



POPULISM

101

YOUTH EXCHANGE

ORAHOVICA, CROATIA

14-22 JULY 2026

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.



Co-funded by
the European Union



About the Youth Exchange

The youth exchange Populism 101 will gather 56 participants from Croatia, the Netherlands, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, and Bulgaria from 14–22 July 2026 (including travel days). Each partner country will send a team of 7 participants (aged preferably 18–25) along with one youth leader (18+), making a total of 8 members per national group.

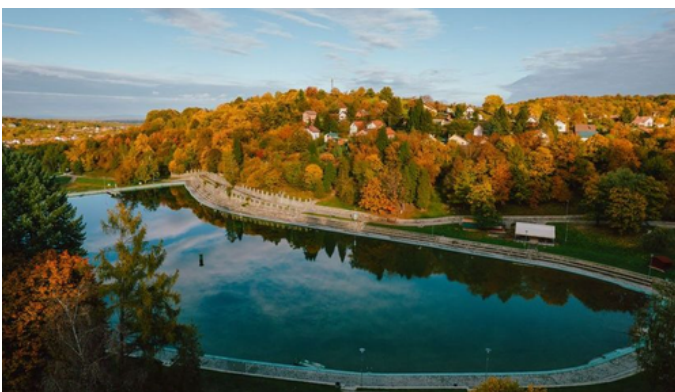
The project will take place in Orahovica, Croatia, a small town whose name comes from the word orah, meaning walnut tree.

During this youth exchange, participants will explore the concept of populism as both a political style and an ideological challenge. They will examine similarities and differences in how populism appears across different countries, while critically analyzing its root causes—including the shortcomings of liberal democratic systems. At the same time, the project aims to strengthen participants' understanding of and commitment to the core values and standards of democratic governance.

About city of Orahovica

Orahovica was first mentioned in 1228 in a document by King Andrew II, while the nearby Ružica fortress appeared in records in 1357 as a royal estate. During the 15th and early 16th centuries, the town prospered under several noble families, including Nikola Kont and Lovro Iločki. In 1542, it was conquered by the Ottomans under Suleiman II, renamed Rahoviçe, and developed into an important administrative center within different Ottoman provinces. Ottoman rule lasted until 1687.

After liberation, the town came under the ownership of prominent noble families such as the Pejačević and Mihalović. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Orahovica was part of Virovitica County in the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia. In the 20th century, it grew into a local center of industry and agriculture. During the Croatian War of Independence, the town experienced shelling that caused material damage. Orahovica was officially granted city status in 1997.





Aims and objectives

This project aims to develop understanding of populism as both a political style and an ideological challenge, encouraging participants to move beyond simplified labels and examine its deeper causes. It focuses on the socio-economic and cultural shortcomings of liberal democratic systems that have contributed to the rise of populist movements, while reinforcing the importance of core democratic principles such as the rule of law, separation of powers, and pluralism. By combining critical reflection with practical learning, the project empowers young people to better understand and engage with contemporary political dynamics.

The project places particular emphasis on strengthening democratic literacy and analytical skills, enabling participants to recognize and critically assess populist rhetoric, including “us vs. them” narratives, charismatic leadership styles, and anti-establishment messaging. It also promotes transnational dialogue, allowing participants to compare how populism manifests across different countries and political contexts, including both left-wing and right-wing variations. At the same time, it encourages reflection on why populism resonates with citizens, with a focus on the perceived gaps and “blind spots” of political elites.

Key goals of the project include:

- x Strengthening understanding of fundamental democratic governance standards.
- x Developing the ability to identify and decode populist rhetoric and strategies.
- x Promoting cross-country comparison of populist trends and contexts.
- x Critically examining the societal factors driving populist support.

By the end of the 7-day exchange, participants will be able to:

Contrast populist approaches with liberal democratic standards, particularly regarding independent institutions.

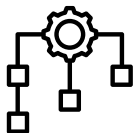
Identify key rhetorical elements of populism in media and political discourse.

Differentiate between left-wing and right-wing populism while recognizing their shared features.

Contribute to a comparative overview of populist trends across partner countries.

Propose practical recommendations to make democratic institutions more inclusive, transparent, and responsive.

Overall, the project seeks to equip participants with the knowledge, critical thinking skills, and collaborative experience needed to better understand populism and actively contribute to strengthening democratic values in their communities.



Youth Exchange Structure

There will be four 90-minute workshops per day. The workshops will be arranged in the following way:

Day	Date	Workshop 1 (W1)	Workshop 2 (W2)	Workshop 3 (W3)	Workshop 4 (W4)
Day 1	Jul 15, 2026	Group Building	Group Building	Group Building	Group Building
Day 2	Jul 16, 2026	The 4 Pillars: Rule of Law, Human Rights, Separation of Powers, Pluralism	The Island State (Simulation)	Standards of Government: Accountability, Transparency, Freedom of Press	Tension Points: Majority vs Minority Rights
Day 3	Jul 17, 2026	Defining Populism: "People" vs "Elites"	How Populism Deviates from Liberal Democracy	The Populist Playbook: Dismantling Institutions	Debate: Ideology or Style of Governance?
Day 4	Jul 18, 2026	Media Literacy: Recognizing Populism	Left-Wing vs Right-Wing Populism	Populism in Partner Countries	Populism Around the World
Day 5	Jul 19, 2026	Causes of Populism: Crisis, Economic & Social Factors	Luxury Beliefs	Free Afternoon	Free Afternoon
Day 6	Jul 20, 2026	Final Outputs	Final Outputs	Final Outputs	Final Outputs
Day 7	Jul 21, 2026	Reviewing final outputs	Reviewing final outputs	Youthpass	Closing Ceremony, Evaluation, Certificates

TIMETABLE

- 9:30 - 11:00 - First workshop**
- 11:00- 11:30 - Coffee Break**
- 11:30 - 13:00 - Second workshop**
- 13:00 - 15:00 - Lunch break**
- 15:00 - 16:30 - Third workshop**
- 16:30 - 17:00 - Coffee Break**
- 17:00 - 18:30 - Fourth workshop**



Accommodation and Food

The youth exchange will be held in Centre for Education of Red Cross in Orahovica. The centre is in a green hilly area on a hill a bit further away from the town. The centre will also provide us with all three meals. **The centre also has a swimming pool which will be open so bring your swimsuits.** Croatian National Agency regularly has training courses in these facilities so we are sure that all of our participants will be satisfied with the centre's facilities.

Participants will be placed in a 4-bed same-sex room. Every room has its own bathroom. The centre will also provide breakfast, lunch and dinner for all participants. The conference room where workshops will be held is also in the same building.

Blankets, towels and bed linen will be provided by the hostel. If necessary, we can organise washing of clothes for participants one time half-way through the project. **Bring your swimsuits because we can use facility pool after dinner. There is also a big artificial lake half hour by foot from the accommodation.**



Food

Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be provided by the Red Cross Educational centre. Breakfast is a buffet. Before participants arrive they will have to declare their food preferences (vegetarians, food allergies and similar) and they will be provided with appropriate meals. Besides food, we will have coffee breaks with coffee, tea and different snacks during the day after workshops.

The first meal will be dinner on 14 July and the last meal will be breakfast on 22 July.

Travel

VERY IMPORTANT, CAREFULLY READ THIS SECTION:

All participants will travel by train as arranged by the organizers. For arrival on 14th July 2026, you are required to be in Zagreb no later than 14:30, which is at least 2 hours before the scheduled train departure. Please plan your travel accordingly. We will meet at the main train station in Zagreb at 15:30 here: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/uG2Ba2pFwfyDyZmn6>

Train for Orahovica departs from Zagreb at 16:30 on 14th of July 2026.

Participants arriving from the east (e.g. Serbia) may reach Orahovica/Čačinci by train via Osijek. The same route applies to the Hungarian team.

If you are traveling by car, please use the following address for the accommodation, parking is available for free there:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/RaTUSegtPaN1P4cT7>

For the return journey, all participants will take the train departing at 06:59 on 22 July, arriving in Zagreb at 11:00. You must allow a minimum of 2 hours for your onward travel, meaning that any flights or bus departures to your home countries should be scheduled after 13:00 on 22 July.

Participants who are not returning via Zagreb are required to either travel by car or take a train to Osijek.

If you are unable to meet these requirements, you must inform us in advance via email or WhatsApp so that alternative arrangements can be discussed.

Before booking any travel tickets, please contact us at ivan@platypus.hr or +385951071981 for travel plan approval

Country	Distance Category	Travel Mode
Bulgaria	500–1999 km (309e or 417e)	Flight/Green
Serbia	100–499 km (285e)	Green Travel (Bus/Train/Carpool)
Hungary	100–499 km (285e)	Green Travel (Bus/Train/Carpool)
Romania	500–1999 km (309e or 417e)	Flight/Green
the Netherlands	500–1999 km (309e or 417e)	Flight/Green
Slovakia	100–499 km (285e)	Green Travel (Bus/Train/Carpool)



Travel reimbursement

Transportation costs will be reimbursed upon obtaining originals or scanned invoices and boarding passes. We will transfer the money for the whole group after the youth exchange to one account, in order to minimise bank transfer fees.

IMPORTANT: travel reimbursement will be provided only upon submitting proof of organised dissemination activities (minimum 1 presentation for young people). We strongly encourage partners to organise this presentation for other youth in a week after they return from the youth exchange. The date and place should be arranged before coming to the youth exchange. At the youth exchange young people will have time to prepare dissemination outputs so there is no reason why the presentation cannot be in the first week after coming back from the youth exchange.

IMPORTANT: The maximum travel reimbursement per participant depends on the distance between Orahovica and the sending city (check E+ distance calculator). Participants can also apply for green travel (not flying) and in that case they receive more money for transportation and are paid additional accommodation for upto four nights, if necessary (please check with the organiser for any specific situations). We will reimburse only the actual travel costs, and not the full maximum amount per participant. For example, if your travel costs are 200 euros per participant and your travel budget was 275 euros, we will refund 200 euros, not 275. However, if your travel costs are 400 euros per participant, we will refund only 275 euros per participant.

IMPORTANT: Only economic travel will be reimbursed. In special circumstances (e.g. if you are traveling late at night and there is no public transportation) you can use a taxi but you must previously write to inform the organisers. Also, only travel from the home city to Zagreb will be reimbursed - touristic travel will not be reimbursed.

**In case you are unable to find flights within the budget limits
please contact us ASAP.**



Preparation

Every group will have 7 youth (ages 18-25) plus one youth leader (18+). The participants must understand that this is not a free vacation but a learning experience where they will be required to do work before coming to the youth exchange and after finishing the youth exchange (i.e. dissemination activities).

Every national group will be in charge of implementing workshops they were assigned to. The topics for the workshops have already been assigned to national teams and will be sent via email.

IMPORTANT: since one of the dissemination outputs will be videos, we strongly encourage every national group to select at least one participant who knows how to make videos well.

IMPORTANT: during the preparation for implementation of workshops, partners can add additional tasks to their groups. In this case they should contact the project coordinator ASAP in order to forward this information to other partners.

Also, the participants are expected to participate in dissemination activities. Every national group must organise a minimum of one presentation for other young people about the project. This dissemination activity must have a minimum of 10 young people (participants are not included). This activity can be online, e.g. via zoom, or in person. The details of this activity will be communicated



Rules during the project

- a) Participants must arrive on the official arrival day and depart on the official departure day. Late arrival or early departure is not permitted and may result in non-reimbursement of travel costs.
- b) Participants must take part in the preparation phase, including Zoom meetings, workshop preparation, and planning for the intercultural evening.
- c) Participation in the entire program is mandatory. All sessions, activities, and group tasks must be attended unless excused by the organizers due to illness or emergency.
- d) Participants are expected to actively contribute to all group activities, discussions, and cultural exchange components.
- e) This is an educational project, not a tourist trip. The focus must remain on learning, collaboration, and intercultural dialogue.
- f) Participants must respect the schedule and be on time for all activities. Repeated lateness or absence may result in disciplinary action, including exclusion from the project.
- g) All house rules of the venue and accommodation must be followed. Participants are responsible for their behavior and any damage caused. They must cover the cost of repairs or replacements if necessary.
- h) The use or possession of illegal substances is strictly prohibited. Violation of this rule will result in immediate exclusion from the project without reimbursement.
- i) Participants must show respectful behavior toward others at all times. This includes openness, cultural sensitivity, and avoiding any form of harassment, bullying, or exclusion.
- j) Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated, including discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, ethnicity, or political beliefs.
- k) Participants must engage in open and respectful dialogue, showing empathy and a willingness to understand different perspectives.
- l) Any form of violence (physical, verbal, or psychological) is strictly prohibited.

m) Serious breaches of conduct may result in immediate exclusion from the project and being reported to the sending organization. Costs of early departure will not be covered.

n) Participants must collect and submit all required travel documents (tickets, invoices, boarding passes) for reimbursement within 2 weeks after the project ends. Failure to do so may result in a loss of reimbursement.

o) Each national team is required to carry out one dissemination activity after the project (e.g. a presentation or sharing session). The sending organization must be informed once it is completed.

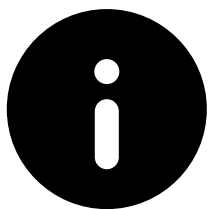
p) Participants will be accommodated in shared same-sex rooms with approximately 4 people from different national teams. Respect for shared space and roommates is expected at all times.

q) Participants give consent for the use of personal data (including photos/videos) for the purposes of organizing and documenting the Erasmus+ project. All data will be handled in line with GDPR regulations.

r) Participants may request correction or deletion of their personal data at any time by contacting the project organizers.

s) All information provided by the participant must be true and accurate.





Other information

Expressions		Common Signs	
Hello	Bok	Open	Otvoreno
How are you?	Kako si?	Closed	Zatvoreno
Fine, thank you.	Dobro sam, hvala.	Toilette	WC
Thank you	Hvala	Men's	Muški
You are welcome.	Nema na čemu.	Women's	Ženski
Yes	Da	Entrance	Ulaz
No	Ne	Exit	Izlaz
Good morning	Dobro jutro	Push	Gurni
Good afternoon	Dobar dan	Pull	Povuci
Good evening	Dobra večer		
Good night (to go to sleep)	Laku noć		
Excuse me	Oprostite		
I don't speak Croatian.	Ne razumijem hrvatski.		
Do you speak English?	Razumijeti li engleski?		

Croatian currency from 1st of January 2023 is euro (EUR)

Croatia is the part of Schengen zone so if you are traveling by land you will not have to show your ID or passport, however always carry at least your ID card.

Croatia has virtually free health care service so make sure all participants have European Health Insurance Card. Make sure that all your participants have European Health Insurance Card or private health insurance (for Serbian team)

Emergency contact IVAN GRGURIĆ
ivan@platypus.hr
+385951071981