

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

NECE 2025

NECE Lab: Youth participation in democracy

10 – 14 May 2025 in Leipzig, Germany (tbc)

In the wake of rising antidemocratic sentiments across Europe, young people are coming together to create bold yet practical and actionable solution packages designed to serve as effective countermeasures. This exchange aims at making populist and anti-democratic attitudes of different EU countries visible and empower young people to devise strategies that foster stronger democratic values.

So, are you between **18 and 25 years old**? Do you have a strong connection to, from a **rural/peripheral region**? Do you have ideas and experiences about how young people can actively **counteract anti-democratic sentiments**? Are you passionate about strengthening political culture in your local community? If so, then apply now to join the **NECE Lab: Youth participation in democracy**, hosted by [THE CIVICS Innovation Hub](#) in cooperation with the [Sofia Platform Foundation](#) and [Znanje na Djelu](#).

Under the theme '**CIVICS Democracy Toolbox: Future Skills for a Resilient Europe**,' up to 20 young people from **peripheral** or **rural** areas in **Bulgaria, Croatia, and Germany** will convene within Leipzig and its surroundings to examine and contextualise the transnational challenges posed by anti-democratic and populist movements. In the next phase, participants will develop low-threshold and practical solution ideas that can be transformed into accessible content and materials for use in transnational youth work and local democratic action. The results of this innovative and collaborative exchange will be presented to a diverse audience of policymakers, youth advocates, and young changemakers from across Europe at the [18th Deutscher Kinder- und Jugendhilfetag \(German Child and Youth Welfare Congress\)](#) in Leipzig

[NECE \(Networking European Civic Education\)](#) is a multi-stakeholder network for civic educators to connect, learn and grow. At NECE Labs, our primary objective is to promote and strengthen interdisciplinary and transnational collaboration in civic education. We achieve this by embracing a multi-perspective approach that focuses on essential civic competencies as well as the co-creation of innovative tools for effective civic education.

For this Lab, we invite you to interact with like-minded young change-makers, sharing your experiences and perspectives on how to inspire change in your local community to promote

democracy and resilience. You will hear from experts vexed in strengthening democracy and active civic participation as well as be guided by an experienced design-thinking moderator to guide you in developing practical ideas for promoting democracy that suits your local context. Additionally, getting selected for this Lab guarantees you an automatic participation slot at the prestigious German Child and Youth Welfare Congress and grants you access to all its working sessions!

Have we pricked your interest? Then fill out our application form through this link (https://gstoo.de/necelabs2025_youth), and apply with a few details about yourself and your motivation until 27 Feb 2025 (11:59 pm CET). If our selection panel votes your application as one of the best 20, you will be invited to participate in the Lab, with **all travel and accommodation expenses covered.**

Who can apply?

Young adults between **18 and 25 years** old with an interest in democracy, local political culture, and civic education based in **Bulgaria, Croatia, or Germany**. While we encourage applications from all young people from the aforementioned countries, NECE is particularly interested in promoting and offering young European voices from rural or periphery regions a platform for representation. Applications from these regions will therefore be more prioritised in the selection process.

Selection Criteria

- You should be between 18 and 25 years old.
- Fluency in English is required.
- Strong motivation to participate in the NECE Lab.
- Prior engagements in the sphere of youth work, volunteering, civic education, or local action are desired.
- Applicants must be based in Bulgaria, Croatia, or Germany with priority given to those from rural or peripheral regions.¹

We look forward to receiving your application and making democracy happen by participating, together! If you have questions, contact the NECE Labs team on necelabs@thecivics.eu.

¹ We define rural regions as villages, towns, and municipalities with no more than 15,000 inhabitants, and peripheral regions as places characterised by a lack of opportunities for civic and political learning and engagement, as well as the absence of institutions that typically provide such opportunities, such as youth programs, cultural and arts organisations, and religious congregations. Read more here: <https://mappingcivildeserts.com/from-civic-deserts-to-civic-cohesion/>