7th STUDENT CONFERENCE ON

International Relations

BELGRADE · 15 & 16 APRIL 2027

CALL FOR PAPERS

Youth, Democracy and Political Agency in a Changing World Order

Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, 15 & 16 April 2027

We are pleased to invite you to the 7th Student Conference on International Relations (SCIR) on 15 and 16 April 2027 at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade (FPS UB), organised by the Centre of International Relations at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana (FSS UL) and the Ljubljana-based Student Association for International Relations Globallis, in partnership with the Department of International Studies at the FPS UB. The event is part of the CERV-funded project **"Engaging Young People and Citizens in Shaping Policies for a Reformed Europe – EUINSPIRE"**. We cordially invite Bachelor's, Master's and PhD students working in the broad field of International Relations and related disciplines to participate.

Contemporary international politics is marked by multiple and intersecting crises, ranging from democratic erosion, geopolitical tensions and ongoing conflicts to climate change, technological disruption and growing social inequalities. These developments raise fundamental questions about the future of democracy, the resilience of political institutions and the possibilities for meaningful political participation. At the same time, young people are increasingly asserting their agency in challenging existing political arrangements, mobilising against democratic backsliding, corruption and injustice and demanding a greater role in shaping the societies and political orders in which they live. Such engagement extends beyond streets and digital platforms: it also takes shape through critical dialogue, intellectual exchange and collective knowledge production within universities and other spaces of learning and civic engagement.

Against this backdrop, the 7th Student Conference on International Relations aims to provide a dedicated platform for young scholars to critically engage with contemporary international challenges and reflect on the possibilities for political agency, democratic participation and collective action. It encourages participants to examine the structures and practices underpinning today's political and international orders, question existing power relations and explore alternative visions of political, social and economic organisation. Particular attention is given to the relationship between the European Union and the Western Balkans, as well as to the opportunities and challenges facing young people in contributing to democratic processes and shaping Europe's future.

By bringing together diverse perspectives and epistemologies, the conference aims to cultivate critical thinking, dialogue and agency, empowering students to develop their own perspectives on pressing international issues. In this spirit, it provides an opportunity to explore how young people can move beyond the position of observers of political developments to become active participants in public debate and contributors to policy discussions and decision-making processes.

The conference welcomes contributions addressing a broad range of themes in International Relations, including, but not limited to:

- International order and global governance, with a focus on small states
- International Political Economy
- Democracy and democratic backsliding
- European integration and EU–Western Balkans relations
- International security and conflict
- Political participation and social movements
- Climate politics, environment and energy
- Digital technologies and AI in international politics
- Youth politics
- Discourses on violence

For the seventh consecutive year, SCIR offers students an opportunity to develop and practise their scientific research, writing and presentation skills in a simulated academic setting through several thematic panels. Above all, the conference seeks to encourage young, ambitious scholars to deepen and refine the academic knowledge acquired during their studies by receiving constructive feedback and recommendations on their research and presentations from peers, established researchers and university teachers. We also hope that the event will serve as a bridge between the (national) academic and study spheres. A specific goal is to foster collaboration between EU-based academic institutions and universities from the Western Balkans. Successful student authors receive a Certificate of Internationalisation.

We invite all interested students to participate in the conference and contribute to the development of a growing network of young scholars committed to critical academic inquiry, international collaboration and actively engaging with the challenges and possibilities shaping our shared future.

Read about the previous Ljubljana Student Conference on International Relations 2026 here.

Thematic Panels and Research Topics

To facilitate academic exchange and discussion, the conference features several thematic panels, each focusing on a specific area of research and chaired by a member of the Academic Board. These panels provide suggested thematic tracks and points of departure for research paper submissions, rather than an exhaustive list of topics covered by the conference.

Participants are welcome to submit contributions addressing any of the themes outlined below, as well as original research engaging with the broader conference theme *"Youth, Democracy and Political Agency in a Changing World Order"* but not necessarily fitting into one of the listed panels. We particularly encourage submissions that bring forward new perspectives, interdisciplinary approaches and critical insights into contemporary international developments. Depending on the range and focus of submissions, additional thematic panels may be organised to accommodate different research interests and ensure meaningful academic exchange.



1. **Foreign Policy of Small States**

   Chair: Prof. Dr Ana Bojinović Fenko (University of Ljubljana)

Within the post-World War II liberal international order, providing respect for international law and sovereign equality, small states have developed a range of active foreign policy strategies. Despite their constraint of power as capability, they have increasingly been able to rely on soft power as a strategy of influence, such as persuasion-based negotiation and mediation, shelter-seeking and bandwagoning, balancing, donorship and agenda-setting, often pursued through smart-state strategies and niche specialisation. Some small states have also relied on attraction, developing exemplary domestic policies and cultivating credible international track records, enabling them to even pursue a hard power strategy of critique. With the dramatic change of international order in the 21st century, this panel will ask which factors constitute and drive current small states' foreign policy strategies.

2. **International Political Economy**

   Chair: Assoc. Prof. Dr Josip Lučev (University of Zagreb)

The students will explore the various growth models and their obstructions (corruption, clientelism, competitiveness) in the European periphery. How can the Mediterranean South and the post-socialist East of Europe overcome their structural issues and achieve robust and stable growth? What is the role of institutions in achieving development? The panel also invites discussion on how integration into the global and European political economy shapes domestic economic trajectories and policy choices. By examining questions of dependency, structural transformation and the politics of reform, the panel seeks to uncover the interplay between international markets, state capacity and development strategies across Europe's peripheries.

3. **Climate Politics, Environment and Energy**

   Chair: Assist. Prof. Dr Danijel Crnčec (University of Ljubljana)

Climate change, environmental degradation and the global energy transition are increasingly shaping international relations. As states seek to balance climate objectives, energy security, economic development and geopolitical shocks, new forms of cooperation, competition and interdependence emerge. This panel invites students to explore the political, economic, security and governance dimensions of climate, environmental and energy challenges at the global, regional and local levels. Contributions could address issues such as (but not limited to) climate diplomacy, environmental governance, energy transition, resource politics, sustainability, climate justice and the role of international organisations. Papers focusing on the European Union and the Western Balkans, and their role in climate, energy and environmental governance, are particularly welcome.

4. **Artificial Intelligence and the Future of International Relations**

   Chair: Assist. Prof. Dr Danijel Crnčec (University of Ljubljana)

Artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming a source of economic influence, military capability, diplomatic leverage and strategic competition. This panel explores how AI may transform power relations among states

and alter the roles of governments, international organisations, corporations and citizens in global affairs. Students may examine competition over semiconductors, data, computing capacity, technical standards and highly skilled labour, as well as emerging technological dependencies and inequalities. Other possible topics include autonomous weapons, intelligence gathering, cybersecurity, disinformation, algorithmic governance, surveillance and the use of AI in diplomacy and crisis management. The panel also invites discussion of international efforts to regulate AI and the challenges of developing common rules amid geopolitical rivalry. Particular attention may be given to accountability, human rights, democratic governance and countries with limited technological capacity. Contributions addressing the European Union are equally welcome, including its approach to AI regulation, digital sovereignty, international standard-setting, technological competitiveness, security and relations with other major global actors.

5. **Rethinking European Integration: Challenges and Future Directions**
   Chair: Assist. Prof. Dr Jure Požgan (University of Ljubljana)

The European Union faces an increasingly complex environment shaped by intersecting internal and external challenges, geopolitical tensions and persistent economic uncertainties. While crises such as the Eurozone crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and Russia's war against Ukraine have, in different ways, encouraged policy convergence and prompted the development of new EU capacities, others, including the migration crisis and Brexit, have exposed and reinforced existing divisions and institutional weaknesses. These developments raise important questions about the future of European integration and the EU's ability to respond to growing expectations and emerging challenges. This panel invites contributions examining the impact of multiple crises on European integration, EU governance and institutional capacities. It welcomes research on policy coordination, institutional and political reforms, enlargement, differentiated integration, internal divisions and the EU's role in a changing international order. Contributions may also explore the gap between what the EU is expected to deliver and what its political, institutional and material capabilities allow it to achieve.

6. **European Union Normative Power: Legal vs. Political Considerations**
   Chair: Prof. Dr Julija Brsakoska Bazerkoska (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje)

The European Union's role as a global actor is based on its actorness, which needs to accommodate normatively grounded EU values and effective, influence-aspiring geopolitical interests. This theme calls for research that examines how these two dimensions intersect as complementary or conflictual in the EU's strategic positioning and actions in global governance. If the Brussels effect explained how the EU has expanded its standards externally, de jure and de facto, recent events such as the war in Ukraine or the new Trump administration have put EU legal norms, standards and policy abroad under stress. In light of this, we may ask what types of legal and policy reaction the EU is having with regard to its vision abroad and the promotion of its values and interests.

7. Youth Politics, Participation and Political Mobilisation

Chair: Assist. Prof. Dr Ajda Hedžet (University of Ljubljana)

Young people are increasingly visible in political debates and struggles over the future of democratic societies, yet their forms of political engagement extend far beyond conventional participation and electoral politics. This panel invites contributions examining youth politics and political engagement across diverse contexts, including social movements, protests, activism, resistance, civic initiatives and institutional forms of participation. It welcomes research exploring how young people articulate political demands, mobilise around shared concerns, challenge existing power structures and seek to influence political processes and decision-making. Contributions may also examine the factors shaping youth political participation, including digital technologies, social inequalities, generational identities and changing forms of political representation.

8. Discourses on Violence in Democratic and Non-Democratic Settings

Chair: Dr Polina Zavershinskaia (University of Padova)

Violence takes different forms and acquires different meanings across political systems, yet its manifestations are often shaped by how power, authority and legitimacy are constructed and maintained. This panel invites contributions examining discourses on violence in democratic and non-democratic settings, including how political actors, institutions, media and social movements frame, justify, contest or legitimise the use of violence. It welcomes research on state and non-state violence, political repression, securitisation, structural and symbolic violence, protest and resistance, as well as the discursive construction of threats and enemies. Contributions may explore how democratic and authoritarian regimes alike invoke security, order, stability or national interest to legitimise coercive practices, and how these narratives are challenged by different actors.



Important Dates

19 November 2026	Release of the Call for Papers
9 December 2026	Students indicate their interest in participating through the Google Form on the Globallis website
16 December 2026	Online lecture “How to make a research plan?”
31 January 2027	Deadline for students to submit a Research Plan
8–12 February 2027	Thematic online workshops held by Chairs
19 February 2027	Deadline for student authors to submit an improved Research Plan based on input given at the online workshop
26 February 2027	Student authors receive Chairs’ feedback on their Research Plan and notification of (non)acceptance
29 March 2027	Deadline for student authors to submit the final Research Essay
15 & 16 April 2027	**Conference takes place at the FPS UB in Belgrade.** All student authors who have submitted their Research Essay will participate in the conference and orally present their Research Essay as part of the conference programme.
July 2027	Student authors submit Research Essay abstracts for publication. Delivery of Certificates of Internationalisation to successful students

Participation Details

Please indicate your interest in participating by 9 December 2026 through the Google Form available on the Globallis website. For any questions, please contact us at konferenca@globallis.org.

The organiser will fund two days of accommodation in Belgrade for all accepted student authors. A selected number of travel grants will also be offered.

In addition to coffee breaks with snacks, a joint breakfast and lunch will be organised as part of the conference.

Organising Team

Local Host	Main Organiser	Programme Chair
Assoc. Prof. Dr Goran Tepšić	**Hana Štefanec**	**Assist. Dr Melika Mahmutović**
FPS UB	FSS UL	FSS UL

2027 Academic Board

Prof. Dr Julija Brsakoska Bazerkoska, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Iustinianus Primus Faculty of Law, Skopje, North Macedonia

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Assist. Prof. Dr Danijel Crnčec, FSS, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Assist. Prof. Dr Alice Cunha, NOVA University Lisbon, Portugal

Sara Cosatti, PhD candidate, University of Trieste, Italy

Prof. Dr Nemanja Džuverović, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, Serbia

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