

political youth network



YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA
NISMA E TË RINJVE PËR TË DREJTAT E NJERIUT



About YIHR

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights was founded in 2003 by young people in the former-Yugoslavia to overcome the consequences of armed conflicts and inter-ethnic tensions. YIHR's work focuses on **the processes of dealing with the past and the protection of human rights, strategically targeting young people to participate in and lead these processes**. YIHR works with journalists, students, civil society activists and young politicians to build capacity in the region to pursue a sustainable agenda for change.

YIHR is active in **Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia**, with offices in Prishtina, Podgorica, Sarajevo, Belgrade and Zagreb, as well as with a broad network of local, regional and international partner organizations.

The YIHR's first program was the Visiting Program, an exchange

of youth from Serbia and Kosovo, with the aim of tearing down the "wall" between the Kosovo and Serbian societies, and enabling participants to see the actual situation and social changes in Serbia and Kosovo through direct experience of living in Prishtina/Belgrade. This is one of the most sustainable YIHR programs in which more than 3,000 young people took part. After implementation of this program in Kosovo and Serbia, it was spread in the region and so far at least **15,000 young people have participated in various YIHR cross-border activities**. Through this program most of the participants stepped to the other side for the very first time in their lives.

YIHR noticed that there were a lot of obstacles for normal cooperation among the youth from the region and that **the constant and persistent, but also strategic work** is needed for overcoming

the consequences of more than two decades of broken relations between societies created on political level and spread around through dominant discourse in the media and educational system. Young people usually do not know each other, do not meet each other, but they have strong standpoints about each other. Those standpoints are often negative, followed by lack of will for any cooperation and mutual work.

YIHR supports participation of youth in transitional justice and dialogue processes. It opens taboo topics, challenges dominant and nationalist narratives, pays respect to victims of crimes often denied and relativised, works on a local level to engage youth in dialogue and pioneers youth involvement in seeking accountability and justice.



Background of Political Youth Network

The region of Western Balkans is a specific type of polity where one big country (Yugoslavia) dominated for several decades. Yugoslavia has not dismantled peacefully. Nations that were for long time living in one country where “bratstvo i jedinstvo” [brotherhood and unity] was a mantra in the 1990s started to fight one against another. Today, wars ended but confrontation with the past and the implementation of liberal values in those societies still did not occur. Countries in the Western Balkans have great political, economic, and cultural potential that can be empowered by mutual cooperation. However, there is a lack of that cooperation.

Young people engaged in politics as well as future leaders still do not have enough experience in benefitting of networking and collaboration. Hence, their access to education of human rights, tolerance, and transitional justice is limited.

Youth in political parties do not cooperate regionally with other politically engaged youth, other than those from ‘sister’ parties. This cooperation is thus limited to ‘ideological networks’. Through these networks members get some contacts and training about political skills, but very little about human rights.



Political Youth Network

The Political Youth Network (PYN) is an international network of youth organisations operating as a part of, or as a subsidiary organisation of 31 political parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia that was established at the Founding Conference in Zagreb, held on 29th and 30th March, 2014.

By signing the Declaration of Commitment to the Political Youth Network, member organisations expressed their dedication towards PYN's Statute, Secretariat, and other members, in achieving common goals, recognised and shared by its members.

The main objectives of PYN were defined and presented through individual meetings with political youth organisations, while by signing the Declaration of Commitment, members have agreed to pursue the following goals and values:

- a) education of young politicians in the field of human rights and the importance of its advocacy;
- b) encouraging cross-border exchange of knowledge and experiences;
- c) training of practical political skills;
- d) enhancing regional cooperation between politically engaged youth in the area of dealing with the past and transitional justice;
- e) achieving greater participation of young people in policymaking processes;
- f) increasing overall standards of political communication among the political rivals.



Meeting with former President of Republic of Croatia Ivo Josipović, March 2014

Activities

PYN activities are divided into three fields:

- 1) Human Rights
- 2) Regional Programmes
- 3) Capacity Building

Three working groups are established at the PYN Second Assembly in Sarajevo, on October 2015, with a mission to design activities in accordance with these topics. Working groups consist of both representatives of the Secretariat and member organizations.

All activities of the Network should demonstrate consent of all members over some key issues:

- 1) commitment to human rights protection;
- 2) support to the process of regional cooperation;
- 3) dedication to the active participation of youth in decision making processes;
- 4) improvement of the position of youth branches within political parties.

All the activities of PYN are planned and discussed among the PYN Secretariat and PYN members. Most of the planned activities will be implemented through campaigns, meetings, trainings and expert consultation on topics of human rights protection, cross-border cooperation and developing practical competences that might be useful and attractive for future political leaders.

In the scope of political activities, examples of laws related to human rights (law on free access to information, law on gender

equality, law on reparation to victims of war crimes etc.) will be analyzed and discussed with an aim of sensitizing PYN members on issues of human rights violations.

Previous activities include joint Declaration on Human Rights Day, round tables on national level and consultations on questions of internal organization.

Secretariat

The Secretariat is an operational body of PYN in charge of all of its organizational activities such as trainings, meetings, reporting, newsletters and websites. The Secretariat also coordinates the activities of the network and ensures constant communication among the members of the network. The Secretariat is established at YIHR.

PYN Members

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Forum mladih Naše stranke // Our Party Youth Forum

Socialdemocratic Party Youth Forum // Forum mladih Socijaldemokratske partije

Mladež Hrvatske demokratske zajednice 1990 // Youth of the Croatian Democratic Union 1990

Savjet mladih Partije demokratskog progresa // Democratic Progress Party Youth Council

Stranka nezavisnih socijaldemokrata // Party of Independent Socialdemocrats

Mreža mladih Saveza za bolju budućnost// Union for Better Future Youth Network

Stranka za Bosnu i Hercegovinu // Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina

Demokratska fronta // Democratic Front

Montenegro:

Asocijacija mladih Socijalistička narodna partija // Youth Association - Socialist People's Party

Bošnjačka stranka // Youth Forum Bosniak Party

Demokratski savez Crne Gore // Youth – Demos

Forum mladih Pozitivne Crne Gore // Youth Forum – Positive Montenegro

Građanski pokret URA // Youth Reforme Movement - Civic Movement United Reform Action

Demokrate // Young Democrats- Democrats

Hrvatska građanska inicijativa // Croatian Civic Initiative – Youth

Mladi Liberali Crne Gore // Liberal Party Youth

Mreža mladih Pokreta za promjene // Youth Network of Movement for Change

Savjet mladih Demokratske partije Socijalista Crne Gore // Democratic Party of Socialists – Youth Council

Socijaldemokratska partija // Youth Forum- Social Democratic Party

Croatia:

Youth of the Croatian People's Party – Liberal Democrats // Mladi Hrvatske narodne stranke - Liberalni demokrati

Sustainable Development of Croatia // Održivi razvoj hrvatske

Youth of the Croatian Labourists – Labour Party // Mladi Hrvatskih laburista - Stranka rada

Youth Forum of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia // Forum Mladih Socijaldemokratske partije Hrvatske

Independent Democratic Serb Party // Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka

Kosovo:

Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës // Alliance for the Future of Kosovo

Serbia:

Demokratska omladina // Democratic Youth

Socijalistička omladina Srbije Socijalistička partija Srbije // Socialist Youth of Serbia Socialist Party of Serbia

Mladi Liberalno-demokratske partije // Liberal Democratic Party Youth

Socijaldemokratska omladina u Socijaldemokratskoj uniji // Social Democratic Youth in Social Democratic Union

Forum mladih Nove stranke // New Party Youth Forum

Omladina Lige socijaldemokrata Vojvodine // League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina Youth

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