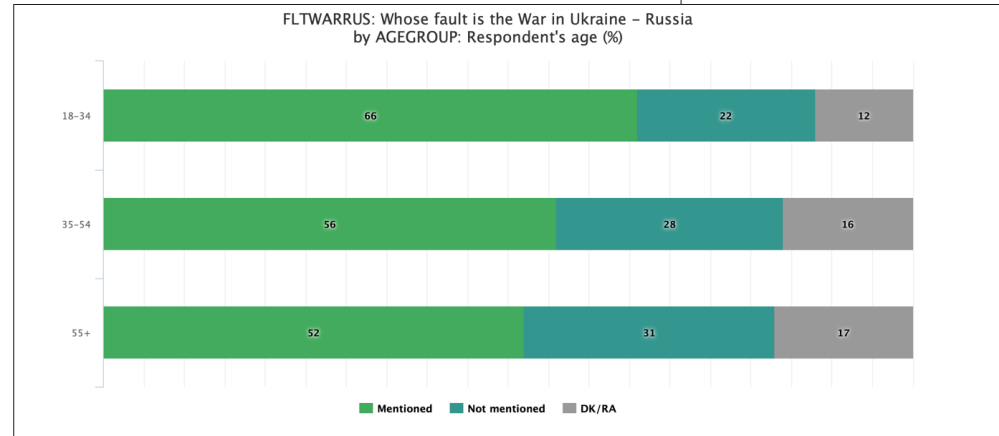
**Social media as a source of knowledge about the attitude of young people towards war: Correlation with data from the Caucasus Research Resource Centre**

As indicated in the first parts of the article, the very fact that young Georgians openly support Ukrainians through their activity in social media reflects their attitudes towards the war itself. This is indicated by the CRRC data from 2022, where the question posed to Georgians “Whose fault is the war in Ukraine – Russia?” as many as 66% of young respondents aged 18-34 indicated yes, and 22% did not (Figure 2).<sup>33</sup>

Figure 2. The answer to the question: “Whose fault is the war in Ukraine – Russia?”

In turn, to the question “Should Georgia introduce sanctions against Russia?” 44% of respondents in this age group answered definitely yes and pointed to the rightness of applying all possible sanctions. Slightly fewer, 26% of those surveyed, believed that only some sanctions should be introduced, and 19% that such restrictions should not be applied to Russia.<sup>34</sup>

When asked about the legitimacy of activities undertaken in the real world, including supporting Ukraine in the form of protests and marches, 38% of respondents considered this type of activity necessary and right, and 15% considered it rather right. At the same time, a large group of respondents, i.e. 27%, considered such activities to be definitely inappropriate, and 16% as rather inappropriate. Statements of this type by young Georgians indicate their greater interest in the activities supporting Ukrainians in their fight not only in cyberspace, but also in the real world. An example is the presence of young Georgians at a rally in Zugdidi, called to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili. During this event, young Georgians once again expressed their solidarity with Ukraine.<sup>35</sup> Another example is the rally organized by young people in Chulov in support of Ukraine. The newspaper reads “We, young people, are well aware of the Russian threats and we realize that, like Ukraine, Georgia may find itself in the situation that Ukraine is in today.”<sup>36</sup>



Source: CRRC 2022.

33. *Caucasus Barometer...*, op. cit.

34. *Ibidem*.

35. *Some of the young people say that they came to the rally today only to support Ukraine*, [ახალგაზრდების ნაწილი ამბობს, რომ დღეს აქციაზე მხოლოდ უკრაინის მხარადსაჭერად მივიდა], <https://www.livepress.ge/ka/akhali-ambebi/article/42516-akhal->

## Conclusions

Contemporary societies have been living and developing in recent years in a specific environment, in conditions of renegotiation of political and economic forces, in the area of a number of geopolitical changes taking place in the world as a consequence of the war in Ukraine. The study of young people in political reality (both at the local, national, and international level) is of particular importance due to the changes that young people will bring about in the near future. Marian Niezgoda emphasizes that young people are more receptive in the context of innovation and adaptation of new technologies and more susceptible to influences resulting from media messages and trends. Young people follow social media and absorb all news, thus becoming the target of marketing activities, including political marketing. Moreover, M. Niezgoda indicates that this group is more sensitive to systemic changes and crises.<sup>37</sup> In the case of young Georgians, the trend is similar. Their actions and understanding of the processes taking place in the political space will guide the state not only internally, but also in the context of cooperation with other international entities. Youth as the “connected” generation, i.e., the generation of young people strongly connected with the Internet, shifts part of their lives and identity into cyberspace, using social media as a place to express their views and attitudes and to undertake various types of activities, including various forms of support for specific people or social groups.

This article, which is an introduction to the research, concerns the use of social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) by young Georgians in social and political activities to support Ukraine in the context of the ongoing war. The research allowed us to make a preliminary analysis of the importance of this type of new media in socio-political activity undertaken by young people, and especially in expressing their opinions and presenting attitudes. Such mapping of the research space allows one to look at the problem and is an important first stage of research. The article does not exhaust the subject, it is only a study that allows us to analyse the meaning of this topic. Such recognition of the research area also gave the opportunity to isolate a number of empirical methods that can fill the research gap in the context of studying young Georgians, as well as the role of social media in their social and political life.

The initial hypothesis indicated that young Georgians use social media to support Ukraine as a kind of socio-political activity. This is confirmed by the posts and initiatives promoted on social networks of Georgian youth organizations. The sheer number of posts can be examined using analytical tools that fall within qualitative methods of an empirical nature. What’s more, the engage-

[gazrdebis-natsili-ambobs-rom-dghes-aqciaze-mkholod-ukrainis-mkharadsatcerad-mivida.html](https://batumelebi.netgazeti.ge/news/392277/), (access 01.01.2023).

36. *Solidarity with Ukraine* – action of young people in Khulo, [“სოლიდარობა უკრაინას” – ახალგაზრდების აქცია ხულოში], <https://batumelebi.netgazeti.ge/news/392277/>, (access 02.01.2023).

37. M. Niezgoda, *Młodzież. Kłopotliwa kategoria socjologiczna*, “Jagiellońskie Studia Socjologiczne”, 2014, No. 1, pp. 13–34.

ment visible on the social profiles of these organizations proves the reach of these posts. Undoubtedly, Georgian youth supports the Ukrainian side and supports it through numerous aid campaigns and posts openly criticizing Russia; moreover, they also indicate the attitude of young people to Georgia's place in this war – as a state that should largely introduce sanctions and openly condemn Russian actions.

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