

# #OSCEyouth: Regional Connectivity & Millennials

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*Conference on Youth Connectivity in the Western Balkans*

Belgrade, 13-15 December 2017

Draft Agenda

**Wednesday, 13 December**

SCREENING OF A SHORT DOCUMENTARY

**KISMET – Young Women for Co-operation & Equality**

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*Kismet* is a story about young women from Albania and Serbia and made by young women from Serbia and Albania, who strongly believe that youth co-operation and gender equality are preconditions for long-lasting peace and progress. The short documentary delves into the lives of ten young women with different backgrounds and experiences, but all living in still predominantly patriarchal systems. The film zigzags between urban and rural areas of the two Western Balkan countries, between traditional and digital, between pressures and innovations, old narratives and new chances, asking – how similar are we in our differences? Why would a Serb want to learn Albanian? Why would an Albanian marry a Serb? Who is a 'foe', and who is a 'friend'? Can bridges between two countries be strengthened by young women playing football together or a few enthusiasts co-operating on Wikipedia? What are the solutions for the same challenges? Should young women accept their assumed "kismet" (Turkish for destiny or fate), or can they be "the strong warriors that they are," actively encouraging dialogue in this restless region?

*Welcome reception*

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Thursday, 14 December

## OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

### *Opening remarks*

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#### PANEL DISCUSSION 1

### Everything You Wanted to Know but Were Afraid to Ask: Who Are Millennials?

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Digital natives? Justin Bieber fans? Individualists? Narcissistic, yet more accepting of differences? Dedicated to wellness? What is certain is that millennials seem to be a generation endlessly dissected all over various media channels but also heavily researched in terms of their consumption, education, working, digital and other habits.

Millennials, who came of age as one millennium ended and another began and are also called Generation Y, Generation "What?" and the "Lost Generation", are often described as being flexible, critical, tech-savvy and the most educated generation so far. Nevertheless, they are also referred to as "Generation Me", indicating characteristics such as politically apathetic narcissism, selfishness, and an inability to commit, who have spent their formative years under a global veil of physical, economic, and political insecurity.

This panel will examine myths and truths about millennials, offering reflections on societal changes and opportunities enabled by the upsides of the digital generation, which is, according to *Time* (9 May 2013), "worldwide more similar to one another than to older generations within their nations".

#### PANEL DISCUSSION 2

### Likes and Links: Young People Engaging Digitally

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Digital media and online communication have become a constant in the lives of youth globally. Social network sites, smartphones, and the production of their own media content are now fixtures of youth culture. Digital media and technology have improved unimaginably the ways in which people establish and maintain connections, creating fertile ground for co-operation and constructive initiatives. However, an endless sea of available information and access to people and entities entails new challenges often beyond the technical abilities of older generations.

This panel discussion will delve into the question of how digital trends are changing connectivity between young people, alongside the pitfalls which may lurk. Can digital space be used for young people to discuss and to engage with multiple stakeholders and decision makers across borders and boundaries, and to actively shape societal agendas? What are the learning implications in a world of rapid digital development and how can young people be tapped for positive purposes? Are digital skills equally relevant for both rural and urban youth? And which digital skills contribute to the advancement of individuals and communities?

## ZOOM IN

### Humans of Albania and Serbia: From Distance to Connectivity

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The Balkan societies share both a common heritage and similar challenges. Nonetheless, young people are facing numerous obstacles, often emerging as a consequence of external and inner barriers caused by a lack of trust, a lack of information, and existing prejudices. Time has shown that only through joint action in promoting tolerance and by advocating solidarity, mobility and cooperation can progress be achieved in the region.

Since 2015, the OSCE Mission to Serbia, together with the OSCE Presence in Albania, has been supporting youth co-operation in this regard. Humans of Albania and Serbia is an independent initiative that emerged from the OSCE Mission to Serbia's project "Enhancing regional connectivity between Serbian and Albanian youth actors". The aim of the project is to support youth actors from Serbia and Albania in engaging in connectivity, co-operation, and dialogue.

*Research on social distance among youth from Albania and Serbia*  
*Human Rights Youth Forum – "Voice of Youth" recommendations*  
*Humans of Albania and Serbia – youthhumans.net*

## PANEL DISCUSSION 3

### Youth in the Western Balkans: Break on through to the Co-operation Side

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The need for youth co-operation and networking has been recognized by youth organizations and state institutions from Serbia and Albania. At the 2014 Western Balkans Summit in Berlin, the governments of Serbia and Albania announced their intention to strengthen youth co-operation between the two countries. In November that year, a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding was signed. The Memorandum calls for the promotion and development of joint policies, programmes, and actions in the fields of direct interest for youth, such as education, culture, and science, thereby paving the way for long-term co-operation between young people from both countries.

Since then, two significant new structures have been created in the Western Balkans to promote dialogue, co-operation, and mobility – the Regional Youth Co-operation Office and the Western Balkans Fund. Are such steps not only relevant for co-operation and reconciliation, but also for European integration of the Western Balkans?

Nevertheless, young people in the region have been finding other ways to connect to each other outside of the framework of these institutional mechanisms, be it digitally or through mobility schemes.

What are successful stories of co-operation in the Western Balkans? Will youth be the pioneers of European integration in the region? Are they connecting via shared challenges or similarities which break the language barrier? Or there is still work to be done *en route* to countering prejudices, passivity and ghosts from the past?

### *Closing remarks*

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This conference is the concluding activity of the OSCE Mission to Serbia's extra-budgetary project, "Enhancing regional connectivity among Serbian and Albanian youth actors". The project is implemented in partnership with the OSCE Presence in Albania and in close co-operation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia, the National Youth Council of Serbia, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Albania, and National Youth Service of Albania. The project is generously supported by the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Republic of Austria.