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Editorial

Moldova at a Crossroads: Presidential Election, Referendum, and the struggle for European Integration

On 20 October 2024, the Republic of Moldova held both a presidential election and a referendum that could shape the country's future for years to come. The day was not without controversy, as allegations of foreign interference, vote buying, and cyberattacks, particularly from Russia, marred the electoral process. Despite these challenges, the election moved forward, and with no candidate securing over 50% of the vote, Moldova is now preparing for a second round of the presidential election on 3 November, pitting the incumbent Maia Sandu against former Prosecutor General Alexandr Stoianoglo.

In the first round of voting, Maia Sandu, the pro-European reformer, won 42.45% of the vote, while her rival, Alexandr Stoianoglo, secured 25.98%. Stoianoglo, seen as representing the more pro-Russian factions in Moldova, now poses the greatest challenge to Sandu's efforts to maintain the country's pro-EU course. Other candidates, including politician Renato Usatii, who garnered 13.79%, are likely to influence the second-round dynamics, with both candidates seeking to attract votes from across the political spectrum.

The Referendum: A Narrow Win for Constitutional Change

Alongside the presidential election, Moldova held a crucial referendum on 20 October to amend the constitution. The outcome of the referendum was far from an overwhelming endorsement. The "Yes" vote prevailed by the slimmest of margins—just 50.39%, according to the Central Electoral Commission. This narrow victory has injected a sense of ambiguity into

what was intended to be a clear statement of Moldova's collective desire for European integration.

While the passage of the referendum is seen as a victory for pro-European forces led by Maia Sandu, the close result has underscored the deep divisions within the country. Many hoped the vote would reflect a broader consensus, but the razor-thin margin reveals the challenges ahead in uniting the nation around this historic decision. Moldova now faces the task of navigating these internal fractures while maintaining its course toward EU membership, a path fraught with both opportunities and obstacles.

Russia's Ongoing Interference: A Direct Threat to Moldova's Democracy

The 2024 elections in Moldova have been heavily marked by foreign interference, particularly from Russia, which has long viewed Moldova as part of its sphere of influence. President Sandu has accused Russia of orchestrating a wide-ranging campaign to disrupt both the presidential election and the referendum, with the goal of undermining Moldova's pro-European trajectory.

"There is clear evidence that criminal groups, working together with foreign forces hostile to Moldova's interests, sought to buy off 300,000 votes, which is fraud of unprecedented scale," Sandu said following the first round. These groups, she added, were primarily targeting voters to sway them toward pro-Russian candidates and to vote "No" in the referendum.



Earlier in October, Moldovan police revealed that they had traced payments to as many as 130,000 voters, allegedly funded by a network led by Ilan Șor, a fugitive politician living in Moscow, convicted in absentia for fraud. In September, Moldovan police reported that \$15 million had been transferred as part of a vote-buying scheme. According to the chief of police, Viorel Cernauteanu, the recipients of these payments were identified because they had provided personal information to open new bank accounts, which were then used to distribute the illicit funds.

Russia's interference extended beyond vote buying. There were also reports of disinformation campaigns aimed at sowing confusion and distrust among voters, as well as malicious cyber activities targeting Moldova's electoral infrastructure. These attacks have been aimed at destabilizing the electoral process and undermining the support for the country's pro-European orientation. Despite these efforts, the Moldovan authorities managed to safeguard the overall integrity of the election, though the scale of interference has raised alarms both domestically and abroad.

Conclusion: Moldova's fragile democracy under siege

As Moldova moves closer to the second round of the presidential election, the 2024 elections will be remembered as a critical juncture for the country. The narrow passage of the referendum represents a win for those seeking to modernize and strengthen Moldova's democratic institutions, but it also highlights the precarious balance the country must maintain as it navigates foreign influence and internal divisions.

Russia's efforts to disrupt both the election and referendum through illicit financing, disinformation, and cyber activities have shown just how fragile Moldova's democracy remains. The second round of the presidential election will be a key test for Moldova's democratic resilience and its ability to withstand external pressure. All eyes are now on 3 November, as the nation prepares for the decisive run-off that will shape its future.

Oxana Bordian
PAS Youth International Secretary



Past Events

YEPP Study Days in Naples

Last month, YEPP embarked on a mission to Italy for its first event following the European Election campaign. Members of the Board and delegates from across Europe gathered in Naples from September 27th to 28th for its Study Days, following the EPP Study Days held earlier in the same week.

In Naples, the program began with a city center tour hosted by Forza Italia Giovani, featuring a delegation of young members from the Campania region. YEPP delegates had the opportunity to learn about the city's rich history and its cultural and political role in unifying Italy into a single nation.

After the guided tour, the main activities took place at the Apple Developer Academy, a partnership between the University Federico II of Naples and Apple. "The Academy is the only one of its kind in Europe and provides training not only for those with coding or computer science experience, but also for young people interested in areas such as design and business," explained Simon-Pietro Romano, a professor at the Academy and member of the selection board. "Every year, we select more than 300 students from across the world. The program is free for the students, and thanks to European and regional funds, they receive an allowance to cover their expenses."

Our delegation participated in an insightful workshop led by Raimonds Bricis, Social Media Coordinator for the EPP Group in the European Parliament. He provided expert advice on creating impactful social media strategies, drawing on case studies from his team's past campaigns. Following the workshop, participants broke into working groups to discuss current challenges related to their respective topics and draft resolutions for the Council Meeting in Turin.



Past Events

Workshop Ukraine

“The only guarantee for Ukraine to achieve peace is to join NATO. Otherwise, they will never be truly safe from Russia.” Iryna Shev, a Ukrainian and Portuguese journalist, has been reporting on the conflict from the region in recent months. She has lived alongside young soldiers and ordinary citizens who experience war in their everyday lives.

On 30th September, YEPP hosted Iryna Shev for an online seminar about the war. The meeting was moderated by Eoin Scarlett, Chair of the Working Group on Foreign Affairs, and also featured an intervention from Oleksandr Afanasiev, YEPP Vice-President based in Kyiv. Iryna Shev opened the meeting by offering participants a

unique auditory experience: she shared a video without images, which captured the sounds of civilians heading to a bomb shelter after a bombardment. Participants could hear the voices of children, adults, and animals spending hours underground together. That day, 8th July, more than 30 people died in Kyiv after a children’s hospital was targeted by Russian missiles.

With YEPP, Shev shared insights from the battlefield and discussed future prospects. She explained that among soldiers, there is no rotation; they are exhausted, weapons do not always function properly, and there is waning faith in Western support. However, they remain motivated and are determined not to give up. To improve battlefield outcomes, Kyiv urgently needs weapons delivered on tight deadlines and quick responses from the West in authorising missions and targets. Delays in delivery often result in the loss of tactical advantages.

The session was highly interactive, with participants discussing current public sentiment towards the conflict and the potential impact of the U.S. elections on it.



Photo by Iryna Shev - A young doctor treating another doctor's wounds after Russian forces attacked a pediatric hospital in Kyiv while civilians try to put the fire out and search for survivors under the rubble.



Photo by Iryna Shev - Ukrainian soldiers watch the national team play at the European Championship a few km's from the frontline, just after they left their position and took a shower.

Past Events

YEPP Board Meeting in Munich

Between the 4th and the 6th of October, YEPP held its Board Meeting in Munich, Germany, where members had the privilege of visiting the headquarters of the Christian Social Union (CSU), the mother party of the YEPP-affiliated organisation Junge Union Bayern (JU).

A highlight of the visit was an informal yet insightful discussion with Manfred Weber, President of the European People's Party and leader of the EPP Group in the European Parliament. Weber reflected on the significant success the EPP achieved in last spring's European elections, emphasising the party's ongoing commitment to addressing the challenges faced by Europe today.

Board members had the chance to ask the chairman for his opinion on the future European scenario following the appointment of the new Commissioners. The meeting reaffirmed the EPP and YEPP's commitment to shaping Europe's future based on shared democratic values.



Past Events

Shaping International Relations – YEPP Council Meeting in Turin

YEPP gathered in Turin for the third Council Meeting of this year, held from 10th to 13th October, under the title "Shaping International Relations: The Global Impact of Migration Trends." Organised by Forza Italia Giovani with the support of the EPP, this event provided a significant opportunity to address critical issues facing Europe today.

The gathering commenced on Thursday evening with a reception hosted by FIG President Stefano Benigni, alongside Secretary General Simone Leoni and International Secretary Ludovico Seppilli, who welcomed delegates from across Europe.

On Friday, the delegates visited the National Automobile Museum, where they engaged with prominent leaders, including Antonio Tajani, EPP Deputy Chairman and Deputy Minister of Italy and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Alberto Cirio, Governor of the Piedmont Region and Chairman of the Italian National Delegation to the EU Committee of the Regions. Tajani emphasised the crucial role YEPP plays, representing both the present and the future of the European People's Party family, expressing satisfaction with the EPP's great success in the European elections. Our President, Lídia Pereira, highlighted Forza Italia's strong pro-European

stance, adding that, thanks to Tajani's commitment, the party continues to advocate for a united and prosperous Europe, dedicated to tackling the challenges ahead.

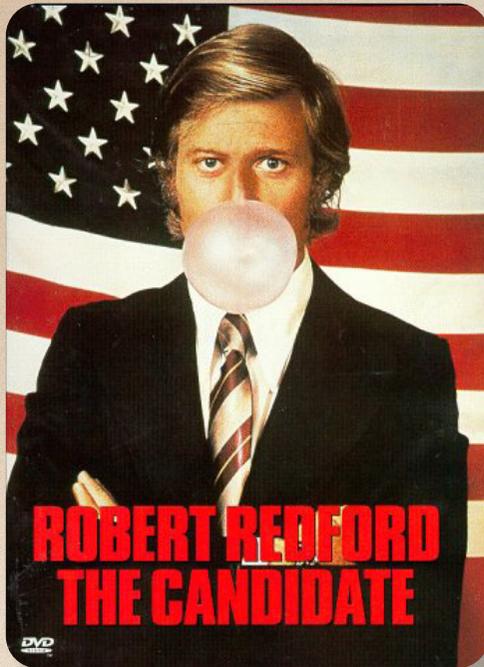
The following day featured a series of panels addressing pressing topics, including the challenges of migration from the Mediterranean region, the geopolitical implications of the Ukraine conflict, and the strategic and economic impacts of emerging technologies. EPP President Manfred Weber delivered a keynote address, emphasising the importance of a coordinated European response to these multifaceted challenges.

The highlight of the event took place on Saturday during the Council Meeting, where delegates deliberated and approved five crucial resolutions. Among these, one addressed the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, condemning the fraudulent 2024 presidential election and the repression of the opposition by the Maduro regime. Another resolution called for the EU to enhance innovation, support startups, and streamline regulations to better compete with the US and China. Additionally, the Council approved a resolution supporting EU efforts to mitigate cyber risks in finance while advocating against excessive regulations that stifle innovation and contractual freedom. Another important resolution urged revising EU Association Agreements to allow candidate countries access to the CJEU, enhancing legal protection and reducing oligarchic control.

This Council Meeting reinforced YEPP's commitment to shaping a proactive European response to global challenges, ensuring that the voices of young centre-right leaders are heard in the ongoing discussions about the future of Europe.



5 Movies on US politics



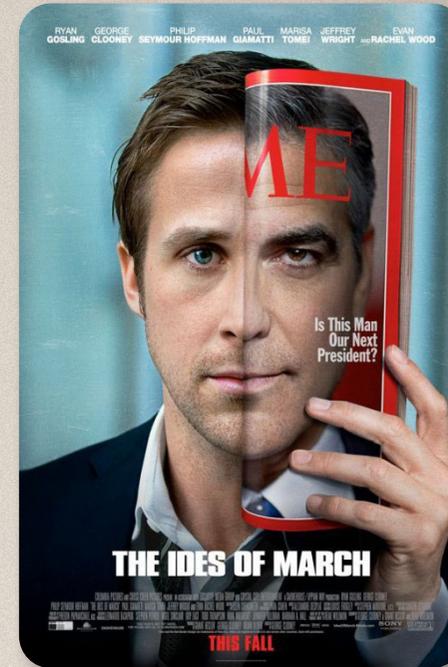
The candidate

Provides a critical look at the political process, highlighting the conflict between personal ideals and the realities of political ambition. It follows the story of Bill McKay, a charismatic lawyer who is persuaded to run for the US Senate in California. As he embarks on this campaign, he navigates the complexities of political strategy, media manipulation, and the compromises necessary to appeal to voters (Disney Plus, Prime Video, Apple TV, Hulu).



The front runner

Explores themes of media intrusion, personal privacy, and the shifting dynamics of American politics through the story of US Senator Gary Hart, the leading Democratic candidate in the 1988 presidential race. It follows Hart's rise in the polls, fuelled by his charisma and innovative ideas, and his subsequent downfall following a scandal involving his extramarital affairs (Prime Video, Apple TV).



The ides of March

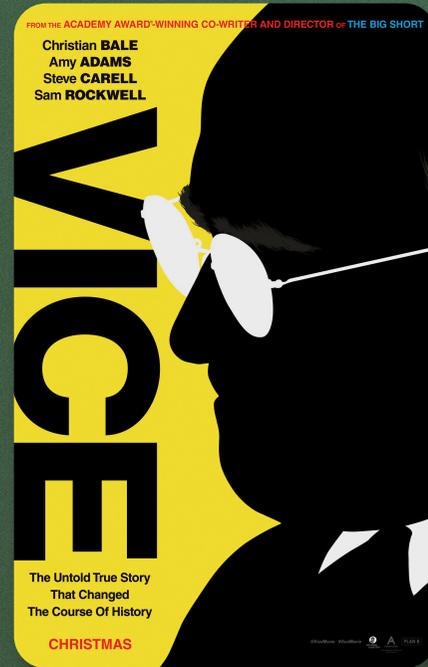
Is a political drama about a young campaign staffer played by Ryan Gosling, who works for a presidential candidate played by George Clooney. As the campaign heats up, the campaign staffer navigates the competitive world of politics, facing betrayal and moral challenges that force him to rethink his ideals and ambitions (Apple TV).

Movies on the US elections



The apprentice

Is a biographical drama released in 2024 that delves into Donald Trump's journey in the New York real estate scene during the 70s and 80s, together with his difficult relationship with lawyer Roy Cohn. The film is currently showing in theatres.



Vice

Is a biographical comedy-drama that chronicles the political rise of Dick Cheney, played by Christian Bale, from his humble beginnings to becoming Vice President under the leadership of George Bush. The film explores Cheney's influence on key events such as the Iraq War and his controversial policies, blending humour with political commentary (Apple TV, Prime Video).



News from EU Bubble

Highlights from the past weeks

EU Referendum: The pro-European faction in Moldova reported a narrow victory in a referendum assessing public opinion on whether the country should pursue EU membership. On Sunday night, 20th of October, with 90% of votes counted, the pro-EU side was trailing by a few points. However, the gap ultimately closed, with 50.4% of Moldovan voters in favor of amending the constitution to support EU membership. The campaign was marked by allegations of Russian-funded propaganda opposing the referendum.

Middle East: In a span of a few days, Israeli military forces eliminated leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah in separate attacks in Lebanon and Gaza. Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader for 32 years, was killed in an airstrike in Beirut on September 28. Yahya Sinwar, a top Hamas leader and planner of the October 7 terrorist attack, was also killed in an armed conflict on October 16. Despite the death of this prominent hardliner against a possible ceasefire, experts argue that the loss is unlikely to significantly impact Hamas's ongoing military operations.

Elections in Europe: Georgia's recent parliamentary elections, held over the weekend, have sparked widespread controversy with allegations of electoral interference surfacing before and during the voting process. Critics claim that the ruling Georgian Dream party used voter intimidation tactics and connections to criminal networks to sway the election outcome. In Bulgaria, elections were also held, where the center-right party GERB emerged victorious with 26.46% of the vote. GERB will need to form a four-party coalition or a shadow majority to govern.

Legislative pipeline

Parliament has approved up to €35 billion in loans to Ukraine, supported by frozen Russian assets. This funding is part of a G7 package to provide up to €45 billion in financial aid. The loan will be disbursed by 2025 and is conditional on Ukraine's commitment to democratic reforms and anti-corruption measures. Revenues from frozen Russian assets will help repay the loan, as the EU continues to support Ukraine against Russia's ongoing war.

The hearings for Commissioners-designate will run from 4 to 12 November. European Parliament committees will assess each candidate's suitability for their assigned roles. Depending on their portfolio, candidates may face one or multiple committees. After the hearings, committee coordinators will evaluate the candidates, and the results will be reviewed by the Conference of Presidents, which gathers the President of the Parliament and leaders of the Parliamentary groups. President von der Leyen will then present the full College of Commissioners in plenary. Parliament must approve the Commission before formal appointment by the European Council.

What's next

The presidential election in the U.S. is approaching, with candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump campaigning in swing states one week before Election Day. Pollsters currently show Harris leading by less than 2 percentage points nationally. This year, several U.S. states have reformed their vote-counting systems to improve the speed of results. Compared to the 2020 election during the COVID-19 pandemic, fewer voters are expected to use mail-in ballots, which take longer to process. Initial results are anticipated on election night, with final tallies expected within two days.

Media worldwide are covering the election not only for its significant impact on international relations but also for allegations of foreign interference. The Department of Homeland Security has launched an investigation into Chinese hackers accused of infiltrating Republican communications. In September, authorities issued countermeasures to limit Russian broadcasters in the U.S., citing alleged attempts to influence the election.

COP29 will convene in Baku from November 11 to 22. The 'Conference of the Parties' is an annual event that brings together governments committed to environmental action under the United Nations. This year, the conference will focus on mobilising financial support for climate action in developing countries.

Get to Know: KDMS, Slovakia

The Christian Democratic Youth of Slovakia (Kresťanskodemokratická mládež Slovenska, KDMS) was established in the early 1990s as the youth wing of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), with a mission to engage young Slovaks in political and civic life. Throughout its history, KDMS has played a significant role in shaping both national and European youth politics, advocating for Christian democratic values and fostering young leaders committed to improving Slovakia's future.

Foundation and Early Success

KDMS was formed as a key part of the efforts of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) to engage younger generations in the political process. From its start, the organization grew quickly, attracting thousands of members across Slovakia. In its early years, KDMS was actively involved in campaigns, policy debates, and youth activism, becoming one of the most vibrant political youth organizations in the country. It proudly bears its title as the oldest youth political organization of Slovakia.

One of the most enduring symbols of KDMS's spirit is its annual Ďumbier event. Since the 1990s, KDMS members have climbed Mount Ďumbier to honor the cross placed there by the organization—a powerful symbol of the group's values and resilience. This tradition not only celebrates unity and faith, but also strengthens the

connection between KDMS and Slovakia's cultural heritage, reminding members of the organization's roots while inspiring them to look toward the future.

KDMS has always had a strong international presence. It was one of the founding members of the Youth of the European People's Party (YEPP), aligning itself with other like-minded center-right youth organizations across Europe. This connection allowed KDMS to influence European policy discussions, promote Slovakia's interests, and provide its members with a broader platform for engagement. KDMS also became a member of the International Young Democrat Union (IYDU), expanding its reach to global discussions on democracy, freedom, and economic development.

Political Influence and Civil Activism

The organization has played an active role in national politics, contributing to parliamentary campaigns and successfully having its members elected to the National Council of the Slovak Republic. This involvement allowed KDMS to bring fresh, youthful perspectives to the legislative process, advocating for education reforms, economic innovation, and social issues that resonate with the younger population. In addition to political campaigns, KDMS has organized several popular protests over the years, rallying against policies that conflicted with its values and advocating

for center-right policies. These protests have not only raised public awareness but have also cemented KDMS's position as a key player in civil activism.

The 2016 Parliamentary Defeat and Decline

Despite its early success, KDMS, along with the senior KDH party, faced a significant setback in 2016 when KDH failed to secure parliamentary seats for the first time in its history. This marked a turning point for KDMS, leading to a sharp decline in both membership and activity. The organization struggled to maintain its influence, and internal structures weakened during this challenging period.

The defeat of 2016 was more than just a political loss; it led to a period of reflection and restructuring for KDMS. The organization saw a decline in participation, and it became clear that significant efforts would be needed to restore its standing both within Slovakia and on the international stage.

The Path to Revival

Despite these challenges, the last 3-4 years have seen a remarkable revival of KDMS. Through the dedication of its members and leadership, KDMS has managed to rebuild itself from the ground up. Operating without state funding (since Slovakia does



not provide financial support for youth wings of political parties), KDMS has relied on the commitment and resourcefulness of its members to reignite the organization.

This revival has included reactivating local chapters, increasing engagement in political discourse, and once again fielding multiple candidates in parliamentary elections. Young candidates from KDMS have continued to bring fresh ideas, focusing on education, technology, and youth employment—issues that are vital for Slovakia's future. Many members were instrumental in bringing KDH back to the Parliament through their expertise during the campaign process, too.

Present and Looking Ahead

Today, KDMS stands strong, once again playing a vital role in shaping Slovakia's youth political landscape. Many influential personalities—ranging from politics to business and other sectors—proudly identify as former members of KDMS, underscoring the organization's extensive impact over the decades.

The organization remains active in both national and European politics, advocating for Christian democratic values and engaging young people across the country. KDMS continues to participate in international platforms such as YEPP and IYDU, ensuring that Slovak voices are heard in broader political conversations.

The future looks bright for KDMS. After successfully navigating the challenges that followed the 2016 decline, the organization is now thriving, with its members actively involved in campaigns, protests, and policy discussions. KDMS has proven that it is not merely a political organization but a dynamic movement capable of adapting, evolving, and leading future generations.

In summary, KDMS has reclaimed its position as a key player in Slovak youth politics, contributing significantly to national political discourse. The organization embodies resilience and renewal, providing a vital platform for young Slovaks to engage in shaping their country's future.

By Adam Bátovský

YEPP Treasurer



Latest Polls: Harris vs. Trump

in the 2024 Race



6 Days to
Elections

Latest Polls: Harris vs. Trump

in the 2024 Race

Who is leading national polls?

According to national polls by 538/ABC News, Kamala Harris is leading the race by less than 2 percentage points (the figure shows an average of the national polls).



The race in the swing States

Figures show the distance in percentage points between the 2 candidates in the swing States, decisive to win the race.



Social Media Highlights

y youthepp



This weekend, YEPP traveled to Munich for our Board meeting

[View all 256comments](#)

7 of October

y youthepp



From October 10th to 13th, YEPP gathered in Turin...

[View all 35comments](#)

15 of October

youthepp



symbol of conservative strength, now a
y tale...

[4 comments](#)

YEPP in the future



Microsoft event

In early November, YEPP will hold a special roundtable event in collaboration with Microsoft, bringing together key voices on sustainability. The event will feature YEPP President Lídia Pereira and Vice President Derek Groot, alongside several participants.

This roundtable will foster an open discussion on sustainability, offering a platform for participants to exchange ideas, share perspectives, and explore innovative solutions to sustainability challenges. We're excited to host this event in partnership with Microsoft, reinforcing our commitment to addressing one of the most pressing issues of our time.



Council Meeting in Athens

We are thrilled to announce that the next YEPP Council Meeting will be held in Athens, Greece, from 21st to 24th November 2024. Organised by ONNED and YEPP Deputy Secretary General Vassilis Sakellaris, this gathering will bring together delegates from our 63 organisations.

The focus of the meeting will be on securing Europe's future, exploring critical themes such as demographics, energy, and digitalisation. Greek politicians and representatives will play a significant role in sharing the good practices that have contributed to Greece's recovery in recent years. This will be a unique opportunity for our delegates to engage in meaningful discussions, share insights, and develop strategies to address the pressing challenges facing our continent.



Transatlantic Youth Summit

Building on the success of our previous editions in 2014, 2015, and 2023, YEPP is excited to bring the Transatlantic Youth Summit back to life!

This initiative aims to create a dynamic network of young American and European leaders ready to tackle the policy challenges shaping our future. At the core of this effort is our commitment to Atlanticism as a guiding principle for the next generation.

Stay tuned for more updates as we develop this important project!

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