Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo and **Saferworld**

Leaving the past behind

The perceptions of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina

March 2012

Leaving the past behind

The perceptions of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Acknowledgements

The People's Peacemaking Perspectives project

The People's Peacemaking Perspectives (PPP) project is a joint initiative implemented by Conciliation Resources and Saferworld and financed under the European Commission's Instrument for Stability. The project provides European Union institutions with analysis and recommendations based on the opinions and experiences of local people in a range of countries and regions affected by fragility and violent conflict.

Contents

Bosnia and Herzegovina administrative map

CROATIA

Banja Luka

Sanski Most

REPUBLIKA SRPSKA

Doboj

BRČKO

SERBIA

Drvar

Novi Travnik

Bratunac

Srebrenica

CROATIA

REPUBLIKA SRPSKA

Sarajevo

FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

ADRIATIC SEA

Mostar

MONTENEGRO

International boundary
Inter-entity boundary
Canton boundary

0 10 20 30 40 50 km
0   10   20   30   miles

Trebinje

ALBANIA

List of acronyms

BAM	Bosnian Convertible Marks
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CCYI	Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues (in BiH)
CFSP	Common Foreign Security Policy
COE	Council of Europe
CSDP	Common Security and Defense Policy
CSO	civil society organisation
DPA	Dayton Peace Agreement
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EU	European Union
EUFOR	European Union Military Force (Operation Althea)
EUPM	EU Police Mission
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FGD	focus group discussion
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HDZ	Youth of Croatian Democratic Union
IfS	Instrument for Stability
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IO	international organisation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
KII	key informant interview
MIPD	Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document
NDC	Nansen Dialogue Center
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PDP	Party of Democratic Progress
PPP	People's Peacemaking Perspectives
RS	Republika Srpska
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
SDP	Social Democratic Party of BiH
SNSD	The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Executive summary

YOUNG PEOPLE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BIH) grow up in a difficult environment: a society still deeply divided and struggling with the legacy of war; a political leadership that does not lead; an economy hit hard by the economic crisis and internal mismanagement; and an uncertain future inside or outside the European Union (EU).

How do young people cope with these challenges? Do they try to leave the past behind and bridge gaps between the different ethnic and religious groups in BiH? Or do they fall back on ethnic and nationalist sentiments in these challenging times? Do they take an active role in shaping their society, or are they waiting for someone to show them the way – and, if so, which way?

Little is known about the role young people in BiH play in relation to peace and conflict dynamics. Past research by Saferworld[1] indicated that young people tend to have a more negative view of the security situation and are more critical of security providers than older generations. Parents, teachers, local authorities and civil society representatives voiced concerns that young people who grew up after the war are more ethno-nationalist and prone to violence and conflict. This pointed to the need for further and more in-depth research on this issue.

In the framework of the People's Peacemaking Perspectives project, a joint initiative implemented by Conciliation Resources and Saferworld and financed under the European Commission's Instrument for Stability, Saferworld and Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC) Sarajevo, with support from young researchers in BiH, looked into the role young people in BiH play in relation to peace and conflict dynamics.

The report finds that young people in BiH grow up in a context that fosters ethno-nationalist sentiments and fears, discourages independent and critical thinking, and only half-heartedly addresses and responds to youth concerns and priorities. Young people have limited opportunities to voice their views and to be heard. They respond to this grim situation with a mixture of criticism, apathy and disinterest. They are fed up with being caught in the legacies of the war and want to escape ethnic, religious and geographic labels. They are interested in a life free from insecurity and economic constraints, where people are treated equally and can participate in decision-making. Political ideas and world views based on ethno-nationalism have no place in that vision.

Ethno-nationalist rhetoric and narratives have left their mark on youth, and while positive interaction (as opposed to mere co-existence) is still difficult, particularly in so-called 'divided cities', there is an interest to meet more frequently in a positive

1 *The missing peace. The need for a long term strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Saferworld (August 2010)

environment. Aggressive behaviour among young people is a growing concern, particularly when combined with the display or use of weapons, but it is rarely directed against others on the basis of ethnicity. Young people are frustrated by their parents' generation, particularly with the political elite who are met with a remarkable level of mistrust and disdain. This elite is blamed for being responsible for the war, for maintaining the ethnic divides, for upholding a system that is corrupt, and for failing to respect values, such as equality and participation, and therefore limiting young people's prospects. While previous research highlighted the older generation's concerns about youth attitudes, the young respondents in this report placed the blame on the older generation's role in cementing ethnic divides.

In response, young people resort to apathy: they feel that they need to wait for the influence of the older generation to wane before there can be significant change. This apathy is a significant constraint on youth voice and action and is expected to continue if not addressed. Another serious concern identified by the research is linked to the fact that an increasing sense of frustration among people (both young and old) could escalate at some point. While this might not be negative *per se*, there is a risk that while ethnicity and religion may not be causes of frustration – as people are equally disadvantaged regardless of their ethnic or religious background – this escalation might play out along familiar and visible ethnic lines, and resilience to ethnic violence might not be strong enough.

Efforts to engage youth more actively in civic life, bolster their resilience to violence and strengthen inter-ethnic interaction are limited, particularly on the part of BiH actors. While some relevant policies and laws related to youth have been put in place in recent years, such as the National Strategy against Juvenile Offending or the Juvenile Justice Law in Republika Srpska (RS), key policies such as a youth strategy for the Federation of BiH (FBiH) are yet to be developed. Also, implementation has been a major challenge in BiH. Many young people do not even attempt to make use of existing mechanisms because they believe that they will not be able to have any influence on decision-making, whether in youth organisations or political parties.

Only a handful of EU-supported programmes are aimed primarily at supporting youth to play a positive role in peace dynamics. However, looking across the different instruments, it is apparent that the EU is supporting a range of youth and non-youth projects and programmes that have the potential to address conflict-risk factors and support youth to play a part in peacebuilding, even if this is not the explicit programme objective. In addition, through its key policies and strategies, mechanisms for policy dialogue and monitoring relating to the EU enlargement process, the EU is setting criteria and pushing for progress in areas relevant to this research, for instance with regard to the divisive education system, high youth unemployment or widespread corruption. To take advantage of and further strengthen the potential that young people have to contribute to a positive and peaceful future, and to curb tendencies towards and build resilience to violence and instability based on ethnicity and religion, more targeted support from BiH and international actors will be necessary.

The report highlights the importance to understand young people as a relevant and constructive factor for the future of BiH. This means that the needs and concerns of young people need to be given greater priority in policy areas relevant for young people – from schooling and education to youth-specific opportunities for engagement at the municipal level, from the fight against corruption and nepotism to the reduction of ethno-nationalist rhetorics from parties and politicians. Youth should be seen as an asset rather than a burden, and they should be encouraged and given the space to play a constructive role in social and political life.

It also means that engagement with youth needs to be seen from a peacebuilding and conflict-prevention perspective. In order to become actors for peace, young people from different ethnic and religious groups or geographic locations need to be given the opportunity to meet and interact in a constructive way that encourages peaceful

and positive relationships. This includes the reduction of institutional barriers, such as divided schools, but also proactive efforts to bring young people together for experience sharing and joint activities.

Finally, whether peace and stability in BiH can be sustained and strengthened depends very whether and how the underlying causes for tensions are addressed. This includes the question of whether BiH will remain a state based on and structured around ethnicity; whether ethnic segregation will continue to shape everyday life; whether an open and constructive dialogue about what happened during the war will take place at the political and social level; and whether political leaders will continue to use politics mainly as an arena to increase their economic and political power and influence, rather than looking for solutions that will improve living conditions for all citizens of BiH.

1

Introduction

YOUNG PEOPLE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BiH) grow up in a difficult environment: a society still deeply divided and struggling with the legacy of war; a political leadership that does not lead; an economy hit hard by the economic crisis and internal mismanagement; and an uncertain future inside or outside the European Union (EU).

How do young people cope with these challenges? Do they try to leave the past behind and bridge gaps between the different ethnic and religious groups in BiH? Or do they fall back on ethnic and nationalist sentiments in challenging times? Do they take an active role in shaping their society, or are they waiting for someone to show them the way – and, if so, which way?

The international community and national and international experts are divided over the risk of BiH falling back into instability and potential violence, and what to do about it. Some, mainly those who think that the situation is precarious, advocate increased international engagement and stricter conditionality, which would include maintaining an international political, military and police presence in BiH. Others, including many EU Member States, put their hopes in BiH's integration into the EU and think that prospects to join the EU will be strong enough to maintain and strengthen stability and peace.

Little is known about the role young people in BiH play in relation to peace and conflict dynamics. Past research by Saferworld[2] indicated that young people tend to have a more negative view of the security situation and are more critical of security providers than older generations. Parents, teachers, local authorities and civil society representatives voiced concerns that young people who grew up after the war are more ethno-nationalist and prone to violence and conflict. The research pointed to the need for further and more in-depth research on this issue.

This study seeks to provide EU institutions, as well as government and civil society actors in BiH, with analysis and recommendations on the role of youth and how they affect peace dynamics in BiH, based to a large extent on the opinions and experiences of young people age 16-30 years living[3] in BiH. This age group either experienced the war as children, but were too young to actively participate in the fighting, or were born during or just after the war and have no memories of it. The report investigates the following questions:

- What are the factors that influence youth in BiH today, and are these influences positive or negative for future peace and stability?

2 *The missing peace. The need for a long term strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Saferworld (August 2010)
3 According to the FBiH legislation, youth comprises young people aged 15-30 years, while in RS it is 16-30 years.

- How does youth respond to the current environment, and is the post-war generation more likely to be peacebuilders or prone to ethno-nationalism and radicalisation?
- How can the EU and BiH policies and programmes ensure they build on the potential of youth to act as peacebuilders and reduce the risk of youth becoming radicalised?

The research was carried out in co-operation with Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC) Sarajevo between April and September 2011. It aimed to combine solid qualitative data collection and analysis with participatory approaches that would not only allow young people to voice their opinion, but also give them an active role in carrying out some parts of the research. This was expected to a) provide access to young respondents and specific information otherwise inaccessible to adult researchers; b) encourage young people to critically question their own attitudes and behaviour with regards to peace and conflict; c) demonstrate to young people that they can achieve a lot on their own. The participants selected the following topics to research for this report:

- Influence of politics on shaping young people's opinions (see box 1, page 23)
- Perceptions of young people on democracy and EU (see box 2, page 24 and box 3, page 26)
- Influence of media on shaping young people's opinions (see box 4, page 28)
- Young people and politics (see box 5, page 43)
- Manifestation of radicalisation and 'messages for peace' in music (see annex 2, page 67)

The assessment was done in five steps (see annex 1 for a description of the methodology):

- **Preparatory phase and desk research:** including research on EU policies and mechanisms

- **Research phase 1:** focus group discussions (FGDs) with young people (overall 217 participated) and key informant interviews (KIIs) in ten selected locations across BiH

- **Research phase 2:** participatory workshop with selected members of the FGDs to a) validate findings from Phase 1; b) get a better understanding of selected findings from Phase 1, and c) to develop simple methodologies with the participants so that they could conduct research themselves (for Phase 3)

- **Research phase 3:** small-scale research by young researchers, which overall involved 94 respondents

- **Validation:** workshop with selected young researchers and NGO representatives in Sarajevo to validate findings.

Beyond the pure research and validation focus, the June workshop had positive effects that had not been planned by the research team. During and after the workshop, participants stated that they had appreciated the opportunity to meet with young people from other locations within BiH, other entities, and other ethnic groups. Almost all of them mentioned that they had seen how important it was to listen to the opinions of others and to look at issues from different sides, and that they had valued the experience to work on specific questions jointly with peers from other ethnic groups or locations. They also understood that you can disagree on certain issues, but still respect each other. Two examples illustrate this:

- On the second workshop day, some girls from different ethnic groups and parts of BiH shared with us that they had promised each other the night before that they would not fight each other during the war, but leave the country.

- A discussion evolving around whether different languages should be used in BiH or only one common language, and whether Bosniak, Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb were in fact different languages or just variations of the same, was led passionately among participants, displaying completely opposite opinions. However, in the end they could agree that they disagreed and move on to another topic, without holding grievances against each other.

Participants also stated overwhelmingly that more opportunities for such exchanges should be provided, and over longer periods of time.

To contextualise the findings, Chapter 2 provides a short overview of the environment for young people in BiH. Chapter 3 assesses how EU policies, mechanisms and programmes address the issues identified in the research and contribute to enabling young people to play a constructive role in peace dynamics. Chapters 4 - 8 present findings from the field research. In order to better understand where youth stands in relation to peace and conflict dynamics, the study took as indicators young people's views on and responses to a set of key issues. These indicators, around which the findings are structured, include:

■ **Young people's perceptions of society, institutions and decision-makers**
Do young people accept and approve of the system in which they are growing up? Do they have alternative models they would prefer, and if so, what values and principles underpin these models? To what extent are they able and interested in shaping society and their own future, and what would that future look like?

■ **The influence of the past on young people's lives today**
To what extent do war memories and narratives still impact on young people's attitudes and behaviour to others, the present and the future?

■ **Young people's view of themselves and others**
What defines young people's identity today? To what extent does 'the other' play a role, and is this role positive or negative? Do young people feel comfortable in those roles, or are they seeking to change them?

■ **Young people as actors:**
What role do young people play in shaping society? Is this role positive or negative and what are the factors contributing to this?

■ **Young people and future conflict:**
POA first analysis of young people's potential to build peace or to undermine it.

Finally, we provide recommendations directed towards actors in BiH (particularly government institutions and civil society actors) and international actors (the international community, particularly the EU, donors, international organisations and NGOs).

Annex 1 provides a detailed methodology, including a list of research locations, FGDs and key informants. Annex 2 presents youth research on music and its messages of peace or radicalisation.

How do age and gender influence attitudes and behaviour of young people?

The respondents were divided into a younger group (16-early 20s) and 'older' (up to 30) to see whether the views and behaviour regarding conflict, security and perceptions of 'the other' or the levels of activism differed between those who had some conscious experience of the war and those who were too young to have any memories of the war. However, the findings showed no major differences between these two groups.

Differences were more visible by gender. Girls and young women were less likely to get involved in physical violence, and yet felt that they were more likely to be a victim of violence, for example of sexual harassment or domestic violence. Boys and young men were more frequently involved in physical violence and aggressive behaviour, often because of perceptions of what is regarded as masculine by society, specifically by peers. However, this goes hand in hand with them also being a victim of peer violence and a victim (or witness) of domestic violence at home.

2

Context

YOUNG PEOPLE[4] IN BIH HAVE GROWN UP in a country dominated by fundamental change. On the one hand, the end of the 1992–95 war brought large-scale return of refugees and internally displaced persons, extensive reconstruction of buildings and infrastructure, and processes of reconciliation (at least politically). On the other, the dissolution of Yugoslavia brought political and economic reform: from socialism to western-style democracy, and from a socialist to a market economy.

Youth in BiH live in a society intent on moving on from its violent past, but where the legacy of war is omnipresent; in particular in the way that ethnicity shapes every aspect of life. In addition, the current political and economic crisis has put further pressure on the population, albeit so far with little impact on stability. This section aims to outline the key factors influencing the lives of young people in BiH, and provides a background against which to understand the research findings.

Post-war BiH: a brief overview

Politics

The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA, or Dayton), which ended the 1992–95 war, defined Bosnia and Herzegovina as a federation consisting of two main entities: the (primarily Bosniak and Bosnian Croat) Federation of BiH (FBiH) and the (primarily Bosnian Serb) Republika Srpska (RS); as well as Brčko District.[5] FBiH is divided into ten cantons, each with extensive individual powers. Political power (for example, seats in Parliament) is distributed between the three main ethnic groups[6] according to an agreed 'ethnic key', while other minorities (such as Roma or Jews) and citizens who do not identify themselves with any ethnic or religious group are *de facto* excluded from holding political office.

Dayton put in place a political system that institutionalises ethnic divisions and places a great deal of power with the entities (and cantons) at the expense of the state; and an administrative system that is complex, bureaucratic and expensive. As a consequence, political parties tend to define themselves along ethnic and, as a consequence, religious lines, rather than according to a traditional left-to-right scale and, particularly during electoral campaigns, the 'ethnic card' is still played frequently.

---

4   Since the last census in BiH was undertaken in 1991, there is no recent data on demographics. According to the BiH Statistics Agency (2007), 24% of the population of BiH were between 15 and 30 years of age in 2000. Data from the World Population Prospects (2008) says 29% of the population is below the age of 24.

5   Due to its strategic location, Brčko was not included in either Entity but accorded its own special status.

6   According to the Dayton Peace Agreement, BiH has three 'constituent people': Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks), Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs. Out of the 4,622,163 (July 2011 est.) people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina today, Bosniaks constitute 48% of the population, Bosnian Serbs (mainly Serb Orthodox) 37.1% and Bosnian Croats (mainly Catholic) 14.3% and other 0.6%. The last population census was carried out in 1991: these figures are later estimates of Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook: Bosnia and Herzegovin, www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html, accessed in Nov 2011.

The education system

The institutionalisation of ethnic divides permeates the education system in BiH. Looking first at the primary level, schools in BiH can be divided into three 'types':

■ **'Two schools under one roof'**
This is the most visible example of ethnically divided schools. In this system, two sets of administrative staff, teachers and students, segregated along ethnic lines, share one building, but operate in shifts and do not have classes together or indeed any kind of physical contact. These schools were introduced by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as one of the preventative measures for future violence immediately after the war, and in order to facilitate the process of return for families who had been driven from their homes by ethnic cleansing, and who were fearful of sending their children to a school dominated by another ethnic group. Intended as a temporary measure, many of these schools have since been integrated into one, but at least 54 such schools remain, despite intense criticism from national and international civil society organisations and other actors. The OSCE assesses that their number has remained stable since 2005 (KII, legal officer, OSCE, email correspondence 2 November 2011).

■ **Mono-ethnic schools**
In most places in BiH, the ethnic balance of the location defines the ethnic balance in the schools, and since many of the towns and cities in the RS are to all intents and purposes mono-ethnic, the schools reflect this reality. In addition, sometimes parents contribute to strengthening this effect, as they prefer to enrol their child in a school located further away to ensure he/she is taught with children of the same ethnic background, rather than enrolling her/him in the local neighbourhood school, if this is dominated by another ethnic group. "Some see segregated education as their human right. It is the Minister of Education in consultation with parents who decides whether schools are segregated or not. 'Two schools under one roof' is just a more visible way of segrgation, but there are other examples. For example, children from one ethnic group are brought to the next mono-ethnic school by bus, even if other mixed schools are on the way" (KII, legal officer, OSCE, email correspondence, 2 November 2011).

■ **Multi-ethnic schools with separate curriculum for certain subjects**
Many schools in BiH are (at least in theory) ethnically mixed, again reflecting the composition of the community where the school is located. While 'neutral' subjects such as mathematics or biology are taught together (and indeed in much the same manner for all pupils across BiH), separate curricula exist for other subjects deemed to be more sensitive: the pupils each learn 'their own' ethnic community's version of religion, languages and literature, history and geography in ethnically segregated classes.[7]

In particular, the existence of separate textbooks for certain subjects (the 'National Group of Subjects') is considered particularly problematic, since the textbooks are often "ethnically-centred and fail to instil a sense of common citizenship".[8] A study carried out in 2011[9] concluded that many textbooks contribute to ethnic and religious segregation and antagonism in BiH: each set of textbook is oriented to one particular ethnic group, and students do not learn about what the other groups are taught. Many of the books serve to develop a stronger feeling of belonging to other countries (Croatia and Serbia) than to BiH. Director of the OSCE Education Department Claude Kiffer has made the point that "(t)he absence of genuine education reform designed to bring future citizens together undermines all other reforms so far" and that the current education system is producing "three sets of citizens who do not know anything about the others, have no intercultural skills". In this sense, education, identity and security

---

7 Magill C, *Education and Fragility in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, UNSECO, IIEP (2010), http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Info_Services_Publications/pdf/2010/Bosnia-Herzegovina.pdf, accessed in November 2011

8 OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'Curriculum reform', http://www.oscebih.org/Default.aspx?id=31&lang=EN

9 Local consultancy company, *Promente*, conducted an extensive content analysis of all 146 textbooks of religious education and the so-called national group of subjects (mother language, geography and history) textbooks recommended for use by the Education Ministries in BiH, http://promente.org/OSF0-pres-e.pdf, accessed in September 2011

are all closely linked in BiH. Kiffer went on to warn that "(i)n the longer term, this may contribute to the breakup of the country".[10]

In the secondary (high school) and higher education system, ethnic separation is less of an issue – at least at the institutional level. All eight universities in BiH are located in urban areas, with students coming from across the country (although there is a tendency to choose the nearest university), and universities are regarded as much more ethnically mixed than primary and secondary education.[11] "Students are more open and there's no way to segregate universities. They mix there, and they also experience more things together. Children from segregated communities at first are shocked when they enter university"(KII, Helsinki Committee of Human Rights, 16 May 2011, Sarajevo). However, the biggest problem of higher education in BiH is one of quality of education. One reason is that the system of higher education is not set up to ensure countrywide coherence, co-operation and homogeneity with regards to the curriculum and education standards. There is no state-level agency or ministry dealing with education. Instead, authority over education lies with the entities and (in FBiH) the cantons. There are no laws in place or principles agreed to ensure for co-operation or co-ordination between the various institutions, or to guarantee and monitor academic standards. This situation means that higher education in BiH faces unresolved issues of governance "at the levels both of co-ordination and the management of institutions".[12] Other problems identified in the research include corruption and political party pressure on academia (more on this in chapter 4).

Religion

Religion, politics and ethnicity are closely intertwined in BiH. Given that religion is a big part of ethnic identity, and ethnic division is very much institutionalised, religion is not just a private matter. Bosniaks are generally associated with Islam, Bosnian Croats with the Roman Catholic Church, and Bosnian Serbs with the Serb Orthodox Church.[13] Someone not identifying with one of these three 'main' religions can easily be marginalised, given that the system is defined around these ethnic/religious groups. Religious leaders are seen to take strong political positions in their public appearances, and often support specific political parties – and for their part, political parties seek their support: "The lines dividing politics, ethnic identity and religion were often blurred. (...) Many political party leaders used religion to strengthen their credibility with voters. Religious leaders exerted influence in government policy and programs, sometimes to the detriment of nonbelievers or adherents of another religion".[14] This support even extends to religious leaders encouraging people to vote for specific political parties. This close relationship is criticised by civil society representatives, who resent local politicians using religion for political purposes (KII, Schueler Helfen Leben, SHL, 26 May 2011, Sarajevo; KII, Faculty of Islamic Studies, 20 June 2011, Sarajevo). One reason behind this close relationship of religion and politics is funding. The majority of religious communities are not self-sustainable and depend on donations, and obtaining financial support from politicians/political parties is therefore tempting.

Perhaps due to its close relationship with political life, religion is not generally seen

10 Robinson AC, 'School segregetaion threat to long-term peace', Associated press, August 30, 2009 www.articles.sfgate. com/2009-08-30/news/17177733_1_bosnian-croats-bosnia-s-ethnic-groups-croatian-elections/2, accessed in September 2011

11 Exceptions are the University of Džemal Bijedić, situated in the East Mostar, considered the Bosniak University (with Bosnian as the official language) and the University of Mostar, in West Mostar, the Croatian university (the only Croatian language university in BiH).

12 *Overview of Higher Education System in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, The UK Higher Education International Unit, http://www. international.ac.uk/resources/Overview%20of%20Higher%20Education%20System%20in%20Bosnia%20and%20 Herzegovina.pdf, accessed in October 2011.

13 According to unofficial estimates from the BiH State Statistics Agency, Muslims constitute 45 percent of the population, Serb Orthodox Christian - 36 percent, Roman Catholics - 15 percent, Protestants - 1 percent, and other groups including Jews - 3 percent. *International Religious Freedom Report 2010*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171686.pdf, accessed in October 2011.

14 *International Religious Freedom Report 2010*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, p.5, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171686.pdf, accessed in October 2011.

to play a positive role in improving inter-ethnic relations in BiH.[15] At the state level, the Inter-religious Council of BiH[16] is in place to promote inter-religious dialogue and understanding. It publicly condemns acts of hooliganism and violence against religious buildings and structures. One of its five working groups is on youth[17] that has worked on various projects, including bringing together youth from the different religious communities and engaging them in dialogue and conflict transformation activities.

Media

Legislation and institutions[18] are in place to protect the freedom and independence of media in BiH, and to prevent defamation and hate speech. However, the media in BiH does not operate in a vacuum, and is influenced by the divisions and problems that exists elsewhere in society. Threats and violence against journalists are problems, as is political pressure on the media.[19] The media is highly fragmented and polarised along political and ethnic lines. While open violations of the anti-defamation law are not common,[20] ethnic and political loyalties influence media reporting and editorial decisions: the time/space allocated to different news items (in particular 'sensitive' ones such as war crimes court rulings), journalistic angle and language used.

In addition, much journalism is unprofessional and does not live up to press ethics: failing to cover more than one side of a story, not distinguishing between assumptions and facts, and applying self-censorship. These problems are linked with the economic and political interests of media owners, and in some cases, serious financial pressure on media outlets – which has got worse with the economic crisis and a resulting fall in advertisement revenue.[21]

Ethnicity also strongly influences the way in which people in BiH consume media: most Bosniaks watch Sarajevo-based channels, most Bosnian Serbs watch RS- and Belgrade-based programmes, and most Bosnian Croats are dependent on and oriented towards programmes from Croatia.[22] The nature of information accessed varies between the different ethnic groups, with obvious implications for the formation of opinions about what happens in BiH and in the region.

BiH today: political and economic crisis

Political deadlock and no government

Like most peace agreements, the DPA reflects the compromises necessary to end the fighting and was never designed to provide a lasting governance framework. However, while a new political and administrative structure (a new constitution) is a necessity (not just for the viability of BiH as a functioning state, but also a precondition for

15 For example, the above mentioned report criticises the religious institutions for promoting intolerance and further segregating various religious communities

16 The Inter-religious Council of BiH brings together representatives of the four main religious communities within BiH: the Islamic community, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Jewish community of Bosnia-Herzegovina. From the website of the council, www.mrv.ba/en/about-us, accessed in September 2011

17 For more information, see their website: www.svizajedno.org/en/home

18 Freedom of expression and freedom of the media are guaranteed by the Constitution, the European Convention on Human Rights, Law on Protection from Defamation (*Official Gazette RS* No. 37/01, *Official Gazette FBiH* No. 31/01), and the Law on Communications (*Official Gazette BiH* No. 33/02, 12 November 2002), which is the general legal framework for the broadcasting and telecommunications industry. The same legislation establishes the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) as the independent state agency that regulates broadcasting and telecommunication sectors.

19 The statute of the Public Broadcaster BHRT was amended in order to increase the control of the Steering Board over the editorial management, affecting editorial independence (EU Progress Report 2011). Political pressures affecting the financial and political independence of the Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA) have continued. Amendments to the Law on Ministries and Other Bodies of Administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain to be adopted in order to ensure the CRA's independence. EU Progress Report 2011, pp. 16

20 Cases of hate speech are rare (for example, the Press Council registered four cases in print media in 2010), however, independent analysts have noted a tendency for politicians and other leaders to label unwanted criticism as hate speech. Human Rights Report Media 2010 pp. 13.

21 Bosnia and Herzegovina Media Sustainability Index 2011, http://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/EE_MSI_2011_Bosnia.pdf

22 TV ratings and viewers' habits confirm the overall division of BiH along ethnic lines. This is best seen in the ratings of the publically owned channels in each entity. According to MIB,31 FTV had ratings of around 21 percent in the Federation in 2006, while RTRS only had around 1 percent and BHT1 around 10 percent. In Republika Srpska, RTRS viewership in 2006 was around 9.4 percent (2006), BHT1 had 3 percent while FTV had only 1.4%. GfK BH Market Research Centre, Press Release, 12 February 2006. Accessed on 16 September 2007. Available at http://www.gfk.ba/PR/2006/GfK%20PR%2002-2006%20-%20TV%20and%20radio.pdf

progressing towards EU accession), negotiations have proved so difficult that they regularly cause the whole political system to grind to a halt. In particular, the issue of how to transfer powers from entity to state level is sensitive, with the RS in particular reluctant to give up the significant degree of autonomy accorded to them under the current system. After the general elections in October 2010, the more than 14-month delay in forming a government has led to another political crisis, which has blocked constructive governance, impeded important budgetary decisions and put reform processes on hold. It has also increased the ethno-nationalist rhetoric, particularly among Bosnian Croat politicians who are increasingly calling for a Bosnian Croat entity. The crisis can also be seen as a confirmation for many of the already frustrated voters that the politicians are free to disregard the will of the electorate, and put the entire country on hold if they so choose. Worse, threats of a break-up of the country were once again high on the agenda again in spring 2011, when the RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik publicly announced a referendum concerning the secession of the RS from the rest of BiH.[23] While the referendum did not take place, partly due to a emergency visit from the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, this episode brought once more to the fore the deep political conflicts that dominate BiH. The deadlock is putting a strain on the Bosnian people, and there are indications that frustrations also are having an impact on security too (more on this below in chapter 4).

International community: disagreement on level of engagement

The international community maintains a strong presence in BiH and still plays a significant role in political life, mainly via the Office of the High Representative (OHR). The OHR was established after the war, with the mandate to implement the DPA and endowed with a set of wide-ranging powers to boot. Over the past four or five years, the intention has been for the OHR to intervene less, leaving more responsibility in the hands of local politicians and enabling a transition to a system where the international community is represented by a less powerful (and in the future, merely 'advisory') EU Special Representative (EUSR). How and how quickly to undertake this transition is something that divides the international community. While some countries are in favour of delegating more responsibility to local politicians and put the emphasis on the 'pull' effect of the prospect of eventual EU accession, others argue that a more interventionist stance – the 'push' of international engagement and pressure – is still needed. These fundamental disagreements (and the fact that BiH has slipped down the list of foreign policy priorities for many countries) has left a policy vacuum in which local politicians jostle for position. In political crises over the last few years, there has been frequent 'grandstanding' – illustrated most visibly by RS President Milorad Dodik challenging the authority of the international community in BiH.

BiH's progress towards EU membership stalled

The prospect of EU accession is an important goal to which most Bosnians aspire, many believing that being an EU member country will bring economic opportunity and political stability and security. However, there has been little progress in terms of meeting the criteria to achieve Candidate Country status over the past two years, as the political deadlock has meant a brake on introducing the required new legislation. On the contrary, there are indications that BiH has gone backwards in some areas.[24] At the same time, within the EU, enthusiasm for accepting new members of the Union has been dampened: first by 'enlargement fatigue' caused by the difficulties following the latest expansion to the East; and second by the impact of the global economic downturn on the EU and the eurozone crisis. The lack of progress and the mixed

23 Traynor, Ian, "Bosnia in worst crisis since war as Serb leaders calls referendum", *Guardian*, 28 April 2011, www.guardian. co.uk/world/2011/apr/28/bosnia-crisis-serb-leader-referendum, accessed in September 2011

24 *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010 Progress Report*, European Commission, November 2010, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/ pdf/key_documents/2010/package/ba_rapport_2010_en.pdf, accessed in October 2011, p. 14.

messages received from the EU has led to people in BiH beginning to lose faith in the country's European future.[25]

The economy: poor performance and high unemployment rates

BiH has been hit hard by the global economic crisis. It has led, among other things, to a sharp decline in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), decreased manufacturing and export, and a reduction in remittances from abroad. Efforts to reduce poverty and create jobs stalled, reversing trends of slight improvement in those areas.[26] Households felt the impact of the economic and financial crisis as wages went down, relatives working abroad sent lower remittances, and unemployment increased even further from 23 percent in 2009 to 27.2 percent in 2010 and 27.6 in 2011. At the same time, inflation increased, leading to higher prices for consumer goods. Recovery is expected to be slow, and people are likely to continue to be affected by the impact of the crisis in the medium to longer term.[27]

Youth are particularly affected by the difficult employment situation. Youth unemployment rate is alarmingly high: from around 50 up to more than 60 percent of youth between 15–24 years are without a job (numbers vary depending on the source).[28] Young women are slightly more affected than young men (65.7 percent unemployment among young women compared to 60.2 percent among young men).[29] The high unemployment rate is explained by the lack of jobs in general rather than with youth-specific deficiencies in the labour market. However, the level of education and area of qualification also play a role: Young people with low or no qualifications are most affected by unemployment, while university graduates are more likely to find employment. However, labour force qualification, whether in terms of vocational training or other forms of education, suffers from the low quality of education, and in addition, graduates' profiles often do not correspond with the needs of the market. In fact, in cases where jobs have been created, they often cannot be filled, as professionals with the right skills set are lacking.[30] Because of this mismatch, the prospects even for qualified young people to get into employment and play a constructive role in economic recovery are small.

Furthermore, the public sector is one of the major employers in BiH, to a large part because of the huge bureaucracy, which is a side effect of the administrative structure. However, this sector is specifically vulnerable to nepotism and clientelism, making it even more challenging for young people without 'connections' to enter into employment. When young people find a job, it is often in the informal sector, where they have no job security and are not enrolled in social security or pension schemes.[31]

Corruption is not just an issue for young jobseekers but a problem affecting the whole economy. The 2010 EU Progress Report states that corruption is "widespread throughout the public and private sectors, affecting the judiciary, tax and customs administrations, public procurement, and privatisation".[32] At the institutional and policy level, BiH has

25 *Insights and Perceptions: Voices of the Balkans*, Focus: *Perceptions of the EU in the Western Balkans*, Gallup, Balkan Monitor, June 2009, http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/files/Gallup_Balkan_Monitor-Focus_On_EU_Perceptions.pdf, accessed in November 2011.

26 *Protecting the poor during the global crisis, 2009 Bosnia and Herzegovina Poverty Update*, Poverty Reduction and Economic Update Unit, World Bank, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTBOSNIAHERZ/Resources/361930-1266406160604/ECCBAPoU2009.pdf, accessed in August 2011, p. iv.; *Country Partnership Startegy paper for Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period FY12 – FY15*,World Bank 2011, *Country Partnership Startegy paper for Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period FY12 – FY1*,http://siteresources.worldbank.org/BOSNIAHERZEXTN/Resources/362025-1240235526234/6038984-1317407893166/bihCPS_Annex.pdf, accessed in August, 2011, p. 5.

27 *Assessing the potential for renewed conflict in BiH: A security risk analysis*, Atlantic Initiative, Democratisation Policy Council (AI DPC), October 2011, http://www.atlanticinitiative.org/images/stories/ai/pdf/ai-dpc%20bih%20security%20study%20final%2010-9-11.pdf, accessed in November 2011, p. 28

28 World Bank 2009, p. iv; World Bank 2011; EC progress report 2010, p. 26, based on 2010 Labour Force Surveyt; EU progress report 2011, p. 24.

29 International Labour Organisation p. 23, 35; 61 percent fact sheet; 57,5 percent WB, based on May 2010 Labour Force Report; 48,7 percent EU 2010 progress report, p. 41

30 Niall O'Higgins, Youth Labour Markets in Bosnia and Herzegovina ILO Employment Policy Papers 2009, p. 34; World Bank 2011: International Development Assocaition and International Finance Corporation: Country Partnership Strategy For Bosnia And Hezegovina For The Period of FY12–FY15, August 30, 2011, p. 13

31 Niall O'Higgins, Youth Labour Markets in Bosnia and Herzegovina ILO EMPLOYMENT POLICY PAPERS 2009, p. 18, p. 45

32 *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010 Progress Report*, European Commission, November 2010, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/ba_rapport_2010_en.pdf, accessed in October 2011, p. 14.

taken some steps, such as the adoption of a Law to establish the Anti-Corruption Agency in 2009[33] and beginning to implement the 2009–2014 anti-corruption strategy. However, the progress in the implementation of the strategy has fallen behind expectations[34], and corruption is still seen by most Bosnians as a major problem.

The security situation in BiH

The war's effects on security

Compared to many other post-conflict countries, particularly bearing in mind the ferocity of the fighting and the scale of the human rights abuses that took place, BiH has seen relatively low levels of violence since the war ended in 1995. Serious incidents of inter-ethnic violence, particularly directed against returnees, was a problem in the immediate aftermath of the war but subsided relatively quickly (partly thanks to the presence of large numbers of international peacekeepers)[35]. Most young people in BiH today are thankfully unlikely to have personal experience of physical inter-ethnic violence (although many have experienced other types of inter-ethnic aggression, such as verbal abuse, intimidation and discrimination, as outlined in chapter 6). However, there is reason to believe that the war had more 'subtle' effects on the safety and security of youth, in the form of an increase in people affected by post-traumatic stress following the war, which has resulted in a rise in levels of domestic and gender-based violence, but also peer violence[36] (see chapter 7). In addition, the war left another legacy affecting the security situation in BiH: the large numbers of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW), which remain in circulation[37] and contribute to a feeling of insecurity (for more detail, see chapter 7).

Current security situation

Despite the political and social pressures being exerted on what is an ethnically polarised society, BiH remains a relatively secure and, so far, stable place. The security providers have been sufficiently equipped to handle the levels of crime and social unrest to date, although questions remain about their ability to tackle any larger scale violence – particularly along ethnic lines – were this to occur. In brief, the security situation in BiH can be summarised as follows:

■ **Crime levels are low, but rising**
The number of violent crime in BiH is low compared to European standards: compared to many other national capitals, one is less likely to become a victim of crime in Sarajevo. However, the crime rate seems to be increasing: EU Police Mission (EUPM) statistics give an annual average of 98.9 violent crimes per month for 2010 (2009: 83.3), and for 2011 (data from May 2011) the rate had increased to 123 violent crime cases per month. Particularly the number of property crimes has gone up in recent years, such as violent robbery or robbery at gun point (and international observers expect this trend to continue (KII, EUPM, 26 May 2011, Sarajevo), often in conjunction with the use of weapons or explosives. Police informants take this to be a result of the economic crisis with higher levels of unemployment, increased living

---

33 Other measures taken by BiH in the fight against corruption include the ratification of the additional protocol to the Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, and the adoption of the Law establishing the Agency for Prevention and Coordination of the Fight against Corruption, but policies and measures are not adequately implemented, and investigation and prosecution of corruption remain weak (EC Progress Report 2010, p. 14).

34 According to an analysis of implementation progress, Transparency International identifies insufficient involvement of all relevant stakeholders, lack of planning of necessary resources and improvement of operative aspects of certain components of the Strategy and their realisation, insufficient and piecemeal implementation, often upon pressure from national or international actors, lack of ownership and prioritisation of the implementation of the strategy as well as lack of awareness among the general public and many members of the government at the entity and district levels as some of the reasons for this failure (Transparency International 2011, Analysis of the implementation level of the BiH Anti-corruption Strategy 2009-2014, Second periodical report Transparency International BiH, pp. 7).

35 For an analysis of levels of post-war violence in BiH, see: Mats Berdal, Gemma Collantes Celador and Merima Zupcevic Buzadzic 'Post-war violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina' in Berdal, Mats and Suhrke, Astri (eds.): "The Peace In Between: Post-war Violence and Peacebuilding", (Routledge 2011).

36 Claudia C, *War at Home – a Review of the Relationship between War Trauma and Family Violence* (University Bielefeld 2010).

37 Most of the weapons are in the hands of civilians (1,098,762 out of a total of 1,224,142 pieces of SALW in BiH). Only a third of them (349,366) are legally owned. The fact that statistically, most households own a gun means that children and youth easily have access to weapons.

costs and growing drug addiction, but also because people have more high-value property worth stealing.[38]

■ **Data on juvenile delinquency is inconclusive**

Data regarding juvenile delinquency is unreliable and differs depending on the source. According to data from the Federal Statistics Office in FBiH, the number of minors convicted of a criminal offence in FBiH decreased from 237 to 188 between 2007 and 2010.[39] While this has been confirmed by some police KIIs who mention a decrease in delinquencies by around 30 percent per year (between 2010 and 2011, and between 2008 and 2009),[40] other studies indicating that numbers have dramatically increased in the first months of 2011 in comparison to 2010, particularly in Sarajevo canton.[41] In RS, numbers for minor perpetrators fluctuate; the Department of Criminal Police of RS counted 783 minor perpetrators in 2008, 837 in 2009, and a decrease to 705 in 2010.[42] According to police informants (KII, police representative, 10 May 2011, Sarajevo), most offences committed are of a material nature such as robbery and theft. Delinquencies are often committed in combination with alcohol or other drug abuse – both because young people (mainly men) under the influence get involved in fights more easily, and because people may resort to stealing in order to buy drugs.

The number of inter-ethnic incidents appears low, but data is inconclusive

Data on inter-ethnic incidents is scarce and unreliable. During the research, police representatives interviewed almost unanimously stated that there were no incidents of inter-ethnic violence in their geographic area of responsibility. The opinions and data provided by international observers vary due to different reporting categories.[43] Between 1 January and 18 May 2011, EUPM reported a total of 32 ethnically or religiously motivated security incidents, 11 of which were registered as violent inter-ethnic incidents; the remainder were actions targeting cemeteries or religious/ethnic facilities or symbols. The monthly average of 7.2 inter-ethnic incidents in 2011 is a slight increase compared to 2010 (5.0), but a reduction compared to 2009 (12.5). Other international observers give the total number of inter-ethnic incidents across BiH for January-April 2011 of 56 incidents and are concerned that this represents a sharp rise: this figure is more than 50 percent of the total number of recorded cases between January and December 2010. Most incidences occurred in Mostar, followed by Sarajevo and Potočari (KII, representative from international community, Sarajevo, 24 May 2011). Of the total number of 56 attacks that occurred in this period, there were 28 attacks on the facilities of the Islamic community, 17 attacks on the facilities of the Serbian Orthodox Church, nine attacks on the facilities of the Catholic Church and two attacks on the facilities of the Jewish community. Generally, inter-ethnic incidents, particularly attacks against ethnic or religious sites, are taken seriously by police and local authorities, but it is rare that the perpetrators are identified and brought to justice.[44]

38 Increased numbers in juvenile delinquency can also be a result of improvements in police investigation and reporting (KII police representatives, 13 May 2011, Banja Luka; KII police representatives, 20 May 2011, Mostar).

39 Information supplied by the Federal Statistics Office in FBiH, in November 2011

40 While the report AI, DPC A security risk assessment (p 59) states an increase in the number of juvenile offenders by 81.4 percent in Sarajevo canton, KIIs with the police in Sarajevo reported a decrease in juvenile delinquencies by 39 percent between 2010 and 2011 (KII police representatives, 19 May 2011, Sarajevo

41 Juvenile crime jumped by 19.2 percent in the federation as a whole from January and June 2010 compared to the same period in 2011. Source: Buric, Ahmed: Federation Fails to Curb Rising Bosnian Youth Crime, BalkanInsight 9 November 2011. http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/federation-fails-to-curb-rising-bosnian-youth-crime, accessed 20 February 2012.

42 Data provided by the Department of Criminal Police of RS, January 2012

43 The main recorded form of inter-ethnic violence is attacks on religious sites and symbols, most commonly in communities where a certain religious ethnic group represents a minority, as these are easiest to determine as incidents directed against a religious or ethnic group. In RS for example, attacks tend to target mosques and Catholic churches and sites; while in FbiH, attacks are mostly aimed against Orthodox sites. It is more difficult to determine, for example, whether the window of a car with a number plate from a specific location (potentially indicating the ethnicity of the driver) has been smashed in for ethno-nationalist reasons or is simply an act of vandalism.

44 *Monitoring and responses to attacks on religious buildings and other holy sites in BiH (Protections of Holy sites)*, Report on the pilot project covering November 1st 2010 – October 31st 2011, Inter-religious Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed in December 2011, http://www.mrv.ba/images/stories/documents/izvjetaj_monitoring_kratki_engl.pdf

Security and justice providers

Considerable efforts have been made to improve the technical capacity of the police in BiH, policing standards and police-community relationships, and the police is functional in many areas. However, progress on police reform remains slow, and operational co-operation (specifically information exchange) between police agencies suffers from the dysfunctional organisational structure of BiH's administrative set-up.[45] In addition, the police is subject to political influence, often in the framework of local patronage systems or loyalties that impact on the investigation of cases (mostly on organised crime and corruption) that politicians have an interest or are even involved in. Corruption within the police constitutes a serious problem,[46] which also impacts on community perceptions of the police. While there is no widespread perception that the police is ethnically biased or that their behaviour could lead to an escalation of inter-ethnic tensions (KII, EUPM, 26 May 2011, Sarajevo), doubts have been raised as to whether the police would be able to prevent or quell larger scale conflict, particularly if it was between ethnic groups (KII, Atlantic Initiative, 24 May 2011, Sarajevo). The police specifically engage with young people at school. Police officers focus mainly on younger youth rather than older youth who "already have their opinion and are hard to reach" (KII, police representative, 10 May 2011, Drvar). They also concentrate on awareness raising about drugs, juvenile delinquency and traffic rules, but seem not to work with at-risk youth to prevent them from getting in conflict with the law, or with those who have already committed an offence. Some specialised police units responsible for investigating offences committed by juveniles as well as for crime prevention have been established in some cities.[47]

Similar to the police, BiH's armed forces (which fought as three warring militias during the conflict) have undergone reform and been integrated under the unified command of the Ministry of Defence (The Centre for International Governance Innovation, CIGI, Country Profile BiH).[48] While the transition of the armed forces in BiH is widely seen as a success story by internal and external actors, scepticism has been voiced by international experts regarding the capacity and resistance of the army to stand united in the event of internal or regional conflict: "If the country falls apart, soldiers will 'go home' (and join their own ethnic group) anyway. And with regards to external threats, should there be war with Croatia, Croat soldiers will join the Croatian side; in a war with Serbia, Serb soldiers will join Serb side" (KII, international security expert, 24 May 2011).[49]

The justice sector suffers a lack of coherence, co-operation and co-ordination as a result of the administrative system,[50] as well as because of political interference and corruption.[51] Progress in the necessary reforms of the justice sector, such as the implementation of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy 2009–13, remain slow and hampered by a lack of political will and resources. The political crisis has further hampered progress. Pressure, particularly from politicians, on the judiciary and on judicial institutions, indicates "a problematic general attitude and behaviour of political elites vis-à-vis the judiciary and the rule of law".[52] While efficiency in processing of cases has slightly increased, the huge backlog of cases means that the

45 The police system reflects the administrative structure as there are separate law enforcement agencies at the entity level (FBiH and RS) and at the Brčko district level, plus police jurisdiction in the 10 cantons in BiH (CIGI Country Profile BiH, in Security folder; originally from Office of the High Representative and EU Special Representative (2009a). Police Restructuring in BiH. Sarajevo. Available at http://www.ohr.int/ohr- dept/rule-of-law-pillar/prc/).

46 *Assessing the potential for renewed ethnic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A security risk analysis.* Atlantic Initiative, DPC. October 2011, accessed in December 2011, http://www.atlanticinitiative.org/images/stories/ai/pdf/ai-dpc%20bih%20 security%20study%20final%2010-9-11.pdf, p. 52, pp7, pp 39; KIIs with police officials in BiH

47 Assessment of Juvenile Justice Reform and Achievements in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNICEF, February 2011), pp 7

48 Approximately 10,000 soldiers and 5,000 reservists are serving in the army, with slightly more than 2,000 international troops (ESI, 2007: 2).

49 See also AI, DPC: A security risk analysis. October 2011, p. 35

50 Four separate judicial systems exist in BiH: one at the state level, and one each in FBiH, RS, and Brčko District.

51 *Assessing the potential for renewed ethnic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A security risk analysis.* Atlantic Initiative, DPC. October 2011, accessed in December 2011, http://www.atlanticinitiative.org/images/stories/ai/pdf/ai-dpc%20bih%20 security%20study%20final%2010-9-11.pdf, p. 52

52 *Assessing the potential for renewed ethnic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A security risk analysis.* Atlantic Initiative, DPC. October 2011, accessed in December 2011, http://www.atlanticinitiative.org/images/stories/ai/pdf/ai-dpc%20bih%20 security%20study%20final%2010-9-11.pdf, p. 52

justice sector acts as a significant impediment to progress in the provision of rule of law.[53]

Progress has been slow too in juvenile justice provision, and appropriate mechanisms and institutions to deal with young people and help them not to reoffend and to successfully reintgrate into society are so far insufficient. A National Strategy against Juvenile Offending (2006–10) has been adopted, and in 2009, a Juvenile Justice Coordination Body was established. However, the implementation of the Strategy has been limited by BiH's administrative set up, lack of resources and political will.[54] A juvenile justice law,[55] based on international standards and introducing alternative means of punishment, such as mediation, compensation, or victim-offender restorative meetings, was adopted in RS in 2010 and entered into force in January 2011 (KII, ToPeeR, 14 May 2011, Doboj; KII, OSCE, 24 May 2011). A similar law may be adopted in FBiH and Brčko in 2012 as well. However, experts voice concerns about the lack of capacity among key actors for the implementation of the legislation:[56] "Capacity is lacking, particularly with regards to social welfare centres. They say they have too much on their plates, but the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare will need to step up efforts [to respond to the new legislation]" (KII, OSCE, 24 May 2011). There is an insufficient number of permanent centres for juvenile delinquents (particularly children under 18 years) that are appropriate for their age and support their rehabilitation into society, and many young offenders are instead put in ordinary prisons with adult offenders, albeit in separate units (KII, Foundation of Local Democracy, 12 May 2011, Sarajevo; KII, ToPeeR, 14 May 2011, Doboj). However, some good facilities exist, and additional ones have been established.[57]

Youth institutions and mechanisms within BiH and entity governments

In the framework of EU integration, BiH needs to develop youth policies that conform to international standards and that help to improve the living conditions and education of youth, increase youth participation in the decision-making process, and ensure active youth involvement in all spheres of social, economic, cultural and environmental life. Progress has been slow in terms of establishing the necessary institutions, harmonising legislation, and adopting relevant policies, strategies and action plans that focus on youth. This slow pace is due partly to the complex administrative set-up,[58] but also to a lack of prioritising youth issues politically and financially.

The main bodies and structures responsible for youth in BiH are as follows:

■ **At the state level**

 ☐ The main government body in charge of youth issues is the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH (CCYI BiH).[59] This is as a permanent body within the BiH Council of Ministers that is in charge of creating state level youth policy and co-ordinating activities of key actors, such as the government, the international community and local civil society.[60] The CCYI BiH has nine members: four are representatives of the government institutions (two from the entities' level

53 *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010 Progress Report*, European Commission, November 2010, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/ba_rapport_2010_en.pdf, accessed in October 2011, p. 11.

54 Assessment of Juvenile Justice Reform and Achievements in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNICEF, February 2011, pp 7

55 Law on Protection and Treatment of Children and Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings

56 Assessment of Juvenile Justice Reform and Achievements in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNICEF, February 2011, pp 12

57 Assessment of Juvenile Justice Reform and Achievements in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNICEF, February 2011, pp 7, 13

58 Responsibility for addressing youth issues is distributed between: the state level, the entity levels (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska), ten Cantonal levels (in the Federation), one District level (Brcko) and the Municipality levels (63 municipalities in the RS and 79 in the Federation), p.3 - Reviews on youth policies and youth work in the countries of south east Europe and Caucasus – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Council of Europe, last updated in 21.03.2011, by Jasmin Jasarevic, accessed in Oct 2011, at http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/SEE/Reviews_on_youth_policies_SEE_EECA_BxH_2011.pdf

59 For more information see their website: www.mladi.gov.ba

60 CoE country sheet on youth policy, 2010, accessed in Sep 2011, at http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Country/2008-09/Bosnia.pdf

and two from the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH), and five come from the youth NGO sector.[61] As a co-ordinating body, CCYI should attend all youth-related seminars and activities, but this is not done systematically due to lack of human resources, information and capacity: "We don't have enough necessary information, like data on youth organisations for instance" (KII, CCYI BiH, 20 June 2011, Sarajevo). Civil society representatives have criticised the CCYI for its passivity, poor performance and lack of necessary capacity and skills.

☐ In the BiH parliament, there is a Joint Committee on Human Rights, Rights of Children, Youth, Immigration, Refugees, Asylum and Ethics[62] that deals with issues related to the exercise of the rights of youth – in particular improving the status of youth in BiH. It is one of six joint parlimamentary committees.

■ **At the entity level**

☐ In RS: there is a Committee for Youth issues within the RS National Assembly. The entity-level Ministry for Family, Sport and Youth has a separate Division for Youth. In addition, there are other relevant ministries within the government that also deal with youth.[63]

☐ *In FBIH:* there is a Commission for Youth issues within the FBiH parliament.

The entity-level Ministry of Culture and Sport has a 'Center for Youth'[64] that functions as an organisational unit[65], but has limited human resources[66] and a limited portfolio, as it currently focuses only on sport and culture.[67]

■ **At canton level (in the Federation)**

☐ The cantons have jurisdiction on youth issues and are responsible for implementing the Youth Action Plan and assigning a budget to it.

■ **At the municipal level**

☐ Municipalities are expected to establish a Municipal Youth Commission[68] within the municipal assembly as "a necessary and permanent body within the Municipal structure",[69] consisting of representatives from various spheres, such as education, culture and sport. Their main role is to contribute to the development of municipal youth strategies and their implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluating implementation. The municipalities should allocate a budget for the implementation of the strategies. Progress in the development of youth strategies varies from municipality to municipality and implementation seems to be a particular problem in places. Each municipality should also have a Youth Officer, directly in charge of youth issues. Since 2003, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has supported the installation of youth officers and their capacity building through the "Establishment and promotion of structures in the youth sector"programme, but the process is not completed yet in all the municipalities: in some areas, these youth officers either are not identified yet or they are seen as not having the necessary capacity or commitment required for the job

61 Reviews on youth policies ...2011 accessed in Seo 2011, at http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/SEE/Reviews_on_youth_policies_SEE_EECA_BxH_2011.pdf

62 More on: https://www.parlament.ba/sadrzaj/komisije/zajednicke_komisije/ljudska_prava/default.aspx?id=28474&mid=1&langTag=en-US

63 Ministry of Education and Culture of the RS, Ministry of Science and Technology of the RS, and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the RS

64 The Center for Youth works on co-operation with youth in the domain of culture and sport. It supports existing programmes in culture and sport, and finds out new forms of cultural and sport engagement of youth in the framework of overall care of society on youth – aiming to prevent and fight against alcoholism and drug addiction, [it] cares and motivates youth to stay in the country, repatriation of youth, co-operates with other federal ministries, NGOs and institutions that deal with youth issues, co-operates with authorised cantonal organs and bodies, doing other businesses aiming to protect interests of youth. Translated from the Ministry website: www.fmksa.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=54&Itemid=76

65 Jasarevic J, Reviews on youth policies and youth work in the countries of South East Europe, Eastern Europe & Caucasus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, EU-COE partnership, last updated 21 March 2011, http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/SEE/Reviews_on_youth_policies_SEE_EECA_BxH_2011.pdf, accessed in August 2011, p.17.

66 As mentioned by one of the KII's (CCYI BiH) it has only one employee.

67 Mazalica, S, *Institutional framework for youth and youth policy options in BiH*, Country sheet on youth policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated on 19/04/2010 http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Country/2008-09/Bosnia.pdf

68 Some reports refer to them as "youth committees"

69 Kačapor Z, *Report on Youth Policy at Local Level in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, December 2007, http://www.cisp.ba/publikacije/Studija_%20omladinske%20politike%20u%20BiH_engleski.pdf, accessed in August 2011, p. 27

(June workshop participants). By 2007, only 50 out of the 142 existing municipalities in BiH had youth officers.[70]

In terms of strategies and policies at the entity level, the RS has developed a youth strategy ("Youth policy 2010–2015"), which was adopted in November 2009 (already the second strategy since 2006) together with an action plan. The strategy has outlined the following areas: (1) employment, (2) education, (3) health, (4) social policy, (5) active participation of youth, (6) information for youth, and (7) culture and sport.[71] Instead of developing an entity-level youth policy, FBiH is looking at developing a state level strategy, Coordinated Youth Policy in BiH 2011– 2015.[72]

Local youth NGOs

There are around 250–300 active youth organisations in BiH.[73][74] The co-ordination of these organisations is important in order to have various initiatives that complement rather than duplicate each other's work. Co-operation and joint advocacy between the different NGOs within and between the two entities would also contribute to greater success of these initiatives. The Law on Youth Organisation of the RS makes legal provision for a Youth Council to act as an umbrella body for youth NGOs.[75] There is no such council at the state level or in the FBiH, either at federal or canton level. The EC and the FBiH Government acknowledge the need for a Youth Council and "the EC just approved a project that will support establishing this council on federation level" (KII, CCYI BiH, 20 June 2011, Sarajevo). Besides the RS Youth Council, there are only a few representative bodies, such as the Youth Initiative of Central Bosnia that represents an informal initiative of the youth organisations in the Central Bosnia Canton (in FBiH).[76] "There is a great number of youth NGOs that are dealing with youth issues and youth policy issues in BiH but there is no single BiH state youth NGOs umbrella organisation that can advocate for youth policy implementation in BiH".[77]

Youth NGOs rely on volunteers and few are financially self-sustainable. Most depend on international assistance or support from municipal authorities. Their activities are of even greater importance at the municipal level, as fewer opportunities exist here for young people to engage and spend their free time in a constructive way: for example in youth clubs, engaging with sports, cultural or social activities, etc. (Advocacy workshop participant, NGO representative).

70 More about youth officer see Kačapor's report on youth policy, p.28, 2007.

71 The RS Strategy provided by the RS National Youth Council

72 Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH, CCYI, *Work Report covering 1 January - 31 December 2010*, www.mladi.gov.ba/images/upload/god.izv.o%20radu%20komisije.%20eng.%202010.doc, accessed in August 2011.

73 For more information refer to www.civilnodrustvo.ba, www.ngo.ba, www.omladina-bih.net. www.mladi.info

74 Jasarevic J, *Reviews on youth policies and youth work in the countries of South East Europe, Eastern Europe & Caucasus, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, EU-COE partnership, last updated 21 March 2011, http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/SEE/Reviews_on_youth_policies_SEE_EECA_BxH_2011.pdf, accessed in August 2011

75 Jasarevic J, *Reviews on youth policies and youth work in the countries of South East Europe, Eastern Europe & Caucasus, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, EU-COE partnership, last updated 21 March 2011, http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/SEE/Reviews_on_youth_policies_SEE_EECA_BxH_2011.pdf, accessed in August 2011

76 Jasarevic J, *Reviews on youth policies and youth work in the countries of South East Europe, Eastern Europe & Caucasus, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, EU-COE partnership, last updated 21 March 2011, http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/SEE/Reviews_on_youth_policies_SEE_EECA_BxH_2011.pdf, accessed in August 2011

77 Jasarevic J, 2011, p.3.

3

EU policies and programmes relevant to youth

ANALYSIS OF THE KEY POLICIES AND STRATEGIES, mechanisms for policy dialogue and monitoring relating to the EU enlargement process reveals a number of areas of relevance in terms of addressing the key factors identified in the research. Some of them have a *direct relevance* as they are focused explicitly on youth-related issues; others have an *indirect relevance* and address priorities or commitments that are not directed specifically at the youth population, but are nonetheless focused on issues identified as relevant to the situation of young people in the research (for example, corruption, participation) and could have a positive impact on the youth population.

The framework for BiH's EU accession

The broad policy framework for EU enlargement and accession by countries in the Western Balkans is the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), modelled on EU policy towards Central Europe.[78] The 'European Perspective' of all Western Balkans' countries was introduced in 2000, confirming all the countries as having the potential for EU membership. BiH was offered preferences in foreign trade (duty-free access to EU markets), economic and financial support, and a 'road map' of benchmarks to form the basis for Stabilisation Association Agreement (SAA) negotiations. BiH reached the formal status of 'potential candidate country' in 2003, and signed an SAA in 2008 that established mutual rights and obligations relating to market access, visa-free travel and so on. The agreement, which will enter into force once the ratification process has been completed, sets the broad standards to which the country must aspire for membership and is aimed to act as a catalyst for internal reform. An interim SAA is currently in place.

The SAA is complemented by a European Partnership[79] with BiH: a Council Decision outlining principles, conditions for EU financial support, and short- and medium-term priorities for progress towards accession. Implementation of the European

---

[78] Two specific additional conditions were added for the Western Balkans, intended to overcome the legacy of past conflicts: regional co-operation, and co-operation with ICTY. The SAP priorities include: the establishment of democracy based on the rule of law; development of a market economy and combating organised crime.

[79] Council Decision of 18 February 2008 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina and repealing Decision 2006/55/EC (2008/211/EC)

Partnership is examined through annual Progress Reports. An annual Enlargement Strategy in the form of a Commission Communication provides information on the status of the enlargement process and further strategic guidance to the EU's relationship with (potential) candidate countries, including BiH.

To assist BiH to progress in these reform processes, there are a number of instruments through which the EU supports BiH financially. The main financial instrument is the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) that aims to support the country in its transition from a potential candidate country to a candidate country. The policy framework of the IPA is based on the priorities of the European Partnership and the Enlargement Strategy, and is put into operation through rolling three-year Multi-annual Indicative Planning Documents (MIPD). MIPD specify the main priorities, expected results, forms of assistance, financial indications and areas of intervention. MIPD aim to support BiH's own reform and development strategies (in so far as they help to fulfil the requirements for EU integration).

Despite these policy frameworks and financial support, EU accession within the next years seems very unlikely, if not unrealistic for BiH. There has been little progress in relation to European Partnership over the past two years, and indeed indications that BiH has gone backwards in some areas. At the same time 'enlargement fatigue' within the EU is likely to influence the pace of EU accession. The challenges of the last round of enlargement and the impact of the global financial crisis on the EU have dampened enthusiasm for widening the Union to include new Member States. International actors, particularly within the EU, see the accession to the EU as the main goal for BiH and at the same time as the solution for BiH's problems. However, these statements are hardly in line with the decline in engagement concerning EUPM and the European Union Military Force, whose presence is seen as a stabilising factor by many in BiH, particularly given that it may still be a long time before BiH is an EU Member State.

EU mechanisms

Policy dialogue and strategies

Through the stabilisation and accession process and requirements to meet accession criteria, the EU has the means to point to weaknesses in existing policies and practices, and monitor progress in addressing those weaknesses. This is primarily policy and political dialogue in relation to the Stabilisation and Accession Process (encompassing the Stabilisation Association Agreement and European Partnership) as well as the annual Progress Report published by the European Commission. In recent years, several progress reports have raised concerns about: divisions in the education system – separation of children within schools along ethnic lines and the existence of mono-ethnic schools; high levels of unemployment among young people; and insufficient progress regarding juvenile justice provisions and the capacities of social welfare services to fulfil their responsibilities towards children and juveniles. At the regional level, communications produced by the European Commission outline regional strategic approaches and priorities for progress towards EU accession.

Financial instruments

Financial instruments provide another opportunity to set priorities and provide financial support to the priority areas. These include:

■ **The Instrument for Pre-Accession**
The priorities for assistance under the IPA, formulated in the MIPD, are informed by the needs identified in the progress reports and support BiH's own reform and development strategies in so far as they help to fulfil the requirements for EU integration. For example, the 2011–13 MIPD grants financial support to issues such as: educational reform; the improvement of the social protection system at all levels of governance to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups (including youth); and

the improvement of co-ordination between labour and employment institutions and strengthening of their capacities.

■ **The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights**
BiH is also eligible to assistance under the global European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The EIDHR supports civil society activity in the promotion of human rights and democracy and is intended to complement the Union's various national and regional co-operation programmes. Unlike the IPA, it operates independently from the consent of the host government and other public authorities.

■ **The Instrument for Stability**
In 2009, the Instrument for Stability (IfS) provided funding under the Peacebuilding Partnership (IfS Article 4.3) in order to increase stability and peace and promote a culture of human rights among youth and the community in BiH. This funding was awarded directly from (the then) DG RELEX in Brussels.

In addition, the **Multi-Beneficiary MIPD** complements the MIPD at the regional level. The 2011–13 document provides support in the field of Social Development, such as the promotion of youth exchange, voluntary services and contribution to strengthening democracy and civil society.

EU missions

The two EU missions deployed in BiH under the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) framework, the EU Police Mission (EUPM) and the European Union Military Force (EUFOR) Operation Althea, do not have a specific youth focus in their mandate. However, both have a youth dimension. EUPM has assisted law enforcement agencies in BiH to address security issues, such as juvenile delinquency and drug abuse, encouraging systematic efforts at all levels of government to address root causes and carry out risk assessments as part of their crime prevention strategy. They also support public information campaigns. For example, EUPM supported the 'Anti-Corruption Jolly Ambassadors' initiative, developed and implemented by a group of youth and student associations, and aimed at raising awareness of the necessity to fight corruption at all levels in BiH. EUFOR also undertakes awareness campaigns and initiatives to support youth and encourages interaction among youth from different parts of the country. For instance, it recently supported a youth campaign that raises issues facing young people in BiH.

In addition, the EU Special Representative (EUSR) has the means to support youth-related activities. One recent example is a project entitled 'Generation BiH for Europe', an initiative bringing together 100 young people from across the country and from various backgrounds to develop a common vision for BiH, which was then shared with decision makers at the BiH, EU and international level.

How can EU policies and strategies support youth and peace?

All policies and strategies relating to the EU enlargement process have some relevance (whether 'direct' or 'indirect') in addressing the key issues emerging from the research. If implemented well, these commitments could have a positive impact on the youth population and help counter the factors that lead youth to play a negative role in relation to peace and conflict dynamics.

Importantly, the EU clearly acknowledges the negative impact on the youth population of ethnic divisions within the education systems. Within the Stabilisation and Accession Process, the issue is constantly raised by EU officials through policy dialogue with BiH counterparts, and the annual Progress Reports of the European Partnership with BiH have over the past years raised concerns about the separation of children within schools along ethnic lines and the existence of mono-ethnic schools.

It appears that some progress has been made in this area, with a working group set up by the authorities in FBiH to investigate the issue. However, the impact 'on the ground' remains to be seen.

The European Partnership and IPA planning documents (MIPD) recognise the need to enhance democratic participation and understanding of youth issues at the political level, support social and economic empowerment of vulnerable groups (including children), and improve education and employment prospects. Broader commitments, such as tackling corruption, police and judicial reform, development of media and civil society, and social and economic development, whilst not necessarily youth focused, could also have a positive impact on the youth population from a peacebuilding perspective. Regional policies have a particular focus on the importance of enhancing interaction between ethnic groups both within and between countries of the region, and have a more explicit focus on reconciliation and youth exchange.

Are youth issues creeping up the EU's agenda in BiH?

Addressing the particular challenges facing the youth population has not been particularly high up the hierarchy of EU priorities within the enlargement framework (compared to, for example, minority issues). References to youth concerns are fairly sparse within the documentation, and youth does not appear as a cross-cutting issue within the 2009–11 MIPD. There are signs, however, that this may be changing. The 2011–13 MIDP includes a commitment to reflect vulnerable groups' concerns in all activities programmed under the IPA (particularly in relation to legislative matters, public services and socio-economic development) and to supporting specific activities focused on social inclusion and vulnerable groups. It is unclear whether 'vulnerable groups' are interpreted to include the youth population. If they are, this could mean more support for youth-related activities and there are new programmes in the pipeline.

A shift towards EU sector support will bring opportunities as well as risks from a youth perspective

The 2011–13 MIPD introduces a shift towards sector support as a modality of assistance to BiH, whereby efforts will be concentrated on targeted sectors and aligned more with BiH strategies and priorities, where possible under the lead of BiH authorities. The aim is to enhance harmonisation and alignment of assistance and co-ordination with other donors. Support by the EC for the implementation of the National Youth Policy reflects this shift and creates opportunities for enhancing local ownership and a more co-ordinated approach. However, a sector approach also brings risks of an over-emphasis of support for the state level and less support for interventions at the local level. This may limit the EU's scope for addressing challenging and sensitive local issues (such as community engagement and inter-ethnic relationships) that are of relevance to the youth population. It also potentially increases the possibilities for political manipulation of where and to whom funding goes – a challenge that independent local CSOs are already struggling with.

EU policy in BiH is primarily viewed through the lens of EU accession rather than peacebuilding

If the EU is focusing more on youth in BiH, it is from the perspective of their role as a driver of democratic reform and progress towards EU accession. There is little, if any, reference in policies and strategies to the position of youth from an explicit peace and conflict perspective – although the two are of course linked. But this is symptomatic of a broader issue: EU policy towards BiH (as with the rest of the Western Balkans) is viewed through the lens of enlargement and accession, arguably limiting

the EU's potential to assess, focus and emphasise on those factors that are particularly important from a broader perspective of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Non-enlargement instruments have a more explicit focus on peacebuilding

Instruments such as EIDHR and CSDP have a more explicit focus than the IPA on reconciliation, security issues, and building consensus on disputed or controversial areas of policy; and they are well targeted at addressing issues emerging from the research. The EIDHR guidelines include support for conflict prevention and for consolidating political participation and representation. Child rights feature as a cross-cutting issue. However, EIDHR represents a mere fraction of the EU's overall support to the BiH. Unfortunately, most instruments provide only short-term funding rather than long-term support and often have limited financial capacity that limits their potential to support country-wide initiatives with the potential to guide and encourage children and young people from an early age to bridge divides, think differently, and seize the initiative.

How can EU-financed programmes support youth and peace?

Only a handful of EU-supported programmes are aimed primarily at supporting youth to play a positive role in peace dynamics. These are Youth Peace Advocates, supported under the IfS and programmes supported under Youth in Action (thus outside the enlargement framework).

However, looking across the different instruments, it is apparent that the EU is supporting a range of youth and non-youth specific projects and programmes that have the potential to address conflict risk and support youth to play a part in peacebuilding, even if this is not an explicit programme objective. These include support for UNICEF to address social exclusion among children as well as youth focused projects under the regional Civil Society Facility.

A notable programme is the IPA support for the development and implementation of the National Youth Policy, which represents a firm commitment on the part of the EU to address youth issues in BiH. The envisaged project is aligned with the challenges facing the development and implementation of youth policies and programmes, even if the impact of any National Youth Policy is likely to be limited by the broader political challenges affecting all policy development and implementation in BiH.

The issue of ethnic divisions among youth is not addressed in IPA-funded projects

It is interesting to note that there are no projects funded under the BiH IPA that encompass the issue of ethnic divisions among youth, despite policy commitments to address the ethnic dimension in education within the European Partnership. This may be a reflection of the difficulty of designing effective programmes in relation to these issues or, more likely, suggests a reluctance on the part of the EU to address head on these sensitive political questions within programming processes: particularly where they involve discussions with the state counterparts. Looking across IPA support to sectors such as education and justice, it appears that the EU favours a fairly 'technical' approach – focusing on administrative efficiency and support to 'hardware' (buildings and such like), rather than applying a more political lens that seeks to affect attitudes, political culture and so on. This focus is perhaps reflective of the Commission's particular areas of competence, as well as being symptomatic of donors' preference for tangible outputs.

The potential of EIDHR to fund projects focusing on youth and peacebuilding is not realised

The EIDHR guidelines provide for projects that seek to bridge social divides and promote reconciliation (including integration of two schools under one roof). However, over the past four years no projects of this type (with or without a specific emphasis on youth) have been funded by this instrument. This represents an opportunity lost.

There are no EU supported programmes that address the issue of availability of weapons among the (youth) population.

Likewise, there are no programmes financed under any instrument that address the specific issue of the availability of weapons among the population, including among youth.

4

Youth perceptions on society and institutions

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH begins with young people's perceptions of: the dominant issue of politics and the state of democracy in BiH; the hopes for EU integration; the role of the media; the role of religious institutions; the local administration (municipalities); and the education system. The cross-cutting issue of corruption/nepotism is addressed last.

Lack of trust in politics and politicians

How do young people see the situation?

The general election in October 2010 saw the highest voter turnout in the past ten years (56.53 percent):[80] 51.75 percent of voters age under 30 participated in the elections and 80,000 young people were first-time voters.[81] At the same time (or perhaps because of the failure of politicians to establish a new government following these elections), our research showed that generally, young people have very little trust in politics and politicians. To quote one respondent, politics is perceived as "dirty and linked to illegality" (KII, Foundation One World SEE, 12 May 2011, Sarajevo), and many young people don't want to get involved in it. Please see box 1.

What is the response of young people

Youth in BiH are disillusioned, disappointed, even 'outraged' by the behaviour of politicians, and are politically disenfranchised. With these negative perceptions, it is unsurprising that young people show little interest and trust in politics. Many do not want anything to do with it for fear of 'getting their hands dirty'. As a 23-year-old female student from Banja Luka put it, "I do not want to take part in the destruction of the people" (Research on the influence of politics, interview 1). Hence, many said they would not vote if there were elections.

At the same time, there is evidence from the interviews that young people, particularly those at the lower end of the age group consulted, would become politically active – either by joining a party or through civic engagement – if they felt that their voices would make a difference (see box 5). So far, however, the prevailing feeling is that even if they participated in politics, they would not be able to change anything. This is closely linked with the notion that the involvement of youth in decision-making is not appreciated by the older generation. Older and established politicians are seen

80 Data provided by the Central Election Commission
81 Rondic A, *Analyse der Wahlen in Bosnien-Herzegovina 2010*, (Heinrich-Boell-Stiftung, 12 October 2010)

> **BOX 1: Youth research: Influence of politics on shaping young people's opinions**
>
> Two groups of young researchers looked into what young people think about politics and the extent to which politics is seen to influence their lives. They interviewed 11 young people from Travnik/Novi Travnik, and seven from Prijedor/Banja Luka (on influence of politics on young people) and ten young people from Sanski Most (regarding young people's perception of politics and politicians). While the findings are specific to the locations and cannot be taken as representative, they provide an interesting snapshot on the relationship between youth and politics. The findings are complemented by interviews conducted by Saferworld with young politicians and other key informants (see annex 1).
>
> 'Corruption', 'enrichment', 'power' – these are the main associations young people make with politics. People are tired of unfulfilled promises and understand that the tactic used by parties to provide scholarships or other rewards to young people is a means to 'buy' votes.
>
> Politicians are seen to be doing everything for their own gain. "They are all promising, but nobody does anything" (Research on the influence of politics on young people, female, 23, student, Bosnian Serb, interview 1, Banja Luka). "They could do a lot but in the end they don't do anything, they are all working for their own benefit and [don't] care about the people" (Research on the influence of politics on young people, female, 17, student, interview 6, Travnik).
>
> Many blame politicians for the problems in BiH and are tired of their ethno-nationalist rhetoric. Statements along the lines of "why don't they focus on creating jobs instead" were frequently voiced. Youth has lost respect for politicians, "they look like some sort of turbo folk" (Research on the influence of politics, female, 21, student, Bosniak, interview 2, Travnik). Many see them also as key drivers of potential conflict: "I'm afraid that politicians might bring new conflict as they did in the past" (June workshop participant, Doboj). At the same time, it is the political personalities who polarise opinion – a prime example being the RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik, either admired or despised by many people – who are best known, and whose statements are most widely discussed.

as clinging to power, while publicly making statements along the lines of, 'The world belongs to the young people'. For many young people only a complete change in the political class could restore their trust in politics – allowing them to vote for new, young politicians who would address key policy issues relevant for young people. Young people would like to see new faces in politics: "New leaders, new people who lead BiH in a better way," (FGD participant, male, 21, student, Bosnian Serb, Banja Luka) – politicians that are not 'dirty' and not associated with corruption or war. The 'new' faces would be trusted more than current ones.

Questioning the state and appropriateness of democracy in BiH

How do young people see the situation?

Young people complain about the state of democracy in BiH. Almost all FGD participants think either that BiH does not have a democratic system or that the system is only partly democratic: "Democracy is very weak in Bosnia and Herzegovina. People in Bosnia and Herzegovina speak about democracy in a theoretical way. There is very little democracy in practice in BiH. Everything is done according to personal interest, not the common one" (FGD participant, female, 19, Bosniak, high school student, Bratunac); "There is a big difference between theory and practice. In theory, everything looks perfect, but nothing applies in real life"(FGD participant, male, 17, Bosnian Croat, high school student, Novi Travnik).

"I see democracy as packaged dictatorship"(FGD participant, male, 26, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Banja Luka); "If I express my opinion about something in public, and then I am targeted by those who do not think the same – where is the democracy? This is not democracy" (FGD participant, female, 23, Bosnian Serb, employed, Doboj).

The respondents blame the politicians for the weak state of democracy. They express suspicion that politicans exploit loopholes in the democratic system to allow them to rule according to their liking; and accuse them of not taking young people seriously: "The authorities (…) do not respect us young people" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Sanski Most).

However, citizens are also blamed for their lack of understanding of what democracy really means: "There is no democracy here. It is anarchy. People should learn what

democracy means. There are rights, but also obligations and responsibilities. People should learn them and behave accordingly" (FGD participant, male, 22, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Doboj); "I think that we misunderstand democracy. We take it to mean that everyone has to respect our rights, and we have no obligation to take care of others" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Novi Travnik); "All of us have our own version of democracy – in most of the cases, the wrong one" (FGD participant, male, 21, Bosnian Serb, student, Doboj).

The respondents were frustrated with citizens in BiH for their seeming lack of will to make changes. "I do not believe in democracy as it is practised here. '"Demos' [the respondent refers here to the Greek word] means people, so it should be governing the state by its people, but we are so passive and do not make any changes" (FGD participant, male, 27, Bosniak, unemployed, Novi Travnik). The lack of civil society was also seen as an impediment to a functioning democracy: "real democracy does not exist here, because we have no real civil society" (FGD participant, female, 22, Bosnian Croat, student, Mostar).

Some see democracy in BiH as a system in which everyone can do what he or she wants: "There is too much democracy here, people do not have limits in verbal communication. I think that democracy supports verbal violence. I believe in respecting the law" (FGD participant, male, 23, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Drvar). "I am not a supporter of complete freedom" (FGD participant, female, 23, Bosniak, student, Sarajevo).

Lastly, some respondents viewed democracy as something utopian, impossible to realise in practice: "The impossibility of realisation from theoretical to practical" (FGD participant, female, 22, Bosniak, student, Sarajevo); "a Utopia like socialism and communism" (FGD participant, male, 18, Bosniak, student, Sarajevo).

BOX 2: Youth research: Perceptions of young people on democracy and democratic values in BiH

Young researchers investigated young people's perceptions of democracy and democratic values. They did this by sending out a questionnaire to young people age 16 to 30 years from Bratunac and Sanski Most. 36 young people responded.

Asked what they associated with the term 'democracy', the top three responses were: 1) freedom of opinion /freedom of speech; 2) equality; and 3) more participation by the people/decisions not imposed on the people. Respondents were asked to rate the level of democracy in BiH on a scale from one (very poor) to five (very good). Only one respondent assessed the democratic system in BiH to be in 'good' shape. All others gave marks between one and three, with votes fairly equally distributed.

Asked whether they would prefer a strong leader or a parliamentary system, two thirds opted for the first option. While it is concerning that young people prefer a more authoritarian system to democracy, these statements to be seen in the light of the current government system which, with the rotating chair of the presidency and its highly decentralised structure, has been extremely vulnerable to blockages to effective and efficient governance. In this context, 'a strong leader' could easily stand for 'one president instead of three' (which is currently the case – one from each constituent people).

Interestingly, a question about suggestions for the right government system for BiH showed a certain level of nostalgia: four respondents said they would prefer 'communism', 'a system like in the old Yugoslavia', or a system 'like under Tito'.

Another question was the degree to which people felt specific rights and values were respected in BiH. Respondents were asked to give scores (not at all – not much – to a certain extent – fully) against the following criteria: freedom of speech, equality/equal treatment, transparency, freedom of movement, gender equality. The results showed a poor mark for the government: Half of all respondents felt that all the values listed were respected either not at all or not much. Equality/equal treatment and transparency were the least respected – more than 75 percent of all respondents thought they were respected not much or not at all. People felt that gender equality was most respected, with more than a third of the respondents claiming that it was respected to a certain extent; 16 percent even thought it was fully respected.

What is the response of young people?

Respondents would like citizens to take advantage of the opportunities that democracy provides them – specifically the vote – in order to change the current political situation: "We have had elections and people have chosen almost the same politicians and same governance. People are to blame for that, not the politicians" (FGD participant, female, 20, Bosnian Serb, student, Banja Luka); "I think that we do live in a democratic society. We chose, and this what we have." (FGD participant, female, 30, Bosniak, unemployed, Sanski Most). "Our way of thinking should be changed. Why do we always vote for the same people, why not vote for someone else. Young people should get a chance. Everything goes in circles, nothing is changing" (FGD participant, male, 26, Bosniak, unemployed, Sarajevo).

The opinion that democracy is still new and needs to be 'learnt' by the people was also expressed frequently: "We learn about democracy in our schools. We know about it in theory, but in practice it is fairly different" (FGD participant, female, 20, Bosnian Serb, student, Banja Luka); "We have to learn more about it. We have to be more democratic at the individual level" (FGD participant, male, 18, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Doboj).

However, the frustrations with the current system lead some youth to question the appropriateness of a democratic system in BiH. Some believe that BiH is not yet ready for democracy: "Democracy is not for us" (FGD participant, male, 20, Bosniak, student, refugee from Čapljina, Mostar); "I think that we were not ready for democracy" (FGD participant, male, 28, Bosniak, unemployed, Sanski Most) "I think it would work better for us if there is dictatorship, we are not mature enough for democracy" (FGD participant, female, 22, Bosniak, student, Sarajevo). Some also want to have a strong single leader: "I do not believe in democracy in BiH. I think this country must have a leader who will take responsibility, rather than three leaders at the same time"(FGD participant, man 28, Bosniak, unemployed, Sanski Most); "It is a utopia that we are all equal, we should have a leader" (FGD participant, female, 23, Bosnian Croat, student, Mostar); "Someone should take over and do the job of being the ruler" (FGD participant, male, 26, Bosniak, unemployed, Novi Travnik).

Mixed feelings about the EU

How do young people see the situation?

In terms of the current situation, there is scepticism about the role and motives of the EU and other international actors in peace and conflict dynamics. While many young people see the international presence as a mitigating factor that helps ensure peace and stability, there is also a perception that some international actors want continued instability in BiH: "I am aware of the geopolitical games of external forces, they don't want to have peace in this region" (June workshop participant). This is an imprecise feeling and young people were not able to provide any justification when challenged.

In terms of the future, young people have mixed feelings regarding BiH's integration into the EU. On the one hand, there is strong support for BiH to join the EU, and people have high hopes of EU integration. On the other hand, people have concerns that being a EU member might bring disadvantages as well. Many think that EU integration has to start from within BiH: "How can we integrate into the EU if we are not even integrated among ourselves?"

There are concerns and doubts about whether joining the EU would be good for people in BiH. The economic crisis in the EU and particularly the dire financial situation of current EU Member States such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal have raised fears. Many are concerned that BiH will be seen as source of cheap labour and that the EU's main interest is the exploitation of BiH's natural resources, such as water and wood, which young people see as one of the few assets that BiH can bring to the EU.

BOX 3: Youth research: Perceptions of young people on European Union

A questionnaire was sent around by the young researchers to canvass young people's perceptions of the EU and democracy in general. 36 young people age 16 to 30 years from Bratunac and Sanski Most responded. Findings from this participatory research complement those from the FGDs and KIIs.

The research showed that young people have high expectations for EU integration in terms of the potential benefits for the economy. People hope for an improvement in employment opportunities and overall economic development within BiH, but also for an improvement in the quality of education. Young people also hope that the EU will bring them peace and stability, and an improvement in democratic practices, such as fairer elections and more freedom of speech. Respondents were a bit more sceptical regarding improvements in corruption and inter-ethnic relations: most of them still expect an improvement, but a considerable number believed that nothing would change if BiH became an EU member.

Most young people either fully agree or to some extent agree that the EU is an important actor. The EU is particularly seen as playing a positive role in BiH's economic development. To a slightly lesser extent, the EU is regarded as an actor that contributes to peace and stability. However, it is interesting to note that a fifth of respondents think that the EU contributes to conflict and tensions. Young people see the EU as an actor interested in the views of youth and this is appreciated. Most people also agree fully or to some extent that the EU treats people equally, irrespective of their ethnic or religious background.

The EU …	fully agree	agree to some extent	disagree	Total
… is an important actor	17	16	4	37
… has a positive impact on economic development	18	11	8	37
… contributes to peace and stability	14	16	7	37
… contributes to conflict and tensions	8	12	15	35
… treats ethnic groups equally	14	16	7	37
… treats religious groups equally	16	14	7	37
… is interested in views of young people	17	12	8	37

Frustration with the media in BiH

How do young people see the situation?

All of the respondents identify the media as the main factor shaping the opinions of youth. Its influence on local conflict dynamics is broadly considered to be negative by all respondents, and the vast majority express a distinct lack of trust in the media. The main points made are that media in BiH is:

- **a strong influence, and that many lack the knowledge or ability to be critical of the information they receive via the media:** "The population is easily manipulated by politicians and media. Because they are young, they don't go outside this area, they only live in their small village, and have this mental image of a huge dragon living behind the hills. That's how the war started in BiH" (KII, Odisej, 24 May 2011, Bratunac). "Their voice is the loudest and [it] leaves a deep imprint on the collective opinion and on inter-ethnic relations" (from youth research on media, Doboj).

- **negative:** even if good things are happening, the media is rarely reporting on positive stories: "they send very pessimistic and negative messages. Even the international media is only interested to hear bad things about Bosnia" (June workshop participant).

- **under political party control and politically biased:** "Media has a big impact, and they are very biased. If you live in one entity and watch local TV, you don't have

an unbiased view" (KII, school representative, 14 May 2011, Doboj). "(…) During the
pre-election campaign one politician openly used his newspaper for his campaign.
TV in the RS is also very bad. They invited only the main party on to a TV show and
somebody called in, asking where the opposition was, and they just cut him off" (KII,
Women to Women, 16 May 2011, Sarajevo). Some respondents suspected that the
media was also deliberately distracting the viewer's attention from important issues
such as unemployment, and rather diverting their attention to things that happened
in the past, or to the private lives of famous tycoons (from youth research on media,
Doboj).

■ **promoting ethnic stereotypes and even stirring inter-ethnic tensions:** "(…)
if I only followed the TV broadcast, without previously socialising with Bosniaks,
I would never wish to be in contact with them. The influence of media is so strong"
(FGD participant, female, 20, Bosnian Serb, refugee from Sarajevo, Bratunac).
"(…)The media remind me of the war, and it is very politicised" (KII, Omladinski
Komunikativni Centar, OKC Banja Luka, 18 May 2011 Banja Luka). "Most of the media
use and exploit information out of context in order to promote inter-ethnic hatred,
especially using the events of the last war" (Research on media, Doboj). Some felt that
while the media does have an inflammatory effect, they probably do not realise the
harm they are doing.

■ **of poor quality:** a lack of investigative journalism, and failure to call to account
people in power and their actions and policies: "There is no investigative journalism,
no analysis of what's happening. It's due to lack of skills. Media is not gender-sensitive
either. The media faculty has a very bad reputation. Students don't study anything
there" (KII, Women to Women, 16 May 2011, Sarajevo). Many felt that the media did
not add any useful information for them: "In addition to the spread of inter-ethnic
hatred and partisan bickering, no useful information can be obtained from the
media"(from youth research on media, Doboj).

**What is the response
of young people?**

The role of media was the focus for one of our young researchers, who carried out
a series of interviews in Doboj specifically on this subject. Ten young people were
interviewed, between the ages of 17 and 30. The interviews were conducted in Doboj,
RS, by the Focus group participant (from Doboj) in July 2011. The respondents were
chosen by the use of 'snowball sampling'.[82]

Youth responds to the divisive and poor quality media by trying to select the sources
they feel are most objective and independent, and seeking out the content that they
feel appeals to them. Many deliberately avoid media coverage of politics, as this is seen
as biased and unreliable, and go for 'neutral' subjects such as sports or the weather – a
further factor that contributes to the disconnect between youth and politics. Youth will
sometimes seek out media coverage from the other entity if it is considered to be of
better quality than local media, or to see how this coverage compares with the one they
usually receive. For more detail, see box 4.

Need to separate religion from politics

Religion is viewed by most of the young respondents as important to their lives. The
majority of participants said that they are religious, and celebrate the religious holidays
with their families. Some respondents (both in RS and FBiH) said that religion for
them is irrelevant and that they are atheists.

**How do young people
see the situation?**

However, youth respondents are concerned that in BiH religion is often abused, and

---

82 Since the research volunteers are not professional researchers, the guidelines given to conduct the interviews were designed
to be simple. The volunteers were asked to interview persons that they did not know personally (that were not their friends),
in order to avoid interviewing only likeminded group of people.

BOX 4: Youth research: Influence of media on shaping young people's opinions

For this research, ten people were interviewed, within the age of 17-30. Interviews were conducted in Doboj, RS. All respondents live in Doboj, but three were born in other places. In terms of ethnic balance, six (declared) were Serbs, one (declared) Bosniak (born in Germany), and the rest did not want to declare.

Which types of media do young people use?

The interviewees use almost all types of media (except radio): print media, internet, and TV. The internet and specifically Facebook provides a diverse range of opinions: when people comment on certain events or groups, it gives an opportunity to learn how different people see the same things. Print media is used, especially during socialising in the cafés, or in the morning.

Why do they choose certain media?

Respondents then were asked to select criteria based on which then they choose to use certain media as a source of information. Their priorities were the following: objectivity, independence, entertainment, programmes about youth issues/by young people, political alliance, provides information faster than others, and quality of information.

"I think that the majority of serious media tries to achieve all these equally, but in leading state media, it can be noticed that the political affiliation is increased, while independence is decreased. Even though all media, in my opinion, lack more quality programmes and shows dealing with youth issues. And if somebody would have to be selected as media who provides more quality and more rapid information, then I would say Croatian media, because, as far as I'm concerned they are the fastest and to some extent reporting with most quality. This also counts for them only if we leave aside inter-ethnic relations. But when sports or weather forecast is in question, they are fastest and most precise, and no one can come near them" (Research on media, Doboj, Bosnian Serb, 26, employed).

Which type of information are they mostly interested in?

Most of them were interested in getting information about sport, culture and the weather. They were specifically not interested in politics and other issues 'that give you a headache' (Research on media, Doboj, Bosnian Serb), because they think media is especially biased when covering politics and policy-related issues. "The first thing I notice and read in media is the sport and culture, because at least I think that these are somehow of interest to someone my age. On the other hand I avoid politics, because I am not necessarily addressed, nor do I want to be" (Research on media, Doboj, Bosnian Serb).

Do they seek out the media perspective of 'the other side'?

When asked if they follow any media from the other political entity or other regions, some said they do not usually watch TV from the other entity, but if it is about sport and culture, they do not mind. The majority admitted that they do sometimes watch TV stations from the other entity, either via cable or the internet. One reason given was that these are of a better quality than the local media. Some follow these specifically in order to compare how different media (Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian) report on the same issues.

used to promote negative messages instead of love and understanding: "Religion is very important to us. The problem is that people interpret religion and religious practice wrongly. They propagate hate, not love and understanding" (FGD participant, female, 19, Bosniak, high school student, Bratunac). "I hear religious leaders spread hatred and intolerance" (FDG participant, male, 25, Bosnian Croat, student, Mostar). "Each religion proclaims love and respect between people, but religion is misused here" (FGD participant, female, 17, Novi Travnik).

This negative role of religious institutions were closely related to the influence of politics: many young people criticise the close relationship between religious communities and institutions and political parties, and many specifically blamed politicians for using religion to manipulate the people. "Religion can be misused, there is in Republika Srpska propaganda of Orthodoxy and that is used by politicians" (FGD participant, female, Bosnian Serb, high school student 17, Trebinje). "Religion is important to me, but I think everyone should be respected. Unfortunately, the religion in BiH occupies a major role in politics" (FGD participant, male, 25, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Trebinje).). "One of the examples of the abuse of religion is when they did not allow having Santa Claus in kindergarten giving presents for the New Year holidays to the kids. Religious leaders have great influence on general policy" (FGD participant, female, 22, Bosnian Croat, student, Sarajevo). The interference of religious leaders in the political life was raised as a critical point in almost all locations, regardless of ethnic or religious background.

The respondents also criticised the influence of religious institutions in the education sector. "It [religion] has a significant role in my private life. I think that religious education should not be a subject in our schools" (FGD participant, female, 19, Bosniak, high school student, Srebrenica). These findings contrast with the predominant views of the older generation:[83] most parents do not object to having religious education for their child, but the younger generation expresses more secular views in this regard.

What is the response of young people?

At an individual level, the attitude of youth towards other religious groups is positive, and this was observed in all groups in both entities. Respondents from both FBiH and the RS side agree that religion is not an obstacle for communication, stating that they have friends from other religious backgrounds, with whom they either share classes, or celebrate different religious holidays together. "In my class there are two Bosniaks and everything is OK. They bring cakes (baklava) to us during Eid. Also, we bring cakes during our religious holidays. We socialise with each other. During religion class, one Bosniak showed us how to pray and everything went well. We were very interested while he was demonstrating it and asked him a lot of questions" (FGD participant, female, 18, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Doboj). Many are friends with youth of other faiths: "I have plenty of friends who are not the same religion as me and we even attend religious classes together" (FGD participant, female, 17, Sanski Most).

All respondents, across all research locations, believe that the way to continue to coexist peacefully is through more information exchange about the different religious/ethnic groups, learning about others' customs and traditions, more inter-ethnic exchange opportunities and more travelling within the entities and regions of BiH. "I go to school in Prijedor (Republika Srpska), and we travel to Greece for an excursion every year and visit monasteries. It would be nice to visit all the cultural monuments, not just the Orthodox [ones]" (FGD participant, female, 17, Sanski Most).

Most respondents want to see a more secular society: for religion to be kept a private matter, with no interference by state institutions or, *vice versa*, religious leaders influencing politics. All were unanimous that religion is a private matter and that personal beliefs should not be used for political manipulation. Most respondents were in favour of a secular state where roles and responsibilities of state and religious leaders are kept clearly separate. "It [religion] is connected to policy and politicians. It is not good. It should be a private matter for each individual" (FGD participant, female, 18, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Doboj). "I believe that religion is a private matter and that it should not interfere in state institutions" (FGD participant, female, 23, Bosnian Croat, student, Mostar).

To address the issue of religious influence in the education system, workshop participants in May 2011 would like to have instead the subject 'culture of religions' introduced throughout the schools system. This subject was in fact introduced[84] in 2008, but not in all schools. The general view is that religious classes taught in schools should cover not only the religion commonly practised, but also other religions and the culture of different religions. "We should learn about all religions, and those who want to learn more about religion should go to the church or the mosque" (FGD participant, female, 19, Bosniak, high school student, Srebrenica).

---

83 For more information, see the report, *Divided schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, (UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 2009), available at www.unicef.org/bih/media_14093.html

84 Presentation about the Inter-religious Council in BiH, http://www.mrv.ba/images/stories/documents/IRC-BiH.pdf, accessed in September 2011

Lack of attention from local administration

How do young people see the situation?

Many respondents feel neglected by the municipal authorities, who they feel do nothing to support them. "They do not have any sensibility towards young people and our needs, constantly saying that they have no money for anything we ask for. They do not allocate any funding for our activities, even for sport. The budget is used only for their salaries" (FGD participant, female, 27, Bosnian Croat, unemployed, Sanski Most). Experience varies between municipalities, depending on the structure of the municipality and people that work there: if staff are personally interested in supporting youth, then young people in that region are more likely to get attention.

It was felt that, particularly in rural areas where the NGOs presence is limited, local government support is important, even for cultural activities or sporting events. "(…) it is important for us, young people, to be supported by the local authorities when it comes to projects in the field of culture and sport" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Sanski Most).

Many criticise municipalities for not fulfilling their obligation to adopt youth strategies and action plans. Where strategies and plans exist, respondents suspect that calls for relevant project proposals are not processed fairly and transparently. Furthermore, often calls are announced too late for people to collect the required documentation for application, or the selection criteria is too exclusive and unrealistic. These issues feed the perception that municipalities do not really care about fair selection and have already chosen the initiative or organisation they favour (KII, youth NGO, Srebrenica). In addition, there are concerns about corruption: "Municipalities are stealing money. They do not support us. There is some budget for youth and its initiatives in the municipality, but we never get anything (FGD participant, female, 19, Bosnian Serb, high school student).

What is the response of young people?

Most young people respond with resignation to this perceived disinterest by municipalities. Some respondents, however, acknowledge that municipalities' under-prioritisation of young people's needs is partly their own responsibility: "Generally speaking young people are passive. Even when they decide to approach officials, if there is any obstacle they immediately give up. There is a strategy and a budget approved for youth in the municipality of Ilidža, but I am sure that 90 percent of youth are not aware of that. There are different opportunities for informal education, i.e., non-compulsory classes, afternoon activities, summer or winter schools, in each high school, but students are not interested" (FGD participant, female, 23, Bosniak, student, Sarajevo).

Criticism of education system

How do young people see the situation?

The discussions in the focus groups and workshops were dominated by the issue of education. Various themes were touched upon concerning both primary, secondary and higher education: the quality and cost of education, textbooks, academic staff, the need for critical thinking, the different types of systems including mono-ethnic schools, the 'two schools under one roof' and the 'National Group of Subjects'.

The role of the school system in dividing the future generations of BiH was intensively discussed among young people at the workshop in June 2011.[85] In particular, the participants were concerned about the National Group of Subjects . They were concerned that different schools teaching different history with different textbooks hinders interaction and dialogue between the ethnic groups. "Speaking about the subject of history in elementary school, I have the feeling that the children here learn one history, their peers in Federation of BH the other one. In this subject everything is

[85] June workshop took place on 17-18 June 2011, in Sarajevo. For more details see annex 1 on methodology

presented in a way so as to suit to one or the other side" (FGD participant, female, 18, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Doboj).

As for secondary education, a 'better quality of education' was raised as part of necessary changes for improving young people's lives in almost all groups. Many are concerned that not everybody has equal access to secondary and higher education, due to financial problems in the current economic crisis. "The right to education is the most important [right]. We finish high school but the problem is if we want to continue our education in some of the colleges. The problem is money. So we cannot attend the college we would like to in accordance to our talents, but we choose those we can afford" (FGD participant, female, 19, Bosniak, high school student, Bratunac).

In addition, the respondents feel that teachers, as part of the older generation raised in Yugoslav times, do not support critical thinking. Teachers are criticised for failing to treat young people as 'smart' enough to ask questions or to challenge their knowledge. This attitude then continues when they graduate and enter the university. "The education system is at fault, because it does not encourage creativity among students"(FGD participant, female, 27, Bosniak, student, Mostar). On the other hand, the lecturers criticise their students for being passive and not challenging them and the older generation in general. "In Bosnia [BiH], student life is a disaster. Professors are like 'little Gods', dictators, whatever they say it needs to be done …" (KII, political party representative who also teaches at the university, 26 May 2011, Sarajevo). Corruption and nepotism were also mentioned as problems in the education system (see separate section on corruption and nepotism below for more details). This has a demoralising effect, making young people think: "why do I need to study well, if I can easily buy a a diploma?" (KII, Narko NE, 16 May 2011, Sarejevo).

What is the response of young people?

The respondents want a better education system. At primary school level, they would like to see a change in the separate curricula. "I think we aren't able to talk about history because we have three histories and it should be one, written by somebody outside, who is neutral" (June workshop participant). "I think that the history book for the school should be written somewhere else not in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Somebody from abroad should write it for us. It should be written on a basis of facts, not on subjective opinion and attitude"(FGD participant, female, 23, Bosnian Serb, employed, Doboj). Indeed, the education system is seen as having important potential to help bridge ethnic divides: "We go to different schools, even to different buildings: Bosniaks have their own schools and the Croats have their schools. We should be together, sitting on the same school benches, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation" (FGD participant, female, 17, Novi Travnik).

To keep the youngsters occupied and interested in various activities, respondents would like to see schools working more with children on their behaviour (KII, school representative, 11 May 2011, Drvar) and encouraging them to enrol in more extra-curricular activities, especially since parents are perceived not to spend enough time with their children because they are busy working. "Definitely education should be a priority. Parents have no time, or some of them are not able to help the children study due to their own lack of education. I think that university students should volunteer to help elementary school students, and set a positive examples to them as well" (FGD participant, female, 22, Bosnian Croat, student, Sarajevo).

The FGD and the June workshop participants suggested having more "informal education", such as summer/winter schools or opportunities for volunteering and internships, and "more education of youth in rural areas. 70 percent of youth live in rural areas so we should pay more attention to them" (June workshop participant). The education in rural areas received particular mention at the workshop, as many young people live in rural areas.

Lastly, the respondents would like to see teachers and the education system

encouraging critical and creative thinking: "[We need] different approaches to education; teachers/professors have a huge influence on youth" (June workshop participant). This has also been highlighted by some teachers and professors interviewed for the research, who criticised the fact that students only learn to reproduce what they hear from teachers or read in their books, but do not learn how to work with that knowledge: "The education system does not encourage students to become analytical minds, to be critical, to ask themselves questions" (KII, professor and political analyst, 24 May 2011, Sarajevo).

Corruption and nepotism – discouraging youth

How do young people see the situation?

Key informants and FGD participants mentioned different types and forms of corruption that they face in everyday life. These include:

- **payments for services that should be provided for free** (as they are paid for by taxes). These services include health care, where people have to give doctors extra money to receive good and prompt treatment, and education. It is not uncommon for students who want good marks to give money to teachers (often in a 'subtle' way, by buying their books). Many universities have a reputation for 'selling' diplomas on demand, "How can you get any kind of diploma in a couple of months? There are six universities in Travnik with 25 faculties! You get used to this, scandals become normal. And young people take on that behaviour" (KII, Catholic School, 19 May 2011, Sarajevo). This behaviour is not only frustrating for young people studying today, but is also expected to have an impact on the future of the country: "In my opinion, universities are directly contributing to corruption because we produce fake experts [those who pay money to pass exams and get their diploma] who will later be in responsible positions, but they don't have the capacity and skills to do their job" (KII, professor and political analyst, 24 May 2011, Sarajevo). This is a widespread problem and authorities are aware of it. "If we learn about corruption in the education sector, we report on it and pass it on to the prosecutor" (KII, police representative, 20 May 2011, Mostar).

- **direct bribes, particularly to the police, instead of paying fines**. This is particularly troubling as this means that the very agencies who are supposed to ensure that anti-corruption laws are implemented are themselves involved in corruption.

- **clientelism and nepotism, which is very common**. A lot of the pre-war power structures in politics and the economy are intact or were formed during or immediately after the war. To find employment, it is important to have the necessary connections, which are usually linked to family ties, ethnicity and political affiliation: "You cannot get a job without good connections or money to pay for a working place" (FGD participant, female, 24, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Banja Luka). "You have people who are in charge of the Bologna process and they can't even speak languages, and those who really know something cannot get into those positions, they did not have money to get to this job, and that's a real problem" (KII, Orthodox Church, 27 May 2011, Sarajevo).

What is the response of young people?

Young people are frustrated with the prevalence of corruption and nepotism, and they criticise the *status quo*. However, it is an aspect of life in BiH that they are accustomed to and have to operate within: so while they do not like it, youth will still turn it to their advantage when necessary or beneficial.

"Why should we learn, when we can pay to get into university and also pay to get diploma? (KII, Narko Ne, 16 May 2011, Sarajevo); "Professors make their students pay (...) and there is no protest in the streets about it" (KII, HDZ, 26 May 20111, Sarajevo). Many young people admitted that while they detest bribery, they still go along with it. For example, they prefer to pay a small bribe instead of a higher fine: "Somehow it suits

us, because it is easier to give 10 BAM[86] than to give 50 BAM to pay the ticket" (FGD participant, female, 20, Bosnian Serb).

While small-scale corruption is the almost daily 'oil that makes the wheels turn', the existence of nepotism can have a dramatic impact on young people's lives, particularly in the current difficult employment situation. "Today it is only possible to get a job through connections, nepotism" (FGD participant, female, 24, Bosnian Croat, unemployed, Drvar). Young people are frustrated at the fact that qualifications, skills and experience count for very little compared to 'who you know'. This acts as a further disincentive to spending money and effort on studying. "Regardless of education and good success, we cannot get a job if we do not know anyone and have no ties of kinship" (FGD participant, male, 17, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Trebinje). "Young people complete their education at universities, but their chances to get a job are minimal. They spend years looking for a job. Highly qualified young people work in cafés as waiters. You cannot get a job without good connections or money to pay for a working place" (FGD participant, female, 24, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Banja Luka).

---

86 Bosnian Convertible Marks (BAM) is a currency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

5

Dealing with the past

How do young people see the situation?

MORE THAN 15 YEARS AFTER WAR ENDED, the younger generation still feel its influence on their lives. "Everybody feels the war, even today" (FGD participant, female, 22, Bosnian Serb, student, Banja Luka). Young people are unanimous in saying that it has a negative impact on their present and future prospects. Although none of the FGD participants took active part in fighting, some of them still have traumatic memories. For example, one of the workshop participants from Sarajevo told the group that once at her friend's birthday party, the sound of the fireworks reminded her of the shootings she used to hear when she was a child, and she instantly started panicking.

As young people did not participate in the war themselves, their perceptions of what happened, why and how, rely entirely on what they are told about it. Almost all the respondents felt that this keeps fear alive and promotes ethnic separation: "We learn from older people, our parents (…) We cannot recall the last war. We are all born into war, some of us in exile. Our parents share their experiences from the war with us, they tell us that 'the others' are not good and that we should not mix with them" (FGD participant, female, 17, Sanski Most). "The older generation who passed through the horrors of war and survived are trying to instil in the younger generations a certain distance towards members of other ethnic groups. It causes a lot of problems. So, the comments from the parents are: Do you really have to socialise with them (members of other ethnic groups)? Or they say: It is OK to socialise, but do not go falling in love with him/her" (FGD participant, female, 18, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Doboj).

It is not just parents who youth hold responsible for keeping alive the stories of war: the media, politicians and teachers were all mentioned: "We remember the war, but we have our own opinions about these events. Media points out the ugly events and massacres. Younger generations are heavily influenced by their parents, teachers and media" (FGD participant, female, 27, Bosnian Croat, unemployed, Novi Travnik). "It is the past that still separates people, but politics and media are supporting this separation even more. If they did not speak about these divisions, people would not think in a nationalist way" (KII, Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 26 May 2011, Sarajevo). "The media is quite instrumental and can easily poison us. The media coverage of ethnic issues is different, they have their own stories" (June workshop participant). "Politicians, our parents and environment as a whole create inter-ethnic tensions here (FGD participant, female, 23, Bosnian Croat, student, Mostar).

The role of teachers in perpetuating ethnic discrimination seems to have been more of a problem in the immediate aftermath of the war: "When I got back here in 1999 I was experiencing prejudice. I was insulted by teachers and students, I was the only Bosnian Serb in the classroom (Croats were predominant at that time here)" (FGD

participant, female, 23, Bosnian Serb, Unemployed). "I returned to Drvar in 1998, and I was together with only two other Bosnian Serb girls in the classroom (the rest were Bosnian Croats). We were insulted even by the teachers. Now it is different" (FGD participant, female, 25, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Drvar). However, not everyone felt that their teachers have moved on: "Unfortunately our teachers openly show hatred towards students from other ethnic groups. That is the case here, in Sanski Most, Prijedor ..." (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Sanski Most). "We asked our professors to take us on a trip to Banja Luka (RS), and he refused because he hates Serbs" (FGD participant, female, 17, Sanski Most).

Some were concerned that young people would not be able to resist the message of fear and hatred, and might end up repeating the same pattern of violence: "Young people are being manipulated by adults (politicians, media, parents, teachers), and I'm concerned that another cycle of conflict might occur in the next 20 years" (KII, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, 12 May 2011, Sarajevo).

What is the response of young people?

On the one hand, our young respondents feel loyalty and solidarity with their parents and families' experience of war. Young people understand that the horrors of war shaped the perceptions, behaviour and attitudes of their parents' generation, and respect those experiences. "My father was a soldier in the war and I will always respect him, but I will make decisions on my own, and will not let him impose his ideas on me. Parents do not allow us to socialise with others, they try to infect us with hatred" (FGD participant, male, 17, Bosnian Croat, high school student, Novi Travnik).

Some openly criticise people from older generations for their negative role, for telling them to hate 'others', rather than encouraging the same inter-ethnic communication that they experienced under life in Yugoslavia. Not many young people proactively challenge these attitudes, but some of them confront their parents openly by disagreeing with them on past events. "I disagree with my dad in many things when we talk about the war. He had terrible problems during the war. Now my father is poisoned by hatred, does not like anyone from other ethnic groups, and does not even want to have any contact with 'them'. (…) I understand why people do not enter into inter-ethnic marriages, but it is necessary to socialise and co-operate between different ethnic groups" (FGD participant, female, 28, Bosniak, unemployed, Sanski Most).

Respondents do not only disagree with their parents when discussing the past, but actively reject their parents' world view by choosing to socialise with people of other ethnic backgrounds. "People were pawns – listening only to politicians. My parents raised me in a nationalist spirit while I was living as a refugee. When I got back to Bratunac I started to socialise with Serbs on my own" (FGD participant, female, 20, Bosniak, unemployed). Respondents realise that what separates them from other groups is much less than what they have in common. "We, the youth, do not care who believes in which God, we are interested in travelling. We meet with each other regardless of what religion we practise and of our ethnic background. We celebrate holidays together. We all face the same problems, and live with our parents because we do not have enough money to rent or by apartments for ourselves" (FGD participant, male, 30, Sanski Most).

"I have two friends, Bosniaks, from Kotorsko (about 10 km from Doboj) and we socialise. Their parents receive me well, as well as mine them. Youth should make more efforts to get rid of ethnic prejudices. There are much more prejudices among older people than [among] youth. For us, the most important [thing] is to socialise. Whether we are of this or another religion is not important to us" (FGD participant, female, 18, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Doboj). In some cases, the will to move on and coexist even defies great personal loss: "I lost my father in the war, but I cannot blame my peers from other ethnic groups for that" (FGD participant, male 18, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Doboj).

There are still those who feel that the divisive influence of the war is too strong to resist: "Everything comes from the family. I have some friends who do not want to accept people of other ethnic background just because of the influence of parents on them" (FGD participant, female, 22, Bosnian Serb, student, Banja Luka). "We are constantly being poisoned by hate, listening to our parents' stories about the war. We are trying to overcome this situation, but we are not strong enough, because we live in a mono-ethnic environment and are influenced by our parents…" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Trebinje).

For this reason, it is felt that efforts still need to be made to overcome the negative influences of parents on their children: "Parents have a huge influence on children. That is why there is a need for work with children. The majority of us are listening to one-sided stories from our parents" (FGD participant, female, 19, Bosniak, high school student, Bratunac). The point was made that in many cases, while the parents' generation may be 'lost', the younger generation can be more easily influenced by positive messages: "There are cases where parents teach their children from an early stage not to socialise with members of other ethnic group.... It is easier to work with children than with their parents" (FGD participant, female, 18, Bosniak, high school student, Bratunac).

When young people are asked about how they try to deal with past, the answers vary. Some of them say that they would like to forget it completely, or just 'sweep it under the carpet'. For others, dealing with what has happened means discussing it more and learning from the past so that it never happens again. "To deal with the war heritage, young people want to have discussions and openly talk about the past – everyone should know what happened in Srebrenica and Vukovar" (FGD participant, female, 26, Bosnian Croat, unemployed, Novi Travnik). Generally, young people see the war heritage as an obstacle to building a new and prosperous future for BiH, and they long to leave the past behind and move forward. Some of the practical suggestions were to organise workshops where they can discuss recent history, and get the opportunity to listen to 'others', to understand the other side of the story as well. "I think it is very important to organise workshops where we can be together and speak freely and, hang out. It is important not to sweep things under the carpet and forget the war and the violent events of war, we need to talk and tell each other openly what hurts us. It is the only way to move forward" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Sanski Most).

The youth, throughout the entire BiH, especially in relation to dealing with past, look to the non-governmental sector to implement more projects that promote reconciliation. "It is essential to organise dialogue seminars between different ethnic groups. Projects dealing with the past should be implemented in order to help us to create a realistic picture of the recent history" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Trebinje). "There is a need for work on projects that are dealing with facing the past. Here we have three truths now" (FGD participant, male, 20, Bosniak, refugee from Čapljina, student, Sanski Most).

6

Youth identity: self and 'others'

GROWING UP IN A COUNTRY SO DEFINED by the preferences, habits and fears of older generations, how do young people in BiH describe themselves and their own identity? What role does ethnicity play? How do they relate to people who are different to them? And what kind of role models do they have?

Young people and ethnic identity: an ambivalent relationship

Young people have mixed and ambivalent feelings regarding their own ethnic affiliation. On the one hand, they feel that they are obliged to identify themselves with one ethnicity and religion against their will, and they resent being put into 'ethnic boxes'. As seen in the previous chapters, this starts in the home, continues at school and throughout adult life. They criticised, for example, the fact that one of the first questions they are asked at school or university is about their ethnicity and religion. Many choose not to respond – similarly in questionnaires for this research some respondents left the field on 'ethnicity' blank. For many, culture and religion is something that is important in their private lives, but not in their interaction with others, and does not play a role in how they want to be perceived by others. "It is important to me to have the freedom to introduce myself by my name without having others humiliate me" (FGD participant, male, 29, Bosniak, unemployed, Novi Travnik). Some also fear they would be seen as 'traitors' if they deviated from the expectations of their ethnic group, for example, if they changed their religion.

On the other hand, young people do feel strongly about their ethnic identity, particularly if they perceive it as being under threat. For example, in the first workshop a heated discussion developed about whether BiH was a state with three languages (that is, with Bosniak, Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb speaking citizens), or whether there was only one language that should be recognised and taught at schools, with regional differences considered as dialects ("although we think that there are differences between the three languages, it is only like [the difference] between British and American English" – June workshop participants from mixed towns). While young Bosniaks from Sarajevo were particularly in favour of abolishing teaching in different languages at schools and argued for a unified curriculum, some ethnic Bosnian Croat participants argued strongly for maintaining cultural diversity: "There is no respect for diversity. I'm not happy. I believe that you can't impose one language and unify the three that we have" (June workshop participant, Bosnian Croat). Others pointed to the difficulties associated with the current system and suggested more

flexible alternatives: "I was at the youth camp (…). Students from the RS had identity cards in Cyrillic, and Bosniaks in Latin. Some people did not understand each other's names. Why don't we learn both letters?" (June workshop participant, Bosnian Serb). Others, again, expressed a willingness to compromise in return for a peaceful future: "I will speak even Serbian language, if Bosnia and Herzegovina is unified and we live in peace" (June workshop participant, Bosniak).

Perceptions about 'others'

How one defines oneself is closely linked to how one sees 'others'; that is, people who are different in terms of ethnicity and religion, origin, sexual orientation or attitudes and behaviour. Relationships to and views of 'others' are characterised by doubt and a lack of knowledge. Our research indicates that while youth want to interact, they are also afraid of how they will be received.

They include regional differences within BiH, or the rural-urban divide, with youth from rural areas perceived as backwards and radical, and urban youth as arrogant and presumptuous – all of them mostly based on the lack of encounter of 'the other'. Statements also indicate that differences can be seen with suspicion or even as 'threatening' – whether it is dyed hair or unusual style of clothing. People who stand out from the crowd are at risk of becoming victims of harassment or peer violence, so many people try to remain invisible, "I think that everybody was exposed to some prejudices. I was exposed because of the type of music and my way of dressing" (FGD participant, female, 20, Bosnian Serb, refugee from Sarajevo, Bratunac).

Generally though, ethnicity remains a major factor for young people, both in terms of how they define themselves and how they see others. Most young people express a strong interest in having more opportunities to meet people from other ethnic groups and other places within BiH. "There are situations where people in our country believe that members of the other ethnic communities are different [from them] in the physical sense, for example, [that they] have three ears … It is sad that people from different places just a few kilometres apart have no communication, they live in mono-ethnic communities" (FGD participant, female, 22, Bosnian Croat, student, Sarajevo).

Statements from young people in the FGDs and during the workshops indicate that it is easier for people belonging to an ethnic majority in a location to be open to contacts and interaction across ethnic divides, and to demand the removal of institutionalised barriers because they feel less threatened in their own identity than those from an ethnic minority. For example, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs said they feel less and less at home in Sarajevo which they perceive as an increasingly 'Bosniak' town. "I think that there is radicalisation of the Bosniak majority in Sarajevo as well. Minorities are marginalised here, and they cannot obtain their rights easily" (FGD participant, female, 22, Bosnian Serb, student, Sarajevo).

At the same time, young people have concerns about how they might be perceived by others, for example, when travelling to a location where mainly people from another ethnic group live. Many of them say they have experienced resentment, or have heard of bad experiences from friends or family members. They fear that others might look down at them because of existing prejudices, or experience hostility if they give their names that might point to their ethnicity, or speak their own language: "I go to school in Prijedor [Prijedor is in Republika Srpska and is inhabited by a majority Bosnian Serb population], and when I introduce myself by saying my name they change their attitude towards me. The reason is simply because my name immediately gives me ethnic and religious identity as Bosniak and Muslim" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Sanski Most).

Young people who come from places that have symbolical association with atrocities and war crimes, such as Srebrenica, feel burdened with this 'legacy' of their own

identity and find it hard to stand up for where they are from and fear stigmatisation. But people from the same ethnic groups also face problems if they are associated with a location that is perceived as being 'from the other side', as this example illustrates: "When there was a football match between Borac (a football team in Banja Luka) and Sarajevo (in Sarajevo), a lot of us Bosniaks supported Borac on Facebook … However, a number of other Bosniaks sent us bad feedback because they perceive Borac as a Serbian team" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Sanski Most).

Particularly in so-called 'divided cities' such as Mostar, Novi Travnik (and to a certain degree also in Sarajevo), it is still the norm to keep to one's side of town, or to visit cafés only frequented by people from one's own ethnic group. Often people feel safe and secure in 'their' part of town, but less so in 'the other' part: "I'm from Novi Grad (in Sarajevo municipality). I feel physically safe in the local community where I live, while in other parts of the city I do not feel (safe)" (FGD participant, female, 22, student, Sarajevo). "I feel unsafe because in our city there are invisible boundaries between the lower (Bosnian Croat) and upper (Bosniak) part of the city (FGD participant, female, 17, high school student, Novi Travnik). "Since Mostar is a divided city, I feel safe on the side where we belong" (FGD participant, male, 20, student, Bosniak, Mostar). Some respondents feel free to go anywhere in BiH without fearing for their safety, but others had security concerns related to places away from home, particularly when the majority of the population there is from another ethnic group. "When I go to the big city, I do not feel safe because I do not know people there. That's why I feel afraid and unsafe in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar" (FGD participant, female, 17, high school student, Trebinje). "When I was in FbiH, I felt uncomfortable because of different stories I had heard about inter-ethnic issues. That is why I felt scared to say who I am (Bosnian Serb) because of the reaction of somebody who is Bosniak. But I was in Sarajevo and everything went well" (FGD participant, female, 17, high school student, Doboj). Often those fears were not based on specific incidents or negative experiences, but on hearsay or media reporting: "Generally I feel safe everywhere … I think that the media contributes to creating a distorted picture about the safety of different groups in various parts of the town" (FGD participant, male, 26, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Trebinje).

However, it seems that in these places, boundaries are becoming more blurred, and that people feel more comfortable crossing over to the 'other side'. At the same time, while people might mix spatially, they tend to keep the company of friends from their own ethnic groups. In cases where people mix and interact with each other, they have developed certain coping mechanisms and ways of behaviour to avoid getting into difficult situations. For example, they avoid saying their names if these might give away their ethnic identity; or they avoid conversations that touch upon any potentially contentious topics, such as religion, ethnicity, politics or the past.

Many FGD participants feel that the situation has improved over time, and feel less confronted by resentment and prejudice than immediately after the war – and that to a certain extent, they take prejudices less seriously: "Yes, I felt the consequences of prejudice from others toward me in fifth grade in elementary school. Now it is funny, but before it hurt" (FGD participant, female, 29, Bosnian Croat, unemployed, Sanski Most). People are less wary about meeting each other and 'crossing sides' than in the immediate aftermath of the war, and it is easier to share the same place. It is questionable whether this has *de facto* resulted in a considerable increase in inter-ethnic interaction among young people, or rather merely a less fearful form of coexistence – sharing a place but living separate lives as much as possible.

Role models for young people

Who do young people identify with or look up to? Many of them do not have an answer to this question. Some mention sporting figures or musicians. However, as in most other aspects of life, role models are closely linked to one's ethnic identity. "Edin Džeko [a famous Bosniak footballer, now playing for Manchester City] is a role model for a lot of young guys. But for many others he's just a Muslim guy, and they don't care about the values he carries. It's hard to have a good model here. Dubioza Kollektiv [an ethnically mixed rock band] … all open minded kids like them, but not nationalists" (KII, Omladinski Komunikativni Centar (OKC) Abrasevic, 20 May 2011, Mostar).

Many of those interviewed were concerned that young people are inspired and follow role models promoted through the media, particularly through 'turbo folk'.[87] "Turbo folk is popular here, it promotes a more materialistic world, and also portrays women badly. All you need is to just look good to be famous and get naked, and if you are ugly and have no money, you can't be successful. And this defines the development of values …" (KII, Omladinski Komunikativni Centar (OKC), 18 May 2011, Banja Luka). People were concerned about the impact these role models would have on young people, their understanding of gender roles, what is expected of them in life and how to get there. "Especially boys need to prove their masculinity, but there are no positive role models for boys. Girls are supposed to be 'sexy and blonde'. In the future, girls might look only at their beauty and go for 'cheap prostitution' to get material wealth, and boys might get more aggressive and macho" (KII, Foundation One World SEE, 12 May 2011, Sarajevo).

These worries are substantiated by people turning to inappropriate or even criminal behaviour to get what they cannot afford, and further confirmed by cases where criminals are seen to succeed in life, such as Celo Ismet Bajramovic, a member of a criminal group who gained money during and after the war and was admired by young men particularly from rural areas up to his death by suicide. "Youth can see them as role models and start smoking, skipping school, stealing and selling illegal items to be like them" (KII, police representative, 10 May 2011, Sanski Most). Adults, and particularly teachers, expressed hopes that they themselves could serve as role models through good, respectable behaviour, but were also aware of the challenges: "How can a teacher be a role model when pupils see that teachers are struggling to sustain themselves economically, while other people without education who don't work much earn much more?" (KII, school representative, 23 May 2011, Srebrenica).

Respondents were critical that, in contrast to other countries, society in BiH was not providing and promoting positive role models: "Media should focus on positive role models; in Croatia there was a spot with sport stars and musicians speaking up against violence" (KII, Foundation of Local Democracy, 12 May 2011, Sarajevo).

---

87 Turbo-folk is a specific genre of pop-folk music popular across the Balkans. It originated in Serbia, and for many is associated with the Milošević era. But more than political, it is known for glamorising the image of artificial beauty, expensive cars and jewellery, and promoting an ideal for making a lot of money quickly and without much work.

7

Young people as actors

THE VAST MAJORITY OF YOUTH IN BIH play no active role in shaping society – for the better or worse. "Apathetic" was probably the word most used by key informants and by the young FGD participants to characterise the response of youth in BiH today. There is general agreement that young people do not take an active role in society and do not seek to bring about change through their own initiative. This was often stated by key informants, with a certain level of despair and frustration, particularly when the lack of engagement and enthusiasm concerned issues that were of direct interest to young people. "When I was young, I wanted to see Yugoslavia, Italy, Hungary, Germany … But today, the furthest young people go is the nightclub. These young people lack this dimension: they have no interaction with persons that are different. They refuse to communicate with people from other ethnic groups" (KII, police representative, 13 May 2011, Banja Luka). "I'm starting to feel angry with youth … in 2010, the Ministry of Education in Sarajevo Canton promised that they would provide free tickets for public transport to students, but later they refused to fulfil their promise. The student union organised demonstrations and announced them on Facebook. Approximately 5,000–6,000 people on Facebook said they would attend, but in the end only 500 came. That is disappointing!" (KII, OIA, 25 May 2011, Sarajevo)

Youth are very aware and critical of themselves, their environment and situation, but generally do not take action to change things. The reasons given were manifold. First and foremost, young people generally lack the confidence that their actions will be successful, so are reluctant to even try. This was blamed partly on the still influential 'socialist culture', in which any kind of change must be initiated and/or approved by the authorities. Grassroots initiatives are not rewarded, and in fact are more likely to be penalised. "There is a history [from Yugoslav times] of not taking public space and protesting" (KII, Foundation One World SEE, 12 May 2011, Sarajevo). Many young people are not used to taking the initiative and have never been taught to think critically, analyse the situation and make suggestions for improvement. Indeed, the more conservative parts of the education system seem to actively discourage critical thinking – an approach that is heavily criticised by more progressive teachers and professors.

This lack of confidence means that logistical and bureaucratic hurdles are seen as insurmountable obstacles. "People are fragmented [spread across the country], and infrastructure to get from one place to another is poor; otherwise people might [at some point] come together for a 'small revolution'" (KII, Foundation One World SEE, 12 May 2011, Sarajevo). "How to pass through the bureaucratic procedures? You need to fill out some forms when you organise a public gathering". Sometimes, previous negative experiences has led to a "fear of failure that hinders any activity; a lot of initiatives were taken, but most of them failed, and youth is discouraged. A lot of chances have been missed" (June workshop participant). Some were also concerned

about whether the changes they call for will meet everyone's approval: " … if we bring about a change by this protest, will people support us and be happy about it?!" (June workshop participant).

The fear of negative consequences is also a big factor. There is the fear of social consequences: of being singled out as a 'troublemaker'. But somewhat concerningly, many expressed concerns that engagement, especially when it is related to calls for bigger social or political changes, might have negative consequences for individuals and family members. This includes concern for ramifications at school. "There is a fear that if we are active, our professors would be subjective towards us and it would negatively affect our grades" (June workshop participant). Some feared that family members employed in the public sector, but also in the private sector (given political connections that seem to exist as almost everywhere) would lose their job, which is a big risk in times of high unemployment. "It is important that we can say our opinion in public. Adults are afraid to say what they really think, because if they do not support the ruling party they will lose their jobs. We cannot exercise our basic rights" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Sanski Most). Many young people feel particularly discouraged by their parents. "Everybody is saying that we can not say things openly. Our parents teach us to be incorporated into the mass"(FGD participant, female, 22, Bosniak, student, Sarajevo). It is an indication of the strongly politicisation of all segments of society, and of how little trust people have in the state and its institutions, that young people feel so vulnerable and restricted in their rights.

There were also concerns that protests might disturb the social and political balance, even leading to violence. "If you organise a public gathering, there is a risk that the crowd becomes uncontrollable" (June workshop participant). In fact, maintaining 'peace and quiet' at any cost seems to be a key motive not to take to the streets: a notion that is probably transferred from parents to children.

Opinion is divided as to how to deal with this passivity and apathy. Some people feel that a complete generation change is necessary to overcome the frustration and passivity (June workshop participant). Others suggested individuals can demonstrate through their actions that change is possible (June workshop participant). Some see long-term engagement with young people and youth involvement in processes over many years as crucial to secure their engagement: "it is easy to inspire young people and to get them involved and interested, but you have to keep up the momentum. You have to give them guidance and assistance on what they can do, and how they can be creative" (KII, GIZ, 24 May 2011, Sarajevo).

Young people as 'positive actors': volunteering, activism and politics

In spite of the high level of (self-) criticism, we found that, surprisingly, many young people are taking part in youth activities or are volunteers, or were interested in such activities, as long as someone else organises them. Many of these activities are either apolitical, or outside mainstream politics. For example, young people are interested in working with the elderly or other social initiatives, sports and culture, or they get engaged on environmental issues. "There is much more interest also among young people [in environmental activities]; it is not big in the political discourse, but is in the social discourse" (KII Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 14 June 2011, Sarajevo). In all FGDs, there were respondents who had participated at least once in initiatives bringing young people from different regions, religions or ethnicities together, whether it was in projects encouraging general exchange and interaction, or in specific initiatives aimed at dealing with the past or reconciliation. Across the board, participants had enjoyed this experience and found it valuable. They called for more such activities and to involve more people from diverse backgrounds more frequently or for longer periods of time.

In fact, the short duration and often 'one-off' character of such important initiatives

was criticised by many, who pointed out that this is an obstacle to sustainable and longer-term impact. Key informants from a CSO and an international implementing organisation explained how they have been able to motivate young people to work as volunteers over a long period of time, which in some cases even results in young people deciding to work in a profession related to youth or social work. "If you give youth the chance to express themselves, this is sufficiently motivating. After some time they become leaders and are known with other municipalities too … One 17-year-old volunteer was elected President of the Youth Council of BiH" (KII, ToPeeR, 14 May 2011, Doboj). "Some of those who went through our training [a youth leader training programme] have decided to make a career in the youth sector, some of them even run some of the Youth Centres" (KII, GIZ, 24 May 2011, Sarajevo). CSOs and youth organisations, including many of those interviewed for the research, have employees who are young and engaged, and trying to change BiH in a positive way.

Yet young people who take initiative to achieve and change something are few, and often have been engaged in youth activities as participants for a long time before taking on a more active role. They have to overcome a lot of obstacles to make activities happen, and to push for changes at the higher level. "You have to be more diligent if you want to achieve something. Last year, I did a project and went to some organisations asking to assist financially, and only the seventh time was I successful. We have to erase the thinking that 'we, youth, can't do anything'" (June workshop participant). Young people often make use of new technology, such as Facebook, for their activities. Nevertheless, often their efforts fail because of a lack of public interest. "There was a case when one kid who was ill, was not accepted in hospital in another canton and he died because of it. [To raise awareness on this issue] we created Facebook groups, raised some money and printed leaflets. We sent this information to media and they did not report on it" (June workshop participant).

There are formal structures and mechanisms in place through which young people can participate to strengthen the voice of youth and to contribute to decision-making. These include: student/pupils' councils at schools, with a council network in each entity; student associations and unions at university level; party youth organisations; specific youth sections in the Federation of Unions [an umbrella organisation for labour unions] (KII, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 19 May 2011, Sarajevo) or youth councils in the municipalities. However, youth from the June workshop and key informants pointed out that in many municipalities, youth councils only exist on paper, but no funding is provided to them; and that political influence is widespread, particularly in student unions and associations.

> **BOX 5: Youth research: Young people and politics**
>
> The researcher from Sanski Most looked into what young people's perceptions of politics and politicians. Overall ten young people were interviewed, out of which, four representatives were from CSOs and youth/student organisations and only six interviewees were directly involved in politics. While the findings are specific to one location and cannot be taken as representative, they provide an interesting snapshot on the relationship between youth and politics. The findings are complemented by interviews conducted by Saferworld with young politicians and other key informants, and discussions at the June workshop (see annex 1 on methodology for more details).
>
> The statutes of most political parties envisage youth membership of 20–30 percent in the party organs, some such as the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDP-BiH) has an even higher percentage of 35 percent (KII, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 19 May 2011, Sarajevo; KII, SDP-BiH youth forum, 14 June 2011, Banja Luka). In some political parties, there is a recognition (at least in their rhetoric) that youth are an important factor in political life and should be given more influence within the party structure, and that young people who do not have a political history could be an asset for the next elections (KII, "Party for BiH" (PBiH), 26 May 2011, Sarajevo). But how do young people engage and operate in political life?
>
> **What motivates or would motivate young people to join a party or become politically engaged?**
>
> Some, particularly the younger respondents, voice a genuine wish to change things, to actively contribute to improving the situation in BiH. "(In the future, I would like to engage politically) mostly to help the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the people of my town. Because I am sure that I would not be like other politicians, and not look for my own gain" (interview 6, female

Bosniak student, 17, not a party member, Travnik). However, most young people approach the question of party membership from a much more pragmatic point of view. They look mainly at the benefits such a step would bring them: as party membership means access to employment, connections that might be helpful for the future, and other opportunities such as travel to other countries. "I think that becoming a politician is desirable for young people because they earn a lot of money; but parties don't offer a lot of incentives. The behaviour and attitudes of older colleagues is quite counter-productive, they want to remain in their positions" (KII, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 19 May 2011, Sarajevo). Political vision seems to play a minor role.

Do young politicians have a chance to make their voice heard?

There are doubts as to how much influence young politicians can wield in a system dominated by the older generation. Many key informants claimed that young people who want to make a career in politics need to follow the party line – or more precisely, that of the party leader. "The older generation of politicians does not give a chance to the younger generation. If you want to step up, you have to do what your political leaders say" (KII, SDP-BiH youth forum, 14 June 2011, Banja Luka). Where young politicians claim that they co-operate with their more senior colleagues in equal partnerships, and that their opinions are respected, they also admit that this is an exception even within their own party. As a norm, "senior politicians want to keep all positions … (in our party), senior politicians are the brain; we, youth, are the arms, we do everything they say" (KII, HDZ youth organisation, 26 May 2011, Sarajevo). In this regard, young people engaging in politics have criticised a lack of solidarity among their peers, who might speak out critically against their party elders and take joint decisions that are independent of the party line, but in the end fall in line with the party in order not to be seen as 'trouble makers' by party leaders. As one of the young researchers/member of one of the FGDs said, "At my faculty, we've established a student group of political scientists and we met several politicians. I asked critical questions and was praised for my courage, but soon all these people (members of the student group) joined the parties and my frustration increased. There is a lack of solidarity" (June workshop participant, male, Bosnian Croat).

What kind of issues do young political activists focus on?

Research carried out by some of the young researchers showed that older politicians are not trusted by young people to address youth issues, beyond making promises before elections, and providing scholarships to motivate young people to vote for them. Young party members are much more aware of young people's concerns, but do not feel in a position to address them, particularly the more complex issues such as unemployment. However, some are trying to raise awareness on youth issues with their senior colleagues: "As young politicians, we are trying to convince party colleagues to pay more attention to education, employment of young people, but I think that's not enough" (interview 5 with young politician, 24, Sanski Most). Others are supporting youth initiatives, such as the rehabilitation of playgrounds, or by trying to get municipalities to support youth issues.

Are young political activists more open to 'the other side' than the older generation?

Some of the key informants who are working with young politicians, but also young politicians themselves, have observed that once young people overcome their stereotypes against peers from other parties – often through joint meetings or seminars organised by CSOs or political foundations – they are able to discuss constructively and often agree on policy issues across party lines. "Young politicians don't have a problem talking across party lines. Older politicians are from the war generation, they have problems communicating with each other" (KII, SDP-BiH youth forum, 14 June 2011, Sarajevo). However, it seems that young politicians can only discuss issues with each other openly in seminars arranged outside the party context, but that they will fall back behind the party line once they are back in a more official setting.

Young people as 'negative actors': violence and aggression

Based on the research findings, most young people in BiH fall into two categories: passive or with a tendency towards being positive actors. However, a minority of youth end up as 'negative actors', in that they become involved in crime or delinquency, or behave aggressively or even violently towards others. There is a perception among young people, as well as older respondents, that youth are more aggressive nowadays than in the past, and that juvenile delinquency is on the rise. However, the existence of radical (nationalist, racist, religious) groups hardly featured in the respondents' discussions. This might be for several reasons: it could be that there is not much interest in radical groups (and they are not considered to be a problem); there is a lack of information about them; or that young people felt uncomfortable talking about them, either because they are tired of being asked about negative things (an impression the researchers had several times), or because of fear. If the latter, this would be an area of concern requiring more in-depth research.

Types of violence and aggression

Different manifestations of aggressive behaviour were mentioned by the young respondents. Most youth aggression and violence is seen as being directed against peers at school and on the street, and less linked to ethno-nationalist or religious motives today than in the past. Instead, victims are mainly youth and children who are seen as 'different' in one way or another. However, once tensions are there, ethnicity or religion is often used as means to escalate and sustain violence. "Inter-ethnic tensions are not the motive for conflicts and violence, but they are used during the escalation of conflict" (FGD participant, female, 21, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Doboj). The same point was made about hooliganism among sports fans. BiH has witnessed several serious cases of football violence in the past few years. One notorious and frequently quoted incident occurred in 2009 in Široki Brijeg, when a 24-year-old football fan was killed and others injured in clashes between fans of two rival teams. Tensions mainly arise from sporting rivalry, and some of the biggest rivalries are between clubs with fans from the same ethnic group. Where there is also an ethnic difference between the fans, this can be used to rile the crowd and poison the atmosphere. "There is a fan club called 'Vojvode'. There is a part of town called Čaršija inhabited by Bosniaks only. So, if someone who is not Bosniak goes to Čaršija, there is a huge possibility they will be physically attacked, and *vice versa* – if some Bosniak come to the part of town inhabited by Serbs" (FGD participant, male, 18, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Doboj). A civil society respondent working with youth explains: "Depending on where you grow up and which ethnic community you belong to, you join a specific group [fan club]. Conflicts between those groups are not specifically ethnically motivated, but they play out that way"(KII, ToPeeR, 14 May 2011, Doboj). As many of the hooligan groups use ethno-nationalist slogans, hooliganism is frequently portrayed as an indicator of conflict and ethnic hatred. However, as elsewhere in the world, the underlying causes are often social. Given the high rates of youth unemployment in BiH and the social pressures affecting young people, hooliganism is likely to continue to draw in youth – primarily young men who use this as an opportunity to vent their frustration with the social situation.

However, while the respondents felt that physical inter-ethnic violence was less pronounced they noted that verbal violence and 'hate speech' are prevalent in internet forums, blogs or social networks such as Facebook. "There are plenty of ugly comments on Facebook, especially in the field of ethnic and religious affiliation" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Sanski Most). Local and international organisations are increasingly concerned about this trend and have started a number of initiatives to raise awareness and counter 'cyber hate speech'. A study undertaken by OSCE, "the Analysis on Combating Hate Crime in Cyber Space" (unpublished at the time of writing) names a number of Facebook and YouTube groups/discussions that spread and promote hatred against other ethnic groups, using threats that are related to the war, but also insults of a sexual nature or linked to family honour.

While there were few clear differences in terms of attitudes and perceptions between the different categories of respondents (age, gender, urban/rural, and so on), there were clear gender differences when it came to physical aggression and violent behaviour. Boys and young men are more likely to be perpetrators of violence (peer, domestic and probably gender-based), but also more likely to be victims of peer violence. It was seen as rare for girls to use physical violence against others.

Factors leading to aggressive behaviour

While respondents stressed that ethnic differences are most often not the root cause of youth aggression and violence, they discussed other underlying factors that they felt contributed to violence, including social and cultural factors, but also influences from the home.

Domestic violence

In all FGDs, domestic violence was mentioned as a widespread problem, but one little talked about. Key informants working with young people described domestic violence as one reason why young people displayed and accepted aggressive behaviour more easily, as many who had experienced violence at home saw it as a normal way of behaviour: "Violent boys learn this behaviour from their fathers, they consider violence against women as normal" (KII, Foundation of Local Democracy, 12 May 2011, Sarajevo). Key informants emphasised that many young people do not 'recognise' violent and aggressive behaviour because they never receive any guidance on what is right or wrong from their family and society. Thus, young people can easily become victims of violence without being aware that they are treated in a way that is unacceptable, or even perpetrators of violence without knowing that this is morally wrong and constitutes a criminal offence.

Families at risk were often described as 'dysfunctional': for example, families under high economic and social pressures/hardship or families in which one or both parents were abusing alcohol, drugs or illegal substances (KII, Foundation for Local Democracy, 12 May 2011, Sarajevo; KII, NDC Prijedor, 19 May 2011; KII, police representative, 19 May 2011, Sarajevo). BiH's recent history adds an extra dimension to this; with war veterans constituting a vulnerable group, often traumatised by their war experiences and unable to deal with the stress. In addition, they are often unemployed and have problems functioning in society. Research on how insufficient reintegration and rehabilitation/war trauma impacts on domestic violence in post-conflict situations is inadequate.[88] The assumption made by key informants is that these are factors that favour the development of violent and aggressive behaviour at home. Thus, as in other contexts, domestic violence is passed on from one generation to the next as victims become perpetrators. Our respondents believe that it is likely that this will have repercussions for wider parts of society as the economic and social downturn continues. It is estimated that real numbers for domestic and gender-based violence are much higher than the official statistics, as it is still a socially stigmatised subject that is not talked about openly.

Social problems and substance abuse

The abuse of substances, particularly alcohol and drugs, was mentioned by key informants and FGD participants as one reason why young people, particularly men, become aggressive and violent, and commit drug-related crime. "The availability of alcohol is behind the rise in the number of young people who are violent" (KII, ToPeeR, 14 May 2011, Doboj). "The acts conducted are more severe, more violent, with extensive usage of drugs and alcohol" (KII, OSCE, 14 May 2011, Bratunac). The social and economic context is also seen as playing a considerable role, either because people drown their frustrations in alcohol, or because they use aggression and violence to let off steam: "That's the way they express their frustration, by using more drugs and alcohol, because otherwise they are silent. The violent incidents are … also due to bad social and economic background" (KII, "Party for BiH", 26 May 2011, Sarajevo). "The social framework needs to be considered: transitional problems, drugs, access to information, unemployment and lack of goals" (KII, police representative, 13 May 2011, Banja Luka). If the economic and employment situation continues to deteriorate, social problems are likely to affect more young people in BiH.

Acceptance of aggressive behaviour

Respondents felt that aggressive behaviour was perceived as normal by some young people, and is often not condemned by peers. On the contrary, particularly for young men, displaying such behaviour or carrying weapons (see below) is in some cases seen as a status symbol and a way to earn respect from others: "… young people believe that by having weapons they immediately become important" (FGD participant, female,

---

[88] Catani C, *War at Home – a Review of the Relationship between War Trauma and Family Violence* (University Bielefeld, 2010).

26, Bosnian Croat, unemployed, Novi Travnik). Some key informants expressed worries that movies or music, particularly turbo folk, might further promote such kinds of behaviour, and that young men might feel pushed to correspond with these (perceived) social expectations and resort to violence and criminal behaviour to make quick money.

The availability of small arms, light weapons and cold weapons

The cultural acceptance (in some circles at least) of aggressive and 'macho' behaviour is particularly worrying when coupled with the availability of small arms and light weapons. Weapons in the hands of young people seem to be perceived as normal by young people themselves. Many young people and key informants we talked to told us about their own experiences of peers or students bringing weapons (both firearms and cold weapons such as clubs or knifes) or explosives such as grenades to cafés, school or university. "The problem is that everything you get on the street, you can also get at university. You can get drugs, weapons, sex/prostitution" (KII, Atlantic Initiative, 24 May 2011, Sarajevo). "We have a lot of weapons but families don't know that we carry weapons; parents generally do not know much about what happens with their children. The problem is that carrying weapons is not sanctioned by the state" (June workshop participant). Many of these weapons are said to be remnants of the war and can be found in many families; and taken by young people (particularly young men) without their parents knowing. It also seems to be easy to buy weapons. "Weapons are cheap here and easy to buy" (FGD participant, male, 17, Bosniak, high school student, Novi Travnik). The link was also made to feelings of insecurity: "All kinds of weapons are possible to find here. Most young people have some kind of weapon because they feel unsafe" (FGD participant, male, 25, Bosniak, unemployed, Novi Travnik).

It seems that for young men in particular, weapons act as a status symbol, enabling them to be accepted and admired by peers and to feel important: "I think that the system of values is disrupted in general. People pretend to be important, and bring weapons into the bar and they easily become aggressive if they are drunk" (FGD participant, male, 18, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Drvar). Weapons, particularly firearms, are seldom used in fights between young people. However, weapons are often found in connection with other crime and offences. "There are not many cases of young people using weapons, but sometimes we find weapons in young men's cars. If we search for drugs, we often find weapons" (KII, police representative, 20 May 2011, Mostar). "We face a disturbed system of values, young people believe that by having weapons they immediately become important." (FGD participant, female, 26, Bosnian Croat, unemployed, Novi Travnik). This easy availability of weapons contributes to a feeling of insecurity among youth, and citizens in general,[89] and increases the risk of conflicts leading to violence.

---

89 KII police representative, 13 May 2011, Banja Luka; KII police representative, 14 May 2011, Doboj ; KII police representative, 17 May 2011, NGO and school representative Novi Travnik ; KII police representative, 19 May 2011, Sarajevo; KII police representative, 20 May 2011, Mostar.

8

Young people and the question of future conflict

Possibility of new conflict

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS about the resurgence of violence and the likelihood of renewed conflict. These differences were not linked to a 'category' of respondents, but were found across younger and older respondents, women and men, and respondents from mono-ethnic and mixed communities, and different ethnic groups.

The majority of respondents felt that the prospect of war was unrealistic, and certainly on the scale of the last war. It was felt that decision makers would not allow it to happen: they had gone through the horrors of the 1990s, they understood that war did not bring anything good. "I think we learned enough from the previous war. Nobody will want to have conflict again. We have to be grateful that we are alive" (June workshop participant, Bosniak). In addition, it was felt that the international community would not allow it: "As long as the EU and others are present here, there will be no war, but we do not know what will happen when they leave" (June workshop participant). "The OHR is the guarantee for peace; they provide security and we do not know what will happen when they leave. But I do not think they will leave in the next 8–10 years, and by that time we will be ready to enter the EU" (June workshop participant, Bosniak).

However, a considerable number of respondents expressed doubts: "If you had asked people right before the war, they did not think that there would be war, but it broke out anyway" (June workshop participant). Only a few respondents thought that the root cause of large scale unrest or conflict might be inter-ethnic tensions, but many believed that, once started, a conflict would play out along ethnic lines. This is similar to the situation described above, where respondents felt that aggression and violence between individuals was not caused by ethnic differences, but could acquire an ethnic dimension. Different potential root causes and triggers for renewed conflict were mentioned:

■ **Provocative political acts**
For example, the referendum in the RS was mentioned as a factor that could fuel conflict.[90] Generally, young people feel that it is up to their politicians whether or

90 It is interesting that this was raised at the FGD conducted in Banja Luka and Trebinje, RS, within mono-ethnic (Serbian) group. Given the media influence, this might be expected more in FBiH.

not another war will break out. Politicians' use of hate speech and incitement of intolerance are seen as a potential cause of conflict. "At this point it is a very unstable and tense political situation here. Politicians provoke hatred by manipulating the passive population. It is necessary to work with young people in order to protect them from various nationalistic manipulations" (FGD participant, female, 17, Bosnian Serb, high school student, Trebinje).

■ **The influence of a radical minority**
Some youth are concerned that although the majority of people are against a new war, there might be just a tiny minority who want to start conflict again, and that this radical minority could be enough in an environment where people are easily manipulated, mainly for fear of becoming victims. "I think that for renewed conflict, it would take only one percent of people who would like to fight and because of them others, who do not want it, would be forced to take weapons in their hands too" (FGD participant, female, 24, Bosnian Serb, unemployed, Banja Luka).

■ **The tense environment**
Some respondents felt that years of political crisis has created an environment of fragility and fear, and that it would just take a small spark to start a new conflict. For example, one of the participants of the workshop mentioned that if somebody in front of the BBI centre (a square in the centre of Sarajevo) shouted to people that Serbs have organised themselves in Banja Luka and they are coming to Sarajevo, people would arm themselves (June workshop participant, Bosniak).

■ **The economic crisis and resulting social unrest**
The state of the economy was listed by many as a potential reason and trigger for new violence: "Class, social unrest is possible. I work as a waiter and listen every day to people who are influenced the most by the financial crisis" (FGD participant, male, 28, Bosnian Serb, Bratunac). Key informants not only from civil society and the international community, but also representatives from the administration, particularly the police, confirmed these views: some of them indicating their sympathy for protests against further economic decline. While people agreed that economic hardship was a problem all ethnic groups had to struggle with equally, and there were no statements that one ethnic or religious group was advantaged or taking advantage over others, concerns were raised that general social frustration might spill into broader conflict, and that this might in the end lead to inter-ethnic confrontations. "If the economic situation and frustration of young people continues, this might become a matter of concern" (KII, police representative, 11 May 2011, Drvar). "The social, economic and political context here is unemployment and poverty … These are ideal predispositions for expressions of frustration and violence for young people who are dissatisfied with society and the general conditions" (KII, police representative, 20 May 2011, Mostar). "There is a potential for social unrest, and it's only a step from social to national unrest" (KII, police representative, 13 May 2011, Banja Luka).

What would the role of young people be?

One of the concerns of the older generation in BiH is that youth, who do not personally remember the horrors of war, but who have grown up in a divided society, might be more susceptible to the messages of any leader trying to incite hatred and inter-ethnic violence. However, when asked about what their own role would be in such a situation, the response from youth was a unanimous and overwhelming rejection of violence. Respondents stress that they do not see themselves as potential triggers of or leading renewed conflict, but rather see 'others', either their parents' generation or politicians, as the potential instigators of renewed conflict. FGD participants and those youth participating in later workshops strongly rejected the idea of renewed violence. They stressed that they do not want conflict, and think this applies for most young people. "I would not like to have conflict again, I was five years old when the war started and I still remember a lot" (June workshop participant, female, Bosnian Serb).

If a violent conflict were to unfold, the majority of respondents said that young people would choose to flee to other European countries. They are afraid of violence, they have no wish to fight each other, and have seen that those who left the Balkans during the war are much better off today, both psychologically and economically. "If someone asks people like us about conflict, we would not choose conflict. We [people] should be the ones to prevent any kind of conflict. If the war starts, most young people will run away because the ones who left during the previous war are doing much better than the ones who stayed" (June workshop participant). "I'd go as well because I remember war very well, I lost some relatives, my uncles ran away and their children are fine, but I'm the one left with trauma" (June workshop participant, Bosnian Croat). "In the case of conflict, I would take my brother and run away" (June workshop participant, female, Bosnian Serb). On the second workshop day, some of the female participants mentioned that the previous night they had promised each other not to fight each other should inter-ethnic conflict break out – probably just a moment of friendship, but also a clear sign that encouraging and fostering positive interaction can have a powerful impact. Despite this resistance to enter into conflict, there seemed to be few ideas as to how to prevent a conflict from breaking out should tensions rise. The attitude here is much more along the lines of: 'This is your conflict, we don't want to have anything to do with it and, if we have to, we will leave the country rather than fight'. The research did not seek out the opinions of extremist or radicalised youth, who might hold less absolute views on the use of violence, but the overwhelming picture gained from the research was one of pacifism.

9

Conclusions and recommendations

YOUNG PEOPLE IN BIH ARE BURDENED with a bad reputation – passive and apathetic at best; at worst, ready for violence and conflict. Our research findings, however, point to different characteristics: young people have the potential to engage constructively for the future of BiH and to overcome inter-ethnic barriers in the long-term, if they are provided with sufficient support and encouragement, and if they can see the results of constructive engagement.

Positive characteristics

What young people in BiH want for their future is clear: to live a life free of economic hardship, nationalism and politicisation, in a peaceful and secure environment and in a society that provides them with fairer and better economic and social opportunities. They perceive themselves to be much less influenced by what happened during the war than their parents' generation; disagree with ethnic divides, and see constructive social interaction with people from other ethnic groups as something necessary and indeed positive and desirable. At the same time, only few of them actively seek to build such bridges and on their own initiative – most of them wait for someone else to lead the way, or feel discouraged to try themselves.

Young people hold strong values with regards to democracy, equality, human rights and peace: they want to live in a society in which people can say what they think and have an impact on decisions and in which people are equal regardless of ethnicity, religion or gender. Above all, they strongly reject war and violent conflict, and cases of inter-ethnic violence among young people are few. This positive characteristic is one of the strongest factors against young people leading or engaging in violent conflict.

Criticism and apathy

Youth express a remarkable degree of criticism of others, such as parents and teachers, but also of themselves. They display scepticism and mistrust towards authorities in general, whether politicians, administration, the media or the police. At best, they perceive these institutions as generally uninterested in young people's concerns, and at worst as corrupt, negative and even destructive influences on society. Young people do not see their views and interests represented by the decision-making elite. Yet their perceptions of those in power is seldom based on critical and well-informed analysis, but on poorly defined 'common knowledge', rumours and media reporting – despite the fact that the media is criticised by youth for polarising opinion and lacking credibility.

Young people's criticism does not translate into action to challenge opinions or decisions, or to try to change the situation, but rather engenders a pervasive feeling of apathy and fatalism. This is partly because everything related to politics is seen as 'dirty', but also because youth do not feel sufficiently confident and in a position to speak up and engage proactively.

This apathy affects not just inter-ethnic and inter-regional interaction, but almost all aspects of young people's lives. It is both a blessing and a curse for peace and conflict dynamics. Young people are less likely to become radicalised and manipulated by others for ethno-nationalist and confrontational ends, but they are also unlikely to become a driving force for positive change without considerable support and encouragement. The system encourages young people to withdraw into their own private sphere, and to disconnect from politics and public life completely. It represents a huge wasted opportunity as BiH is left without a pool of talented young people to draw from who can develop ideas for a new society and bring about positive political changes. It also means a key section of society is failing to hold decision-makers to account, allowing incompetence, corruption or brinkmanship to go unchecked, and possibly become more pervasive.

Continued threats

Despite the positives, factors conducive to the development of radicalisation and violence are still present in society. Young people in BiH continue to grow up in a society that is fragile, divided and extremely vulnerable to incidents that threaten to disturb public peace and order and the delicate balance between ethnic groups. Aggressive behaviour, domestic violence, and violence among peers are commonplace and society does not condemn it in a way that prevents people from adopting such behaviours. Weapons are readily available and often seen as status symbols by young men.

More and more young people suffer economic hardship, with little prospect of being able to improve their situation through personal effort, such as achieving good grades at school. Besides the poor economic situation, nepotism and mismanagement also impede development. On the political front, young people feel their opinion does not count and that political parties and the elites play games for personal gain rather than for the benefit of youth and the general public.

Government-led efforts at the municipal, entity and state levels, largely fail to prioritise and address youth concerns. Often it depends on individuals, rather than institutions, whether initiatives for young people are organised or whether young people get access to resources. Plenty of initiatives are organised by civil society, local or international NGOs and regional/international organisations, but they depend on funding that is often provided for one-off initiatives and for a short or mid-term period of time, rather than more long-term and strategic engagements, complementing the development of children and young people from an early age.

The call for a 'strong leader' from some of the young people might not yet be cause for alarm, rather a desire to see a government pulling in one direction rather than blocking progress; but if this takes hold and leads to a general distrust of democracy, it might well become cause for concern.

The greatest risk at present seems to be potential social unrest in reaction to the economic and political situation. Frustration is high and building, and might at some point lead to larger-scale public strikes and protests. While protests in themselves might bring about positive change through public expression of dissatisfaction with the political elite, there is a danger that, if protests escalate into violence, this could play out along ethnic lines. While there are currently no complaints about unfair advantage being given to one ethnic group over another, given the history of ethnic division and conflict, this is a clear vulnerability. Politicians, in particular, may find it tempting to attempt to channel people's frustration over corruption, unemployment

and the political and economic crisis into inter-ethnic confrontation. The question is whether, despite youth's lack of appetite for conflict, their resistence to violence and conflict would be strong enough, particularly if fears of 'others'and ethno-nationalist sentiments are fuelled.

The role of the European Union

Directly or indirectly through its policies, strategies and programming, the EU is addressing many issues underlying the challenges identified in this research,. However, the majority of these initiatives do not focus directly on children and youth. Furthermore youth are not sufficiently consulted or included in designing the policies and programmes, nor are the latter subsequently explained or communicated to youth. In addition, the EU tends not to view its engagement BiH through a peacebuilding and conflict prevention lens; rather EU integration is largely seen as the (sole) means to ensure development and stability. However, given the persistent grievances and resentment between ethnic groups, tensions fuelled by political actors, and the limited and slow progress towards EU integration, this attitude seems to be overly optimistic. Supporting the EU integration process is undoubtedly crucial, but specific measures need to be taken to further reconcile society and build peace and stability – indeed, this should be the cross-cutting objective of all other policies and strategies in BiH.

Many of the findings from this research are not specific only to young people living in BiH. Youth in other countries in Europe are equally struggling with high levels of youth unemployment, economic constraints, frustration with marginalisation and neglect by politicians, heightened levels of juvenile delinquency and aggression (or at least a perception thereof). This has recently led to large-scale (and in some cases violent) protests, such as in Spain and London in 2011, when youth took to the streets to demand good education and employment. In BiH, youth is hardly seeing itself as an actor that can move things. And yet, the history of and potential for violent conflict in BiH makes it even more vital to bring youth into the decision making process and to address their ambitions for a better and more prosperous future, if they are not to become a 'forgotten' or even 'lost' generation.

Recommendations to government institutions and civil society actors in BiH

The following recommendations are drawn from suggestions and ideas put forward during the process of this research, particularly by youth involved in focus groups, by youth researchers and in a youth workshop in September 2011. They have also been informed by key informant interviews with national and international officials as well as ideas put forward by Saferworld's partner organisation, Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo.

1. Make youth issues a national priority

In co-operation with NGOs and INGOs, schools and other youth actors, Government agencies, particularly those working on youth related issues (for example, the Youth Commission), should:

■ **Identify the issues**
Identify young people's concerns and priorities to improve their current situation and their opportunities for the future in a participatory and inclusive way (for example, by using focus groups and interviews), getting the views and recommendations of young people, professionals working with youth, CSOs and parents. This 'problem mapping' should be updated at regular intervals.

■ **Adopt a strategy**
Based on this identification of issues, and in consultation with youth, finalise, adopt and implement a youth strategy at the state and FBiH level accompanied by the necessary structures, mechanisms, capacities and resources required for its

implementation and monitoring. The strategy should be revised every couple of years involving youth at different levels. In RS, where a strategy exists, the focus should be on ensuring proper implementation and on-going revision.

- **Ensure a co-ordinated approach**
  Establish clear strategies, procedures and guidelines across all levels of governance (local, municipality, cantonal and national) to improve communication, consultation and co-ordination among all bodies that deal with youth issues

- **Provide funding opportunities**
  Ensure that funding for youth projects is allocated to youth organisations and other interested actors in a fair and transparent manner, through open application processes that are advertised widely and well in advance of deadlines

- **Take a partnership approach**
  Facilitate and establish partnerships between municipalities, schools and youth organisations/CSOs to address youth issues. Youth strategies could encourage these partnerships by making dedicated funds available to them.

- **Ensure staff capacity**
  Dedicate resources to continually build the capacity of professionals working with youth (youth/social workers, teachers, police officers, municipal officers, youth judges, youth psychologists, and so on) to appropriately address young people's concerns and challenges.

- **Advocate for youth and monitor government performance**
  Local and international NGOs should **c**all on the Government and political parties to prioritise youth issues; to monitor practices, progress and transparency; and to hold the Government, its institutions and politicians, accountable for commitments that have been made.

2. Develop conditions conducive to youth engagement and activism in social, cultural and political life, including encouraging volunteerism

Government agencies, particularly those working on youth related issues should:

- **Promote volunteering** as a way of increasing young people's social and civic engagement, and accredit volunteer activism as part of educational and professional experience.

- **Ensure the right to public protest and freedom of opinion** is guaranteed and people do not discimination in their work or private life for expressing their opinion.

Government and youth agencies, particularly those working in co-operation with local and international NGOs on youth-related issues, should:

- **Give youth the skills and confidence to take initiative and engage actively in society**
  Support programmes that create opportunities to develop leadership skills and reward initiative, for example through school project work or BiH-wide children/youth competitions.

- **Foster democratic debate**
  Provide opportunities for discussion among young people in order to: build their ability and confidence to engage in open debate about various issues in society; to listen to and respect the views of others, and to give constructive criticism and find compromises. These opportunities could take the form of debating clubs or competitions at local, entity, national or regional level, and focus on common issues affecting youth.

Local and international NGOs should:

- **Promote youth activism**
  Support and implement programmes (especially in rural areas) that provide opportunities for children from a young age to attend youth summer/winter camps, or participate in events, activities and campaigns that require them to take an active role,

so they grow up seeing active participation as something that is important, desirable and appreciated.

■ **Give space for 'bricks-and-mortar' projects**
Provide permanent 'safe spaces' for young people, such as youth or sports clubs, where they can be with their peers, and spend their time in a constructive and creative way with expert guidance and counselling.

■ **Raise awareness of existing opportunities**
Support and implement programmes (such as information campaigns at schools, in the media or through social networks) that improve young people's awareness of existing opportunities so that they can become more actively engaged in social, political and cultural life.

Local and international NGOs, with support from the international community, should:

■ **Scrutinise and put pressure on Government agencies to safeguard the individual's right to peaceful protest**
Assess whether concerns that participating in public demonstrations can have harmful consequences (such as losing one's job) are based on evidence or just on rumours and unsubstantiated fears. Should these concerns turn out to be justified, pressure the authorities to ensure the safeguarding of the individual's right to peaceful protest.

3. Encourage youth participation in decision making and politics

Government agencies should:

■ **Include pupils and students in decision-making at schools and universities**
Encourage political learning, discussions and engagement at school and university, including giving genuine responsibilities and influence to school and student councils, without having them dominated by party politics.

Political parties, with support from local and international NGOs should:

■ **Take on board the concerns and priorities of youth**
Politicians at local and national level should consult with young people on issues relevant to youth, and ensure those issues are addressed in the party's policies.

Political parties should:

■ **Enable young politicians to influence the party line**
Political parties should welcome young people who want to become politically active, and encourage discussion of new ideas in party debates. Youth wings of political parties should be given real influence in drawing up party policies.

4. Address young people's safety and security concerns

Government and government agencies should:

■ **Implement and improve laws**
Bring legislation at state and entity level in line with international standards on issues such as hooliganism, juvenile delinquency, illegal possession of weapons, nepotism and corruption and ensure rigorous and consistent application of these laws.

■ **Use new/social media**
The police should use more youth-specific means of communication such as Twitter or Facebook in order to establish constructive relationships with young people and share relevant information, including on crime prevention, protection/advice for victims of violence, and so on.

■ **Take advantage of Community Safety Forums (CSFs)** and similar mechanisms where they exist and equip them so they can reach out to young people and to involve them in identifying, discussing and addressing safety and security issues relevant to them.

Government agencies, schools, parents and NGOs/INGOs should:

■ **Challenge aggressive behaviour in children and teenagers**
Actively discourage and condemn aggressive and anti-social behaviour from an early age. This includes promoting positive, non-aggressive behaviour and role models, with a specific focus on boys and young men so they don't associate 'masculinity' with violent or aggressive notions.

5. Actively promote inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-regional understanding

Government agencies, in co-operation with NGOs and INGOs should:

■ **Redesign policies and develop strategy and programmes** at the state, entity, cantonal and municipal levels that will enable more and better interaction between young people from different ethnic and religious groups.

■ **Take the long view**
Prioritise long-term and strategic programmes (over short-term ones) aimed at fostering multi-ethnic understanding and dialogue.

■ **Organise exchange visits**
Arrange regular exchange visits between schools, universities and youth clubs from different entities, regions and different ethnic/religious youth groups.

■ **Encourage mediated discussions of the past**
Provide opportunities for young people to discuss BiH's history and to tell their side of the story and listen to others in a neutral and 'safe' environment, if necessary with the presence of a person skilled in post-conflict reconciliation and dialogue.

6. Abolish discrimination and segregation at schools, universities and the workplace

Government agencies should:

■ **Abolish all kinds of discrimination in theory and practice**
Ensure that all constituent peoples in BiH, national minorities, and other groups are equal before the law. Ensure equal access to schooling and employment opportunities regardless of ethnicity, religion, political views or place of origin.

■ **Create a harmonised school curriculum**
Fundamentally change the way so-called 'national subjects' are taught: introduce one common curriculum for all schools in BiH, with a specific focus in these classes on encouraging mutual understanding of and debate around the traditionally different interpretations of the subjects.

■ **Introduce 'civic education' as an obligatory subject in every school,** rather than leaving it up to the respective minister in each canton whether or not to teach this subject.

■ **Introduce a code of ethics** for teachers at schools and universities to avoid them engaging in partisan ethnic/religious/political polarisation.

NGOs and INGOs should:

■ **Include the older generation**
Support and implement programmes that also help the older generation, particularly parents and teachers, to overcome stereotypes, prejudices and the legacy of the past, and to understand how they can play a positive role in preventing conflict and hatred among young people.

7. Improve quality of education

Government agencies, with the support from NGOs and INGOs should:

■ **Address corruption in the education sector** by improving enforcement of anti-corruption legislation, and by establishing a system in which people can report corrupt conduct without having to fear negative consequences.

■ **Promote critical thinking** in the classroom/lecture hall and encourage young people to challenge the consensus, analyse information, and to hold different opinions while respecting plurality and diversity.

Government agencies should:

■ **Adopt common higher education policy and standards**
Create a common higher education policy framework at the state level, the absence of which is delaying the introduction of the Bologna Process for a European Higher Education Area. Also there should be common standards for the recognition or accreditation of universities in order to improve the quality of higher education. Exchange programmes at secondary and higher education level need to be established with other European schools and universities in order to increase the mobility of students.

8. Provide psychological and social support for children, young people and families facing specific challenges

■ **Improve the capacity of social services**
Welfare councils, social workers, youth and family specialists need to identify and support families suffering from or vulnerable to abuse, neglect and violence. This includes ensuring adequate funding and staffing levels, competent and trained staff, and improving co-ordination and communication between agencies and institutions.

■ **Target vulnerable youth**
Pay specific attention to children and young people living in 'dysfunctional' families to prevent them from being abused or neglected, becoming victims of domestic or gender-based violence, and from displaying anti-social behaviour towards others

■ **Work with parents** with psychological and/or social issues to minimise the negative effects on their children. This includes ex-combatants who might still experience problems resulting from the war experiences.

9. Make a greater effort to resolve the current economic crisis and take action to address the high levels of unemployment and the worsening economic situation.

Government agencies (with support from civil society) should:

■ **Focus on youth unemployment**
Prioritise the creation of job opportunities for young people.

■ **Foster consultation, co-ordination and co-operation** between key ministries and institutions responsible for education and employment, such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, entity and canton level authorities, civil society organisations, private and public sector to identify strategies to bring young people into the job market.

■ **Improve access to information about the labour market**
Regularly conduct and publish assessments regarding labour market needs and prognoses and share these among young people at school and university to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their professional future.

■ **Foster closer co-operation between the education system and business sectors,** for example, in the form of presentations or roundtables between students and economic / business actors, visits to companies, the provision of internships and apprenticeships for young people.

■ **Rigorously and visibly address corruption and nepotism**
Ensure that the Anti-Corruption Agency established in 2009 has enough human and financial resources as well as a clear mandate to tackle corruption effectively.

10. Install a more professional and independent media ethos to overcome polarisation and politicisation of the media

Government agencies should:

■ **Safeguard the independence and effective functioning of the Communications Regulatory Agency (RAK)** as a transparent and functioning mechanism for media monitoring, including safeguarding the independence of its executive board, and ensuring it receives on time and in full the funding allocated to it in the state budget.

■ **Strengthen efforts to combat discrimination and hate speech** by harmonising the legislation on freedom of expression and protecting journalists from political and any other pressure.

Media outlets should:

■ **Conduct research** that assesses views held by young people regarding media and current media reporting, and what changes to media and reporting young people would like to see to make media more relevant, informative and reliable/trustworthy

■ **Focus more on youth issues**
Public broadcasting organisations should make more space for young people openly to discuss issues relevant for them, and to develop their own formats.

Recommendations for the European Union

The EU should support the Government of BiH and/or civil society in implementing all of the recommendations listed above. For example, the EU should continue to encourage the Government of BiH to make progress on issues relevant to youth, including addressing the divisive education system, high youth unemployment, and widespread corruption. The EU should also provide support for the development of policies and programmes relevant to addressing youth issues, such as the National Youth Policy. In addition, the EU should:

1. Develop a peacebuilding/conflict-prevention framework for strategies, policies and programming in BiH

■ **Further investigate the relationship between youth and conflict dynamics**
The EU should seek to better understand the role of youth in relation to local peace and conflict dynamics, and reflect this understanding in its policies and programmes.

■ **Prioritise peacebuilding**
Provide more support to programmes that have an explicit objective to improve inter-ethnic relationships among youth and support their positive role in relation to peace dynamics (through instruments such as EIDHR, the Civil Society Facility and within the IPA framework).

2. Ensure youth issues are understood, prioritised and adequately addressed in EU strategic planning

■ **Make youth a cross-cutting issue in the MIPD**
Given the extent of the challenges facing youth in BiH and the potential roles of young people in relation to peace and conflict dynamics, youth concerns should be included as a cross-cutting issue in the EU's Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document (MIPD).

■ **Consult with youth**
Ensure consultation with youth representatives in the strategic planning of EU external assistance (in particular the MIPD). A good example was set by the European Union Special Representative's 'Generation BiH for Europe' initiative, where young people were given the opportunity to prioritise their concerns, which were shared with EU and national decision makers. Such engagement should be institutionalised to maintain a youth perspective for policy making and the process and results should be made known and discussed in schools, universities and other agencies working with young people to demonstrate that youth voices count.

3. Ensure funding requirements, priorities and mechanisms are conducive to strengthening youth-specific programming

- **Maintain local focus**
  Ensure that a shift to sector support does not preclude support for smaller, local initiatives aimed at the youth population.

- **Take the long view**
  Prioritise long-term and strategic programmes (over short-term ones) aimed at fostering multi-ethic understanding and dialogue.

- **Make youth a cross-cutting issue in grant making**
  The EU grant application guidelines should, where relevant, include a requirement for proposals to state how the particular needs of young people will be addressed by projects and programmes.

- **Re-assess the co-funding requirement**
  Evaluate the negative effects of the requirement for local NGOs to obtain a certain percentage of the project budget from another source (which often proves very difficult) and work with local NGOs to develop ways of addressing this issue.

4. Support the development of conditions conducive to youth engagement and activism in social, cultural and political life

- **Support youth mobility and exchange**, including to EU countries; for example, via the Council of Europe's 'European Citizenship' training programme

  As above (recommendation 2 for government and civil society), the EU should, in co-operation with local partners and international NGOs:

- **Give youth the skills and confidence to take initiative and engage actively in society**
  Support programmes that create opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills and reward initiative, for example through school project work or BiH-wide children/youth competitions.

- **Foster democratic debate**
  Support initiatives that provide opportunities for discussion for young people in order to: build their ability and confidence to engage in open debate about various issues in society; listen to and respect the views of others and to give constructive criticism and find compromises. These opportunities could take the form of debating clubs or competitions at the local, entity, national or regional level, and focus on common issues affecting youth.

- **Promote youth activism**
  Support programmes that provide opportunities for children (especially in rural areas) from a young age to attend youth summer/winter camps, or participate in events, activities and campaigns that require them to take an active role, so they grow up seeing active participation as something that is important, desirable and appreciated.

- **Give space for 'bricks-and-mortar' projects**
  Provide permanent 'safe spaces' for young people, such as youth or sports clubs, where they can be with their peers, and spend their time in a constructive and creative way with expert guidance and counselling.

- **Raise awareness of existing opportunities**
  Support and implement programmes (such as information campaigns at schools, in the media or through social networks) that improve young people's awareness of existing opportunities so that they can become more actively engaged in social, political and cultural life.

  Assist government agencies, local and international NGOs to:

- **Safeguard the individual's right to peaceful protest**
  Assess whether concerns that participating in public demonstrations can have harmful consequences (such as losing one's job) are based on evidence or just on rumours and unsubstantiated fears. Should these concerns turn out to be justified, pressure the authorities to ensure the safeguarding of the individual's right to peaceful protest.

ANNEX 1: **Methodology**

The idea for this research came from a study carried out by Saferworld and Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC) Sarajevo in 2009–10, which looked at communities' perceptions of conflict and security in BiH.[91] Findings from this study indicated that the attitudes of young people towards security providers and the state differed from that of older generations, and suggested that more research should be done to look at this issue in more depth. The idea was then shared and further developed with representatives from the EU (both from Brussels, BiH and in the region), governments, civil society and security experts in the framework of the People's Peacemaking Perspectives (PPP) programme.

This research was carried out by Saferworld in co-operation with NDC. It was conceptualised to combine solid qualitative data collection and analysis with participatory approaches that would not only allow young people to voice their opinion, but would also give them an active role in carrying out parts of the research. The intention was to: a) obtain access to young respondents and specific information that other researchers would not have got access to; b) encourage young people to critically question their own attitudes and behaviour with regards to peace and conflict; c) demonstrate to young people that they can achieve something on their own.

The assessment was done in five steps:

1. **Preparatory phase and desk research**

2. **Research phase 1**

3. **Research phase 2**

4. **Research phase 3**

5. **Validation and advocacy training workshop**

1. **Preparatory phase and desk research**

The overall topic for the conflict assessment and the broader research questions to focus on, as well as the guiding questions for FGD and KIIs were developed based on consultations with NDC and internally within Saferworld. As there are three studies in the PPP programme that look at the role of youth (BiH, Yemen and Central Asia), it was decided to identify overarching areas to look at in order to allow comparisons of our findings at the end. The three areas identified were:

- Identity, stereotypes and values held by young people
- Decision-making opportunities for, and influence on, young people
- War/insecurity-related context and current situation

For the purpose of this research, we looked at youth age 16–30. That is, young people who had either experienced the war as children but were too young to actively participate in the fighting, or young people who were born during or just after the war and had no memories of it.

Saferworld and NDC selected ten locations for FGD and KIIs across BiH, in the Federation of BiH as well as Republika Srpska. A number of criteria were developed for the selection process, including that locations should: provide a balanced representation of different ethnic groups living in BiH; cover rural and urban contexts alike; provide coverage of the different regions within BiH; and include different legacies of the war (for example, a high number of returnees, particularly inter-ethnic relationships, and remote and mainly mono-ethnic locations where prejudices against other groups are particularly strong). While we did not want to return to the

....

91 *The missing peace. The need for a long term strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Saferworld (August 2010)

same places covered in the 'Missing Peace' report, we did feel that it was important to include Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar again as these are the major cities and considered as 'centres' for Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats.

Locations selected were:

- in Federation of BiH: Drvar, Sanski Most, Novi Travnik, Sarajevo and Mostar
- in Republika Srpska: Trebinje, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Doboj and Banja Luka

Location	Region within BiH	Ethnic composition	Other characteristics
Drvar	Western Bosnia, FBiH	Majority are Bosnian Serbs, minority are Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks	There is high percentage of Bosnian Serb returnees who returned to this municipality after the war; high rate of unemployment especially of young people. There is a trend of leaving this municipality.
Mostar	South Herzegovina, FBiH	Majority in eastern part of the town are Bosniaks, majority in western part of the town are Bosnian Croats. Bosnian Serbs are minority in both parts.	Became a symbol for destruction during the war. Strongly divided (including physically) in two parts, each dominated by one ethnic group.
Novi Travnik	Central Bosnia, FBiH	Majority are Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks, minority are Bosnian Serbs.	There is an invisible division between Bosniak and the Bosnian Croat part of the town. Schools are divided on ethnical basis.
Sanski Most	Western Bosnia, FBiH	Majority are Bosniaks, minority are Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs.	There is a high rate of unemployment among youth.
Sarajevo	Central Bosnia, FBiH	Majority are Bosniaks, minority are Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs.	Capital of BiH and FBiH. The majority of Bosnian Serbs left Sarajevo after the reintegration of some parts of the town where they were the majority during the war. Many Bosniaks from other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially Eastern Bosnia, came to Sarajevo to live.
Banja Luka	Western Bosnia, RS	Majority are Bosnian Serbs, minority are Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats.	Capital of Republika Srpska. There is certain number of Bosniaks who returned. Many Bosnian Serbs from other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia moved to Banja Luka.
Bratunac	Eastern Bosnia, RS	Majority are Bosnian Serbs, minority are Bosniaks.	It is a neighbouring municipality to Srebrenica; most of the Bosnian Serb inhabitants of Srebrenica moved to Bratunac. It has a poor economic and social situation.
Doboj	North-Western Bosnia, RS	Majority are Bosnian Serbs, minority are Bosniaks.	Invisible division of the town with Bosniak and Bosnian Serb part.
Srebrenica	Eastern Bosnia, RS	Majority are Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats are minority.	There is a poor economic and social situation in this municipality. Youth are trying in every possible way to leave.
Trebinje	Eastern Herzegovina, RS	Majority are Bosnian Serb majority, Bosniaks are minority.	There is a high rate of unemployment. There is a tendency among youth to leave this town either to go to Serbia or to some other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Complementing the field research, desk research was carried out to identify and assess how EU policies and strategies as well as programmes and initiatives funded by the EU contribute to or are counterproductive to addressing key issues identified in the report.

2. Research phase 1

The first phase of the research took place in the period of 9–28 May 2011, with additional interviews from 13–22 June 2011 and September 2011.

Focus group discussions: Per location, two FGDs were carried out with 10–12 participants, age 16–30 years. Participants included: male and female youth, from rural and urban areas, students, working and unemployed youth, and different ethnic groups. The participants were selected by local CSO partner organisations working with youth or on youth issues in the respective locations. Due to concerns that conducting separate FGDs for people from different ethnic groups would further cement existing division, we decided to have mixed FGDs with members from diverse ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the ethnic composition in the respective location. The research team is aware that this might have led to people being more 'diplomatic' in their responses, particularly with regard to voicing their perceptions of members of other ethnic groups. However, we felt that the process of conducting the research was also an opportunity to allow people to meet, share opinions and potentially overcome divides, and that this was important to the research team. Another challenge was that while we had requested to have young people from rural and isolated locations represented in the focus groups, this did not happen to the extent expected due to logistical reasons. Per location, we had one group (first FGD) with younger participants (16–22) and another group (second FGD) with older youth (23–30) to see whether there were any substantive differences in attitudes and behaviour between the age groups.

Depending on the ethnic composition in the respective location, focus groups were: completely mono-ethnic, almost mono-ethnic (with one-three participants from other ethnic background, and mixed. Most of them (11) were mixed and had representatives from both urban and rural areas, and the remaining were only from urban settlements. The groups were also balanced according to gender.

Entity	Location	FGD	Ethnic composition
FBiH	Sanski Most	1st FGD	Mono-ethnic (Bosniaks)
		2nd FGD	Almost mono-ethnic (2 Bosnian Croats + 10 Bosniaks)
	Drvar	1st FGD	Almost mono-ethnic (1 Bosniak + 11 Bosnian Serbs)
		2nd FGD	Almost mono-ethnic (2 Bosnian Croats + 11 Bosnian Serbs)
	Novi Travnik	1st FGD	Mixed (Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats)
		2nd FGD	Mixed (Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats)
	Sarajevo	1st FGD	Mixed (9 Bosniaks + 3 Bosnian Serbs)
		2nd FGD	Mixed (Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian roats)
	Mostar	1st FGD	Mixed (Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats)
		2nd FGD	Mixed (Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats)
RS	Banja Luka	1st FGD	Mono-ethnic (Bosnian Serbs)
		2nd FGD	Mono-ethnic (Bosnian Serbs)
	Doboj	1st FGD	Almost mono-ethnic (2 Bosbiaks + 11 Bosnian Serbs)
		2nd FGD	Mono-ethnic (Bosnian Serbs)
	Bratunac	1st FGD	Mixed (Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs)
		2nd FGD	Almost mono-ethnic (2+12)
	Srebrenica	1st FGD	Mixed (Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks)
		2nd FGD	Mixed (Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks)
	Trebinje	1st FGD	Mono-ethnic (Bosnian Serbs)
		2nd FGD	Mono-ethnic (Bosnian Serbs)

Based on guiding questions, NDC carried out the FGDs in local language; recordings were later typed up and translated into English.

Key informat interviews: In parallel to the FGDs, and in the same locations, Saferworld carried out interviews with selected key informants (80 in total). Interviewees were either working directly with youth, or involved in work that

concerned young people. These included representatives from local CSOs, police, municipal administration, and the education sector (such as school teachers or directors, teachers at universities, and so on). Additional interviews were held with representatives from ministries, youth party organisations, student associations, worker unions, religious institutions, civil society/NGOs, and political foundations in Sarajevo and Banja Luka (the capitals of the two entities), as well as with international actors in Sarajevo.

List of interviewees:

International and regional actors
Catholic Relief Service (CRS), Sarajevo
Schueler Helfen Leben (SHL), Sarajevo
Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Sarajevo
Office of Public Affairs of the USA Embassy to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo
EU Delegation, Sarajevo
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Sarajevo
OSCE, Sarajevo
OSCE, Bratunac
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Sarajevo
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Sarajevo
EUSR/EUFOR, Sarajevo
EUPM, Sarajevo
AIESEC, Sarajevo
UNICEF, Sarajevo

International and national policy analysts and experts
Vladimir Azinovic, Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo
Kurt Bassuener, Democratization Policy Council, Sarajevo
Sanja Mihailovic, Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), Sarajevo
Srdjan Puhalo, Psuchologist, Banja Luka

Local civil society and research organisations
Refugee Relief Service (RRS), Drvar
Foundation One World SEE, Sarajevo
Foundation of Local Democracy, Sarajevo
Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Sarajevo
Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo
Women to women, Sarajevo
NARKO NE, Sarajevo
The House for Orphans "Ljubica Ivezić", Sarajevo
Dosta, Sarajevo
AIESEC BiH, Sarajevo
Youth Information Agency (OIA), Sarajevo
CEM, Travnik
Center for Education of Youth, Travnik
Alter Art, Novi Travnik
Odisej, Bratunac
Alternativni klub, Trebinje
Association of Returnees, Trebinje
Peace activist, Trebinje
SARA, Srebrenica
Union of students of Srebrenica, Srebrenica
Union of students Srebrenica – Skelani SPONA, Srebrenica
ToPeeR, Doboj
Omladinski kulturni centar (OKC) Abrašević, Mostar
Omladinski kulturni centar (OKC), Banja Luka
Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), Sarajevo
Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC) Mostar, Mostar

Dialogue Center Srebrenica/Bratunac (NDC Sarajevo field office), Srebrenica

NDC Prijedor (NDC Sarajevo field office), Prijedor

Representatives of Central Government

Defence Ministry, Sarajevo

Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues, Sarajevo

Representatives from police in

Banja Luka, Bratunac, Doboj, Trebinje, Srebrenica (RS),

Drvar, Mostar, Novi Travnik, Sanski Most, Sarajevo (FBiH),

Representatives of schools in

Banja Luka, Bratunac, Doboj, Trebinje, Srebrenica (RS),

Drvar, Mostar, Novi Travnik, Sanski Most, Sarajevo (FBiH),

Representatives of local government in

Doboj, Bratunac, Srebrenica, Mostar,

Representatives of religious communities

Principal of the Catholic School Centre Sarajevo, Sarajevo

Faculty of Islamic Studies Sarajevo, Sarajevo

Priest (Paroh) of the Orthodox Church in Sarajevo, Sarajevo

Representatives of political parties

Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (Stranka za BiH), Sarajevo

Youth of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Sarajevo

The Forum of youth of Social Democratic Party of BiH, Sarajevo

Our Party (Naša Stranka), Sarajevo

The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), Banja Luka

Party of Democratic Progress (PDP), Banja Luka

Other

The Student's Parliament of Sarajevo University, Sarajevo

Union of teachers of Canton Sarajevo, Sarajevo

3. Research phase 2

After an initial analysis of the findings from Phase 1, NDC Sarajevo and Saferworld organised a two-and-a-half day workshop in Ilidža (near Sarajevo) with the participation of 15 selected participants from the FGDs, the period of 16–20 June 2011. Participants were identified based on criteria such as active participation during FGDs and stated interest in further participation; and selected to provide regional and ethnic balance. Some had previously participated in workshops organised by NGOs, others had not.

The purpose of the workshop was to:
- share and begin to validate initial findings from Phase 1;
- get in-depth information on some key findings from Phase 1;
- jointly identify topics for further small-scale research activities to be carried out by the participants after the end of the workshop;
- build basic research capacity of workshop participants;
- provide participants with an opportunity to meet, share and reflect critically about their own perceptions, values and behaviour with regard to others, and to peace and conflict.

During the workshop, a number of different tools were applied, including open and guided group discussions and mappings. In addition, the observation of group dynamics provided interesting insights to the research team.

In the course of the workshop, participants divided into groups according to their interest to conduct further research on a selected number of topics:
- Influence of politics on shaping young people's opinions (see box 1)
- Perceptions of young people on democracy and EU (see box 2 and 3)
- Influence of media on shaping young people's opinions (see box 4)

- Young people and politics (see box 5)
- Manifestation of radicalisation and 'messages for peace' in music (see annex 2)

In consultation with the research team, participants decided upon the specific methodology to use (mainly interviews, questionnaires or desk research), and developed research questions in consultation with Saferworld and NDC Sarajevo. They also developed work plans that outlined the responsibilities of each research team member, timelines, and reporting requirements.

4. Research phase 3

Based on the research questions and methodologies developed during phase 2, participants carried out their research in phase 3 on a voluntary basis, in the period of July–August 2011. Terms of references had been developed that outlined the research themes, methodologies to be used, where to undertake the research and which people to approach, but also how participants would stay in touch with each other and co-ordinate research, and how to share the data with the research team. Methodologies chosen were questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, or analysis of texts (media, songs).

There were a number of limitations related to the research carried out by the young people:

- Not all those who participated in the workshop in phase 2 had the time to undertake research, thus it was not possible to preserve the regional/entity balance.
- The workshop under phase 2 only allowed for some very basic capacity building and practising of the young people's research skills.
- The individual pieces of research are not representative, but present a snapshot of the opinion of young people in a specific location.
- While the young researchers tried not to limit their research respondents to friends and acquaintances, and to get responses from people they did not know, we can assume that respondents were of a similar age and social background to the interviewers.
- The translation of the research questions at times were not clear. Also, there were problems with filling in questionnaires, especially ratings of different options, and some answers were left blank or more than one box was ticked, which made it difficult to clearly assign the response to the existing categories.

5. Validation and advocacy training workshop

A workshop was conducted in September 2011 which aimed to:

1 Share and validate research findings
2 Improve technical skills for advocacy
3 Provide basic information on key EU mechanisms
4 Develop a draft advocacy strategy

Participants (see below) were selected based on their commitment to further engage on youth issues, their expertise, and their connectedness and influence within BiH. They included four of the young researchers from Sarajevo, Doboj, Banja Luka and Novi Travnik, and ten representatives from CSOs. While the majority of representatives were from field research locations, some representatives were chosen who were considered specifically relevant due to their experience of working on youth-related issues. Regional and ethnic balance was also taken into consideration. The workshop participants got acquainted with the basic advocacy tools, specifically aiming at EU structures. By using the practical advocacy exercises, the participants drafted the list of stakeholders they would address with the advocacy messages, and also the list of recommendations on how to address youth issues. The session on sharing the research findings provoked interesting debates, and the participants validated their findings, by giving more exampels demonstrating the results.

Local CSOs (work on youth issues) who attended the workshop were from:
NDC (Sarajevo and Prijedor), OIA (Sarajevo), Youth Inititative for Human Rights (Mostar), Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in the RS (Bijeljina), IPAK (Tuzla), Centre for Peace Building (Sanski Most), Omladinski Komunikativni Centar, OKC Abrašević (Mostar), ToPeeR (Doboj) and PRONI (Brcko).

ANNEX 2: Youth research on music: Manifestation of radicalisation and 'messages for peace' in music

"Music, maybe a little more than anything else, brings people together, but can evidently also set them apart":[92] messages promoted through music in BiH

"I truly see art, and music included, as something that can be used, but also because of its power perhaps must be used, to mitigate the simmering situation in BiH. The people of my generation want progress, they want encouragement and they want inspiration. What better way to give them that than through the lyrics they will scream out at some concert in the middle of Sarajevo, hugging their multi-ethnic friends?"
(Researcher)

Youth in BiH, and the views that young people hold, are multi-faceted. Often art provides an opportunity for young people to express those views. The young researchers focused on music, as it is probably the most popular form of art that reaches out to the largest number of young people. A young researcher from Sarajevo led the research, assisted by another researcher from Travnik. They selected examples of two types of lyrics through the internet before carrying out the interviews: a) lyrics that promote ethnic/religious/national superiority and hate messages, and that are often offensive, and b) lyrics that promote peace messages. Afterwards, the lead researcher conducted ten interviews, mostly with young people she already knew. All interviewees lived in Sarajevo, but some of them were from Bihac and Travnik. The aim was to get their reactions to these different lyrics, and to find out why certain artists are more appealing to young people than others. The respondents were all age 19–20 (except one, age 28), and in spite of different tastes in music, all the interviewees admitted that they recognise and listen to similar things when it comes to famous musicians from this region. Considering the limitations, the findings should not be taken as valid for the entire country, but the research still provides valuable insights.

The examples of negative lyrics were from Baja Mali Knindza and Nedjo Kostic, who are considered radical nationalist singers. They sing about war, glorifying one side and insulting the other. Here is an example:

"The Serb is chasing Balijas over Bascarsija, The head flies off the shoulders, when the Serb executes his revenge"
Nedjo Kostic

"The Serb is chasing Balijas", "I don't like you Alija, because you are a Balija. You shattered a peaceful dream, let the Drina carry you a 100 mudzahedin (Muslim soldier) every day … I will sing, I didn't sing for a long time, New Sarajevo will be ours"
Baja Mali Knindza[93]

Đorđe Balašević's lyrics was used as the positive example, promoting pacifism:

"Let there be no war, madness among people, the grown ups offer disillusions, they scare us with various wonders, And they hurt every fairytale, let there be no war[94]"
Đorđe Balašević

When asked about the most influential artists the respondents named Dubioza Kolektiv (a band from Tuzla that mostly sings about the social reality and criticises the government), Đorđe Balašević, Dino Merlin, Halid Beslic, Hari Varesanovic, Goran Bregović, Edo Maajka, Marcelo, Crvena Jabuka, Plavi Okrestar and Erogene Zone. These are all musicians who promote universal human values, tolerance, condemning war and what has happened in the past. "They sing about things that should change in order for everyone to be better off, they don't divide people who are joined by territory

---

92 The researcher
93 "Balija" a hurtful term for Bosniaks. „Alija" refers to Alija Izetbegovic, the first President of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1990–96).
94 Lyrics translated by the researcher

in their lyrics, while others deliberately target those people to turn against each other. Those are all artists and musicians that are born and grew up in this region, people who know what it means to be human and a real neighbour, no matter what your name is" (girl, 20). The song "Tears" was mentioned as "important", since it is a product of co-operation between the Serbian rapper Marcelo and the Bosnian rapper Edo Myakka who lives in Croatia:

"I know the dead are crying, because I can hear their screams with my heart! They are sobbing and cursing, they are asking "Why?" "Was it worth is?" Tell that to the mother that lost her only child! Let them know that even today we don't know the reason or significance! Everybody has had enough of the war! The hatred is not ours, it was given to us! O dad, tell me, do I need to hate a Croat or a Muslim today? We are all tortured by the same wound from the old days! People are people, no matter from this or that meridian. The same things frighten us … Forgive us our sins".[95]

The band Thompson (Croatian band) and Baja Mali Knindza (Serbian singer) were mentioned as having a bad influence on young people's opinions. All ten respondents said that the reason the 'good musicians' are attractive to people is mostly that their lyrics gives them opportunity to say something that they would like to see themselves in future, and they 'recognise themselves' in the lyrics.

When the researcher read out lyrics that are from the songs of the radical nationalistic bands or groups, all respondents were unanimously critical towards the negative lyrics that promote hatred and racism, and towards the young people who would listen to this kind of music, and were referred to as 'sick'. "The patriotism that is expressed on songs with lyrics like 'We don't like you Alija because you are a Balija', where the Muslims are addressed, jeopardises the good relations between young people and can only sow a seed of hatred. Such use of patriotism hurts relations", one interviewee said.

In terms of access to music, they all said that it is not difficult to get hold of music made in the other entity or outside the country, due to their availability via the internet. The origin of the band or musician does not define if they listen to them or not, but rather the messages they convey and the quality of the music. Although it does not mean that BiH's youth all think this way, the picture given by this small-scale research is positive: it indicates that young people distance themselves from the negative manifestations through music; they are more sympathetic towards the musicians who are not talking about ethnic divisions, the past and revenge, but rather promoting messages that are common for everybody regardless of ethnic background.

---

[95] Lyrics translated by the researcher

Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that aims to contribute to the development of democratic practices and the prevention and resolution of conflict in Sarajevo and throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina by creating dialogue across ethnic and national divides.

Saferworld works to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote co-operative approaches to security. We work with governments, international organisations and civil society to encourage and support effective policies and practices through advocacy, research and policy development and through supporting the actions of others.

COVER PHOTO: The photo shows a young man performing on a busy street of Sarajevo to help raise money for their group to enter a regional dancing contest. © NINO VADAKARIA