



YOUTH FOR DEMOCRACY

# MAGAZINE

MAY 2019



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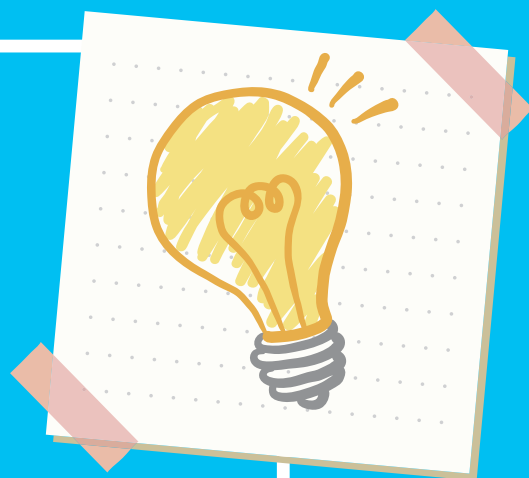
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# Introduction

Whether it is about volunteering, structured dialogue, civic engagement or voting, youth participation represents a key element in developing a sustainable community. Therefore, among the strategic directions Active Development Association ADA targeted since 2012 are promoting youth participation in the community, and also developing an European identity, civic spirit, and democratic competences among young people.

Youth for Democracy is, first of all, a youth initiative of ADA volunteers through which we want young people from Bacau county, and not only them, to understand the importance of active participation in their communities and to develop the feeling of being European.

In the first issue of Youth for Democracy magazine we invite you to discover the story behind this project, find out more about the European Solidarity Corps programme, but also about the European Parliament elections and other articles written by young Europeans.

**Bianca Cristina Butacu**  
Youth for Democracy coordinator



CORPUL  
EUROPEAN  
DE SOLIDARITATE



# YOUTH FOR DEMOCRACY



# YOUTH FOR DEMOCRACY

who, why, when and how

The idea of the Youth for Democracy project came from the experience of Active Development Association ADA in the youth sector and from the ADA volunteers who identified a series of problems and needs of active participation in the democratic life at youth level.

*„By implementing structured dialogue projects, such as Acting European 3 and Structured Dialogue Support Group – Support for Bacău’s Youth Initiatives, we have realized that, generally, young people from Bacău county don’t know the importance of active participation in the democratic life and aren’t aware of the role they have as citizens. This is visible especially among young people outside the Bacău municipality, where there aren’t many projects and initiatives that follow the stimulation of active participation among young people in the democratic life and develop democratic competences.”*

Victor-Cătălin TOMA, president of ADA



# YOUTH FOR DEMOCRACY

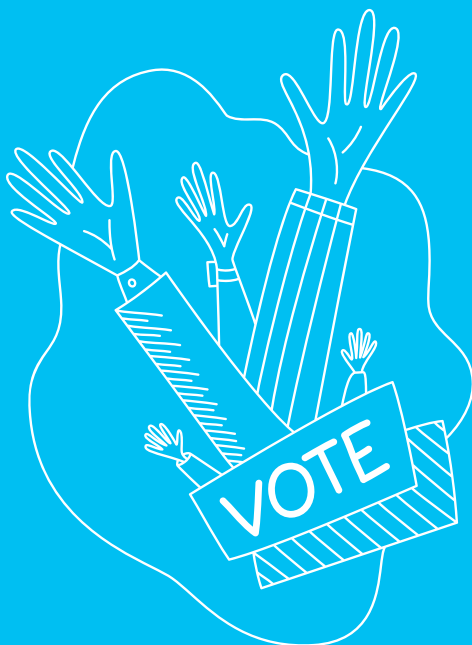
is our answer and solution

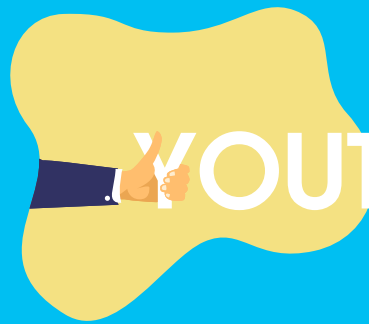
Youth for Democracy is our answer and solution to the needs of young people from Bacău county to be aware of the importance of active participation in the elections, in the democratic life of the society we live in and for their need to develop democratic competences and attitudes.

2019 is an important year that brings major changes at national and European level, through the European elections in May and the presidential elections in November. Therefore, one of the strategic directions assumed by the Active Development Association ADA for 2019 includes promoting active participation in the democratic life. Regarding this matter, through Youth for Democracy we want to act at county level and contribute to increasing young people's participation level in the democratic life with activities organized around Bacău County.

In the last 2014 and 2016 elections, at county and national level, young people between 18 and 24 years old had the lowest turnout compared to other age categories: 24-34 years, 35-44 years, 45-64 years and 65+ years.

From our experience with young people, we believe that the causes for this situation were: limited civic attitudes, limited democratic competences, weak information regarding the elections and the electoral system in those years, the lack of interest and motivation, the lack of trust in the authorities and the high rate of disinformation on social media regarding politics.





# YOUTH FOR DEMOCRACY

key activities and strategy

**February – May 2019**

## **Campaign on informing young people about the European elections**

to promote participatory democracy and civic engagement among young participants, to inform them about the electoral system and the elections, to raise awareness regarding the importance of going to vote. In the campaign, there will be 11 informing activities: 3 in the Bacău Municipality and the rest in Comănești, Săscuț, Buhuși, Onești, Moinesti, Târgu Ocna, Dărmănești and Podu Turcului.

**June – August 2019**

## **Three European Parliament Simulations**

to stimulate the interest of young people regarding the subjects that are currently debated by the authorities, encourage the debate of these themes by young people and form opinions on the topics, understand how an EU institution works.

**September –November 2019**

## **Six democracy workshops**

to promote the participatory democracy among young people and to teach them how to get involved in the community, the tools and opportunities they have as young Europeans.

**February –November 2019**

## **Online Campaign**

to promote participatory democracy, civic spirit and informing youth regarding the elections from 2019 and 2020.

### **The main topics approached during activities are:**

- The electoral system I
- Participatory democracy
- Civic engagement
- EU functioning system
- 2019 & 2020 elections

Through the entire project we aim to increase the collaboration between young people and their awareness regarding the importance of active participation and assuming the role of active citizens.



# EU & Youth

European Solidarity Corps





# EU & Youth

## European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps is the newest initiative and programme of the European Union dedicated to young Europeans, which joins programmes like Erasmus+ to offer young people the chance to learn, develop themselves and their local communities, and more.

The European Solidarity Corps brings together young people to build a more inclusive society, supporting vulnerable people and responding to societal challenges. It offers an inspiring and empowering experience for young people who want to help, learn and develop.

Taking part in a European Solidarity Corps project will be a significant achievement for any young person. It will be an asset when applying for a job and it will help you when you apply for higher education. The European Solidarity Corps could be a new opportunity for you to engage in a meaningful activity which could prove to be a stepping stone into employment.

After participating in a project you will be entitled to receive a certificate that documents your participation. You could use this when applying for jobs or further learning.

As well as being useful for your future career prospects, European Solidarity Corps you will receive a package of other benefits, which will vary depending on the type of project that you undertake. It will also depend on whether you are participating in the Volunteering or Occupational parts of the Corps.

If you decide to volunteer, you will not receive a wage, but will on the other hand be entitled to travel, lodging and subsistence as well as insurance coverage for the duration of the activity. You will receive relevant training before you start and after you arrive on site.

For participants doing an apprenticeship or a traineeship, there will, in some countries, be an employment contract established in accordance with the national regulations of the hosting country. A subsistence allowance will be provided.

For participants that are recruited for a job placement, there will always be a formal labour contract and a wage in accordance with local laws, regulations and collective agreements.



# EU & Youth

## European Solidarity Corps

### VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES

Individual volunteering lets young people participate in the daily work of organisations and lasts between 2 and 12 months, and in some cases, 2 weeks and up. Participants can volunteer abroad or in their country of residence for projects covering social inclusion, environment, culture, and more.

Volunteering teams are groups of 10-40 young people from at least two different countries who volunteer together for a period of between 2 weeks and 2 months. The costs of accommodation and food are covered. Participants also receive a small allowance for personal expenses.

### TRAINEESHIPS AND JOBS

Traineeships count as full-time work practice and last between 2 and 6 months – renewable once. They are paid for by the organisation responsible for the traineeship. Trainees develop their personal, educational, social, civic and professional skills.

Jobs are full-time and last between 3 and 12 months. They are paid for by the organisation employing the participant.

Traineeships and jobs can take place in the participant's country of residence or abroad. If abroad, participants receive a small allowance to help them relocate and settle in a foreign country.

### SOLIDARITY PROJECTS

Solidarity projects are initiated, developed and implemented over a period of 2 to 12 months by at least five young people who want to make a positive change in their local community. Young people who want to run a solidarity project in their country of residence must register in the European Solidarity Corps portal.

The Youth For Democracy project is funded by the European Union through the European Solidarity Corps, the solidarity projects action, being applied at the first deadline of the program (October 2018) and approved with the highest score in Romania.



# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT - THE CENTER OF THE EUROPEAN Democracy

The European Parliament is:

- The citizens' representative (500 millions) and it's located in the center of the European democracy;
- The only institution of the European Union (EU) chosen directly by the citizens;
- The European legislative body. More precisely, the EP co-legislates together with the Council;
- The European Committee supervisor, that holds the executive power in EU.

Above all, the European Parliament is an actor that fought for all the powers owned in the present: legislative, budgetary, external politics and democratic control over the other institutions.

EP has been through a rebranding as well as a metamorphosis of its powers too over the years. In the beginnings, the assembly of deputies of each member state wasn't named The European Parliament, but it was known as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

Thus, the institution whose members are chosen in the present, since 1979, directly went through some deep changes: from a gathering with named members to a Parliament chosen directly by the citizens, which sets the political agenda of the European Union.

As the European project began to define itself and take on a shape close to the present one, EP has undergone considerable changes, extending its role and identity. The zero moment was the accession of Greece, as a result of which the number of Member States has increased and automatically the number of deputies present in the EP. Therefore, it was decided, by mutual agreement, that the MEPs should no longer be appointed by the parliament of each state, but chosen directly by the citizens.





EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT - THE CENTER OF THE EUROPEAN

# Democracy

**What does it mean that deputies are directly elected and the domino effect caused by elections in the EU legislative process?**

Citizens vote the EP deputies; In turn, the deputies vote the chairman of the commission; The Chairman of the commission, together with the Member States (The European Council) propose the composition of The Commission (the Commissioners) which, in turn, will be voted in EP.

Subsequently, in the ordinary legislative process, the deputies fine and vote for or against all the draft laws proposed by the commission.

The Commission sets the direction (EU agenda for the next 5 years);

The draft laws are born, which the deputies elected on May 26 must vote in plenary (topics such as: budget, regional investments in member states, migration, monetary and economic policies, environmental protection, consumer protection, etc.)

Once it became a law, all Member States must then implement it at national level.

The European Union influences our daily lives, from work, family, health care, hobbies, travel, security, consumer choices, social rights, to the cities and regions of each of us, How? Through the developed and voted laws! Returning to the domino effect, the piece that kicks in, in the European context, is called the European elections, that is the vote of every citizen. So, each vote means a brick in the construction of the new EU direction. (Don't forget that!)

This year, it will be 40 years since the first European elections. In this context, the European Parliament has launched an apolitical informational campaign on this election and also on the importance of voting.

**#ThisTimeImVoting** is the name of the campaign and it brought together a beautiful, large and involved European community.

V O T E



How you want **our Europe** to look like?

# AMBASSADORS

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AMBASSADOR SCHOOL PROGRAMME

The European Parliament Ambassador Schools EPAS project answers to the needs of senior ambassadors (teachers) and junior ambassadors (students and youngsters) of being informed about the European Union, of knowing the European institutions and their role, of being aware of the importance of participating in the European elections and in the democratic life of the society they live in.

The program aims to create in the ambassadors schools European Union information points, where junior ambassadors as well as other students of the school can participate in 6 pedagogical modules on european themes and, in the perspective of the european elections this year, to promote the importance of voting among young people and developing the #ThisTimeImVoting campaign.



*„As students in a school involved in this program, we have opportunities to better know the European Union, to understand why it was formed and how it works. 2019 is an important year for all european youngsters and citizens, because we will elect the future of the European Union for the next 5 years. Through the activities of the EPAS program, we have developed abilities in documentation and taking action in the #ThisTimeImVoting campaign, abilities which will help us in the future and which we will certainly share with the community.*

*With the help of this program we will feel more motivated to involve in activities covering european topics and organize activities along our teachers to develop our school as an european school.”*

Teodora GAFTOI,  
president of the Students School Council & EPAS Ambassador.

# AMBASSADORS

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AMBASSADOR SCHOOL PROGRAMME

At national level "Grigore Moisil" National College Onesti is one of the 25 educational institutions selected by the National Education Ministry (MEN) to apply in the 3rd edition of the "European Parliament Ambassador Schools"-EPAS program (2018-2019 school year).

*„The ambassador-school role means for the senior ambassadors, which are the teachers involved in the program, the consolidation of European Union knowledge, as well as other aspects of european citizenship using the good practices exchange with the other schools from the EPAS network, at national and european level.*

*Through this program, the involved teachers develop their abilities to work with students outside classes, develop their teamwork abilities, to build efficient strategies to develop the activities of the program. EPAS - European Parliament Ambassador Schools offers the opportunity to increase the visibility and image of our highschool in the community, as well as consolidating the school-student relation and the school-family-community one.*

*Our school will remain an information point regarding the European Union after the end of the 2018-2019 program by continuing activities through partnerships, Active Development Association ADA being one of our partners, as well as through a new optional class that will be implemented in the school – European values and themes.*

Virginia Smărăndita BRĂESCU  
Educational counselor & european projects and programs coordinator





## POWER & DECISION

In less than two months, the Active Development Association ADA gathered together 100 young people from eight EU countries in two international youth exchanges. The projects focused on promoting active participation of young people in the democratic life.

Power of Youth and YOUTH Decide were implemented by Active Development Association ADA with the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.



# POWER & DECISION

## Power of youth

Youth participation in democratic life is a pillar of sustainable development of European Union and may take different forms:

- Participation of young people in representative democracy - standing for or voting in elections or membership of political parties
- Participation of young people in participatory structures: promoting the involvement of more young people in structures, such as youth organisations or issue-based non-governmental organizations or volunteering;
- Participation in debate: on youth or community issues;
- Developing democratic competences and knowledge.

According to Post-election survey 2014 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2014 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC ANNEX, done by DG for Communication - Public Opinion Monitoring Unit of the European Union, the European Union is facing a decline in citizens' confidence in European institutions and even if the young people are generally more positive about the EU, their age group is the one with the highest absenteeism in the 2014 EP elections.

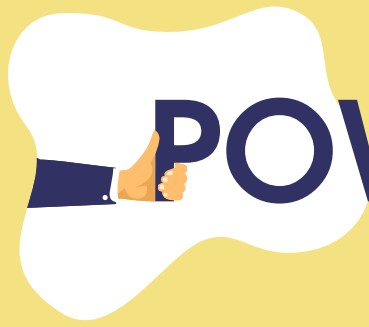
In this way, through POWER OF YOUTH, we aimed:

- To stimulate the active participation of 49 young people from 7 countries in the context of the 2019 EP elections.
- To develop democratic competences, the European consciousness and knowledge about the EU among the young participants.
- To develop participants' specific skills for developing online campaigns to promote the active participation of the young people in the local communities.
- To develop and implement 7 online national campaigns aiming to promote the active participation of young people in the context of the 2019 PE elections.

Power of Youth reunited 49 young people from Romania, Greece, Malta, Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, and Lithuania, who participated in sessions focused on youth participation and policies, European citizenship, European democracy and civic engagement.

The project main activity was an international youth exchange held in Slănic Moldova, Bacău County, Romania, in March 2019.

The entire project have been carefully planned as an intervention plan for the identified needs and problems of the local community, but also to develop high quality learning outcomes and a sustainable impact for all actors involved.



# POWER & DECISION

## Power of youth



*A project that made 7 countries go through a challenger experience, on one hand because of the difficulties of facilitating the sessions and on the other hand the less time we had to organize it all.*

*ADA makes this new challenge possible because they believe in the power of the youth from these countries, they made them experience new methods to gain initiative, to be creative, and also not to be afraid of public speaking, which means believing in ourselves.*

*Everyone had his own role in this project and made it amazing, having good organized sessions, workshops and, the most interesting, what it means to be a member in a European Parliament.*

*I am really grateful that I participated, that I shared and also discovered those amazing and creative people on this project, and also to ADA for doing it so easy to interact with them.*

*I believe that our voices will be heard in all Europe and that every single one of us counts and has something to say. This project gave us the power to see through the barrier we had because of the society where we are living, and I am sure that our campaign will help others.*

*Thank you, ADA, for this amazing experience, and also Asociación Mundus, for letting me be a part of this project!*

*Soufyane, participant from Spain*



*Soufyane M. (Spain)  
Participant in Power of Youth*



# POWER & DECISION

## Youth Decide

The project aimed to promote European citizenship among young people and their participation in the decision-making process at European level, in an assumed and responsible way, starting from 3 main linked problems: the low degree of confidence of young people in European institutions and the increase of the degree of radicalization of young people, high degree of misinformation of young people on the background of intensification of fake news in social media, low degree of participation of young people in elections for the EP.

### Objectives:

To increase by at least 50% the degree of confidence in the EU of 42 young people by developing democratic competences and their knowledge regarding the mechanisms of EU functioning during the implementation of the project.

To develop the critical thinking and responsibility online of 42 young people during the implementation of the youth exchange.

To develop a guide for promoting critical thinking among young people and to help them to recognize and combat fake news online.

To increase the participation of young people in the 2019 EP elections (compared to 2014) in the local communities of the partners by initiating and conducting campaigns to inform the youth about the EP 2019 elections.

The project's main activity was a youth exchange, with Program countries, which took place in Bacău, Bacău County, Romania, between 3rd and 15th April 2019 and attended by 42 young people between with the ages between 17 and 30 years old and 7 group leaders from 6 countries from the European Union: Finland, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Spain.



*"The project was one of the best experiences I had so far. The working session helped me find out more about the European Union through non-formal education methods. I'm sure that these types of projects can help young people be more aware of the importance of being active, a thing that I'm for sure going to promote back home."*

Denilson, Portugal

“Through these two projects we wanted to stimulate the active participation of almost 100 young people from different European countries in the context of the European Elections, to develop their democratic competences, and their knowledge on the E.U. and its functioning system. Moreover, we wanted to develop their communication and digital competences in order to run online campaigns on promoting youth participation and the European Elections.

Victor Cătălin Toma  
President of ADA





# YOUTH & DEMOCRACY

Article by Ritienne Cauchi, Malta

Susan B. Anthony stated „Someone struggled for your right to vote, use it.“

Democracy is strengthened with votes. By voting, citizens express what they think is best in their interest, more specifically in their collective interest. There's no use sugarcoating it - citizens elect high officials to act on their behalf. They trust them with their eyes closed, to commit the actions necessary for a holistic society.

Looking back, one may realize that it took centuries of struggles to establish the rights we have today. Rights that many take for granted, such as, but not limited to; the right to vote, the right to have freedom of expression, the right to believe in any religion and the right to live. These rights shape our identity. So, I'd like to ask, what is the real reason for youths to not participate in elections?

Our ancestors have fought for our freedom. They have sacrificed their lives for what we have today. But most youths are not interested in politics, they do not take the initiative to protest, they do not express themselves or vote. Is this what our ancestors wished to see?

I would like to address those youths through this article. It's the power of your vote that keeps our elected officials accountable. They are the ones who can represent your opinion, and the change you want to see. Through your vote, you can determine the future of your children. We speak of representation, we speak of democratic principles, we speak of active participation, but without your vote, nothing of this is possible. Individually, it may seem you're just a drop of water, but collectively, we are an ocean.





# YOUTH & DEMOCRACY

Article by Stavroula Chaloulakou, Greece

In an era characterised by a moral crisis, encouraging young people to get involved is undoubtedly a challenge. But does youth engagement actually make a difference?

Youth CAN make the difference! By their participation in decision-making processes, young people gain the courage and the power they need to make their voices heard. As a result, their involvement does not only affect their lives but also the community. Unfortunately, not all those who are able to vote will, that's why the positive results of youth participation in the elections have to be clear.

It's completely logical for youth to be indifferent about politics, as they have other priorities. However, years go by and you will surely care in some years, so why not start now? Actually, the younger you are, the more will you depend on the results of the elections.

It's YOUR choice! Voting gives you the opportunity to shape your future. It's YOU who decides what is the best for you, not your parents or anybody else.

Voting is a right! We all know cases of countries whose citizens are denied the right to vote. They are denied the right to decide for their own lives, but WE are lucky to have this right. Why not take advantage of it?

Eliminate the stereotypes about youth's indifference. It's a common stereotype that youth is not interested in elections or politics in general. Get involved and prove them wrong!

Education plays a major role in this. However, a proper education curriculum is not provided, as reflected in the Youth Electoral Study, where it was found that citizenship education in Australian schools has at best been marginally successful and is required to raise levels of democratic engagement. This can be achieved by alternative methods that will live up to youth's expectations and needs. Youth can also take the initiative and participate to a variety of programs offered by Erasmus+ , where this indispensable knowledge is gained by non-formal methods.

You have possibilities! You have choices! GO TO VOTE!





# PROJECT'S UPDATES

## 11 INFORMING EVENTS READY FOR THE YOUTH OF BACĂU COUNTY

Youth for Democracy represents an intervention plan for Bacău County regarding participatory democracy.

The project responds to the need of the youth of Bacău to become aware of the importance of active participation in the life of the community, including going to vote, but especially to develop certain democratic skills and knowledge about the European Union and its institutions.

„Youth for Democracy” was launched on 6 March 2019 at the „Best Practices in Youth Participation” conference organised within the youth exchange „Power of Youth” project implemented by ADA.

The first stage of the project follows the promotion of youth participation at the elections for the European Parliament in May 2019 through a campaign around Bacău county. And so, in the entire County (Bacău, Moinesti, Onesti, Comănesti, Târgu Ocna, Sascut, Dărmănești, Podu Turcului and Buhusi) 330 youth aged between 16 and 24 will take part in informing and training activities on participatory democracy promoting and civic involvement. Through non formal education methods, especially participative and creative ones, which will prompt learning, the youth will discover more about the European Union, the importance of the participation in the democratic life and the presence at the polls, but specifically about the incoming electoral elections.

Through the implementation of this campaign, we want to contribute in assuming the identity and role of European citizens by the youth of Bacău, but also to increase the level of cooperation between the youth from Bacău County.







# TESTIMONIALS

THE AWARENESS AND PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

”

*“I think the most important thing that we as youngsters do is to inform ourselves. That is why I enjoyed this activity so much. I was able to learn new things, but also to strengthen some of the ideas I already had.. And the group activity was such an amazing idea because we were able to deepen and better understand the idea of the project.”*

Teodora, Onesti

”

*“I am glad to have taken part in ADA's activity as it was so interesting, informative and interactive. The best part of the activity was the making of those flipcharts with information regarding one of the E.U.'s institutions. I think that it is good for us, highschoolers, to participate in such activities, especially to enrich our culture of the Union in which we live.”*

Andrada, Onesti



# TESTIMONIALS

THE AWARENESS AND PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

”

*„I found it a super interesting activity. I learnt new things that I think every youngster would be better off knowing. I also enjoyed working in groups, interacting with others and talking openly about our thoughts on the European Union, but also exploring more of the benefits that it offers to us.”*

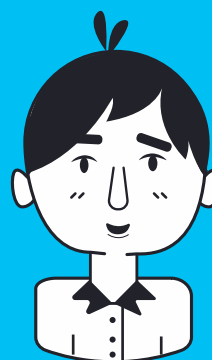
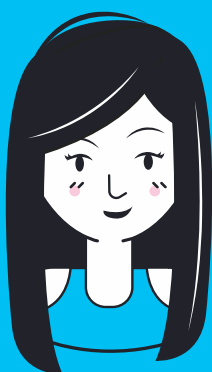
Claudia, Bacău

”

*“During the activity, I understood better what the European Parliamentary elections of May 26, this year, mean. I understood that for young people and not only it is important to vote for our future, as members of the EU. Pupils, students benefit from numerous scholarships abroad at universities or high schools. The euro ensures the common foundations for greater stability and economic growth, people, goods, services and capital can move in the EU almost as freely as in the same country, etc. The main objectives of the European Union, in my opinion, are: maintaining peace between states, democracy, freedom, respect for citizens' rights and freedoms and at the same time, ensuring a good life for citizens.”*

Lusia, Moinesti





The project **YOUTH FOR DEMOCRACY** was implemented by **Asociația pentru Dezvoltare Activă (ADA)** with the support of the **European Solidarity Corps** Programme of the European Union. The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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