

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

eaRLINK Stage Research

Relink<sup>2</sup> Training School

June 29 – July 3, 2026

Sofia, Bulgaria, New Bulgarian University

### About

The forthcoming Training School will be collaboratively organised by Working Groups of the **Relink<sup>2</sup> Cost Action** and hosted by the **Department of Political Sciences** at the New Bulgarian University.

Over five enriching days, the school will offer a unique platform for young scholars and innovators to explore the latest theoretical, analytical, and practical advances in the study of digital technologies and democracy. Participants will engage with leading scholars on topics linked to the two key questions of the **Relink<sup>2</sup> Cost Action**:

- (1) How can democracies regain legitimacy and rebuild the link between representative institutions and citizens using the benefits of digital technologies?
- (2) How can political organisations connect with digitally marginalised but politically active groups (the elderly) and with digitally active but politically marginalised ones (young citizens)?

In addition, feedback will be provided on ongoing research projects, working papers, or other research endeavours by leading experts in the respected fields.

Beyond academic exchange, the school fosters connections across regions and methodological traditions. Participants will have the chance to network with peers and senior scholars from across Europe and with practitioners as part of the session or field visit. The **Relink<sup>2</sup> TS** includes the keynote speech by **Dr Anamaria Dutceac Segesten**, Associate Professor in European Studies and Strategic Communication at Lund University (Sweden).

### Applications

*Who can apply?*

The Training School welcomes applications from (a) young scholars or innovators who are below the age of 40 or are PhD students (candidates) or have gained their PhD not earlier than 2019 who (b) are working on different aspects of digital technologies and democracy.

You do not have to be a Relink<sup>2</sup> COST Action member to submit the application; however, be aware that (a) we will consider applications of Relink<sup>2</sup> COST Action members first; (b) if accepted, we will ask you to become a member of Relink<sup>2</sup> COST Action.

*How to apply?*

To apply, you must submit the following no later than **10 April 2026**:

1. Training School **application form**.
2. **Your CV** and **cover letter** (400 words) clearly identifying what you intend to work on during the training school, what output you expect to achieve at the end and how your work is related to **Relink<sup>2</sup> Cost Action** aims (for information see: <https://relink2.eu/>).
3. Extended **Abstract** of the Paper that you wish to present at the Training School (500–800 words) or **Synopsis** of the larger research project you're working on (800–1000 words).

We expect to receive application material originally prepared by the applicants and not AI prompted.

Applicants are requested to send the complete application via this email: [relink2.training.school@nbu.bg](mailto:relink2.training.school@nbu.bg)

**Partial or incomplete applications will not be processed. Late applications will not be accepted.** All valid applications will be reviewed and evaluated by the Training School organisation committee members. Applications will be evaluated according to the fit to the Relink<sup>2</sup> Cost Action aims, the benefit the summer school can bring to the project and overall quality of the application.

Successful applicants will be informed about the outcome of their application by email by **early May 2026**. We will invite up to 15 participants to attend the Training School.

### Certificate

Attendees who successfully completed the Training School are awarded 3 ECTS and a certificate of attendance issued by the New Bulgarian University.

### Fees and Funding

Attending the Training School is free of charge. The Relink<sup>2</sup> Cost Action will cover most of the associated expenses. This includes travel, visas and daily allowances for accommodation and subsistence totaling up to €1,000 - 1,200 per participant. However, you will be required to arrange and pay in advance for your travel and stay, as well as any additional costs, such as local transport or insurance. In accordance with COST Action rules, funding will be provided in the form of reimbursement, based on your financial claim, once the Training School has been completed.

### Programme

The engaging five-day programme comprises a series of lectures and workshops delivered by the field's foremost experts, in-depth discussions of participants' research projects, a practitioners' roundtable and social activities. The intense but exciting schedule will touch on major approaches to research on democracy and digital technology at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels with a focus on youth and elderly across Europe and the world.

*The program encompasses:*

- Lectures on theory, methodology, and practice
- Hands on workshops in research methods and professional skills
- Individual and small groups mentoring session with leading experts and peers

*Core themes explored throughout the week include:*

- Focus group method: grasping collective reasoning
- Methodological approaches to content analysis
- Applying for funding grants and preparing project applications
- Communicating research findings
- Building projects' impact
- Developing evidence-based policy recommendations

### Faculty

The confirmed trainers for the Training School are:

1. PD Dr. habil. Jasmin Fitzpatrick (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)
2. Dr. Felix-Christopher von Nostitz (Université Catholique de Lille)
3. Dr. hab. Prof. Michał Jacuński (University of Wrocław)
4. Dr. Marco Lisi (Universidade Nova de Lisboa)
5. Dr. Giulia Sandri (European Citizen Action Service, Université libre de Bruxelles)
6. Dr. Inga Gaižauskaitė (Vytautas Magnus University)
7. Dr. Anamaria Dutceac Segesten (Lund University)
8. Dr. Petia Gueorguieva (New Bulgarian University)
9. Irma Nugrahanti (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

### Contact

If you have questions related to application process or the Training School, please, do not hesitate to contact us via email: [relink2.training.school@nbu.bg](mailto:relink2.training.school@nbu.bg)