

VISEGRAD YOUTH FORUM 2022

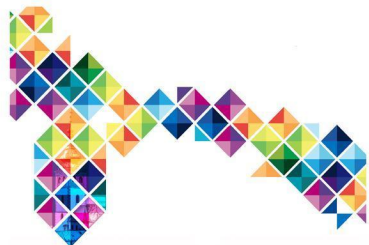


Increasing Democratic Participation in V4+

The first Panel Discussion of the Visegrad Youth Forum 2022 was focused on the topic of Increasing Democratic Participation in the V4+ region. The panel was moderated by Adam Gajdošík, Project Coordinator of Visegrad Youth Forum and Euro-Atlantic Center. Among speaker were remarkable participants, namely Melanie Jaindl from Institut für den Donauraum und Mitteleuropa, Anna Vaszkó as an Operational Supervisor at Franchise of House of European Affairs and Diplomacy, Youth Business Group and Zsanet Greta Papp, who is Research Assistant at Europeum Institute for European Policy.

The discourse started with the topic of political participation with the focus on young people and young leaders. Speakers provided many different views and tried to take an alternative approach to discussed issue. Vaszko emphasized activism and volunteerism as an excellent opportunity for young people nor only as a way to gain new experience and meet new friends, but also as a way to influence and shape our society. She added that through activism and volunteering we can push ideas we would like to see blooming in our environment. Later she pointed out the importance of online activism as a new tool for modern participation. Other speakers agreed and Jaindl added that even the expression of an individual's interest in a topic is a form of participation. According to her, we as a young generation, do different things individually but later we put it together as we want our voices to be heard. Papp expanded on the topic with food for thought - many young people think that politics doesn't affect them and they can't change it, but the opposite is true. Sooner or later politics will affect everyone. It is acceptable that sometimes we distance ourselves as a kind of protective mechanism but we as young people should not give up. We need to be involved in such a way that the principles we believe in will be sooner or later a reality in our society.





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In the next part speakers focused on socio-economic questions related to the life of the young people. They all agreed that the class of people should not limit their options for participation. They highlighted issues concerning young people nowadays, mainly low social mobility and many other socio-economic barriers. The panel slowly began to move into the realm of generational issues. Panelists came to the conclusion that sometimes not even the young, successful and educated people are included in decision making processes. Jaindl claimed that it is shameful how the older generation underestimate young people. According to speakers, young people need to organize and vote together. They need to focus on all issues complexly, because politics is not just about the EU and NATO. Also, they have to pay attention if their ideas and values are actually well represented and voted in, as sometimes politicians like to gather young people vote but do not represent their interests. Before moving to questions, panelists concluded that although young people do not have power in traditional ways like holding a public office, they have their voices and enthusiasm, they are the future of their specific countries.

The first raised question was related to freeze of EU funds for Hungary and what it means for Hungarian youth. According to panelist Vaszkó, youth in Hungary is at the end of the day influenced by politics and culture of Hungary. It is actually really hard to organize and create one common platform or fight for freedom. Young people in Hungary are still in the phase of shaping themselves. Speakers recommendation for youth of Hungary is to create national platform which could be used for discussion and finding common ground.

The panel was closed with the conclusion that we as a young generation grow up in the modern era of smart technologies and it is natural for us to live with social media. As a result we build a kind of resilience which the older generation lacks. But of course, further education is needed and we need to improve our information literacy, as it is upon us to process and evaluate information which we receive.

