



# Citizens' Agenda



# Preamble

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In the city where young people have been dynamic in expressing their political views as demonstrated by the success of the Exit festival, we have shown that future generations from the Western Balkans and the European Union, despite different and conflicting perspectives, can continue to constructively express their political views.

In July 2010 the city of Novi Sad hosted the Waves of Democracy 2010 Programme, which provided a unique opportunity to bring together 50 delegates from the Western Balkans and 50 delegates from the EU.

The programme enabled young representatives from 27 European countries to share their perspectives on five main areas: Energy and Climate Change, Regional Development, Culture and Education, New Media and Democracy and Active Citizenship.

We explored various ideas as a result of our differing backgrounds and cultures. However, in order to initiate a strong and decisive Citizens' Agenda we practiced democratic techniques and methods such as debating, voting, compromising and the use of a common language.

Aware of the fact that both regions are facing problems we wanted to provoke critical thinking by forming five resolutions that would serve as a guideline in the process of creating regional networks and achieving long-term stability in the Western Balkans. The overall aim of our agenda was to enable efficient integration in the EU and to strengthen the relationship between the EU and the Western Balkans in an ever globalised world. This we believe to be crucial, particularly in a time of economic crisis whereby democratic principles are often endangered.

We aimed to make the resolutions as practical and specific as possible so that they address the needs of the Western Balkans and the EU. For instance, in order to reinforce the ideas of democracy we propose the establishment of an Active Balkan Citizenship and in order to improve the overall standard of European education we propose the cooperation between educational institutions and the job market.

As the future generation we understand that we are responsible for maintaining the flourishing relations between the EU and the Western Balkans and as such are not afraid to participate actively in the civil society.

These resolutions are not just formal documents, but the voice of the young Europeans. They are initiatives for encouraging mobility, since mobility leads to creating networks, networks lead to inter-regional development and inter-regional development leads to sharing knowledge, values and experiences, overall leading to respect between countries, nations and people.

**The Committee on Energy and Climate Change submits the following resolution to the plenary session of Waves of Democracy 2010.**

*The question of how to deal with climate change, encourage green growth and provide safe systems of electricity and energy supply.*

- A. Bearing in mind that climate change can only be solved through a global effort of all nations,
- B. Emphasizing that developed countries, countries with economies in transition and developing countries have different responsibilities and capabilities,
- C. Taking into account the experience different EU states have with renewable energy sources,
- D. Stressing the fact that the swift from fossil based economy to a renewable, low carbon based economy and energy system is inevitable,
- E. Noting that both EU and West Balkan countries highly rely on imported energy and given the potential of various renewable resources of the given regions,
- F. Taking into account that NGOs and public institutions have an important role to play concerning the environment,
- G. Noticing that the engagement of civil society, especially in the Western Balkans is low,
- H. Fully aware of the different levels of education, knowledge and information available within the EU countries and Western Balkans,
- I. Alarmed by the growing number of transport units that leads to urban congestion and atmospheric pollution,
  - 1. Requests that national interests have to be put aside in order to achieve the strongest possible mitigation impact;
  - 2. Urges that developed countries need to support countries with economies in transition and developing countries financially, scientifically, technologically and politically;
  - 3. Advocates the sharing of technical know-how on sustainable development between EU member states and the countries of the Western Balkans according to the “green” potential of each specific region;
  - 4. Recommends that the transition to a renewable low carbon based economy and energy system has to be implemented as soon as possible in order to create a first-mover-advantage;
  - 5. Encourages the redirection of EU funds towards research into renewable energy resources that would ensure long-term, sustainable development in Europe;

6. Highlights the importance to achieve independence by utilizing all the available renewable resources within Europe by:
  - Installing photovoltaic cells on public buildings, such as schools and universities, which could set an example to the broader community and thereby encourage their use in private homes,
  - Setting up wind and water turbines in regions with great untapped potential for such alternative sources of energy;
7. Considers necessary the implementation of “green: loan programs, subsidized through public-private partnership with banks, for individual consumers and small or medium enterprises;
8. Advises that EU institutions facilitate and encourage the capacity building of environmental NGOs where it is necessary;
9. Supports the establishment of grants oriented towards the implementation of local, awareness-raising environmental projects;
10. Asks the EU and developed European countries to establish new public bodies and monitoring processes;
11. Considers necessary to narrow the gap by providing educational support, knowledge and information transfer and strengthen the dialogue between countries;
12. Draws attention to the need for environmental education to be mandatory in primary and secondary schools, following the example of other European member states;
13. Proposes the development of transport infrastructure such as the extension of metro networks and the introduction of electric/hybrid vehicles;
14. Further urges the EU institutions to increase sanctions on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for cars.

**The Committee on Regional Development submits the following resolution to the plenary session of Waves of Democracy 2010.**

*The question of how to relate to your neighbours in the Balkans and in the EU in a still more globalised world.*

- A. Bearing in mind that the process of economic, political and social transition into democracy in the WB is not accomplished yet,
  - B. Alarmed by the lack of cooperation among governments of WB-countries weakening the perspective of this region being part of the EU,
  - C. Noting with satisfaction that there are NGOs performing their effort to implement deeper and sustainable relations among WB-countries,
  - D. Believing that a lack of transparency in economy hampers further cooperation between the EU and SEEC towards the integration process and does not attract private investments,
  - E. Recalling that there are still unsettled issues among WB-states which are an obstacle to intra-regional cooperation,
  - F. Fully aware of the fact that conferences and bi- and multilateral agreements have settled conflicts in European countries and brought peace and growth to the conflicting parties,
  - G. Concerned by the level of corruption evident in the public sector and the consequential lack of faith in institutions,
  - H. Recognizing that sharing intellectual resources (knowledge, training, technologies etc.) is essential to enable WB companies to become more competitive,
  - I. Emphasizing that the emigration of highly educated individuals from the WB region (brain drain) is often connected to the lack of internships and job opportunities, which causes a phenomenon detrimental to regional development,
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- 1. Strongly affirms intensified cooperation among different actors<sup>1</sup> which involves frequent meetings, conferences and discussions forming common positions and decision-making on relevant issues;
  - 2. Calls upon all European countries to establish or improve Civil Education as a school subject, already starting in elementary school, focusing on the following topics:
    - National history and development of democracy,
    - Current developments in international democracies,
    - Democratic institutions and their structure in Europe;

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<sup>1</sup> Governments, academic elites, citizens etc.

3. Expresses its support for the Igman Initiative<sup>2</sup> as a good example of building a vision for a better future and calls upon all distinguished actors who have not been involved yet to give their influence;
4. Approves of the implementation of a more effective control on monetary transactions from local governments and the establishment of international rating agencies under the supervision of the EU;
5. Reminds national governments of the importance to improve the efficiency of the justice systems by quickening trial processes, creating/strengthening institutions fighting corruption by freezing criminal assets and promoting effective law enforcement;
6. Supports the creation of special national courts dealing with the prosecution of corruption issues;
7. Recommends that national governments support initiatives to create and facilitate enterprises, including the provision of low-cost start-up loans, business management programs and seminars<sup>3</sup>;
8. Requests further state-subsidized cooperation between companies and universities, such as recruitment fairs, scholarships conditional upon repatriation, education programs sponsored by WB companies.
9. Suggests the creation of a WB organisation promoting tourism by providing accurate information about traveling opportunities throughout the Balkans and reducing costs<sup>4</sup>;
10. Establishes a working group called Best Practices in Western Balkans with the following tasks:
  - Gather information about projects working on issues related to regional development in WB,
  - Select the most successful projects for each field (education, economy, science) and present them as a source of inspiration for projects with similar interests/focus,
  - Provide developing projects with financial, material and technical support (on demand),
  - Foster a deeper spirit of networking in the region by industry-specific conferences, designed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge between specialists in Balkan and EU countries;

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<sup>2</sup> Igman Initiative's mission:

"Promote and facilitate local and regional dialogue in the fields of politics economics and culture; to promote confidence building advocacy of democratic values" ([www.igman-initiative.org](http://www.igman-initiative.org))

Participants: Balkan Presidents, Academic community, NGO sector etc.

<sup>3</sup> Commercial incubation units providing the primary needs of start up businesses

<sup>4</sup> Low price Balkan-region inter-rail passes and holiday packages.

**The Committee on Culture and Education submits the following resolution to the plenary session of Waves of Democracy 2010.**

*The question of how to meet the demands of a globalised world and empower young people with intercultural and international competences in non-formal and formal education.*

- A. Believing that knowledge about other cultures can promote intercultural understanding and reduce the risk of future conflicts,
  - B. Alarmed by the lack of student mobility between the Western Balkans and the EU,
  - C. Realizing that there are almost no foreign students in the Western Balkans,
  - D. Recognizing the fact that students from the Western Balkans have few opportunities to study in other countries because of financial reasons and the lack of partnership programs and information,
  - E. Believing that language plays an important role in the process of improving cooperation and intercultural understanding,
  - F. Believing that it is important to foster interregional cooperation and willing to take advantage of language similarities among the Western Balkan countries,
  - G. Considering that non-formal education can empower young people with additional knowledge such as soft skills, practical and intercultural competences,
  - H. Bearing in mind that in a world of constant change, life-long learning is essential for coping with future challenges,
  - I. Recognizing that there is a weak connection between educational institutions and the job market,
  - J. Alarmed by the high percentage of corruption in the educational system in the West Balkans,
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- 1. Suggests the foundation of a Western Balkan mobility fund enabling students to study and teachers to research in foreign countries;
  - 2. Endorses establishing programs in English for foreign students to study in the Western Balkans;
  - 3. Proposes increasing in the number and quality of cultural activities which involve young people from local, national and international level;

4. Recommends that a network cooperation between universities in the Western Balkans is created to increase student mobility within this region;
5. Recommends effective mechanisms in the implementation of multicultural education in the curriculum, such as classes in history and culture, field trips etc.;
6. Draws attention to the importance of thorough implementation of the Bologna Process of Standardization;
7. Recommends that all students should learn at least one foreign language at an active level, by using appropriate methods of education to give them the best skills possible to communicate with other nationalities;
8. Considers necessary to increase funds for national unemployment agencies in order to organize free programs for adult education, e.g. requalification;
9. Proposes governmental and non-governmental bodies to implement non-formal education such as summer schools, seminars, conferences and voluntary work;
10. Demands the establishment of new institutions on a national level which provide and promote life-long learning and strengthening the existing ones in this field;
11. Proposes more cooperation between educational institutions and the job market, such as internships, study visits and job fairs, e.g. with help of student organizations;
12. Demands the improvement of the transparency level in the educational system, through independent monitoring bodies, monthly reports etc., to cope with corruption.

**The Committee on New Media and Democracy submits the following resolution to the plenary session of Waves of Democracy 2010.**

*The question of how media and not least the new media can strengthen formal and informal democracy domestically and across borders.*

- A. Recognizing that people differ in their degree of access to new media,
  - B. Recognizing that media have an agenda-setting function,
  - C. Strongly believes that new media provide means to increase political participation, strengthen democracy, resulting in a more transparent and open society,
  - D. Strongly believes that information wants to be free and the internet open,
  - E. Considering the fact that new media play an increasing role in peoples' lives, especially in that of young people,
  - F. Aware of the fact that personal data and privacy must be properly protected,
  - G. Noting that new media provide a wide spectrum of information sources,
  - H. Aware of the fact that using new media can have negative effects,
  - I. Observing the importance of new media in connecting people and involving them in democratic actions,
1. Recommends the further development of campaigns to inform people about their freedom of choice concerning information sources;
  2. Calls upon:
    - The creation of internet infrastructure where it does not yet exist,
    - The improvement of internet infrastructure where it already exists, if necessary with the assistance of EU funds and/or private sector initiatives;
  3. Encourages governments to implement e-voting as a complement to existing voting mechanisms;
  4. Further encourages governments to use new media as means to inform citizens, promote transparency and interaction;
  5. Calls upon the inclusion of media literacy courses in national school curricula, starting in primary school, in order to gain understanding of media dynamics and teach critical thinking with regards to all media;

6. Urges the governments of European countries to develop a strategy in order to secure personal data:
  - The implementation of laws regarding personal data protection in countries where such laws do not yet exist,
  - The improvement of such laws in countries where they do exist,
  - Campaigns to inform citizens about the risk of providing personal data on the internet;
7. Demands the development of an accessible and free new media channel in the countries of Europe which will provide live and on-demand information regarding national parliamentary activities;
8. Calls upon the reduction of corruption by means of new media by creating a website which makes will make information about assets and possessions of state officials, and financial transactions of political subjects, publicly available;
9. Recommends the use of blogs to increase participation and interaction between citizens and politicians;
10. Calls upon politicians to make themselves more accessible to citizens through new media, for example by means of a website, in order to engage people and keep them informed;
11. Demands the incorporation of new media within education through:
  - Ensuring that all schools have internet access,
  - Ensuring that all schools have an adequate facilities, such as computers,
  - Education for teachers and parents to use new media,
  - Providing educational games on physical media, such as CDs, since many schools still have limited internet access,
  - Improving the awareness and accessibility of new media education, such as distance learning.

**The Committee on Active Citizenship submits the following resolution to the plenary session of Waves of Democracy 2010.**

*The question of how to empower citizens and make them interested in taking part in non-formal political activities.*

- A. Aware of the importance of active citizenship for the legitimacy and sustainability of a healthy democracy,
  - B. Deeply concerned by the lack of citizens' interest in participation in different social areas in the WB, which poses an obstacle to the EU integration,
  - C. Believing that democracy should not be imported from abroad but rather spring from active citizenship,
  - D. Fully alarmed by the fact that people in the region, in particular minority groups, feel isolated from the decision making process,
  - E. Emphasizing the necessity of overcoming the nationalistic political myths in order to face the past and the future,
  - F. Alarmed by the impacts of excessive bureaucracy and partitocracy on individual initiative and trust in the institutions,
  - G. Noting the resilience of political culture in its influence on accepting and internalizing democratic and civic values,
  - H. Recognizing that the lack of civic education considerably limits interest formation and non-formal political activities,
  - I. Realizing that NGO sector suffers from stigmatization and lack of funding,
  - J. Taking into account the challenges and opportunities posed by new media outlets in connection to the strengthening of active citizenship.
1. Encourages an exchange of best practices, regarding Ngo legislation between current and perspective member states of the EU;
  2. Urges the Committee on Culture and Education to develop a strategy for national civic education tuition;
  3. Suggests the creation of a European secretariat for the administration of exchange programs for professionals working for NGOs in the WB and the EU member states;

4. Calls upon the EU to establish and fund a body named “ABC”<sup>5</sup>, which would
  - Fund and support the establishment of specialized organisations, which would raise citizens civic awareness by organizing projects, meetings, workshops and other non-formal activities,
  - Make funding available for projects, which stimulate into cultural dialogue between nationalities in the WB, through activities such as cultural evenings, seminars and conferences,
  - Fund a campaign that raises awareness of the opportunities of new media for the facilitation, organisation, exchange of ideas and access to information,
  - Use new media as an instrument to overcome stigmatization of the Ngo sector, providing transparency and accessibility of information, related to their programs and initiatives.
  
5. Further reminds national governments in the WB to implement measures, which contribute to a sense of transparency and encourage involvement, such as:
  - Devolution of power to regional and local authorities – especially with regards to cultural and financial affairs,
  - Implementation of structural and legal reform to increase the efficiency of bureaucracy and encourage non-party participation,
  - Consideration of political models that correspond to local customs and tradition.

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<sup>5</sup> Active Balkan Citizenship.