Declining trust in democratic governance: the case of post-communist countries

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Abstract: Post-communist countries have experienced significant changes over the past three decades, moving from authoritarian rule to democratic societies that rely on the pillars of democratic governance. Rule of law, transparency and accountability, together with citizens' participation, have been strengthened in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe as a result of democratic consolidation. However, over the past decade, populist political parties have flourished in some post-communist societies, while anti-democratic movements are growing across the region. One of the core ideas fuelling this process deals with the growing distrust in the democratic institutions, opposing the citizens to the democratic institutions. This paper examines trends in trust in government and in civic society, core institutions of democratic governance, in the CEE countries, focusing on the generational change and its impact on the loss of trust in democratic governance. Using data from repeated large-scale surveys that cover the CEE countries, such as EuroBarometer, European Values Study, World Values Survey, and Life in Transition Survey, the analysis decomposed the changes in trust in government and civic society using Linear Cohort Decomposition of social change. The results point to a decline in trust in democratic governance institutions among young generations socialised during the democratisation period.