



IFES supports citizens' right to participate in free and fair elections. Our independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to promote sustainable democracy.



Engaging Youth to Innovate and Participate in Europe and Eurasia

Youth in Europe and Eurasia make up more than a quarter of the population, 167 million, and a significant political force.¹ With more than 30 years of programming, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has enabled and supported the engagement of youth in Europe and Eurasia to promote leadership, advocacy and democratic values. Through formal and informal programs, IFES Europe and Eurasia works alongside election management bodies, government institutions, academic bodies and civil society to encourage political and civic responsibility among all youth.

Current Programming

IFES Europe and Eurasia programming delivers the following types of assistance to empower state institutions, civil society and young leaders to increase youth participation in democratic processes.

Formal and School-Based Programs

IFES cooperates with secondary and vocational schools, universities and youth-serving education centers to develop and implement civic education curricula focused on political, electoral and social themes, such as democracy, governance, and media literacy, which are tailored to specific age groups.

Informal Programs and Extracurricular Activities

IFES supports diverse activities such as mock elections, public debates, election schools and Democracy Camps to increase knowledge of the electoral and political process, as well as to teach leadership skills and inspire community engagement through student action projects. These activities, such as the camp model, can also be adapted for specific themes, such as disability inclusion or media literacy.

New Media Engagement

IFES employs new media to actively engage youth through a broad range of initiatives, whether through innovative web-based games, interactive mobile applications, cybersecurity, media literacy or creating their own voter education campaigns in media laboratories. This programming maximizes reach and impact among peers and encourages the exchange of ideas, experiences and good practices for mobilizing youth participation through digital means.

Capacity-Building Trainings

IFES draws on its extensive expertise to conduct capacity-building trainings that promote youth-led efforts to effect change in their community, hold elected officials accountable and advocate for transparency and the rule of law. Trainings such as those described below encourage sustainability and empower youth to lead democratic change at the local, national and regional levels.

Program Highlights

Georgia

Georgia pioneered IFES' civic education course at the university level, using the Strengthening Engagement through Education for Democracy (SEED) methodology. Democracy and Citizenship is now implemented in 31 universities across the country and laid the foundation for the innovative course now implemented in Ukraine.

¹ ["Being Young in Europe Today," Eurostat, European Union, 2019.](#)

Under the “Knowledge, Advocacy and Responsibility Engagement” (KARe) program, IFES works with youth in marginalized communities, specifically ethnic and religious minority youth, to develop and propose solutions to challenges young Georgians face such as lack of civic activism and poor community outreach. Youth community mobilizers are taught the basics of community organizing, civic education and advocacy, which they share with their local communities through outreach initiatives.

Kosovo

Using the digital Speak in the Nest platform, developed with partner Peers Education Network, IFES supported youth-led efforts to increase young people’s understanding of and engagement in electoral and political processes in Kosovo. The platform included a web-based game, quizzes and public service announcements, called Youth Voice, developed by youth. To complement the platform, IFES organized a series of mock elections and public debates for youth to practice what they learned about the electoral process and to provide a space for youth to raise their voices and concerns to politicians and other government officials.

Kyrgyzstan

IFES has conducted Democracy Camps annually for more than 20 years, holding a 10-day program that educates primary and secondary school-aged youth on democratic values such as leadership, civic responsibilities and political participation. These values are embedded through interactive exercises and post-camp student action projects in which camp alumni become teachers and leaders on salient issues in their communities. The Democracy Camp Alumni Network fosters peer-to-peer engagement and sustainable connections for the exchange of ideas, practices and impacts across Kyrgyzstan.

In addition to the Democracy Camps, IFES has hosted media laboratories where youth gather in a creative space filled with mini presentations, general and group discussions, video shows and performances. Media laboratories allow participants to discuss and find solutions to bring awareness to challenges faced in their communities.

North Macedonia

IFES and local partner National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM) are collaborating on initiatives with political party youth and youth community mobilizers to support youth engagement and encourage youth inclusion in democratic processes. IFES and NYCM are hosting a series of capacity-building workshops on policy development and community engagement. These skills-building and collaborative efforts aim to increase citizens’ participation and the accountability of political parties and elected officials by local communities.

Ukraine

IFES developed the university-level civic education course, Democracy: From Theory to Practice, based on the course designed in Georgia using the SEED methodology and currently implemented in 22 national universities across Ukraine. The course utilizes an interactive classroom environment to foster democratic values and attitudes; student action projects; and customized course readers that enhance knowledge of democratic principles, good governance, civil society, civic participation, media literacy and human rights. In 2021, the course will expand to 30 more institutions, including colleges and technical institutes. The course is also being adapted in Armenia and set to be implemented in five universities.



20+ ethnic and religious minority youth trained as KARe facilitators in Georgia



500+ youth interviewed for “Youth Voice” in Kosovo



2,200+ in Democracy Camp Alumni Network in Kyrgyzstan



20+ universities implementing civic education courses in Ukraine

Learn more about IFES’ [Youth Engagement](#) activities and follow [@IFESYouth](#) and [@IFES_Europe](#) on Twitter.