



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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# EDYN

European Democracy Youth Network

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## Vision

We are concerned citizens. We live in European countries with totalitarian histories. We are civic activists, political leaders and journalists, and we share the commitment and willpower to defend the freedoms our parents fought for. We refrain from the policies of hate and division to unite our societies against authoritarian revisionism.

## Mission

EDYN supports young pro-democracy activists, politicians, and journalists from across the political and ideological spectrum, ages 18 to 32, in 23 countries with totalitarian histories. EDYN supports those who refrain from the policies of hate and divisiveness in order to unite their societies against authoritarian threats and extremists.

## EDYN 2023 IN NUMBERS

### MEMBERS:

**MORE THAN**

**700**

**MEMBERS**

**EDYN grew by  
199 members in 2023**

**59**

**PARTICIPATED**

**in EDYN trainings and events**

**73**

**ELECTED  
AMBASSADORS**

### SOCIAL MEDIA:

**1 207 000**

**ACCOUNTS REACHED**

**MORE THAN**

**23.000**

**FOLLOWERS**

**across our platforms**

**16**

**COUNTRY CHAPTERS  
with own social media presence**

### FUNDRAISING:

**FACILITATED**

**38**

**PROJECTS AND  
OPPORTUNITIES**

**38**

**INTERNATIONAL  
PARTNERSHIPS**

# 1. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

## 1.1. EDYN HQ

Situated in Bratislava, Slovakia, EDYN HQ serves as the central administrative, communications, and fundraising hub for the network. Its broad scope includes managing internal processes like elections for EDYN President, Leadership Council (LC), and Ambassadors, selecting representatives for international opportunities, recruiting members, and overseeing the Membership Engagement Fund. Additionally, EDYN HQ coordinates international events for members and handles network-wide external communications, administering digital platforms and strategic partnerships with organizations in the USA and Europe. Currently, EDYN HQ comprises six employees.

## 1.2. Board of Trustees

EDYN is an independent non-profit organization registered in Slovakia. It is governed by a [Board of Trustees](#) which consisted in 2023 of 3 outstanding members: Jonas Rolett, Tamala Longaberger, and Kathryn Walt Hall. Jonas Rolett currently serves as the Chairman of the Board. Given the organization's impressive growth, it was determined that EDYN will expand the Board by at least two members in early 2024.

## 1.3. NDI, IRI and USAID

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) were instrumental in founding and fostering the growth of the EDYN network, as well as in the institutional development of EDYN HQ. As recipients of the USAID grant, these Institutes secured essential funding for the network. However, there was a shift in 2023 when the IRI discontinued direct financial support to the network but retained its partnership. On the other hand, the NDI continues to collaborate with EDYN HQ, offering financial support, guidance, expertise, and valuable experience.



## 1.4. EDYN Leadership Council

[The Leadership Council](#) serves as the representative and decision-making body of the network and in 2023 was represented by 13 EDYN Members: Daryna Onyshko, EDYN President, Poland/Ukraine; Salome Mgeladze, EDYN Vice-President, Georgia; Enrik Keco, EDYN Vice-President, Albania; Tudor Arnaut, Secretary General, Moldova; Laura Danilas, Estonia; Saska Radujkov, Serbia; Viktoriya Andrukovich/Vladislav Sazonov, Belarus; Nikola Kandic, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Gjorgji Tasev, North

Macedonia; Egzon Osmanaj, Kosovo, Loretta Pinke, Slovakia, Denys Ganzha/Lyudmila Karpova, Ukraine and Jana Soukupova, Czech Republic.

The Leadership Council assumes a crucial role in representing the organization on a global scale. Comprising committed individuals, the LC is tasked with articulating the goals and mission of EDYN to an international audience at various international forums. Their efforts promote the values of depolarization, no hate, and democracy while fostering collaborations with like-minded organizations. Throughout 2023, the LC effectively heightened awareness of EDYN's initiatives and garnered support from a diverse array of individuals and organizations. Attached to this document is the annual report from EDYN's Leadership Council.



## 2. EDYN's GROWTH

### 2.1. Recruitment of new members

The number of EDYN members increased significantly in 2023. By the end of 2023, the network had grown from 553 members to 722 members. EDYN HQ organized two main international member recruitment rounds, one in the spring and one in the fall of 2023, while three country chapters held individual off-cycle recruitments in their respective countries. EDYN worked diligently to streamline the recruitment process by offering unified online applications for prospective members and set a clear timeline for the recruitment process. EDYN prioritized open information about the recruiting process by promoting the call online, collecting and distributing applications to the country chapters for review, and finally informing and welcoming new members to the network. EDYN is satisfied with its membership expansion progress and anticipates a new increase in membership across its 23 countries in 2024.

In 2023, as more members reached the age of 33, the number of members who transitioned into Alumni status increased, and EDYN currently has 48 Alumni.

<b>Country</b>	<b>#of applications</b>	<b># of accepted members</b>	<b># of members at the end of 2023</b>
Albania	52	26	75
Armenia	4	4	16
Belarus	0	0	16
BiH	9	8	35
Bulgaria	4	4	4
Croatia	24	8	12
Czech Republic	8	6	22
Estonia	0	0	7
Georgia	30	13	60
Hungary	3	3	20
Kosovo	34	16	53
Latvia	0	0	4
Lithuania	4	1	4
Moldova	6	4	62
Montenegro	22	22	29
North Macedonia	18	14	64
Poland	14	7	27
Romania	7	7	19
Serbia	6	2	18
Slovakia	5	3	25
Slovenia	4	3	8
Ukraine	68	42	121
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>722</b>

### **3. INTERNAL PROCESSES AND GOVERNANCE**

### **3.1. Institutional changes from the previous year**

The 2023 Leadership Council was normally in regular monthly working sessions virtually and convened in-person in Bratislava, Slovakia in March 2023. One of the main objectives of the retreat was to reflect and deliberate on the future of the network and discuss the possible updates to the [EDYN Charter](#). The enhancements to the EDYN Charter have resulted from decisions made by the LC and implemented by the EDYN HQ. The LC 2023 also initiated and prepared other internal improvements such as the Code of Conduct, Annual Operational Plan, and others.

#### **▶ EDYN Charter changes**

The EDYN Charter underwent revisions by the Leadership Council, introducing member statuses, updating committees, and unified election methods for non-USAID presence countries. International member recruitment calls will be held only annually in the fall, with Country Chapters still able to open individual off-cycle recruitment calls as needed. The selection process for international opportunities was formalized, with a task force handling international selection opportunities. Additionally, the charter was updated to focus on engaging alumni and promoting mentorship for new members, ensuring continued engagement with the network.

#### **▶ EDYN Code of Conduct**

The EDYN Code of Conduct, which consists of a set of standards and guidelines for members, was developed and implemented prior to the Ambassador Elections. The document is accessible [here](#).

#### **▶ Annual Operational Plan**

The 2023 Leadership Council created an Annual Operational Plan for the first time, defining thematic goals and activities for the term. However, some of the planned activities were not carried out because of a variety of adjustments and budgetary constraints. This activity will be passed to the incoming LC to continue this practice.

#### **▶ Country Chapter Engagement**

The LC created "Recommendations and Practices for Country Chapter Engagement" in order to improve local engagement. This manual helps with fundraising, improving internal communication, welcoming new members, and exchanging best practices.

#### **▶ Member Engagement During Elections**

Throughout the Ambassador Elections, the LC kept members engaged by conducting Q&A sessions regarding the elections and a welcoming call for incoming ambassadors. Furthermore, throughout the LC election period, discussions for non-USAID and President seats were held in partnership with the Elections Committee. The new LC is urged to continue strengthening member connections and creating greater opportunities for dialogue.

#### **▶ EDYN Pool of Trainers**

In 2023, EDYN Pool of Trainers was founded by participants who completed an extensive Training of Trainers program intending to provide its wide membership with high-level trainings. With their political and activism backgrounds, these trainers will increase awareness and improve the network's performance through internal and external training sessions.

### ► **EDYN Alumni**

The network acknowledges its Alumni's wealth of expertise and encourages their continued collaboration with EDYN. While a complete Alumni program is not currently viable, the network wishes to establish lifetime relationships with its Alumni. Alumni will be invited to conferences, seminars, workshops, and other related events whenever feasible.

## **3.2. Ambassadors' elections**

EDYN Ambassador elections were conducted in May and June of 2023. The election of EDYN Ambassadors is an important step in selecting dedicated and motivated individuals who will represent the network and actively contribute to its mission in the country chapters. Each Country Chapter could elect a specific number of Ambassadors based on the number of members in the Chapter, but no more than seven Ambassadors. All Country Chapter EDYN members who have been members for more than six months had the right to vote for their Ambassador candidates from their respective Chapters, through anonymous electronic voting. The process, timeline, rules, and procedures were developed by representatives of the Leadership Council and the Election Committee, which are incorporated in both the EDYN Charter and EDYN Elections Committee Guidelines.

The number of Ambassadors assigned to each Country Chapter is decided by the number of members in that Country Chapter. There is one Ambassador for every seven members. The maximum number of Ambassadors per chapter is, however, limited to seven for Country Chapters with more than 49 members.

The criteria for being an Ambassador are simple, and any member who has been an EDYN member for more than 6 months and is under the age of 33 can run to be elected. Ambassadors must be involved in their community's political and social life, have a track record of political and civic leadership, and embrace EDYN's values and principles.

A total of 73 Ambassadors were chosen during the Ambassador elections that took place in 20 different countries. The other three countries (Bulgaria, Latvia, and Lithuania) don't have Ambassadors yet due to the number of members being lower than 7.

## **3.3. Presidential and Leadership Council Elections**

The 2024 Leadership Council consists of 15 members, with each EDYN USAID-presence Country Chapter being eligible to have one representative, and all non-USAID Country Chapters together having three representatives. The Leadership Council Elections together with the Elections of the EDYN President for 2024 took place at the beginning of December 2023. The process includes current EDYN Ambassadors expressing interest in running for LC seats or nominating fellow Ambassadors for the position of the Presidency of EDYN. There were two candidates for the President: Giorgi Agirbaia from EDYN Georgia

and Mario Keputa from EDYN Albania. Following a tie in the first round of voting, with both candidates receiving 28 votes, Mario Keputa won the second round of the EDYN Presidential Elections with 36 votes, while Giorgi Agirbaia received 26 votes. The turnout in the Presidential elections was 82%, respectively 84% in the second round.

The Leadership Council members for 2024 are:

- ▶ Mario Keputa (Albania), EDYN President
- ▶ Marija Bandulova Taseva (North Macedonia), Vice-President
- ▶ Vladislav Sazonov (Belarus), Vice-President
- ▶ Cristian Mariuta (Moldova), Secretary-General
- ▶ Albert Hayrapetyan (Armenia), LC member
- ▶ Nikola Kandic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), LC member
- ▶ Giorgi Agirbaia (Georgia), LC member
- ▶ Blerta Berisha (Kosovo), LC member
- ▶ Aleksandar Mijailovic (Serbia), LC member
- ▶ Rustam Savranskyi (Ukraine), LC member
- ▶ Hubert Tadych (Poland), LC member
- ▶ Marija Kovac (Croatia), LC member
- ▶ Andra Balan Costache (Romania), LC member
- ▶ Ana Gjidiqaj (Albania), LC member

<b>NUMBER OF EDYN AMBASSADORS 2023 BY COUNTRY CHAPTER</b>	
Albania	7
Armenia	1
Belarus	2
BiH	5
Croatia	1
Czech Republic	2
Estonia	1
Georgia	7
Hungary	3
Kosovo	6
Moldova	7
Montenegro	4
North Macedonia	7
Poland	3
Romania	2
Serbia	2
Slovakia	2
Slovenia	1
Ukraine	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>

## 4. INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



## 4.1. International opportunities

In 2023, EDYN organized and coordinated a series of capacity-building, educational, and networking international opportunities. These allow our members to access the knowledge, contacts, and skills necessary to flourish in their country's political and civic spheres. Moreover, as a byproduct of participation in these activities, EDYN also represents a platform for the exchange of good practices, experiences, and knowledge amongst our members, which further enhances regional and international network-wide cooperation.

These included:

- ▶ 13-17th February 2023 (14 members, 14 countries, no selection): **Advocacy trip to Strasbourg, France** for the 2022 Leadership Council organized by KAS (Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung). The LC members met with a number of MEPs who were at the European Parliament in Strasbourg to attend a plenary session, with representatives of the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre, and with a KAS Researcher who provided a day-long seminar session on the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans countries' path to integration into the EU;



- ▶ 26-29th March 2023 (14 members, 14 countries, no selection): **Leadership Council retreat in Bratislava, Slovakia**. Organized by EDYN HQ, the 2023 Leadership Council members spent three fruitful days with EDYN HQ, IRI, and NDI staff to set priorities for the year ahead, align on the mission for this year's LC, finalize and vote on the new EDYN Charter, as well as network and get to know each other better;



- ▶ 26th-31st March 2023 (2 members, 2 countries, 41 applications): Rising Public Leaders Programme at the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government. Organized by Oxford University, the program's main purpose is to equip the next generation of public leaders which, in EDYN's case, come from countries with a totalitarian heritage who are attempting in their day-to-day life to uphold the values of democracy, fight against revisionist narratives, and combat rising nationalism and polarization. The Rising Public Leaders Programme aims to strengthen the skills that upcoming leaders need to build cultures of excellence, effectiveness, and integrity throughout the institutions they lead and across the public sector more widely. Throughout the programme, the two EDYN members who were selected worked on skills and frameworks that are essential today across all branches and departments of government in any country or international institution;



- ▶ 2-8th July 2023 (10 members, 8 countries, 132 applications): Summer School on Post-Conflict Reconciliation and Inter-Faith Dialogue in Cambridge, England and Belfast, Northern Ireland. The trip, organized by EDYN HQ in partnership with the Woolf Institute, the Dekk

Institute, and CulturePulse brought together 10 EDYN members who – through an academic and practical, grassroots-level engagement with peace practitioners – familiarized themselves with the knowledge necessary to address issues arising in the aftermath of conflict, particularly surrounding issues of legacy and the role of inter-community dialogue. The members attended lectures and seminars and participated in case studies and group projects led by world-leading academics on conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and post-war reconstruction. During their time in Northern Ireland, EDYN members attended workshops with peacebuilders, capacity-building seminars with policy experts, a guided study tour of contested spaces in Belfast, Q&A sessions with former combatants and political prisoners, as well as discussion forums with leading diplomats, politicians, and community leaders;



- ▶ 27-29th September 2023 (14 members from 10 countries, 49 applications): Political Campaigning training in Bratislava, Slovakia. 14 EDYN members interested in running for office or managing a political campaign in the near future participated in EDYN's expert-led training. It was conducted in a workshop format which combined lectures and practical sessions ranging on topics such as political campaign organization and management, campaign messaging, digital communication strategies, as well as social media content planning and creation;



- ▶ 1st-3rd December 2023 (7 members from 6 countries, no applications): **Summit on the Western Balkans in Sofia, Bulgaria.** Six EDYN members from the six Western Balkans countries (3 from the civil society sector, 3 from the political sphere) attended the WB Summit organized by the New Direction foundation and the European Parliament party's European Conservatives & Reformists. A seventh EDYN member, EDYN's former Vice President, Enrik Keco, also attended the event as the panel moderator.



## 4.2. Statistics

In 2023, EDYN offered 6 international opportunities to its members in 4 countries. Three of those events were wholly organized by EDYN HQ, and two took place at EDYN HQ in Bratislava. There were 257 applicants to these events, and 59 EDYN members had the opportunity to participate in at least one of these international opportunities. For all of these, the number of applicants far exceeded the number that could participate in the event.

EDYN 2023 INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITY	City, Country	Date	Organized by	# of applicants	# of selected participants	Note
Advocacy trip	Strasbourg, France	13-17 February	KAS	14	14	by invitation
Leadership Council Retreat	Bratislava, Slovakia	26-29 March	EDYN HQ	14	14	by invitation
Rising Public Leaders Programme	Oxford, UK	26-31 March	University of Oxford's Blavatnik	41	2	

			School of Government			
Summer School on Post-Conflict Reconciliation and Inter-Faith Dialogue	Cambridge and Belfast, UK	2-8 July	EDYN HQ and the Woolf Institute	132	10	
Political Campaigning Training	Bratislava, Slovakia	27-29 September	EDYN HQ	49	12	
Western Balkans Summit	Sofia, Bulgaria	1-3 December	EDYN HQ and New Direction foundation	7	7	by invitation
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>257</b>	<b>59</b>	

After each event, an evaluation form was distributed amongst the participants to better understand their experience and to evaluate the quality of the event, including its logistics, organization, content, and speakers. The 2023 Leadership Council also represented EDYN at a series of events, summits, and conferences during 2023. Some of these include:

- ▶ EDYN’s 2023 President, Daryna Onyshko, gave remarks at the Global Democracy Coalition Forum, Brussels; an Address at the Polish Parliament, Warsaw; presented the Youth Participation Handbook at the Summit for Democracy, San Jose; participated in the European Economic and Social Committee’s 577th Plenary, the EESC’s Session on Youth Action Plan implementation, and the EU-EaP Special Civil Society Meeting. She participated in the European Commission’s session at the EU Youth Event, gave a keynote at an NDI Board Meeting in Warsaw and one at the NDI and Hudson Institute event in Washington, D.C;
- ▶ EDYN’s 2023 Vice President, Salome Mgeladze, gave an interview for Forbes Magazine, introduced EDYN to 20+ organizations and diplomatic representatives, and presented the network twice on a popular Georgian TV channel.



- ▶ February 2023: Summit for Democracy event in Brussels. EDYN HQ staff, the EDYN President, and EDYN's Vice President (Salome Mgeladze, EDYN Georgia) attended the event and the President (Daryna Onyshko, EDYN Ukraine/Poland) attended as a panelist;
- ▶ April 2023: LC member from EDYN Serbia, Saška Radujkov, participated in the European Economic and Social Committee's 578th Plenary session;



- ▶ June 2023: The Moldova Youth Forum (hosted by IRI, with over 230 participants) was moderated by EDYN's Secretary General Tudor Arnaut.

## 5. SELECTED ACTIVITIES OF EDYN COUNTRY CHAPTERS IN 2023

### 5.1. Activities of Country Chapters

In 2023, the expansion of EDYN Country Chapters was notable, but they also experienced significant impacts due to changes in the network. This included the loss of direct support from IRI and a reduction in support from the NDI.

The number of applications received in 2023 was 322 applications which exceeded the goals set for the year, even though the fall recruitment call was opened only in a few countries. The biggest Country Chapters remain North Macedonia, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova but in 2023 Albania experienced substantial growth. EDYN's largest achievement regarding Country Chapters remains the continuous development of new Chapters. These include in 2023 mostly Slovenia, Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria. Despite these successes, in 2023, EDYN did not succeed in the further development of the Baltic Country Chapters (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and this will remain a challenge for 2024.

In 2023, the EDYN Country Chapters left a profound mark through the execution of innovative and impactful projects. EDYN diligently ensured that the benefits of these projects effectively reached our members and local communities. Beyond project implementation, network members actively engaged in various conferences and workshops organized by partners and cooperating organizations. Throughout the year, members had valuable opportunities to connect with key stakeholders, including government officials and Ambassadors, fostering both the reinforcement of existing partnerships and the establishment of new ones. Here are a few highlighted projects implemented by EDYN members.

### ► **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a dedicated team focused on boosting women's roles in politics and professions. They started with a successful social media campaign celebrating women's achievements. Then, they organized "Inspiring Talks: Gender and Leadership," where female leaders shared stories and advice, sparking enthusiasm for women in decision-making roles. With two female ambassadors elected internally, they're set on continuing advocacy, pushing for reforms, and creating a supportive space for women to thrive. Their journey highlights how everyone plays a part in achieving gender equality and how they are committed to empowering women and fostering a fairer, more inclusive society.



### ► **GEORGIA**

The "Embassy Spotlight: Building Bridges with Diplomatic Corps" project by EDYN Georgia aimed to strengthen ties between EDYN Georgian Chapter, allied organizations, and Georgia's diplomatic corps. Three meetings hosted around 50 young attendees, 20 of whom were EDYN members. They engaged with the UN outreach coordinator, Austrian and American Ambassadors, discussing EDYN's mission, regional visits, and current challenges. These interactions provided insights into democratic processes, positioning participants as advocates for youth empowerment. Additionally, the meetings fostered future partnerships, offering members connections in the diplomatic and development spheres, enhancing their career prospects. Participants gained valuable knowledge about collaboration

opportunities, international organizations, youth roles in democracy promotion, and Georgia's European integration, elevating their understanding of global issues and EU structures.



► **MOLDOVA**

In the first half of 2023, EDYN Moldova initiated "Workshops in the Regions," offering sessions on Advocacy, Elevator Pitches, and Project Writing in three youth centers. Simultaneously, they launched a call for applications from 21 youth entities in villages and small towns to receive similar training. Their main goal was to make education and skill development accessible across regions, breaking down geographical barriers for equal learning opportunities. These efforts addressed the demand for trainings beyond the capital, while helping trainers enhance their workshop delivery skills.



► **MONTENEGRO**



EDYN Montenegro marked the year with a flagship event that resulted from several months of work by its members culminating with the signing of a Declaration on improving cooperation among the youth of the political parties and movements in the fight against hate speech and polarization. Representatives of 12 political parties and movements signed the Declaration on improving cooperation among the youth wings of the political parties in the fight against hate speech and polarization. The Declaration calls on the signatories to exert their influence on political and social changes through constructive political engagement, dialogue and debate with different points of view between and within political parties, to foster solidarity and provide support to young people committed to democratic principles. This declaration was a strong message to the Montenegrin society and political actors that cooperation and dialogue are the right path to overcoming the challenges their society is facing.



### ► NORTH MACEDONIA

Several activities were carried out in North Macedonia in 2023 as part of the member-driven project "Erase the Hate" to improve young people's ability to detect and respond to hate speech. Around twenty local volunteers and EDYN members took part in an outdoor "guerrilla activity" to erase and repaint hate speech and insulting graffiti in public locations. This type of action drew the attention of the general public and public officials, who recognized and backed young people's efforts to combat hate speech and prevent vandalism. Activists interacted with bystanders who stopped to demonstrate their support and solidarity with young people as vital actors in creating a safe community, while mayors and other leaders issued public statements in favor of such youth initiatives. This endeavor exemplifies one of the numerous innovative ways in which EDYN members contribute to building resilient democratic communities by banding together to combat hate speech, which is one of the Network's core goals.



## ► POLAND

In Poland, IDEATHON 2023 marked the third edition of an inspiring series of social hackathons, providing young individuals with the opportunity and tools to creatively tackle various social problems. In March, our EDYN member from Poland Iga Karasińska successfully organized this edition in Warsaw, in partnership with the Important Issues Foundation. The event saw an impressive turnout with over 150 enthusiastic participants forming 30 teams, all driven by a shared desire for positive change. The main objective of the event was to empower young people to find effective solutions for combating disinformation in their local communities. Following extensive concept ideas, brainstorming and teamwork, three extraordinary teams emerged as winners who received support to implement their creative ideas and well-thought-out projects in three different local communities in Poland.



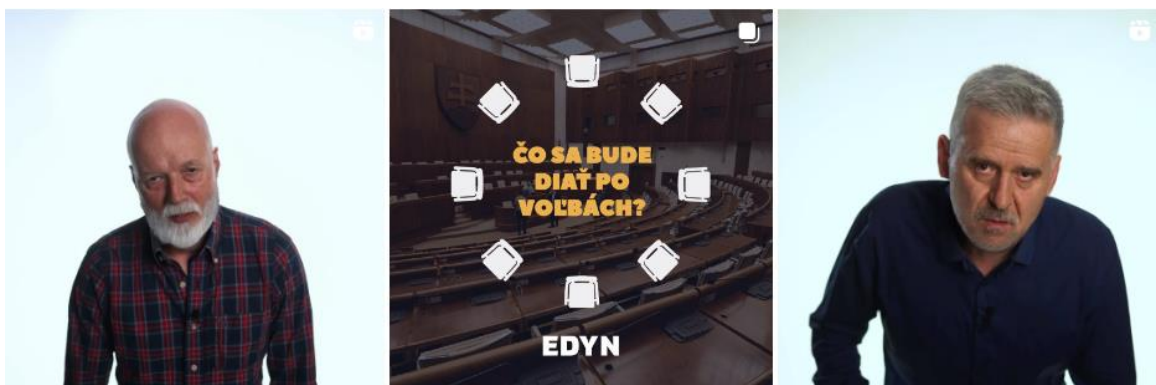
## ► SERBIA

In 2023, The EDYN Serbia Chapter introduced EDYN TALKS, aiming to foster dialogue and combat polarization prevalent in the country's public sphere. The project sought to engage youth from diverse political backgrounds and reduce polarization, which is substantial within the country. Concerning this, they managed to engage young people from various political organizations in the discussions. Another intended outcome of the EDYN TALKS was to formulate recommendations that would enhance the position of youth in Serbia. Drawing from the conversations, perspectives, and suggestions of speakers and guests, EDYN TALKS yielded written suggestions from young people, hoping to find solutions to their issues. Furthermore, through event coordination, time management, public speaking and networking opportunities, participating members gained valuable experience.



## ► SLOVAKIA

EDYN Slovakia's GOTV campaign was dedicated to empowering Slovakia's youth for active participation in elections. The campaign aimed to fill a crucial void left by previous elections that lacked youth-focused mobilization. The campaign comprised a total of 17 posts, incorporating a mix of videos and static content using statistics. This approach resonated widely, accumulating an impressive reach of 855,432 accounts across all platforms, sparking discussions in the comments section. The videos used AI filters to show our members as older versions of themselves in the future. Through these visuals, they shared regrets about times they didn't vote and how those elections impacted their country's path. This approach enhanced the importance of voting by showing the possible outcomes of not exercising this essential right.



## 6. OUTREACH

### 6.1. Statistics

EDYN not only achieved but also surpassed the 2023 KPIs already in Q3, maintaining a reach of 200,000 individual profiles and gaining 1,200 new followers. Across five social media channels, our outreach successfully connected with 224,184 accounts. Including EDYN's Country Chapter profiles, our collective audience expanded to an impressive 1,206,912 individuals.

The organization's primary accounts on five platforms gained nearly 3,000 followers. Additionally, the 15 Country Chapters actively grew their audience on Facebook and Instagram from 7,695 individuals to 13,533. Combining these figures with EDYN's main profiles, the network's total following now stands at 25,656, vastly exceeding our expectations. The data provided in the tables below give a more detailed look at EDYN's social media statistics.

General Reach:	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Audience:	general	with CC
Facebook Page Reach	22313	16299	13 804	13956	Facebook Page Likes	5 293	13 416
Instagram Reach	8972	5 758	6344	9577	Instagram Followers	2 199	7 554
YouTube Views	761	1368	744	534	Twitter Followers	1401	1444
LinkedIn Impressions	20470	17141	19 475	11272	TikTok Followers	1242	1242
Twitter Impressions	24 899	9925	11 600	8691	YouTube Subscribers	131	143
LinkedIn Followers					LinkedIn Followers	1857	1857
<b>Summarized</b>	<b>77415</b>	<b>50 491</b>	<b>52248</b>	<b>44030</b>	<b>Summarized</b>	<b>12 123</b>	<b>25 656</b>

### 6.2. Advocacy and Communication campaigns

#### ► #DEMOCRACYWEEK

In celebration of the International Day of Democracy, EDYN orchestrated a social media campaign #DemocracyWeek featuring nine of our members. For a week, through a series of nine posts across five platforms, we delved into their personal perspectives and experiences on practicing democracy in real life. Each post included a quote and a photo showcasing our members' engagement in diverse democratic actions—ranging from active protests to legal advocacy and the creation of Youth Councils aimed at educating and engaging young minds in politics.



### ► The International Youth Day campaign

EDYN's social media campaign for International Youth Day was aimed at spotlighting the voices and concerns of young individuals. Through six videos featuring our members, we navigated the core questions: why empowering youth is crucial and what changes they envision for the world. The campaign strategically focused on the issues affecting today's youth, shining a light on their perspectives and aspirations. Our overarching goal was to cultivate awareness about these challenges while advocating for increased inclusion of young minds in political decision-making processes.



## 7. PARTNERSHIPS IN 2023

### 7.1. PARTNERSHIPS

In 2023, EDYN established new partnerships and deepened existing ones with a number of organizations, NGOs, think tanks, and institutions across Europe, the UK, and the US. They are 38 in total and include:

- DYPALL, Europiamo, Assembly of European Regions, SQLearn, YEPP Europe, and Nordland Fylkeskommun in our joint cooperation for a European Commission-funded Erasmus+ grant (which we successfully received);
- The Austrian Institute of Technology, Strategic Design Scenarios, WeDo Project Intelligence Made Easy, Missions Publiques, Fraunhofer Institute of Systems and Innovation research, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, European University Institute, European Youth Forum, and Make.org in our joint application to a European Commission-funded Horizon 2040 grant, due in February 2024;
- The Woolf Institute, CulturePulse, and the Dekk Institute in our joint design, planning, and implementation of the Summer School on Post-Conflict Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue in Cambridge, England and Belfast, Northern Ireland;

- ▶ University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government for two EDYN members' participation in their Rising Public Leaders Programme;
- ▶ Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung organized an advocacy and education trip for the 2022 Leadership Council to Strasbourg ;
- ▶ Through our partners at the European Conservatives&Reformists and New Direction foundation, our members participated as panelists in their annual Summit on the Western Balkans held in Sofia, Bulgaria;
- ▶ We continued our work as co-leaders of the Summit for Democracy's Youth Democracy Cohort with DG INTPA (European Commission), the European Partnership for Democracy, and International IDEA, with whom we also launched the Youth Participation Handbook;
- ▶ The UK Embassy in Bratislava provided grants for our EDYN Slovakia members and supported their GOTV campaign;
- ▶ The US Embassy in Bratislava hosted a reception for our EDYN Slovakia members at the Ambassador's Residence. The Ambassador also participated in a session with the 2023 LC members during the Leadership Council Retreat;
- ▶ We submitted a grant application to USAID as part of an IREX-led consortium;
- ▶ Participation Factory, a Prague-based social enterprise that mainstreams participation and data-driven approaches into governance and process design, offered a webinar session on the intersection of technology and civic participation for all members;
- ▶ The Brussels-based Friends of Europe think-tank published an EDYN member's article on their policy journal;
- ▶ EDYN connected and discussed tangible ways to cooperate in the future – either at the HQ-level or country chapter-level – with the Polish Platform for Homeland Security, the European Endowment for Democracy, the German Marshall Fund, the Center for International Private Enterprise, GLOBSEC, IRI Women's Democracy Network, Apple, and the Multitudes Foundation.

## 8. Summit for Democracy & Youth Participation Handbook

EDYN's advocacy efforts for and towards increased youth participation are best exemplified by its role in USAID's and the European Commission's Summit for Democracy. As a co-leader of the Summit for Democracy's Youth Participation Cohort, EDYN not only oversaw the work of the cohort and participated in its activities, but it also spearheaded the creation of the **Youth Participation Handbook** in partnership with the EPD (European Partnership for Democracy).

The Handbook documents 25 case studies from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society across 30 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe. It was presented at the 2023 Summit for Democracy's main event in Costa Rica in March and became one of the Summit's main deliverables of the year. The case studies showcase best practices on how to effectively drive youth political and civic engagement across different countries, socio-political contexts, economic conditions, and local needs. The Handbook also identifies key enabling factors that foster successful youth participation in politics and public life. Innovative policy solutions, in line with young people's creativity, are crucial for creating an environment that empowers the active involvement of youth in public affairs. Evidence-based policies, interventions, and structures identified in the Handbook offer good practice for democratic governments seeking to overcome barriers to meaningful youth participation.



The Youth Democracy Cohort of the Summit for Democracy is devised as an inclusive platform to take meaningful action toward implementing Summit for Democracy commitments on youth political and civic engagement through resources, expertise, research, activities, and achievements. The cohort is co-lead by EDYN, DG INTPA, the Government of Ghana, the Government of Nepal, the Government of Costa Rica, the European Partnership for Democracy, Africtivistes and International IDEA. We have been joined by over 100 organizations across the world to work together on youth empowerment and inclusion. For more information about the Youth Democracy Cohort and the Summit for Democracy's Year of Action, please visit <https://youthdemocracycohort.com/the-youth-participation-handbook/>.



# Annual Leadership Council Report

**December 2023**



## Content:

1. Message from the EDYN President
2. Internal Improvements
3. Leadership Council Meetings and Statements
4. EDYNers as Experts: activities, meetings and speaking engagements

*Disclaimer: Please note that this report does not include all activities carried out by the Leadership Council. Additionally, it does not cover activities organized by Country Chapters or the EDYN Headquarters.*



## 1. Message from the President of EDYN, Daryna Onyshko



As this year and the mandate of the 2023 Leadership Council come to an end, it's time to reflect on the major challenges and positive changes we have faced. The world has witnessed significant political developments, characterized by shifts and emerging conflicts. Yet, even in these times of uncertainty, our network has maintained its resilience.

Before I address anything else, I wish to honor the memory of our colleague and friend, Serhiy Ikonnikov, a member of EDYN who was tragically killed on the frontline by the forces of the aggressor country on October 13, which was also the day of his 25th birthday. The memory of Serhiy will forever stand as a testament to the sacrifices made in the pursuit of freedom and justice.

I extend my deepest gratitude to each one of EDYN's members for their engagement and commitment. Their efforts have been at the center of our achievements. The hard work and dedication of our Headquarters in Bratislava have been key to navigating these challenging times. Likewise, the support and leadership provided by our Board of Trustees have proved invaluable in steering our course.

Our Leadership Council has worked diligently in realizing various activities and developing thematic statements aligned with our core values, they are presented as part of this report. These efforts have contributed to EDYN's mission of supporting young politicians, journalists, and civil society activists.

Looking ahead, it is clear that EDYN's role remains critically important. The year 2024 presents an important moment, with more than 50 per cent of the global population participating in various elections, including several critical ones in Europe and the EU elections. In this key time, the youth must stand as a united voice for democracy. We have a responsibility to encourage voting, engage in the electoral process, and run for office ourselves. Our collective voice and actions can shape the future of our democracies.

I am proud of what we have accomplished together and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. I wish the new Leadership Council a successful term. Let us continue our journey with new energy, commitment, and the shared vision of a more democratic and inclusive world.

Sincerely,

## 2. Internal Improvements

### **EDYN Code of Conduct**

The EDYN Code of Conduct, comprising a set of norms and rules for members, was finalized and implemented prior to the Ambassador Elections. The document is accessible [here](#).

### **Annual Operational Plan**

For the first time, the Leadership Council (LC) developed an Annual Operational Plan, outlining thematic priorities and activities for the year. However, due to various changes and financial limitations, some planned activities were not realized. We encourage the incoming LC to uphold this practice.

### **Local Level Engagement**

To strengthen local engagement, the LC developed "[Recommendations and Practices for Country Chapter Engagement](#)." This guide assists in onboarding new members, enhancing internal communication, fundraising, and sharing best practices.

### **Member Engagement During Elections**

Throughout the Ambassador Elections, the LC maintained member engagement through organizing Q&A sessions about the elections and a welcome call/icebreaker for new ambassadors. Additionally, during the LC election period, in collaboration with the Elections Committee, debates were held for non-USAID and President seats. The incoming LC is encouraged to continue fostering member connections and providing more opportunities for dialogue.

### **EDYN Pool of Trainers**

The [EDYN Pool of Trainers](#), initiated by graduates of the EDYN Training of Trainers program, aims to deliver high-quality training to members. These trainers, equipped with political and advocacy skills, will enhance the network's capabilities through both internal and external training sessions, while also raising awareness.

### **EDYN Alumni**

The network values the rich experience of its Alumni and encourages their ongoing involvement with EDYN. While a comprehensive Alumni program is not currently feasible, the network aspires to maintain lifelong connections with its Alumni. Where possible, Alumni will be invited to conferences, seminars, workshops, and other relevant activities.

### 3. Leadership Council Meetings and Statements

The Leadership Council held twelve planned meetings online, in addition to several emergency ones. A major highlight was the in-person LC retreat in Bratislava in March, which provided a valuable opportunity for members to convene, reflect, and deliberate on the future of our network.

The LC retreat concluded with an inspiring meeting with Mr. Gautam Rana, the U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic, where he discussed the challenges and future prospects of Europe and our regions. More details can be found [here](#).

The LC actively supported causes and individuals fighting for freedom, while condemning human rights violations in Europe and beyond. Please find a list of the statements issued in 2023:

- [EDYN Statement on Israel and Gaza, October 26, 2023](#)
- [EDYN Announcement Regarding Serhiy Ikonnikov's Passing, October 16, 2023](#)
- [EDYN Statement regarding the crackdown on environmental protests in Soyudlu village, Gadabay district, Azerbaijan, July 11, 2023](#)
- [EDYN Statement on Condemning the Bills on Transparency of Foreign Influence and Registration of Foreign Agents in the Parliament of Georgia, March 8, 2023](#)
- [EDYN Statement on One Year Since Russia Began Brutal Aggression Against Ukraine, February 24, 2023](#)



## 4. EDYNers are Experts: activities, meetings and speaking engagements

The **V4 Working Group**, led by LC Member Loretta Pinke, hosted an online roundtable focused on increasing youth participation in elections. The event provided a comprehensive overview of youth participation in elections and identified best practices for increasing participation. More information on the V4 cooperation can be found here. [here](#).



The **Working Group on Youth Policy**, chaired by Nikola Kandic, EDYN BiH, Gjorgi Tasev, EDYN North Macedonia, and VP Salome Mgeladze, has compiled stories spotlighting EDYN youth workers and developed a report. This report, which will be published shortly, will highlight our members' expertise to key stakeholders in democracy and youth.



On International Youth Day, August 12, the Group also organized a one-day social media campaign emphasizing the importance of youth participation in Ukraine's reconstruction and decision-making. Eight local chapters engaged in the campaign, posting content in their native languages.

GIJATË LUFTËS, TË RINJË  
UKRAINAS NA MËSUAN SE  
VENDOSMËRIA DHE  
UNITETI KANË FUQINË PËR  
TË KRIJUAR NJË TË  
ARDHME MË TË  
NDRITSHME DHE  
PAQËSORE. KËSHU MUND  
TË KALOJMË ÇDO SFIDË, TË  
BASHKUAR!



ПІД ЧАС ВІЙНИ,  
УКРАЇНСЬКА МОЛОДЬ  
НАГАДУЄ НАМ,  
ЩО РІШУЧИСТЬ І  
ЄДНІСТЬ МАЄ СИЛУ  
ТВОРИТИ СВІТЛЕ  
І МИРНЕ МАЙБУТНЄ.  
І МИ ВСІ МОЖЕМО  
ЗРОБИТИ ТЕ САМЕ,  
ОБ'ЄДНАВШИСЬ!

## 4. EDYNers are Experts: activities, meetings and speaking engagements

A noteworthy activity from this year, organized by the LC 2022 in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, was an advocacy visit to Strasbourg. Themed **“Promoting the youth priorities from Western Balkans and Eastern European countries”**, it took place from Feb 13-17. The visit enabled half of the members from both the current and previous LC to voice their perspectives directly to EU decision-makers. [Learn more about the visit.](#)



Following the presentation of the Youth Participation Handbook by EDYN in cooperation with the European Partnership for Democracy, EDYN has been part of the **Youth Dialogue Platform** (April-November). This forum serves for continuous joint reflection and consultation on the priorities, implementation, and follow-up of European cooperation in the field of youth. In December, the network reapplied for its membership in the forum.

## Voicing EDYN's Mission

The EDYN President has participated in a wide range of speaking engagements across various prestigious platforms. These include providing insights at the **European Commission's** sessions and addressing the **Polish Parliament**. Engagements spanned from discussions on youth political leadership in online forums to participation in the **Global Democracy Coalition Forum** held in Brussels. She also provided feedback on the implementation of the **Youth Action Plan**, the EU's operational roadmap for engaging young people in EU external action.

The President also contributed to the **European Economic and Social Committee's** 577th Plenary and shared expertise at the second **Summit for Democracy event in Costa Rica**. In Europe, she was active at the **EU Youth Event** in Strasbourg and engaged with the NDI Board in Warsaw. Further, she delivered a keynote at an National Democratic Institute and Hudson Institute event in Washington, D.C, highlighting the network's global engagement.

In April, LC member EDYN Serbia Saška Radujkov participated in the **European Economic and Social Committee** 578th Plenary session. In the panel about Strengthening democracy and European values together with Civil Society in the EU candidate countries, she presented the views of the young people from the Balkans. You may watch the plenary [here](#).



## Voicing EDYN's Mission

The Secretary General helped to organize and moderated the **Moldova Youth Forum**, hosted by the International Republican Institute in Comrat from June 30 to July 2. The forum featured more than a dozen panels focusing on how to include the new generation in crafting the best path forward for Moldova. Over 230 young people attended in person, and around 60,000 people joined in virtually from every corner of Moldova and abroad. [More information about the Forum.](#)



In her **interview for the Forbes**, VP Salome Mgeladze noted, the "European Democracy Youth Network" is an organization created by USAID, NDI and IRI in 2018, which had only ten members at the time of its creation, and now boasts hundreds of members and many successful projects. Access the full [interview here](#) (in Georgian).

The Vice President introduced EDYN to multiple organizations and diplomatic representatives as well as presented the network twice on a popular Georgian TV channel.

In July 2023, EDYN President wrote for the **Diplomatic Courier** discussing [the role of youth in transatlantic security](#):

*The new generation in Eastern Europe, particularly in Ukraine, is capable of partnering on equitable terms and willing to collaborate with Western states in security discussions and developing frameworks. One example of youth working across borders toward shared democratic values is the European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN), which was formed in 2019 and today includes almost 700 members from 23 European countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Central Europe.*

