

Harnessing Digital Technologies for Youth-Led Anti-Corruption Movements in the Balkans

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Abstract : In an era where digital tools shape governance and political participation, youth in the Balkans face dual challenges: systemic corruption and limited opportunities for meaningful engagement. These challenges are exacerbated by the "brain drain" phenomenon, as young, educated individuals leave the region in search of better opportunities, weakening local efforts to combat corruption and build accountability. This paper explores how digital technologies can empower youth in North Macedonia and neighboring countries to address cross-border corruption while fostering political activism in response to EU integration policies. Drawing on global case studies of youth-driven digital activism, it examines how digital platforms can amplify youth voices, mobilize collective action, and overcome systemic barriers. Movements such as those during the Arab Spring demonstrate the potential of digital tools to bridge local and transnational activism, offering valuable insights into strategies that can be adapted for the Balkan context. The central research is based on how digital technologies can empower youth in the Balkans to combat corruption and foster political engagement while addressing the challenges posed by brain drain. To address this, the research employs a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data from big data analytics, such as social media activity and online petitions, will map trends in youth-led digital activism. Qualitative methods, including interviews with youth leaders and policy experts, will capture the lived experiences of young activists. By situating global examples within the specific context of the Balkans, the research identifies strategies for mitigating brain drain and fostering local resilience through youth-driven initiatives. By exploring how digital platforms can both facilitate and combat corruption, this paper underscores the transformative potential of technology in fostering transparency and accountability. It argues that young people, armed with digital tools, are key players in reshaping the anti-corruption landscape in the Balkans. The findings will offer practical recommendations for policymakers and international organizations to strengthen youth engagement, address brain drain and bolster transnational anti-corruption strategies.

Keywords : youth political engagement, digital anti-corruption, balkans, brain drain, cross-border activism

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