

# MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



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**Title:** MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS - BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA REPORT

**Author:**

Samir Beharić, member of the Group for Integration and Democracy team of researchers

**Editor:**

Ognjen Markovic, RCC's Western Balkans Youth Lab

**Consulting Editor:**

Emina Basic-Poljak, RCC's Western Balkans Youth Lab

**Design:**

Samir Dedic & Damir Bilalovic

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisations
<b>DCF</b>	Donor Coordination Forum
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUD</b>	European Union Delegation
<b>HCA</b>	Helsinki Citizen's Assembly
<b>IPA</b>	Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance
<b>KOMS</b>	Youth Council of Serbia
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>MoCA</b>	Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>MoFT</b>	Ministry of Finance and Treasury of Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>NEET</b>	Not in employment, education or training
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisations
<b>OKC</b>	Youth Communication Centre Banja Luka
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>OSRS</b>	Ministry for Social Welfare and Youth
<b>RYCO</b>	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
<b>SCIA</b>	Sector for Coordination of International Economic Aid
<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development
<b>SDP</b>	Social Democratic Party
<b>STEM</b>	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN PBF</b>	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>WB</b>	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* , Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia)

*\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.*

<b>WBYL</b>	Western Balkans Youth Lab
<b>WBYCP</b>	Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform
<b>YEA</b>	Western Balkans Investment Framework
<b>WBIF</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>WFD</b>	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report delves into the landscape of youth policy, programmes, and mechanisms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, offering a comprehensive analysis that draws from both desk research and empirical investigations, including in-depth interviews with key stakeholders within the youth sector.

This report, which is an update of the 2020 publication, aims to provide a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the current youth policy framework, programmes, and mechanisms for youth participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, the Report encompasses the identification of current support mechanisms and deficiencies in the financing of youth programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Report has been formulated utilising examination and analysis of policy papers, laws, strategies, and other important government documents and reports. The analysis of statistics obtained from numerous sources, alongside the examination of recent publications issued by both local and international organisations, is considered crucial in acquiring valuable insights about the youth sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The empirical investigation was conducted by means of comprehensive interviews with a range of local and economy-level institutions and organisations.

According to the 2013 census, there were 723,116 young people (aged 15-29) in the total population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which composed 20.47% of the total population.<sup>1</sup> Since then, there has been no census in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and there are no plans for the next one. The census was expected to take place in 2023, but this did not happen due to the lack of political will.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, there is no official data about the number of young people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. In addition, there are no official data on youth unemployment, youth emigration, and other youth-related statistics. This has kept the public in the dark for years, especially youth workers, researchers and policy makers who cannot develop effective youth policies without reliable, accurate and up-to-date statistical data.

However, international organisations publish their own statistics related to young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the World Bank, the overall youth unemployment rate in 2022 was 33.47%, the lowest in recent years.<sup>3</sup> For more than two decades, since the end of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, youth unemployment was one of the key reasons for youth emigration. Still today, Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing an intensified process of emigration of young and highly educated people, as noted in various reports, but no accurate data on brain drain is available. Those citizens leaving the economy have no requirement to report their departures and the government institutions do not collect and analyse the data.

Development of youth sector commenced during the early 2000s, facilitated by substantial financial backing from international donors. Today, development of youth policy at various levels of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina is faced with significant challenges. These challenges stem

- 1 Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2016, *Census of population, households and dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013 final results*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://www.popis.gov.ba/popis2013/doc/RezultatiPopisa\\_BS.pdf](https://www.popis.gov.ba/popis2013/doc/RezultatiPopisa_BS.pdf)>
- 2 Radio Sarajevo, 2023, *Zašto u Bosni i Hercegovini nije obavljen popis stanovništva 2023. godine?*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala teme/istrazili-smo-zasto-u-bosni-i-hercegovini-nije-obavljen-popis-stanovnistva-2023-godine/516572>>
- 3 World Bank, 2023, *World Development Indicators*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>>



from the insufficient coordination and involvement of relevant stakeholders, limited resources and capacities of youth institutions, as well as poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. On top of that, young people and civil society organisations dealing with youth issues are often excluded from decision-making processes. This, in turn, results in policies that do not respond to the real needs of young people, which is also reflected in the resources allocated to certain youth-related programmes that do not address the main issues of young persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When it comes to youth sector's financial support, it is evident that financial aid is fragmented and difficult to follow. This is primarily due to the absence of budget lines dedicated solely to the youth sector, but also due to unique government structure comprising four tiers of governance: economy, entity, canton and municipal levels.<sup>4</sup> The political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina is often considered to be one of the most complicated in the world.<sup>5</sup> Due to the lack of coordination between various governance levels, municipal bodies, cantonal ministries, and entity institutions tend to use different resources to support the same youth-related programmes and projects which often leads to overlaps.

This report demonstrates a correlation between a highly fragmented and ineffective youth policy system and unequal financial conditions and opportunities for youth participation and empowerment in the economy. Aside from this, and while acknowledging the constitutional structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which youth policy is created at several levels of governance, the Report argues that such political complexity makes it exceedingly difficult to determine a unified or coordinated youth policy. Such tendencies persist despite the fact that youth make up a considerable part of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Nonetheless, the Report reveals that significant number of young people actively participate in youth organisations, especially at the local level with an aim to address ongoing and emerging youth issues. At the entity level, the work of two entity youth councils and a district youth council, which collaborate closely despite varying degrees of involvement, is crucial in dealing with youth issues. The primary focus of all three youth councils is youth participation, dissemination of information regarding youth rights and government's responsibilities towards this group of people. Despite the existence of a set of beneficial policies at all three levels of government, youth participation mechanisms have not been implemented adequately. Therefore, there is a lot of efforts to be taken by decision-makers to improve the current youth policy at all levels within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Despite fragmented funding both at the economy level and its sublevels of governance, as well as limited transparency, international agency and donor funds have supported youth civil society engagement during low investment periods in the sector. A flexible, need-based analysis and cross-sectorial approach are needed to coordinate international financial initiatives. The long-term commitment and potential to catalyse partnerships with government institutions and youth NGOs must remain a priority for international donors to create innovative youth opportunities beyond employment. At the same time, more focus should be placed on young women and young people

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4 European Committee of the Regions, 2023, *Division of Powers: Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/Bosnia-Herzegovina.aspx>>

5 Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two entities, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, as well as one condominium named the Brčko District. While Republika Srpska represents one level of self-governance, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina itself has a federal structure and consists of 10 cantons. Brčko District is a condominium jointly owned by the two entities but not managed by either.



from rural areas, which are often neglected in both international donor schemes and domestic financial programmes targeting youth.

Even though young people constitute a considerable percentage of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, challenges such as high youth unemployment rate, ongoing emigration of highly educated individuals, and inequalities in youth participation and empowerment, stress the urgency of youth policy reform. Moreover, the lack of coordination between governance levels, absence of youth-dedicated budget and limited data transparency in the youth sector present formidable challenges. Yet, amidst these obstacles, the dedication of young people, youth councils, and civil society organisations in addressing youth issues remains unwavering. To address this, the Report explores the intricate relationship between youth policy development and decision-makers, while uncovering the complexities of funding allocation within the youth sector. This document sets the stage for a deeper understanding of the youth policy landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the above-mentioned critical issues that must be addressed.

By doing this, the report ultimately highlights the urgent need for policy improvements and funding coordination to harness the potential of Bosnia and Herzegovina's youth population. The potential for international donors to catalyse positive change through flexible, need-based initiatives and partnerships with local institutions and NGOs is underscored. With six chapters covering demographics, policy frameworks, funding mechanisms, participation channels, donor financing, and the gaps in youth policy implementation, the Report concludes with a set of policy recommendations aimed at steering the youth policy landscape towards a brighter, more inclusive future for Bosnia and Herzegovina's youth. Compared to 2020, when the COVID-19 outbreak presented a major challenge to the whole region, and especially its youth population, the 2023 obstacles looming above young people reflect the institutional neglect, high corruption rate and the lack of future prospects for young people. All of this, in turn, drives the youth population of Bosnia and Herzegovina to seek not only job, but a brighter future abroad, mainly in the Western Europe. The public institutions are responsible for creating an attractive environment for the youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina to stay in their homeland and contribute to the development of the WB economies.. Above all, the government institutions at all levels must work together to create a long-term plan for turning brain drain into brain circulation.

There are six chapters within the report. The first chapter provides demographic information about the youth population. The second chapter provides additional context by analysing the legal and strategic youth policy framework and describing all institutions responsible for youth policy implementation. The third chapter analyses the funding framework and its associated mechanisms. The fourth chapter examines the mechanisms and channels for youth participation and inclusion in decision-making. A comprehensive description of donor financing of youth-related initiatives is provided in chapter 5. Finally, the Report concludes with chapter 6, which provides a comprehensive analysis of acceptable practices and gaps in the financing and implementation of youth policy.



# CHAPTER 1: YOUTH POPULATION DATA

This chapter outlines the general data on youth population, referring to official resources as per their availability. It is important to note, however, that there are inconsistencies in the definition of the category of youth in data collection of different public institutions and other stakeholders. Using different categories for youth data collection poses constraints to the comparability of the data and general analysis of youth trends in terms of demography, education, employment, and migration.

## 1.1 Age and gender

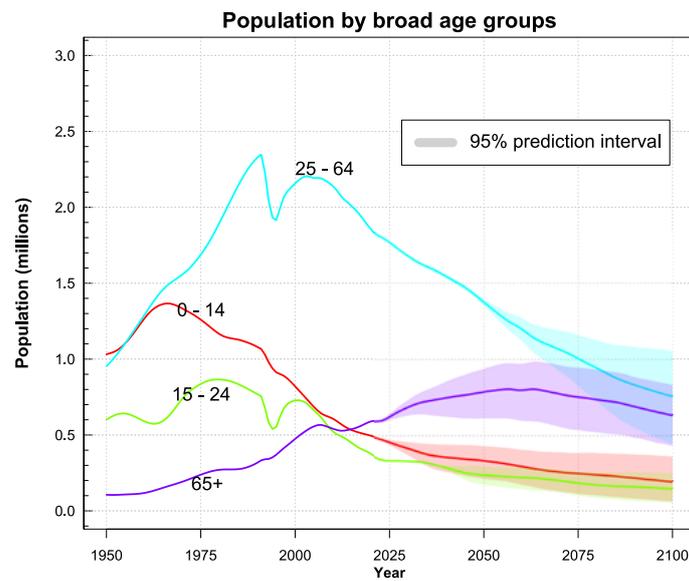
The youth in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina are considered to be persons between the ages of 15 and 30.<sup>6,7</sup> In Republika Srpska, youth are those individuals between the ages of 16 and 30.<sup>8</sup> Despite the legal definition of youth, the age of 30 is not included in the youth statistics. According to the 2013 census, there are 773.850 young people, aged between 15 and 29, in the overall population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which represents 20.47% of the total population. The ratio of young men in the youth population is 51.31%, compared to 48.69% of young women.

The data presented here is from the latest census carried out in 2013, as this is the only available and most recent data from the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, there is no official data about the number of young people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Thus, researchers often turn to international organisations as alternative sources for this data. According to the World Bank, youth aged 0-14 constitute 14.9% of the total population, whereas those aged 15-64 constitute 66.7% of the total population.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, as indicated in Graph 1, key findings from the 2022 UN Population Prospects indicate that Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing depopulation with grim projections for the upcoming decades.<sup>10</sup>

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- 6 Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010, *Law on Youth of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bosanski/zakoni/2010/zakoni/22hrv.html>>
- 7 Brčko District Assembly 2017, *Law on Youth of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://skupstinabd.ba/3-zakon/ba/Zakon%20o%20mladima%20Brc--ko%20distrikta%20BiH/001%2018-17%20Zakon%20o%20Omladima%20Brc--ko%20distrikta%20BiH%20B.pdf>>
- 8 Perpetuum Mobile, 2004, *Law on Youth Organisation*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<http://www.pm.rs.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Zakon-o-omladinskom-organizovanju-RS.pdf>>
- 9 World Bank, 2023, *World Development Indicators*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>>
- 10 United Nations, 2022, *World Population Prospects 2022*, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://population.un.org/wpp/>>



Graph 1: Bosnia and Herzegovina: Population by broad age groups



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United Nations, DESA, Population Division. World Population Prospects 2022. <http://population.un.org/wpp/>

## 1.2 Education and employment

### 1.2.1 Education

According to the last available data from the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the academic year 2021-2022 there were 427 pre-school institutions, which represents a slight increase compared to 2020-2021 academic year, when there were 399 pre-school institutions operating.<sup>11</sup> The number of children in pre-school institutions increased compared to previous years with its peak reaching during the 2021/2022 academic year. At the same time, the number of students enrolled in primary and secondary schools has seen a sharp decrease over the past decade (Table 1).<sup>12</sup> Compared to the 2012/2013 school year, there were 40,000 less students enrolled in primary schools during the 2021/2022. Similarly, as compared to 2012/2013, the number of students enrolled in secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina decreased by more than 58,000 during the 2021/2022 academic year.

When it comes to higher education, female students generally enrol in higher numbers compared to males, but the numbers have been still decreasing. Based on the latest data released by the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina in early 2023, the number of students enrolled in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the academic year 2021/2022 was over 23,000 lower than it was 10 years ago (Table 2).<sup>13</sup> The data for the 2022/2023 academic year will be published by the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina in early 2024.

11 Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2022, *Bosna i Hercegovina u brojevima 2021*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2021/NUM\\_00\\_2021\\_TB\\_1\\_BS.pdf](https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2021/NUM_00_2021_TB_1_BS.pdf)>

12 Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, *Bosna i Hercegovina u brojevima 2022*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2023/NUM\\_00\\_2022\\_TB\\_1\\_BS.pdf](https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2023/NUM_00_2022_TB_1_BS.pdf)>

13 Ibid.



Table 1: Education by level and gender 2012-2022

Year	Pre-school education		Primary education		Secondary education	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
2012/2013	8,958	9,859	148,585	156,296	82,242	84,420
2013/2014	9,383	10,497	147,238	154,895	77,468	78,882
2014/2015	10,290	11,200	144,456	152,363	71,786	72,095
2015/2016	10,983	11,918	141,454	149,888	66,520	66,708
2016/2017	11,832	13,086	139,479	148,250	63,592	63,232
2018/2019	13,656	14,855	136,181	143,837	58,654	58,821
2019/2020	14,730	15,857	133,242	140,792	56,468	56,328
2020/2021	13,221	14,477	130,519	137,540	55,336	55,068
2021/2022	15,941	17,259	128,455	136,347	54,341	53,916

Table 2: Students in higher education by gender 2012-2022

Year	Gender	
	Females	Males
2012/2013	56,325	46,118
2013/2014	55,114	44,646
2014/2015	53,599	42,826
2015/2016	52,457	41,633
2016/2017	50,552	39,163
2018/2019	52,009	37,007
2019/2020	48,875	34,034
2020/2021	49,217	33,473
2021/2022	47,670	31,478

## 1.2.2 Youth not in employment nor in education or training (NEET)

The latest World Bank data on the share of NEET youth was published in 2022. According to that data, the share of NEET for youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina was 17.6% with 18.1% for females and 17.2% for males.<sup>14</sup> Compared to 10 years ago, when the NEET rate was hovering above 26%, this is a considerable drop. In fact, the 2022 rate represent the lowest NEET level for young people ever recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina during its post-war history. In 2020, when the previous mapping report was published, this figure was 21.8%. There are no official statistics available for 2023 yet.

14 World Bank, 2023, *Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population)*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=BA>>



### 1.2.3 Unemployment rate

The World Bank defines youth unemployment ratio as the number of unemployed persons aged 15-24. According to the same institution, the youth unemployment rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina declined from 63.49% in 2012 to 33.47% in 2022, reaching its lowest value in the post-war history.<sup>15</sup> According to the 2022 data, youth unemployment among male population aged 15-24 was 30.18%, while this number was even higher for females in the same age group, being at 38.92%.<sup>16</sup> Compared to ten years ago, the most recent World Bank data shows that the youth unemployment has almost halved. The youth unemployment rates have been constantly dropping since 2014.

However, compared to 13.9% unemployment rate in the EU from 2022,<sup>17</sup> this is still considered relatively high. High unemployment rates among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially young women, have been also noted by the EU. The European Commission (EC) Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020 notes that *“the labour market participation of women and the youth is still low, while the unemployment rates of those two groups are significantly higher than for men in core working-age cohorts.”*<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, the youth employment rate has increased over the last 10 years. Compared to 2012, when only 10.8% of young people were employed, the current youth employment rate is over 18%.<sup>19</sup> The highest youth employment rate in the past decade was recorded in 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, at 23.4%.<sup>20</sup>

## 1.3 Youth migration

The official statistics on migration (collected by the Statistics Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with the entity offices, the Federal Statistics Office and the Republika Srpska Statistics Office) track migration within the economy, as well as the arrival of foreigners into the economy. However, those offices do not track who left the economy, because the citizens emigrating have no requirement to report departures.<sup>21</sup> Estimates have been made based on the number of individuals who requested criminal record certificates from local police administrations in order to obtain a visa in one of the host countries they wish to migrate to. However, such data does not give an accurate insight into the number of those who left the economy. Therefore, the data available does not offer relevant information on migration from Bosnia and Herzegovina, even on youth migration. Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing an intensive process of emigration of young and highly educated people

15 World Bank, 2023, *World Development Indicators*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>>

16 Ibid.

17 European Commission, 2022, *Eurostat Euroindicators: Euro area unemployment at 6.8%*, accessed 7 October 2023, <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/14636259/3-01062022-AP-EN.pdf/85134828-9c7a-898b-1636-00c24ddca735?t=1654005489696>>

18 11 Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission, 2020, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 Report Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/bosnia_and_herzegovina_report_2020.pdf)>

19 Employment and Social Affairs Platform, 2022, *Youth Employment Rate (Annually)*, accessed 7 October 2023, <<https://www.esap.online/observatory/indicators/8/youth-employment-rate-annually>>

20 Ibid.

21 Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2020, *The cost of youth migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Cost-of-Youth-Emigration-from-BH\\_official\\_version-1-1.pdf](https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Cost-of-Youth-Emigration-from-BH_official_version-1-1.pdf)>



as noted by institutions such as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES)<sup>22</sup>, United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)<sup>23</sup>, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)<sup>24</sup> and others. These institutions ran their own surveys in Bosnia and Herzegovina, interviewed young people, and worked closely with researchers who developed models indicating Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing depopulation with young people generally being open to leave.

The Study on Young People in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018/2019 confirms this trend and identifies the economic motivation for youth migration. To the question of whether they want to emigrate, more than half of those surveyed gave affirmative answers: 14.7% had a very strong desire, 12.7% had a strong desire, and another 27.3% a moderate one. Around 40% of those who plan to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina have no intention of ever coming back. At the same time, almost 20% of surveyed participants plan to stay abroad longer than 20 years, and 10% plan to return in 5 to 10 years.<sup>25</sup>

According to 2021 UNFPA study on youth migration from Bosnia and Herzegovina, almost a quarter of respondents have seriously considered leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina permanently and an additional 23% of them think about prospects of temporary migration abroad. The pursuit of better living standards and prospects is a major driver of migration motivations.<sup>26</sup>

One of the most recent studies on youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, published by USAID in early 2023, indicates that youth interest towards emigration is lower than in 2018, but those intending to leave are more determined and prepared to do so. The study titled Youth Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022 underscores that most young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are pessimistic and dissatisfied with the situation in the economy, particularly with employment opportunities and corruption. According to this study, potential motivators to remain in the economy are all work-related: higher salaries, better respect for workers' rights, and more job opportunities.<sup>27</sup>

22 Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2020, *Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018/2019*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15262.pdf>>

23 United Nations Fund for Population Activities, 2021, *Survey on Youth Emigration in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://ba.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth\\_emigration\\_survey\\_in\\_bih\\_eng\\_final\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://ba.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth_emigration_survey_in_bih_eng_final_0_0.pdf)>

24 United States Agency for International Development 2023, *Economy-wide Youth Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://www.usaid.gov/bosnia-and-herzegovina/reports/national-youth-survey-BIH-2022>>

25 Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2020, *Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018/2019*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15262.pdf>>

26 United Nations Fund for Population Activities, 2021, *Survey on Youth Emigration in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://ba.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth\\_emigration\\_survey\\_in\\_bih\\_eng\\_final\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://ba.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth_emigration_survey_in_bih_eng_final_0_0.pdf)>

27 United States Agency for International Development 2023, *Economy-wide Youth Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://www.usaid.gov/bosnia-and-herzegovina/reports/national-youth-survey-BIH-2022>>



*Key developments over the years:*

	<b>By 2020</b>	<b>2021-2023</b>	<b>Critical Assessment</b>
<b>Youth Population (under 15 years old),</b> World Bank	14.92%	14.82%	The institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not track yearly statistics on young people. The last census was carried out in 2013. Similarly like with the total population, Bosnia and Herzegovina is gradually losing its young people.
<b>Youth Unemployment Rate,</b> World Bank	36.89%	33.47%	In 2015, Bosnia's youth unemployment rate was 63.15%. Since then, it has shrunk dramatically. The 2022 youth unemployment rate of 33.7% is at its lowest point since the end of the 1992-1995 war. In 2022, the youth unemployment rate in the EU was 13.9%, which indicates that youth unemployment rates in Bosnia and Herzegovina must be tackled in order to reach the EU average.
<b>NEET Youth Rate,</b> World Bank	21.8%	17.6%	Since 2013, the NEET youth rate has dropped from 26.6% to 17.6%. The decrease in NEET rates follows the youth unemployment rates dropping during the same period. However, young women are affected more than young men, with their NEET rates constantly higher than those of their male peers. As in case with other youth-related data, Bosnia and Herzegovina is not tracking this type of information, which prevents policy-makers from creating impactful long-term legislation targeting youth population of the economy.



# CHAPTER 2: YOUTH LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

This chapter analyses economy-wide youth policy, and its legal and institutional framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to outlining the relevant strategic documents, action plans, and laws, a critical assessment identifies achievements, challenges, and remaining gaps. Additionally, this chapter gives a comparative analysis of the youth legal and policy framework, comparing the current state of the art with the situation in 2020.

## 2.1 The Constitution

The constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the highest legal document of the economy. The current Constitution is actually part of the Dayton Peace Agreement, signed on 14 December 1995. The Dayton Agreement sealed the war that lasted from 1992 to 1995, and its Annex 4 serves as the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>28</sup> However, the Constitution itself does not regulate all political matters within the economy. Both entities, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, as well as Brčko District have their own constitutions. Furthermore, each of the ten cantons within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has their own constitution, regulating some of the matters independently from the entity-level or even –economy-level constitutions. One of the best examples is the educational sector, administered by the cantons without much interference from the higher instances of government. Such level of constitutional fragmentation and de-centralisation often poses a challenge for an efficient, coordinated, and synchronised youth policy governance.

The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina provides the allocation of jurisdiction among central and entity government levels and provides that any competence, which is not explicitly vested in the central-level institution, rests with the entities and their subunits. Therefore, the jurisdiction for youth-related issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina is at the level of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (and ten cantons of this entity, as well as its municipalities), Republika Srpska (and its cities and municipalities), and Brčko District.

The Constitution of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina refers to young people in its two amended articles, IV.A.12a<sup>29</sup> and IX.11h<sup>30</sup>. The two articles define the participation of young people in the

28 The Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, *The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://www.ustavnisud.ba/public/down/USTAV\\_BOSNE\\_I\\_HERCEGOVINE\\_bos.pdf](https://www.ustavnisud.ba/public/down/USTAV_BOSNE_I_HERCEGOVINE_bos.pdf)>

29 Amendment CXIV: After Article IV.A.12, a new Article IV.A.12a shall be added to read: “In order to enhance the transparency and accountability of the Federation Legislature, each House shall enable citizens’ participation, including youth participation, in their work and shall prescribe in its Rules of Procedure the appropriate forms of direct participation of citizens in matters falling under the responsibilities of the Federation Legislature, including the right of citizens of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to initiate adoption of the laws in certain fields and the conditions to exercise such a right.”

30 After Article IX.11g, a new Article IX.11h shall be added to read: “(1) Both Houses shall adopt appropriate amendments to their Rules of Procedure pursuant to Article IV.A.12a of this Constitution within one year of the entry into force of these amendments to the Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (2) The legislative and executive authorities of the Federation, the cantons and the cities and municipalities shall develop appropriate structures for inclusive participation of the youth in matters concerning their future in those units of government within one year of the entry into force of these amendments to the Constitution of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”



work of the Parliament of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the involvement of young people in the decision-making processes related to their future.<sup>31</sup> In the case of the Constitution of Republika Srpska, the youth is introduced in a less specific way. Young population is mentioned in Articles 40 and 68 with regard to the government of this entity providing “special protection” to young people.<sup>32</sup> Neither do the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>33</sup> nor the Statute of the Brčko District<sup>34</sup> mention young people in any of their article.

## 2.2 Laws on youth

Youth matters are defined in detail in the relevant laws adopted at various levels of governance. There is no economy-level law on youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even though such law does not exist at the economy level, entities, cantons, cities, and municipalities have independently adopted and implemented their own youth laws. The relevant laws also provide basis for the establishment of youth organisations, of which at least 2/3 of their membership must consist of young people.<sup>35</sup>

The following laws are in force at two entity and district levels:

- The Law on Youth of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina regulates youth issues in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina;<sup>36</sup>
- The Law on Youth Organising of Republika Srpska defines general interest and programmes in youth and their organisations in this entity. This law defines youth organisations in Republika Srpska;<sup>37</sup>
- The Law on Youth of Brčko District describes the rights and obligations of youth and youth organisations in the District.<sup>38</sup>

Despite this, the situation in the field in terms of implementation of the existing laws is challenging. For example, although prescribed by the Law on Youth of Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina, it does not have its Strategy on Youth adopted. The Law on Youth in Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted in 2010 and explicitly states that all levels of government in this entity are obliged to define, adopt and implement strategies for young people. Despite the fact that Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has recognised the importance of a Youth Strategy, this key document that would define some of the key programmatic approaches towards young people has not been yet adopted by the relevant institutions of this entity. Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been

31 Parliament of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, “Ustav Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine”, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://parlamentfbih.gov.ba/v2/bs/stranica.php?idstranica=71>>

32 Assembly of Republika Srpska, 2023, *The Constitution of the Republika Srpska*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://www.narodnaskupstinars.net/sites/default/files/upload/dokumenti/ustav/lat/ustav\\_republike\\_srpske.pdf](https://www.narodnaskupstinars.net/sites/default/files/upload/dokumenti/ustav/lat/ustav_republike_srpske.pdf)>

33 Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023, *The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://www.ustavisud.ba/public/down/USTAV\\_BOSNE\\_I\\_HERCEGOVINE\\_bos.pdf](https://www.ustavisud.ba/public/down/USTAV_BOSNE_I_HERCEGOVINE_bos.pdf)>

34 Assembly of the District Brčko, 2023, *The Statute of the District Brčko*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://skupstinabd.ba/images/dokumenti/hr/statut-brcko-distrikta.pdf>>

35 The laws of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brčko District define youth as persons between age 15 and 30. The Law on Youth Organising in Republika Srpska provided for the age range from 16 to 30 prior to 2011 amendments.

36 Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010, *Law on Youth of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bosanski/zakoni/2010/zakoni/22hrv.html>>

37 Perpetuum Mobile, 2004, *Law on Youth Organisation*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<http://www.pm.rs.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Zakon-o-omladinskom-organizovanju-RS.pdf>>

38 Brčko District Assembly, 2017, *Law on Youth of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://skupstinabd.ba/3-zakon/ba/Zakon%20o%20mladima%20Brc--ko%20distrikta%20BiH/001%2018-17%20Zakon%20o%20mladima%20Brc--ko%20distrikta%20BiH%20B.pdf>>



involved in the drafting process of various youth-related documents in this entity. The Youth Council has been working together with other organisations, such as RCC's EU funded WBYL project, on enhancing the existing Law on Youth of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The RCC contributed to development of the Law on Youth by drafting two amendments offering different models related to the state of youth organising in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the Youth Council representative who was interviewed for this report, the amendments will become officially submitted once they are approved by the Assembly of the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Meanwhile, the strategies on youth have been adopted both at cantonal and municipal level within Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entity. So far, the cantonal strategy on youth has been implemented in four out of ten cantons of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the other hand, not all municipalities in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina have a youth strategy either. In 2019, as indicated by the Analysis of the Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, only 13 municipalities had its own youth strategy in place.<sup>39</sup> This is the latest number the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina shared during an interview for this report. A similar analysis has been conducted for 2020, but the document was never published by the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As of November 2023, the analysis for 2021 and 2022 has not been completed yet.

When it comes to Republika Srpska, the Youth Policy of Republika Srpska is an integrated, multi-sectoral strategic document that defines public policies and directs development of all areas important for young people. The Youth Policy represents an entity-level youth strategy that aims for the improvement of living conditions of young people, which then creates preconditions for their stay in the entity. The current Youth Policy of Republika Srpska covers the period from 2023 to 2027 and defines four strategic goals with a total of 15 priorities, 44 measures, and 3 strategic projects.<sup>40</sup>

The Youth Policy of Republika Srpska has been developed continuously since 2006 in the form of five-year strategic documents. The current document covering the period from 2023 to 2027 is the fourth in a row. A total of 70 representatives of competent institutions, public bodies, civic associations and youth organisations, as well as experts in fields relevant to improving the situation of young people, participated in working groups to draft this document, which was preceded by extensive research in 2021.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.3 Strategies on youth

### 2.3.1 Economy level

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have an economy-level youth strategy, a action plan on youth, or any other similar document that strategically deals with youth at the economy level. The Law on

39 Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2019, Analiza Zakona o mladima Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://www.vijecemladih.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Analiza-Zakona-o-mladima-FBiH\\_2019.pdf](https://www.vijecemladih.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Analiza-Zakona-o-mladima-FBiH_2019.pdf)>

40 Government of Republika Srpska, 2023, Usvojena omladinska politika Republike Srpske od 2023. do 2027, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://shorturl.at/pzLP8>>

41 Ibid.



Youth Organisation of Republika Srpska,<sup>42</sup> Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,<sup>43</sup> and Brčko District Law on Youth<sup>44</sup> are the three laws that define youth policy framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### 2.3.2 Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

As stipulated by the Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Youth Strategy of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be developed as a programme-based document with clear strategic goals and measures and should be governed by different institutions of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina states that youth strategies should be developed at both federal and cantonal levels. Further on, the Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina defines that youth strategies have to be developed based on a needs analysis in the youth sector, where the youth sector includes formal and informal education, employment and youth entrepreneurship, social and health protection, housing, active participation in the civil society, information and counselling, youth tourism, recovery, rehabilitation, culture, sports, work with special needs persons, and other relevant matters.

However, the Youth Strategy of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has neither been adopted nor implemented. Despite this, some activities for drafting the strategy have taken place between 2013 and 2022. The first initiative to design the Strategy on Youth in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina dates to 2013, when the process of developing the Youth Strategy began for the first time. As a result of the Youth Law in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2015, a decision on establishing the working group for drafting the Youth Strategy of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted.<sup>45</sup>

Since then, numerous meetings and events were organised by the Parliament of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Different attempts to adopt the Youth Strategy of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including pressure from a Member of Parliament of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Social Democratic Party (SDP), resulted in an Initiative for adopting the Youth Strategy of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>46</sup> In 2022, the Commission for Youth Affairs at the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina organised a meeting that resulted in a number of conclusions and recommendations, including a mandate to the Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt a Youth Strategy for this entity. Additionally, the recommendations state that the entity government should also allocate funds for the implementation of Youth Strategy and

42 Perpetuum Mobile, 2004, Law on Youth Organisation, accessed 1 October 2023, <<http://www.pm.rs.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Zakon-o-omladinskom-organizovanju-RS.pdf>>

43 Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010, Law on Youth of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bosanski/zakoni/2010/zakoni/22hrv.html>>

44 Brčko District Assembly, 2017, Law on Youth of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://skupstinabd.ba/3-zakon/ba/Zakon%20o%20mladima%20Brc--ko%20distrikta%20BiH/001%2018-17%20Zakon%20o%20mladima%20Brc--ko%20distrikta%20BiH%20B.pdf>>

45 Official Gazette of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015, Decision on establishment of the working group for drafting the Youth Strategy of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://istinomjer.ba/app/uploads/2019/06/rjesenje.png>>

46 N1, 2019, Predstavnički dom Parlamenta Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine usvojio inicijativu za strategiju za mlade, accessed 1 October 2023, <<http://ba.n1info.com/Vijesti/a352215/Predstavnicki-dom-Parlamenta-FBOSNIA-AND-HERZEGOVINA-usvojio-inicijativu-za-strategiju-za-mlade.html>>



appoint an inter-ministerial working body to oversee the implementation of this strategic document, which to this date has not happened.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, cantons can implement their own youth strategies independently. So far, four out of ten cantons adopted the youth strategy at cantonal level. Between 2017 and 2019, three cantonal strategies were adopted in Una Sana Canton,<sup>48</sup> Zenica-Doboj Canton,<sup>49</sup> and Canton Sarajevo.<sup>50</sup> In 2022, Central Bosnia Canton also adopted its own youth strategy.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, Zenica-Doboj Canton is underway to adopt its second youth strategy by the end of 2023 as the previous one lasted until 2022.<sup>52</sup> The remaining six cantons of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina have not adopted their youth strategies yet.

### 2.3.3 Republika Srpska

Currently, the entity of Republika Srpska is implementing its 2023–2027 Youth Policy adopted in January 2023.<sup>53</sup> Youth Policy of Republika Srpska is the document equivalent to the Youth Strategy in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the key youth strategy document for the period from 2023 to 2027 that defines the main goals, tasks, and directions of the youth sector development in Republika Srpska. It develops specific programmes and measures that secure better living conditions and enable creative expression and youth participation in the broader social environment.

The key priorities of the document are related to fostering sustainability and encouraging development of healthy lifestyle of young people, and promoting excellence and the creation of role models among the youth, all with the aim to support youth to come back to the home economy. Additionally, through this document Republika Srpska authorities aim to encourage young people to take responsibility in the community and get more involved in the decision-making processes by being more active in non-governmental organisations. The three strategic projects to be implemented as part of the Youth Policy are establishing a resource centre for young people, launching a Startup Srpska programme for entrepreneurship, and introducing the first science and technology park in the entity. The document follows the EU recommendation related to young people, as envisaged in the EU-funded EU for Civil Society project that facilitated the establishment of 2023–2027 Youth Policy.

The Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republika Srpska is responsible for the overall implementation of Youth Policy and coordination of other corresponding institutions important for the implementation of specific measures from this document. The Youth Policy of Republika

47 Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Koliko smo blizu ili daleko od Strategije prema mladima?, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://www.vijecemladih.ba/vijesti/koliko-smo-blizu-ili-daleko-od-strategije-prema-mladima/>>

48 KULT, 2018, USK dobio Strategiju prema mladima, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://mladi.org/usk-dobio-strategiju-prema-mladima/>>

49 Zenica Doboj Canton Ministry of Education, 2018, Strategija omladinske politike na području Zeničko-dobojskog kantona za period 2018-2022.godine, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://www.zdk.ba/ministarstvo-za-obrazovanje-nauku-kulturu-i-sport/item/7166-strategija-omladinske-politike-na-podrucju-zenicko-dobojskog-kantona-za-period-2018-2022-godine>>

50 Canton Sarajevo Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, 2019, Strategija prema mladima Kantona Sarajevo, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://mon.ks.gov.ba/sites/mon.ks.gov.ba/files/2022-04/Strategija\\_prema\\_mladima\\_kantona\\_sarajevo\\_za\\_period\\_2019.-2023.\\_godina\\_0.pdf](https://mon.ks.gov.ba/sites/mon.ks.gov.ba/files/2022-04/Strategija_prema_mladima_kantona_sarajevo_za_period_2019.-2023._godina_0.pdf)>

51 KULT, 2023, Skupština Srednjobosanskog kantona osigurala sistemsku brigu o mladima kroz usvajanje prve strategije prema mladima, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://mladi.org/skupstina-srednjobosanskog-kantona-osigurala-sistemsku-brigu-o-mladima-kroz-usvajanje-prve-strategije-prema-mladima/>>

52 Naša riječ, 2023, ZE-DO kanton priprema novu Strategiju za mlade i strategije razvoja obrazovanja, Accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://nasarijec.ba/ze-do-kanton-priprema-novu-strategiju-za-mlade-i-strategije-razvoja-obrazovanja/>>

53 Government of Republika Srpska, 2023, Usvojena omladinska politika Republike Srpske od 2023. do 2027, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://shorturl.at/pzLP8>>



Srpska calls for an inter-sectoral approach for all youth-related issues that should be implemented for youth. A good example of this approach is the scholarship programme for youth that has been implemented by the Ministry of Education and promoted by the Ministry of Culture. The major weakness of the Youth Policy development process in Republika Srpska is the monitoring and evaluating of youth policies.

### 2.3.4 Brčko District

In February 2023, Brčko District adopted its own Youth Strategy.<sup>54</sup> According to the Youth Law of the Brčko District, the Youth Strategy is based on youth need analyses and includes defined problems, strategic goals, and implementation measures.<sup>55</sup> The Youth Strategy of Brčko District was developed for the period of next five years and will be a relevant document to steer youth policies until 2026. The Strategy fully follows the recommendations of Law on Youth of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as those defined in the EU Youth Strategy for the period 2019-2027. The youth category in the Strategy refers to population from 15 to 30 years of age, which is also prescribed by the Youth Law of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Strategy defines five biggest problems that young people are faced within the area of education. According to the Strategy, formal education is not synchronised with the labour market, which causes young people to study for jobs they will not do once they graduate. Therefore, 34% of young people decide not to continue university education after completing their secondary school. At the same time, educational institutions in the District do not offer equal opportunities to marginalised young people. Finally, on top of the lack of organised system of non-formal education, young people lack awareness of the importance of non-formal education.

In order to tackle the issues related to education, but also to offer young people in Brčko District a reason to stay, the document defines three strategic goals. The first one is related to introducing an employment support system, creating a competitive economy of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina and improving the education system in the District. The second strategic goal deals with establishing services for young people in the field of social care, information and health. The third strategic goal of the Brčko District is to recognise young people as stakeholders who actively contribute to development and implementation of youth policies and programmes.

Compared to the youth sectors in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Republika Srpska, it is important to note that the youth sector development in Brčko District is not lagging behind. On the contrary, during the past years, Brčko District has found itself in a healthier position compared to the rest of the economy, mainly due to the number of donors that invest in the District, but also due to administrative structure that is considered to be more simple.

54 Brčko District Assembly, 2023, Usvojena strategija za mlade za period 2022-2026. godina, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://skupstinabd.ba/index.php/ba/3703-usvojena-strategija-za-mlade-za-period-2022-2026-godina.html>>

55 Youth Council of Brčko District, 2023, Dokumenti, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://vsmbd.org/dokumenti/>>



## 2.4 Action Plan on Youth

The Action Plan on Youth does not exist at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the entity level, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has not yet adopted its own Action Plan on Youth. However, each of the ten cantons has its own institutions that have the mandate to adopt action plans at cantonal level. Therefore, several cantons have adopted their own action plan while other cantons are in the process of creating and adopting the document.

Tuzla Canton, for example, is one of rare cantons that has adopted such an Action Plan in 2021 for the period until 2024.<sup>56</sup> Back in 2017, the City of Tuzla has adopted not only the Strategy on Youth, but also an Action Plan defining how to implement the Strategy. Since then, the City administration has been adopting an updated Strategy every two years. The most recent Strategy is for the 2020-2022 period.<sup>57</sup> Unlike the Strategy, the Action Plan is adopted for the period of four years. Cities like Tuzla are rather a positive exception when it comes to local communities adopting such strategies and actively implementing youth-related initiatives based on the relevant legal documents. This Action Plan defines several key issues that hinder young people from advancing in their private and professional environment and proposes actions on how to tackle them. The most significant obstacles young people in Tuzla face range from getting education they need for the labour market, advancing in their careers, enjoying the full health benefits and protection, benefitting from mobility opportunities, to spending their leisure time for activities that will help them rest, recuperate, and grow. The solutions this Action Plan is proposing are directed at improving the cooperation and communication between young people, who are not actively engaged in the work of youth NGOs, and their political representatives, who are often not interested in youth-related issues. The document proposes the City of Tuzla to define the educational priorities and align the needs of the labour market with the educational system. In order to boost the employability of young people, the document proposed the City of Tuzla to expand its employment programmes for youth and marginalised groups and subsidise entrepreneurial ideas of young people. The Action Plan recognised the potential of non-formal education, which is not utilised to its full capacity. Interestingly enough, this document tackles the health hazards impacting young people, proposing to the City administration strategies to curb the percentage of young people who smoke and consume alcohol. Some of recommendations include educating young people on the dangers of such substances, introducing laws prohibiting smoking in the public, and passing more strict laws that would sanction those who sell alcohol to underage youth.

In Republika Srpska, the Department for Youth is responsible for all activities relating to the determination and application of the Action Plan and Youth Policy of Republika Srpska. The Action Plan for the implementation of Youth Policy of Republika Srpska defines the institutional commitment of entity-level stakeholders in the implementation of youth-related laws. Hence, the strategic frameworks in the form of Youth Policy remain the most important multi-annual plans for development of youth policies in this entity.

56 Tuzla Canton Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth, 2021, Strategija prema mladima Tuzlanskog kantona, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://mksmtk.gov.ba/file/strategija-prema-mladima-tuzlanskog-kantona-2020-2024/265>>

57 The City of Tuzla, 2020, Akcioni plan za implementaciju Strategije za mlade Grada Tuzla 2017.-2026. za period 2020.-2022, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://grad.tuzla.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Akcioni-plan-za-mlade\\_2020-2022.pdf](https://grad.tuzla.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Akcioni-plan-za-mlade_2020-2022.pdf)>



## 2.5 Institutions dealing with youth

The institutional setup for youth policy and youth sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina is organised as follows:

- Economy level: Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MoCA) with its Department for Mobility and Youth, within the Education Sector;
- Entity and district levels:
  - Federal Ministry of Culture and Sport and its Department for Youth,
  - Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republika Srpska and Department for Youth,
  - Department for Expert and Administrative Matters of Brčko District.
- Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina level: seven ministries have departments for youth or added jurisdiction for youth policy within the ministry authority. Three cantons (West Herzegovina Canton, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, and Canton 10) still do not have a Youth Department within any of their ministries.

The legislation of all subunits of government allows for youth councils and specifies their structure. All youth councils are inter-sectorial bodies of representatives of corresponding ministries in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District, and include a certain number of youth representatives. The participation of youth within different levels of governance is secured through youth councils that are established at each level of government: entity, cantonal, and municipal.

### 2.5.1 Economy level

The Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the Department for Youth and Mobility has a broad authority to secure the implementation of basic principles of coordination of activities and exchange of information with economy-level and international institutions responsible for youth and youth mobility. The Ministry also established the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>58</sup>

### 2.5.2 Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

At the level of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Department of Youth in the Federal Ministry of Culture and Sport is responsible for youth policy and the overall institutional mechanisms for youth-related issues and implementation of youth action programmes under the Ministry's jurisdiction. The Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is made up of the local-level youth NGOs. These organisations form youth councils at the cantonal level, which constitute the entity-level Youth Council.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 1 October 2023, <<http://www.mladi.gov.ba/index.php>>

<sup>59</sup> Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://www.vijecemladih.ba/>>.



The Youth Council of each municipality and city is established by bringing together more than 50% of youth associations from that local community. The minimum number of youth organisations to establish a local-level youth council is three. Parallel to that, the youth councils at the level of cantons are established by more than 50% of youth councils from the municipalities and cities registered within that particular canton. Youth Councils in the cantons are organised at cantonal levels and are established by youth organisations in municipalities in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is established by more than 50% of cantonal youth councils (with a minimum of 6).

At the moment, 41 municipalities in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina have their own youth council. The biggest obstacles in establishing a municipal local council are related to the fact that some local communities do not have three youth CSOs, which is a minimum requirement for forming a local council. Youth in rural areas face an additional problem as their local communities are traditionally neglected by the institutions. However, the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been working closely with youth CSOs active in rural areas and smaller local communities in order to empower them, build their capacities and assist them in establishing a local youth council. A positive example is recently established local youth council in Ilijaš and Ilidža, where young people took initiative to establish a youth council, which was successfully implemented with the assistance of Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In October 2023, within an IOM project implemented by the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, youth organisations from Žepče initiated an idea to establish a municipal youth council. As of November 2023, the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is actively assisting youth CSOs from Žepče to set up the local youth council.

It is important to emphasize that the Law on Youth of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina also defines that youth officers should be employed by every municipality and canton. The officer is entitled to direct the communication with local and cantonal youth councils, coordinate the municipal and cantonal youth strategy, and its implementation. Unfortunately, not all municipalities and cantons have yet employed a youth officer due to the lack of political will or financial resources.

### 2.5.3 Republika Srpska

The Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republika Srpska is responsible for creating Youth Policy and the corresponding Action Plan that also defines the role of the Youth Council of Republika Srpska. The Youth Council of Republika Srpska, as well as youth council formed at the level of municipalities and cities are formed by a minimum of three youth organisations from that area. The Youth Council of the Republika Srpska consists of NGOs registered in the Register of Youth Organisations of Republika Srpska.

More than 10 years ago, in 2012, Republika Srpska Government established the Youth Committee of Republika Srpska (*Savjet za mlade Republike Srpske*), which should not be confused with the Youth Council of Republika Srpska (*Omladinski savjet Republike Srpske*), established in 2002.<sup>60</sup> The Youth Committee includes representatives of different ministries and youth representatives that jointly work on youth policy from various sectors. Therefore, as stipulated by the Law on Youth of

60 Government of Republika Srpska, 2012, Konstituisan Savjet za mlade Republike Srpske, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mpos/media/vijesti/Pages/Odrzana\\_konstitutivna\\_sjednica\\_Savjeta\\_za\\_mlade\\_Republike\\_Srpske.aspx](https://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mpos/media/vijesti/Pages/Odrzana_konstitutivna_sjednica_Savjeta_za_mlade_Republike_Srpske.aspx)>



Republika Srpska, the Committee has nine members: Minister of Family, Youth and Sports, Minister of Education and Culture, Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Minister of Labour and Veteran Protection, Minister of Finance, representative of the working body dealing with youth issues in the Assembly of Republika Srpska, and three representatives of the Youth Council of Republika Srpska. It is important to note that the Parliament of Republika Srpska includes the Committee on Children, Youth, and Sports which also deals with youth issues.

### 2.5.4 Brčko District

Brčko District Department for Administrative Affairs is responsible for the implementation of Youth Law and youth policy. Brčko District Assembly has established the Commission for Youth, which includes five members of the Brčko District Assembly.<sup>61</sup>

The Youth Council of Brčko District was formally established at the end of November 2018. The Youth Law of Brčko District envisions the Council, whose primary role is to participate in policy making and create programmes and strategies for youth in cooperation with legislative institutions. The Youth Council of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina represents more than 50% of youth associations registered in the District. Currently, there are 13 youth organisations as Council members that are officially listed in the Registry of Youth Organisations of the Department for Professional and Administrative Issues of Brčko District.<sup>62</sup>

## 2.6 Other sectors impacting youth

There are central level framework documents in other sectors that directly address youth-related issues, such as education, sport, and culture. The Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is responsible for coordinating working groups, collecting data, and drafting the youth policy. However, the other ministries of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina must be involved in implementing the measures and objectives of the adopted Strategy. Besides the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a few other line entities are responsible for youth issues as well.

The Commission for Youth Issues discusses drafts and proposals of framework documents related to youth, provides guidelines and recommendations for developing youth policy in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and facilitates communication between different public institutions, youth organisations, informal groups, and individuals in accordance with its jurisdiction in order for each to be involved in the process accordingly. The Commission also monitors implementation of certain youth-related European documents and conventions in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other governmental bodies also influence youth-related matters. As an illustration of this impact, it is worth mentioning that in October 2019, the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not adopt the Strategy for Employability of Youth in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period of 2018-2021, another critical document relating to Youth Policy of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The reasons for this could be found in the absence of an

61 Brčko District Assembly, 2023, Brčko District Commission for Youth, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://www.skupstinabd.ba/ba/komisija-za-mlade.html>>

62 Youth Council of Brčko District, 2023, Vijeće mladih Brčko distrikta, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://vsmbd.org/>>



economy-level strategy which is required for adopting the Strategy for Employability of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On the other hand, the document entitled Youth Policy of Republika Srpska 2023-2027 calls for a multi-sectoral approach in the implementation of youth strategy with defined stakeholders for each measure. In this document, four strategic goals were defined with a total of 15 priorities and 44 measures, as well as three strategic projects. Funds in the total amount of approx. EUR 130,000 were planned for the implementation of this Strategy.<sup>63</sup> The document is to be further developed through the projects in the Action Plan implementing the Youth Policy of Republika Srpska.<sup>64</sup>

## 2.7 Critical assessment

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a complex government administration that influences development and implementation of youth policy by lacking a strong coordination mechanism that would provide more efficient work of different stakeholders working in youth sector. Additionally, the constitution did not envisage economy-level institutions that deal with youth without them being prevented from functioning due to internal ethnic disputes.

Development of youth sector started some two decades ago with significant international donor support from the EU institutions, OSCE, U.S. Embassy and UN agencies. However, due to the lack of economy-level youth policy development, youth policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina is very dispersed in terms of its institutional setup. The process of developing the youth policy at all levels of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina is challenging because of several reasons.

There is limited coordination and inclusion of the relevant stakeholders. Ministries responsible for youth issues in both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not provide the mechanisms, such as the council for youth or permanent working group for youth. Ministries responsible for other sectors, such as education, sport, culture, and employment, often do not recognise the importance of youth issues within their scope of work, which results in the lack of addressing youth problems in education strategies or youth needs in active labour market measures. The improvement of coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders was especially relevant and essential during the COVID-19 pandemic due to a complete absence of any policy regarding youth in the job market, continuous education, support for health and mental health of youth, and assurance of their continuous participation. Such coordination remains equally important and relevant nowadays during the post-COVID era, as the way that the decision-makers dealt with young people during the pandemic has just added to the factors and features that drive outward-oriented migration of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>65</sup>

There are limited resources and capacities of institutions to deal with youth issues. Youth related research studies cited throughout this report have been conducted mainly through the support of international donors. Likewise, development of youth policy documents is usually conducted similarly,

63 Government of Republika Srpska, 2023, Usvojena omladinska politika Republike Srpske od 2023. do 2027, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://shorturl.at/pzLP8>>

64 Government of Republika Srpska, 2023, Omladinska politika Republike Srpske od 2023. do 2027. godine, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://shorturl.at/nprz5>>

65 United Nations Fund for Population Activities, 2021, Survey on Youth Emigration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://ba.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth\\_emigration\\_survey\\_in\\_bih\\_eng\\_final\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://ba.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth_emigration_survey_in_bih_eng_final_0_0.pdf)>



being mostly funded by international donors through projects implemented by local organisations. In order for the youth organisations in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brčko District to involve competent young people to work for them and conduct evidence-based youth research at a high level adequate funds should be allocated and institutional capacities built. This would offer a necessary motivation for more young and competent individuals to plan their future within the youth sector. However, youth organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina have professional employees, voluntary membership, and many of the activities on the ground depend on the engagement of local volunteers. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the organisational capacities and professional resources of youth organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and especially its youth councils, in order to create more coordination and cooperation especially among those organisations that are now in different stages of development. Since such kind of development depends mostly on the budgets available to youth organisations, it is an imperative for the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to offer more financial support to such organisations.

There is limited youth participation and inclusion in the decision-making processes. Only ministries that have been put under pressure through the civil society sector have effectively included youth in their work. In most cases, ministries do not invite young people to participate in activities. Young people are often invited to the table by other stakeholders such as international donors and local NGOs. As a result, in most cases, youth policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina are developed without youth participation. However, one of the positive examples of participatory and youth-centred approach to policy making are the Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs, which have been implemented also in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This RCC-facilitated dialogue offers young people a unique platform to engage in policy development together with decision-makers. This offers decision-makers the opportunity to understand the youth perspective, and at the same time gives young people a chance to create meaningful policies, take part in the implementation process, and get involved in monitoring of the impact on the ground.

Inadequate monitoring and evaluation capacities within ministries are noted, and initiatives such as the Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs can serve as an impetus for the ministry officials to integrate the tools from the Youth Labs into their own work. Monitoring and evaluation of policies for youth at different levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina are often regarded as unnecessary. However, youth strategies at all levels clearly outline the monitoring and evaluation procedure as an important part



of the process. There is a lack of institutional ability to define and plan an efficient monitoring system and evaluate policies.

*Key developments over the years:*

	By 2020	2021-2023	Critical Assessment
<b>Law on Youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	No law adopted.	No law adopted.	Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a youth law, youth policy, youth council or any youth representative body representing youth at the economy-level. Youth issues at the economy level are under the jurisdiction of the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which due to political reason does not operate as prescribed. Republika Srpska Law on Youth Organisation (Zakon o omladinskom organizovanju Republike Srpske), Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Youth Law (Zakon o mladima Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine) and Brčko District Youth Law (Zakon o mladima Brčko distrikta Bosne i Hercegovine) define the youth policy framework in the economy. On top of that, in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10 cantons also regulate youth policies through their own laws and strategies. This is one of the main reasons why youth legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is so fragmented, which causes lack of coordination of youth policies between different level of governance and inefficiency in addressing youth issues at economy level.
<b>Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted in 2010.	No major revisions undertaken.	Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina regulates issues related to youth life, position and activities in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, Youth Law is not implemented as it should be. Many local communities do not have a youth council, budget, space for youth or other items prescribed by this Law. One of the major challenges in implementing the Law is that many MPs at the local level are not aware of this Law and the importance of implementing it. Youth Law in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has good basis for ensuring youth participation in this entity, but only through its full implementation will the status of young people in this entity be improved compared to what was evident until 2023.
<b>Strategy on youth at the cantonal level in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	Between 2017 and 2019, three cantonal strategies were adopted in Una Sana Canton, Zenica-Doboj Canton, and Canton Sarajevo.	In 2022, the Central Bosnia Canton adopted its own youth strategy.	The Strategy on Youth is a document of government institutions with a programmatic approach to actions towards young people, which includes defined problems and needs of young people. With the adoption of the Law on Youth of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010, all levels of government are obliged to develop and adopt a strategy for youth, which is a document of government institutions with a programmatic approach to youth work, which includes defined problems and needs of young people, strategic directions of action and goals of the strategy, including measures for attainment of strategy goals. It is established that strategies for youth are developed based on the analysis of the situation and needs of young people, which must be carried out on the basis of expert research on the situation and needs of young people for the level of government for which the strategy is being prepared. However, so far, only 4 out of 10 cantons in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina have adopted such a document. What is very important in the coming period is for every canton that has adopted its own strategy to develop action plans and implement planned measures. Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, established based on this entity's Law on Youth, is working closely with the remaining cantonal governments for them to adopt their own youth strategies.

<b>Republika Srpska Law on Youth Organisation</b>	Republika Srpska Law on Youth Organisation was adopted by the Assembly of Republika Srpska in 2004. The Law underwent two revisions. First revision took place in 2008 and the second one in 2011.	No major revisions undertaken.	Unlike in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska has no cantonal level of governance, which makes the coordination of youth policies slightly easier. The Law on Youth Organisation of Republika Srpska defined the position and role of the Youth Council of Republika Srpska (OSRS), an umbrella youth organisation in this entity. The organisation brings together local and entity-level youth NGOs with the aim of presenting and representing their interests to the institutions of Republika Srpska. Even though cooperation between the Youth Council of Republika Srpska and Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina exists, there is more potential of this cooperation to be explored in the future.
<b>Brčko District Youth Law</b>	Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Law on Youth in 2017	No major revisions undertaken of the Youth Law. Brčko District Strategy on Youth was adopted in February 2023.	Despite the Youth Law being adopted in 2017, Brčko District Assembly adopted the Brčko District Strategy on Youth only six years later.  The Youth Council of Brčko District, which is the umbrella youth organisation formed based on the Brčko District Law on Youth, has been advocating for the adoption of the Strategy. There are currently 13 member organisations forming the Youth Council of Brčko District.



# CHAPTER 3: YOUTH FUNDING FRAMEWORK - YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND INSTRUMENTS

This chapter analyses youth policy funding and presents some key interventions and government programmes in the area of youth, including a critical assessment of the above. This includes funding allocated from the economy, entity, and local level of governance, including the programmes that tackle unemployment.

## 3.1 Youth policy funding

Funding of youth policies is planned at the entity or district levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Financing at the entity level also takes place through transfers and grants to the ministries in charge of youth or youth-related issues. Grants are allocated through public calls for youth organisations. However, in some cases grants for youth organisations are allocated through grants for NGOs, and sometimes through budgets specifically dedicated to youth NGOs.

Since the economy-level youth policy is still not developed, there is no specific budget line for youth policy implementation in the economy-level budget. The Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina has allocated funds from the public budget, but it only supports projects strictly related to its jurisdiction. The only central-level funding related to youth is the one allocated for the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### 3.1.1 Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

In the three-year work plan of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2022–2024, there is a specific budget dedicated to youth policy. A total amount of (approx.) EUR 200,000 will be allocated during this period for financing youth-related projects and supporting the work of key bodies representing young people in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>66</sup> According to the same work plan, the Sector for Youth is responsible for improving the position of young people, protecting their interests, and strengthening youth participation in the decision-making process. The Federal budget also allocates transfers for youth-related activities (e.g. student loan fund and student mobility fund).

66 Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2022, Trogodišnji plan rada Federalnog ministarstva kulture i sporta za period 2022. - 2024. godina, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://fmks.gov.ba/images/2022/TROGODI%C5%A0NJI\\_PLAN\\_RADA\\_FMKS\\_ZA\\_PERIODE\\_2022-2024.pdf](https://fmks.gov.ba/images/2022/TROGODI%C5%A0NJI_PLAN_RADA_FMKS_ZA_PERIODE_2022-2024.pdf)>



The foreseen three-year budget for the period 2022–2024 includes the following specific items:

- Policy and project support intended for young people in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (approx. EUR 150,000);
- Support to the Youth Council in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (approx. EUR 20,000);
- Development and adoption of strategic documents (approx. EUR 20,000); setting up and work of the local youth councils (approx. EUR 10,000).

During this period, the Ministry of Culture and Sport of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina plans to support more than 100 youth NGOs from this entity, promote local youth-led initiatives, and support youth policies at the local level by allocating funds through public calls for projects. Additionally, the funds will be invested in strengthening the inner cohesion of the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, developing an action plan for the implementation of Youth Strategy in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and analysing the needs of young people in this entity.

### 3.1.2 Republika Srpska

The legislation of Republika Srpska defines that each level of governance allocates parts of their budgets to monitor and implement programmes specified in the Youth Policy of Republika Srpska. In order to implement such a measure, several ministries of Republika Srpska allocate funds for youth population, students, and youth-led NGOs, including the Youth Council of Republika Srpska. In certain cases, such budgetary allocations are intended specifically for youth organisations, and in some cases also for NGOs which are not specifically registered as youth organisations, but do work with young people.

### 3.1.3 Brčko District

According to the Law on Youth in Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the District is obliged to provide financial resources for conducting research and developing a youth policy. In 2024 budget proposal, Brčko District plans to invest approx. EUR 250,000 in building a youth centre in Grčica, one of the most populous local communities in Brčko. This is the continuation of a project for which approx. EUR 100,000 was allocated in 2023.<sup>67</sup> The construction of this youth centre spanning across 900 square meters started in September 2022.<sup>68</sup>

67 Brčko District Government, 2023, Budget, accessed 3 October 2023, <<http://vlada.bdcentral.net/Content/Read/dokumenti-budzet>>

68 Brčko District Government, 2022, Započeti radovi na izgradnji omladinskog centra u Grčici, accessed 3 October 2023, <<http://www.vlada.bdcentral.net/Publication/Read/Pocetak-radova-Grcica?lang=en>>



## 3.2 Youth project funding

### 3.2.1 Economy (central) level

According to the mid-term Work Plan of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2020-2022,<sup>69</sup> one of the central goals of the Ministry in youth-related issues was to improve the policy and implementation of international obligations in the areas of education and youth. The mid-term plan was developed in order to set in motion the programme on drafting and implementation of strategic documents in the field of youth education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This includes the decision on adopting the strategic youth-related document in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the decision on adopting the strategic document in the area of education and training in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was the latest mid-term plan produced by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Similar goals remained among the top priorities in the Work Plan of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2023, which is the most recent document of this kind developed by this Ministry.<sup>70</sup> This document deals with similar priorities as the previous plan, but putting stronger emphasis on short-term implementation during 2023. This includes development of an efficient model of coordination of activities in the field of education and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina, drafting and implementation of regulations and strategic documents in the field of education and youth at the Bosnia and Herzegovina level, and improving international cooperation in the field of education and youth. Additionally, the documents put a strong emphasis on cooperation with the organisations and institutions such as RYCO, Economy-wide Erasmus+ Office, and Eurydice Network. Furthermore, this Plan also defines the roadmap for establishing new collaboration programmes in the field of youth with foreign governments, incl. France, Germany, Greece, Turkey, and Albania. Finally, the document outlines the activities related to promotion and presentation of exchange programmes implemented through CEEPUS, Erasmus+, and RYCO.

### 3.2.2 Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina allocates funds for financing youth-related projects and programmes on annual basis. The decision to support such projects for 2022 was adopted in May 2022, and it includes five transfers, one of which is the Transfer for Youth. In 2022, four programmes were provided under this Transfer with a total budget of approx. EUR 200,000.<sup>71</sup>

69 Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020, Srednjoročni plan rada Ministarstva civilnih poslova BiH za razdoblje 2020-2022, accessed 3 October 2023, <[http://mcp.gov.ba/attachments/hr\\_Migrirani\\_dokumenti/Va%C5%BEni\\_dokumenti/Va%C5%BEno-Srednjoro%C4%8Dni\\_plan/Srednjorocni\\_2020-2022.pdf](http://mcp.gov.ba/attachments/hr_Migrirani_dokumenti/Va%C5%BEni_dokumenti/Va%C5%BEno-Srednjoro%C4%8Dni_plan/Srednjorocni_2020-2022.pdf)>

70 Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Important documents, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/vazni-dokumenti?lang=en>>

71 Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2022, Budget, accessed 3 October 2023, <[https://fmks.gov.ba/images/2022/Program\\_utro%C5%A1ka\\_sredstava\\_za\\_2022.pdf](https://fmks.gov.ba/images/2022/Program_utro%C5%A1ka_sredstava_za_2022.pdf)>



Table 3: 2022 transfer for youth

Support for projects on research, development, promotion and implementation of policies towards young people in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Approx. EUR 147,000
Support for the work of the Youth Council in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Approx. EUR 15,000
Youth strategy	Approx. EUR 20,000
Intervention funds for the programmes of the Association of Youth Organisations	Approx. EUR 20,000

When it comes to development and promotion of youth policy in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the overall objective is to harmonise its policies on young people, strengthen the organisational capacities of youth policy holders in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their promotion among the target group. Support for the work of the Youth Council in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina refers to strengthening its organisational capacities across Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with an aim to improve the status of young people in this entity.

### 3.2.2.1. Cantonal level budgeting

Budgetary allocations for youth-related issues also exist at cantonal levels in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo Canton, Zenica-Doboj Canton, Una-Sana Canton, Bosnia-Podrinje Canton, Posavina Canton, and Central Bosnia Canton specify grants for youth organisations in their budgets. Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and Canton 10 do not specify budget funds for youth organisations. On the other hand, all Cantons which specify youth grants in their budgets publish public calls for applications, except Posavina Canton. It is important to note that cantons also allocate scholarships for talented students, which is usually not included under the youth grants.

### 3.2.3 Republika Srpska

Since 2006, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports is using the Youth Policy of Republika Srpska to finance youth organisations and programmes for young people through regular annual public calls and provide support, funding, and co-funding to youth organisations projects.

All funding opportunities are published in daily newspapers and on the official website, but no specific figures, number of calls, or list of projects are publicly available. These funds are usually supporting:

- projects for the construction of facilities for children and youth;
- subventions to youth housing;
- public institutions dealing with youth grants;
- youth policy programmes;
- programmes for rural youth;
- youth mobility programmes.



### 3.2.4 Brčko District

Although Brčko District still does not have a running Youth Strategy, its annual allocations demonstrate investment into the work of youth NGOs and District's Youth Council. As outlined in the 2023 Budget, Brčko District will invest approx. EUR 100,000 in building a youth centre in Grčica.<sup>72</sup>

It is important to note that budget allocations differ from canton to canton and entity to entity as not every administrative level has the same means and political will when it comes to supporting young people. At the same time, in many cases, financial schemes of different governance levels tend to overlap in their mission and target group they aim to support. In addition, titles of budget allocations are often relatively generic as in certain cases youth organisations are eligible to apply for grants for non-profit organisations, and in certain cases they apply for specific youth grants. Frequently, such calls for applications do not include only youth organisations as primary beneficiaries or objectives.

## 3.3 Key youth programmes and instruments

Key youth programmes at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina focus on supporting areas of employment, with a specific focus on young entrepreneurs, targeting unemployment through additional education opportunities in forms of internships, career guidance and counselling, as well as support to businesses of marginalised groups, especially young women. Most of the key youth programmes are funded through donor support (see Chapter 5) and seem to be equally dispersed with far-reaching activities across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Youth programmes represent good practice examples, as they tend to have a far-reaching outcome which does not primarily target specific ethnic groups among youth. Such programmes are aimed at fostering strong partnerships with local authorities. Such approach contributes to the principle of "ecosystem building," or working together at different levels to achieve success in youth-related issues. Lastly, completed and existing youth programmes tend to foster youth participation in decision-making and youth activism, often including relevant ministries at all levels.

Some of the most recent key programmes include:

#### ***Employment and self-employment co-financing programme Together to Work in 2023<sup>73</sup>***

Employment Agency of Republika Srpska is implementing the co-financing programme for employment and self-employment Together to Work in 2023, the total value of which is approx. EUR 3,000,000 financed from the Republika Srpska budget. The programme targets youth, though not exclusively.

The programme will be implemented through four components.

Component 1: The programme will co-finance self-employment of young people coming from the families of fallen soldiers, disabled soldiers and demobilised soldiers of the Army of Republika

<sup>72</sup> Brčko District Government, 2023, Budget, accessed 3 October 2023, <<http://vlada.bdcentral.net/Content/Read/dokumenti-budzet>>

<sup>73</sup> Employment Agency of Republika Srpska, 2023, Program sufinansiranja zapošljavanja i samozapošljavanja, Zajedno do posla u 2023. godini, accessed 3 October 2023, <[http://www.zzzrs.net/index.php/projekat/program\\_sufinansiranja\\_zaposljavanja\\_i\\_samozaposljavanja\\_zajedno\\_do\\_posla\\_u/](http://www.zzzrs.net/index.php/projekat/program_sufinansiranja_zaposljavanja_i_samozaposljavanja_zajedno_do_posla_u/)>



Srpska, 273 persons in total, in the amount of approx. EUR 2,500 per unemployed person, which totals to approx. EUR 700,000.

Component 2: Co-financing of employment of young people coming from the families of fallen, war-disabled and demobilised soldiers of the Army of Republika Srpska regardless of the duration of unemployment, and children of demobilised soldiers and war veterans who are on the unemployment register for more than 12 months, 544 persons in total in the amount of approx. EUR 2,500 per unemployed person, i.e. total of approx. EUR 1,300,000.

Component 3: Co-financing of employment by employers of hard-to-employ persons in extremely underdeveloped municipalities for 300 persons in the amount of approx. EUR 2,500 per unemployed person, which is a total of approx. EUR 750,000.

Component 4: Co-financing the employment of high-school educated young family members of fallen soldiers of the Army of Republika Srpska for 34 persons in the amount of approx. EUR 6,000 per year per unemployed person, which is a total of approx. EUR 200,000.

#### ***Co-financing of self-employment programme – Start Up 2023<sup>74</sup>***

The co-financing of self-employment programme - Start Up 2022 was created in accordance with the Law on Mediation in Employment and Social Security of Unemployed Persons in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Three-Year Work Plan of the Federal Employment Service 2022-2024.

Funds in the amount of approx. EUR 8,000,000 have been allocated for the implementation of the programme. The Federal Employment Office implements this programme in cooperation with the cantonal employment services.

This programme will encourage at least 2,000 young persons from the unemployment register in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to become self-employed by starting an independent business, as well as to employ other persons from the unemployment register in the started activities/companies. The target group of the programme are young people, but not exclusively. The programme targets those individuals registered on the unemployment register in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of education level.

In 2022, the Federal Employment Agency implemented the same programme titled Start Up 2022. This programme contained a number of measures to encourage self-employment of young people, women, war veterans, and young entrepreneurs. Funds in the amount of approx. EUR 6,000,000 were contracted through the programme, on the basis of which 1,752 contracts were signed with unemployed persons. With the financial support of this programme, all these individuals have successfully registered their business.<sup>75</sup>

74 Federal Employment Service, 2023, Program sufinansiranja samozapošljavanja – Start up 2023, accessed 3 October 2023, <<https://www.fzzz.ba/ckFinderFiles/files/Program%20START%20UP%202023.pdf>>

75 Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, FZZZ: Programom sufinansiranja samozapošljavanja „Start up 2022“ podržano osnivanje 1.752 poslovne djelatnosti, accessed October 2023, <<https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/fzzz-programom-sufinansiranja-samozapostljavanja-start-up-2022-podrzano-osnivanje-1752-poslovne-djelatnosti>>



***Employment co-financing programme 2023<sup>76</sup>***

The Employment Office of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina implements this programme in cooperation with the cantonal employment services. Funds in the amount of approximately EUR 18,000,000 are provided for the implementation of the programme in accordance with the Financial Plan for 2023 and the estimate for 2024 and 2025. The programme targets specifically young people without work experience, young trainees, women, people up to the age of 35 with work experience, and war veterans, etc.

The employment co-financing programme for 2023 is implemented with the aim of employing at least 6,000 people from the unemployment register in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with special social and gender sensitivity. The ultimate goal of the programme is not only to employ them, but also to prevent long-term unemployment, preserve and improve work skills, and create conditions for strengthening competitiveness of young people without work experience through training for working in the profession and gaining first work experience.

This programme is specifically catered to young people under 30 years old through its trainee employment scheme. The aim of this measure is to enable as many young people up to the age of 30 as possible to be trained to work in the profession and to gain their first work experience in those positions for which they were educated.

***Canton Sarajevo self-employment and co-financing programme for young unemployed persons under the age of 35<sup>77</sup>***

In order to implement the Programme of measures to encourage employment and maintain a higher employment rate as well as improve the structure of employees in the Canton of Sarajevo in 2022, the Employment Service of this Canton catered the Self-Employment Co-financing Programme for young people up to the age of 35. The goal of the programme was to shorten the duration of unemployment and stimulate self-employment. The planned funds amounted to approx. EUR 600,000, and the goal was self-employment of 70 unemployed persons from the target group. The target group are young unemployed people below 35 years old, who are registered in the unemployment register in the Canton of Sarajevo.

***Brčko District programme of co-financing of self-employment of young unemployed persons up to 35 years of age<sup>78</sup>***

Based on the 2023 Brčko District self-employment programme, the Employment Office of Brčko District has allocated approx. EUR 265,000 for a programme of co-financing of self-employment of young unemployed persons up to 35 years of age. The purpose of the Programme is to contribute to economic development by creating conditions for self-employment and raising the entrepreneurial spirit in the District.

76 Federal Employment Service, 2023, Program sufinansiranja zapošljavanja 2023, accessed 3 October 2023, <[https://www.fzzz.ba/ckFinderFiles/files/Programi/2023/Program%20sufinansiranja%20zapo%C5%A1ljavanja%202023\(1\).pdf](https://www.fzzz.ba/ckFinderFiles/files/Programi/2023/Program%20sufinansiranja%20zapo%C5%A1ljavanja%202023(1).pdf)>

77 Akta, 2023, Javni poziv nezaposlenim osobama da se prijave za učešće u Programu sufinansiranja samozapošljavanja mladih nezaposlenih osoba do 35 godina života, accessed 3 October 2023, <<https://www.akta.ba/Tender/javni-poziv-nezaposlenim-osobama-da-se-prijave-za-u%C4%8De%C5%A1%C4%87e-u-programu-sufinansiranja-samozapo%C5%A1jav/1866645>>

78 Employment Office of Brčko District, 2023, Javni poziv za prijavu po Programu samozapošljavanja na području Brčko distrikta BiH u 2023. godini, accessed 3 October 2023, <<https://zzzbrcko.org/dokumenti/JP%20Program%20samozapo%C5%A1ljavanja%202023.pdf>>



All unemployed young people who are registered in the active records of the Employment Office can apply for the programme. The programme has been successfully implemented on a yearly basis since 2014.

The above listed programmes are successful examples of the most recent schemes offered by government institutions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, Brčko District, and Canton Sarajevo. However, besides these notable programmes facilitated by governmental organisations, there are several other active key youth programmes which target slightly different areas. Some of those programmes, including the ones implemented by non-governmental organisations such as the Institute for Youth Development KULT or SMART Balkans project focus mostly on areas of youth employment, education and leadership skills development, and strengthening institutional capacities of youth councils in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A smaller number of programmes also target traditionally unrepresented policy areas, such as minority youth, reconciliation, and human rights in the economic sector.

### 3.4 Critical assessment

When it comes to programme financing, one of the main issues is the lack of budget allocations for youth policy development, despite the fact that some of the programmes are highly successful. In addition, due to the limited funds such programmes allocate, the effectiveness of their implementation is also quite limited.

Moreover, financial overlapping is frequent. Two entity ministries dealing with youth issues communicate only when invited to standard processes by the economy-level ministry. Unlike institutions responsible for youth sector, youth organisations and young people collaborate and use a variety of opportunities for cooperation. Due to the lack of coordination, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina financially supports only issues related strictly to its jurisdiction, while the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republika Srpska rarely finance joint activities.

Budget planning is not harmonised with youth policy documents. Youth policy documents are developed in the timeframe of four to five years, while budget planning is happening every year. As a result, budgets for youth policies are not planned for the entire policy implementation period but only cover a specific period.

Grants allocated to youth organisations are often not based on a needs analysis. Available funds disbursed through grants are often modest, ranging from several hundreds euros to a maximum of EUR 5,000 per project. This has hindered sustainability and impact of the implemented projects. Budget allocations for youth are mostly not specified as “youth grants” nor are there budget lines which specifically state that grants are meant for youth organisations.

In the majority of cases, no updated financial reports are available. Financial reports are either outdated or not available to the public. This makes the analysis of spending almost impossible. Furthermore, no insight into lists of recipients of youth grants is available, impeding financial analysis of youth-related projects and programmes. Priority areas need to be expanded. Although key youth



programmes have very good outcomes, policy areas still focus mostly on youth employment, education/development of leadership skills and institutional capacity building. Hence, it would be recommendable to further advance such programmes while preventing the overlap with the existing ones dealing with issues such as human rights, youth participation, culture and sports, and youth health.

*Key developments:*

	By 2020	2021-2023	Critical Assessment
<b>Economy level funding</b>	Until 2020, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the only economy level institution to offer financial support to organisations from across the economy had been allocating budgetary funds to NGOs at all governmental levels.	Developments related to this period had been defined in two documents of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2020-2022 mid-term Work Plan defined the activities to be implemented within the three-year period, while 2023 Work Plan, which is the recent document of this kind, laid out a detailed plan to implement youth-related activities, projects and programme during 2023. Furthermore that needs to be allocated in 2023 for Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue participating in youth activities within programmes implemented through Erasmus+, CEEPUS, and RYCO.	Other than planning to adopt a strategic youth-related document in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a strategic document in the area of education and training in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the expected plan to implement the two above mentioned decisions in 2021 and 2022 respectively, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not offer any further information on the actual status of these processes. Since this is the latest document of this kind available to the public, further youth-related plans of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina are still unclear. The documents for 2023 and 2024 period have not been disclosed yet.
<b>Entity level funding</b>	Both the entity of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska regularly allocate funds from their budgets aimed at financing local and entity-level organisations in strengthening their position in the NGO ecosystem.	In 2022, under the Transfer for Youth, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has foreseen a total budget of approximately EUR 200,000. In Republika Srpska, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports also allocates funds for youth sector. At the same time, Brčko District plans to allocate approx. EUR 100,000 for constructing a youth centre in 2023.	Despite the fact that entity-level governments allocate funds for youth-related projects and programmes, these funds are considerably lower when compared to other budgetary allocations. Additionally, the funds dispersed by the entity-level institutions seem not to satisfy the actual needs of youth sector in either of the entities. What the entity governments need to do in the upcoming years is to create budgets that meet the needs of youth sector. In order to achieve this, it is necessary for the ministries to consult the youth sector and involve young people and their representatives in creating budgets and funds to be spent on youth-related project and programmes. Comparatively to the whole budget, all levels of governance are investing just a minor fraction for youth-related initiatives. With its approx. EUR 100,000 for the youth centre, Brčko District, for example, will allocate only 0.07% of the total budget for the needs of young people.



<b>Cantonal level funding</b>	In the past years, budgetary allocations for youth-related issues have been provided in all cantons of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.	6 out of 10 cantons specify grants for youth organisations in their bodies. Several cantons allocate funds for youth organisations from the same grant as for all other non-governmental organisations.	Certain cantons, such as the Canton 10, do not specify budget funds for youth organisations. At the same time, some of those cantons that do specify youth grants fail to publish a call for youth grants, which leaves room for irregularities and represents a lack of transparency. All cantons give scholarships for university students, and some of the cantons do the same for high school students. Student scholarships are usually not part of youth grants.
<b>Other youth programmes and policies</b>	Both in Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Brčko District, the employment services are allocating funds for young people through programmes fostering employment, self-employment, and entrepreneurship.	In 2022 and 2023, the Employment Office of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Employment Agency of the Republika Srpska, Employment Office of Brčko District, and the Employment Service of Sarajevo Canton will allocate several millions of euros for the employment of young people and financing their startup ideas. This is done to minimise youth unemployment rate in the respective areas and offer young people their first work experience.	Such employment programmes, which represent a novelty in recent years in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are generally welcomed and well received by the youth population in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole. While some of them are focusing on children of war veterans, other programmes are prioritising young entrepreneurs. Expanding such schemes will be beneficial not only for young people at individual level, but also for Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole, since those programmes have a capacity to reduce the youth unemployment rate and contribute to creation of jobs at cantonal, entity, and economy level.



## CHAPTER 4: YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLICY AND DECISION- MAKING PROCESS

This chapter analyses the existing mechanisms of youth participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina both at the economy level and entity levels. Young people are engaged in youth participation and policy-making through the work of youth NGOs, youth councils operating at various levels of governance, and informal activist youth groups. Those organisations organise their own activities in line with the youth laws adopted at various levels of governance. Despite the fact that the central-level law on youth has not been adopted yet, the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the body responsible for ensuring youth participation at the central level of governance.

### 4.1 Youth engagement and participation in policy: Key mechanisms and processes

As stipulated by Article 2 of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina are given access to basic human rights and freedoms, but they only gain access to certain rights when they reach the age of 18.<sup>79</sup> All three laws on youth that exist in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina define additional rights for youth population. Young people have the right to support and promote their development without discrimination on any grounds. Representatives of umbrella youth associations at local, cantonal and entity levels have the right to be consulted on all issues concerning young people. In addition to mandatory involvement in the work of youth councils in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District, the youth representatives will be included in the work of other advisory bodies that represent the interests of young people. Representatives of youth structures in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina have the additional right to be involved in planning and development of youth strategies at all levels of governance.

The ways in which young people can organise themselves are different:

- a. Through informal youth groups - the most informal type of association that seeks to fulfil common ideas, goals and activities. Informal groups are not legal entities (e.g. they do not have their own statute). They can be included in the list of youth associations in local communities to record their existence, but they do not exercise the rights that youth organisations have.
- b. Through youth associations / organisations – i.e. associations that have two- thirds of young people in their governing bodies.

79 Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 3 October 2023, <[https://www.ustavisud.ba/public/download/USTAV\\_BOSNE\\_I\\_HERCEGOVINE\\_bos.pdf](https://www.ustavisud.ba/public/download/USTAV_BOSNE_I_HERCEGOVINE_bos.pdf)>



- c. Through youth councils - the youth council (Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Youth Council of Republika Srpska, and Brčko District Youth Council) is an umbrella youth association based on the voluntary membership of youth associations, which represents the interests of youth and youth associations. Legally speaking, a youth council is a youth NGO established to contribute to the improvement of the position of young people and achievement of goals in all areas of youth policy.
- d. Young people can also be organised through other associations formed according to the Laws on Associations and Foundations, and whose work is not covered neither by the current Laws on Youth of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brčko District, nor the Law on Youth Organisation of Republika Srpska. These associations can deal with young people, but they are not primarily established as youth associations/organisations.

As stipulated in all three youth laws existing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, youth participation is obligatory in the process of drafting youth policy. The legal framework requires that youth participation is ensured through youth organisations and their active participation in youth councils, working groups, and assembly commissions. Table 5 illustrates and legal standards which specify such participation:

*Table 5: Describes legal standards for institutional participation of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina (all levels)*

Name of the body	Administrative level at which it is formed	Legal obligation of youth representatives' participation
Youth Commission	municipality/city	YES (min. 1)
Youth Commission	canton	YES (min. 1)
Youth Commission	entity (parliament)	YES (min. 1)
Youth Council	entity (government)	YES (50%)
Youth Commission	municipality/city	YES (1/3 membership)
Youth Commission	entity (assembly)	YES
Youth Council	entity (government)	YES (3 members)
Youth Commission	entity (government)	NO

As stipulated by the law on youth in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brčko District, youth associations are organisations where two thirds of organisation's members belong to the age group of 15 to 30 and whose activities and statutory work is mostly focused on youth. The Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina includes members from all three youth councils at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and this is how youth participation is ensured at the central level.



### 4.1.1 Economy level

There is no economy-wide policy that defines youth participation in the policy-making process of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### 4.1.2 Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina defines the establishment and functioning of the Youth Council of the entity. It therefore secures the possibility for youth to participate in the decision-making process. Article 11 of the Youth Law stipulates that youth councils at municipal, cantonal, and entity-level must be included in developing the youth strategy. The same Article declares that all levels of governance in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina must define, adopt, and implement a youth strategy. In addition to this, Article 18 foresees the establishment of Youth Council whose members are both youth councils from across this entity and ministry representatives concerned with youth issues. In line with the law, the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was established in 2015, following the 2010 Youth Law.<sup>80</sup>

Since its establishment, the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has represented young people in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and is widely considered as the most active of all youth councils (compared to those from Republika Srpska or Brčko District). The primary areas of its engagement, aside from youth participation, include youth education on their rights as well as awareness raising of the importance of establishing youth councils at the local level. The Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina often cooperates with the Youth Council from Brčko District and the Youth Council of Republika Srpska. In 2020, together with youth councils from Republika Srpska and Brčko District, the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina launched an initiative entitled *Fakat je Vakati za Mlade* (It is Time for Youth) which envisions the cooperation of all three umbrella institutions which work with youth across the economy.<sup>81</sup> Since then, these three youth councils have joined forces to explore all possibilities of revitalising the economy-level Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an institution that has remained dormant due to political issues. Even though this process has not yielded any results so far, it is imperative to keep it going, while at the same time working with decision-makers who act as allies within the government institutions.

For the past three years, the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has engaged in series of advocacy campaigns with an aim to secure more funding for the youth CSOs and the improvement of the position of young people in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This includes communication with the Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina vis-à-vis the adoption of entity-level Youth Strategy, as well as the advocacy efforts directed towards the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the increase of Youth Transfer from approx. EUR 200,000 to approx. EUR 500,000. This would also include the increase in financial support for the work of the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is now set at approx. EUR 15,000.

80 Note: The Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is an umbrella organisation in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is not the same organisation as the Council for Youth of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina envisioned by Article 18.

81 Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020, *Je li fakat je vakati za mlade?*, accessed 3 October 2023, <<https://www.vijecemladih.ba/fakatjevakatzamlade/>>



During this period, the Youth Council has developed a set of 63 recommendations for the Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina aimed at improving the standards of youth activism, volunteering, and youth organising in this entity. According to the Youth Council representative interviewed for this report, only three out of 63 recommendations were been implemented until November 2023. These three recommendations refer to progress in adopting the Youth Strategy of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopting the Youth Strategy of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, and to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture to allocate more funds for self-employment of young people in this entity.

The Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has also implemented projects supported through IOM's BHRI Initiative aimed at informing young people about their rights prescribed by the Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In one of the projects, titled Youth on the Move, an interactive social game called Vijećko was developed with an aim to use innovative ways to generate advocacy ideas to be addressed to decision-makers at local, cantonal, and entity levels of governance.

### 4.1.3 Republika Srpska

According to the Law on Youth Organising in Republika Srpska (Article 11), it is in this entity's general interest to care for its youth, including a particular focus on youth participation in decision-making processes. This is ensured by implementing a Youth Policy of Republika Srpska, a document that is revised every five years. The implementation of Youth Policy is ensured by the Government and proposed by the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports.

The Youth Council of Republika Srpska was established in 2004.<sup>82</sup> The primary role of the Youth Council is defined as an advisory one – providing expert opinion on youth-related issues. As such, it includes representatives of the Youth Council and members from different ministries whose work covers youth issues. Currently, this Youth Council includes 55 local youth organisations, mostly active in the field of youth participation as well as sports and culture. Although it is not very active in far-reaching activities which would encompass youth councils across Bosnia and Herzegovina, this Youth Council remains active in the areas related to culture, sports, and student exchange.

On a yearly basis, the Youth Council is organising Republika Srpska Youth Convention (Susreti mladih Republike Srpske), bringing together students, youth activists, and youth workers from across the entity. Through an IOM-funded project, the Youth Council has organised a series of public meetings between young people and elected officials in Republika Srpska. In 2023, the Youth Council partnered with the Srpska Open tournament, offering young people a chance to volunteer at this tennis tournament. This entity-level Youth Council has remained locally vocal about issues such as increasing youth employment, quality of education and youth housing. Activities include organisation of various workshops and communication with the government through media.

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82 Youth Council of Republika Srpska, 2023, O nama, accessed 3 October 2023, <<https://omladinskisavjetsr.org/o-nama/>>



### 4.1.4 Brčko District

In accordance with the Youth Law of Brčko District, the Brčko District Government, in cooperation with the Youth Council of Brčko District, is obliged to develop a Brčko District's Youth Strategy. Brčko District has recently started with the implementation of Brčko District Youth Law, which was adopted in 2017, while the Youth Council of Brčko District has been in place since November 2020.<sup>83</sup> Currently, this Youth Council includes 13 member organisations. They are mostly engaged in spheres such as youth participation, cooperating with government institutions on youth issues, and improving the status of young people.

The Youth Council is responsible for organising Brčko District Youth Convention that gathers hundreds of young people from Brčko District. This event is attended also by over 50 youth representatives from Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entities, as well as by youth representatives from the neighbouring Croatia and Serbia. Another notable project is related to empowering young people and informing them about their rights at public events organised by the Youth Council. Promoting entrepreneurship among youth in the District has been one of the key pillars of the Youth Council in its advocacy efforts to sink the youth unemployment rates and boost employment of young people in the District.

## 4.2 Evidence-based youth policy

Evidence-based youth policy making is challenging due to the lack of statistics and inconsistency of definition of the target group. Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks comprehensive research on youth. However, lower levels of governance conduct their research on youth, while many of them are using consultancy support from NGOs. Official government bodies dealing with youth issues lack the resources to implement broader research on youth.

In 2021, the Institute for Youth Development KULT published an in-depth research on young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, encompassing both entities and Brčko District. According to this research, more than 50% of young people want to leave the economy and 12.1% have already taken concrete steps to emigrate.<sup>84</sup> A year earlier, KULT published another research focusing specifically on Brčko District. Beside its scientific significance, the document titled Analysis of the Results of the Research on the Needs and Problems of the Youth of Brčko District was used as a basis for drafting the Youth Strategy of Brčko District, which was adopted in February 2023.<sup>85</sup>

There are however instances of research commissioned and conducted by international donors. For instance, in 2019, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung researched youth opinion on specific politically related issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina,<sup>86</sup> followed by a 2021 Survey on Youth Emigration in Bosnia and

83 Youth Council of Brčko District, 2023, Organi, accessed 3 October 2023, <<https://vsmbd.org/organi/>>

84 KULT, 2021, Nakon 13 godina provedeno sveobuhvatno istraživanje o mladima u BiH: Više od 50% mladih želi napustiti državu, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://mladi.org/nakon-13-godina-provedeno-sveobuhvatno-istrazivanje-o-mladima-u-bih-vise-od-50-mladih-zeli-napustiti-drzavu/>>

85 Youth Council of Brčko District, 2020, Analiza rezultata istraživanja potreba i problema mladih Brčko distrikta, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://vsmbd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-06-AnalizaRezultataIstrazivanjaPotrebaMladihBrckoDistriktaBiH.pdf>>

86 Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2020, Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018/2019, accessed 1 October 2023, <<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15262.pdf>>



Herzegovina, conducted by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)<sup>87</sup>. One of the most recent research outputs funded by foreign donors and paving ground for evidence-based youth policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the Economy-wide Youth Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina published in 2022 by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)<sup>88</sup>.

In Republika Srpska, comprehensive research was conducted before outlining the Youth Policy of Republika Srpska for the period 2016-2020. Still, the adopted Youth Policy does not reflect the results of this research. Instead, the document is based on different international and desk research data.

### 4.3 Establishment and functioning of youth councils and umbrella organisations

The existing youth councils at the entity and district level mentioned above still struggle with the individual implementation of the youth law, operational budgets, and development of internal structures. Since all three laws were established in different time spans, each had its challenges during the implementation process and regarding their organisation. Thus, entities have not found yet an adequate cooperating modality to develop a economy-wide youth council. Also, none of them is a member of the European Youth Forum.

An example of a youth umbrella organisation which was initially established to unite all youth organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Youth Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Youth Network was established in 1997 following an initiative and coordination of the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly (HCA) Organisations from Banja Luka and Tuzla. The lack of contacts and cooperation between youth organisations in the economy was a motivation for the initiative. In the period following the war, the focus was on citizen's initiatives, refugee organisations and female groups, and youth issues were not in focus. The basic idea behind the network was to connect youth's initiatives (independent organisations, informal groups and individuals) from across Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure strengthening, support and guidance of their projects, activities and ideas. A special focus was put on small communities and rural youth. Even though it did not propel itself as a economy-level youth council, it remained a valuable resource for youth organisations, youth workers, and youth activist working on the ground throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, the Youth Network gathers 186 organisations and 115 individuals from 75 cities across Bosnia and Herzegovina. In cooperation with the Youth Resource Centre from Tuzla, the Youth Network issues its own monthly Bulletin apart from publishing on its web page, mailing lists, and social networks.<sup>89</sup> The Bulletin is published in Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and English language and it provides information about the activities of the Youth Resource Centre in Tuzla and Youth Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, the Bulletin offers information about monthly activities of youth organisations and non-formal groups, their plans for the following period, and information about donors, calls for conferences and seminars, and scholarships. The Bulletin is co-facilitated by the

87 United Nations Fund for Population Activities, 2021, Survey on Youth Emigration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 1 October 2023, <[https://ba.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth\\_emigration\\_survey\\_in\\_bih\\_eng\\_final\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://ba.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth_emigration_survey_in_bih_eng_final_0_0.pdf)>

88 United States Agency for International Development, 2023, National Youth Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://www.usaid.gov/bosnia-and-herzegovina/reports/national-youth-survey-BIH-2022>>

89 Youth Resource Centre, 2023, Bulletin of the Youth Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 3 October 2023, <<https://orctuzla.ba/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/286-mart-2023-eng.pdf>>



Youth Resource Centre, a Tuzla-based youth NGO that assists youth organisations and individuals from Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially those operating in smaller local communities, to grow and prosper. Established in 2004, the Youth Resource Centre was set up as an organisation aiming to empower and strengthen the capacities and resources of youth organisations and informal youth groups – primarily those in smaller local communities. By doing this, the Youth Resource Centre has provided professional and logistical assistance and support for youth organisations, especially those that were in the process of establishment.

## 4.4 Platforms of youth cooperation at economy level

Since there is no youth council at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the only economy-level body for youth is the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yet, it has not been functional in the last three mandates due to political reasons. As a result, every international representation of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a matter of political discussion of ministries and youth councils. Sometimes, discussions end with a request to have at least three representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina in certain international events and international bodies.

## 4.5 Regional platforms and networks

Some of the most important regional platforms are considered to be the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO),<sup>90</sup> Young European Ambassadors (YEA),<sup>91</sup> and RCC's Western Balkans Youth Lab Project (WBYL).<sup>92</sup>

Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina took part in two separate Western Balkans Youth Labs focusing on youth employability and mental health, each in the duration of one year and a half. The involvement of Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in WBYL project resulted in two analyses being published. The first one, titled Youth Guarantee in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Path towards better Employability of Youth People was published in October 2022 and offers a set of recommendations for institutions responsible for enhancing the employability prospects for youth people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The second document, titled Methodological Framework for Promotional and Preventive Mental Health Activities Aimed at Youth People aged 14 to 18 in Bosnia and Herzegovina emerged in 2023 as a product of continuous work of the Working Group from Bosnia and Herzegovina consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Republika Srpska, Ministry of Health of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Government of Brčko District, Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and PRONI Centre for Youth Development.<sup>93</sup> This document presents the specifics of developmental period of adolescence, giving an overview of the current state of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina aged 14 to 18 and the most common problems they face.

90 RYCO, 2023, Regional Youth Cooperation Office, accessed 3 October 2023, <<https://www.rycowb.org/>>

91 The Young European Ambassadors, 2023, YEA, accessed 3 October 2023, <<https://www.webalkans.eu/>>

92 RCC, 2023, Western Balkans Youth Lab Project, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://www.rcc.int/youthlab>>

93 PRONI, 2023, Izrađen dokument pod nazivom „Metodološki okvir za kreiranje i provođenje promotivnih i preventivnih aktivnosti u oblasti mentalnog zdravlja namijenjenog za mlade od 14 do 18 godina“, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://www.proni.ba/2023/09/21/izraden-dokument-pod-nazivom-metodoloski-okvir-za-kreiranje-i-provodenje-promotivnih-i-preventivnih-aktivnosti-u-oblasti-mentalnog-zdravlja-namijenjenog-za-mlade-od-14-do-18-godina/>>



Youth organisations from Republika Srpska closely cooperate with Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS), while organisations from Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brčko District also cooperate in different initiatives with youth organisations from Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro. One of the well-known international programmes is the youth exchange in Lazurny, Russia, where the Youth Council of Republika Srpska has been providing financial support to young people from this entity to participate in the camp. According to available information, the last call for application was published in 2019.<sup>94</sup> Republika Srpska institutions financially supported participants travelling to this camp in Russia as it was considered “an opportunity to promote Republika Srpska”.<sup>95</sup>

## 4.6 Critical assessment

The Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina operates today as a youth umbrella organisation at the entity level, even though four cantonal youth councils are not part of the organisation. Establishing the remaining cantonal youth councils and bringing them into the membership of the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be regarded as one of the key priorities for this Youth Council in the upcoming period. This would strengthen the legitimacy of the organisation and create a broader foundation for implementation of the Law on Youth of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in all ten cantons.

The Youth Council of Republika Srpska is an independent non-governmental organisation that should not be involved nor ruled by any political influence. Distancing themselves from political structures in Republika Srpska ensures that the work of this youth umbrella organisation is truly independent and free from political influence.

The Youth Council of Brčko District has been working together with government officials in Brčko District for the Strategy on Youth to be adopted and implemented. Lobbying for implementation of key policies of this document will ensure the improvement of youth standards in the District.

Establishment of the local youth councils often depends on the work of individuals engaged at the local level. Taking into account that smaller local communities do not have universities which are located in bigger cities, a challenge of keeping the highly involved young people in such communities will persist in the years to come. However, the efforts of the entity youth councils in working together with youth stakeholders at the local level and assisting them to establish youth councils should be commended.

Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) plays a key role when it comes to bringing young people together at a regional level with a special contribution to facilitating reconciliation, cooperation and peacebuilding among youth in the Western Balkans. Unlike many other institutions dealing with youth issues, RYCO brings young people to the table together with government officials, offering them a seat in its Governing Board.

94 Youth Council of Republika Srpska, 2023, Poziv za učešće – 26. Međunarodni omladinski kamp u Rusiji (Lazurny 2019), accessed 3 October 2023,

<https://omladinskisavjetrs.org/2021/04/08/poziv-za-ucesce-26-medunarodni-omladinski-kamp-u-rusiji-lazurny-2019/>

95 RTRS, 2017, Davidović: Omladinski kamp u Rusiji prilika za promociju Srpske, accessed 3 October 2023,

<https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=262103>



Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) has a special place in the youth ecosystem of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region due to its strong engagement in resolving issues that no other institution has been able to tackle so far. One of the RCC's most impactful initiatives in the field of youth is the Western Balkans Youth Lab Project.<sup>96</sup> This three-year project funded by the EU enabled young people from the Western Balkans region to participate in decision-making processes. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, representatives of youth NGOs, including the youth councils from Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District engaged in meaningful exchange with public officials and worked to jointly develop policies aimed at increasing youth participation in decision-making processes. The Western Balkans Youth Lab Project encompasses four interlinked components related to implementation of Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs, strengthening the youth councils, increasing participation of youth in regional and international events, and mapping youth policies. Other topics such as preventing brain drain and focusing on mental health of young people have been of utmost importance in the context of RCC addressing the issues of young people in a wholesome and profound manner.

*Key developments:*

	<b>By 2020</b>	<b>2021-2023</b>
<b>Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	The Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was established in December 2015 after six cantonal youth councils were established in 2014 and 2015.	Still today, the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of six cantonal youth councils. Since its inception in 2015, no new members have joined the Youth Council.
<b>Youth Council of Republika Srpska</b>	Youth Council of Republika Srpska was established in 2002, and as an umbrella youth organisation in Republika Srpska. It brings together youth NGOs from this entity.	The Youth Council has maintained its status as the umbrella youth organisation in Republika Srpska with projects implemented at entity, economy-level as well as regional level.
<b>Youth Council of Brčko District</b>	The Youth Council of Brčko District was established in November 2018 as an umbrella organisation representing the interests of young people in Brčko District.	Today, the Youth Council of Brčko District is composed of 13 youth organisations registered in the District.
<b>Local Youth Councils</b>	Local councils are established at municipal level across Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the past years, the entity-level youth councils have been assisting local organisations in forming youth councils in their local communities.	-

96 RCC, 2023, Western Balkans Youth Lab Project, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://www.rcc.int/youthlab>>



<p><b>Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)</b></p>	<p>RYCO was established in 2016 as an independent functioning institutional mechanism, founded by all Western Balkan economies. It aims to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region through youth exchange programmes. The first RYCO youth project was implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018, and since then, RYCO remained the key youth institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2020, RYCO published the Fourth Open Call for project proposals with youth CSOs from the Western Balkans. Out of 129 proposals submitted from CSOs across the region, 18% of them were submitted from CSOs from Bosnia and Herzegovina.</p>	<p>During 2021 and 2022, RYCO implemented Peace and Advocacy Camp for young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2022 and 2023, RYCO published calls for MIRAI Programme that brought 14 young people from the Western Balkans (three of them from Bosnia and Herzegovina) for a seven-day-long cultural experience in Japan. Between 2021 and 2023, secondary schools from Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in Superschools exchange programme. A total of 330 students and 66 teachers took part in two cycles of this exchange programme. The fifth Open Call for project proposals for CSOs from the region was closed in August 2023. In 2023, RYCO launched the Western Balkans Youth Cultural Fund, a multi-year project financed by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and supported by the Governments of Western Balkans. The Fund is designed for cultural practitioners and civic society organisations from the field of culture. This project will support youth-led cultural activism and creative solutions for pressing social and political issues in the region by contributing to regional cooperation, intercultural dialogue, peacebuilding, and reconciliation. Finally, RYCO took an active role in facilitating cooperation between the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Youth Council of Republika Srpska, and Youth Council of Brčko District.</p>
<p><b>Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)</b></p>	<p>RCC is a regionally owned and led cooperation framework that engages 40 of its participants from South East Europe, members of the international community and donors on subjects which are important and of interest to the region.</p> <p>Since 2020, the RCC has been implementing the Western Balkans Youth Lab (WBYL), a 3-year project funded by the European Union. The project aims to provide opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making in all Western Balkan economies.</p>	<p>WBYL continuously supported organisation and participation of young people from the Western Balkans at the international events. At the Berlin Process Youth Forum held in Berlin 2022, young people developed a youth declaration directed to the political leaders of the Western Balkans and European Union. The document was presented at the margins of the Berlin Summit and reflects active participation and youth's ownership of the topics of high interest to them. Further to this, the Project establishes excellent cooperation with key stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina.</p>



# CHAPTER 5: MAPPING OF DONOR INTERVENTIONS IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

This chapter presents programmes and interventions of key donors in youth-related issues. It also outlines how donor coordination works in Bosnia and Herzegovina and what are the priority areas for the future in the field of youth.

## 5.1 Key donors in the field of youth

The international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina supports the youth sector in the economy through a variety of different programmes. The activities relating to youth sector broadly encompass those in the field of education, employment, and social policies sector. Donors usually follow their development strategies for Bosnia and Herzegovina or EU priorities for youth.

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) is the means by which the EU has been supporting reforms in the enlargement region with financial and technical assistance since 2007. IPA funds build up the capacities of the beneficiaries throughout the accession process, resulting in progressive, positive developments in the region. For the period 2007-2013, IPA Programme had a budget of EUR 11.5 billion. Its successor, IPA II, allocated EUR 12.8 billion for the period 2014-2020. For the multiannual financial framework period 2021-2027, IPA III budgetary expenditure is expected to be EUR 14.162 billion.<sup>97</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina benefits currently from the IPA III programme.<sup>98</sup>

Foreign embassies and international organisations have been very active in the implementation of youth projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most active donors which provide both grants and loans include the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development - USAID, European Union – EU, United Nations – UN, while economies that invest the most in the youth sector include Switzerland, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States.

### *European Commission*

#### *Erasmus+ Programme*

Erasmus+ is the EU Programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2021-2027. Established as Erasmus Programme in 1987, it has remained one of the EU's flagship programmes. The general objective of the Programme is to support educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport in Europe and beyond.<sup>99</sup> By utilising such approach, Erasmus+ has been contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion in Europe and beyond.

97 European Commission, 2023, Overview - Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, accessed 17 October 2023, <[https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance_en)>

98 Directorate for European Integration of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, IPA III, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.dei.gov.ba/en/ipa-iii>>

99 European Commission, 2023, What are the objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme?, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme/objectives-features>>



In order to achieve its objectives, Erasmus+ Programme foresees the implementation of three Key Actions in 2021-2027 period. Key Action 1 focuses on mobility of individuals, Key Action 2 fosters cooperation among organisations and institutions, and Key Action 3 supports policy development and cooperation. Bosnia and Herzegovina is participating in the programme as a Partner, which gives its institutions and non-governmental organisations a chance to implement Erasmus+ projects.<sup>100</sup>

According to the statistics for 2021-2027 period, provided by the Economy-wide Erasmus+ Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in number of projects within the Key Action 1 and Key Action 2. It is important to note that the following information reflects situation following the 2021 and 2022 selections.<sup>101</sup> The data including the 2023 selections has not been published yet. A total of 1839 students from Bosnia and Herzegovina went to study abroad in the frame of the International Credit Mobility Programme (ICM). During the same period, 23 Erasmus Mundus scholarships were awarded to students from Bosnia and Herzegovina pursuing an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree Programme in one of the Erasmus+ Programme Participating Members. Two projects coordinated by higher education institutions from Bosnia and Herzegovina were selected for the Capacity-building Programme for Higher Education and additional 12 projects involve institutions from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Three project proposals from Bosnia and Herzegovina were selected as Jean Monnet Activities.

### **Swiss Embassy**

#### **Youth Employment Project - YEP, 2016 - 2022**

The aim of the Youth Employment Project (YEP) is to help public employment bodies in Bosnia and Herzegovina to improve their offer and to introduce youth-friendly services, such as individual and group career advice for unemployed young adults between 18 and 30 years.<sup>102</sup>

The Swiss Embassy Youth Employment Project was dedicated to improving the work of public employment bodies by introducing new work methods, which enable them to provide better services to young people, match them with prospective employers, and encourage self-employment. Together with local partners, YEP promoted new job opportunities linked to social entrepreneurship models. Additionally, the project contributed to raising public awareness of youth employment issues. It has been implemented in both entities and Brčko District. The project was worth approx. EUR 6.1 million and was accomplished in 2022.

### **U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Over the past 20 years, USA has invested more than USD 1.1 billion (approx. EUR 1 billion) in total assistance for Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>103</sup> Part of this amount has been invested in strengthening youth sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, fostering reconciliation among young people, and

100 European Commission, 2023, What is the structure of the Erasmus+ Programme?, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme/structure>>

101 Erasmus+ Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Erasmus+ for the higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 17 October 2023, <[https://erasmusbih.com/documents/results/Bosnia\\_and\\_Herzegovina\\_fact\\_sheet\\_2021-2022.pdf](https://erasmusbih.com/documents/results/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_fact_sheet_2021-2022.pdf)>

102 Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023, Prospects for young, unemployed adults in Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/laender/naher-osten.html/content/dezaprojects/SDC/en/2007/7F04625/phase4>>

103 U.S. Mission to ASEAN, 2020, The United States is Leading the Humanitarian and Health Assistance Response to COVID-19, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://asean.usmission.gov/the-united-states-is-leading-the-humanitarian-and-health-assistance-response-to-covid-19/>>



supporting peace efforts made by youth-led CSOs on the ground. The funds are usually channelled through programmes administered by the U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Democracy Commission Small Grants Programme supports NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina to promote grassroots democracy, civil society, human rights, and Euro-Atlantic integration through media outreach and public advocacy campaigns. The programme focuses on youth empowerment, particularly in employment and promoting youth leadership, communication, and negotiation skills. It also emphasizes Euro-Atlantic integration and human rights, including projects on LGBT issues, gender equality, and support for people with disabilities and minorities.<sup>104</sup> The Interethnic Reconciliation and Youth Camps Programme supports projects and initiatives aimed at fostering multi-cultural cooperation and dialogue, promoting intercommunity exchange, collaboration, and joint projects. Local NGOs can organise medium and large-scale youth camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina, addressing issues such as water, sanitation, hygiene, educational segregation, STEAM projects, and restoring dignity to war victims.<sup>105</sup>

Youth Leadership Programme (YLP) introduces participants to civic education, community service, and youth leadership development, enhancing understanding of democratic processes and discourse.<sup>106</sup> 2023 YLP programme includes secondary school students and teachers from Tuzla, Banja Luka, and Široki Brijeg participating in a 23-day programme of intercultural experiences and skills workshops.<sup>107</sup> The Interethnic Reconciliation and Youth Small Grants Programme aims to finance projects and initiatives that develop increased tolerance and cooperation between ethnically and geographically diverse communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The programme does not specifically target youth organisations but proposals should engage youth aged 10-17 or 18-25.<sup>108</sup> The Democracy and Human Rights Education Programme is divided into two components: Comprehensive in School Democracy and Human Rights Education Programme and Homestay Small Grants Programme.<sup>109</sup> Under the Comprehensive in School Democracy and Human Rights Education Programme, young students in kindergartens, elementary schools, secondary schools, and universities get educated about the basic concepts of democratic society, justice, human rights, tolerance, Bosnia and Herzegovina constitution, and various levels of government in the economy.

Finally, BOLD grants are awarded through the BOLD network, which is a project of the Public Diplomacy Section of the U.S. Embassy to Bosnia and Herzegovina that seeks to empower young people across Bosnia and Herzegovina through leadership opportunities and training to implement projects for positive change in their communities.<sup>110</sup> The U.S. Embassy supports BOLD leaders by offering U.S. educational and cultural exchanges, workshops and training in Bosnia and Herzegovina, seed funding for projects, and engagement and connection with like-minded people.<sup>111</sup>

104 U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Democracy Commission Small Grants Program, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://ba.usembassy.gov/education/grant-opportunities/democracy-commission-small-grants-program/>>

105 U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Interethnic Reconciliation Small Grants Program, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://ba.usembassy.gov/education/grant-opportunities/interethnic-reconciliation-small-grants-program/>>

106 U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Youth Leadership Program Grants, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://ba.usembassy.gov/education/grant-opportunities/youth-leadership-program-grants/>>

107 Hocu.ba, 2023, Youth Leadership Programme (YLP), accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.hocu.ba/index.php/hocupriliku/youth-leadership-program-ylp/>>

108 U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Interethnic Reconciliation Small Grants Program, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://ba.usembassy.gov/education/grant-opportunities/interethnic-reconciliation-small-grants-program/>>

109 U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Democracy and Human Rights Education, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://ba.usembassy.gov/education/grant-opportunities/democracy-and-human-rights-education/>>

110 U.S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Bold Grants, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://ba.usembassy.gov/education/grant-opportunities/bold-grants/>>

111 Bold, 2023, U potrazi za kvalitetnim liderima u BiH, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://bold.ba/>>



**IOM*****Bosnia and Herzegovina Resilience Initiative (BHRI)***

Since 2018, IOM's Bosnia and Herzegovina Resilience Initiative (BHRI) has been empowering local youth to become agents of change. Between January 2020 and November 2023, a total of 8,000 young people has been involved in BHRI activities and projects implemented in 89 local communities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. During that time, IOM has partnered with 130 youth CSOs and institutions dealing with youth issues. BHRI provides youth with spaces to meet, interact, and collaborate towards common goals regardless of their background. BHRI also offers opportunities for youth to increase their role in local decision-making processes, while promoting political accountability. Finally, BHRI explores history, arts and culture as tools to bridge division and engages youth in local media and messaging campaigns to amplify positive voices and unifying narratives.<sup>112</sup>

BHRI is part of IOM's social cohesion and resilience portfolio. Until the end of October 2021, BHRI was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and since November 2021, it is being funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). It is implemented through a small-grants mechanism, which supports adaptable programming and layering of grant activities. Based on BHRI's best practices and lessons learned, IOM is currently raising funds to continue with its most impactful activities.

**UNDP*****Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2)***

ReLOaD2 is a continuation of two EU supported initiatives, LOD, which ran between 2009 and 2016, and ReLOaD, which was implemented between 2017 and 2020. This project is fully funded by the EU and implemented across Western Balkan economies by UNDP. ReLOaD2 started its implementation in January 2021, and its estimated end date is envisaged for December 2024.

The project's overall objective is to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration process in the Western Balkans by empowering civil society to actively participate in decision-making and by stimulating an enabling legal and financial environment for civil society. ReLOaD2 aims to strengthen partnerships between local authorities and civil society in the Western Balkans by scaling a successful model of transparent project funding of CSOs, which is aimed at greater civic and youth participation in decision-making processes and at improved service delivery in local communities.

The stakeholders benefitting from ReLOaD2 project are 63 local governments in the Western Balkans, civil society organisations, and youth population. At a regional level, the Project is supporting implementation of 300 CSO projects worth approx. EUR 12.63 million. It is expected that by the end of the project 35,000 citizens will benefit from projects in local communities. Special attention is being given to projects contributing to women empowerment and strengthening of youth and socially excluded groups<sup>113</sup>

112 IOM, 2023, Bosnia and Herzegovina Resilience Initiative (BHRI), accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://bih.iom.int/bosnia-and-herzegovina-resilience-initiative-bhri>>

113 United Nations Development Programme, 2023, Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (ReLOaD), accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/regional-programme-local-democracy-western-balkans-reload>>



In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a total of 72 projects were supported in 13 municipalities in the period between January 2021 and April 2023.<sup>114</sup> During this time, approx. EUR 720,000 has been allocated for project implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additional projects are to be implemented in local communities between April 2023 and December 2024. The project reports for those projects running between April 2023 and November 2023 have not been published yet.

### ***UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)***

#### ***Empowering Youth against Hate Speech in the Western Balkans Project***

To foster trust and inclusive online spaces for young people, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women (the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women), and UNESCO are collaborating to empower young individuals to take a stand against hate speech and cultivate a safer digital environment in the Western Balkans.

By leveraging existing networks and resources from previous PBF-supported projects in the Western Balkans, the initiative has already initiated change: in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the project is helping to ensure the sustainability of Youth Peer Peacebuilding manual by integrating it into university courses. This initiative aims to reach young people who have not yet participated in intercultural dialogue activities, including those affected by intergenerational trauma. Young trainers in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania attest that the training programmes help them adopt a more inclusive stance and value diverse perspectives.

Furthermore, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the project launched Youth Peace Policy Lab (YouPOL), which the UN considers to serve as a bridge between public institutions and young people, facilitating development of policy solutions for issues of mutual interest.<sup>115</sup> YouPOL has already established cooperation with the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina with an aim to engage young people in the work of this institution and showcase a positive example of joint collaboration between young people and public officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>116</sup> Important to note, the Youth Peace Policy Lab should not be confused with the Western Balkans Youth Policy Lab Project implemented by RCC and funded by EU.

This EUR 4.2 million initiative, funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), has been implemented for over two years across the Western Balkans. The project engages a diverse range of youth, including students, journalists, decision-makers, politicians, artists, and activists.<sup>117</sup>

114 UNDP, 2023, Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 ReLoaD2: Overview of all CSO projects awarded in the period 01 January 2021 - 30 April 2023, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-07/Copy%20of%20Overview%20of%20awarded%20CSO%20projects%20as%20of%20April%202023.pdf>>

115 United Nations, 2023, Nurturing Safer Digital Spaces: Empowering Youth Against Hate Speech in the Western Balkans, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/nurturing-safer-digital-spaces-empowering-youth-against-hate-speech-western-balkans>>

116 The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Ombudsmeni s predstavnicima UNFPA-e razgovarali o angažmanu mladih, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.ombudsmen.gov.ba/Novost.aspx?newsid=2580&lang=BS>>

117 United Nations, 2023, The Peacebuilding Fund, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/fund>>



***SMART Balkans - Civil Society for Shared Society in the Western Balkans***

Centre for Civil Society Promotion (Centar za promociju civilnog društva - CPCD), together with partner organisations from Albania – Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) and North Macedonia – Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM), is implementing a project named SMART Balkans. The SMART Balkans is a 4-year regional project financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a grant worth more than EUR 17 million.<sup>118</sup> This project focusing on topics related to security, stability, and good governance in the Western Balkans started in January 2022, and it will last until the end of December 2025.

Until December 2025, a minimum of 445 projects divided into seven types of grants will be awarded to CSOs working on the ground across the Western Balkans. The seven types of grants SMART Balkans is allocating are: core grants, economy-level interventions, media grants, regional grants, local initiatives, creative box, and ad hoc grants. Focusing on empowering civil society, the programme finances CSOs and networks to have a stronger and active role in creating peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. SMART Balkans aims to tackle issues such as widespread corruption at all levels of government, low living standard and political instability in the Western Balkans, among others. Young people play a crucial role in the project activities implemented within the SMART Balkans project.

At a regional level, until November 2023, SMART Balkans has allocated 159 grants worth approx. EUR 5.5 million, which is 39% of the total budget amount that is available specifically for grants. Out of this amount, approx. EUR 1.6 million has been allocated for youth grants in the region, which is 29% of the total amount allocated so far. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a total of 13 CSOs were awarded approx. EUR 452,000 for implementing projects focusing on young people. Important to note, the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been awarded a core grant worth EUR 30,000 aimed at building the organisational capacity of this NGO. The support provided through SMART Balkans project goes beyond financial grants. Those CSOs awarded a grant will receive support in capacity building and mentoring, as well as technical support via project's grant scheme.

***EBRD Youth in Business Programme***

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has launched its Youth in Business programme in the Western Balkans by extending loans to Banca Intesa Beograd and microfinance institution Mi-Bospo from Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>119</sup> The EBRD has committed to providing €100 million to financial institutions in Western Balkan economies over the next five years to support youth entrepreneurship.

The EBRD's Youth in Business Programme helps SMEs owned or managed by youth in the Western Balkans to access know-how, business expertise, financing, and other critical resources to surmount their challenges and unleash their full potential. Under the Youth in Business Programme, EBRD provides credit lines to local partner financial institutions for on-lending to youth SMEs. This financial

118 SMART Balkans, 2023, SMART Balkans - Civil Society for Shared Society in the Western Balkans, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://smartbalkansproject.org/about-smart-balkans/>>

119 European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2023, EBRD supports youth entrepreneurship in the Western Balkans, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.ebrd.com/news/2022/ebrd-supports-youth-entrepreneurship-in-the-western-balkans.html>>



lending is supported with technical assistance to help banks better respond to the needs of their younger market segment by providing them with loans to start their businesses.

Facilitating other opportunities for youth, including mentoring, networking and access to educational resources, aims to build leadership capacity. The Youth in Business Programme is currently active in Egypt, Morocco and the Western Balkans. The Programme is supported by the European Union, Luxembourg, Sweden and Italy through the Central European Initiative.<sup>120</sup>

## **RYCO**

As an independently functioning institutional mechanism aiming to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through youth exchange programmes, RYCO plays a special role in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As much as there is a need to implement regional youth exchange programmes, the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina proves that such exchange programmes also need to be implemented at the economy level. A specific peculiarity in the case of RYCO in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the circumstances under which a youth representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina is being elected as a member of the Governing Board of RYCO. Namely, the youth representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina represents the voice of the youth population in RYCO's Board, and therefore is regarded as a representative of the youth sector from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The youth representative actively participates in regional initiatives, meetings and activities with other Board members coming from both the youth and governmental sector of the Western Balkans region.

For the past two election cycles, the Board member was elected in a process jointly organised by the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Youth Council of Republika Srpska, and Youth Council of Brčko District. After the election process was closed and the best candidate announced, the process of confirming the youth representative was delayed and blocked due to political disputes in both cases. The election processes were criticised for both the lack of transparency and the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina was often the only economy not having its youth representative in the Board of RYCO despite the election procedure being concluded. Recently, Zorana Tovilović Glavaš was elected as the youth representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the RYCO Governing Board.<sup>121</sup> However, by mid-November, her election has still not been approved by the relevant authorities. Despite the political blockades, RYCO has been supporting youth projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2018, and since then, it has remained one of the most relevant youth institutions in this economy.<sup>122</sup>

*RYCO Superschools: Western Balkans School Exchange Scheme* Superschools Initiative is RYCO's flagship project co-financed by the European Union and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The project is implemented across the Western Balkans by RYCO and GIZ.<sup>123</sup> Superschools scheme aims at providing the ground for creating strong and sustainable bonds

120 European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2023, The EBRD's Youth in Business programme, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.ebrd.com/sites/Satellite?c=Content&cid=1395312384687&pagename=EBRD%2FContent%2FContentLayout>>

121 RYCO, 2023, Government Representatives and Youth Representative, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.rycowb.org/team-widget-2/>>

122 RYCO, 2018, RYCO Supports First Projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://www.rycowb.org/ryco-supports-first-projects-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>>

123 RYCO Superschools, 2023, Make your school a Superschool, accessed 17 October 2023, <<https://superschools.net/>>



between secondary schools within the region and building long-term partnerships. The regional budget of the project amounts to EUR 5.4 million.

So far, two calls for proposals have been launched and two cycles of school exchanges have been implemented, with secondary schools from Bosnia and Herzegovina participating in projects with a total value of almost EUR 500,000. The first Superschools call was opened in 2021 with the first cycle of exchanges being implemented starting from January 2022. In the first call, Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in 14 exchange projects worth EUR 210,000. The second call for Superschools exchanges was published in December 2022 with exchanges taking place throughout 2023. In this call, Bosnia and Herzegovina is participating in 19 exchange projects valued at EUR 285,000.

By participating in this initiative, secondary schools from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region have an opportunity to implement school-to-school exchanges, as well as to participate in the programme's activities dedicated to their capacity building, networking and cooperation. Schools that are awarded the project participate in the exchange with a total of 10 students and two teachers. In the first two cycles, a total of 330 secondary school students from Bosnia and Herzegovina took part in the exchange programmes together with a total of 66 secondary school teachers accompanying the students. The third call for Superschools exchange is expected to be published in April 2024.

### ***RYCO Open Call***

It is important to note that besides the Superschools scheme, RYCO awards grants to CSOs within its Open Calls for project proposals for CSOs from the Western Balkans. The latest, fifth Open Call, titled RYCOConnecting You(th) was concluded in August 2023 with the overall financial envelope of EUR 300,000.<sup>124</sup> The size of grants awarded through Open Calls is between a minimum of EUR 15,000 and a maximum of EUR 30,000. To this moment, no data on the number of awarded grants of the fifth Open Call has been published.

The Fourth Open Call was carried out in 2020 under an identical financial framework. A total of 129 project applications were submitted. Out of the total number of projects submitted under the fourth Open Call, 18% were submitted by CSOs from Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>125</sup> The next Open Call is expected to be opened in 2024.

### ***KULT - Learn, Think and Act (UMiD)***

Learn, Think and Act (Uči, misli i djeluj – UMiD) is a programme dedicated to young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, implemented by the Institute for Youth Development KULT. Throughout the years, UMiD has been financed by different local and international donors. The project has been ongoing implementation since 2005, when it was introduced as a programme for educating youth leaders and building the capacities of youth sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the past 18 years, the project has been advocating for the recognition of Learn, Think and Act – UMiD as a form of non-formal education that provides youth with an opportunity to acquire different competencies which would increase their labour market value.

124 RYCO, 2023, RYCOConnecting You(th), accessed 7 7 November 2023, <<https://www.rycowb.org/6477-2-2/>>

125 RYCO, 2023, Fourth RYCO Open Call, accessed 17 November 2023, <<https://www.rycowb.org/services-2-2/>>



UMiD training, which adapts its curriculum to the needs of young people, typically lasts one year, during which youth leaders participate in implementing civic initiatives in their local communities. The initiatives are usually organised with the support of other young people, youth organisations, local administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as UMiD alumni. So far, over 400 young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina have benefited from this project, which recently prompted KULT to establish an UMiD Alumni Club.

Based on the UMiD framework for young people that has been in existence for almost two decades, KULT developed UMiD programme for secondary school teachers and school staff from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most recent UMiD call focusing on teachers and staff was published in 2023, and it will bring together 25 education professionals working in secondary schools across Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>126</sup> Parallel to this programme, a similar programme tailored to young politicians has been also designed by KULT. There are currently 14 elected officials serving in different levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina who have already benefited from this programme equipping young political leaders with necessary skills relevant for political engagement.

### ***Humanity in Action Bosnia and Herzegovina***

Humanity in Action is a transatlantic non-profit organisation that supports democracy, pluralism and human rights through unique educational programmes for university students, recent graduates and emerging leaders.<sup>127</sup> Humanity in Action's educational, networking and leadership programmes have for over 20 years now focused on human rights violations, social tensions and how to sustainably address and prevent them. This international non-governmental organisation implements its fellowship programmes and projects in the United States, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Denmark, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 1997, Humanity in Action has engaged more than 2,850 alumni, many of them from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who have participated in one of its flagship fellowship programmes in Europe and the United States.<sup>128</sup>

Humanity in Action Bosnia and Herzegovina is part of the international educational organisation, founded as the most recent partner organisation within the international Humanity in Action network in 2011. Since 2005, Humanity in Action has welcomed more than 140 students from the universities of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Humanity in Action Fellowship programmes in Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States. For the past three years, Humanity in Action Bosnia and Herzegovina has implemented its projects in Sarajevo and other cities financed through the support by NED, UNFPA, Visegrad Fund, Anna Lindh Foundation, British Council, and Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

In 2023, Humanity in Action Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted the seventh Fellowship in Sarajevo and implemented the tenth cycle of the programme Encouraging Democratic Values and Active Citizenship among Youth (EDVACAY) for first and second year university students. Until 2023, more than 200 young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina took part in the EDVACAY programme. Upon completion of their fellowship programmes, young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina implement

126 KULT, 2023, Javni poziv za učešće: Uči, Misli i Djeluj! obuka za nastavno i stručno osoblje srednjih škola, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://mladi.org/javni-poziv-za-ucesce-uci-misli-i-djeluj-obuka-za-nastavno-i-strucno-osoblje-srednjih-skola/>>

127 Humanity in Action, 2023, EDVACAY Fellowship 2023/24, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://humanityinaction.org/country/bosnia-herzegovina/>>

128 Humanity in Action, 2023, Senior Fellow Community, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://humanityinaction.org/fellowship/senior-fellow-community/>>



action projects and civic campaigns in their local communities with funding from Humanity in Action. By completing this part of their fellowship programmes, the fellows enter the Humanity in Action Senior Fellow network that connects them with an international pool of senior fellows, offering them opportunities for professional development on a global scale.

## 5.2 Donor coordination

In December 2005, 17 leading donor organisations and international financial institutions established the Donor Coordination Forum (DCF) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since its establishment until the end of 2008, UNDP and the Office of UN Resident Coordinator in Bosnia and Herzegovina served as the DCF Secretariat. The Donor Coordination Forum initiated the Donor Mapping Exercise in Bosnia and Herzegovina (DME) in 2006 as a tool to improve the management of aid information and to synchronise and enhance cooperation of the donor community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. DME has two components: the online database that details project activities funded in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the analytical report which offers an overview of donor activities contributing to sectoral reforms.<sup>129</sup>

In order to have a better insight into donor activities, as well as strengthen the leading role of Bosnia and Herzegovina governments in defining the economy's development, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Finance and Treasury undertook the role of DCF Secretariat in January 2009. The Ministry has taken over the management of DCF online database that also provides information for the Donor Mapping Exercise / Donor Mapping Report. This was a significant move towards establishing partnerships among Bosnia and Herzegovina governments and the donor community, as well as towards government leadership in defining the economy's development priorities and orienting international financial assistance to achieve stable and equally distributed economic development.

DCF meetings are complemented by expert presentations coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina governments and international organisations. Currently, the forum has 20 members. It meets on a quarterly basis with a chair rotating among its members. All donor agencies work in line with the commitments deriving from the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The last meeting took place in June 2023.<sup>130</sup> During the meeting, the Overview of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) was presented. This document defines the partnership between Bosnia and Herzegovina and UN as well as the strategic priorities and results. In the period 2021–2025, UNSDCF activities are taking place within 4 priorities: sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth; quality, accessible and inclusive education, health, social protection; people-centred governance; and the rule of law and social cohesion.<sup>131</sup>

129 Donor Coordination Forum, 2023, Welcome to DCF, accessed 17 October 2023, <<http://www.donormapping.ba/home>>

130 Donor Coordination Forum, 2023, DCF meeting 12/06/2023, accessed 17 October 2023, <<http://www.donormapping.ba/Publication/Read/dcf-meeting-12062023?pageld=97>>

131 Ibid.



## 5.3 Priority areas for the future in the field of youth

Youth sector development cannot be achieved without comprehensive reforms in education, employment, and social policies relating directly to youth. Considering also the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth, further efforts are needed in the following areas:

1. Adopt the Youth Strategy of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina together with the corresponding action plan;
2. Adopt the youth strategies and action plans in remaining cantons of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
3. Economy institutions to involve young people and youth organisations when developing legislation dealing with youth issues;
4. Institutions to work hand-in-hand with donors in coordinating future financial programmes based on the real needs of young people and youth CSOs;
5. Carry out a thorough reform of educational institutions that would allow young people to attend classes with more resilience in the event of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic;
6. While drafting the legislation dealing with young people, special attention to be paid to vulnerable and disadvantaged categories of youth, including disabled young people, Roma youth, rural youth, young women and girls, as well as unemployed young people;
7. Promote programmes that support business start-ups and stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit among young people with the aim of increasing employment opportunities for youth;
8. Besides international and regional youth exchange programmes, foster peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes that allow young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet one another within the economy;
9. Tackle brain drain by developing employment opportunities for young people and offering them competitive salaries while at the same time working to curb endemic corruption and nepotism in the institutions;
10. Develop talent schemes that would attract foreign-educated young professionals to return to Bosnia and Herzegovina and boost brain circulation that would benefit not only the youth sector but Bosnia and Herzegovina society as a whole.

In addition, there are areas which are scarcely, if at all, covered by donor interventions in the youth sector. Hence, the following areas for support could be investigated further:

1. While supporting the work of youth organisations, donors must advocate for local ownership that is responsive to the needs of local community;



2. Use sub-grating as a development tool in smaller local communities only when strategic planning is part of the process, so both the larger and smaller local CSOs would keep operating as intended;
3. When developing their support mechanisms, donors to prioritise programmatic part of the support rather than project segment that often consumes a lot of time and prevents the COS staff from working in the local community;
4. Finance projects and activities dealing with youth issues that are not present in the media, such as those related to Roma youth, young people with disabilities, and rural youth;
5. In order to secure a long-term and impactful relationship with grantees that stretches beyond the project duration, donors must work on building trust between their institutions and youth CSOs.

## 5.4 Critical assessment

Most donations from international organisations and foreign embassies seem to be oriented towards educational opportunities (often with a particular emphasis on underprivileged and marginalised youth) as well as reconciliation projects, as a way of tackling potential conflict among post-war generations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The educational opportunities include vocational training, academic exchange programmes, and provide funds for more inclusive and accessible schooling for all.

As for the reconciliation projects, local partners often gather high school and university students to work together on various projects, which frequently include learning about the history of the conflict between different ethnic groups living in the economy and promoting future cooperation. Ranging from one-day conferences to summer schools and even long-term projects lasting several years, the idea of reconciliation has marked a profound importance in youth-oriented projects. That is not to say that these are the only priority areas of the donors. Still, they tend to be the most transparent in terms of accessibility of project information for the wider public.

Other than that, as youth unemployment became a mainstream challenge for Bosnia and Herzegovina, an increasing number of donors began to orient funds towards equipping young men and women with the necessary skills to enter the labour market more efficiently, as well as providing a chance to develop their ideas and start their small businesses. Funds are increasingly being supplied to start-up companies to reach a certain standard of technological advancement.

A significant number of funds were also oriented towards improving the conditions of disadvantaged groups. A good example is the Roma Education Fund, albeit often being conducted on a much smaller scale. Not as many cases were noticed of multicultural exchanges between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the rest of Europe, let alone the rest of the world. Most projects tend to stay at the regional level. However, there are good examples such as Reboot Europe project which stands as an excellent case to introduce German and French youth to young people of the Western Balkans and vice versa. When it comes to donor community, by far the biggest donor is EU, followed by the individual EU members such as Germany, Austria, and France. A considerable place in the field have the United



States through its youth-funded programmes that have been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the end of the war.

Another challenge stands for the field that projects cover. This means that funds are often oriented towards projects supporting youth studying law, humanities, and social sciences. Participating in non-academic activities has a range of benefits for students. Not only does it often drive greater political participation and democratisation among them, but it also has a great potential to inspire more innovative and efficient approaches in their respective fields. Therefore, it might be useful to support more actions aimed at greater inclusivity and participation (regardless of major) and those offering additional knowledge and skills in their fields.

It is important to stress that many initiatives have been financially supported by several foreign embassies and international organisations simultaneously. This happens for both small and large-scale projects, which require various sources of support with the aim of a more significant impact. An excellent example is the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, which highlights the importance but also showcases the potential success of top-down initiatives.

When it comes to the youth sector, foreign donors' main problem is the lack of donor coordination and sectoral approach. Lack of donor coordination is noticed as the youth policy sector falls within the Sector on Education, Employment and Social Policy, a broader field of donor support in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Considering this comprehensive approach, which also impacts the youth sector, most activities are coordinated on an ad-hoc and bilateral basis. This also directly affects financial planning, resulting in frequent financial overlapping.

Lack of sectoral approach strategy – the donor community often duplicates programme and project schemes and disperses them across the economy. This is because there is no broad consensus between different levels of governance across Bosnia and Herzegovina and aid partners on key sector policies. There are several lead aid partners that support governments in managing donor coordination. Still, most of the incentives are broadly defined (e.g. education, employment, social policy), and there is no sectoral approach to youth policies at any level.

Thus, financial overlapping is frequent. A direct impact of weaker donor coordination is that donors usually communicate on ad-hoc and bilateral/multilateral basis. Due to the lack of coordination, project topics remain repetitive and mostly within the reconciliation and inter-ethnic cooperation fields, thus calling for similar organisations in the calls.

Grants allocated to youth organisations are not based on need analyses, thus influencing the sustainability of the projects. International donor funds partly contribute to local youth policies, and there is little synergy with the local interventions. These programmes make little reference to the existing youth legal framework. Little attempt has been made on behalf of the donor community to revive the work of the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is the only central-level body responsible for youth issues. Hence, more interventions within Bosnia and Herzegovina's public administration is needed.



*Key developments:*

	<b>By 2020</b>	<b>2021-2023</b>	<b>Critical Assessment</b>
<b>Large-Scale Youth-Focused Projects</b>	<p>For two decades now, European Union has been supporting young people institutionally, programmatically, but also individually through its education and youth programmes. Together with the U.S., German, and French embassies, which have invested considerable funds in supporting peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the Western Balkans region, European Union has been funding local youth organisations and bringing young people together with the aim of building trust, bridging ethnic and religious differences, and fighting ethnic segregation in education. Numerous other institutions, such as UN agencies, have followed and built up on what donors such as foreign embassies have done at the local level.</p>	<p>This period marks the implementation of new projects funded through several influential donors, including the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Austrian Development Agency, and UN agencies. Some of the new projects and programmes implemented through the financial assistance of those donors include SMART Balkans, BHRI initiative, and UN's Peacebuilding Fund. Many other major donors, such as the U.S. Embassy with several of its youth-oriented programmes, and RYCO continue to operate under their well-known or updated grant schemes that have already brought together thousands of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina and funded hundreds of youth projects.</p>	<p>Numerous international donors, including some of the major development agencies, have been implementing large-scale projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the end of the war. Unlike in the late 1990, when the funds were aimed at rebuilding infrastructure, by 2020, the donors have shifted towards funding the work of youth organisations, financing the implementation of programmes and projects, and strengthening institutional capacity of youth-led NGOs. What needs to be improved is the focus of the financing schemes, which should consider more young people from rural areas, young women and girls, as well as disadvantaged youth. Parallel to that, donors often fail to properly analyse the real needs of young people, which results in offering support in areas that are not regarded as a priority by young people and youth CSOs. An additional obstacle hindering youth CSOs to devote more of their time working on the ground is related to large bureaucracy while applying to public calls, implementing projects, and reporting to donors. Simplifying the bureaucratic segments would also enable the staff of youth CSOs to deliver more work on the ground.</p>
<b>Youth-Focused Donor Support</b>	<p>With its BHRI initiative, IOM has been financing local youth projects since 2019 by going to local communities and supporting those youth organisations that often had no capacity or know-how to apply for their own projects and implement them. Often so, such organisations are located in the rural communities, which have been largely neglected both by foreign donors and Bosnia and Herzegovina's governmental institutions. At the same time, organisations such as Humanity in Action Bosnia and Herzegovina have put their focus on building the capacities of young people through educational opportunities at a global level. At the same time, Humanity in Action is financially supporting young people's projects implemented in local communities.</p>	<p>Numerous organisations, including UNFPA, WFD, and OSCE have financed or directly conducted research on youth, providing much-needed insights into youth population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, other international institutions have been supporting development of relevant youth laws and youth strategies. Furthermore, in the recent years, we have seen international donors such as EBRD financing programmes aimed at entrepreneurship and eradicating youth unemployment.</p>	



# CHAPTER 6: GOOD PRACTICES AND GAP ANALYSIS

Following the same structure as the rest of the study, the final chapter discusses good practices and successful approaches to youth-oriented policies and initiatives, in addition to highlighting areas for improvement in terms of available funding. The chapter also presents some major recommendations tailored specifically for relevant stakeholders in the field of youth.

## 6.1 Good practices

The fragmentation of youth laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina is responsible for the lack of development and implementation of youth policy in the economy. If this process was less fragmented and laws implemented properly, there is a good possibility that youth policies would address the actual needs of young people in the field. With youth policy documents and their implementation set in place, more youth issues could be resolved, especially with administrative units adhering to the relevant youth laws.

Even though the constitutional fragmentation has been inhibiting the development of youth sector across Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to note that the youth organisations have been managing to implement projects, cooperate within the economy and the region, and engage in youth advocacy aimed at decision-makers adopting some of the strategic youth-related legislations. Despite the slow implementation of youth laws in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, many of the necessary system mechanisms for youth policy developments have been put in place. In Republika Srpska, the Youth Council has its members in all intergovernmental bodies. Youth organisations across Republika Srpska are using available funds from the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republika Srpska as well as other funds in order to support youth policy implementation. At the same time, in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, only some of the local communities are fully implementing the Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with only four out of ten cantons following their example by adopting the Strategy on Youth.

Young people have access to the development and implementation of youth policy documents in local communities and municipalities. Together with the municipal youth officer, the youth councils in several municipalities throughout the economy often conduct research and analysis on youth issues and coordinate the working group that will deliver a draft of the municipal youth policy document.

The Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina follows a pyramidal structure. Although its work can be challenging in some areas, it remains a highly inclusive and participatory youth organisation that represents the voices of young people when it comes to developing youth policies in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



At the same time, it is important to note that the existing youth laws, even those that need further revision and expansion, stand as legal tools to establish youth representation bodies at all levels of governance. If well implemented, they provide good legal support to youth from the municipal to entity level. These laws also provide a basis for youth in the policy framework and in budgeting youth issues. However, not every level of governance is taking the law implementation seriously.

Youth councils at all three levels continue to work together and are well supported by the local and entity governments. Brčko District is usually considered a role model for the rest of the economy when it comes to financial support, but also for all other activities, as the government has proven ready and capable in dealing with youth issues. This example could serve as a model for development of a nationwide functioning youth policy framework, which would be structured on the blueprints of what exists today in Brčko District.

Another good example is the Municipality of Jablanica, located in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has in place all mechanisms described by the Youth Law of this entity and has the oldest local youth council in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This youth council was established before the adoption of Youth Law in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, an intersectoral approach is taken in every step of the development and implementation of youth strategy. Most of the processes are led by young people and their representatives with the full support of decision-makers. During the previous years, the Youth Council in Jablanica has been working in the local community with an aim to bridge the communication gap between young people and stakeholders in this municipality. In 2021, in cooperation with the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Youth Council of Republika Srpska, and Youth Council of Brčko District, the Youth Council in Jablanica organised events in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton that brought together young people from this canton with the aim of raising awareness among this population about their legal rights and opportunities to influence the decision-making processes. Furthermore, the Youth Council in Jablanica has recognised university students as the potent force that carries the potential to influence youth policies in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. In February 2023, the Youth Council in Jablanica signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Student Union of Džemal Bijedić University in Mostar<sup>132</sup> The Memorandum defines that these two organisations will work together to strengthen the cooperation between university students and young people, improve the status of youth in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, and contribute to the establishment of Youth Strategy of this canton.

For the past two decades, since the inception of first initiatives to structure youth policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, numerous activities have been undertaken by different stakeholders to facilitate, empower, and support the process of development of youth policies, establishment of youth laws, and its implementation. Some of the following activities serve as an illustration of successful examples of institutionalisation of youth work, such as:

- a. The dialogue on youth policies has been a broad consultative process that included decision-makers from various levels of governance engaging in meaningful dialogue with young people within frameworks initially developed by the Institute for Youth Development KULT.

132 Student Union of Džemal Bijedić University in Mostar, 2023, Potpisan sporazum o saradnji sa Vijećem mladih Općine Jablanica, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://unijastudenata.ba/2023/03/01/potpisan-sporazum-o-saradnji-sa-vijecem-mladih-opcine-jablanica/>>



Such processes resulted with the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina drafting the first Youth Strategy in 2016. Since then, development of Youth Strategy in this entity has been put on hold. However, in October 2023, the Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated the political process aimed at developing the Youth Strategy for the period until 2027.<sup>133</sup> In November 2023, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina announced it would consult the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Institute for Youth Development Kult in order to timely determine all the necessary activities that are legally prescribed in the process of developing the Youth Strategy.<sup>134</sup>

- b. In partnership with the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republika Srpska, the Youth Communication Centre in Banja Luka took over a very similar methodology in drafting the first Youth Policy of Republika Srpska, which was adopted in 2006. Since then, the Youth Policy of Republika Srpska has been developed continuously in the form of five-year strategic documents. So far, four strategies have been adopted with the 2023-2027 Strategy passed in January 2023.<sup>135</sup>
- c. Youth Club Network activities, developed by PRONI Centre for youth development, could be used as an example of youth space and support mechanisms in the youth law implementation. PRONI is the founder of the largest network of youth clubs in Bosnia and Herzegovina – with 42 youth clubs, and the co-founder and initiator of the renovation of one of the largest youth centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Youth Centre of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Youth clubs are organised as places where young people can meet and participate in various activities. Such facilities are very suitable not only to provide youth consultation process for municipalities but also for a higher governance level. Local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have accepted the PRONI youth work methodology as well as the PRONI policies when working with young people. Over 30,000 young people have passed through youth clubs to integrate various workshops of common interest and cooperation activities.<sup>136</sup>
- d. Active Still Today is an initiative launched by the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the intention to showcase the engagement of youth-led NGOs on the ground and raise awareness of the importance of activities such organisations carry out in their local communities. The initiative arose from the daily encounters with young people and youth organisations that are increasingly facing problems such as the lack of activists and volunteers in organisations, lack of activity, neglect by local authorities, youth emigration, and the need to adapt the legislation to the youth population.<sup>137</sup>
- e. The Youth Accelerator initiative launched by the Institute for Youth Development KULT is an example of a dialogue for a better position of young people at a local level, in this case in the municipalities of Banovići, Novo Sarajevo, and Travnik. The purpose of the initiative

133 Government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Pokrenuta izrada Strategije za mlade Federacije BiH, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/pokrenuta-izrada-strategije-za-mlade-federacije-bih/>>

134 Federal Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2023, Youth Strategy of the Federation of BiH: Coordination of activities of the Ministry and the Federal Institute for Development Programming, accessed 7 November 2023, <<https://www.fmks.gov.ba/en/youth-strategy-of-the-federation-of-bih-coordination-of-activities-of-the-ministry-and-the-federal-institute-for-development-programming/>>

135 Government of Republika Srpska, 2023, Omladinska politika Republike Srpske od 2023. do 2027. godine, accessed 1 October 2023, <<https://shorturl.at/nprz5>>

136 Proni, 2023, Omladinski klubovi, accessed 19 October 2023, <<https://www.proni.ba/pok/>>

137 Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023, Aktivni i danas, Accessed 19 October 2023, <<https://www.vijecemladih.ba/aktivni-i-danas/>>



is to educate, engage, and encourage young people to actively participate in legislative processes that directly affect them, primarily in the three municipalities where it is being implemented. Given its advocacy character, this initiative aims to familiarise young people with the Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the rights they have as young people.<sup>138</sup> Since this is still an ongoing initiative, numerous activities are being undertaken as part of it. These include direct exchanges between young people and public servants responsible for youth sector in their municipality. Additionally, young people involved in the initiative had a chance to learn how to write a successful project proposal by participating in workshops titled From Problem to Solution: Write Your First Project Proposal!<sup>139</sup> In February 2023, as part of the Youth Accelerator initiative, the representatives of the Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Youth Council of Municipality Novo Sarajevo, and Youth Association BaUM from Banovići signed a Memorandum of Understanding regulating the terms under which these three organisations will be collaborating with an aim to advance the position of young people in Banovići, Novo Sarajevo, and Travnik.<sup>140</sup>

## 6.2 Gaps

When it comes to youth policies at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the major gaps are the lack of economy-wide youth policy framework and financial support for young people. An example of yet another lack of relevant and efficient policy implementation were the mechanisms that were expected to be used by the government to address the impact of COVID-19 on young people, pupils, students, and youth participation in general during the pandemic. The gaps and risks that threaten the youth policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina are elaborated below.

### *Economy-wide youth policy framework*

The lack of a youth policy framework jeopardizes the execution and respect of youth rights across Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the economy-level institution dedicated solely to youth issues, has not been operating for several years now due to political disputes between the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. This led to the exclusion of young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina from different youth-related international frameworks.

Each level of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina defines and organises its youth policy and sector individually, resulting in a highly fragmented and inefficient youth policy system in the economy. As a result, some strategies for youth are not developed or adopted yet. There is a lack of coordination and coherence, a lack of participatory approach between entities, and different governance levels that deal with youth issues and with the development of youth-related policies.

138 Institute for Youth Development, KULT 2023, Inicijativom "Omladinski akcelerator" do dijaloga za bolji položaj mladih u općini Novo Sarajevo, accessed 19 October 2023,

<https://mladi.org/inicijativom-omladinski-akcelerator-do-dijaloga-za-bolji-polozaj-mladih-u-opcini-novo-sarajevo/>

139 Lonac, 2023, Od problema do rješenja: Napiši svoj prvi projektni prijedlog!, accessed 7 November 2023,

<https://lonac.pro/bs/od-problema-do-rjesenja-napisi-svoj-prvi-projektni-prijedlog/>

140 InfoBaUM, 2023, U Banovićima starta Omladinski akcelerator, accessed 7 November 2023,

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### ***Funding framework***

When it comes to the financial support of youth sector, it is evident that financial aid is fragmented and very hard to analyse. This is mainly caused by the lack of a single public budget line entirely devoted to the youth sector. The lack of coordination between different governance levels results in financial overlapping, supporting the same youth-related issues, programmes, and projects from the municipality, cantonal, and entity resources. This overlapping seriously decreases the efficiency of youth sector development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, there is a serious problem with the unequal distribution of funds, especially when it comes to grants provided to NGOs.

Therefore, more transparency is needed in presenting financial contributions, as well as beneficiaries to have a complete overview of available funds that seem like an established and well-functional area of investment at this point. A special issue in this regard is the neglect of smaller local communities and rural areas in which youth workers and youth representatives have less experience when it comes to applying for funding, which severely impacts their ability to secure funding and implement impactful initiatives on the ground.

### ***Youth participation***

Young people and youth councils are often not perceived as serious interlocutors or as partners at all levels of governance, even when it comes to the development and implementation of youth policies. Sometimes, they are totally excluded from the consultation processes. While there is a set of highly valuable policies at lower levels of governance that provide an excellent pathway for youth participation, their implementation in practice is not effective. This mainly refers to youth laws at all three levels of governance, as they define different mechanisms for youth participation.

There is also a lack of unified opinion from all three youth councils on the improvement of current youth structures as well as the long-lasting support to develop youth policies in the economy. The fact that the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a functional body mainly due to political reasons harms young people's interest in the first place. Therefore, young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina do not speak with one voice at events taking place in the international youth arena.

## **6.3 Recommendations**

This section is dedicated to final recommendations and conclusions. Based on the data gathered from interviews with stakeholders, as well as the desk research, this report summarises the recommendations into the following subgroups:

### ***Recommendations for policymakers at all levels***

- To involve young people in the decision-making processes while discussing youth-relevant legislation and initiatives through adopting methodology similar to the one used by the Western Balkans Youth Policy Lab Project;



- To improve the coordination and cooperation of institutions dealing with young people at all levels;
- To initiate the cross-entity engagement of relevant authorities in order to re-launch the work of the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina and reintroduce its functionality;
- To establish the Advisory Council for Youth in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Ministries from Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and those from Republika Srpska should engage in mutual cooperation for the benefit of creating more opportunities for young people from the two entities;
- Ministries from the two entities should work together with the relevant authorities from Brčko District in order to utilise relevant legal measures and initiatives pertaining to young people;
- The remaining six cantons in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina should introduce the youth strategy with the aim to fully implement the Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- To create room and mechanisms which involve partners in the decision-making process institutional framework, along with young people;
- To join forces with the academic community and leading civil society organisations in the endeavour to strengthen research and get relevant data, which makes it possible to create evidence-based and long-term policies oriented towards young people;
- To form a statistical data set from the available information on young people harboured by the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and use the data to strengthen the research and evidence driven legislation;
- To create a database of students from Bosnia and Herzegovina studying abroad and establish a fund that would cover some of the ad-hoc emergency situations they might face during their studies;
- To create talent schemes that would turn brain drain into brain gain and motivate not only highly educated young people from abroad to return to the economy, but also attract expatriates to move to Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- To use its position within the relevant ministries in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to tackle segregation in education by advocating against the 'two schools under one roof' and in favour of an integrated school system;
- Authorities should get more engaged with relevant ministries, especially those in Republika Srpska, and work with them to ease the process for high school teachers and students attending youth events;
- Introduce budgeting schemes that are based on the needs of youth sector and designed in close coordination with youth stakeholders, civil sector and international donors to avoid potential overlap and cover as much topics as possible.



### *Recommendations for youth organisations and other relevant civil society stakeholders*

- To support project activities that include travel (especially to other Western Balkan economies) as a tool to bring young people from the region together and expand their views about youth policies outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- To work with high schools in establishing a mandatory curriculum on youth policies and processes;
- To work more intensively with high school pupils, focusing on informing them of possibilities to engage in meaningful projects within the youth sector;
- To expose young people to new environment by engaging them in inter-ethnic activities, encourage critical thinking and offer the chance to meet with peers from different ethnic groups and other Western Balkan economies;
- To develop a partner relationship with local organisations outside urban areas in order to create a direct channel of communication with young people from local communities who might have different needs and viewpoints;
- To focus on qualitative and meaningful exchange programmes such as the Superschools project implemented by RYCO;
- To refrain from using phrases that might deter potential applicant from application to youth events, instead use encompassing tools and methods to encourage young people to attend such events;
- To involve students from vocational high school in youth activities organised at regional and international level;
- To promote youth NGO activities in high schools classes, where practitioners in the field of youth would use non-formal education methodology in teaching and training;
- To enhance the youth councils PR in order for them to exert media influence on decision-makers and cater the social media content to the needs of younger generations;
- Strengthen media relations with conventional media, and work more closely with the local media outlets, which have the capacity to convey the message to young people living in small town and especially in rural areas;
- To incentivise youth organisations to connect local youth activists at the regional level, as these groups are often dealing with similar challenges.

### *Recommendations for donor community*

- To remove administrative obstacles related to project application criteria, which would allow and encourage as many as possible youth-led organisations to apply to the calls for projects;
- To create environment in which youth workers will be able to spend more time on implementation than on administrative procedures;



- To introduce a grant scheme aimed at financially supporting local grassroots youth activists, whenever there is a potential to bring together young people from different ethnic groups;
- To streamline financing and grant initiatives to avoid programme overlapping;
- To introduce small emergency grants that could be available much faster than the standard funds through the current scheme;
- To introduce a start-up grant scheme that would specifically fund those start-ups linking their work to peacebuilding and reconciliation;
- To financially support the collection, analysis and publication of statistical data on youth, which establishes the main pre-requisites for evidence-based policymaking in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- To contribute to capacity-building of small local NGOs which do not have the experience or skills in writing project proposals;
- To orient the funding to several priority areas and involve rural youth, young women, disadvantaged young people, and young people from ethnic/religious minorities to contribute to the debate whenever new youth legislation is discussed;
- To launch an educational programme involving war veterans recruited from a pool of well-trained war veterans who will work together with youth from Bosnia and Herzegovina on peacebuilding processes while at the same time aligning the youth policy programmes between the economy, entity, and local levels of governance.



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# ANNEXES

## Annex 1 - Overview of central and local level stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina

### CENTRAL LEVEL

#### Responsible authorities for overall implementation of NYS

- Ministry of Civil Affairs, Department of Youth in MCA
- Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as advisory body to MCA (currently not functional)

#### Responsible authorities at entity level – Republika Srpska

- Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republika Srpska - responsible for implementation of Law on youth organising, preparation, drafting and coordination of youth policy implementation
- Advisory Council for Youth of Republika Srpska is formed by the Government of Republika Srpska - monitoring youth policy and implementation of Law
- Committee on Children, Youth and Sports in the Assembly of Republika Srpska

#### Responsible authorities at entity level - Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Federal Ministry of Culture and Sports – responsible for implementation of Youth Law, preparation, drafting and coordination of youth policy implementation
- Commission for Youth Issues in the Parliament of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 10 cantonal ministries of education to implement Law on Youth at cantonal level

#### Non-governmental organisations operating at Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina level

- Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Cantonal Youth council (operating in 6/10 cantons)

#### Non-governmental organisations operating at Republika Srpska level

- Youth Council of Republika Srpska

#### Non-governmental organisations operating at all levels of Government

- Institute for Youth Development KULT - involved in youth policy development at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina; PRONI Centre for Youth Development - registered in Brčko District, but operating as youth work organisation across Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Youth Communicative Centre Banja Luka - operating in the field of volunteering and youth employment, based in Republika Srpska
- Social innovations incubator MUNJA works to improve the situation of young people, increase their active role in society and employability in the labour market.
- Perpetuum Mobile – Institute for Youth and Community Development working in policy development with young politicians



**International organisations and donors at economy level**

- RYCO - Regional Youth Cooperation Office
- UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA – implementing several different programmes targeting youth and topics of youth policy (e.g. UNFPA very supportive in health and education of youth)
- German Agency for International Cooperation – GIZ: one of the key interventions throughout history of youth policy development in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- US Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina - implementing several grant programmes targeting youth
- Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development – SDC
- Organisations for Security and Cooperation in Europe – OSCE, actively involved in the youth sector through YAG.

**LOCAL LEVEL****Local level authorities**

- Municipal Departments for civil services
- Municipal Youth Officer

**Non-governmental entities**

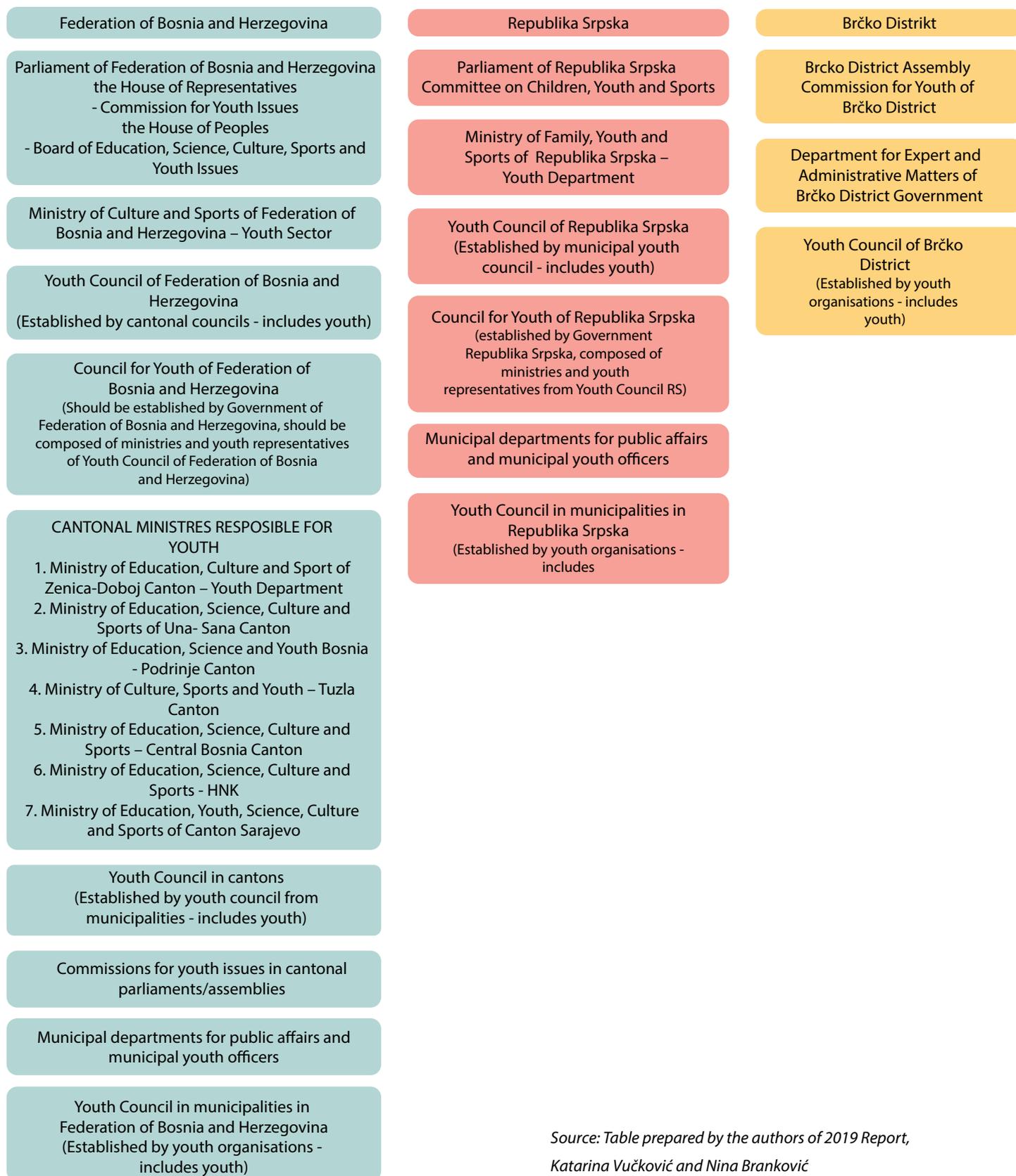
- Local Youth Councils
- Local NGOs



## Annex 2 - The institutional framework for youth issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina

### MINISTRY OF CIVIL AFFAIRS BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA Education Sector – Department for Youth and Mobility

Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues of Bosnia and Herzegovina (not functional in last two mandates)



Source: Table prepared by the authors of 2019 Report, Katarina Vučković and Nina Branković

## Annex 3 - Comparative review of youth laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Subject matter	Youth Law of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Youth Law of Republika Srpska	Youth Law of Brčko District
Competence for defining, adopting and implementing youth strategies	<p>Federal, cantonal and municipal bodies, with the support of NGO sector.</p> <p>The cantonal and municipal governments will designate an official for dealing with youth matters.</p> <p>All levels of Government must provide the minimum standards for the implementation of youth policies and include them in their budgets.</p>	<p>Republika Srpska Secretariat for Sports and Youth, competent ministries, local self-government and Committee for Youth Issues of the People's Assembly.</p>	<p>Government of Brčko District, Department for Expert and Administrative Matters, Youth Council.</p>
Youth programmes	<p>The cantons develop youth programmes within their jurisdiction which are implemented by the corresponding ministries through the action plans they develop.</p> <p>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina includes youth-related issues into all relevant strategies and programmes.</p>	<p>Youth programmes based on youth policy are adopted by the Government of Republika Srpska and the local self-government.</p> <p>Action plans for the implementation of policy is adopted for a period of one year. Special attention will be given to programmes dedicated to employment, professional development, sport, and social, healthcare and social security.</p>	<p>Youth programmes for the implementation of youth policy are adopted by the Government of Brčko District based on the proposal of the Department for Expert and Administrative Matters.</p>
Council for Youth (Vijeće za mlade Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, Savjet za mlade Republike Srpske)	<p>Working body formed by the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina government tasked with coordination and harmonisation of the Federal youth policy. 50% of the members are from youth assemblies.</p>	<p>Established by the Government of Republika Srpska based on the proposal of the Ministry. It serves as an advisory body for youth policies. Its membership consists of the ministers of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Health and Social Security, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Finances, a representative of the People's Assembly Working Group on Youth Issues and three members of the Youth Committee.</p>	<p>Permanent working group established by the Assembly of Brčko District, under the provisions of its rules.</p>



<p>Youth Commission of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Youth Committee of Republika Srpska (Komisija za mlade Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, Odbor za mlade Republike Srpske )</p>	<p>Established by the Federation and confirmed by both Houses of Parliament. At least one member is from the Youth Council.</p>	<p>Consists of representatives of youth organisations which are registered in accordance with the Law. It is tasked with the development and implementation of Youth Policy and protection of youth interests.</p>	<p>Consists of at least 50% of representatives of youth organisations which are registered in accordance with the Law. It is tasked with the development and implementation of Youth Policy and protection of youth interests.</p>
<p>Youth report</p>	<p>The Federal Government submits an annual report to the Parliament regarding the status of the youth issues and areas for improvement.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>
<p><b>Corresponding Ministry/ Institution for youth issues</b></p>	<p><b>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina will designate a ministry which will be in charge of coordination and implementation of youth policies. The Council for Youth will oversee the implementation of youth-related strategies.</b></p>	<p><b>Republika Srpska Secretariat for Sports and Youth, Managing Committee, competent ministries, competent authorities from the local self-government, Committee for Youth Issues of the People's Assembly of RS.</b></p>	<p><b>Government of Brčko District and the Department for Expert and Administrative Matters.</b></p>
<p><b>Grants and financial support for youth population.</b></p>	<p><b>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina will award grants to the youth based on merit or social need.</b></p>	<p><b>For activities of general interest of Republika Srpska related to youth, financial support is allocated from the budget of Republika Srpska and local self-government.</b></p>	<p><b>The Government of Brčko District is in charge of providing the finances for the development of youth policy and its implementation.</b></p>
<p><b>Youth Strategies</b></p>	<p><b>The youth strategy is adopted based on the needs assessment and it refers to the matters of the youth sector. The Strategy must contain a programme for the implementation of planned activities.</b></p>	<p><b>The youth policy is developed at the level of Republika Srpska and the local self-government. It is adopted by the People's Assembly for the period of 5 years.</b></p>	<p><b>The youth policy is developed and proposed by the Department for Expert and Administrative Matters and Youth Council, and upon approval from the Government of Brčko District, it is adopted by the Assembly of Brčko District.</b></p>



## Annex 4 – List of interviews

No.	Name and surname	Position	Organisation
1	Adnan Husić	Education Advisor	Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina
2	Katarina Vučković	Head of Youth Work Department	Institute for Youth Development KULT
3	Nikola Kandić	Local Programme Officer	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
4	Zarja Marković	Programme Director	Humanity in Action Bosnia and Herzegovina
5	Irma Rešidović	Project Coordinator	Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
6	Dajana Cvjetković	Programme Manager	Centar za promociju civilnog društva
7	Dženana Šabić	Project Officer	International Organisation for Migration



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Trg BiH 1/V, Sarajevo  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Fax: +387 33 561 701  
Phone +387 33 561 700

mail: [rcc@rcc.int](mailto:rcc@rcc.int)  
website: [www.rcc.int](http://www.rcc.int)



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