

# Enhancing youth participation in BiH



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

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

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

Since 2019, the inclusion of youth perspectives has been ensured through the formal integration of a youth portfolio into the Mission structures. The

Gender and Youth Unit, the network of youth focal points, and promotion of youth affairs on the Mission's SharePoint platform are there to make sure that youth mainstreaming is central to all aspects of the Mission work.

#### **Youth Advisory Group (YAG)**

In accordance with the OSCE's youth-related priorities that aim at strengthening the young men and women's voice in the organization, the Mission benefits from the input of a Youth Advisory Group (YAG). The YAG is composed of volunteers under the age of 30 from diverse ethnic, religious, academic, and socio-economic backgrounds, from both urban and rural communities. This mechanism allows the Mission to draw on insights from

young people regarding their concerns and priorities, and to benefit from their creativity and drive. This is particularly useful in endeavours to strengthen democratic governance and gender equality, as well as counter hate speech, bias-motivated incidents, gender-based violence, violent extremism, corruption, and segregation and discrimination in education.

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



## Youth-Related Legislation

Unfortunately, Bosnia and Herzegovina still lacks a framework law on youth. At the entity level, Republika Srpska (RS) adopted the Law on Organization of Youth, the Law on Students' Union, and the Law on Voluntarism. At the beginning of 2023, this entity adopted a new youth strategy. The authorities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) adopted the FBiH Law on Youth, but are still to adopt a youth strategy. Brčko District BiH (BD) adopted the BD Law on Youth and youth strategy. At the cantonal level, only Sarajevo and Tuzla Cantons have comprehensive youth strategies.

## Youth Councils – Youth NGOs

Consisting mostly of local non-governmental organization (NGO) members, youth councils are umbrella organizations at the municipal level which can operate as direct partners to local authorities. Youth councils and/or other youth NGOs are often involved in the development and implementation of local youth policies and generally represent the interests of young people. Although an important component of both entities' legal frameworks, youth councils do not exist or operate in all municipalities of BiH. Recognizing their potential, the Mission works to establish and empower youth councils across the country.

## Youth and Security

In recognition of the significance of young people as key partners in building community resilient to radicalization and in preventing violent extremism, the Mission involves young men and women in its CVE/VERLT efforts. With a view to increasing their meaningful involvement in agenda-setting and policy development related to security sector good governance and reform, including that of the BiH Security Policy, the Mission organizes Youth and Security Summer Schools each year. These serve to increase the awareness and knowledge of future experts in this crucial field. The summer schools also act to improve inter-entity co-operation and that between the future experts and traditional security sector actors. Furthermore, this work helps to promote the further development of democratic institutions in BiH.



For more information, scan the QR code.



### OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Fra Anđela Zvizdovića 1, UNITIC Tower A  
71000 Sarajevo  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tel: +387 33 952 100  
Fax: +387 33 442 479  
press.ba@osce.org  
www.osce.org/bih

Follow OSCE Mission to BiH

