

ANELA LEMEŠ, MA
VALIDA REPOVAC NIKŠIĆ, PHD
EDO KANLIĆ, MA

AWAKENED IN NEED: Political and Civic Engagement of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Youth

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AUTHORS Anela Lemeš, MA
Valida Repovac Nikšić, PhD
Edo Kanlić, MA

TRANSLATION Narcisa Semić

METHODOLOGY Sanel Huskić, MA

REVIEW Sarina Bakić, Dr.
Milica Pralica

PROOFREADING Ana Kravić

DESIGN Miomirka Mila Melank
Kai David Melank

ABSTRACT

The main motivation for this study was the alarming and increasing pace of youth leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina. This study attempts to map the main impediments to youth activism, identified as a fulcrum for improving youth's outlook for opting to stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Numerous previous studies have identified unemployment and lack of opportunities as the key push factors for the massive levels of youth migration. During research it was noted that previous studies and analyses of youth engagement and activism are extensive but mostly quantitative, focusing on large pools of different identities in which the individual experience easily gets lost. For that reason, this study focuses on qualitative analysis, discussing general topics with young people who consider themselves active in order to define the sources of their motivation. The study clearly identifies that the formal systems of education are not preparing youth for active civic and political life, and that civil society organizations are trying to compensate for their shortcomings and inadequacies.

KEYWORDS: Activism, apathy, politics, protests, youth

DISCLAIMER

Publication is developed in partnership with Centre Party International Foundation with the implementation of Boris Divkovic Foundation. Opinions expressed in this publication are solely author's, not project organizer's and/or partner's.

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I SUMMARY

The Boris Divković Foundation (BDF / Foundation) was motivated to conduct this research on youth activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in the hope of understanding how to decrease youth migration rates, which will have devastating long-term consequences on the development of BiH. The logic of the theory of change used in this research is simple: active youth fights for its rights by default; hence, active youth will be more likely to stay in BiH and fight rather than migrate. Thus, it is important to uncover what makes youth active and activism-oriented, because youth is more likely to stay in BiH if they are given the opportunity to become active.

The primary goal of this research was to inform the Boris Divković Foundation and its partners about what those opportunities should entail and how to design appropriate activities for youth. This was achieved by using an assessment methodology for youth activism in BiH that was focused on primary research through semi-structured interviews of 25 active individuals, mainly in their twenties. Information was also obtained from other available sources.

The bulk of findings suggests that youth in BiH are apathetic because they feel that they have been left to their own devices, that they are alone. Young people seem disconnected from their local communities, they lack leaders who motivate them to engage in activism, feel that they don't matter to decision-makers, can't find employment, have no prospects for meaningful civic and political life. And even when youth engage in activism it is predominantly unorganized, short-lived, and occurs as an impulsive reaction to specific events or issues.

There are numerous reasons for such an unfavorable situation in youth activism, but the overarching impediments arising from the interviews can be identified in the inadequacies of formal education systems. In essence, formal education is eroding the prospects for youth activism. The main identified culprit here is the lack of critical thinking in the curriculum and in the teaching methods employed in the formal education system(s) that do not nurture youth activism.

The role of education is pivotal since findings suggest that better educated youth is more active. The study found that active youth in BiH is generally in some way educated by the CSOs. Moreover, study findings established that CSOs are by large surrogates for civic and political upbringing of youth in BiH; CSOs act as a foster system for youth education and as a mechanism for civic and political engagement.

The study clearly suggests how the Boris Divković Foundation and its partners should shape future activities and initiatives and create opportunities in order to change the current state of youth activism as well as overall civic and political participation. The recommendations outline changes to approaches and work of all stakeholders in order to encourage young people to become more active and to empower them to become more vocal and structured in their demands. The governing structures and their apparatus should work together with non-governmental organisations/institutes to ensure that young people stay in BiH and contribute to the development of their society and have meaningful and fulfilling lives, because youth should not feel like they stand alone.

II INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Boris Divković Foundation was established in 2013 with the aim of improving political science and practice in BiH. The Foundation's activities promote responsible politics that serve all citizens, acting on the principles of equality, coexistence and solidarity. One of the areas of BDF's interest is political participation, including youth activism and youth political participation. BDF's core value is the promotion of basic moral principles in political activities, which the late Boris Divković advocated throughout his civic and political engagement. Decades-old rule of irresponsible politics has led to the widespread belief that morality has no place in politics. This has profound negative impact on youth. The BDF assumes that it is possible and necessary to carry out a moral and ethical decontamination of the concept of politics in the public arena. This would create conditions for the involvement of honest and responsible people, including younger generations, in the political processes of BiH.

The Foundation's activities revolve around political and economic literacy in BiH and the region. Some of the successful projects the Foundation implemented over the years are: *Academy of Political Responsibility*, *Regional Academy for Young Liberals from Western Balkan*, *Initiative 50%*, *Schools in Connections*, *We Grow Together*, *Scrolling the Page of Hate - "Insult gallery"*, *Progressive Politics in Western Balkans (ProgWeB)* organised as a joint program of 7 think tanks from Western Balkan, *Insult Gallery - Walk of Shame in Public Discourse*, *EU Mentorship* (Appendix 1).

The main motivation for this study is the fact that BiH is being drained of its youth. Only in the last six years, 530,000 citizens have left BiH¹. In addition, almost 50 percent of youth considered leaving BiH in 2019². The scale of potential youth migration is significant, considering that youth

1 *The latest World Bank data shows BiH an emigration rate of 44.5%, which is significantly ahead of Serbia (18%), Croatia (20.9%), and Albania (43.6%), making BiH the leader in this aspect in Europe for years.*

2 *USAID Bosnia and Herzegovina Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity II, "National Survey of Citizens' Perceptions in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2019, Final Report", June 2020; available at: http://measurebih.com/uimages/measurell_nscp2019_final_report.pdf; also, according to the Regional Cooperation Council's survey published in Jun 2020, "Balkan Barometer 2020: Public Opinion Survey"; Bosnia and Herzegovina has seen the most sizable surge in the number of prospective leavers in the course of 2019 with that figure now at 44 percent of the respondent population, available at: <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/95/balkan-barometer-2020-public-opinion-survey>*

(15 - 30 years) make up one-fifth³ of the total 3.5 million population of BiH. Those who are considering leaving would be joining the huge BiH diaspora which at the moment stands at 49.5 percent (total population of BiH that resides outside of the country)⁴; almost half of the country's population is expatriate. In addition, there is an increasing trend of BiH citizenship renunciation. According to the official records of the Agency for Statistics of BiH and the Union for Sustainable Return and Integration in BiH, around 85,000 people have renounced their BiH citizenship since the end of the war.

Youth is leaving for various reasons. The BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs suggests that one reason could be unemployment and general youth poverty in BiH; more than 60 percent of youth is unemployed and the Ministry considers the total population of young people as a vulnerable group that is much closer to poverty than the population of adults⁵. Other sources have similar opinions, reporting that unemployment and economic dependence are identified as the main problems for youth across BiH, where only a quarter of youth have regular earnings and only one-fifth are satisfied with their standard of living⁷. But what is becoming obvious is that in addition to the poor standard of living, young people in BiH are also increasingly leaving because they feel that they cannot influence key aspects that could improve their situation⁸. In essence, youth feels powerless. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung made a lucid observation in their study about the reasons for leaving: "in addition to unemployment, an inadequate educational system, the depressing political situation in the

3 Youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina are persons between the age of 15 and 30. There are more males than females within this age population; the number of young people in BiH is 777 000 and there are about 607 100 people under the age of 15 in Bosnia today. BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs, "Data on Youths in BiH", 2021; available at: http://www.mladi.gov.ba/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=46&Itemid=34

4 World Bank, "Migration and Brain Drain: Europe and Central Asia Economic Update", dostupno na: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/657051570692065211/pdf/Migration-and-Brain-Drain.pdf>; također, prema studiji Heinrich Böll Stiftunga iz 2017. godine o mladima u BiH i njihovom iseljavanju, "Massive Departure of Youth from BH: Job Search or Escape From Reality," procjena ukupnog broja ljudi koji žive u emigraciji, a koji su porijeklom iz Bosne i Hercegovine je barem 2 miliona, što je 56.64% od ukupne populacije Bosne i Hercegovine (3.531.159).

6 BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs, "Data on Youths in BiH", 2021; dostupno na: http://www.mladi.gov.ba/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=46&Itemid=34

7 USAID Bosnia and Herzegovina Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity, "National Youth Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018, Findings Report", July 2018; dostupno na: http://measurebih.com/uimages/MEASURE-BiH_NYS2020182007262018.pdf

8 For more information please see: Regional Cooperation Council's survey published in Jun 2020, "Balkan Barometer 2020: Public Opinion Survey"; USAID Bosnia and Herzegovina Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity, "National Youth Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018, Findings Report"; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, "FES Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2018/2019", available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15262.pdf>

country, feelings of lack of prospects, etc., the mass exit of young people to other countries has continued”⁹.

The Foundation believes that youth would stay if they were given the opportunity to become active; youth activism is a linchpin in solving most troubling issues for younger people in BiH. Thus, the Foundation is motivated to understand what makes a young person active and engaged despite the obvious and substantial obstacles. For that purpose, we designed the following key research questions to obtain that information:

- What are the main obstacles for youth activism, and what hinders the political and civic participation of youth?
- What are the main triggers/circumstances for youth to become ‘active’, and what are the key reasons/circumstances that make youth inactive?

BDF’s key motivation is to improve the conditions for youth that stays in BiH to become and remain active. BDF has noticed a decline in young people’s interest in the activities of the Foundation and its partners and stakeholders. However, the Foundation also recorded a rapid engagement of young people at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in assisting their neighbors and categories of citizens who needed assistance. This finding is also corroborated by other studies¹⁰. The goal for BDF and partner organizations that support young people is to foster youth activism through a structured and strategic approach. The findings and conclusions from this study provide a clear set of recommendations on how to proceed with these initiatives.

During preparations for this research, BDF has analyzed previous studies on youth engagement and noticed that most of the existing research is extensive but mainly quantitative, focusing on large pools of research subjects where the individual experience easily gets lost. These studies are significant because they offer the general idea about the mindset of the youth in BiH; raising the issue of the average person whose priorities lie beyond civic and specifically political engagement. We therefore focused on qualitative analysis, discussing general topics with the youth that consider themselves active in order to define the sources of their motivation and how these could be applied to a larger pool of people. The first part of the study discusses methodology and provides background information on youth activism in BiH. This is followed by findings from the interviews with activist youth and the conclusions drawn from those conversations. The final portion of the study offers recommendations for both the government and non-governmental actors.

9 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, “FES Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2018/2019”, p. 11.

10 For more please see: “Rezultati istraživanja o utjecaju pandemije COVID-19 na mlade aktivistice i aktiviste”, Institut za razvoj mladih KULT i Fondacija Mozaik; available at: <http://mladi.org/v2/bs/resursi/riznica-znanja/publikacije/category/19-studije-i-analize>

III METHODOLOGY

The methodology for assessing youth activism in BiH was designed to ensure systematic and efficient data collection and triangulation of information through various sources and methods, taking into account the pandemic-related circumstances and deadlines for writing reports. Triangulation - obtaining information from different sources - was necessary given that the very construct of 'active' youth is complex and directly depends on the perceptions of different participants.

For this study the research team used:

- Frameworks/platforms available for organizing youth;
- Key informant interviews responsible for various stages/duties of protests/activism activities;
- Secondary data sources (topic-specific analyses produced by domestic and international organizations, as well as official country statistics and reports).

The research team reviewed the secondary sources related to youth activism, including studies, reports, analyses, assessments, legal/legislative documents and so forth. Key informant interviews (KIIs) with youth activists were conducted using the Zoom platform due to COVID-19 constraints. All selected key informants (KIs) were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol. The research methodology and interview protocol was piloted with several participants prior to conducting full interviews in order to test the understanding of each question. The research team collaborated with several BDF partners to access respondents who are as diverse as possible, in order to obtain information that encompasses different backgrounds and views.

The majority of respondents were young people who responded to the online call that we shared on our Instagram profile and Lonac.ba page. In addition to the public invitation to participate in the research, we applied the "snowball sampling" method in collaboration with our partners and by sharing contacts between organizations. However, because of Covid-19 and everyone's screen oversaturation due to excessive use of their computers, our research sample is sparse. In total 25 individuals were interviewed, 14 women and 11 men, mainly in their twenties.

LIMITATIONS

In the process of research design, tools development and data collection we encountered several limiting circumstances that may somewhat reduce the strength of our findings:

- Data was collected during the peak of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (October – late December 2020). We believe that the pandemic affected the final number of our respondents. We fully appreciate the emotional pressure that all citizens of our country and the world are experiencing. Some of our participants shared their current employment problems due to the pandemic, difficulties with their studies due to their inadequately organized communities and educational institutions, and general mental health difficulties experienced during the pandemic. Therefore, conducting the interview was more difficult than under normal circumstances.
- The biggest constraint in our research were the epidemiological measures in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, considering that the pandemic informed several protests and activities that we discussed with our subjects, specifically, the protests that took place in 2020 (Antifascist protest, Pride march, and student protests) we still found the timing to be suitable for this study despite the restrictions in place due to the pandemic.
- Data was collected mainly by interviewing active youth, so there is a limitation in not including the voices of youth who chose not to be active, which certainly affects the findings and conclusions.

IV BACKGROUND

Prior to conducting the research, the BDF team explored which movements are active and which student bodies provide opportunities for youth activism. The general impression we got is that the student bodies were mostly connected to political actors and influenced by them, not being completely independent, while communication among the various actors was very weak. Our impression was later confirmed by the research participants themselves, as they all preferred solo activism instead of the existing forums for activism. The politically driven student bodies were not the first channels that our participants chose to contact in case of any (re) action, as they do not feel that these bodies represent their views.

A slightly different approach was noticed during the COVID crises, when youth contacted humanitarian organisations (such as the Red Cross and the humanitarian organisation Pomozi.ba) and offered them to assist the elderly during the lockdown. The movement started without any invitation or formal structure, where the youth put themselves at the disposal of official crisis response staff in local communities; youth especially devoted their energy to helping in rural areas with a large elderly population. This engagement was different from previous activism since the youth chose to make themselves available to all involved stakeholders - the political authorities, non-governmental organisations and their community in general, which prompted many organisations' to explore such spontaneous approach.

The understanding and perceptions of civic and political engagement are mostly dependent on the political and socio-economic circumstances of any given society. Those familiar with social relations within BiH in the past two decades could easily identify changes in the attitudes on political participation and civic engagement among the youth. Some of these changes were caused by the ways in which formal and non-formal education approaches youth. Other factors are related to global trends, in which the role of social media is rapidly growing. This analysis is based on previous research done by international organizations and civil society organizations whose work was focused on the youth sector in BiH, and on the experience that BDF had in its work with youth.

To understand the main obstacles to youth activism, one has to think about the formal education system(s) in BiH. As the primary and, in some administrative units in BiH, secondary education are obligatory, values promoted in the curricula play a crucial role in shaping the youth's attitudes

and sense of responsibility for themselves, for the people around them, and for the place in which they live. Critical thinking is fundamental for identification of societal problems that should be addressed by activists, and the educational system(s) in BiH are often criticized for the lack of it. According to the Report¹¹ based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) testing conducted in BiH in 2018, students from this country performed worse in reading literacy than their peers in other Western Balkan countries and European states. Having in mind that reading literacy is defined as "understanding, using, evaluating, reflecting on and engaging with texts in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society"¹², this evaluation led us to the assumption that the educational system(s) in BiH do(es) not encourage students to think critically enough.

If students do not have a critical approach towards the society and its members, it is illusory to expect them to engage in civic or political activism. The FES study from 2018/2019 indicates that young people in BiH do not know the proper meaning of the term "quality education". While 75.6 percent of young people who participated in this research said that the educational system is not well adapted to market needs and 72.1 percent of them think that the system is corrupt, at the same time 49.15 percent of them are satisfied (32.8 percent of participants are extremely satisfied), with the education they acquire¹³. The same paradox is apparent in the fact that 77 percent of young people tested during the PISA 2018 testing stated that they were satisfied or largely satisfied with life in BiH, while the official data about youth (un)employment alarmingly underlines the hopeless position of this category.

Another deficiency of the education system(s) when it comes to encouraging youth's civic and/or political participation is the conservative stance towards non-curricular activities outside of school. Young activists usually do not have the support of school management for participation in non-curricular activities, which are often seen as an obstacle to better performance in school. This argument is based on the experiences of civil society organizations in the course of organizing various events and activities across BiH. Some participants had problems justifying their absence from classes and some of them were summoned by school principals due to activities they attended after school.

11 Žaneta Džumhur, "PISA 2018: Izvješće za Bosnu i Hercegovinu", Agencija za predškolsko, osnovno i srednje obrazovanje, Mostar 2019. See more on: <https://aposo.gov.ba/sadrzaj/uploads/PISA-2019-izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e-za-BiH.pdf>

12 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

13 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, "FES Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2018/2019", p.42, dostupno na: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15262.pdf>

This brings us to the other main problem in BiH. During the still ongoing post-conflict period, the strong ethno-nationalist narratives remain powerful in the public discourse. As most of BiH youth share the same problems regardless of the administrative unit they live in, young activists often see cooperation and joint action as a strong tool for implementation of their goals. In this way, they become a target for official and semi-official ethno-nationalistic elites. This is particularly the case with initiatives and projects focused on dealing with the past and memorialization. According to the PAX Report¹⁴ on inclusive memory initiatives, activists in this field have been met with strong criticism from the political elites and media channels, which often accuse them of being 'traitors' and 'foreign mercenaries'. Apart from political elites, representatives of religious communities are sometimes the main arbiters, whose judgment of one's activism in fields that particular community considers sensitive are crucial. This phenomenon is visible in small communities whose residents mostly know each other and are well-informed about each other's interests and ideological affiliations. It is not rare that some activists and their family members are labeled as traitors for being involved in forms of activism that are not following the official narrative and the public norms of that community.

With the educational system(s) not promoting activism as part of a lifestyle that helps a young person realize themselves as an active citizen in their full capacity, and with other stakeholders who are judging and negatively approaching progressive ways of thinking, such as the ethno-nationalistic elites, media and religious communities, one should not be surprised by the fact that youth (in)action in BiH is related to various and in most cases negative psychological aspects. According to the research¹⁵ conducted among secondary school students by the Association of Secondary School Students in BiH (ASuBiH), 64.2 percent of respondents agree that "obedience and respect for authority are the most important values that children should learn." The same research indicates that youth supports very rigid authoritarian standpoints that focus on simplified, black-and-white solutions to sociopolitical issues. Alarming data shows that 81.5% of respondents agree that "our country needs [...] a strong, determined prime minister who will destroy evil and get us back on our right path."¹⁶

Apart from strongly expressed aspirations for a strong and determined leader, the above-mentioned data shows the youth's distrust in current

14 PAX, „Mapping Inclusive Memory Initiatives in the Western Balkans“, October 2020. Available at: <https://paxforpeace.nl/media/download/pax-report-mapping-inclusive-memory-initiatives-in-the-western-balkans.pdf>

15 Zlatan Jovanović, „Učešće mladih u procesima donošenja odluka: Istraživački izvještaj“, Asocijacija srednjoškolaca u Bosni i Hercegovini, Decembar 2020.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

political actors in BiH. A 2015 study¹⁷ of youth in BiH found that young people demonstrate "the existence of a pronounced distrust of political institutions, which may also be one of the explanations for the general resignation of young people concerning BiH politics." (Žiga et al., 2015). Distrust in political actors and institutions negatively affects young people's willingness to take part in society through various forms of engagement. The ASuBiH research shows that young people are dissatisfied and aware of problems, but they articulate them very generally¹⁸. There is a visible need to help the youth to express their thoughts and observations in a precise and understandable way.

When speaking about global trends and the way they affect youth engagement, many people point out social media as the main culprit for the alleged apathy. Skeptics do not recognize the role often ascribed the Internet, that of actualizing social change, and they draw their conclusions from several studies.¹⁹ The results of the research presented in the book *Social Media: Usage and Impact* clearly suggest that "although Facebook's potential to connect young activists is tremendous, sustaining a young person's interest in a group and in a cause is a bit more challenging."²⁰ Facebook is still the most used social network in BiH and serves as a good platform to check public opinion on certain issues. However, in many cases, the discussion ends on Facebook and does not shift to real life. This is particularly significant when we think about the limited attention social issues get from youth in the era of the over-informed world.

Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that society can count on young people in BiH in times of crisis. According to the survey²¹ conducted by the Youth Development Institute KULT and the Mozaik Foundation, almost half (47.6 percent) of respondents have volunteered in their local communities in the first months of pandemic. The important detail is that 72.5 percent of those who volunteered did it on their own initiative. Despite the fact that a big number of respondents are youth who were active before the pandemic, it is significant that they were the ones who reacted when state institutions failed to fulfil their purpose

17 Žiga et al., "Studija o mladima u Bosni i Hercegovini", Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2015. Available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/11436.pdf>

18 Zlatan Jovanović, „Učešće mladih u procesima donošenja odluka: Istraživački izvještaj“, Asocijacija srednjoškola u Bosni i Hercegovini, Decembar 2020. p. 22.

19 Baumgartner & Morris, 2009; Grossman 2004 quoted in Hana S. Noor Al-Deen And John Allen Hendricks ed., "Social Media: Usage and Impact", 2012, p. 204.

20 Ibid, p. 207.

21 Institut za razvoj mladih KULT i Fondacija Mozaik, "Rezultati istraživanja o utjecaju pandemije COVID-19 na mlade aktivistkinje i aktiviste", available at: <http://mladi.org/v2/phocadownload/REZULTATI%20ISTRAZIVANJA%20%20UTJECAJ%20PANDEMIJE%20COVID-19.pdf>

V FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

FINDINGS

The key issue for youth is the lack of employment. All respondents concluded that the key issue for youth in BiH is the chronic lack of employment. However, all respondents believe that they have a satisfactory standard of living in comparison to other youth. Several of them stressed that they do not measure their worth through material and monetary gauges only, but through wealth of knowledge, friends, experiences, purpose, values, etc. They also pointed out that youth with better financial standing are often more oriented towards activism and that they have more inclination to become engaged in various activities that are of interest to the youth. However, they stress that there are exceptions to this observation.

Youth activism is predominantly unorganized, short-lived, and happens in reaction to specific events or issues.

The majority of respondents stated that they participated in activist initiatives on their own and with friends and/or family members, without any organized support. Also, partly due to the lack of support, their activist engagement in most cases lasted for a short period of time. Self-organized initiatives that respondents mentioned were the 2013 JMBG (identity codes)

protest, 2014 Bosnian Spring protest, 2014 flood crisis, 2017 - ongoing migrant crisis, and 2020 student protests. The initiatives where they got support were the 2019 Pride March, and to certain extent the 2020 COVID-19 crisis (initially was self-organized). Majority of respondents believe that initiatives that are 'worth fighting for' have a tendency to transcend the question of general youth lethargy and lack of motivation. Those initiatives are usually a reaction to gross violations of and/or encroachments on commonly shared rules, laws, morals and values. For example, one respondent stated that "the natural disasters brought out generally the same feeling among all of us - mostly empathy and disappointment with the government response to it".

When you see what they are doing to us who would not protest? I know it will not change anything but I cannot just sit home and do nothing. I always hope if enough of us come out it will make a difference. But it is never enough. Regardless, I am not losing faith.

Student

Youth is more eager to participate in actions that are seemingly less political. A majority of respondents stated that they participated in initiatives and activities that they perceive as non-political. For example,

Political parties do not care about me or my family and friends. I don't care about their politics. They only care about the money.

CSO activist

Once I got burned by getting too close to politics and I have learned my lesson. Politicians cannot be trusted!

Student

virtually all of our participants had thoughts on the flood crisis that took place in 2014; most of them volunteered in their communities, and those who did not helped by raising awareness and uplifting the voices of others. However, when it comes to causes that are overtly politicized in our society, like the first Pride March that took place in September 2020, only some respondents participated in it. One respondent explained his choice simply as, "based on my own beliefs and experiences, I choose to march or not."

Urban youth are more active than rural youth. It has been noted during the interviews that participants' opinions on activism depend to some extent on where they live. It is noticeable that urban residents were much more active. All respondents agree that one of the key problems for young people who want to engage in activism, which is not as obvious as others, is the lack of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Lack of infrastructure means places or events that are of interest to youth where they can share their opinions and engage in activities that are of interest to them (e.g. civil society organizations, professional clubs, music schools and music production studios, sport venues, etc.). Both rural and urban respondents agree that this is a problem that nobody is addressing. All respondents also agree that although there are excellent organizations that create activities for young people in BiH, they are mostly located in larger city centers, mostly in Sarajevo. However, one respondent drew attention to the fact that although such activities exist in smaller communities, many young people do not dare to participate because of the negative perception of active youth in some parts of the community. Participants concur that majority of such trainings and projects mainly take place in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar, thus requiring young people to travel to these centers from their local communities.

I speak as someone who comes from a small community that is very poorly infrastructurally connected to Sarajevo and other centers. I know how many problems young people from Krajina, Herzegovina, other parts of Eastern Bosnia face, who first have few opportunities in their communities, and then do not have good opportunities to connect with other centers where they can be educated and acquire some knowledge and skills, and work experience.

Aktivist OCD

Youth are feeling disconnected from their local community. All respondents stated that they are not aware of the issues in their local communities. Furthermore, all respondents state that they are aware of the 'bigger' issues, topics that are troubling the whole youth population rather than what is troubling their local communities. This observation applies to both coming from youth urban and rural communities. At the same time, respondents note that the majority of their time is spent online; not only for leisure but also in communication with peers and studying rather than being active in their local communities and connecting with peers and neighbors.

Youth activism and increases in youth activity rates are supported by the work of CSOs. All respondents agreed that they had some kind of activity through local CSOs, but not activism, with the exception of the 2019 Pride March. They mentioned that CSOs

are not only important for education and work on specific projects but that they are also important for travel, information exchange, and trainings. Some of the examples that they mentioned were the Peace Network, which actively shares job vacancies and invitations to study abroad, and the Sarajevo Open Center, which runs workshops and trainings on feminism and LGBTQI+ topics. One participant stated that the Sarajevo Open Center provides a good system of legal support, "where people can go and inquire about any information" related to their rights. Several participants cited Humanity in Action and the Schüler Helfen Leben Foundation and their programs as some of the factors crucial for raising the awareness of the importance of activism and social engagement. Respondents stated that in CSOs "the focus is on group work, where participants develop projects and research papers with mentors, but also travel around the country."

Based on this knowledge, I became a totally different person. I used to be passive, I didn't want to argue. After that I changed, I am active. I demanded my rights, I changed.

Student

The main cause of apathy is that young people feel that their problems are 'only' their problems. One respondent drew attention to a communication problem, in the sense that there is a lack of two-way dialogue when problems of young people are being addressed. The fact that young people are seen as "a separate category cared for by CSOs through different activities or by a single ministry or a single municipal department," as one of our subjects explains it, is wrong because, according to her, "young people are in every sector and, like every group in society, they have problems within those sectors." She concludes that "youth problems are in all categories, in all areas of society," and emphasizes that "what young people see as the biggest problem is another issue." All respondents agreed with her statement that "in general,

most problems for young people are found in education, because the largest category of young people is in education systems, whether high school or higher education." One participant stated that many problems "essentially stem from each other," citing health problems as an example, especially if they were related to education: "If they have to go from one canton to another canton, they do not have health insurance coverage due to government decentralization."

We are not important to anyone. Our issues are not the issues our leaders see as important. They only care about politicizing ethnicity and nationality in order to stay in power.

Young professional

A young person in this country knows not to expect anything from anybody.

Student

Education and politics are eroding the prospects for youth activism.

All respondents stated that the main impediment for greater rates of youth activism is the lack of support by the formal education system(s) and political parties and their representatives. They believe that the combination of inadequate education and politics disinterested in youth issues is the main obstacle to political and civic participation of youth. Most respondents stressed that issues that youth face are interconnected and combined with the lack of support from the formal education system and political parties in BiH.

More/better educated youth is more active youth.²² Therefore, observing the difference between the experiences of the active youth with those who do not consider themselves as such, it could be suggested that there is a link between activism and general opinions on the quality of education. The more active and engaged a young person is, their standards and expectations are higher, and by extent, are more willing to work on change.

²² Non-formal education, in the Bosnian/Croat/Serbian language, includes all types of education not acquired in formal educational institutions. English is somewhat more specific, so it distinguishes between non-formal education (which takes place outside educational institutions, but has an organizational framework, e.g., education, workshops) from informal education (which is created when a person participates in non-educational activities, e.g., participation in forgiveness for the sake of social change, but still acquiring knowledge through action). In our research, our interlocutors talk about both types of non-formal education.

Formal education system(s) are not fostering youth activism. The majority of interview participants stated that the education system is not prioritizing civic and political education and development of young people in BiH. They also claim that the formal education system(s) is completely “poorly set up,” so much so that one respondent described it as “harmful to society as a whole.” One respondent saw the education system as a personification of “the cementing of changes in education that reflect unfortunate changes imposed by the Dayton system onto the BiH Constitution” and, according to one interviewee, the education system “betrays all young people.” Several respondents pointed out that the most obvious way in which the system neglects youth is reflected in the segregation caused by the “two schools under one roof” phenomenon, which exists in several communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, several respondents noted that one of the best ways to build a person’s spirit is thought education, however, “the education system dulls young people and makes them increasingly passive.” All respondents stressed that the development of critical thinking abilities in primary and secondary level education is missing, and that it could be pinpointed as the main reason why youth is inactive today.

This problem of two schools under one roof has been present for twenty years, and some do not even consider it a problem. I see it as a great tragedy in the 21st century, that in Europe we have a case where both primary and secondary school students are physically separated by ethnicity.

Student

The key is in development of critical thinking in kids’ minds. However, teachers must first be trained how to do this because they do not know how, or they do not understand how important it is.

Student

The lack of rule of law is blocking the education system, and it saturates youth with ‘empty promises’. Several interviewees drew attention to the problem of lack of implementation of resolutions by the BiH political and legal system. As an illustration of the lack of implementation of legally binding decisions, one respondent cited a multi-year discussion of inclusion of vulnerable groups in schooling and noted that “no matter how much we talk about inclusion, in the last ten years we have done very little to actually live that inclusion: we have it on paper. BiH legislation is sometimes even better than the legislation in the countries of the European Union, but implementation is where it is lacking.” All respondents agree that government in BiH actively makes empty promises that rarely have active implementation, resulting in a general saturation of young people with ‘empty promises’.

The formal education system needs reforms in order to promote youth activism. All respondents state that education systems need reforms, but conclude that these are highly unlikely due to numerous obstacles within the systems of governance. For example, several respondents commented that our education system is “not secular in practice,” that “nationality plays a role,” and that it is generally “outdated.” Although most of our respondents believe that structural changes empower young people and promote equality and diversity, most also believe that such topics are “too politicized” and that structural changes come slowly. Respondents are not optimistic that significant changes in the field of education will happen in the near future. One respondent underlined the need for additional education for educators, who “must be willing to work with all student profiles.” Most participants recommend writing manuals on how to obtain scholarships and grants that can support young people. Several participants stated that the number of young people interested in education abroad would increase if there were people who would refer them to such opportunities. One participant explains: “I wish I had someone in high school who would refer me to existing scholarships. I did not know what a scholarship was. Now I see that there are scholarships for primary, secondary education, and university also.”

Informal and non-formal education obtained through CSOs compensates for the inadequacy of the formal systems of education. All respondents stated that key competences for activism were obtained through informal and non-formal learning through various initiatives, projects and trainings provided by CSOs. It is interesting that almost all participants believe that their teachers from formal systems of education would benefit from additional training. A majority of respondents never saw education as one exclusive institution, they rather pointed out the importance of collaboration between formal and informal learning. Furthermore, the majority of respondents believe that the training of teachers could come from CSOs; however, no respondent had any positive examples of such trainings to share, therefore saying that collaboration sounds ideal but that in practice they do not know how this idea could be applied. They also proposed concrete examples, such as democracy classes in elementary school. While some democracy classes have practical engagement, our respondents agree that it is not enough. However, they claim that almost every course in our education system can be made more practical, even the disciplines that are considered more intellectual. All of our respondents stressed that the education offered by CSOs compensates for this obvious inadequacy of the formal system. One respondent stated: “Practice is everything. The education system is really not aligned with the labor market. Our young people are not functionally literate.”

Currently no leaders can prompt youth towards activism. All respondents stated that there are no political or civic leader(s) in BiH at the moment that can mobilize youth towards activism and/or protests. A few interview participants stated that this situation will remain as long as youth do not start fighting for their rights on their own.

I find it fascinating that we do not have a single person to champion youth issues. It is actually very sad when you think about it. Don't they know we vote too!? We should matter.

Student

Mentors/mentorship is key for youth activism. A majority of respondents stated that they had a fellow mentor figure and/or organization that they look up to and that prompted them towards activism. Exposure and/or participation in events, projects and trainings organized by CSOs was mentioned by all respondents as key for their activism. For example, after discussing the role of educators in regard to the cultivation of their activist spirit, most of our respondents referred to democracy classes in primary and secondary education and how that opportunity for education and awareness was missed. Some had good experiences, but most did not. To begin with, some of our interlocutors stated that although such a class should teach about social systems and the rights of individuals within them, often such classes turn out to be an "extended big break." Our respondents suggested a complete reimagination of the course syllabus to include critical thinking skills, media, political and economic literacy, as well as the benefits and values of activism. One participant also stated, "I was lucky to meet professors who raised my spirits and desire for change." However, it is important to note her choice of words: not everyone is equally lucky, because mentoring is not mandatory in the education system. The work of organizations is even more important, because they basically have the freedom to create specific support programs for young people that would include active mentoring programs.

I do not have a single mentor that I can think of. My mentor is my association. It is a very dynamic environment and there is always something to do and something to advocate for.

CSO activist

My first protest was on my cousin's shoulders. I was six years old.

Student

Family and friends are important for youth activism. All respondents believe that the role of their family and friends was an important factor in why they became active. They stated that they started being active because most of their family members were active. Several respondents stated that they remain active because they are surrounded by active people, their friends.

Teachers are perceived as determinants of who is active and who is not. All respondents discussed formal education as an existing problem that they have gotten used to and how important it is for youth activism. The conversation mostly revolved around their suspicion that, had they been exposed to the benefits of social involvement and their rights at an early age, they might have discovered the passion for activism and volunteerism sooner. Several respondents noted that they had teachers/professors who taught beyond the prescribed syllabus, thus exposing them and their fellow students to the benefits of becoming active; students were more passionate, with less apathy and more hope for change. All respondents who had their professors as mentors put attention on the need for an increase of more humane ways of teaching. Those who did not have educators like that, simply wished they did. The general consensus of the respondents is that the training of teachers/professors is outdated, and that for them to be able to teach students about current topics, about the importance of political and economic literacy, etc. - they must first have access to that knowledge. Respondents indirectly gave several suggestions on how to accomplish this when discussing the general state of the BiH educational system.

Youth do not matter to political parties or politicians. All respondents stated that that there are no parties or political leaders in BiH that include young people and their well-being in their initiatives. Several respondents stated that "there are no political leaders." One interview participant stated that aversion to politics comes from the long-standing neglect of all problems

But everyone agrees that our political scene lacks leaders who would mobilize a group of young people. Trust is key. There is a lack of people that youth trust and would follow.

Mladi profesionalac

affecting individuals in the state. All respondents share a negative attitude towards politics in BiH, stating that not only is it not good, but is even repulsive. When asked what a political leader should look like, several respondents gave the example of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Party and the US House of Representatives, as an "intelligent, educated and inspiring" politician and activist that "we don't have." "Young people do not see anything attractive in our political scene due to the negative outlook of what politics is", observed one respondent. One interview participant cited an example: "a lot of uneducated and ineloquent people are on our political scene".

There is gender inequality in youth activism, women are more active than men. Majority of respondents pointed out that women are more socially engaged, while all agreed that women in politics still do not have enough support. The only context in which respondents agreed that gender inequality exists when it comes to activism is how much access women from small and conservative backgrounds have to events and education. They state that parents will not allow some of their children to travel to other cities.

ANALYSIS

It can be concluded that the active and activism-inclined youth have the same problems as inactive youth. During conversations with study participants it became obvious that they share similar problems as their peers. The key issue for all is the lack of meaningful employment opportunities; unemployment and economic dependence can be considered a serious impediment for youth that needs to be bolstered to be active and to contribute to society. The inability to obtain basic jobs for a prolonged period of time certainly has some sway in the perception of self-worth and unimportance, reducing the young individuals' motivation and elan to be active. This is certainly more accentuated in rural areas. Our findings suggest that regular earnings and better standards of living could improve the rate of active youth. Additionally, young people in BiH feel that they have no influence on their surroundings and decision-making. They feel that their voices are not heard among policy- and/or decision-makers, families and friends, professional circles, communities, and political organizations. The respondents' experiences show that the entire society as well as local communities do not meet young people's needs.

Another conclusion is that youth activism lacks coordination and is a reaction to what the youth perceives as injustice. As explained in the study findings, youth is in general reactive rather than proactive in their advocacy and activism; it participates in protests and activist initiatives largely without any external support. In that sense it is easy to conclude that BiH does not have social movements that are purposeful for youth and youth issues. Youth are not organized and lack groups and/or organizations striving to work toward a common goal through activism and active advocacy. Without core groups and organizations, it is hard to attempt to create or resist change or to give a political voice to the otherwise disenfranchised. Thus, all youth activism is short-lived and without guidance. Considering that social movements create social change, it is hard to imagine that BiH youth will in the near future successfully solve some of the issues they deem important without serious

counseling, mentorship and leadership. The key question here for CSOs and other stakeholders is that of the difference between uncoordinated and spur-of-the-moment engagements of youth and their involvement in organized activities in their local communities. The assumption that youth is more likely to mobilize in the times of crisis while their general involvement remains sparse, is not enough. CSOs and other stakeholders should strive to pinpoint the exact sources of motivation in times of crises that can be re-created in less pressing times. Mentorship of young people is important too, since young people are significantly more active when they see the possibility of change, directly resulting from the activities of their mentors or people they emulate in general. Mentors can also be people in whom the youth see a version of themselves, because it is motivating to have an example of a person for whom all the work and effort has paid off. In the absence of such individuals in their communities and schools, one example of the implementation of change is the inspiration of organizations to launch mentoring programs. The emphasis here is on the work of CSOs.

The obvious conclusion is that youth are trying to avoid any type or form of politics, yet only politics will solve their issues, a Catch 22 conundrum. A majority of proactive youth in BiH is trying to have a purposeful life outside of the confines of politics, which is perceived by them as nationalistic or opportunistic. For that reason, they do not see any politician as a potential champion of youth issues in the political arenas of BiH. However, for a political system to be representative and address the issues of all members of society, all members must be included. The case with young people in BiH is that they are disenfranchised and completely removed from political processes at all levels of governance. They comprise a significant portion of the population but have little to no voice or influence in decisions that affect them. In order to improve their position in the long term, it is vital that youth are engaged in formal political processes and have a say either through their organizations/movements and/or their leaders or political party youth issue champions.

Respondents confirmed that youth in general has limited social, economic, and even leisure-related connections with their local community. This lack of meaningful engagement in their local communities is in stark contrast with their online connections, because being a young person today is usually linked with being connected to everything all the time online. This disconnectedness can be contributed to the lack of civic engagement and political participation. It can be concluded that CSOs that largely compensate for the lack of opportunity for youth in education, civic, and political engagement have limited activities connected to local communities. Considering that CSOs have a disproportionate role in civic and political

engagement of youth, a key question for them should be whether they could organize trainings, educations, initiatives, seminars and events in smaller centers. Furthermore, while observing the significant involvement of youth in their local communities to support those in need at the time of the global pandemic, it would seem that CSOs missed the opportunity to explore the possibility of engaging youth on a more permanent and systematic basis.

It can also be concluded that the main cause of apathy is that young people feel that their problems are 'only' their problems, which in turn fuels the lack of civic and political engagement of youth. The general feeling is that the obvious obstacles to participation in formal, institutionalized political processes make young people feel disempowered. Many tend to believe that their voices are not going to be heard, or that they will not be taken seriously even if they are heard. This problem becomes self-fulfilling prophecy, as political parties and politicians lose interest in responding to the needs of young people if they cannot win their votes. This, in turn, leads to young people being increasingly excluded from taking part in decision-making and debates about key socio-economic and political issues important to youth. While youth apathy is a problem, they are not an isolated group: youth apathy is directly related to the general lethargy present in BiH; growing up in an environment that does not cultivate an activist spirit is a direct consequence of what is generally considered apathetic behavior. Also, it would appear that the issue of locality is also of consequence, where more urban environments naturally offer more opportunities. Therefore, the main question is what various stakeholders can do to support youth regardless of their place of residence and access to organized activism.

Regarding the political parties, it can be deduced from the inputs of the interviewees that major political parties do not consider active youth important for their party's development nor for the development of the BiH society. This is very important because in BiH, unlike in a majority of other democracies, political parties are the exclusive gatekeepers of meaningful political and civic participation. Their influence is not only that of determining which candidates are nominated and elected and which issues achieve national importance, but parties also have a great influence over the policies and strategies that could guide and foster a greater degree of young people's civic and political participation at the local, regional, and national levels. They have an essential role to play in promoting young people's participation in formal decision-making processes. However, political parties are not doing this because they have a system of persistent exclusion of youth which stems from a variety of factors, but mostly from their lack of vision or understanding of the issue. Furthermore, engagement in political parties often requires long-term commitment, which is difficult

for youth trying to obtain an education and to establish themselves on the labor market. It is easy to conclude that these obstacles fuel a cycle where youth are discouraged by the exclusionary nature of political parties and decide not to join them or have anything to do with them. In turn, because they do not join political parties and political life in BiH, they lack the internal power base to nominate individuals that would champion youth issues. As it is, both issues should be addressed to break the cycle: (1) youth should be able to develop the skills and motivation to successfully engage in political parties, and (2) parties should be encouraged to create space for youth.

The fact that primary and high school students in BiH are not getting the knowledge that will prepare them for productive civic and political life is another important conclusion of this research. Students are graduating from education institutions without any basic competences that should ensure that these young citizens are sufficiently informed and educated to become equal participants in the democratic discourse, in which they as a proactive, independent individual constructively make responsible decisions and contribute to society. Education systems need in-depth reconstruction and reform in order to introduce creative methods that are more favorable for developing the critical thinking ability of students, which in the long run will ensure that they are more active and activism-oriented. In the current system they are getting fragmented knowledge on different topics in different classes and learning is a lecture-based transfer of knowledge prescribed by a rigid curriculum. Furthermore, there is a widespread tendency of memorizing lectures, essays and question-answer materials. Therefore, proper knowledge of and training in the creative method on the part of both the students and teachers, adequate implementation of the creative method at elementary and high school levels, effective interactive classes, banning of guidebooks, are necessary for the development of critical thinking ability of the students in BiH. Students in BiH must possess critical thinking abilities in order to find their place in the competitive world. Not only for the sake of good workplace performance but also for leading productive and active lives. Simply put, formal education system(s) are not helping youth to be active and activist oriented.

Respondents hinted that there is a substantial portion of BiH youth that lack trust in people and institutions and feels that their fate is sealed by powerful and untouchable ruling elites. There is an obvious lack of implementation of the legally binding decisions in every sector in BiH. Furthermore, suspects in numerous high-profile corruption and crime cases tend not to get prison sentences. Such perception is prevalent among young people and they believe that there are insufficient opportunities for their meaningful engagement, because nothing is based on merit or some kind of law. In

order to enhance young people's trust in justice, institutions and the rule of law, it is important to promote the realization of their social economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights; addressing issues of injustice and unfairness that youth is witnessing, as well as creating opportunities for their free, active and meaningful participation is of paramount importance. It is certain that youth is lacking decent access to education and work due to the widespread lack of rule of law, which is fueling corruption and nepotism. Again, what is missing is youth participation in public affairs, where young people would bring a voice of change with a clear role in advocating for justice and the rule of law. It can be easily deduced that their purposeful engagement could be a powerful force for reform.

CSOs act as a foster system for youth's education as well as mechanism for provision of civic and political engagement. CSOs are surrogates for the civic and political upbringing of youth. The shortcomings of the formal systems of education and participation for young people which should ensure that youth is adequately represented in decision-making, that they know their rights and be given the necessary knowledge and capacity to participate in a meaningful way at all levels are to a large extent ensured by various CSOs in BiH. In order to ensure such opportunities for youth, CSOs show time and again renewed efforts for inclusive and quality education for youth from the early age. They are constantly making efforts to maintain opportunities for non-formal education where youth can learn about the rule of law, civic and political participation, and human rights. Their role of caregivers and educators is essential to encourage young people to value and apply the principles of the rule of law in their daily lives, including making responsible decisions, promoting the values of tolerance and respect and enhancing important life skills such as critical thinking. It would appear that CSOs are the only sector that is constantly expanding opportunities for meaningful engagement of youth and investing in youth-led initiatives on the national level; however, they are lacking in initiatives to aid youth in which young people would actively shape their communities. It is easy to conclude that CSOs need support in their efforts to ensure meaningful engagement by young people in promoting opportunities for their positive development, wellbeing, and education, allowing them to focus on making positive contributions to society rather than just struggling to survive.

VI CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth passivity was one of the topics that we wanted to explore in our research, as we felt through our program activities, development and work with other organisations that the CSOs are starting to struggle to find youth that are interested in any sort of activism or invested in education in this field. The questions that we wanted to explore was what are the main obstacles for youth activism, and what hinders political and civic participation of youth? Specifically, in the system that provides little assistance (or does not provide at all) and there is a lack of resources and information, What are the main triggers/circumstances for youth to become 'active', and what are the key reasons/circumstances that make youth inactive?

The conducted research has confirmed several aspects that must be addressed in the society before we put this burden of activism on the shoulders of youth and expect any change in their approach. All participants have witnessed the lack of opportunities in their education and in society in general. The ones who were active confirmed that activism came out of their own will and effort or through influencers/mentors they they were fortunate enough to meet. This should not be the case and we cannot lean on these factors to promote future development of activism in our country.

Considering the information collected from various relevant sources and the available primary research, the following recommendations for addressing youth activism were outlined. The proposed recommendations are not a mere wish list because they were designed so that each recommendation is both implementable and sustainable.

The proposed recommendations follow a format in which the data and conclusions from the study are presented and are not ranked in any way (e.g., by relevance):

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT(S)

- All levels of government should create realistic strategic frameworks and policies for youth employment, with clear action plans, responsibilities, and connections to budgets, in order to alleviate the high rate of youth unemployment and promote a sense of purpose and usefulness in youth.

- Executive branches at all levels of government must enable youth voices to be heard in their policy and strategy development processes, thus eliminating the youth's sense of non-importance and ensuring that decisions are well-informed.
- All education ministries should conduct curricular reforms to actively pursue development of critical thinking in youth and to create practical and research-oriented curricula in education.
- Formal education institutions should consider training of teachers and educators in the skills and techniques required for development of critical thinking skills in youth, starting from an early age.

POLITICAL PARTIES

- Political parties should create mechanisms to actively pursue greater direct participation of youth in initiatives that are of interest to them, in order to help youth in solving their issues and to foster a sense of importance and value; parties would stand to benefit from potential new youth votes.

CSOs:

- CSOs should consider shifting some trainings, educations, initiatives, seminars, and events to smaller towns in BiH to reach youth that are otherwise neglected and without purposeful opportunities to become active and activist-oriented.
- CSOs should devote a portion of their activities to active mobilization of youth in local communities as potential contributors to their initiatives and projects, aiding youth and communities to create greater levels of trust, reciprocity, and common shared values.
- CSOs should consider expanding their involvement in civic and political education of youth even further, since they are the single largest source of meaningful education about activism for youth.
- CSOs should use young activists as positive examples and influencers to promote activism for other youth in their communities.
- It is of outmost importance for CSOs to develop mentoring programs for youth, thus influencing their involvement in issues in their local communities.

OTHERS:

- All stakeholders must help to create a youth social movement that would act as the foundation for future youth activism and as a Petri dish for future youth leaders.
- All relevant stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental) working with youth must find approaches that will keep youth activism alive, especially for those young activists that do not ask or do not need any other support to be active.

Having said all that, we as a society have an obligation to change the current situation. We must change our approach and work together to encourage young people to become more active, to empower them to become louder in their demands, but also to develop strategies that will help them to accomplish their demands. Governmental and non-governmental institutions must work together to reach this goal, as only with this approach we can help our youth to join global youth rights movements and provide young people with viable alternatives for staying in our country.

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Annexes

Annex 1 – Detailed methodology

RESEARCH COMMUNITY

We have collaborated with several of our partners to access respondents as diverse as possible, in order to get information that encompasses different backgrounds and standpoints. However, because of Covid-19 and screen oversaturation of everyone using their computers extensively, our research community is sparse. Most of our subjects are young people who responded to an online call that we shared on our Instagram profile and Lonac.ba page. Due to the epidemiological situation, we conducted all conversations via the Zoom platform, which enabled us to talk to young people from smaller communities far away from Sarajevo. In addition to the public invitation to participate in the research, we used the “snowball sampling” method through collaboration with our partners and sharing of contacts between organizations. Based on several studies conducted over the last few years, discussed in the following chapter, the BDF team concluded that the attitudes of most young people match and, to get to the heart of issues that bother them, instead of quantitative information in this publication we present the personal stories of our respondents.

We have interviewed fourteen women and eleven men, mainly in their twenties. Ten of them are university students, while the others are employed in either governmental or non-profit institutions. Nine of them work in various NGOs active in the field of civic engagement of BH citizens, while all of our subjects consider themselves active youth. A few of our subjects were hesitant to call themselves activists because of their personal understanding of the term, but all of them have numerous experiences in volunteering and community service.

Five of our subjects are politically active as members of political parties, but most of them are, as they label themselves, “apolitical.” When conversing about the recent election, most of our subjects were open about the fact that they voted or chose not to. That might be the most significant difference between our subjects: while all of them passionately criticize the political climate in the country, only a few have trust in certain political parties.

Our subjects come from various socioeconomic backgrounds and while their beliefs, and especially political beliefs, differ, they all share the same

frustration with the existing systems in BH and are willing to be a part of change. That frustration shows itself in different ways and our subjects see different causes for it. This publication is a collection of personal experiences and opinions about political and civic engagement of youth, and the basis on which we can make suggestions regarding the next steps that BDF, its partners, and similar organizations can take to be of better service to youth.

METHODS EMPLOYED

The methodology of this research underwent significant changes during the research. Although the original plan was to include a survey in which a larger number of respondents would participate, the research team came to the conclusion through trial interviews and survey that the information that BDF wants to convey in this publication would be better presented through detailed interviews and qualitative information.

The research is conceptualized as a synthesis of primary and secondary data on the cases of youth activism in BiH over the past decade. The analysis relies on a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of primary and secondary data and quantitative analysis of primary data collection, to triangulate the information to the extent possible. Therefore, our team utilized the following data sources:

- The available organizing frameworks/platforms for youth;
- Interviews with key informants responsible for various stages/duties in protests/activism;
- Secondary data sources (topic-specific analyses produced by domestic and international organizations, as well as official country statistics and reports).

Using these data sources we illustrate how youth's motivation to participate in civic activities relates to the problems they find important, especially those related to education and unemployment. To examine these and similar topics we applied a mixed method approach that includes the review of previous research on the topic, as well as any prior studies or situation analyses, to gain an understanding of any key features of youth activism. Key informant interviews with active youth representatives were used to provide in-depth, first-hand accounts from youth and activists. To explore these topics, we employ three main research questions. Considering the above facts and the areas we wanted to explore in order to better understand and adapt our approach to youth in general, we come to the main research question: *What are the driving forces behind activism in crises situations and protests in B&H, and how can we keep them alive?*

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first question, “What are the main obstacles for youth activism, and what hinders political and civic participation of youth?”, allows us to explore the background to the past and current environment for youth activism. For example, we explore whether unemployment and economic dependence represent major problems for youth in BiH; whether these problems are interconnected; and whether resolving them could contribute to proliferation of youth activism. While we planned to explore the intersections of gender, age, location, and level of education with respect to being active or inactive, we found that the most pressing factor in this discourse is the location and access to information, which are a direct result of one’s socioeconomic status.

The second question, “What are the main triggers/circumstances for youth to become ‘active’, and what are the key reasons/circumstances that make youth inactive?”, relates directly to the first-hand experiences of activist youth. Our key informants’ accounts are of particular importance in the exploration of this topic, as we explore how their activism and political engagement started and how they differ from their communities and friends who are inactive. This question aims to identify the defining moments/events/circumstances/environment that render youth active or inactive. We discuss this question through various lenses to examine relationships, networks, and support mechanisms, as well as general perceptions on why somebody is active or inactive. The information obtained in answer to this question will feed into the contextual information from the first question. Further analysis makes it possible to examine the role(s) of gender, sexuality, and socio-economic background in perceiving activism differently.

The last question in this study, “What are the necessary conditions for youth activism, and which factors are most likely to foster activism/passivity in youth?”, follows up on the first two questions and is specifically focused on understanding the internal and external circumstances fostering previous, and possibly future, youth activism. To answer this question we used holistic analysis and explored why some ‘environments’ are more conducive for youth activism. While the first two questions focused on our subjects’ experience, this last question follows up on them to discuss the institutional help youth receives. The aim is to explore affiliations with specific policy agenda(s). Specifically, we discuss the formal education curriculum and in what ways it is a factor that may influence youth activism. We compare these objectives with exposure to the non-formal forms of education.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The method that proved to be the most important in obtaining information from our subjects were the semi-structured in-depth interviews, as these allowed us to approach each of our subjects individually and to adjust questions according to their sphere of interest. While we had a detailed interview protocol (Appendix 2), we adapted the guidance to each interviewee. For instance, when speaking to students, the conversation was mainly focused on their own experiences in their communities and how supported they felt by the institutions. Politically active youth were able to reflect on their own involvement in politics, while the youth employed in institutions involved in civic engagement discussed the role of donors and how the institutionalization of activism affects the changes in society. Considering our two trial interviews, we found that the last set of questions, about education, tended to come up sooner in the conversation and we rarely needed to ask this set of questions as our subjects brought up the topic of education usually in the first couple of minutes of the interview, when discussing the main issues that the youth faces. While the youth share a similar general mindset and all agree that the main problems are education and unemployment, their different backgrounds show the different approaches they would take to tackle these issues.

The interviews we conducted with our respondents lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, and the aim of this research, in addition to those listed at the beginning of the publication, was to raise voices and create a platform for exchange of experiences of young people with different backgrounds. The benefit of this approach is that not only have we obtained important insights that helped us to answer our research questions, but even more importantly, we may have created a space for young people to share their experiences and opinions. The majority of our subjects expressed gratitude for being listened to, claiming that they “need to talk about things like this more often.”

Even though the interviews were conducted via Zoom, there was a sense of connection with our subjects, because no matter how distant we were physically, the conversations were engaging. We wanted to avoid any sense of authority between the researcher and the subject, so we formatted the interviews more like loosely mediated conversations. This approach proved to work, especially because the relaxed approach seemed to make our subject more eager to share their experiences. While we were able to create a connection with our subjects, the virtual wall between us was a distraction at times, ranging from internet connection issues to availability and scheduling – essentially, it was harder to seem relaxed in virtual conversations.

LIMITATIONS

In the process of research design, tool development and data collection we encountered several limiting circumstances that somewhat reduce the strength of our findings:

- Data were collected during the peak of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (October – late December 2020). We believe that the pandemic affected the final number of our respondents. We fully appreciate the emotional pressure that all citizens of our country and the world are experiencing. Some of our subjects shared their current employment problems due to the pandemic, difficulties with their studies due to lack of organization in their educational institutions, and general mental health issues. Therefore, we learned that conducting interviews was more difficult than under normal circumstances.
- The biggest constraint in our research were the epidemiological measures in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, considering that the pandemic informed several protests and activities that we discuss with our subjects, specifically, the protests that took place in 2020 (Antifascist protest, Pride march, and student protests), we believe that it was essential to discuss this issue as well.
- Against all obstacles, the fact that 2020 was marked by such an obvious display of dysfunctional institutions inspired young people to speak out sharply and clearly about their experiences. Encouraged by world events such as the Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality in the US and Europe, the global warming awareness movement led by Greta Thunberg, marches for women's and LGBTQI + rights, many of our interlocutors believed that these actions are directly linked to the pandemic because people around the world have had time to notice all the ways the system is holding them back.

Annex 2 – BDF projects

The Boris Divković Foundation was established in 2013 with the aim to improve policy practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. The Foundation promotes responsible policies which will serve all citizens and act on the principles of equality, coexistence and solidarity.

THEREFORE, MAIN GOALS OF BDF ARE:

- Improvement of policy practices in BiH;
- Research;
- Education of socially active young people, regardless of their political affiliation;
- Responsible policy.

BDF's focus is on policymaking, lobbying and advocacy for progressive policies based on principles of democracy, equality and inclusion. Therefore, one of the strongest segments of BDF is its Research and Development Department, which produces tailored policy solutions focusing mainly on the areas of education, social and economic development.

Until now, the Foundation has successfully implemented the following projects.

Academy of Political Responsibility with young politicians, NGO activists, journalists and theologians. The project was supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and Heinrich Bell Stiftung.

Regional Academy for Young Liberals from Western Balkan, with the objective to strengthen the capacity of liberal youth in the Western Balkans. Three modules per generation were organized. The project was supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Initiative 50% – project focused on strengthening institutional, organizational, and political capacities of female candidates in the domain of women's political participation, along with introduction of equal representation of women and men as one of the main principles of (internal and external) operation of political parties. The project aims to design and implement individual programs for female candidates, focusing on their public promotion and raising their public profile.

Schools in Connections – a project of better primary education that aims to work together for quality education on social and sustainability issues, and to focus on future perspectives of young participants. The aim

of the project is to empower youth aged 10-30 through education and action related to socially responsible entrepreneurship, quality training, employment and future planning, in cooperation with municipalities and companies from several countries. The rationale of the project is that only together with youth we can create a better world and a better future for everyone. The project is implemented with the Primary School Srednje in Canton Sarajevo, in cooperation with a primary school from Netherlands.

We Grow Together – Erasmus program with the aim to make social entrepreneurship available to youth 15-25 years of age as much as possible. The aim of the project was to help youth coming from five different countries to come together and exchange their experiences, ideas, and ambitions through an interactive program designed to encourage participants to take the lead in changing the society and to create new jobs and launch individual social projects.

Progressive Politics in the Western Balkans (ProgWeB) – The Boris Divkovic Foundation (BDF) in BiH, with support from Swedish organizations: Olof Palme International Centre (OPC) and the Centre Party International Foundation (CIS) and in cooperation with six think tanks from the Western Balkans: Forum of Left Initiative (FLI), Center of Modern Skills Serbia (CMS), Qemal Stafa Foundation Albania (QSF), Progres Institute for Social Democracy North Macedonia (PROGRESS), Liberal Institute Skopje North Macedonia (LIS) and Musine Kokalari Institute for Social Policy from Kosovo, is organising a one-year political educational programme aimed at young people from liberal and social-democratic political parties in the Western Balkan countries. The aim of this Academy is to empower young and politically active people and to provide knowledge and skills that will contribute to their further political engagement in their political parties and in the political life of their respective countries. Special focus is on practical political education (campaign management and political manifesto writing), the culture of remembrance and reconciliation, and how they relate to regional EU integrations. The program will end with a masterclass for the most active participants.

Insult Gallery – Walk of Shame in Public Discourse – The aim of this project is to teach the participants about the consequences of negative usage of online platforms and to raise the awareness about violent extremism (VE), hate speech, and cyber bullying through an online campaign and education. The goal is to educate young leaders and activists from both FBiH and RS about the importance of fighting against violent extremism and the differences between freedom of speech and hate speech. The participants will gain knowledge about cyber-crime,

strategies to prevent its spread, and how to protect their community. The project was organised in cooperation with the International Organisation for Migrations (IOM) in BiH.

Chance for us – Youth in Politics is a project devoted to education and promotion of candidates for the 2020 local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina: representatives of ten political parties across Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our participants had a chance to learn more about local governance, how local councils work and how to write and promote their initiatives if elected as local councillors. The project was organised in cooperation with the International Organisation for Migrations (IOM) in BiH.

EU Mentorship – The project provides political mentorship to liberal political activists in non-EU Western Balkan countries and Eastern Partnership member states, with the aim of preparing them for EU accession processes, as well as pushing the topic of future EU enlargement beyond the simple 'pro et contra' arguments onto more solution-oriented discussions. This mentorship project should result in opening a new two-way street, where information, opinions and arguments can be exchanged between liberal politicians and officials of EU member states and non-EU Western Balkan/EaP countries, hopefully ensuring that a liberal voice of aspiring members will be heard more clearly within the EU and its Institutions, but also vice-versa. The project was supported by the European Liberal Forum (ELF).

Civic Platform for Young Liberal Activists (CPLA) – The aim of this project is to provoke youth's interest in political activism within the broad spectrum of civil society, including political parties, NGOs, and social movements. Liberal political NGOs all around the SEE area will gather with the young representatives of liberal organisations and political parties and raise awareness about youth activism. The project was supported by the European Liberal Forum (ELF).

Throughout the years, BDF has organized a number of roundtables, with the support of our partners from all over Europe: IDI Stichting (Netherlands), Haya van Someren Stichting (Netherlands), CRS/USAID, Heinrich Boll Stiftung (Germany/B&H), Centre Party International Foundation (Sweden), European Liberal Forum (ELF), International Organisation for Migrations in BiH (IOM), and many others.

Annex 3 – Interview protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for dedicating your time to assist us on our research! This interview is conducted to collect information on youth issues and youth activism in particular in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From this interview with you, BDF hopes to gain substantial and meaningful reflections on youth in order to produce honest recommendations for BDF's partners on improvements to some of the youth-related issues and to promote the participation of youth in political and other processes. The report will be presented to BDF's partners, with clear recommendations for improvements in youth activism given in the form of various activities and policy adjustments. The purpose of this meeting with you, today, is to learn about your thoughts and experiences on this topic. Your insights will help us understand and summarize the information about existing activities, practices, and gaps according to your experience with this topic.

All your comments are confidential and you will not be identified by name in any report, presentation, or similar.

[NOTE: Make sure you have the name, position, and organization/party, and contact information]

1. WHAT IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE FOR YOUTH IN BIH?

PROBES:

- Is lack of the employment important?
- Is general poverty an issue?
- Is lack of other opportunities an issue?
- Is bad political situation an issue?
- What are the predictions for the B&H economy from the youth's perspective?

2. WHAT IS THE MAIN OBSTACLE FOR POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH?

PROBES:

- What barriers hinder youth from engaging with issues of importance to them?
- Is youth relevant to decision-makers?
- Is youth relevant to political parties?
- How do political parties respond to, support, and/or discourage youth who are involved in activism?
- Are there 'good' opportunities for training?
- Are there some innovative platforms to 'get active'?
- How does trust in political actors and institutions reflect on activism?
- What are the risks and liabilities involved for you/your organization/ youth around activism?

3. WHAT IS THE MAIN TRIGGER FOR BECOMING 'ACTIVE'?

PROBES:

- What is activism?
- Please, could you tell me about your recent activism?
- What is the role of family, friends, and school in triggering the activism?
- How does a young person decide what is 'worth fighting for'?
- What topics are appropriate for youth to become involved in, and what topics are considered too taboo?
- What do you or others fear/find exciting about activism?
- How do rules/laws/morals and values affect your activism?
- Tell me about a time when rules/laws/morals and values affected your activism?
- How do you get other people involved in activism and why might they leave?

4. WHAT IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF APATHY TOWARDS ACTIVISM AMONG YOUTH?

PROBES:

- No culture of positive engagement?
- Lack of capacity of youth to organise?
- How do you spend your spare time; how does youth spend spare time?
- Would their interest be changed if the community offers a better portfolio of spare time activities/trainings?

5. IS BiH EXPERIENCING THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ACTIVISM IN A FEW NGOs OR INDIVIDUALS?

PROBES:

- Who do you associate with activism?
- Are they successful or useful?
- What is the role of donors?
- How do NGOs respond to, support, and/or discourage youth who are involved in activism?
- How do you know you were successful or unsuccessful in activism and how did you react?

6. IS YOUTH POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY LITERATE?

PROBES:

- Does youth know what are the benefits of being active?
- Does youth know how to become active?
- Why is youth disinterested in politics?
- Does youth choose to be politically active due to ideology and beliefs, or due to material gains? And why is that?
- What is the interest of youth in politics?
- Which values are the most important to youth?

- What set of ethical ideals, principles, doctrines, myths or symbols of a social movement explains how youth votes today?

7. HOW CONNECTED IS YOUTH TO THEIR COMMUNITIES?

PROBES:

- What is the difference between being involved in the community and being 'active' in community?
- Does youth/you know what the community needs; if NO, why?
- Does youth/you know who to talk to about community issues; if NO, why?
- Does youth/you have any spare time opportunities in their communities?
- How does community respond to, support, and/or discourage youth who are involved in activism?

8. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MEDIA?

PROBES:

- How do media representatives respond to, support, and/or discourage youth who are involved in activism?
- What do young people think about media freedom in B&H?
- Which media do they follow and do they trust the media?
- Do they recognise fake news and how?
- Can they recognise the impact of fake news on youth's choice of political parties?

9. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION?

PROBES:

- How do schools respond to, support, and/or discourage youth who are involved in activism?
- Does formal education shape youth to be inactive? If YES, How?
- Does non-formal education shape youth to be inactive? If YES, How?
- What are good examples of non-formal education?
- If you were in training, please can you tell us why you may have stopped going?

10. WHAT ROLE CAN ACTIVISM PLAY IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND WHAT CAN YOUTH LEARN FROM BEING INVOLVED IN ACTIVISM?

11. IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THERE EMERGING ISSUES WITH YOUTH?

Thank you for your time. We will forward the final results of the study to you once it is finished.

REVIEWS

Review 1: Sarina Bakić

“And those who have youth... they do not know what they have” are the introductory words of Austrian philosopher Ernst Fischer in his book *The Problems of the Young Generation*. They are not only an expression of a doubt in the traditional rule that young people are the easiest and most valuable object of construction and manipulation of any society and political system, but they also speak of young people as a great mystery of our time. That is why studies on their position and their determinations on all issues of social reality are of great importance, and they go beyond the limits of narrow doctrinal attitudes that we often encounter. One of these studies is *Awaken in Need: Political and Civic Engagement of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Youth* by Anela Lemeš, Valida Repovac Nikšić and Edo Kanlić.

Youth is, in fact, a very complex social entity that represent the syncretism of many elements (sometimes a set of very different and mutually contradictory contents). The evident heterogeneity does not occur only due to differences in the degree of socio-economic development of individual countries or their regions, but it arises from individual differences, economic status, cultural, gender and other circumstances and factors. At the same time, there is an unequivocal diversity of young people's entities and differences in their characteristics, which must always be stated and respected. Furthermore, the Bosnian society is a very vulnerable society in all its aspects, and it needs adequate, professional and humanist oriented guidelines in overcoming the key problems that society has been trying to deal with for so many years now. Thus, such guidelines would help every member of the community, regardless of gender, age, religion and ethnicity, social status, culture, gender identities, etc. Not only do young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina include all of them, but they contain other identities as well, and due to the problems our society is facing nowadays, a large number of young people have decided or are in the process of leaving their country. The researchers Lemeš, Repovac Nikšić and Kanlić used this light motive for conducting this very relevant study. Its relevance is reflected in the methodological character of the publication, which includes semi-structured interviews with youth. More precisely, the interviews were conducted with 25 respondents, about twenty years old.

Today's image of Bosnia and Herzegovina is, among other things, determined by youth who have grown up in conditions that characterize the formation of new cultural, media, political and economic standards. The aspirations of this part of Bosnian society are fundamentally and extremely different from the aspirations of young people of the previous system. This is not caused only by the fundamental changes that the state and society have gone through, but by the changes that actually have a global character. The consequences from a difficult period of war and violence, identity crisis, psychological burdens, collapse of the value system, economic instability and unemployment are closely related to the socio-economic, political and cultural situation in BH society. This situation, together with the consequences it creates, is also related to the apathy of the younger generations. For that reason and based on the obtained results of this study, youth often feel self-indulged. The results of this research further emphasize that young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina believe that the most evident segment of society responsible for their position is education, which with its apologetic and ideological approach, does not create sufficient space for comprehensive expression of youth and their needs, or for their political and civic engagement.

In this regard, a very important section of this Study is the research recommendation, created for different segments of society: government, civil society organizations, political parties and other stakeholders, which will be very useful in designing strategic projects, actions and plans for the greater involvement of young people in the processes of political and civic engagement.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the selfless work and dedication of the authors of the Study, Anela Lemeš, Valida Repovac Nikšić and Edo Kanlić, who with their professional and personal engagements encourage, motivate and teach young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina about the importance of their political and civic activism. It is also important to emphasize the role and contribution of Boris Divković Foundation in the development of youth's political culture, as they continue to strengthen their social and political responsibility, all with the aim of developing and benefiting the general society of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Review 2: Milica Pralica

The Publication *Awakened in Need: Political and Civic Engagment of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Youth*, written by Anela Lemes, Valida Repovac Niksic and Edo Kanlic, and published by Boris Divkovic Foundtion, is a summary of the causes, current state of apathy and political or civic disengagement of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, the authors of the publication offer solutions, i.e. recommendations for governments, political parties, civil society organizations and other actors in a society on what they could do to encourage young people to become socially engaged citizens of our country.

The migration of young people from B&H has been a common trend for the last decade, and it has been most evident in the past few years due to the economic and political crisis of the ruling political elites. In addition to the poor socio-economic situation, which is reflected in the social and civic engagement of youth from the publication, we can conclude that the educational system is the leading cause of youth passivity.

The lack of support from both the academic community and the authorities at both the local and all other state levels sends a message to the youth that their opinion and engagement have no social significance. In an attempt to seek their "place in the sun", young people decide to leave the country and apply their knowledge and skills in countries where their voice is heard.

"If you want to conquer a country, send an army, and if you want to destroy it forever, collapse their education" is an old saying. It is through this publication that we can see how much the education system in combination with ethno-nationalism results in the insufficient youth activism in B&H.

In addition, youth lack opportunity to develop critical thinking skills and civic activism in formal education. Although some young people are rebellious and seek their rights in street protests, social activism and youth engagement in B&H is mostly disorganized, short-lived and it often occurs as a belated reaction to specific social events or problems. This indicates that other mechanisms of civic engagement of social activism or civic political literacy are not recognized, including initiating petitions, civic initiatives, writing inquiries and requests for free access to information, and participation in public debates.

Disassociating with the problems of others (all respondents answered that they are not aware of the problems in their communities), lack of solidarity with other marginalized groups in B&H society, ignorance and

unequal approach to action of youth in rural and urban communities, de-politicization of social problems (the publication states that most respondents stated that they participated in initiatives and activities that they perceive as non-political), and many other examples are a consequence of a poor education system, due to the fact that schools and colleges do not teach youth how to be socially responsible and actively engaged citizen, but an obedient citizen.

In addition to classic modules, introducing a civic education subject could offer young people tips and skills how to put their knowledge into practice, which could also lead to better civic activism in their old age.

The departure of young people, their apathy and disengagement in society is a problem that concerns all of us and it is mandatory to find the causes of these problems as soon as possible in order to start solving them.

This informative publication intends to familiarize the public with the problem of youth migration, their non-involvement, and it also offers recommendations and guidelines for the government, political foreign civil society organizations on how to reduce the rate of youth migration.

This clear and comprehensive publication uses no unnecessary professional terms and as such is adaptable to a wide range of users.

The Publication *Awakened in Need: Political and Civic Engagement of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Youth*, is a valuable handbook for all social and political actors in B&H. The content of the publication, research methodology and results not only encourage readers to think about this issue, but they also intend to help all institutions, organizations and others who work with young people in our country.

I believe that this brochure will fill the thematic gap among the currently available publications with its quality, simple and understandable content, and I recommend its inclusion in the compulsory reading of all educational and general institutions and civil society organizations which work with youth.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ANELA LEMEŠ

Executive Director of Boris Divkovic Foundation (BDF) since 2016, in charge of project management and organization of various educational activities. Anela led and organized a number of regional youth academies, engaged in civil society networking and establishment of new collaborations, and published numerous publications on behalf of BDF. She managed to strengthen BDF's capacities and expand its connections both inside Bosnia and Herzegovina and across Europe.

Anela holds a degree in political sciences from the University of Sarajevo and has completed her MA in Management and Organization at the Adizes Institute USA, California, Adizes School of Management at the Faculty of Economics, University of Sarajevo on the topic of Quality as the main foundation of the leadership position for universities in BiH.

Before working for BDF, she worked as a Graduate Program Coordinator at the University of Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST) and won an award for THE EX SOLO AD SOME AWARD for her contribution to the development and progress of SSST over a ten-year period.

VALIDA REPOVAC NIKŠIĆ

Valida Repovac Nikšić is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Sarajevo. She earned her bachelor's degree at the Department of Philosophy and Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Sarajevo and pursued European interdisciplinary postgraduate studies in the area of democracy and human rights at the University of Sarajevo and the University of Bologna. She earned her master's degree in political philosophy in 2002 and defended her master's thesis under the title A Reconciliation of the Liberal-Communitarian Debate in Will Kymlicka's Liberal Theory of Minority Rights. She worked at the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a senior advisor in the Cabinet of the Deputy Minister for European Integration and as a senior advisor in the Cabinet of the Director of Directorate for European Integration. She spent the academic year 2010/2011 at Berkeley, University of California, as a Fulbright fellow. She earned her PhD degree at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Sarajevo in April 2014. In April 2019, she published the book *On Cosmopolitanism – Theoretical Debates*.

EDO KANLIĆ

Edo Kanlić is a youth activist from Goražde. He graduated at the International Relations Department at Ankara University and obtained a master's degree in human rights and democracy at the University of Sarajevo and the University of Bologna. Edo is a member of a few NGOs and informal groups working in fields of youth work, dealing with the past, memorialization and civic participation. In 2021, Edo was a project coordinator for two political academies realized by the Boris Divković Foundation.

SARINA BAKIĆ - REVIEW

Dr. Sarina Bakić was born in 1973 in Sarajevo. She teaches at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, at the Department of Sociology. Her field of scientific interest include sociology of culture and art. She researches various phenomena of mass culture, aesthetics and the relationship between art and politics, and she deals with the culture of memory, segments of intercultural dialogue and international cultural relations. Dr. Bakic is the author of dozens of scientific and professional papers in recent domestic and foreign journals. She has participated as a coordinator and a team member in several international and domestic projects, as well as in a number of international and domestic scientific conferences with presentations.

MILICA PRALICA - REVIEW

Milica Pralica is an activist and feminist, born in Bosanska Dubica in 1991. She graduated Journalism and Communication at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Banja Luka in 2015. Since 2012, she has been an active member of the Citizens' Association Sharp Zero, and she has been appointed Association President since 2017. She is one of the members of the first BH Pride Parade.

SANEL HUSKIĆ - METHODOLOGY

Sanel Huskić is a Sarajevo-based research analyst with more than 20 years of professional experience. In this capacity he was involved with numerous international and intergovernmental organizations (OSCE, USAID, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, EU, EUSR, etc.) as well as government institutions and CSOs in the Western Balkans (including the leading think-tank in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time). He holds an MA in Human Rights and

Democracy from the University of Sarajevo and University of Bologna. He is currently doing a PhD in Global Studies at Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of the University of Sarajevo and as a senior research analyst with the Institute for Social Research at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo. He is a consultant and activist engaged with several organizations and on numerous initiatives.

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