

CEU Scholar Alexander Bor Awarded Prestigious ERC Starting Grant for Groundbreaking Democracy Research

VIENNA, AUSTRIA, September 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Central European University](#) (CEU) is proud to announce that Alexander Bor, ERA Research Fellow at the [CEU Democracy Institute](#), has been awarded the [European Research Council \(ERC\) Starting Grant](#) for his project INFODEM – Intuitive Foundations of Democratic Norms. Bor's project will receive EUR 1.5 million over five years under the ERC Starting Grant scheme, supporting cutting-edge early-career researchers across Europe.

"I'm grateful to the CEU Democracy Institute and many good colleagues for supporting this application and I am very excited to pursue this project at CEU," said Bor. "I believe INFODEM speaks directly to CEU's mission of advancing knowledge in service of open societies and democracy."

Understanding the "Intuitive Foundations of Democracy"

The INFODEM project examines a simple but powerful idea: while citizens often express support for democracy, they rarely reflect on its principles with careful reasoning. Instead, they rely on moral gut feelings about fairness, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution. Bor's research will identify which democratic norms resonate intuitively with citizens—making them easy to understand and defend—and which norms require reinforcement through education and public debate. The project will employ methods ranging from large-scale surveys in 30 countries, through experiments with children, to innovative social media-style experiments that test how people recognize and share information about democratic norm violations.

Safeguarding Democracy in Challenging Times

A unique feature of INFODEM will be the development of a Democracy Advice Application—an interactive online tool designed to help citizens better understand electoral norms and assess the state of democracy in their own countries. The Democracy Advice Application will be tested in Hungary as a proof of concept. In recent years, democracies have been challenged not by coups or blatant fraud, but by elected leaders who gradually erode democratic norms while maintaining public approval. INFODEM addresses the urgent question of why some democratic norms are more widely supported and vigilantly monitored than others, and how human moral intuitions can strengthen or undermine democratic systems.

About the Researcher

Alexander Bor is a political psychologist whose work explores political behavior, hostility, and democratic resilience. His research has been published in leading journals including *Nature*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *American Political Science Review*, and *Psychological Science*. His findings have been widely covered by outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Washington Post*.

Bor holds a PhD in Political Science from Aarhus University and two MAs from CEU and Leiden University. He is currently based at the CEU Democracy Institute in Budapest.

About CEU Democracy Institute

The CEU Democracy Institute is a multidisciplinary research institute in Budapest, part of Central European University. It brings together scholars from across the social sciences and humanities to study the dynamics of democracy, authoritarianism, and societal transformation. Its research agenda covers rule of law, inequality, media, history of ideas, and the resilience of democratic institutions.

About CEU

The Central European University (CEU) is a private, non-profit university where students from over 100 countries receive interdisciplinary education and engage with key societal challenges. CEU is accredited in both the United States and Austria and offers English-language bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in the fields of Social Sciences and Humanities, Law, Environmental Studies, History and Public Policy. Based in Vienna, CEU combines its strong academic and intellectual focus with the historical, cultural, and social diversity of the region, offering a global perspective on good governance, sustainable development, and social transformation.

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