



Essay Competition “Three reasons to stay in my country”

Introduction

Almost all Western Balkans countries are facing a shrinking population dynamics. Brain drain is becoming a systematic problematic for the growth of our countries. Despite these features, the share of the younger population in the Western Balkans is still higher than in the European Union (EU) countries, but their contribution to the region economic growth remains under-exploited.

In the recent years, several regional initiatives have put youth at the top of the political agenda. All Balkan countries as well as EU have recognized youth as an important actor of the reform processes in our region. Support to youth participation to democratic life, education, mobility, entrepreneurship and employment have been identified as top priorities for national, regional and EU policies.

We would like to hear from you and trigger a debate between youngsters and policy makers from EU and Western Balkans. What do you think about the education system and the transition from school to work? What is your take on the vocational education and training policies in your country? How are social values of youngsters shaped nowadays? What should be done for rural and disadvantaged youth? How can youth policies better address your challenges? What can prevent Balkan youngsters from migrating abroad? What can better boost activism and youth participation at a daily base? What role can youth organizations and grassroots movements play? How can digital developments strengthen youth e-participation process? How can Balkan youth contribute to the economy and society in the region? What are top three reasons to stay and be happy in your country, and to contribute to your family, society or country?



National Youth Council
of Macedonia





Criteria

- The competition is open to all youngsters aged 18-24 currently living in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia);
- Essays should not exceed 1000 words in length;
- All essays must be in English language;
- One Applicant can submit only one essay;
- Co-authored essays will not be accepted;

Youngsters currently enrolled in Secondary Education institutions of the Western Balkans region, or engaged with youth organizations active in the region, are strongly encouraged to apply.

The deadline for submissions is 25 June 2018 at 18.00hs.

The jury will select twelve finalists (two per country, preferably one from a representative of youth organizations and one representative from high schools/secondary education). The selected finalists will be announced end of June/beginning of July 2018. Organizers will cover the travel and accommodation expenses for their participation to: i) a special youth exchange programme in Tirana, and ii) a regional event entirely dedicated to youth topics. Both events will take place in October 2018. A booklet of essays and event proceedings will be published after the final event takes place.

Tips

- We look for essays that not only identify the issues that youth in our region face, but also that propose concrete and creative solutions that are identified by you and that can be implemented by the local, regional and/or EU policymakers.
- Personal experiences and collective actions experiences in local communities are important.
- Out-of-the box - but concrete - thinking is much appreciated.
- We are looking for youth actors of change that bring clear, realistic and genuine messages.



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Submission procedure

Your essay file should be submitted by email ONLY, as attached document of maximum 1,000 words in either MS Word (DOC/DOCX) or PDF format. If you use any quotations, please include the reference at the bottom of the essay. References will not be included in the word count.

Deadline for submitting essays: 25 June 2018, 18.00hrs.

Essays need to be submitted only electronically at the address: info@connecting-youth.org.

Follow us for essay updates: #WBYCPEssay2018 in Facebook: @WBYCP

[Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform](#) (WBYCP) is a regional youth platform established by [Cooperation and Development Institute](#) in 2017 with the support of Hanns Seidel Foundation. Committed to promote youth connectivity in the region, WBYCP is partnering with youth umbrella organizations from the region, i.e. National Youth Congress of Albania, National Youth Council of Macedonia, National Youth Council of Serbia, High School Students Union of Montenegro and Central Youth Action Council of Kosovo. Our goal is to promote exchange and discussions amongst youngsters in the region, youth networking and YouthUp Western Balkans for more youth-friendly policies.



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