



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

EDYN
European Democracy Youth Network

A network supporting young pro-
democracy activists, politicians and
journalists

MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



Dear EDYN members, partners, and supporters,

2025 was not an easy year for democracy in our region, and it was not an easy year for those working to defend it. Across Europe and its neighbourhood, democratic norms continued to erode, political polarisation became more entrenched, and civic space – especially for young people – grew narrower. For many in our network, engagement came with real personal, professional, and emotional costs.

In this context, EDYN's responsibility was not to expand at all costs, but to remain steady, credible, and reliable. A central focus of 2025 was stabilising the organisation – particularly its finances – so that EDYN can continue to exist as a trusted platform for young democratic actors over the long term. This work was often invisible, but necessary. Without organisational stability, networks like ours cannot support others facing uncertainty and pressure.

At the same time, EDYN remained active where it mattered. Members contributed to international projects, national initiatives, and cross-border cooperation, often in environments marked by political hostility, shrinking opportunities, and fatigue. These efforts did not always make headlines, but they sustained connections, shared knowledge, and kept democratic engagement possible in places where it is increasingly discouraged.

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a year of intentional growth. With stronger foundations in place, EDYN aims to carefully expand the network, welcome new members, and invest more consistently in functioning, resilient country chapters. Growth, for us, is not about numbers alone: it is about strengthening local capacity, supporting responsible leadership, and ensuring that engagement leads to concrete action.

The continued erosion of democratic norms, the normalisation of polarisation, and the reduced space for youth participation mean that inaction carries its own risks. EDYN will continue to approach its work with seriousness and accountability, recognising both the limits and the responsibilities of a youth-led network operating in increasingly difficult conditions.

We remain grateful to everyone who continues to stand with EDYN and contribute to its work. The challenges ahead are significant, but so is the need for organised, grounded, and sustained democratic action.

With appreciation,



Lubica Kovacova
EDYN Executive Director



Giorgi Agirbaia
EDYN President

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1. ABOUT EDYN

1.1. About us

Democracy in Europe is under threat. Its erosion risks reversing hard-fought freedoms and destabilizing global peace and security. The rise of authoritarianism brings greater censorship, human rights abuses and further division.

With over half the world's population under 30 years old, young people are key to democracy's survival. The European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN) counters the threat to democracy and offers a solution to this existential crisis.

EDYN empowers young civic and political leaders from across the ideological and political spectrum to become active in public life. Together with our members and donors, we prepare new generations of changemakers.

By promoting cross-partisan capacity-building, advocacy and increased participation of youth in governance, EDYN enables young people to refrain from the policies of hate and draft joint solutions for today's most pressing societal problems.

EDYN VALUES



ACCOUNTABILITY



ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR



TRANSPARENCY



**CONSTRUCTIVE
POLITICAL
ENGAGEMENT**



INCLUSION



**RESPECT &
SOLIDARITY**



ANTI-EXTREMISM



**ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSCIOUSNESS**



MERITOCRACY

1.2. Structure and Governance

► EDYN HQ

EDYN HQ serves as the central hub supporting EDYN members and managing the entire network. Its responsibilities include overseeing activities, fundraising and communications. EDYN HQ also implements projects funded by donors, handles key internal processes, coordinates international events, manages network-wide external communications and administers digital platforms and strategic partnerships with organizations all over the world.

► Board of Trustees

In 2025, it comprised seven distinguished members who, through their expertise and experience in the region, contribute to our overall governance and sustainability. These included Mr. Jonas Rolett (Former Special Advisor to the Chairman at Open Societies Foundation) as the Chair, Ambassador Alison Kelly (former Irish Ambassador to Ukraine, Israel, and the Czech Republic), Mr. Nicholas Whyte (Senior Director at APCO Worldwide and Visiting Professor at Ulster University's Faculty of Social Sciences), Mr. Greg Strimple (Founder and President of GS Strategy Group), Ambassador Kathryn Walt Hall (former US Ambassador), Ms. Caryn Eggeraat (Principal of the Endicott Group) and Mr. Peter Cari (Founding Partner of Prism Communications).

At the end of 2025, three Board members finished their mandate—Kathryn Walt Hall, Caryn Eggeraat, and Peter Cari—and the Board voted to appoint a new member, Mr. Justin Lane, PhD (CEO & Founder of CulturePulse).

► EDYN Leadership Council

The Leadership Council (LC) serves as EDYN's representative and decision-making body composed of the EDYN members. In 2025, the LC was led by Giorgi Agirbaia, EDYN President from Georgia and included the following EDYN Members:

- Ana Gjidiaj, Vice-President, Albania
- Hubert Tadych, Vice-President, Poland
- Petru Cretu, Secretary General, Moldova
- Greta Harutyunyan, Armenia
- Amila Husic, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Vladislav Sazonov, Belarus
- Jan Gondek, Czech Republic
- Ana Puljic, Croatia
- Daviti Esatia, Georgia
- Blerton Vehapi, Kosovo
- Bojan Lazarevski, North Macedonia
- Aleksandar Mijailovic, Serbia
- Yuliia Dziuba, Ukraine

The LC plays a vital role in representing EDYN on a global scale. Composed of dedicated young individuals, the LC communicates EDYN's goals and mission to international audiences, fostering partnerships with like-minded organizations and promoting EDYN's core values.

► **Supervisory Board**

At the end of 2025, EDYN established a Supervisory Board to further strengthen its governance and oversight framework. The Supervisory Board is composed of Ms. Monika Husenicová, Mr. Michal Príkopa, and Mr. Norbert Kurilla. Its role is to monitor EDYN's activities and ensure compliance with applicable laws and internal statutes. The Board is responsible for reviewing annual financial statements and reports, inspecting organisational records, and identifying potential risks or deficiencies. Where necessary, it alerts the Board of Trustees and provides recommendations to support transparent and accountable governance.

► **Advisory Alumni Board**

The EDYN Advisory Alumni Board serves as the primary external advisory body for the EDYN network, providing strategic guidance, expertise, and mentorship support to the Leadership Council, EDYN HQ, and members in achieving network-wide and chapter-specific goals. The Alumni Board holds a purely advisory role, without decision-making powers. The current members are: Salome Mgeladze from Georgia, Gjorgji Tasev from North Macedonia, Natalia Slepudin from Moldova, Piotr Kolomycki from Poland, and Ismayil Abdullayev from Azerbaijan.

EDYN 2025 IN NUMBERS

835

MEMBERS

40+

**INTERNATIONAL
PARTNERSHIPS**

5

**COMMUNICATION
CAMPAIGNS**

61

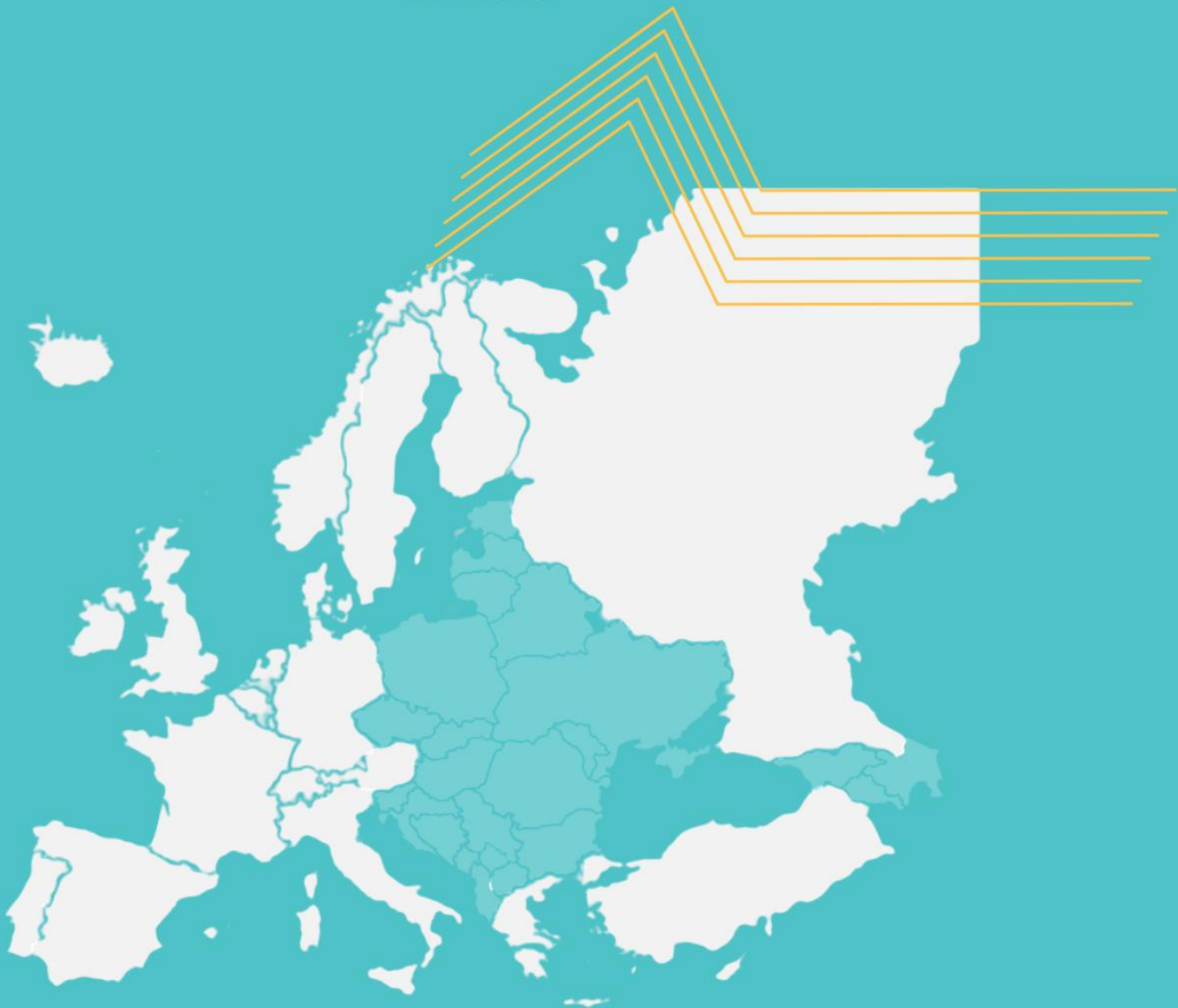
ALUMNI

60+

**MEMBERS ATTENDED
INTERNATIONAL
EVENTS**

1.2 mil

**VIEWS ON EDYN
SOCIAL MEDIA**



2. ACHIEVEMENTS & IMPACT IN 2025

2.1. Key Activities and projects

YouthDecide 2040 Project

The [YouthDecide 2040](#) project is a EU-funded initiative (under the European Commission's Horizon2040 funding scheme) dedicated to reimagining the future of democracy in Europe by the year 2040 through participatory foresight, democratic innovation, and youth engagement.

EDYN is a key implementing partner of this initiative, which started in January 2025 and will run until December 2027. Our project partners include a diverse and interdisciplinary consortium led by the Austrian Institute of Technology, in partnership with Strategic Design Scenarios, WeDo, Missions Publiques, the Fraunhofer Institute of Systems and Innovation Research, the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, the European Partnership for Democracy, the European University Institute, the European Youth Forum, and Make.org.

Through this grant, EDYN has coordinated (and will continue to coordinate) youth workshops, youth-led advocacy campaigns, and structured engagements between young people and European institutions and policymakers. In 2025, EDYN activated all country chapters across Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans to ensure that the voices of EDYN members will meaningfully inform EU-level policies for Europe's democratic future.

We are proud that, as part of this initiative, we can offer our members a platform to meaningfully contribute to their societies and have a say in their countries' futures.

► Creative Retreat in Italy

In May 2025, EDYN contributed to the *YouthDecide 2040's* first main event, which was a Creative Retreat held at the historic former monastery of Certosa di Pontignano near Siena, Italy. This three-day foresight session convened twenty innovative thinkers, researchers, policymakers, scenario experts, philosophers, and youth leaders to explore democratic innovations and co-create forward-looking strategies for the future of European democracy.

EDYN was represented by three female members: **Valentina Malenchi** from Moldova (co-founder of Comunitatea Plus and Head of Communications for Moldova Decide), **Martyna Jałoszyńska** from Poland (currently serving as Warsaw City Councillor with a background in social justice and youth participation), and **Marsela Delija** from Albania (Albania's Youth Delegate to the United Nations with a strong background in anti-corruption, civic engagement, and human rights advocacy) as well as EDYN HQ staff representative, Ms. Carlotta Seriola.

Throughout the retreat, Valentina, Martyna, Marsela and Carlotta engaged in cross-sector dialogue and creative scenario building with the other participants, contributing their diverse national perspectives to shape visions of democratic resilience and inclusion for 2040 and beyond.



► Regional Workshops (Bratislava, Skopje, Barcelona, Oslo, and Paris)

In the summer of 2025, as part of the *YouthDecide 2040* project, EDYN was the key organiser and promoter of five scenario-building regional workshops. The workshops were held in Bratislava, Skopje, Barcelona, Paris, and Oslo, engaging 100 young leaders from across EDYN country chapters, Western Europe, Southern Europe, and Northern Europe. Each workshop convened 20 participants, bringing together young politicians, activists, civil society leaders, and journalists from all over Europe. Across all five cities, these workshops empowered young Europeans to co-imagine democratic futures and prototype policy ideas, laying the groundwork for deeper engagement in the later stages of the *YouthDecide2040* project.



The nearly 40 EDYN members who attended these workshops took part in participatory foresight exercises, scenario-building, and democratic innovation labs focused on Europe's democratic future. In their discussions, they addressed declining trust in institutions, youth political disengagement, and the

future of digital democracy while producing concrete inputs for the next stages of the YouthDecide2040 research and advocacy streams. Our members also had the opportunity to engage in **cross-border, cross-partisan dialogue** with fellow EDYN members and with young people beyond the EDYN network, learning how to explore creative foresight and democratic innovations through hands-on group work rooted in scenario co-creation methods.

We are proud that, through these regional workshops, we strengthened dialogue among our chapters and between our members and young people beyond the EDYN region; amplified perspectives of youth from underrepresented regions vis-à-vis EU institutions; and positioned our network as a key bridge between grassroots youth voices and EU policymakers.

Climbing the Ladder Project

The *Climbing the Ladder: Fostering a Culture of Youth Engagement* (CL-YE) project aims to raise awareness of the critical role of youth participation in policy-making and to foster long-term impacts for youth engagement within local communities. By highlighting adaptable practices, the project provides a resource for practitioners, decision-makers, and youth organizations to create dynamic environments where young people collaborate with policymakers to drive meaningful change and strengthen their communities.

► Multiplier Event in Bratislava to showcase the achievements of the Erasmus+ Climbing the Ladder project

The *"Lifecycle of Youth Engagement"* roundtable took place on 11 November 2025 in Bratislava as part of the Erasmus+ *Climbing the Ladder* project. Organised by EDYN and moderated by Executive Director Lubica Kovacova, the event brought together young leaders and youth organisations. Speakers **Radka Wagingerová** from EDYN Slovakia and **Jan Gondek** from EDYN Czechia shared their experiences from student activism, community engagement, and political participation. The discussion focused on how early enthusiasm for activism can grow into long-term civic involvement. Participants reflected on challenges such as burnout, limited access to decision-making, and balancing activism with school or work. They also highlighted the importance of mentorship, emotional resilience, and supportive institutions in helping young people stay engaged over time.



► Conference in Portugal

The final conference of the *Climbing the Ladder* project (funded by the Erasmus+ scheme), titled “Towards a more youth-oriented society – starting from a meaningful youth engagement,” brought together 40 participants from across Europe, including project partners, institutional stakeholders, municipal representatives, and youth practitioners.



EDYN Leadership Council members Jan Gondek from Czechia, Aleksandar Mijailovic from Serbia, and Bojan Lazarevski from North Macedonia took part in the conference, contributing to discussions and learning from other attendees and their insights. The event aimed to share perspectives on youth participation, democratic engagement, and inclusive decision-making, while presenting the project’s results and innovative methodologies for fostering meaningful youth involvement. Through workshops, discussions, and networking sessions, the conference provided a platform to exchange experiences, explore approaches to youth engagement, and build partnerships across borders.

► Publication: Good Practices and Case Studies

EDYN wrote the “*Good Practices and Case Studies*” publication, a key output of the *Climbing the Ladder* project. The publication documented 18 examples of youth engagement from across Europe, including youth councils, parliaments, youth banks, and youth delegate models, highlighting how these initiatives promoted inclusivity, diversity, and meaningful participation in decision-making. It also featured contributions from EDYN members who showcased their experiences and insights. Jakub Kocjan from EDYN Poland wrote about his involvement in “*Czarnek OUT!*”, a political youth-led campaign, and Jan Gondek from EDYN Czechia gave insights about his work with the Youth Parliament. The second publication provides practical guidance and recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and youth advocates seeking to develop – or strengthen – mechanisms for youth participation at local and international levels.

► Publication: Qualitative Guidelines for Mechanisms of Youth Engagement

As part of the *Climbing the Ladder* project, EDYN and other consortium partners also released a third publication, “*Qualitative Guidelines for Mechanisms of Youth Engagement*”, which offers a practical guide to youth participation in decision-making. The report outlines different engagement models – such as youth councils, parliaments, advisory boards, and co-management bodies – and provides guidance on choosing the right model, ensuring meaningful involvement, sustaining engagement, and balancing youth leadership with oversight. Featuring real-world examples, tips, and quality criteria, the publication supports organizations and policymakers in designing effective youth engagement mechanisms and integrating young people’s voices into decisions that shape their communities.



Other projects

► You(th)&Dem Project: Workshop in Prague by Forum 2000

In 2025, EDYN joined *You(th) & Dem*, a project funded by the Erasmus+ scheme and led by the Prague-based organisation Forum 2000. The initiative brings together young people from Central Europe to develop advocacy skills and learn how to better engage in democratic processes. *You(th) & Dem* also includes local and EU-level advocacy initiatives, supporting participants in building skills, confidence, and networks to ensure young people’s voices are represented in policy-making. As part of the project, Michael Blaško and Aurel Surový from EDYN Slovakia attended the project’s flagship activity in Prague in October. This included workshops, simulations, foresight exercises for local initiatives affecting local communities in participants’ contexts, and dialogues between youth leaders and politicians.



► Democracy in Motion: EU Youth Mobility Workshop in Kaunas, Lithuania, hosted by Mano Europa

EDYN participated in *Democracy in Motion*, an international youth mobility project led by the organisation Mano Europa. It took place in Kaunas, Lithuania between the 13th and 22nd of October. Participants engaged in non-formal learning activities including debates, simulations, role plays, world cafés, and team-building exercises. Participants deepened their knowledge of democratic values and social and human rights as well as their practical skills on how to increase youth civic participation with an eye for inclusion in their communities. By combining experiential learning with collaborative activities, the program promoted diversity, inclusion, and active citizenship, equipping participants to contribute meaningfully to democratic practices in their local and wider communities. Slovak member Viliam Dominik Ďuraš represented the network at the event.



► 13th World Forum for Democracy

EDYN also had its representatives at the 13th *World Forum for Democracy* in Strasbourg. Giorgi Agirbaia, EDYN President from Georgia, Aleksandar Mijailovic, Leadership Council member from Serbia, and Kseniia Malyshenko, member from Ukraine, attended the Forum. Under the theme "*Democracy at risk: how can we revive it?*", the Forum brought together changemakers, activists, and leaders from around the world to exchange ideas and collectively reimagine the future of democracy.



► Freedom in the Changing World conference in Brussels

In May 2025, Yurii Stechyshyn from EDYN Ukraine represented EDYN in the *Freedom in the Changing World* conference in Brussels, organized by think tank *New Direction*. He was selected as a panelist to speak on youth engagement in politics, with a focus on the participation of young people in center-right political organisations. During the conference, Yurii offered his experience in the Ukrainian context on how to build more effective youth policies and the importance of supporting young people who are actively shaping their communities.



► EDYN Webinar: “Youth Perspectives on the Future of Georgia and Moldova in 2025”

On February 11, 2025, EDYN hosted a webinar featuring EDYN alumni Salome Mgeladze (Georgia) and Natalia Slepuhin (Moldova), moderated by former Ambassador and EDYN Board of Trustees member, Alison Kelly, to discuss youth perspectives on the future of Georgia and Moldova. The discussion highlighted how young people in both countries are actively confronting foreign interference and disinformation campaigns in their national elections. They also touched on threats to Georgian and Moldovan civil society. Participants then engaged the speakers in a Q&A session, asking how youth can take an active role in shaping the democratic future of their nations.

► EDYN Webinar: “Ukraine’s Next Chapter - Youth Visions for Kyiv’s Road to Recovery”

On November 19, EDYN hosted a webinar with Yulia Dziuba (EDYN Ukraine) and Pavel Havlicek (EDYN Czechia), moderated by Ambassador and member of EDYN Board of Trustees, Alison Kelly. The discussion highlighted how youth are leading Ukraine’s recovery, rebuilding democratic institutions, and shaping the country’s future. Young Ukrainians are not only surviving the war, but they are also actively driving recovery, reconciliation, and stronger democratic governance. The webinar explored their critical role in Kyiv’s next chapter of building peace, democracy, and civic trust.



► LibertyCon Europe in Prague

In April 2025, EDYN members attended *LibertyCon Europe* in Prague, Czech Republic, the continent's largest pro-liberty gathering. The two-day event brought together over 700 participants, more than 40 organizations, and a range of renowned speakers, providing opportunities for engaging discussions, inspiring lectures, and networking. EDYN Czechia members participated in sessions, exchanged ideas with fellow attendees, and strengthened connections with organizations and advocates across Europe.

► NDI Regional Youth workshop on Political Strategies

In December, EDYN Kosovo members Rea Krasniqi, Armira Muqolli, and Trina Hoti along with Amina Brahić from Montenegro, participated in a *Regional Youth Workshop on Political Strategies*, organized by the National Democratic Institute in cooperation with the City of Wrocław. The workshop focused on building effective political strategies at the local level, strengthening advocacy efforts, and fostering collaboration to boost youth participation in policymaking. Participants explored Wrocław's youth engagement mechanisms, learned about the Wrocław Youth City Council, and exchanged innovative campaign practices that amplify youth voices.



Country Chapter Activities

Throughout the year, EDYN's country chapters carried out a variety of national-level activities. Members organized discussions, workshops, public events, and initiatives that addressed pressing political and social issues while creating spaces for young people to engage, learn, and take action. Here are some of their key activities.

► EDYN Slovakia

EDYN Slovakia has been actively organizing local discussions to engage young people and the wider community in conversations about current social and political issues. So far, they have hosted two events in Bratislava. The first discussion, in October, explored the boundaries of freedom and the risks of extremism in public spaces, featuring political scientist Grigorij Mesežnikov, journalist Beata Balogová, and activist Šimon Žďárský, with EDYN Slovakia member Aurel Surový serving as moderator. The second discussion, in November, focused on the state of democracy 36 years after November 1989, with insights from sociologist Oľga Gyarfášová, journalist Gabriela Kajtárová, and civic activist Zuzana Hozlárová. EDYN Slovakia plans to continue this series of discussions in the coming year, fostering dialogue on topics that shape public life, inspire civic engagement, and combat polarization across Slovak society.



► EDYN Romania

Led by members Sabin Prunau and Patricia Nae, EDYN Romania launched *Hike Talks*, a unique initiative inspired by the spirit of European walking talks. Born from the need for honest dialogue in challenging times, Hike Talks brings together leaders and citizens to walk side by side, rebuilding trust step by step, word by word. In a complex period for Romanian democracy and its quickly evolving political landscape, this platform serves as a reminder that democracy thrives through active participation, and that European values must be lived, not just declared.



► EDYN Ukraine

EDYN Ukraine officially opened its new office in Kyiv on June 15th, marking a significant milestone for youth leadership in the country. The opening gathered a community of inspiring young changemakers and established a dynamic space for collaboration, resilience, and hope in the face of ongoing challenges.



The chapter also organized a *Grant Workshop: Practice, Ideas & First Steps to Funding* at the Ukrainian-Danish Youth House in Kyiv, bringing together 20 young changemakers for an intensive, hands-on learning experience on how to approach the grant-writing process. They got to simulate real grant applications, analyze case studies, and received personalized speed consultations which helped them refine their ideas and prepare to launch impactful community initiatives.

► EDYN Moldova

EDYN Moldova hosted *Dignityland*, an immersive simulation in which participants stepped into the role of leaders in an imaginary country, giving them the opportunity to make decisions, design Moldova's

future, and experience the responsibilities of governance. Over the course of the event, 16 young changemakers developed a five-year vision, addressed key social challenges, and created practical policy solutions. The experience highlighted the importance of **social rights** as a cornerstone of a fair society, demonstrated how teamwork can turn ideas into meaningful change, and reinforced the belief that young people have the power to influence and inspire their communities.

► EDYN North Macedonia

EDYN North Macedonia launched the podcast series *“Youthocracy – Let’s Talk Democracy,”* a platform designed to open meaningful conversations on issues that matter to young people while enriching political discourse and encouraging informed participation. Through insightful discussions with EDYN members, partners, and inspiring community leaders, the series highlights expertise, lived experience, and solutions that can drive positive social change. Four episodes were released, featuring EDYN members Arta Cerimi (Go Green youth association, eco activist), Dr. Bojan Trajkovski (Association of Young Physicians, general practitioner), Blendi Hodai (civic activist and Director of the Forum for Education Change), and Luka Krzaloski (first Secretary General of EDYN).

► Serbia and Georgia statements

In 2025, EDYN issued strong youth-led statements on democratic backsliding in Serbia and Georgia. In Serbia, through reflections written by Serbian EDYN LC member, Aleksandar Mijailović, EDYN highlighted how the aftermath of the collapse of the Novi Sad railway station exposed deep systemic corruption, sparking months of peaceful youth-led protests demanding truth, democracy, and human rights despite intimidation and arrests. EDYN Georgia, led by EDYN President Giorgi Agirbaia, condemned the escalating authoritarianism, detention of over 67 political prisoners, and violent repression of peaceful protesters in the country, urging urgent international action to release detainees, sanction repressive officials, and support youth, civil society, and free elections.

Mentorship program

EDYN relaunched its *Mentorship Program* with Peter Cari, former member of the EDYN Board of Trustees, founding partner of Prism Communications, and a leading U.S. campaign strategist with over 30 years of experience and more than a thousand campaigns behind him.

Five outstanding EDYN members – Donika Selitaj (Kosovo), Radka Wagerova (Slovakia), Shefkije Alasani (North Macedonia), Szmo Kacprzak (Poland), and Patricia Nae (Romania) – were selected to participate. Throughout the program, they worked with Peter Cari on campaign strategy, communication, leadership, and voter outreach, gaining practical knowledge and guidance to strengthen their political engagement and prepare for upcoming elections.



3. COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

CAMPAIGNS

3.1. Communications platform on WhatsApp

In 2025, EDYN launched a WhatsApp Community as a central hub to better connect members and support cross-border collaboration across the network. The platform enables quick sharing of announcements, opportunities, resources, and project updates, while also streamlining communication between EDYN HQ and members. With nearly 200 members who have already joined the Community, this new channel provides a dynamic and practical space for exchanging ideas, staying informed, and strengthening cooperation across chapters.



3.2. EDYN Town Halls

In 2025, the EDYN Leadership Council (LC) organised two virtual Town Halls as a new platform for direct engagement with members and ambassadors. Held in February and June, respectively, they brought together EDYN LC leadership, former Ambassadors, and members to share updates, reflect on challenges, and plan for the future of the network. These sessions provided an opportunity to discuss key topics such as EDYN Charter updates, maximizing collaboration across the network, and addressing the needs of local country chapters.

3.3. Communication Campaigns

► #KeepDemocracyAlive campaign

In 2025, EDYN joined the Global Democracy Coalition's #KeepDemocracyAlive campaign, an initiative that encourages young people to stand up for democratic values amid a changing funding landscape for pro-democracy civil society. As part of the campaign, EDYN shared seven videos featuring EDYN members, giving them a platform to share why democracy matters today and why youth participation is so important. Through this project, EDYN helped amplify young voices and contribute to a wider, international effort to inspire civic engagement and strengthen democracy.

► "What Are You Carrying?" awareness-raising campaign

In May, in honor of Mental Health Awareness month, EDYN HQ cooperated with the EDYN Slovakia chapter to launch the “*What Are You Carrying?*” awareness-raising campaign. The aim was to address the stigma around mental health, share practical tips on mental health from psychology experts, encourage early recognition of symptoms and knowing when to seek help, and encourage young people to discuss their emotional burdens.

The campaign, primarily on Instagram, featured three EDYN members – Jakub Suster, Radka Wagerova, and Nicholas Mauer – in short-form “POV” videos symbolizing struggles like anxiety, burnout, and family pressure, alongside expert-backed posts offering practical mental health tips. Reaching nearly 290,000 accounts and with over 430,000 views, the campaign fostered empathy, reflection, and dialogue, successfully making invisible burdens visible and inspiring young Slovaks to seek support and connect with one another.



► EDYN Features

EDYN Features continued to serve as a platform for member-driven reflection and dialogue throughout 2025, with a total of nine articles published during the year. These short articles allowed EDYN members to share their perspectives on key issues such as youth engagement, tokenism, disability rights, disinformation, and democracy. By amplifying diverse viewpoints and personal insights, EDYN Features aimed to spark meaningful conversations and encourage deeper collective thinking about current global developments.

► Giving Tuesday

In 2025, EDYN marked *Giving Tuesday* - the global day of giving and generosity - by celebrating the accomplishments of our members and their contributions to positive change across Europe. The campaign featured Giorgi Agirbaia (Georgia), Patricia Nae (Romania), Shefkije Alasani (North Macedonia), Bohdana Duma (Ukraine), and Lukas Langer (Czechia), showcasing how EDYN engages youth and the tangible impact of their work. Through their stories and reflections, the campaign highlighted the power of youth leadership, civic participation, and the value of supporting young changemakers across the network.

EDYN



MEET SHEFKIJE

CHIEF OF STAFF AT THE MAYOR'S OFFICE | JOURNALIST | YOUTH ADVOCATE |

She shapes and strengthens her community through communication and civic engagement ▶

EDYN



MEET PATRICIA

CIVIC LEADER | POLITICAL RESEARCHER | COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT |

She is empowering youth to strengthen democracy and drive change

4. PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDRAISING

Despite a challenging fundraising environment for civil society in 2025 – particularly following the withdrawal of major donors from the region – EDYN is proud of this year’s fundraising achievements and deeply grateful to its donors and partners for their continued trust and support.

Throughout 2025, EDYN submitted over 20 **grant proposals**, both independently and in collaboration with organisations with complementary expertise, to a wide range of donors aligned with our commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and youth empowerment. These efforts enabled EDYN not only to consolidate relationships with long-standing partners but also to establish new strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations, youth networks, think tanks, research institutes, and institutions across Europe and beyond.

4.1. Donors

European Commission



In 2025, EDYN was awarded funding under the European Commission’s Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme for the upcoming *COMPASS – Competitiveness Policy for Accelerating Sustainable Solutions* project. Implemented as part of a civil society consortium led by *Stand For Europe*, this two-year initiative (2026–2027) will empower young leaders to engage meaningfully in shaping the EU’s economic and political future.

Through inclusive, high-level platforms, *COMPASS* will bring together youth, policymakers, experts, and industry leaders to co-create policy solutions that strengthen Europe’s competitiveness and long-term sustainability, ensuring that youth perspectives are mainstreamed into forthcoming EU competitiveness policy debates.

This project represents another exciting step in EDYN’s mission to enhance youth participation in civic spaces, advocacy, and policymaking. By engaging directly in EU economic and policy discussions, EDYN members will not only expand their understanding of Europe’s strategic priorities but also play an active role in designing solutions for a more resilient and competitive Europe. We are proud to join our partners in the *COMPASS* consortium and look forward to ensuring that youth voices remain central to Europe’s competitiveness and innovation agenda.

In parallel, EDYN administered two European Commission grants secured in previous years. Under the Horizon Europe framework, EDYN launched the *YouthDecide2040* project, which aims to elevate youth visions for the future of democracy in Europe by 2040. Additionally, through an Erasmus+ grant that began in 2024, EDYN continued its involvement in the *Climbing the Ladder* project, focused on strengthening youth participation by fostering peer learning among youth workers and identifying effective models of youth engagement at local, regional, and national levels.

Global Democracy Coalition

The Global Democracy Coalition, led by International IDEA, awarded EDYN an Emergency Fund in response to the withdrawal of USAID support from the region. As a Coalition partner, EDYN led the European efforts of the *Keep Democracy Alive* advocacy campaign, amplifying youth voices from EDYN membership and highlighting the continued need for democratic support in contexts affected by the withdrawal of major donors.



UK Embassy in Bratislava



A long-standing donor and partner of EDYN, the UK Embassy in Bratislava supported the *"What Are You Carrying?"* Awareness raising campaign, which shed light on the stigma around youth mental health challenges and the often unseen emotional and societal burdens carried by young people.

Open Society Foundations - Western Balkans

EDYN was awarded funding from the Open Society Foundations - Western Balkans division for the project *"A Future Within Reach: From Disenchantment to Dialogue on EU Integration"*.



The initiative will equip EDYN members in Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia with the skills, networks, and platforms to strengthen their participation in public life and influence national and EU-level decision-making on enlargement. After deepening their knowledge of how to run effective advocacy campaigns during the capacity-building trainings, participants will lead their own advocacy campaigns on the youth's role in enlargement negotiations. They will engage with institutions and policymakers responsible for EU-related reforms and they will reach the public through an online awareness campaign, which will feature content tailored to local nuances and in local languages.

4.2. Partners

In 2025, EDYN forged 40+ new partnerships while deepening relations with existing ones. The team engaged a wide and diverse ecosystem of partners, including international organisations, NGOs, youth networks, research institutes, think tanks, universities, civil society organisations, public institutions, and diplomatic missions.

These partnerships strengthen EDYN's programming, expand our geographic reach, and reinforce our role in Europe as a trusted convener of youth leaders across borders and ideological differences.

- ▶ American Council of Young Political Leaders (USA);
- ▶ APCO (worldwide);
- ▶ Atlantic Council (USA);
- ▶ Center for International Private Enterprise (USA and Slovakia);
- ▶ Club de Madrid (Spain);
- ▶ Consortium partners of the "*TRUSTBUILDERS: Building Responsible Influence and Critical Minds Online*" grant proposal: Romanian National University for Political Studies and Public (Romania), Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre (Romania), Funky Citizens NGO (Romania), Cyber Dacians (Romania), OSavul (Belgium) Partner, Bulgaria National Training Center (Bulgaria), Karlova University (Czech Republic), Prague Security Studies Institute (Czech Republic), RiskSight OÜ (Estonia), Forum on Information and Democracy (France), University of Western Macedonia (Greece), Political Capital (Hungary), Jagiellonian University (Poland);
- ▶ Consortium partners of the "*REMEMBER-CEE*" grant proposal: University of Bucharest (Romania), Viešoji įstaiga Reformum (Lithuania), Centre for Legal Resources (Romania), Ivo Pilar Institute (Croatia), Hatter Society (Hungary);
- ▶ Consortium partners of the "*Standing Up to Authoritarianism in the Digital and Global Age*" grant proposal: Grupo InMark (Spain), Political Watch (Spain), University of Coimbra (Portugal), Özyeğin University (Turkey), Cultures Interactive (Germany), Ashoka (Belgium), the European Center for Populism Studies (Belgium), Inclusive Europe (Belgium), Wellbeing Economy Alliance (UK), Stimuli For Social Change (Greece), Radical Data (Netherlands), Democracy Reporting International (Germany), MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont (Hungary);
- ▶ Consortium partners of the "*FAIRWAY*" grant proposal: Jagiellonian University (Poland), Vienna Centre for Societal Security (Austria), Tree Agency (Estonia), AGE Platform Europe (Belgium), Università degli Studi di Torino (Italy), University of Helsinki (Finland), University of Galway (Ireland), Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences (Austria), Goethe University Frankfurt (Germany);
- ▶ Consortium partners of the "*INTERREG - Danube AI Bridges*" grant proposal: Sofia Municipality District of Ilinden (Bulgaria), Green Power Tech EOOD (Bulgaria), NGO Prima (Montenegro);
- ▶ Consortium partners of the upcoming Erasmus+ "*Our Europe to Come – Building a Stronger, Fairer, Larger Europe through Youth Participation*" grant proposal: Institut Français (France), European Youth Press (Germany), Parma European Youth Capital (Italy), European Students' Union (Belgium), and the International Youth Think Tank (Sweden);
- ▶ CulturePulse (USA and Slovakia);
- ▶ DemoTrust (Greece);
- ▶ DEKK Institute (Slovakia);
- ▶ DT Institute (USA);
- ▶ European Commission Erasmus+ "*Climbing the Ladder*" consortium partners: DYPALL Network (Portugal), Europiamo (Italy), Nordland Fylkeskommune (Norway), YEPP Europe (Germany), the Assembly of the European Regions (Belgium) and SQ Learn (Greece);
- ▶ European Commission HORIZON2040 "*YouthDecide 2040*"

consortium partners: Austrian Institute of Technology (Austria), Missions Publiques (Belgium and France), Strategic Design Scenarios (Belgium), WeDo (Spain), Make.org (Belgium and France), Fraunhofer ISI (Germany), the European University Institute (Italy), European Partnership for Democracy (Belgium), European Youth Forum (Belgium) and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Poland);

- ▶ European Commission CERV
"COMPASS" consortium partners: Stand For Europe (Belgium), A Seat At The Table (Belgium), Mano Europa (Lithuania), The European Academy Berlin (Germany), the Polish Robert Schuman Foundation (Poland), Group of the European Youth for Change (Romania), PILCROW (Spain), the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization (Cyprus), and FELCOS Umbria (Italy)
- ▶ EU NeighborsEast Young European Ambassadors (Eastern Europe);
- ▶ Forum 2000 (Czech Republic);
- ▶ German Marshall Fund (worldwide);
- ▶ Giosef Torino (Italy);
- ▶ Global Democracy Coalition (worldwide);
- ▶ GLOBSEC (Europe);
- ▶ Google Europe (Belgium);
- ▶ International Republican Institute (USA);
- ▶ International IDEA (Sweden and worldwide);
- ▶ IREX (USA)
- ▶ Irish Centre for Social Gerontology;
- ▶ Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (Belgium);

- ▶ National Democratic Institute (USA);
- ▶ NATO (worldwide);
- ▶ New Direction foundation (Belgium);
- ▶ Participation Factory (Czech Republic);
- ▶ PeopleForward (Cyprus);
- ▶ Stowarzyszenie Krakowskich Inicjatyw Lokalnych Liderów (Poland);
- ▶ Strategic Analysis think tank (Slovakia);
- ▶ Students for Liberty (worldwide);
- ▶ Summit for Democracy's *Youth Democracy Cohort* partners: European Partnership for Democracy, AfricTivistes, International IDEA, the European Commission's DG INTPA, Costa Rica's Ministry of Culture and Youth and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, Nepal's Ministry of Youth and Sports, National Youth Council, the National Planning Commission and the National Commission for Civic Education;
- ▶ Swiss Embassy in Bratislava (Slovakia);
- ▶ Turbe Giovanili (Italy);
- ▶ UK Embassy in Bratislava (Slovakia);
- ▶ US Embassy in Bratislava (Slovakia);
- ▶ UMIND (Ukraine);
- ▶ Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies (Belgium);
- ▶ Youth Democracy Network (Poland and worldwide).

5. INTERNAL PROCESSES AND GOVERNANCE UPDATES

5.1. EDYN Charter updates

Key Governance Updates to the EDYN Charter

In 2025, the EDYN Charter was updated with a focus on simplification, clarity, and long-term stability of the network. These changes were introduced to better reflect the evolving profile of EDYN's membership and to ensure more sustainable leadership structures. The key updates included:

- ▶ Adjusting the membership age limit by increasing the maximum age from 32 to 35, allowing experienced members to remain active in the network for longer and strengthening continuity and mentorship.
- ▶ Eliminating the Ambassador structure in order to simplify EDYN's governance and reduce parallel leadership roles, making responsibilities clearer and decision-making more straightforward.
- ▶ Extending the term of the President and Leadership Council from one year to two years, providing greater stability, continuity, and the ability to plan and implement initiatives over a longer time horizon.
- ▶ Revising the presidential election process to introduce a new voting model that ensures broader member participation while balancing representation across countries.

Together, these changes aim to make EDYN's governance more transparent, efficient, and fit for the network's next phase of development.

5.2. 2026 EDYN Presidential and Leadership Council Elections

The annual Leadership Council and Presidential Elections took place in November and December 2025. All EDYN members were able to vote in the presidential election by selecting one of four candidates: Yuliia Dziuba (Ukraine), Hristijan Ilievski (North Macedonia), Bojan Lazarevski (North Macedonia), and Aleksandar Mijailovic (Serbia).

Members' individual votes were first counted at the country level: in each participating country, the candidate who received the most votes earned that country's single vote. Each participating country therefore had one vote in the final count. **Yuliia Dziuba** received the highest number of country votes – 10 in total – and was elected EDYN President for the 2026-2027 mandate.

The elected 17-member 2026 Leadership Council members are the following:

- ▶ Yuliia Dziuba (EDYN President, Ukraine)
- ▶ Patricia Nae (Vice President, Romania)
- ▶ Bojan Lazarevski (Vice-President, North Macedonia)
- ▶ Anja Kolimbatovic (Secretary General, Croatia)
- ▶ Marsela Delija (LC Member, Albania)
- ▶ Amila Husić (LC Member, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- ▶ Atanas Mihnev (LC Member, Bulgaria)
- ▶ Jan Gondek (LC Member, Czech Republic)
- ▶ Marie Kikvadze (LC Member, Georgia)
- ▶ Tamas Felfoldi (LC Member, Hungary)
- ▶ Blerton Vehapi (LC Member, Kosovo)
- ▶ Petru Cretu (LC Member, Moldova)
- ▶ Kristina Scepanovic (LC Member, Montenegro)
- ▶ Antonina Majchrzak (LC Member, Poland)
- ▶ Aleksandar Mijailovic (LC Member, Serbia)
- ▶ Radka Wagingerova (LC Member, Slovakia)
- ▶ Oleksandr Tuz (LC Member, Ukraine)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

As we close 2025, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to EDYN's work during a year marked by democratic backsliding, political uncertainty, and growing pressure on the civic space across our region. In this context, EDYN's role as a network of young democratic leaders is not only relevant: it is increasingly necessary.

To our members, donors, and partners: thank you for standing with EDYN in a year when democratic values were increasingly challenged. Our members' engagement, whether through local action, international projects, or quiet leadership in shrinking civic spaces kept democratic principles visible and alive, often under conditions of polarization and political pressure. At the same time, the continued trust and support of our donors and partners enabled EDYN to stabilise its finances, strengthen governance, and build the organisational resilience needed for the years ahead. These foundations are essential, but they are only a starting point as we now look toward growing the network and deepening its impact together.

Looking ahead to 2026, EDYN will shift from consolidation to growth. We aim to open the network to new members, revitalise and build strong country chapters, and increase our collective capacity to act at national, regional, and European levels. In the face of democratic backsliding, standing on the sidelines is not an option. We need active members who are ready to lead locally, and committed supporters who are willing to invest in youth-led democratic action.

Our call to action is clear:

If you are a member, step forward: organise, engage, and help grow EDYN in your country. If you are a donor or partner, please continue to invest in young leaders who are defending democratic values where they are most under threat.

Democracy will not sustain itself. It requires courage, resources, and collective action. EDYN is ready to do its part—together with you.

With gratitude and determination,

Lubica Kovacova
and EDYN HQ Team

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