"Next Generation Europe"

Cres, 20–25 September 2026

Regaining new European and democratic momentum

The *Cres Summer School*, organised on the island of Cres (Croatia), will focus on the topic *"Democracy and Security in Europe: Building Resilience in Uncertain Times".*

Context:

The European Union is facing growing geopolitical uncertainty, shaped by ongoing conflicts, shifting global power dynamics, and increasing pressure on democratic systems. Russia's war against Ukraine, transatlantic relations under severe strain, evolving European dependencies, and a more fragmented international order highlight the need for a stronger and more resilient Europe.

At the same time, internal dynamics such as political polarisation, the spread of disinformation, and declining trust in public institutions are putting increased stress on democratic societies. Rapid technological developments, including the growing influence of digital platforms and artificial intelligence, are further transforming how political information is produced, shared, and perceived.

These developments underline the close interlinkage between security and democracy. In an increasingly complex environment, strengthening resilience requires not only institutional responses, but also informed public debate, critical thinking, and active civic engagement.

In this context, the Summer School provides a platform to explore how Europe can strengthen its democratic foundations and security architecture, while addressing polarisation and disinformation, and fostering resilience and trust – particularly among young people.

Aims:

The aim is to support a new generation of young European experts, scholars, activists, and engaged citizens in their work for a new European togetherness. The interaction will provide young researchers and activists with knowledge, experience, and skills relevant to their professional careers and the future of Europe. Researchers and activists, starting from those that participated in the first edition of the Summer School in Cres in September 2022, organised in the framework of the *WB2EU project*, can form a vibrant network of enthusiastic young people and leaders able to meet political challenges, deepen the dialogue with decision-makers, and thus contribute to regaining a new European and democratic momentum.

The *Cres Summer School* will lead to

1. an increased understanding of Europeanisation and democratic developments among young researchers and activists,
2. new ties and networks between researchers, civic activists, and politicians,
3. new ways of influencing public debates through qualified, evidence-based, and yet politically engaged activities.

Target group:

- Max. 20 young researchers, active young civic activists, and engaged citizens

The participants (aged up to 28 years) will be nominated by partner institutions (one participant per partner). In addition, policymakers, experts, and relevant stakeholders will be invited to engage in dialogue with participants on key challenges related to democracy, security, and resilience in Europe.

Working methods and approaches:

- Lectures, workshops with presentations, and discussions of research projects and forms of civic activism
- Developing scenarios and action plans regarding the future of Europe
- A specific dialogue format dedicated to the meetings with stakeholders
- Preparation of a joint op-ed and a series of YouTube videos

The *Cres Summer School* will bring together politicians, policymakers, senior experts, and researchers from a range of European institutions, think tanks, and academic organisations. These may include representatives from institutions such as the University of Rijeka, the Royal Elcano Institute, ÖGfE, oiip, IRMO, CAS SEE, the Sciences Po Center for European Studies, as well as EU institutions, diplomatic representatives, and other relevant stakeholders.

The organising team of the *Cres Summer School*, in charge of coordination, providing leadership, moderation, and workshop guidance for the *Cres Summer School*, consists of Scientific Adviser at the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), *Senada Šelo Šabić*, Secretary General of the Austrian Society for European Politics (ÖGfE), *Paul Schmidt*, Senior Researcher at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) & Co-Director of the Center of Advanced Studies Southeast Europe (CAS SEE), *Vedran Džihić*, and Research Associate & Project Manager at ÖGfE, *Susan Milford-Faber*.

Working language: English

Programme:

Sunday, 20 September: Arrival
Monday, 21 September: Opening Session – Welcome, Keynote Addresses & Discussion, Introduction to the Working Methods and Programme, Lunch, Creative Workshop 1, Dinner
Tuesday, 22 September: Plenary Inputs & Discussion, Lunch, Creative Workshop 2, Videos, Dinner
Wednesday, 23 September: Plenary Inputs & Discussion, Lunch, Videos, Exploring the Island, Dinner
Thursday, 24 September: Plenary Inputs & Discussion, Creative Workshop 3, Future of EU – Drafting and creating a joint op-ed of the "Next Generation Europe", Video Sessions, Social Programme, Farewell Dinner
Friday, 25 September: Departure

Workshop topics:

Rule of law and democratic governance | European values and fundamental rights | Geopolitical shifts and security challenges in Europe | Geopolitical shifts and security challenges in Europe | Democracy under pressure: polarisation, disinformation and trust | Democratic resilience and civic engagement | Europe's role in a changing global order perspectives

Venue: Center for Advanced Studies - Southeast Europe (CAS SEE), Palace Moise, Zagrad 6, HR- 51557 Cres

Accommodation: Hotel Kimen, Melin I br. 16, HR-51557 Cres / Different Apartments in Cres Town / Center for Advanced Studies - Southeast Europe (CAS SEE), Palace Moise, Zagrad 6, HR- 51557 Cres

Accommodation and board (except breakfast) will be covered by the organisers. **Travel costs** will be reimbursed by the organisers after the Summer School. For that purpose, invoices, tickets, and boarding passes are needed.

Contact & information: Susan Milford-Faber, susan.milford-faber@oegfe.at

About the network:

The network consists of 18 renowned think tanks, do-tanks, higher education institutes and policy centres from the countries that will be most decisive for the enlargement process in the upcoming years.

Project initiators	
Austria	Austrian Society for European Politics (ÖGfE), Vienna
Austria	Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip), Vienna
Croatia	Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb
Spain	Royal Institute Elcano, Madrid
Western Balkan countries & neighbourhood	
Albania	Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), Tirana
BiH	University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Political Sciences
Kosovo	Change Experts Group, Pristina
Montenegro	University of Montenegro, Faculty of Economics, Podgorica
North Macedonia	EUROTHINK - Center for European Strategies, Skopje
Serbia	Foundation BFPE for a Responsible Society (BFPE), Belgrade
EU member countries	
Bulgaria	New Bulgarian University, Centre for European Refugees, Migration and Ethnic Studies (CERMES), Sofia
France	Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE), Nice
Germany	Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP), Berlin
Greece	Department of Political Science & International Relations, University of the Peloponnese, Corinth
Hungary	Andrássy University Budapest (AUB)
Italy	International Affairs Institute (IAI), Rome
Romania	GlobalFocus Center, Bucharest
Slovenia	Centre of International Relations (CIR) – University of Ljubljana

This network is based on the *WB2EU Network* that was established in October 2020 in the framework of the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Networks Project "**Europeanisation meets democracy from below: The Western Balkans on the search for new European and democratic Momentum (WB2EU)",** co-funded by the European Commission under its Erasmus+ Jean Monnet programme (project duration: 29.10.2020 – 28.10.2023). Further information: www.wb2eu.eu

More information on all Summer Schools since 2022, including the current one, please visit:
https://summerschool.oegfe.at/

With friendly support

In cooperation with the WB2EU Network