



EU-CHILDOCRACY

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WP4 – Co-Creative Democracy Lab – Bulgaria

Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law

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Democracy Co-Creative Lab

In April 2025, we prepared and conducted a Co-Creative Democracy Lab with the participation of children and young people from our partner schools and mentors from Fine Acts.

Ahead of the Democracy Co-Creative Laboratory, BCNL contacted all participating schools and youth groups to help prioritise the topics for the local campaigns. Based on the Needs Assessment Report, students selected the five themes that resonated most with them:

- **Drug addiction in schools**
- **Harassment and inclusion in schools**
- **Bullying in schools**
- **Youth civic participation**
- **Digital rights and media literacy**

Participants voted through an online form, and the two most popular topics from each school — as well as from the mixed group of the National Youth Forum — were chosen as the focus of the “EU at Your Doorstep” campaigns.



The Lab

The activities of the Democracy Co-Creation Lab took place on April 25–26 in Sofia. The lab brought together participants from Neofit Rilski School in Dermantsi, 157 School "Cesar Vallejo" in Sofia, and young people from the network of the National Youth Forum. In total, **52 students** took part (27 girls and 25 boys), supported by **6 teachers**, **3 BCNL staff members**, and **10 facilitators and mentors** from the creative social studio Fine Acts.

The **first day** was dedicated to introducing participants to the power of activism and awareness campaigns. Tutors and mentors from Fine Acts, along with representatives from the volunteer platform TimeHeroes, presented inspiring examples of impactful campaigns. During these sessions, the students explored:

- International examples of environmental and human rights campaigns
- Volunteer initiatives in Bulgaria led by young people
- Creative approaches in advertising and tools for boosting public engagement
- Key communication channels for reaching wider audiences

After these inspiration sessions, participants were divided into five teams based on their survey responses prioritizing campaign topics. According to the students' votes, the campaigns were:

- **157 School, Sofia:**

Addictions and Drugs in Schools – How Can We Make Schools Safer?

Youth Civic Participation – How Can We Make Young People's Voices Stronger in School Governance?

- **Neofit Rilski School, Dermantsi:**

Bullying in Schools – How Can We Address Bullying and Create Schools Where Everyone Feels Accepted?

Addictions and Drugs in Schools – How Can We Make Schools Safer?

- **National Youth Forum Group:**

Youth Civic Participation – How Can We Make Young People's Voices Stronger in School Governance?

In the second part of the lab, the teams began brainstorming how to raise awareness about the issues they had identified, engage more people, and bring these topics to the attention of decision-makers.

On the second day, the teams continued working on developing specific campaigns aimed at mobilizing support for civic initiatives. Guided by mentors from Fine Acts, the five teams refined their campaign ideas. These campaign strategies will be launched as part of WP7, starting in May 2025.

By the end of the school year, the teams are expected to organize their plans and communicate the importance of the chosen topics to friends, family, teachers, and parents why these topics are important. During the summer break, they will continue refining their ideas — taking time to rest and reflect — and after the start of the school year they will start putting their ideas into action.

Follow up meetings with all teams in June will focus on refining and finalizing the plans. Teams that are ready to implement them over the summer will receive support to carry them out.

But the lab wasn't only a space for learning among the participants — it was also an inspiring experience for the mentors and facilitators. As one of them shared, *"In just a day and a half, I learned more from you than what I was able to give you — you think so quickly!"*

The reflections shared by some mentors speak volumes about the energy, potential, and shared purpose that emerged during the Lab:

"This is a simulation: It's okay to make mistakes because that's how you learn. The goal is to understand the direction we are heading in."

— *Mentor*

"An amazing group, truly dedicated — we shared a strong common theme, and the sharing itself was the most important and valuable part, despite our differences. There are ideas to work on for the next two years!"

— *Mentor*

"When we talked about motivation, the same values and principles kept coming up — the idea that you can build something more meaningful, both for yourself and for those around you. This one table is like a small community; the room itself is a small community. We need to be more connected."

— *Mentor*

"We work with young people, and our impressions are very different from the image often portrayed in the media — you are different, but you can work together. You joke around, but it's positive. The moment we asked you about the problems you see, you didn't stop — you clearly need a channel to share your thoughts. Don't worry if something doesn't go exactly as planned — if not many people show up, if teachers don't like it... move forward boldly!"

— *Mentor*

"Keep moving forward with courage — you have incredible potential, and we can't wait to see the amazing results of your campaigns!"

— *Mentor*



Related materials:

- [We promised and we delivered – the entire EU Childocracy group under one roof!](#) (29 April 2025) – Post about the Democracy Lab on BCNL Facebook page with more photos from the event.
- [Young voices from Dermantsi continue their journey in the world of EU Childocracy](#) (29 April 2025) – Posted on the Neofit Rilski School website.