

Enhancing youth participation in BiH



The Mission places great significance on working for youth and with youth, recognizing young women and men as key partners for positive change, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

The Mission fully appreciates the unique way young people promote a positive outlook through advancing mutual understanding, reconciliation and regional co-operation, and their desire to protect the norms underpinning democratic governance. Nonetheless, rising levels of youth disengagement from political and public

life and a growing sense of marginalization pose a major challenge. By increasing the democratic political culture of youth and their capacity for a constructive dialogue, the Mission aims to increase the sustainability of their civic engagement and political participation.

The inclusion of youth perspectives in the Mission's portfolios is ensured through the formal integration of a youth portfolio into its structure. The Mission's Gender and Youth Unit, the network of youth focal points, and the youth affairs page on the Mission's SharePoint platform are there to ensure that youth mainstreaming is central to all aspects of the Mission's work.

Youth Advisory Group (YAG)

In accordance with the OSCE's youth-related priorities to ensure greater engagement of young people and strengthen their voice in the organization, the Mission benefits from the input of a Youth Advisory Group

(YAG). The YAG is composed of volunteers under the age of 30 from diverse ethnic, religious, academic, and socio-economic backgrounds, from both urban and rural communities. This mechanism allows the Mission to draw on insights from young people regarding their concerns and priorities, and to benefit from their creativity and drive. This is particularly useful in endeavours to strengthen democratic governance and gender equality, as well as counter hate speech, bias-motivated incidents, gender-based violence, violent extremism, corruption, and segregation and discrimination in education.

Recognizing the cross-cutting nature of youth work and youth affairs, the Mission continues to develop and proactively engage the YAG to ensure that the concerns and priorities of young people in BiH play a central role in the Mission's planning and work.

Youth-Related Legislation

Unfortunately, Bosnia and Herzegovina still lacks a framework law on youth.

In Republika Srpska (RS), there are some relevant laws: the Law on Organization of Youth, the Law on Students' Union, and the Law on Voluntarism. In addition, the RS adopted a number of strategies, policies, and regulations relating to youth issues.

The authorities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) adopted the FBiH Law on Youth in 2010, while Brčko District BiH (BD) adopted the BD Law on Youth in 2017. However, FBiH and BD BiH are yet to adopt a youth strategy. As for the cantonal level, only Sarajevo, Zenica-Doboj, and Tuzla Cantons have adopted strategies that derive from the FBiH Law on Youth.

Youth Councils

Consisting mostly of local non-governmental organization (NGO) members, youth councils are umbrella organizations at the municipal level which can operate as direct partners to local authorities. Youth councils are often involved in the development and implementation of local

youth policies and generally represent interests of young people. Although an important component of both entities' legal frameworks, youth councils do not exist or operate in all municipalities of BiH. Recognizing their potential, the Mission works to establish and empower youth councils across the country.

Youth and Security

In recognition of the significance of young people as key partners in building community resilience to radicalization and in preventing violent extremism, the Mission involves young men and women in its CVE/VERLT efforts.

With a view to increasing their meaningful involvement in agenda-setting and policy development related to security sector good governance and reform, including that of the BiH Security Policy, the Mission organizes Youth and Security Summer Schools each year. These serve to increase the awareness and knowledge of future experts in this crucial field. The summer schools also act to improve inter-entity co-operation and that between the future experts and traditional security sector actors. Furthermore, this work helps to promote the further development of democratic institutions in BiH.

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