



CCIS

Center for Comparative
and International Studies

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

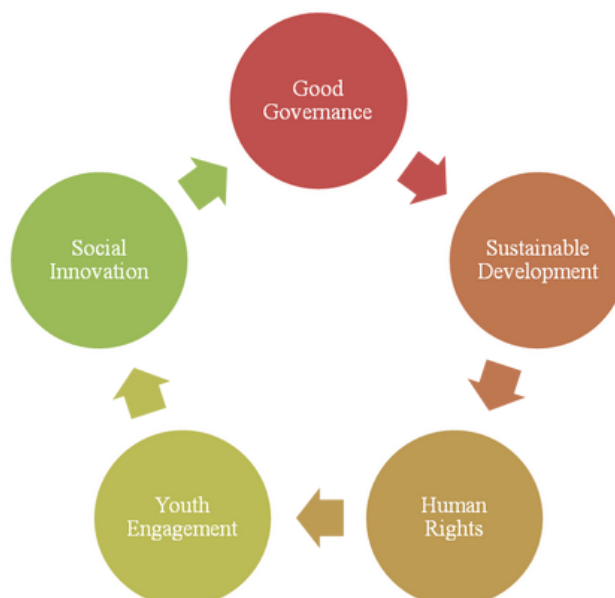
WHO WE ARE:



Center for Comparative and International Studies (CCIS) is an Albanian leading non-profit organization focused on sustainable regional development, promoting international cooperation by leveraging expertise to address good governance issues, inform decision-making, and guide change in partnership with governments, businesses, civic groups, media and universities.

With its very qualified expertise and consultants and excellent performance CCIS seeks to be a leading Think Tank supporting regional structures and activities, by building local capacity, strengthening and expanding its international network, ensuring financial sustainability and managing change within its organization.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS:



COST ACTION INFO DAY IN TIRANA

CCIS participated in the Cost Action Info Day in Tirana, highlighting our 5 years of active involvement in Cost Actions. This network has helped expand our collaborative partnerships across Europe, contributing to various EU-funded projects. Grateful for the opportunities!



COST ACTION MEETING IN TIRANA. MAKING EARLY CAREER INVESTIGATORS' VOICES HEARD FOR GENDER EQUALITY (VOICES)

For the past five years, CCIS has actively contributed to COST Actions, focusing on the knowledge triangle of education, research, and innovation. Recently, we participated in a three-day meeting in Tirana with young researchers, scholars, and civil society members from 37 countries. The meeting, part of the Cost Action VOICES, addressed gender equality challenges for Early Career Investigators (ECIs) and emphasized the need for concrete policies at the European level.



BIG NEWS FROM U2SID PROJECT

On February 26, 2024, the Steering Committee approved the Digital Literacies Accelerator Program, led by Università del Salento and University of Belgrade under the U2SID project (WP2). This initiative enhances digital skills through mobility programs, hands-on training, and multi-sector collaboration, ensuring innovation in education.



THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY OF DIGITAL LITERACIES IN U2SID PARTNER UNIVERSITIES REPORT

The Needs Assessment Survey on Digital Literacies (Nov–Dec 2023) in Albania and Montenegro provided critical recommendations for evidence-based interventions in digital literacy programs.

The findings—covering infrastructure, library access, training, curriculum adaptation, and stakeholder engagement—will shape the Digital Literacies Accelerator Programme and the Digital Transformation Challenge under the U2SID Project.



ENHANCING DIGITAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES, WHILE DEFINING IT QUALIFICATIONS AND CURRICULA WITHIN ALBANIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM – U2SID WORKSHOP IN TIRANA

As a key partner in the U2SID Erasmus+ Project, CCIS is committed to monitoring its impact on digital transformation in the Western Balkans.

On March 27-28, 2024, our team attended a workshop at the Mediterranean University of Albania, focusing on enhancing digital literacy in higher education. Discussions revolved around integrating digital competencies into curricula, fostering university-industry collaboration, and aligning education with labor market needs. The event, part of the U2SID Digital Accelerator Program, engaged academics, students, and industry professionals to strengthen Albania's higher education system for the digital age.

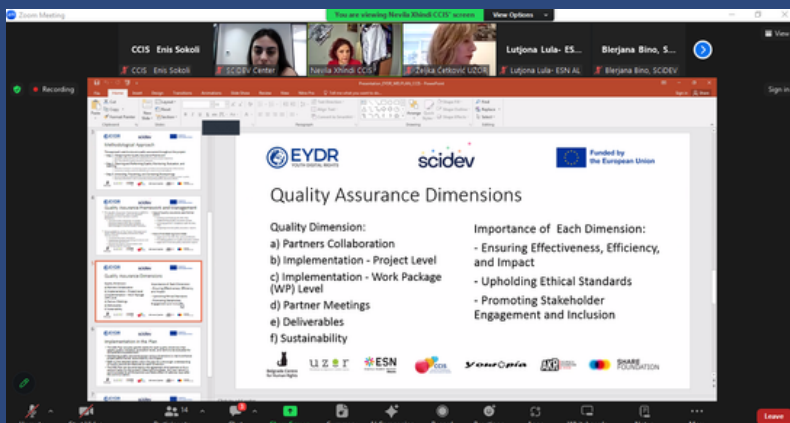


ENSURING QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS: CCIS'S MEL PLAN FOR THE EYDR PROJECT

Since November 2023, CCIS has been actively engaged in the EYDR project, leading the development of a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan to ensure effective implementation, quality control, and continuous improvement.

Key activities included:

- Defining key performance indicators (KPIs) and a monitoring framework to track progress.
- Implementing quality assurance measures such as training and capacity-building initiatives.
- Facilitating reflection sessions and knowledge-sharing to foster a culture of learning and adaptation.
- Conducting periodic evaluations to assess project impact and sustainability.



PARTICIPATION IN THE U2SID PROJECT WORKSHOP AT SALENTO UNIVERSITY.



The CCIS team is proud to have contributed to the U2SID project workshop at Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell'Innovazione – Uni Salento.

As part of the Erasmus+ CBHE project (2023-2025), this workshop focused on harnessing digital innovation for a brighter future. Through presentations and active participation, CCIS played a key role in advancing the project's objectives, reinforcing its commitment to digital transformation and capacity building.

From April 12-19, 2024, CCIS proudly joined European Youth Week, reinforcing our commitment to empowering youth in Albania, the Balkans, and the EU through Erasmus+, CERV, IPA, and RYCO projects.

Our key objectives:

- ◆ Encourage youth civic engagement and voting
- ◆ Highlight positive youth developments
- ◆ Promote Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps opportunities
- ◆ Address democratic participation, digital access, and youth policy

CELEBRATING EUROPEAN YOUTH WEEK 2024!



PROMOTING AND CELEBRATING EUROPEAN DIVERSITY MONTH 2024



CCIS, in collaboration with ANAD-SHKSHNJND, is advancing career development for sign language interpreters in Albania, supported by UNDP. Through diversity and inclusion, we foster innovation and workplace resilience.

As part of European Diversity Month 2024, we celebrate the power of differences in shaping a forward-thinking work environment. Embracing diversity is not just a choice—it's a strategic necessity.

PARTNERSHIP CONTINUATION IN THE DIGITCRESHE PROJECT

CCIS is excited to strengthen its partnership in the DIGITCRESHE Project, focused on digital transformation in education for the cultural and creative industries.

Key objectives include:

- ✓ Enhancing higher education quality in the Balkans.
- ✓ Integrating digital tools & methodologies in creative industries.
- ✓ Aligning curricula with labor market needs through innovative learning approaches.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

PROJECT OBJECTIVES WILL BE ATTACHED THROUGH THE FOLLOWING WORK PACKAGES:

CREATIVE LABS

Creative Lab will be set up in each WB partner. Institutions will allocate space for this Lab and will acquire audiovisual equipment and software licenses for creative software. These labs will support the implementation of the Master classes and Intensive Study programmes, as well as the online lecturing of courses and programmes in the CCS.

TEACHER MOBILITY AND TRAINING

Teachers from WB HEIs will participate in several mobility courses to EU HEIs where they can benefit from the local expertise.

3 MASTER CLASSES

Academic and Industrial experts from EU organizations will lecture master classes (online and in site) in WB HEIs focusing on advanced topics.

4 INTENSIVE STUDY PROGRAMMES

Short (1-week) courses in different formats (workshops, summer schools) will be organized in the WB countries, receiving professors and experts from all the organizations.



5 ONLINE LEARNING AND COMMUNITY PLATFORM

This online platform will be more than a simple learning platform. It is going to be a practical community, that will gather all actors in the sector, and allow the enrolment in a mentoring program. The main idea is for mentors to help students gain skills and give them guidance to build their own social enterprise. The platform will support the delivery of the learning modules.



PROJECT GOALS

- TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OFFER OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEI) IN THE BALKAN COUNTRIES
- TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO USE NEW DIGITALIZED METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS IN THE FIELD OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
- TO INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS THAT EXPRESS HIGHER SATISFACTION FROM THE SKILLS GAINED IN THE NEW CURRICULA AND HIGHER EMPLOYMENT RATES.
- TO DEVELOP, ADAPT, OR RE-DEFINE THE CURRICULA, COURSES, LEARNING MATERIALS, AND TOOLS IN HEI IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
- THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT, THERE WILL BE AT LEAST 30 JOINT ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES FOR COOPERATION AMONG THE PARTNERS FROM THE BALKAN COUNTRIES AND COOPERATION WITH HEI FROM THE EU MEMBER STATES.

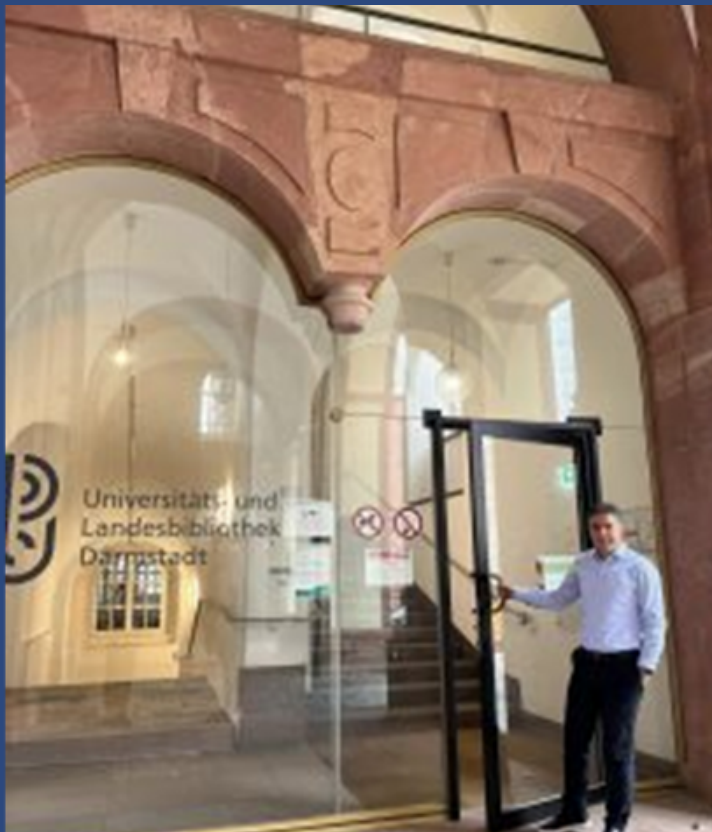
THE PROJECT WILL ALSO INVOLVE A BROAD RANGE OF STAKEHOLDERS (REPRESENTATIVES FROM HEIs, ECONOMISTS, LABOUR MARKET) IN A PROCESS OF PARTICIPATORY, BOTTOM-UP, ANALYSIS AND PLANNING OF THE NEW CURRICULA, COURSES, LEARNING MATERIALS, AND TOOLS IN ORDER TO HARMONIZE THE COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS OF THE GRADUATES WITH THE LABOUR MARKET.



CCIS AT THE SECOND IGCOORD CONFERENCE

On June 13-14, 2024, CCIS participated in the Second IGCOORD Conference at Technische Universität Darmstadt, discussing policy coordination, tools, and challenges in solving complex issues.

Our research also explored collaboration within the COST Association and the European Cooperation in Science and Technology, reinforcing our commitment to impactful policy research.



CCIS AT NECE PREP-LAB 2024

On June 18-19, 2024, CCIS participated in the NECE Prep-Lab in Tirana, engaging with local and regional stakeholders on key issues:

- ✓ Civic Education & Youth Engagement – Strengthening cross-sector collaboration and fostering youth participation.
- ✓ Policy & Reform – Advocating for policies that support education, culture, and creative industries.
- ✓ Environmental & Digital Challenges – Addressing sustainability, media literacy, and brain drain.

CCIS shared insights from EU-funded projects like U2SID, DigitCreshe, EYDR, and YO-Model, reinforcing our commitment to youth and civic innovation.



MIDTERM EVALUATION REPORT DELIVERY FOR U2SID PROJECT.

OCCIS delivered the mid-term evaluation report for the Erasmus+ CBHE U2SID Project, presented during the project's Steering Committee Meeting. The report highlights significant contributions to digital literacy in Albanian higher education institutions (HEIs), aligning with national priorities and European standards.

- ◆ Relevance – Addresses critical digital literacy needs, leveraging EU expertise.
- ◆ Effectiveness – Strong project management, inclusive participation, and validated research.
- ◆ Efficiency – Well-structured budgeting, monitoring, and dissemination efforts.
- ◆ Sustainability – Ensures long-term digital literacy impact beyond the project.
- ◆ Impact – Strengthens HEIs' digital capacities and fosters engagement.

EYDR RESEARCH FOCUS GROUP IN TIRANA

In July 2024, CCIS hosted a national research focus group on digital rights and youth perceptions in Albania as part of the EYDR Project. While young people are informed about their digital rights, they are eager to learn more and engage further.

EYDR, funded by Erasmus+, empowers youth by enhancing digital skills and raising awareness of their rights, ensuring balanced protection and participation in digital democracy.



CCIS TEAM'S EXPERT REPRESENTATION IN A STSM IN PORTUGAL

CCIS participated in a Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) in Porto, Portugal, under the COST Action on Intergovernmental Coordination (CA 20123). The mission focused on collaboration between civil society and the industry sector, engaging municipal officials in Vila Nova de Gaia and Santa Maria da Feira. Key goals included forming collaboration teams, promoting governance, and fostering sustainable partnerships.

CCIS PARTNERSHIP IN THE DIGITCRESHE PROJECT IN THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP IN SALENTO, ITALY

The CCIS team participated in the International Workshop on Virtual International Learning at Università del Salento, Italy, from July 3-5, 2025. The event, part of the COWEB Erasmus+ project, focuses on digital transformation in education for Western Balkans HEIs.

CCIS also shared insights from the Digitcreshe project, which aims to enhance Higher Education in the Creative and Cultural Industries through digital innovation. The workshop provided valuable opportunities to collaborate and discuss the development of Creative Labs and a virtual learning platform for the region.



CCIS AND EYDR PROJECT PARTNERSHIP.

CCIS Center is proud to partner with the EYDR Project, focusing on youth participation in digital democracy. Read the full op-ed by Kristel Hasani to explore current trends and future opportunities in digital activism: [Read the Op-Ed.](#)

This initiative, funded by Erasmus+, empowers youth in the Western Balkans to develop digital skills and understand their digital rights, paving the way for greater participation in digital democracy.

“ENVIRONMENT FOR NON-ENVIRONMENTAL CSOS” ONLINE WORKSHOP

On August 27, 2024, CCIS participated in the “Environment for Non-Environmental CSOs” online workshop, designed for youth CSOs from the WBT region.

Key takeaways included:

- ✓ Understanding how environmental issues impact non-environmental CSOs.
- ✓ Insights on the EU Green Deal and Green Agenda.
- ✓ The role of EU institutions in the green transition and the power of collaboration between CSOs.
- ✓ The importance of youth advocacy and media in driving change.
- ✓ Funding opportunities and engaging youth in policy improvement.

EUROPEAN DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR VICTIMS OF TOTALITARIAN REGIMES 2024

At CCIS, we honor the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes by reflecting on the importance of historical remembrance.

We’ve implemented two youth projects on this topic, co-funded by the European Commission’s Europe for Citizens (now part of the CERV Remembrance program), as well as a related project supported by Tirana Youth Capital and the Municipality of Tirana.



DIGITCRESHE ERASMUS+ PROJECT: CCIS WORKSHOP ON BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP IN ALBANIA'S CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS



The Digitcreshe Erasmus+ project, led by Polytechnic University of Porto, tackles the skills gap in Albania's Cultural and Creative Sectors by aligning education with industry needs. CCIS, alongside Brain Nest Institute, hosted a workshop that equipped youth activists with tools to ensure graduates gain the practical skills required for success.

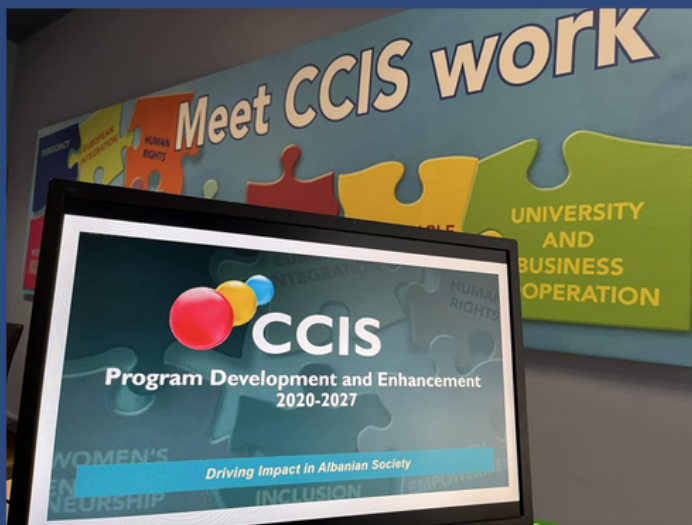
SCIDEV AND UZOR PRESENT THE FINDINGS FROM THE MAPPING OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN ALBANIA AND MONTENEGRO

On October 24, 2024, SCiDEV and UZOR hosted an event to present the findings of the Mapping of Youth Participation in Digital Democracy in Albania and Montenegro.

Objectives:

- Discuss youth digital participation and awareness of digital rights and cybersecurity.
- Analyze findings on youth engagement, slacktivism, and digital skill gaps in both countries.
- Highlight the need for better digital skills education and implementation of existing digital rights laws.





CCIS ERASMUS+ SUCCESS STORIES: NETWORKING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

On October 10, CCIS hosted the event "CCIS Erasmus+ Success Stories" as part of #ErasmusDays. The event highlighted key projects across Albania, Europe, and the Western Balkans:

- U2SID: Inclusive digital transformation with University of Shkodra.
- DIGITCRESHE: Digital education with Polytechnic University of Porto
- EYDR: Empowering youth in digital democracy with Scidev, Albania.
- Youth Observer: Youth-led policy engagement with Mesdheu Center.
- EDUFAIR and EDU Core Academy: Advancing higher education and juvenile justice.

ANNOUNCING THE KICK-OFF OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE Y-O MODEL PROJECT

CCIS proudly participated in the launch of the Y-O Model Project, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at enhancing youth engagement in politics and society. The project brings together young leaders from Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Italy to foster cooperation, policy dialogue, and best practice exchange.

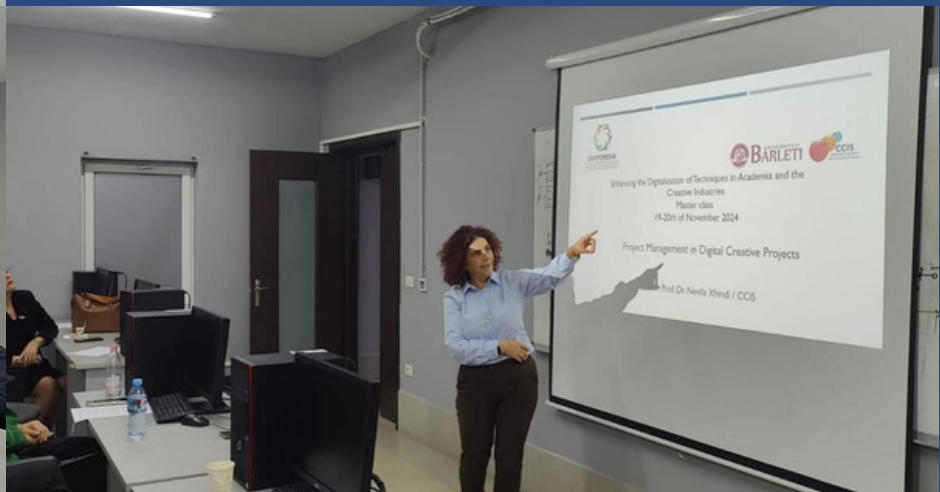
The project officially kicked off in Prishtina on September 25-26, 2024, where young observers from the partner countries participated in their first training session and a hands-on study visit, building lasting connections and insights.



TWO-DAY INTENSIVE MASTERCLASS ON CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: A RESOUNDING SUCCESS!



On November 19-20, CCIS, in collaboration with Universiteti Barleti, hosted an inspiring Masterclass on Innovation and the Creative Industries as part of the Digitcreshe project. Over two intensive days, participants delved into key topics, tools, and methodologies shaping the future of the sector.



INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is a serious violation of human rights. Women continue to face physical, psychological, and economic violence globally, both offline and online. In response, the EU has adopted its first law to combat violence against women, following the Istanbul Convention.

This year's UNiTE campaign, under the theme "Every 10 Minutes, a Woman is Killed," calls for collective action to end violence and promote safety, dignity, and equality for all. Let's unite for a safer and more just world.



CCIS AT THE DIGITCRESHE MANAGERS' MEETING IN PODGORICA



On November 21-22, the CCIS team participated in the managers' meeting for the Erasmus+ DIGITCRESHE project, hosted at the University Mediterranean in Podgorica. This key meeting focused on planning and coordinating upcoming activities leading to the project's conclusion in 2025. Additionally, discussions centered around ensuring the sustainability and future collaboration of the consortium in similar initiatives.

The project aims to align educational programs with industry needs, promoting digital transformation, active learning, and innovation to empower the sector and bridge the divide between education and industry.

U2SID ERASMUS+ PROJECT: CCIS SUPPORTS THE DESIGN AND FINALIZATION OF THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION CHALLENGE MANUAL

In the framework of the U2SID Project – University to Society Collaborations for Inclusive Digital Transformation in the Western Balkans, CCIS proudly contributed to the design and finalization of the Digital Transformation Challenge (DTC) Manual. This initiative, part of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education Project, seeks to empower universities to drive societal progress through digital innovation.



INSTAT SEMINAR ON 2023 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS RESULTS

CCIS was honored to participate in this roundtable as a non-state actor, representing civil society and supporting the use of statistics for good governance in Albania. We found the results enlightening and look forward to their impact on local policy development.

Key Highlights:

- Final census data on population and housing at the district and municipal levels.
- Insights into household size and other critical local indicators.
- Transparency in methodology for data collection and dissemination.
- CCIS's role in advocating for the use of statistics in good governance.



INFO SESSION FOR EYDR YOUTH DIGITAL DEMOCRACY ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

CCIS, in collaboration with Scidev, hosted an engaging info session at its offices with a select group of young individuals actively involved in public life in Albania. The session introduced the EYDR Youth Digital Democracy Accelerator Programme, which is now open for applications for youth from Albania and Montenegro!

Programme Highlights:

- Customized training and mentoring from experts in cybersecurity, digital activism, and social media.
- Exciting mobility opportunities in Oviedo (Spain) or Belgrade (Serbia).
- Collaborative preparation of policy papers on topics like internet freedom and digital activism.
- Designing and launching social media awareness campaigns with partner organizations.



NATIONAL YOUTH DAY: TIME FOR ACTION AND CHANGE!

On National Youth Day, we celebrate the immense potential of Albanian youth and reflect on the challenges they face in shaping a brighter future. The Center for Comparative and International Studies (CCIS) is proud to place youth at the heart of its mission.

Our Youth-Focused Projects Include:

- #EYDR (Youth Participation in Digital Democracy): Advancing digital skills and rights for a more inclusive democracy.
- U2SID Project & DigitCRESHE: Harnessing innovation and digital transformation for youth inclusion in creative and academic sectors.
- EDUFAIR & CORE-ED Academy: Enhancing digital education and youth activism.
- YOM: Promoting youth engagement in public and political life.
- Social Inclusion Initiatives: Empowering youth with different abilities and fostering employment opportunities, in collaboration with ANAD-SHKSHNJND.

CCIS MEETS YOUTH POLICY OBSERVERS TO FOSTER DIALOGUE AND EMPOWER CHANGE



On December 13, 2024, the CCIS team met with selected Youth Policy Observers (Y-Os) as part of the Erasmus+ Youth Observers Project, led by the Mesdheu Center. The group, representing diverse fields such as academia, civil society, media, business, and politics, discussed key topics like:

- Political participation and youth engagement with decision-makers
- Democracy, rule of law, and values
- Regional cooperation for shared growth

SEMINAR “SHKODRA THROUGH THE CENTURIES” DECEMBER, 2024 SHKODRA, ALBANIA

OCCIS participated in an international seminar hosted by Universiteti Shkodrës Luigj Gurakuqi and Bashkia Shkodër, bringing together experts from Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Europe to discuss Shkodra's cultural heritage and regional development.

As part of the Erasmus+ U2SID Project, Prof. Dr. Nevila Xhindi and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Holta Heba presented research on the role of universities in regional development, emphasizing higher education's impact on socio-economic progress in Northern Albania.

NEWS FROM CCIS AND THE #EYDR PROJECT!



CCIS took part in the Co-Production and Design Thinking Workshop in Oviedo as part of the #EYDR Project.

Over three engaging days, participants worked together to design the Youth Digital Democracy Accelerator Programme, which will empower 40 young people from Albania and Montenegro with advanced digital skills and hands-on experience in digital activism.

CCIS YOUTH OBSERVERS BLOG SERIES

In our annual report, we're excited to introduce the CCIS Youth Observers Blog Series, part of the EU-funded project “A Cross-Regional Predictive Model for Youth Policy Shaping – Youth Observers.”

This platform features insightful writings from our dynamic Youth Observers group, offering unique perspectives on public policy in Albania. These blog posts tackle pressing issues affecting youth today, providing a platform for young voices to influence public discourse. Through this initiative, CCIS is amplifying the role of youth in shaping inclusive, youth-driven policies that will help define the future.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CCIS extends its sincere gratitude to its dedicated team, project partners, and funders for their unwavering support throughout 2024. We also express our appreciation to our partner organizations for their collaborative spirit and commitment to our shared goals. Your contributions have been instrumental in fostering youth empowerment, digital transformation, and inclusive development across the region.

Together, we have built a solid foundation for meaningful impact, and we look forward to deepening these partnerships to drive sustainable change in the years to come.