

A white graphic consisting of several overlapping, flowing loops that form a stylized shape, possibly representing a speech bubble or a network, set against a teal background.

BSF

Bled
Strategic
Forum

Young

What values?

Young BSF 2025

Programme

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THIS YEAR'S PROGRAMME

This year's Young BSF, titled *What values?*, will explore values as a fundamental driving force behind world politics—at personal, professional, and institutional levels. The theme stems from an observed shift towards realpolitik, which raises a two-sided question: **How do values drive world politics—and what does the state of the world reveal about us and the values we hold?**

We don't expect to arrive at any definitive answers; rather, this question is intended to spark reflection and critical thinking. The same applies to all our activities—they are not designed to form a structured, coherent whole with a predetermined direction or expected outcome. While a more focused programme might be possible, we believed it would come at the expense of breadth and richness of the experience. Given the variety of this year's Young BSF cohort, our aim has been to offer something for everyone.

With that in mind, we designed the conference around three goals:

- First, to encourage you to think about issues you may not have previously considered, or to approach familiar topics from new perspectives.
- Second, to share practical skills that can help you effectively implement your ideas—whether at your current level, or as you advance in your professional journey.
- Third, to help you broaden your circle of professional acquaintances, and perhaps even friendships. Anyone who has worked to create or change something meaningful knows the value of a fresh viewpoint, an extra pair of hands, a word of encouragement, or a sympathetic ear.

The question of values will be explored through two types of activities and three thematic areas. We have chosen to focus on small-scale discussions with seasoned experts and interactive workshops. You'll notice that the first half of the conference leans heavily on the workshop format, with expert discussions introduced in the second half. In a way, this departs from the typical approach of sparking contemplation through moderated discussions that then feed into group work. We believe you'll learn most by first engaging with one another in group activities and subsequently applying these insights in dialogue with our speakers.

Also worth mentioning, we have built in plenty of downtime for you to recharge or connect with fellow participants (or both, if you're a true extrovert—in which case, good for you).








The issue areas through which we'll explore values and world politics include: the crisis of the rules-based international order; the stalling fight against the climate emergency; and the personal experience of practitioners navigating an increasing divergence between their individual values and the realities of their working environment. Like the conference itself, these themes are not intended to form unified, monolithic units. Instead, they serve as sources of learning and reflection, providing insights, knowledge, and skills that are transferable beyond any single issue area.

Agenda

Thursday (28. 8.) (Ljubljana/Pokljuka)	Friday (29. 8.) (Pokljuka)	Saturday (30. 8.) (Pokljuka)	Sunday (31. 8.) (Pokljuka/Bled Hotel Kompas)	Monday (1.9.) (Bled)	Tuesday (2.9.) (Bled)
Arrivals to Ljubljana	8:45–9:00 Registration	9:00–11:00 Workshop by Cast from Clay Storytelling for Policy Impact	8:45–9:00 Packing and check-out	09:30–10:30 Deep Dive by Young BSF I Lake Lounge, Hotel Toplice	09:00–18:00 Bled Strategic Forum Programme
	9:00–9:45 Opening & Icebreaker	11:00-11:30 Break	9:00–12:00 Workshop by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Personal Resilience: Burn-Out Prevention in the Security and International Sector		
	9:45–11:30 Setting the stage discussion	11:30-12:15 Workshop by Gajst From Gajst to Gram: Rebooting the Liberal Order in Six Hours part I	12:00–12:30 Departure from Pokljuka		
			12:30–14:00 Check-in & Lunch Hotel Kompas	12:15-13:15 Lunch Hotel Kompas	
	11:30–12:00 Break	12:15-13:15 Lunch	14:00–15:00 TBD Discussion Hotel Kompas, Triglav Hall	13:00–18:00 Bled Strategic Forum Opening	14:45–16:00 No Region for Young People – Time for Change Sonce Hall, Riki Balance Hotel
	12:00–13:00 Workshop by the Carter Center Centering Communities: Local Voices in Climate and Conflict Solutions part I	13:15-15:30 Workshop by Gajst From Gajst to Gram: Rebooting the Liberal Order in Six Hours part II	15:00-15:15 Break		
			15:15–16:30 The Limits of the Liberal International Order Hotel Kompas, Triglav Hall		
19:00 Departure from Ljubljana	14:00–17:30 Workshop by Carter Center Centering Communities: Local Voices in Climate and Conflict Solutions part II	16:00-18:30 Workshop by Gajst From Gajst to Gram: Rebooting the Liberal Order in Six Hours part III	17:00–18:00 Conversation with Tanja Fajon, Slovenian MFEA Hotel Kompas, Triglav Hall	18:30–20:00 Deep Dive by Young BSF Ready to fight for democracy? Lake Lounge, Hotel Toplice	09:00–18:00 Bled Strategic Forum Programme
			18:00–19:00 Free time		
20:00 Arrival to the hotel Pokljuka & Dinner	17:30–18:30 Decompress	18:00-19:00 Decompress	19:00–20:00 Dinner Hotel Kompas		
	18:30–19:30 Dinner	19:00–20:00 Dinner	20:00-21:00 Night Owl Conversation with Nik Gowing Hotel Kompas, Triglav Hall		
	19:30– Social Activity	20:00– Social Activity	21:15- Closing & Reception Hotel Kompas, Terrace	22:00–00:00 Bled Strategic Forum Night owl conversation	Departures



List of preparatory materials

Here is a list of preparatory materials, organized by activity. They come from our partners responsible for interactive sessions, with a few additions from our team. None are mandatory, but we encourage you to review at least the recommended items (marked with *), especially if the thematic area (e.g., climate emergency) or technical aspect (e.g., policy communication) is outside your expertise. If time is short, feel free to use your LLM of choice to work through the longer pieces—we won't judge.

LEGEND:	 News article / Opinion piece	 Documentary film
	 Academic paper	 Podcast
	 Report	 Music
	 How-to	






Setting the Stage Discussion

(Group discussion with Young BSF alumnus Juan Sánchez Sáenz)

-  Are we witnessing the death of international law? (The Guardian) [LINK*](#)
-  Psychology of Climate Change (Annual Review of Psychology) [LINK*](#)


Centering Communities: Local Voices in Climate and Conflict Solutions

(Workshop by the Carter Center)

-  Mitigating Conflict and Building Climate Resilience in Mali: A Community-led, Data-driven Approach TCC Initiative Reports (The Carter Center) [LINK*](#)
-  How climate change is leading to a rise in violence in the Sahel (Al Jazeera English) [LINK*](#)
-  Why do pastoralists in Mali join jihadist groups? A political ecological explanation (The Journal of Peasant Studies) [LINK](#)
-  Blick Bassy – Mádibá (published by InFiné, Likoda & Peermusic France). Cameroon. [LINK](#) + English lyrics [LINK](#)
-  Tinariwen – Aman Iman ("Water is life") (published by Emma Productions and Universal Music). Mali. [LINK](#)

Storytelling for Policy Impact

(Workshop by Cast from Clay)


 How to Win an Election (The New York Times) [LINK*](#)


 How to Develop a Communications Strategy (Cast from Clay) [LINK*](#)


From Gajst to Gram: Rebooting the Liberal Order in Six Hours

(Workshop by the Gajst Institute)

 Populism as an Expression of Political Communication Content and Style: A New Perspective (The International Journal of Press/Politics) [LINK*](#)

 Populism in youth: Do experiences in school matter? (Child Development Perspectives) [LINK*](#)


 Between Populism and Emotion: How Social Media Shapes Youth Politics (Preprints.org) [LINK*](#)


 Liberal Populism? The Curious Case of Javier Milei (Friedrich Naumann Foundation) [LINK](#)

Personal resilience:

Burn-out Prevention in the Security and International Sector

(Workshop by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung)

 How to Support a Colleague with Stress, Without Overburdening Yourself (The HR Director) [LINK*](#)

 3 Ways to Help Yourself or a Colleague Avoid Burnout (Health Shield) [LINK*](#)

 I Fought the Law and the Law Won: My Burnout Story (stressandresilience.com) [LINK*](#)

Setting the Stage Discussion

WITH YOUNG BSF ALUMNUS JUAN SÁNCHEZ SÁENZ

Activity: Group discussion

Date and time: Friday, 29 August / 10:00–11:30

Venue: Pokljuka

Introduction: Miha Trstenjak, Young BSF Programme Director

Facilitators: Juan Sánchez Sáenz, Political Analysis and Research Consultant

OVERVIEW: Values are invoked daily in public and political discourse, often with very different normative charges. They stand at the heart of collective action, resistance movements, religious beliefs, and even fatalistic narratives of decline. At times, values are mobilised to morally justify acts of cruelty; at other times, they inspire solidarity and ignite collective action in the face of injustice. But what exactly are values? This session will introduce an analytical framework to better understand values and their relationship with human cognition and behaviour. Through an interactive discussion, we will explore how values operate across different levels — from interpersonal relations to international politics. The discussion will seek to move beyond simple good–bad dichotomies by emphasising the crucial role of discourse and narrative in shaping how values are understood, mobilised, and contested.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES: By the end of the session, participants will:

1. Share a common, axiologically neutral understanding of values.
2. Be able to critically assess the meanings, uses, and narratives surrounding values.
3. Analyse concrete examples of how value narratives have shaped, justified, or contested international policy decisions, with a particular focus on climate politics and global governance.

Centering Communities: Local Voices in Climate and Conflict Solutions

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CARTER CENTER

Activity: Workshop

Date and time: Friday, 29 August / 12:00–17:30

Venue: Pokljuka

Facilitators: **Frederic Deycard, Ph.D.**, Associate Director for Mali and the Sahel, The Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program | **Dan Sanaren**, Research Coordinator for the Sahel, The Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program | **Lauren Dahler**, Project Coordinator for Conflict-Climate in the Sahel, The Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program

OVERVIEW: As climate change intensifies existing vulnerabilities and drives conflict in fragile settings, global responses often overlook the knowledge, and priorities of local communities. This workshop, led by The Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program, invites young professionals to explore how values such as inclusion, equity, and local ownership can be practically integrated into climate adaptation and peacebuilding efforts. Drawing from The Carter Center's work in Mali, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire, where the organization partners with rural communities to prevent climate-related conflict and build resilience, the session will highlight how data-driven approaches can be combined with community leadership to shape more sustainable and just responses to climate change. Through interactive discussion and reflective exercises, participants will engage with real-world examples and consider how to apply similar principles in their own work across diverse global contexts. Participants will also be invited to reflect on their own values, roles, and contexts to explore how these can inform more inclusive and locally grounded approaches to climate change in their personal and professional lives.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES: By the end of the session, participants will:

4. **Have a clearer understanding of their own values in relation to climate and conflict work** – through guided reflection and discussion, participants will examine how their identities and experiences shape their perspectives on climate challenges and responses.

5. **Understand how to incorporate meaningful local integration into their work** – using real-world examples, participants will explore how to embed inclusion, equity, and local ownership into climate and peacebuilding efforts.
6. **Gain practical ideas and peer feedback on integrating community voices in diverse global contexts** – through collaborative group work, participants will develop context-specific approaches and receive feedback to strengthen local relevance in their work.

Storytelling for Policy Impact

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CAST FROM CLAY

Activity: Workshop

Date and time: Saturday, 30 September / 9:00–11:00

Venue: Pokljuka

Facilitator: **Jamie Horton**, Senior Consultant, Cast from Clay

OVERVIEW: “Having technical solutions alone does not set you up for political buy-in or implementation - narratives carry things to completion.” Drawing on lessons from Cast from Clay’s work and the [Policy Unstuck series](#), the workshop will dive into how stories and narratives work, why they should be at the heart of your communications model, and how policy experts and those working for policy change can leverage them to help create impact. Participants will work together to apply a strategic storytelling approach to the complex policy challenge of advancing effective action in response to the climate emergency. They will also reflect on the applications and limitations of storytelling in their own work, and explore how we can all tell better, more impactful stories to address one of the most pressing global issues of our time.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES: By the end of the session, participants will:

1. **Understand how storytelling fits into the wider landscape of policy change** by examining real-world examples of storytelling in action and applying to their own contexts and experiences, including considering when it is and isn’t effective.
2. **Design strategies for how to integrate narratives and storytelling into policy campaigns** by breaking down a complex policy challenge and identifying clear objectives, audiences, frames, messages, and implementation approaches.
3. **Deploy a range of types of storytelling on different levels** by recognising the role and importance of brand storytelling, narrative-building advocacy, and day-to-day thought leadership.

From Gajst to Gram: Rebooting the Liberal Order in Six Hours

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GAJST INSTITUTE

Activity: Workshop

Date and time: Saturday, 30 September / 11:30–18:30

Venue: Pokljuka

Facilitators: Zala Košec, PR Manager, Gajst | Aizea Gutierrez Barlič, Assistant PR Manager, Gajst | Marko Čadež Mačkić, Associate, Gajst | Uliana Chebotarenko, Associate, Gajst | Urban Culleto, Associate, Gajst | Filip Noel Geržina, Junior Associate, Gajst | Timotej Klinc, Head of International Cooperation, Gajst | Anej Bevk Peternelj, Director, Gajst

OVERVIEW: The erosion of trust in the liberal international order – once championed for its promises of peace, rights, and cooperation narrative – has accelerated amid wars, climate breakdown, and its sluggish institutions. Populist movements are filling this vacuum with simple yet dangerously reductive “solutions,” resonating strongly with younger generations. At the same time, liberal values such as human rights, democracy, and justice still hold the potential to inspire, but only if communicated in ways that match how young people actually engage with the world – that is, through social media. This workshop condenses three months of research into one high-energy day, combining focus groups, a podcast, and the design of a populist-style social media campaign. Participants will explore how youth values align with or challenge the principles of the liberal order, and then transform these insights into creative, persuasive digital strategies, producing engaging short-form video content by the end of the workshop. The ultimate goal is to equip the next generation with political fluency, media savvy, and the tools to defend and perhaps even reinvent the order by employing their critical thinking, values and smartphones.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES: By the end of the session, participants will:

1. **Identify and analyse how their personal values intersect with the principles of the liberal international order** by reflecting on research findings, discussing lived experiences, and exploring the system’s flaws and strengths.

2. **Apply modern political communication strategies** by adopting selected populist tactics to design engaging, values-driven short-form video content that resonates with young audiences while promoting the liberal international order and its institutions.

Personal resilience: Burn-out Prevention in the Security and International Sector

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG (FES)

Activity: Workshop

Date and time: Sunday, 31 August / 9:00–12:00

Venue: Pokljuka

Facilitators: **Sonja Schirmbeck**, Director, FES Croatia-Slovenia Office | **Ivan Puh**, Project Coordinator, FES Croatia-Slovenia Office | **Salam Ibrahim Kadhim Al-Nidawi**, Cultural Mediator, Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma Zagreb | **Dr Almut Wieland-Karimi**, Senior Policy Advisor and Advisory Board Member, UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund | **Sara Bugarinovič**, Slovenian Psychology Students' Association (DŠPS) | **Urška Filipič**, Slovenian Psychology Students' Association (DŠPS) | **Manca Kepa**, Slovenian Psychology Students' Association (DŠPS) | **Jure Manfreda**, Slovenian Psychology Students' Association (DŠPS) |

OVERVIEW: Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the burn-out pandemic was running rampant. Even more so in the latest years with all the changes and insecurities in the geopolitical sense. Various organizations dealing with security, international affairs, etc. are also facing numerous challenges, which affect all – especially young professionals working there. More stress can lead to a burn-out, which can lead to quitting. Burn-out does not necessarily need to be connected to a huge workload. It can also be caused by a feeling of uncertainty, and even hopelessness. Since all organizations need new, young professionals, burn-out prevention is essential.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES: By the end of the session, participants will:

1. **Acquire knowledge about burn-out, and personal resilience** thanks to the input given by psychology and cultural mediation professionals, where an intercultural approach to the phenomenon will be presented.
2. **Apply methods for raising awareness over personal control** they have over the processes that happen in their professional lives, communities, countries, globally, as well as personal lives.
3. **Acquire experience in helping their peers** in building personal resilience on both individual and group level, thus strengthening the interpersonal relationships within a tea

Please note that the programme currently includes only a detailed overview of the workshops. The list of all Young BSF discussions will be included in the final version of the programme.

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