

# The Voice of Youth

Responding to challenges  
in South-East Europe





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## **The Voice of Youth**

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## **Boris Divković Foundation**

Boris Divković Foundation (BDF) is founded in 2013 with the aim of improving political situation and practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Foundation promotes responsible policy, which will serve all citizens and act on the principles of equality, coexistence and solidarity.

The vision of Boris Divkovic Foundation has been marked with the desire to have the political activity align with the moral principles, and Boris Divkovic has advocated this idea throughout his entire political engagement. The wide dispersal of the opinion that the connection of the moral and politics is impossible is nothing but the consequence of the perennial rule of the irresponsible politics.

Boris Divkovic Foundation relies on the assumption that it is possible and necessary to practice and keep ideological decontamination of the term politics publicly, and thus establish the grounds for the involvement of the honest and responsible people in the BH political processes.

## European Liberal Forum

The European Liberal Forum (ELF) is the official political foundation of the European Liberal Party, the ALDE Party. Together with 46 member organisations, we work all over Europe to bring new ideas into the political debate, to provide a platform for discussion, and to empower citizens to make their voices heard.

ELF was founded in 2007 to strengthen the liberal and democrat movement in Europe. Our work is guided by liberal ideals and a belief in the principle of freedom. We stand for a future-oriented Europe that offers opportunities for every citizen. ELF is engaged on all political levels, from the local to the European.

We bring together a diverse network of national foundations, think tanks and other experts. At the same time, we are also close to, but independent from, the ALDE Party and other Liberal actors in Europe. In this role, our forum serves as a space for an open and informed exchange of views between a wide range of different actors.

## **Centre Party International Foundation Sweden**

The Centre Party International Foundation, CIS, is a Swedish Party-Affiliated Organisation (PAO) established in 1995 by the Swedish Centre Party. It shares the same core values as the Centre Party, a social-liberal, green party with a strong emphasis on sustainability and decentralisation. The specific objective of PAO development assistance is to promote human rights, democracy and gender equality.

Through its local partners in Palestine, West Africa, the Balkans, and globally, CIS' main mission is to empower women and youth as key agents of change to strengthen democracies and improve national conditions for peace and prosperity.

CIS' activities focus on two interdependent areas, namely support for sister parties and affiliated political movements and organizations, with the goal of ensuring well-functioning democratic political parties and support for multi-party systems, with the goal of ensuring well-functioning, democratically based multi-party systems.

## **Haya van Someren**

### **Stichting/VVD Internationaal**

Haya van Somerenstichting/VVD International is responsible for the international activities and relations of the Dutch Liberal Party VVD.

The main aim of Haya van Somerenstichting/VVD International is realising, maintaining and enhancing relationships with liberal sister parties and organizations around the globe and actively participating in international liberal networks. One of the priorities is contributing to the capacity building of liberal parties in Eastern Europe, at the Balkans, the Middle East and Northern Africa.

The latter is made possible thanks to the MATRA and SHIRAKA programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The MATRA and SHIRAKA programmes support countries in Eastern Europe, The Balkans, Middle East and Northern Africa in their transition to a pluralist and democratic society, governed by the rule of law.

## Authors

### ***BODULOVIĆ, Nikola***

My name is Nikola and I come from Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am 21 years old, and I currently study Architecture at the International Burch University of Sarajevo. My interests span a group of many professions, altogether my focus is on one goal, and that is to contribute to the positive progress in society.

### ***DIMITROVSKA, Teodora***

As someone who always puts her career first, I could say that I am an ambitious workaholic and a persistent law student who always spurs no effort in everything I does. Added to this, I am a human rights activist, determined to fight for the improvement of the human rights and equal treatment of all citizens in society. My life motto is 'Be the best version of yourself'.

### ***FURJAN, Adrijana***

My name is Adrijana and I live in Cestica, a small municipality in the Republic of Croatia. I hold a specialist degree in Economics majoring in Tourism and Sports Management. I love helping others, especially the elderly.

### ***JOVANOVIĆ, Stefan***

My name is Stefan, I am 27 years old and I live in Bar (Montenegro). I study Political Science at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Podgorica. I am a member of the Main Board of the Liberal Party of Montenegro, and also, I am a member and activist of many NGOs in Montenegro which deal with the protection of human rights.

### ***KOLAR, Sanela***

My name is Sanela Kolar and I am from Montenegro. In the past 10 years, I've been living in Italy where I attained my Bachelor's degree in International Studies and European Institutions. Then, I enrolled for Master programme in Political Science and Government. As I moved to Italy when I was 19, I became more open-minded and started to criticize and question everything related to politics. As this approach is not appreciated in politics of the Balkan countries, I hope I can help and bring positive change in this region.

### ***MARKOVIĆ, Luka***

My name is Luka, and I am study Law at the University of Belgrade. I have always been interested in politics and I would like to make positive changes in the future.

### ***VANCHOV, Dimitar***

As a president of LIDEM, I believe that all young people from the Western Balkans are equal and hand to hand with all the young people in Europe. The love for working in the field of human rights and freedoms encouraged me to enrol the Faculty of Law, and as a result, I have obtained LL.M. degree.

### ***VESIĆ, Željka***

Born to be a journalist, I worked as a fact-checking journalist in the daily press and different sites in Serbia. Today I enjoy discovering the beauty of marketing, branding and the digital options of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am a passionate book buyer, even when I already have too many new books to read, coffee addict, and hiker. Also, I am very interested in history, old buildings, monuments, learning new languages and cultures.

### ***ŽUDIĆ, Jasmina***

I come from Montenegro. When I was 19, I enrolled an Italian University, and soon attained a Bachelor's degree in International and European Studies. Currently, I study a postgraduate programme and hope to get my Master's degree soon. Moving from Balkans helped me better observe and analyse the common problems of our region. During my studies in Italy, my motivation to stand for what is right grew, as in Europe, the voice of people is seen as very important.

## Executive Summary

Many social problems that are present in the South East Europe (SEE), such as unemployment, low political participation and migration, high brain drain, the highest unemployment rates of youth in Europe and the lowest rates of political participation of young people are particularly visible when it comes to youth, as they are a special social category. All these problems require a systematic approach and thorough analysis which can result in needed change and progress.

The “Civic Platform for Young Liberal Activists” (CPLA) is a project organized by European Liberal Forum with the support of the Center Party International Foundation (CIS), Haya van Someren Stichting/VVD Internationaal and Boris Divkovic Foundation. The aim of this project is to provoke interest of youth in political activism, within the broad spectrum of civil society including political parties, NGOs and social movements. Liberal political NGOs of South-East Europe gathered young representatives of liberal political parties with one goal - to raise awareness of youth activism. As a part of the project tasks, teams had to write Opinion Pieces on a chosen topic that is relevant for their county, but also for the region. Due to the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, teams did not have the opportunity to meet in person, however, their strong will and joint goals resulted in a publication named “The Voice of Youth”.

The objectives of this project are to provoke and raise awareness among the youth on the importance of, not only their political participation, but also on their very much needed political activism. Youth is a group that is often marginalized in policymaking, and to encourage their empowerment, they need to stay united and articulate the problems they are facing sharply. Therefore, the project that resulted in “The Voice of Youth” is given to the participants of CPLA as a tool to write about the issues that they have recognized as problems in their societies.

## Foreword

**Faris Šehović**, Policy maker and researcher at Boris Divković Foundation

This publication gives a perspective on how SEE area can be set in motion by youth creativity that merged from the ideas of rationality and social responsibility. Also, it is evident that the broader participation of youth in social steering processes is crucial for the healthy progress of the society.

Furthermore, developing the liberal perspective and its public visibility in SEE region is a significant generator for the establishment of an active and progressive society whose goal is to become a member of European Union and cherish all European values. This is why CPLA initiative is not only a tool for fighting the economic and demographic structural challenges in the region or the lack of the youth participation in decision making, but it encourages the approach of a liberal vision among the public sphere in providing the answers on all crucial social issues.

In that liberal vision, or more precisely, in the answers of young liberals whose texts are published here on the topics of unemployment, transgenerational solidarity, institutional support and misinformation, it can be found that there is something “vigorous” in the political context of SEE region. The authors analysed issues and provided detailed study of indicators and parameters that concern the given topic. Finally, they offered new solutions based on principles of rationality and creativity.

Rationalization of society and societal processes is one of the most important programs which liberal idea needs to promote and strengthen in the SEE region. It can further be used as a comparative advantage in the political market of our region to produce the needed social and political reform.

I highly recommend and hope everyone will enjoy reading the following Opinion Pieces. Moreover, I hope the maturity of our authors and their completeness in answers to social questions is evident. Last but not least, I congratulate them on the quality of their work, because only quality can generate real social prosper.

# It is your mother too

Sanela Kolar

Stefan Jovanovic

Jasmina Zudic



## It is your mother too

Authors: **Sanela Kolar, Stefan Jovanovic, Jasmina Zudic**

*She is awakened by the first rays of summer sun. While still sensitive and fragile, she rubs her eyes and smiles. She enjoys the little things in life. She gets up, smells coffee and smiles again. Her love for coffee is unconditional. She puts on the lightest dress she has to make her feel free and comfortable. Oh, my God, how beautiful she is! She already made plans in her head for this wonderful day. First, she will have a cup of coffee with her husband. He is already drinking it and surely, her cup is waiting for her too. Then, she will make lunch and get ready for work.*

*She stands in front of the mirror, and her smile disappears. The reflection she sees in the mirror is a real slap in the face for her. The smell of coffee is still there, but instead of inducing a beautiful smile, her eyes tear up. Her daily plans change instantly. She decides to have her coffee outside. She tries to leave the house as fast as possible and she will come up with the explanation for her two, new, visible bruises on the way to work. There are other new ones on her body too, but she will hide them with clothes and makeup. The question runs through her head: when will seeking justification for his actions stop? However, the same answers put her mind at ease: he will change; he does it*

*because he loves me; this is the price I have to bear to be with him; I love him and I accept all his flaws and virtues; I am afraid, what if the situation gets even worse when I rebel? A strong voice with an imperative tone brings her to reality, "Is there anything to eat or drink here? You don't do anything, you just put on makeup. Didn't I put enough makeup on you?" He comments mockingly. Scared, she hurries to serve the "master".*

*Every day is the same. She is almost used to such a life. Sometimes she thinks things are improving, but very quickly, he brings her down to earth. Going to work and seeking solace in job-related obligations help her run away from everyday problems at home. Instead of looking forward to returning home after work, she hopes she will go to sleep without any new injuries. Once home, she is happy he hasn't arrived yet. He left a message on her desk, "I'll be late tonight, leave the door unlocked. I love you." That is enough for her happiness. That is enough for dimples to appear on her beautiful face and her eyes to shine. "He loves me!" she whispers with pleasure. She falls asleep with a smile....*

*She is awakened by the first rays of summer sun. While still sensitive and fragile, she rubs her eyes and smiles. She stands in front of the mirror and her smile disappears...*

What if we told you that one in five women in Montenegro experienced or still lives in circumstances like this? The OSCE led survey on violence against women (2019) research finds that domestic violence is the main cause of death and disability among women 15-44 years old in the world.<sup>1</sup>

The most recent studies conducted in Montenegro indicate (Radio Slobodna Evropa, 2020) that the violence against women increased during the lockdown period imposed by the Government as preventive measures for repression of Corona Virus in 2020. The statement issued by Montenegrin Safe House confirms that they recorded a call increase of 27% in March 2020 than in February that same year. To be precise, the Safe House received 184 calls in February, whereas in March the number of calls raised to 256.<sup>2</sup> This fact further highlighted the ongoing problems with domestic violence in Montenegro.

Added to this, CEED Consulting and NGO SOS phone Nikšić, in cooperation with consultants from NGO Safe Women's House (Sigurna ženska kuća), have been developing a Study on family violence in Montenegro in 2012, for the needs of UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), European Union Delegation to Montenegro and the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights. The Study has been developed within the gender Equality Programme

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<sup>1</sup> OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe <https://www.osce.org>, [https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/2/413237\\_0.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/2/413237_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Povecan broj poziva zrtava porodičnog nasilja u Crnoj Gori, Aneta Durovic, Radio Slobodna Evropa, March 2020, last seen August 2020, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/porodicko-nasilje-crna-gora-pandemija/30518116.html>

IPA 2010. Furthermore, the study reported that 92% of Montenegrin citizens believe that domestic violence exists, 38% admit knowing someone who is a victim of violence, but only 13% confirm their exposure to family violence. Similar to other Western Balkan countries, Montenegro is considered to be a patriarchal society. That means that the girls are traditionally raised to be gentle and obedient, while the boys are expected to be tough and dominant. The same study finds that 97% of the perpetrators are men of whom 33% have been charged with attempted murder, while 76% of the victims are women, and 50% of them are married to their abuser.<sup>3</sup>

What makes the situation even more serious in Montenegro is the fact that most women do not report violence or contact the officials for help. The Statistical Office of Montenegro explains that the main reasons for that are the feelings of shame imposed on women, and the fear of family/community rejection. In addition to this, the research shows that the violated women lack the trust in the institutions and judiciary system. They fear they will not get adequate support or protection, and this is why they rarely press charges against their abusers.<sup>4</sup>

Many aspects of Montenegrin society can change and help prevent domestic violence against women. First, talking freely and honestly

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<sup>3</sup> Gender equality and anti-discrimination in Montenegro <https://www.gendermontenegro.com>, [https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/MNE/Study%20on%20Family%20Violence%20and%20Violence%20against%20Women\\_final%202012.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3ZjsiSlS MguK8xOIVNviJg\\_CMU i3lh5xP2VIH4wghq-GQ Sbi8PfFvuE](https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/MNE/Study%20on%20Family%20Violence%20and%20Violence%20against%20Women_final%202012.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3ZjsiSlS MguK8xOIVNviJg_CMU i3lh5xP2VIH4wghq-GQ Sbi8PfFvuE)

<sup>4</sup> MONSTAT, Statistical Office of Montenegro <https://www.monstat.org>

about domestic violence needs to be encouraged. The victims must not take the blame for the abuse or believe that they have somehow provoked the violation. In addition, it is necessary to educate and inform the young people about signs of domestic violence and help them understand what the victims are going through. This can be achieved through specific workshops, meetings with experts from this area and victims, so that young participants can hear about real-life experiences first hand. The high school students must be encouraged to participate in this process of awareness, considering that they are at the age when they develop personalities and build the perception of their character. Besides, the target groups are not just young girls, but also the boys, as they equally have to understand the importance of a woman's role in the family and society, and why women must never be objectized. It is therefore recommended that every school implements educational activities in collaboration with the safe houses located near their area. Moreover, the Ministry of Education should be responsible to organize mandatory educational programs on this issue as an extracurricular activity for the high school and university students. Domestic violence is an important problem in our society, and it must be approached as such on all levels. Raising the public awareness is essential step towards progress as the victims of domestic violence must be heard.

Furthermore, the reforms of the governing institutions and the judiciary systems in Montenegro need to ensure Law enforcement that sentences the abusers and supports victims of violence. Only 12% of cases of domestic abuse are officially reported, as majority of violated women fear they will suffer revenge from their abusers and that the institutions will not protect them adequately.<sup>5</sup> There have been numerous discussions on whether every form of domestic violence should be reported or not. As part of the IPA program in Montenegro, IPSOS<sup>6</sup> conducted a survey in collaboration with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and found that there is a significant difference between public opinion on domestic violence and what the judicial authorities stand for. The general public supports the idea that every form of violence must be reported, while the latter approve that some 'light' cases of violence should be resolved within the family.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, reforms are necessary to encourage women to report every instance of violence and to assure that the authorities will be process each reported case and provide protection for victims when needed.

Montenegro is one of the first countries that signed and ratified the Istanbul Convention, which entered into force on 1 August 2014. This is the first legally binding international instrument in Europe which addresses the violence against women and domestic violence, and most far-reaching international agreement that deals

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<sup>5</sup> Percepcija predstavnika pravosudja o nasilju nad ženama i porodicnom nasilju, IPSOS, 2015

<sup>6</sup> IPSOS - Multinational market research and a consulting firm

<sup>7</sup> Gender equality and anti-discrimination in Montenegro <https://www.gendermontenegro.com>

with this kind of human rights violations. Moreover, Montenegro is also part of CEDAW (The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women), an international treaty adopted by the UN in 1979. The succession started on 23 October 2006, soon after the independence from Serbia. It is important to note that these international conventions do not enforce laws but only provide directives for the countries to follow, so it expected of each signee to adopt the necessary laws and see that they are implemented and applied on their grounds. Likewise, judiciary system in Montenegro requires reforms that are in line with the signed international conventions and treaties. This is why both, government institutions and NGOs, should give victims a proper moral and legal support when needed.<sup>8 9</sup>

When it comes to the economic aspect of the domestic abuse, study Women and men in Montenegro, conducted by MONSTAT, in 2019, on the status of women and men in Montenegro society, indicates that 50% of women stay married to their abusive husbands in Montenegro because they do not have any independent income or control over their property.<sup>10</sup> Economic vulnerability of women further increases their risk of becoming a victim of violence. This is why the government institutions, private sector and even families need to increase economic

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<sup>8</sup> Istanbul Convention, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istanbul\\_Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istanbul_Convention)

<sup>9</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> MONSTAT, Statistical Office of Montenegro

[https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/publikacije/Zene%20i%20muskarci%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202019%20p%20review%20FINAL.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1pYxsN5hP\\_-JzqADTtBF35-gnoj5GK1ZYWdw56up8iUxAlkkHuhMGW4FI](https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/publikacije/Zene%20i%20muskarci%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202019%20p%20review%20FINAL.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1pYxsN5hP_-JzqADTtBF35-gnoj5GK1ZYWdw56up8iUxAlkkHuhMGW4FI)

opportunities to promote women's financial independence. To increase employment of women in public sectors and politics, the government can consider the measures that would support women's engagement outside home, namely kindergartens could be free of charge or require a minimum contribution when a mother is employed. In addition, the government can help the private sector that favours women employment. Last but not least, the family has a crucial role in encouraging daughters, sisters, mothers to educate themselves, find work and pursue their carriers so that they can have economic independence. In cases when it is not safe for the victim to stay at home, a "safe house" must provide shelter for them for as long as needed.

While researching this issue, it clearly emerged that this subject is not often covered by the media. This is why we strongly suggest that governmental and non-governmental organizations should cooperate more closely with the local communication networks, such as TV and radio stations, newspapers and online platforms, and to use their channels to help raise awareness of this problem.

In conclusion, the first step is to speak up about domestic violence, then to encourage society to report all cases of abuse and to contribute to awareness rise. The victims should not be afraid to ask for help. Because it could be your mother too.

# **Young for the elderly – awareness and actions of young people for a better life of the elderly**

**Adrijana Furjan**



# Young for the elderly – awareness and actions of young people for a better life of the elderly

Author: **Adrijana Furjan**

The fast technological improvements, sustainable growth and development of the world economy have led to what has become a fundamental determinant of the modern, hectic way of life, known as the lifestyle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> In such context, people's expectations are increasing, and they are always seeking for the new opportunities; however, many are often failing to take a break from every day's haste and stress. Young people often do not have time for their private and business obligations, and thus for activism and caring for society. Scientist in technical and architectural sciences, Mr. sc. Marina Šimunić, finds that only 5% of young people are socially engaged in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>12</sup> This research finds the main reason for such a low interest in social activities and lack of

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<sup>11</sup> Teresa, Zbryrad (2009) STRES I PROFESIONALNI ZAMOR KOD ODABRANIH SKUPINA RADNIKA; Link: [https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id\\_clanak\\_jezik=64433](https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=64433);

<sup>12</sup> Šimunić, Marina (2015) MLADI I AKTIVIZAM: Tek pet posto mladih u Hrvatskoj društveno su angažirani<sup>12</sup> Link: <https://www.srednja.hr/novosti/mladi-i-aktivizam-tek-pet-posto-mladih-u-hrvatskoj-drustveno-su-angazirani-2/>

initiative for changes is the fact that youth accept their community as it is. Decreased involvement of young people in social actions has become more evident in Croatia especially, when an average of 30,000 young people a year have migrated in the period from 2015 to 2020.<sup>13</sup> This means that around 150,000 young people have permanently left the country in the past five years, and thus, the likelihood of social activism is further diminished. This reflects on the general safe keeping of seniors as the country is lacking youth who are willing to engage in their everyday care. Therefore, twofold problems can be highlighted from this - the problem of a hectic lifestyle where youth lacks time to engage in social activism, and the problem of evident decline of caregivers for the elderly in Croatia. It should be emphasized that the elderly are a very vulnerable group in society that often needs special care and attention, but the problem lies not only in the activism of young people, but also in the relationship between the state and other public services.

Although the Republic of Croatia often includes retirees in the country's strategies and plans, this sensitive group is still quite neglected in society. To start with, their pensions are very low compared to the average consumer expenditures. To be more precise, the average pension in the Republic of Croatia is 2,500 Croatian kuna (kn)<sup>14</sup> (about 350 Euros). Nevertheless, it should be

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<sup>13</sup> Postotak mladih - društveno angažiranih u Republici Hrvatskoj; Link: <https://www.srednja.hr/novosti/mladi-i-aktivizam-tek-pet-posto-mladih-u-hrvatskoj-drustveno-su-angazirani-2/>;

<sup>14</sup> Prosječna mirovina u Republici Hrvatskoj; Link: <https://www.mirovina.hr/novosti/prosjecna-mirovina-u-posljednjih-godinu-dana-porasila-102-kune/>;

noted that about 40% of pensioners actually receive an even lower pension of up to 1700kn, (about 250 Euros)<sup>15</sup>. Compared to Luxembourg or Norway where pensions are over 1500 Euros<sup>16</sup>, the Republic of Croatia was at the bottom of the scale of the EU pension list in 2018. It can be concluded that the elderly in Croatia do not have proper financial opportunities to enjoy their retirement, as there is only a small number of retirees who have financial stability for leisure and luxury. Unfortunately, this is just one of the problems that retirees face nowadays in Croatia.

Another problem that concern the elderly is that there is a shortage of caregivers in the market. The Republic of Croatia recognized this problem and launched a project called “Zaželi”<sup>17</sup> in 2017, through which more than 6000 unemployed women are hired to take care for the elderly. Their main obligations include to provide necessities for seniors, such as food and medicine. This project covers only 28,000 seniors, however there are about 900,000 people over the age of 65 in the Republic of Croatia. Many seniors do not have descendants, and usually the vast majority of them are dependent and need help and support.

The implementation of this project is especially challenging in local communities and this can be explained through the example of a

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<sup>15</sup> Postotak mirovina ispod granice siromaštva; Link: <https://www.mirovina.hr/novosti/pola-milijuna-umirovljenika-zivi-ispod-granice-siromastva/>;

<sup>16</sup> Prosječne mirovine u Luksemburgu i Norveškoj; Link: <https://www.poslovnih.hr/hrvatska/cetiri-europske-drzave-s-najvisim-iznosom-prosjecne-mirovine-344304>;

<sup>17</sup> Program „Zaželi“; Link: <https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/nastavljam-program-zazeli-dosad-zaposleno-vise-od-6-000-zena-i-ukljuceno-30-000-starijih-osoba/28808>;

small Municipality of Cestica, located in the northwest of the Republic of Croatia. This municipality is specific as numerous young people have migrated from Cestica to foreign countries and, as a result there are not many caregivers to hire in this local community<sup>18</sup>. Thus, there is an excess of those who need help and shortage of those who can provide help.

After this problem is perceived in the Cestica Municipality, author of this text, Adrijana has launched the “Young for the Elderly” project to motivate youth to be active in providing care for the elderly in their own community, and thus address the two basic problems emphasized at the beginning of the text. The project is designed to encourage two groups of citizens engage: young activists seeking to gain compassion for the elderly and provide them with care and nursing. This project, or online advocacy, actively shares content on the Facebook<sup>19</sup> and Instagram<sup>20</sup> page called “Mladi za starije” (“Young for the Elderly”) to promote youth activism and care for the elderly. As a result, these two groups of citizens, who make about 65% of the population of Municipality of Cestica, actively help each other through project activities.

The whole project campaign is based on Adrijana's personal experience as she takes care for an elderly neighbour whose children live abroad. The seriously ill old lady has many needs and

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<sup>18</sup> Istraživanje mladih u hrvatskoj – postotak iseljenih, Gvozdanović i sur., 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Mladi za starije, Facebook page; Link: <https://www.facebook.com/Mladi-za-starije-104658901335199/>;

<sup>20</sup> Mladi za starije, Instagram profile; Link: [https://www.instagram.com/mladi\\_za\\_starije/](https://www.instagram.com/mladi_za_starije/)

problems, and Adrijana deals with them on the daily basis. She visits her neighbour every day and delivers food and medicine when needed. Sometimes she takes her out for grocery shopping or a walk in the park. Caring for an elderly person has turned into a real friendship, even though there is a 60-year difference between them. It is this initial care for the elderly person that grew into love as Adrijana sees her neighbour as a grandmother and a member of her own family. Adriana's neighbour is just one of many senior citizens who require help and care.

The interest of the local community is extremely important to municipal government. The Municipality of Cestica very often deals with the problems that concern youth. It offers financial support for students, builds POS<sup>21</sup> apartments for the youth to help them to stay in the municipality and supports many projects that concern young people. They recognized the potential of the project “Young for the Elderly”, as it deals with the problems of youth, needs of elderly, goals of municipal authorities and the entire local community. The citizens take the main role in a project, as their activities make an inevitable contribution. The main challenge of the project is to motivate young people to volunteer, who, as mentioned above, often do not have free time due to their private commitments. Thus, this joint involvement of local authorities and the support of citizens can contribute towards

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<sup>21</sup> Izgradnja POS stanova za mlade u općini Cestica; Link: <https://www.cestica.hr/vijesti/novosti-iz-opcine/801-u-cestici-izgradnja-pos-stanova>

the successful implementation of the project and solution to the problem.

Moreover, there are two associations in the Municipality of Cestica that help the elderly at least once a year. The Association “Hiperaktivni”<sup>22</sup> collects the furniture and supplies that people want to throw away and distribute the things which are still in decent condition to the people in need, mostly elderly. Likewise, the Association “Mlada aktivna Cestica”<sup>23</sup> organizes assistance to the elderly in household chores, such as wood chopping. These two associations gathered a significant number of young people, who help others through socialization and entertainment. They provide a good example where joint actions can be organized in the future, as well as how the community can further cooperate.

As it can be seen from the examples of these two associations, the youth activism in the municipality of Cestica already exists, but their contribution to the society can progress even further. As long as the associations aim to gather more youth members, understand the needs of elderly, they will continue to make “the most important drop in the ocean” with their desire and perseverance. In this way, they will contribute to their local community and hopefully motivate others to organize new groups or associations for solving other problems that arise in the municipality.

It’s always nice to help, so if you want a change, help others.

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<sup>22</sup> Udruga Mladih Hiperaktivni Cestica, FindGlocal:  
<http://www.findglocal.com/HR/Cestica/198099000352442/Udruga-mladih-Hiperaktivni-Cestica>; Facebook page;  
Link: <https://hr-hr.facebook.com/umhiperaktivni/>

<sup>23</sup> Mlada aktivna Cestica; Link: <https://www.cestica.hr/projektieu/projekt-mlada-aktivna-cestica>; Facebook page;  
Link: <https://www.facebook.com/mlada.aktivna.cestica/>



# **The gift of the gap**

**Dimitar Vanchov**

**Teodora Dimitrovska**

# The gift of the gap

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Teodora Dimitrovska To be able to talk about political activism, we first need to get acquainted with the meaning of the term civil society. This term was first introduced in theory by Leonardo Bruni<sup>24</sup> in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The term is derived from two Latin terms, namely *communication politica* and *civilis communitas*.<sup>25</sup> According to Alexis De Tocqueville, civil society is a self-organizing form, which is legally regulated and not directly dependent on the state.<sup>26</sup> The starting point is the active social actor – citizen.

Political activism in a country can be seen in several aspects. It can be viewed from the social, political and individual aspect. Activism is the most important thing in a society that helps succeed in the area of human rights and freedoms in the context of bringing a specific right or freedom into focus to the public and stakeholders. Activism is the key to modern democracies; it is the mirror of the freedom of expression through concrete actions.

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<sup>24</sup> Leonardo Bruni, an Italian humanist, historian and statesman. He was often recognized as the most important humanist historian of the early Renaissance. Leonardo Bruni, “Professional rhetorician” or “Civic Humanist”, 1967

<sup>25</sup> Savo Klimovski, Renata Deskovska, Tanja Karakamiseva-Jovanovska, Political System, 2012

<sup>26</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) - French aristocrat, diplomat, political scientist and historian.

Young people want to be heard, and they want to express through the means of activism. According to the “principle of utility”, the only possible limit to the human freedom is the freedom of other people; the State cannot interfere in that private sphere, only if the actions of an individual do not infringe on the rights of others and do not interfere with them.<sup>27</sup> In North Macedonia, there are several key problems that concern the youth participation in political activism. First, there is evident apathy of the youth from engaging in politics, which is a result of intrigues and political fraud present in political parties. In North Macedonia, young people generally feel demotivated and do not want to be a part of politics and political parties. Still, there is a small number of young people who engage in politics. According to the research conducted within Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), 58% of the participants responded that they are not convinced they can personally impact the way authorities work.<sup>28</sup>

Their research further shows that 44% of the poll respondents are members of political parties or supporters, while the other 66% are either not members of any political party or they are not their supporters. The survey also indicated that 10% of the participants have never been involved in a civic/non-governmental organization, whereas only 25% of them were involved in a non-governmental organization.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Jeremy Bentham, A Fragment on Government, 1960

<sup>28</sup> Socio-political participation of Youth in North Macedonia: Apathy, Optimism or Disappointment? 2019

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Socio-political participation of Youth in North Macedonia: Apathy, Optimism or Disappointment? 2019

WFD also finds that more than half of the participants, about 57% of them, never take action to solve a particular social issue, whereas only 2,1% confirmed that they constantly participate in social activism. According to this survey, the unemployment and poverty (28.6%) and Justice (17.1%) are two most important things that the respondents would consider if they were to be more actively involved in political and social life.<sup>30</sup>

The WFD report concludes that there is a high level of distrust among young people as youth are uncertain, they can influence on the policies adopted by the authorities in the country. Also, more than a half of young people are neither supporters nor members of any political party, and they admit that they never participate in solving the social problems that exist in society.

It is very alarming to learn that the young people in North Macedonia lack the interest to participate in the political turmoil. This indicates that they are not properly represented in politics and that they do not participate in creation of policies that concern their wellbeing which further causes their devastation and dissatisfaction. The results of WFD research show that it is essential to motivate the youth of North Macedonia to participate in the daily politics of their country.

Even though there are only few, youth activists in our country are mainly dealing with the fear of expressing their personal opinion.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Socio-political participation of Youth in North Macedonia: Apathy, Optimism or Disappointment? 2019

There is not any appropriate source to prove this statement, but it is evident that the political parties create an ideal image for the public and manipulate youth in order not to lose their credibility. Many informal communications and conversations support this claim. As they are often in a position when they fear to express their opinion, they stay quiet even when they do not agree with the collective. This helps create an image of a cult from a politician which is very characteristic for countries with populist leaders in power.<sup>31</sup>

This problem occurred years ago as a result of the increasing number of populists and right-wing “catch-all” leaders.<sup>32</sup> This is very common in Western Balkan countries, as the political culture of this region, intentionally or not, has history of ideology when it comes to the individuals in power. Unfortunately, the young people have been used as a tool for manipulation and intrigues in such regimes.

The most important step towards raising the awareness of the importance of youth activism is education. Education can enlighten the young people that their voice is important. It empowers them to actively participate to achieve changes in the society and reminds them that they can contribute to the political prosperity of the country.

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<sup>31</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink, Intellectual Backgrounds: Coping with stress*, 254

<sup>32</sup> *A Political Sociology of Populism and Leadership*, Lorenzo Viviani, 2017, p. 297

“I raised my voice not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot succeed when half of us are held back” - Malala Yousafzai<sup>33</sup>

The democratization of political parties is necessary in North Macedonia to restore the faith of the youth and increase their participation in politics. Young people must not be afraid to express their opinion publicly. As North Macedonia aims to join the European Union, the open access, transparency, freedom of expression, respecting opinion of others within political parties is mandatory. Citizens of North Macedonia need to be introduced new politicians, educated young people, who are creative, independent and speak their mind. The democratization is required to achieve a modern and democratic state, as well as the implementation of the principle of pluralism and openness of political parties. Youth activism within political parties should be viewed a source of ideas and potential. Their voice should not be repressed as they can indicate the faults in governance or in general society.

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<sup>33</sup> Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate.

The following changes are necessary for more approachable and practised activism:

- The democratization of political parties - Democratization in political parties means open access of youth in policy creation. To reach such goal, it is necessary to ensure consensus within the party regarding the policies that are being implemented. For example, if three policies are created and implemented in a month, one of them should concern the youth and the youth wing should participate in its development. In this way, young people will contribute to the creation of policies that concern them, and ensure they are properly represented and implemented within the party. Transparency in creation of such policies and availability of all interested in its development are essential elements of the process. Also, these changes would not just cause the democratization of political parties, but their modernization as well, as they would include transformation from the spoiled system to the system of meritocracy. Under the democratization of political parties, the following activities can be carried out from youth: i) free and impartial expression of their opinion; ii) creation of political parties as a centre of ideas and proposals; iii) providing transparency regarding how policies are created within intra-party structures.

- *Encouraging personal and free opinion* - Under this point, several results can be achieved. Moreover, young people should be encouraged to express their own opinion without any pressure, suggestion or fear that they might lose their position in the party. Speaking freely means sharing an opinion that is not forced or imposed, that arises from the reason of the young person, his/her disjunctive possibility, as an opportunity to choose from two or more alternatives.
- Massive participation of young people in state politics – There is a high apathy for politics at the moment among young people that has risen as a result of dissatisfaction in political games and embezzlement.<sup>34</sup> If the political parties show that they are aiming for changes, they will become more attractive for youth to join in.

Our campaign shows what happens if young people are silent and do not speak their mind, ask for their rights or fight for their interests. The voice of youth is important in every society.

Give us our place in governance, let us participate, and only together we can achieve better results.

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<sup>34</sup> Irving L. Janis, Victims of Groupthink, Intellectual Backgrounds: Coping with stress“ Pg:254

# Youth unemployment an ongoing issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Nikola Bodulović



# Youth unemployment an ongoing issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Author: **Nikola Bodulović**

The Balkans, both as a geographic and cultural region of southeast Europe, has raising number of emigrations in the past few years. This is especially prominent amongst young people who, commonly after graduation, decide to travel abroad in search for better opportunities. This phenomenon is also common in the rest of the world due to the globalisation effects on the travelling expenses. Travelling has become affordable to more individuals in the last decade than ever before. Yet, this is not the only cause of increased migration.

The idea of “escape” is becoming common among young people from across the Balkans. It is evident that youth’s search for their economic prosperity, career advancements, and improvement of other life affiliations outside their home county is on the rise.<sup>35</sup> The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most alarming in the region. According to international reviews from 2019, it is estimated that during the past five years 173,011 citizens have left Bosnia and

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<sup>35</sup>N1. (2020). Bosnia’s best students seek different career paths, in and outside the country

Herzegovina in search for better conditions elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> A significant, yet not accurately published percent of this number comprises young people under the age of 30.

This number focuses on the citizens who have permanently left their country, without the aspiration to ever return. In a report from published on Balkan Insight, D. Kovačević estimates that half of the young people born in B&H will eventually live abroad.<sup>37</sup>

The actual figures show that the situation with youth migration is very alarming, especially with the historic upturns that have shaken the economies of the region not that long ago. This is a growing trend which is likely to continue in the future. The most prominent cause of the migration of youth is the state of affairs in their home country.

The Global post has found that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the world's largest percentage of youth unemployment, at a staggering 57,5%.<sup>38</sup>

The most prominent causes of the high unemployment rate are: i) the public sector, which is notorious for its inefficiency, ii) the inherently complex political organisation of the country and iii) the cases of widespread corruption.

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<sup>36</sup>SRNA. (2019). Over 173,000 people left Bosnia in the past five years

<sup>37</sup>Kovačević, D. "Half of All Bosnians Live Outside Bosnia", *BalkanInsight.com*, BIRN, Banja Luka, (8.08.2017),

<sup>38</sup>GlobalPost. (2014). Why Bosnia Has The World's Highest Youth Unemployment Rate. *Youth Economic Opportunities*

These issues present major problems that young people confront on the daily basis. When it comes to youth unemployment, there needs to be made a clear distinction between two main, quite divergent factors that affect it, and they have to be examined separately.

The first one is the lack of technical education. Countries whose education system lacks the programmes for the modern job qualification requirements suffer greatly from this issue. It is difficult for an individual to get a well-paid job if they did not have practical education in the given field. Therefore, this problem is the negative outcome of the education system as the young people seek better education opportunities elsewhere. This is evident in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well, but not to the alarming extent.

The second major factor that concerns youth unemployment is the mismanagement of the workforce. This is a very complex problem in its nature and can be caused by several different factors, ranging from the lack of an efficient labour market to, for example, a corrupt system of employment. The focus here will be on the most present aspect in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.

Many surveys and media reports indicate that the corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina occurs in employment process. People are hired due to their personal friendships and bribes, regardless of their educational degree or professional experience. This causes youth unemployment and contributes to the mismanagement of the workforce factor.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> CIN – „B&H: Sarajevo Clinics Hiring Without Procedures“ ,www.rai-see.org, Sarajevo (2015).

For that reason, it can be said that the issue of youth unemployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina is caused by the insufficient educational programmes and widespread corruption. This study will examine how this problem can be resolved; however labour market needs to be taken into account as well. The corruption has already been mentioned as an obstacle for the employment of youth, and even though the labour market exists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it can't develop naturally due to the dishonesty and bribery.

A possible solution to this problem is organisational change of the workforce management. Job opportunities arise, as well as the demand for them. The key to achieve change and increase youth employment would be to reforms of the system.

The main idea for a method to achieve this goal is to organise a functional group whose main task is monitoring, coordinating and organising (MCO) the workforce. The "MCO" group can be a company, but its role would be an external system of governing. To simplify, the MCO group serves as a middleman between the youth and the labour market. The possibilities of its organisation are many, as it could function as a non-governmental organisation, and as a part of the governing system of the state.

This organisation would not only help young people in finding an appropriate job, but it would prevent widespread corruption in the process as well.

Young people would be hired to work in this organisation or become its members. The organization aims to prevent the workforce mismanagement through transparent fight against corruption, expropriation and discrimination. Through its mechanisms, it would offer guidance, market education, training courses and workshops for specific areas of practice to young people. It would cooperate with the government to create reforms of the education system, and to indicate to the cases of corruption. It would not have the power to process the detected incidents, but its role is to be a regulator and mediator of change.

Every segment of society would benefit from MCO, especially the economy of the country. Another aspect that the organisation could support are the growth of youth projects, start-up companies, businesses, etc. as it would serve as a platform for the economic growth. It would aim to become an essential segment of the governing system, as it would primarily deal with the problem of youth unemployment, as well as with the other problems that concern other members of the society.

This organization would start working from the microenvironment to the macroenvironment. A pilot of this programme would be applied on a small scale first, to test its functionality and the potential

problems which may occur. This means that the company would start with the small organisational unit in the country. Its initial goal would not be profit, as this aspect would, in the end, depend on its position in society. Of course, the main question would be how to attract youth to contribute to this project. The pilot would help test the concept of the organization, and also the public interest, as it is case with a start-up programs. The goal of this project is not only to find youth secure employment, but to increase the labour quality, and thus to provide long term improvements for the economy and market of our country.

Taking care of our youth now, helps solve the problems of the generations to come.

# Fake news and how to fight it

Zeljka Vesic  
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# Fake news and how to fight it

Authors: **Zeljka Vesic, Luka Markovic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us how important it is to have real and true information, and that they are received from the reliable sources. In this particular case, misinformation and spread of fake news endanger our health and raises panic, which further raises danger in multiple ways. This is why it is important to check if a photograph was edited, or if sound was added to a video, and even if the articles spread in mainstream media are modified. The public needs to be protected from the pandemic of false information.

Fake news, pseudo-news, alternative facts and news with misinformation are spread through traditional forms of media or social media to create a false narrative about a given topic. Spreading misinformation gives people a distorted view, often on something that they need to decide on. Social media is very convenient place for spreading of false information because of the open nature of their platforms which allows every person to say and share various contents.

The term fake news can become a dangerous weapon for anyone who wields it, and this can best be seen from the recent example of Ana

Lalic's arrest.<sup>40</sup> Her arrest was disguised under the explanation that the authorities were protecting public from her fake news, after she published an article about the shortage of medical equipment in a hospital in Vojvodina, Serbia, at the peak of the pandemic. Just hours after she has published a report on the chaotic conditions in the local clinical centre, Ana Lalic was attacked by a group of masked police officers, who arrested her and confiscated her mobile phones and laptop, under the accusation that she disturbed the public by publishing the fake story about health workers. She was also accused of being a foreign spy by right-wing organizations. However, she was released after the reaction of journalists' associations, European institutions and international media associations. During her twenty-year career as a journalist, she worked in numerous national media organizations. For this article, Reporters Without borders included her among 30 others 'information heroes' in the world as they were whistle-blowers whose courage helped capture crucial information during the pandemic. She is also the new winner of the Freedom of Speech Award given by Deutsche Welle.<sup>41</sup>

In the case of Ana Lalic, the authorities tried to hide the shortage of ventilators from the public and the official statements from the Government even announced that Serbia is in such of an abundance of equipment that they can even donate medical supplies to other

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<sup>40</sup> Beta news agency, N1info.com, <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a584614/Policija-dosla-po-novinarku-Nova.rs-zbog-teksta-o-Klinickom-centru-Vojvodine.html>

<sup>41</sup> Fang Bin, Deutsche Welle (DW.com), <https://www.dw.com/en/deutsche-welle-freedom-of-speech-award-17-laureates-from-14-countries/a-53306033>

countries (which did occur during the pandemic). The spread of this kind of fake news can lead people to underestimate the danger of the global pandemic, thinking that protection is unnecessary or that the healthcare system can provide the sufficient treatment to all citizens, which, as Ana Lalic has reported, was not the case.

The Serbians also witnessed the arrests of the citizens who shared videos of flood on their social media profiles in 2014. The citizens wanted to show alarming news and destruction of their towns, while the authorities tried to cover up the truth about the floods. In May 2014, Serbia was hit by heavy rains that caused major floods across the country in just 24 hours. There were more than 30 victims, more than 30,000 inhabitants were evacuated, numerous houses flooded, and a state of emergency was declared.<sup>42</sup> Nature could not be stopped, but damage could be minimized or prevented if the authorities reacted in time and invested adequately in infrastructure around riverbanks. The storm was announced three days earlier, and from the beginning it was known that it is going could lead to the catastrophe, however, many cities were still not equipped with sandbags. The reactions of the authorities appeared after the dams broke and the water flooded the nearby areas. Some officials justified themselves by not raising the alarm so that the panic is not spread. The very disorganized coordination of the situation quickly endangered many citizens. At one point they advised the public to

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<sup>42</sup> Government of Serbia, Parliament.gov.rs.

[http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/akta\\_procedura/2014/2220-14.pdf](http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/akta_procedura/2014/2220-14.pdf)

stay in their homes, while the very next day they called for immediate evacuation. Instead of resolving the crisis, the government focused on the arrest of citizens who tweeted about the severe situation in their towns. Until this day, the exact number of arrested citizens is not known. Official announcements state that only 3 people were arrested, while the investigative media have found that 15 people arrested in Belgrade alone.<sup>43</sup> It is very difficult to find out the true impact of human errors on the disaster that occurred in 2014 and if that tragedy could had been avoided or prevented.

It is important to investigate these examples of information manipulation so that the similar tragedies can be prevented from happening. Basic steps to tackle this issue are:

1. How to recognize fake news?
2. How do we participate in the spreading of fake news?
3. What can we do to stop them (who can we ask for help, institutions)?
4. What are the Laws that protects us from fake news (it's important to make already existing laws more visible and to interpret them to public)?

In fighting against fake news, it is imperative to help correct information reach the largest number of people so that they can make decisions and conclusions of their own.

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<sup>43</sup> Beta news agency, Autonomija.info, <https://www.autonomija.info/cins-sporan-broj-uhapsenih-zbog-sirenja-panike-tokom-poplava.html>

Often, we are subjected to fake news that leads us on the wrong trail and emotional response. The first step to fight this is education. The problem with education is that it cannot be simply fixed with our advocacy plan, while it is necessary to introduce education reforms that include classes where future generations would study how to tackle today's level of information spreading.

There are simple mechanisms that every person can apply to check if the information they get is reliable. It is essential to do this before sharing some news or any kind of information on social media, and everyone must be aware about the content they are sharing. Otherwise, it could contribute to the spread fake news and misinformation.

The second important thing that users of social media don't know is that they can request information from official institutions, and more specifically, from the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance in Serbia. It is important to be aware of this fact because the fight against fake news concerns all of us and we can gain access to information that the public needs to know. For example, if a new building is being built, it directly concerns and impacts the lives of people living in that neighbourhood, the company that is doing the constructing should come under scrutiny and be checked whether they have all the necessary documentation, this is something that all of us can try to do.

Law on free access to information of public importance guarantees every person right of access to information of public importance held

by public authorities. That is why free access to official documents must be available to all, and everyone has the right to request them. In today's digital age, there is no reason not to participate in the fight against misinformation and fake news spreading, and there is no justifiable reason to turn a blind eye.

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