

Youth, Elections and Democratic Engagement: A Regional Dialogue

Cluj-Napoca, 25 - 26 February 2026

Casa Universitarilor, Auditorium Maximum Hall / Mihail Kogălniceanu 5

Day 1

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| 12:00 - 13:00 | Lunch at <i>Casa Universitarilor</i> - <i>Piramida</i> Restaurant |
| 13:00 - 13:30 | Registration & Welcome Coffee |
| 13:30 - 13:50 | Opening Remarks |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Daniel David, Rector, Babes-Bolyai University (UBB) (TBC) ● Raul Mureșan, ODIHR Project Co-ordinator |
| 13:50 - 14:30 | Keynote Address: Youth, Trust and Democratic Participation |
| | Vlad Adamescu & Răzvan Petri, <i>Politica la minut</i> , Romania |
| 14:30 - 15:45 | <p>Session 1: (Why) Do Young People Stay Away from Elections?</p> <p>Objective: Identify structural, political and institutional factors contributing to youth disengagement from electoral processes across the Western Balkans, beyond awareness and information gaps</p> |
| | Moderator: Nataliya Vasylevska, Associate Project Officer, ODIHR |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mia Radovanović, Senior Project Officer, Council of Europe Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina Office (TBC) ● Matei Vrabie, Program Manager, Funky Citizens, Romania ● Blendë Pira, Legal Researcher & Program Coordinator, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Kosovo* ● Davor Džakula, OSCE Pool of Young Experts, Serbia |
| 15:45 - 16:00 | Coffee Break |
| 16:00 - 17:15 | <p>Session 2: Education and Political Socialization of Youth – Limits and Opportunities</p> <p>Objective: Assess the role of formal education, civic education and universities in shaping democratic literacy and electoral engagement, including beyond social science disciplines</p> |
| | Moderator: Bogdan Radu, Lecturer in Political Science, UBB |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Giorgiana Spătacean, Secretary General, National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania ● Milica Borjanić, Secretary General, National Youth Council of Serbia ● Gabriel Bădescu, Professor of Political Science, UBB |
| 17:15 - 18:15 | <p>Session 3: Inclusion or Tokenism? Reaching Underrepresented and Marginalized Youth</p> <p>Objective: Explore shared barriers to participation faced by non-student youth, rural youth, NEET groups, young women, Roma youth, national minorities and</p> |

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| | youth with disabilities, and assess whether existing participation mechanisms enable meaningful inclusion |
| | Moderator: Maria Olariu, Researcher in Political Science, UBB |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quentin Rumeau, Associate Democratic Governance Officer, ODIHR ● Afërdita Haxhijaha Imeri, Senior Program Manager and Social Inclusion Specialist, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), North Macedonia ● Adelina Mureșan, Youth Advocate, Interact Transilvania, Romania ● Fernando Varga, Researcher, UBB |
| 18:15 | Wrap-Up of Day 1 |

Day 2

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| 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 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bogdan Lungu, Project Coordinator, Association for Technology and Internet (ApTI), Romania ● Zoran Richliev, Media Project Manager, Metamorphosis Foundation, North Macedonia ● Roxana Pencea Brădățan, Campaign Coordinator, DECLIC, Romania ● Dorin Spoaller, Lecturer in Strategic Communication, UBB |
| 11:30 - 11:45 | Coffee Break |
| 12:45 - 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 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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 (TBC) ● Septimius Pârvu, Coordinator of the Electoral Program, Expert Forum, Romania ● Migen Qiraxhi, Elections Programme Manager, Qendresa Qytetare, Kosovo |



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| 13:15 - 14:15 | Lunch |
| 14:15- 15:45 | <p>Session 6: From Participation to Influence – Youth Engagement in Electoral Reform</p> <p>Objective: Discuss pathways for youth engagement beyond voter turnout, including election observation, advocacy and participation in electoral reform processes</p> |
| | Moderator: George Jigla, Lecturer in Political Science, UBB |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● George Jigla, Lecturer in Political Science, UBB ● Elisa Parnefält Størksen, President, European Dialogue and Democracy Association (EDDA), Norway ● Sorana Constantinescu, Lecturer in Political Science, UBB, TAKEPART Project ● Vildan Plepi, Program Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI), Albania |
| 15:45 | <p>Concluding Session / Key findings and way forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maria Olariu, UBB Rapporteur ● Raul Mureșan, ODIHR Project Co-ordinator |

