



The Balkan Debate and Public Policy Challenge

1. The Organiser

The Balkan Debate and Public Policy Challenge is a competition organized by IDEA Southeast Europe along with its partners, the Balkan Forum and Južne Vesti with the support of various institutions and experts. Please see the project's website (www.balkandebates.net) for more information concerning the identity and role of the different organizations and persons contributing to this initiative.

1. Entry Eligibility and Procedure

The Challenge is open to all students formally enrolled full-time in an “undergraduate program” on or before 15 April 2019 as well as to all recent graduates of an undergraduate program who have not yet enrolled in a graduate program. For the purpose of determining eligibility for participation in the Challenge, the following definitions and conditions shall apply:

An “undergraduate program” shall be defined as including any first degree/certificate course in a tertiary educational establishment/university anywhere in the world.

“Recent graduates” shall be defined as including any person who has graduated from an undergraduate program on or after 14 April 2018 and has not yet enrolled either part-time or full-time in a graduate program before 15 April 2019.

There is no maximum age limit; however, all participants must be at least 18 years old as of 15 April 2019.

Any questions regarding eligibility should be directed: Kosovo participants email: info@thebalkanforum.org ; Macedonia info@idebate.mk; Serbia redakcija@juznevesti.com

There is no fee to register or to participate in the Challenge.

Anyone wishing to participate can register on or before 15 April 2019 at the Website by filling out the registration form located on that site or submit the documents via email on or before 15 April 2019.

III. The Challenge

1. Topic

The theme is a “Joint future of the Western Balkan in the EU”. Specific topics within this theme are 1) a Joint Customs Balkans: Western Balkans Union, 2) a Joint Action Plan for the implementation of regional environmental measures on air quality, waste management, and natural resource management, and 3) Improving Educational Mobility in the Western Balkans. Participants must choose 1 of the aforementioned.

1. Stages of the Challenge

The Challenge consists of one written round, which serves as the qualifying ground for participation in the local and final round, also known as the Forums.

The written round can generally be described as follows:

The Task: All participants submit a policy paper (1500 to 2000 words, excluding the list of sources and citations in footnotes) in response to one of three topics. From these submissions, up to 10 participants per location will be selected to present their policy brief at the local forum.

Each local Forum selects 3 finalists. The 9 finalists in total are all eligible for internship opportunities at the Organiser and its partners.

At the Final Forum, the finalists present their brief and engage in discussion with the panel of experts present. The 3 winners will have their briefs published on the project’s website and receive symbolic prizes (TBA).

1. Rules for Written Submissions

From the beginning of the Challenge, the Organiser will post a list of reading materials as well as a presentation and description of the theme that will help frame the discussion of the topic during the coming year.

For the Challenge, the Organiser will also post the following information on the Website at least two weeks prior to the deadline for submission:

A detailed description of the task.

Evaluation criteria.

Other educational materials helping the participants to prepare the tasks required.

For the Challenge, participants must follow any guidelines posted on the Website when preparing their papers. They must also follow any instructions posted on the Website concerning the manner in which to submit the paper, including electronically via the Website or by e-mail to a designated e-mail address. All papers submitted must be only in English.

The Organiser has set the deadline to 15 April 2019. The Organiser reserves the right to modify at any time the deadlines date. Information concerning the deadline shall be sent by e-mail to the registered participants and posted on the Website.

For the purpose of determining compliance with any deadline, the Organiser will accept any paper that is received by the Organiser by 23:59 (11:59 p.m.) on the date due. In case of doubt, the Organiser will consider only the time applicable in the city and country where the student’s undergraduate program is located. No paper received after the deadline posted will be accepted or marked, except as approved by the Organizer in exceptional circumstances as described by the participant in a written e-mail sent to info@idebate.mk

Each participant may submit only one paper for the Challenge. Participants will only be allowed to submit a paper once. Multiple versions of the same paper will not be accepted. The Organiser will consider the paper submitted earliest by any participant who submits multiple versions of the same paper as being the paper submitted for review by the judges.

Participants are encouraged to be creative and to develop original arguments for their positions. The Organiser shall review papers to ensure that participants do not plagiarise any portion of text from other sources, without proper references. All participants are expected to comply with the citations and plagiarism policy of the Challenge. Any participant that submits a paper that includes plagiarism will be immediately disqualified from the Challenge and will not be allowed to participate in future Challenges. The Challenge has a zero-tolerance policy towards plagiarism.

1. Adjudication – Evaluation

A panel of judges will be responsible for reading and marking each paper submitted in accordance with the evaluation criteria defined for each round. The evaluation criteria shall be posted on the Website at least 2 weeks before the submission deadline so that participants are informed in advance of the basis of the evaluation.

A Chief Adjudicator shall be designated by the Organiser to ensure the quality and consistency of each round's evaluation. The Chief Adjudicator shall oversee and coordinate the work of the judges. The Chief Adjudicator shall also determine, with the consultation of the Organiser, the manner in which to distribute the papers among the judges in order to ensure that all papers are reviewed in a fair, objective and anonymous manner. To this end, participants will be attributed to an identification code to use when submitting their papers so that no personally identifiable information can be seen on the papers when being evaluated. More information on the selection and work of the judges may be posted separately on the Website.

After reviewing all papers submitted, the Organiser shall notify all participants if they will proceed to the next round.

All participants will receive comments on their papers to inform them of the evaluation made by the judges. These comments are intended to help the participants learn. They shall be constructive indications to guide the participants in their future endeavours. They are not intended to express any definitive opinion about the individual participants.

The Chief Adjudicator's decision shall be final and shall not be subject to appeal.

1. The Final Stage: Skopje Forum (May 2019)

The final stage for participants competing in the Challenge consists of an event called the Skopje Forum (hereafter "the Forum"), which will be designed to provide the participants with learning opportunities while they participate in competitive activities. Parts of the Forum may be reserved for the participants, while other parts (and in particular the last competition between the finalists) will be open to the public (i.e., guests and other registered participants).

A maximum of 9 participants will be selected based on their performance in the local Forums ranking to participate in the Forum activities reserved exclusively for them in May 2019 in Skopje, Macedonia.

The participants will participate in a competitive round to compete before a panel of expert judges at the Forum in May 2019 in Skopje, Macedonia. In this round, they will present their briefs before a panel of experts and engage in a discussion.

The Organiser or its partners will cover the cost of travel and accommodation for each finalist to participate in the Forum. The Organiser, however, will not be responsible for any other costs that the participant may incur to participate in the Forum (e.g., costs for a valid passport/ID, or other incidental costs before, during or after the Forum), unless otherwise agreed by the Organiser. In case of financial hardship, the Organiser may cover the costs of some of the incidental expenses associated with the Forum. To qualify for this support, finalists must send an e-mail request to the Organiser at info@idebate.mk with a description of circumstances and itemised expected costs. Support will be determined on an individual case basis.

1. Prizes

Out of the finalists who participate in the Challenge, up to three of the nine finalists will be chosen for an internship at the Organiser or one of its partners. The three winners of the final will have their brief published on the website.

Each prize corresponds to a certain level of achievement and success. It is for this reason that these Rules state that “up to” a certain number of winners will be selected for these prizes. The Organiser hopes that students will qualify to win all prizes available, yet reserves the right to award fewer prizes if the quality of the submissions and presentations do not justify them being awarded or if there are fewer students participating in the final round.

1. Intellectual Property Rights

By submitting a paper to the Challenge, each participant agrees to assign all intellectual property rights, in all languages and in all countries) in the paper to Foundation IDEA Southeast Europe for an indefinite period. The participant shall nevertheless retain his or her moral right to be recognized as the author.

If Foundation IDEA Southeast Europe chooses to make any or all of the papers available to the public, it currently plans to do so under a Creative Commons license Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Unported (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0) (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> for more information). Foundation IDEA Southeast Europe, however, reserves the right to modify the terms of this license at the time of first making it publicly available.

1. Website – Information – Modifications

All information relevant to the Challenge shall be posted on the Website. The Organiser reserves the right to change these Rules as well as the information contained on the Website at any time. Participants are therefore encouraged to consult the Website on a regular basis to find the most up-to-date information. The most current version of the Challenge’s Rules and other information may be found on the Website.

1. Grievances

Participants that have a grievance or question regarding any aspect of the Challenge are encouraged to send an e-mail to info@idebate.mk grievances will be reviewed in a confidential manner aimed at resolving the issues raised by the participant in a constructive manner. Participants filing a grievance will not be punished in any way for doing so. Grievances expressed by participants shall not be taken into account in any way when reviewing a participant’s eligibility to be invited to the next round or to win a prize.