

Connecting Youth – Western Balkans Youth Conference – Paris, 4 July 2016

Call for Applications

Deadline 16 May 2016

The European Commission and the Government of the French Republic, supported by the European Youth Forum and SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre, are launching a Call for Applications to the Western Balkans Youth Conference. The *Connecting Youth* conference will take place in Paris, 4 July 2016, in the margins of the Western Balkans Summit. *Connecting Youth* will bring together 150 young people from the EU and Western Balkans countries, to discuss common challenges and work towards finding joint solutions.

The participants will join forces in 4 parallel groups working on the following topics:

A. Youth on the move, education on the move - Education and mobility for young people

Questions for discussion

- Which are the European exchange programmes and student mobility schemes available to the Western Balkans? What can be done more in the region to maximise their potential?
- Which are the opportunities for Vocational and Educational Training for the Western Balkans? How can young people be more aware of them?
- What could be done to promote mobility in Europe even more strongly (including between the EU and the Western Balkans)?

B. Knocking on job market's doors - Employment and entrepreneurship for young people

Questions for discussion

- What more can be done to address youth unemployment?
- What can the Western Balkans learn from programmes tackling youth unemployment within the EU?
- Is youth entrepreneurship an efficient tool for countering youth unemployment?
- What more can be done to motivate young people to become entrepreneurs and open new businesses?

C. Not just another brick in the wall - Youth engagement & participation

Questions for discussion

- What can be done to increase the number of young people actively engaging in political and societal life? What is the key to making the young become more interested in national / European policy making?
- What role can the European Voluntary Service play in further promoting civic engagement and contributing to democracy, rule of law and fundamental freedoms in the Western Balkans?
- What can be done to prevent violent radicalisation among the youth? How can local communities, civil society & national authorities better reach out to the youth, particularly those who are or feel marginalised?
- How can the representation of young people and their ideas be better ensured both on national and European levels?

D. Get up, stand up, speak up! - Youth and the media

Questions for discussion

- What are the challenges in strengthening free & robust media in the Western Balkans (and in the EU)? Do young people in the EU and in the Western Balkans have access to a variety of objective, good quality and independent information?
- What can be done to further support professional journalism and the training of journalists at national / European level?
- How can young journalists be helped to adhere to and maintain professional and ethical standards?

The Call for Applications is open to young people who are:

- Citizens of one of the EU Member States or the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo^{*}, Montenegro, or Serbia).
- Aged between 18 to 35 years at the time of the event.
- Fluent in English (level C1 under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).
- Members of youth or student organisations will be favoured during the selection process.

To apply

Please [follow this link to fill in the online application form](#) at the latest by 16 May 2016, 23:59 hrs CET. You will need to send a short expression of interest (no longer than 400 words) and your CV in Europass format.

Important: Application requires prior registration on the website of the European Youth Platform: Click on the above link, then click "Registration" on the bar on top of the page that opens and register. Upon registration, you will receive a confirmation email. Click on the link in the confirmation email to activate your registration. Now go back to the above link and you will be able to upload your application.

Please indicate clearly in the expression of interest your preferred working group (as well as your second choice), and explain why. Please dedicate a paragraph in your expression of interest to answer one or two of the questions linked to your preferred working group (see questions above; please remember to stick to the word limit).

- A. Youth on the move, education on the move* - Education and mobility for young people
- B. Knocking on job market's doors* - Employment and entrepreneurship for young people
- C. Not just another brick in the wall* - Youth engagement & participation
- D. Get up, stand up, speak up!* - Youth and the media.

One member per working group will present the outcome of group discussions during a plenary meeting. If you would like to be considered for this role, please indicate it in the expression of interest, and explain why.

Applicants will receive a response on their application by 15 June 2016. Only complete applications, which follow the requirements, will be considered.

Costs

The European Commission will make the necessary travel and accommodation arrangements for selected participants. Please refrain from making any specific individual travel or accommodation arrangements. Catering will be provided during the Conference.

^{*} This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.