



Youth, Elections and Democratic Engagement: A Regional Dialogue

Cluj-Napoca, 25 - 26 February 2026

Casa Universitarilor, Auditorium Maximum Hall / Mihail Kogălniceanu 5

Day 1

- 12:00 - 13:00 Lunch at *Casa Universitarilor - Piramida* Restaurant (*speakers and invited participants*)
- 13:00 - 13:30 Registration & Welcome Coffee
- 13:30 - 13:50 **Opening Remarks**
- Professor Daniel David, Rector of Babeş-Bolyai University (UBB)
 - Raul Mureşan, Project Co-ordinator, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
- 13:50 - 14:30 **Keynote Address: Youth, Trust and Democratic Participation**
Vlad Adamescu & Răzvan Petri, *Politică la minut*, Romania
- 14:30 - 15:40 **Session 1: (Why) Do Young People Stay Away from Elections?**
Objective: Identify structural, political and institutional factors contributing to youth disengagement from electoral processes across the Western Balkans, beyond awareness and information gaps
Moderator: Nataliya Vasylevska, Associate Project Officer, ODIHR
- Mia Radovanović, Senior Project Officer, Council of Europe Office in Sarajevo
 - David Băgăcean, Romanian Association for Debate, Oratory and Rhetoric (ARDOR)
 - Blendë Pira, Legal Researcher & Program Coordinator, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Kosovo*
 - Davor Džakula, OSCE Pool of Young Experts, Serbia
- 15:40 - 16:00 Coffee Break
- 16:00 - 17:15 **Session 2: Education and Political Socialization of Youth – Limits and Opportunities**
Objective: Assess the role of formal education, civic education and universities in shaping democratic literacy and electoral engagement across disciplines, beyond the social sciences
Moderator: Bogdan Radu, Lecturer in Political Science, UBB
- Adela Kula, Project Officer, Council of Europe Office in Tirana
 - Giorgiana Spătăcean, Secretary General, National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania
 - Milica Borjanić, Secretary General, National Youth Council of Serbia
 - Gabriel Bădescu, Professor of Political Science & Daniela Angi, Researcher, UBB
- 17:15 - 18:15 **Session 3: Inclusion or Tokenism? Reaching Underrepresented and Marginalized Youth**
Objective: Explore shared barriers to participation faced by non-student youth, rural youth, NEET groups, young women, Roma youth, national minorities and youth with disabilities. Assess whether existing participation mechanisms enable meaningful inclusion
Moderator: Maria Olariu, Researcher in Political Science, UBB
- Quentin Rumeau, Associate Democratic Governance Officer, ODIHR
 - Afërdita Haxhijaha Imeri, Program Manager and Social Inclusion Advisor, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), North Macedonia
 - Adelina Mureşan, Extraordinary Youth, Romania
 - Fernando Varga, Researcher, UBB
- 18:15 Concluding Remarks



Day 2

- 09:00 - 09:30 Welcome Coffee
- 09:30 - 10:00 **Keynote Address: Youth, Digital Participation and Democratic Risks**
Salome Margvelashvili, Regional Project Manager, Code for Romania
- 10:00 - 11:30 **Session 4: Digital Natives, Democratic Risks – Youth, Social Media and Elections**
Objective: Examine how social networks, algorithms, influencers, micro-targeting and disinformation shape youth political behaviour and electoral participation
Moderator: Quentin Rumeau, Associate Democratic Governance Officer, ODIHR
- Călin Georgia, Lecturer, UBB / Researcher, Funky Citizens
 - Zoran Richliev, Media Project Manager, Metamorphosis Foundation, North Macedonia
 - Sorana Constantinescu, Lecturer in Political Science, UBB / TAKEPART Project
 - Bogdan Lungu, Board Member, Association for Technology and Internet (ApTI), Romania
- 11:30 - 11:50 Coffee Break
- 11:50 - 13:15 **Session 5: Are EMBs Reaching Young Voters? Institutional Communication and (Digital) Outreach**
Objective: Examine whether EMB voter information and communication strategies resonate with youth, and identify barriers related to institutional language, channels and formats
Moderator: Shqipe Shaqiri-Islami, Senior Project Assistant, OSCE Mission in Kosovo
- Doina Bordeianu, Former Director of The Center for Continuing Education in the Electoral Field (CICDE), Moldova
 - Kristina Žugić, Executive Director, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Montenegro
 - Septimius Pârnu, Coordinator of the Electoral Program, Expert Forum, Romania
 - Migen Qiraxhi, Elections Programme Manager, *Qendresa Qytetare*, Albania
- 13:15 - 14:30 Lunch (*speakers and invited participants*)
- 14:30 - 15:45 **Session 6: From Participation to Influence – Youth Engagement in Electoral Reform**
Objective: Discuss pathways for youth engagement beyond voter turnout, including election observation, advocacy and participation in electoral reform processes
Moderator: George Jiglău, Lecturer in Political Science, UBB
- Elisa Parnefält Størksen, President, European Dialogue and Democracy Association (EDDA), Norway
 - Roxana Pencea Brădățan, Campaign Coordinator, DECLIC, Romania
 - Vildan Plepi, Program Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI), Albania
- 15:45 **Concluding Session / Key Findings and Way Forward**
- Maria Olariu, UBB Rapporteur
 - Raul Mureșan, ODIHR Project Co-ordinator

*All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

Thank you for participating in this event. We kindly invite you to complete the online evaluation form to help us improve future activities at <https://bit.ly/WBFUEvaluation> or scan the QR code.

