

**6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019**  
**Final Conference**  
**“retro- / intro- / per-SPECTION 2014-2018-2022 - Activism and  
social engagement in the Western Balkans”**  
**in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Final Report**

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## **Conference: retro- / intro- / per-SPECTION 2014-2018-2022 - Activism and social engagement in the Western Balkans**

### **The initiative to support informal civic groups and grass-root movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina – background**

The initiative to support informal civic groups and grass-root movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina began with the conference “Civil Society as a Factor for Change in BiH” held in 2014 in Vienna. Since 2015, several follow-up activities took place in order to continue supporting informal civic groups, the plena and grass-root movements, from all over the country. The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights has acted as bridge and coordinator between the informal civic groups and international project partners.

The Western Balkan region is not only in the focus of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights but is also a priority area of the Austrian foreign policy, due to its territorial proximity, but also due to the long lasting historic, cultural and economic bonds between Austria and the region. Inspired by the citizens’ protests in 2014, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights approached the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs. Both actors recognised the importance of civic movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the need for changes which were demanded and led by the citizens themselves. Therefore, a common framework was developed which later became known as **“the Initiative to Support the Civil Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**. The main priority of this initiative is to strengthen the citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina to become proactive agents of change, to support civil society in a sustainable way, to guarantee better access to human rights and to foster democracy and the rule of law.

The first outcome of the Initiative was the already mentioned conference “Civil Society as a Factor for Change in Bosnia and Herzegovina” which took place in September 2014 in Vienna. **The aim of the conference was to offer a platform for exchange and to encourage a dialogue between various civil society actors coming from different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to define a common approach and to create a strong and sustainable civil society movement.** The most important results of the conference were not only the exchange of ideas and the creation of networks between the participants who elaborated recommendations for a stronger civil society, but also the creation of new cooperation possibilities with international partners.

The main partners of the initiative are the ERSTE Foundation, Swiss Embassy in Sarajevo, Foreign Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria (BMEIA). Together with the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, they are supporting selected informal civic groups and grass-root movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina such as the Movement of the Citizens in Gračanica - PGG, Plenum Zenica, Informal Group Srebrenik je naš (Srebrenik is ours), Plenum Bosanska Krupa, Banja Luka Social Centre - BASOC, Workers' Union Sindikat Solidarnosti Tuzla and the Informal Group for Social Justice Prijedor.

The selected groups are informal, non-registered grass-root initiatives. Given this fact, it was crucial to develop an innovative cooperation and funding structure, which would enable the informal civic movements and grass-root initiatives to receive international support without the usual conditionality (proof of registration, formal demands, applying for grants, etc.). The new cooperation structure is based on mutual trust and equality between all parties involved. The

Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights accompanies the groups during the implementation of their activities, being the bridge and connecting unit between them and international partners. More precisely, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human transfers the approved grants to the groups (to one appointed person of trust), monitors and supervises the implementation of activities and provides financial and operational reports to project partners. **The groups are responsible for the implementation of their activities and decide by themselves on the use of the funds.**

**The work of the groups encloses a wide range of activities**, from establishing a permanent basis for encountering and networking in the plena to organising public discussions and awareness raising activities in order to include more citizens and encourage them to take action. The groups have developed mechanisms for reporting and detecting cases of corruption in an anonymous way, monitoring the meetings and decisions of the municipal councils including the use of public funds and thus acting as public watchdogs in their local communities. **Since the beginning of the Initiative in January 2015, the informal civic groups achieved remarkable results.** Most of them established a permanent office, which provides enough space and freedom for realising different forms of activities. The interest in civic activism and active involvement in decision-making processes in the local communities increased in general. Young people, the new generation, are getting more and more involved recognising the importance of civic engagement for a better future in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The groups established strong networks and support each other during protests and campaigns.

Time table:

- Beginning of February: citizens' protests in BiH
- 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014: Panel discussion "BiH ahead of the Elections 2014: The Civil Society Movement as a Factor of Change" at BMEIA
- 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014: Conference "Civil Society as a Factor for Change?" in Sarajevo
- 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015: First follow-up and planning meeting in Sarajevo "Vienna Initiative of supporting civil society actors and movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina"
- 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015: Second follow-up conference on the Initiative of supporting civil society actors and movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Gracanica
- 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015: Meeting with potential partners in Sarajevo
- 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015: Meeting with selected informal civic groups in Sarajevo: signing of the Cooperation Agreement with selected informal civic groups
- 25<sup>th</sup> January 2016: Follow-up conference on the Initiative of supporting civil society actors and movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Banja Luka (presentation of achieved results)
- 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016: Follow-up conference on the Initiative of supporting civil society actors and movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Zenica
- 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017: Follow-up meeting in Bosanska Krupa
- 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2017: Follow-up meeting on Initiative of supporting civil society actors and movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Tuzla
- 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018: Follow-up meeting on Initiative of supporting civil society actors and movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Srebrenik
- 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019: Final Conference "retro- / intro- / per-SPECTION 2014-2018-2022 - Activism and social engagement in the Western Balkans" in Sarajevo

## **Conference: retro- / intro- / per-SPECTION 2014-2018-2022 - Activism and social engagement in the Western Balkans**

The past years have seen both, new and old threats to human rights in the Western Balkan region. The rise of politicians who are focussing on polarizing and radicalizing social and political views and eroding consensus and community ties as well as destroying any form of social justice, led to an increase of civic movements. After four years of excellent cooperation with informal civic movements and grassroots initiatives in Bosnia & Herzegovina, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights (BIM) decided to organise the regional conference “retro- / intro- / perSPECTION 2014-2018-2022 - Activism and social engagement in the Western Balkans” from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> February in Hotel Bosnia, in Sarajevo. The BIM invited experts, activists, intellectuals and representatives of the civil society from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the whole Western Balkan region but also internationals, aiming at creating a platform for networking as well as for reflecting on past experience and looking together into the future. The conference was held in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian as well as in English language and was simultaneously translated by two translators.

The current situation in the whole Western Balkan region shows an increase of protest movements against the corrupt governments. In each country there were different sparks that lit the same fire of protest movements such as an unsolved murder of a young student, the brutal beating of an opposition leader or a new law on salaries and cost-cutting measures in the education sector. More than ever, a network for activism and civic engagement is needed to keep on fighting for social justice in the Western Balkans. Therefore, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2019, the event opened with a reception at the restaurant “Amerikanac” in Sarajevo with the possibility for the participants to exchange their opinions and ideas informally, to refresh the networks and to start the conference with a mutual positive look into the future.

### First Day of the Conference

On 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2019, the conference began in the conference room of Hotel Bosnia in Sarajevo. The regional TV channel N1 arrived as well to interview some of the participants on the current protest movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The conference was opened by welcome speeches by Nina Radović (Coordinator of the Initiative to support informal and grass-root movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2015 – 2018), Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights – BIM) and Susanne Fraczek (Head of Department for European Neighbourhood and Integration Policy, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights – BIM) as well as by a speech by the Austrian ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina, her excellency, Ulrike Hartmann. Ms. Hartmann stressed on the support of the civil society, which she perceives as highly motivated people and therefore, she is convinced that Austria is further prepared to support movements by the civil society. Especially, because civil society is seen as a pillar of democracy. The ambassador pointed out that **ethnic affiliation is not the problem, because everybody is affected by the same social problems** and consequently, it is important to establish a network. Particularly, because there are not only problems in only one country but in the whole Western Balkan region.

The greatest security threat in this region is posed by organized crime as the corruption is pervasive in those countries. Furthermore, corruption is widespread at all levels of government and various sectors such as security, health care and labor market. Nepotism is very common

and foreign investors are facing problems with non-transparent business procedures. Entrepreneurs face different obstacles in those countries. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia for example, many enterprises in the electricity, communications and natural gas sectors are state owned and need to be privatized. The need for private sector job creations as well as high unemployment remain challenges to the labor freedom in those countries.



Nina Radović (BIM), H.E. Ms. Ulrike Hartmann, Austrian Ambassador to BiH giving a welcome speech, Vedran Džihic (OIIP & University of Vienna) & Susanne Fraczek (BIM)



The organisers of the conference Nina Radović and Dajana Bjelovuk (BIM)

- Part I: Activism and informal movements in Bosnia & Herzegovina

In the first part of the conference, activism and informal movements in Bosnia & Herzegovina from 2014 – 2018 were discussed under the chair of Vedran Džihic (Expert & Scientific Researcher at the Austrian Institute for International Politics – OIIP and lecturer at the University of Vienna) and Nina Radović (BIM).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, two separate entities exist under a loose central government. The complexity of government leads to deadlock. Inefficiency, incompetence and corruption is widespread at the government and nationalist political parties influence the labour market. About 25% of the population is unemployed, which leads to organised crimes such as robbery, fraud, misuse of taxpayer money and corruption. It appears in Bosnia and Herzegovina that one needs to be a member of a party or at least promise to give the vote to a party (member) or pay those in order to eventually receive a job. Representatives of the civil society groups such as Banja Luka Social center – BASOC, Movement of the citizens of Gračanica – PGG, Informal Movement for Social Justice Prijedor/ Youth Center KVART, Srebrenik is ours, Plenum Zenica and Sindikat Solidarnosti presented their goals, motivation, vision and objectives, what they wanted to achieve and why they chose to take action.

In 2014, Bosnia and Herzegovina reached the point of no return in relation of social justice as the situation could not be worse. This was the starting motive of the hard work of many civil society groups, aiming at a more beautiful country. Being an activist and fighting for the rights of citizens comes with challenges and disadvantages. According to PGGračanica, activists are tortured and isolated, because for everyone who becomes a serious activist for those the doors

are closed in life. It can be seen on the movements of Pravda za Davida and Pravda za Hameta that in Bosnia & Herzegovina there is brutal, shaming political rape happening. Citizens are not aware of their own rights. It is important to wake the motivation of the citizens. On the other hand, where enthusiasm and motivation can already be seen, there a way has to be found to change the enthusiasm and motivation into engagement.

According to Kwart Prijedor, it is necessary to keep in mind that there also have been achievements, which can be seen on the basis of various activities. For example, the white ribbons day shows that a process consists of little things that give energy for further actions. However, it seems like when finance stops, activism stops. Many donators do not set their focus on humanitarian activism. Social security and social stability are getting further and further away from the citizens. It should be discussed what it means to be a fighter for human rights. The representative of Sindikat Solidarnost claimed as well that nepotism is a huge problem in the country. People cannot find jobs, not even a job as cleaning personnel without being a member of a political party. According to Sindikat Solidarnosti, it seems like only the language of violence is accepted in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Srebrenik je nas which started operating as well five years ago with the aim to change the government, because they say “it is enough of this torture and it is enough of the nationalism in the country”, does not have a president, it does not have an office and it does not have a budget. Protests had been organised each Tuesday for four years. People came with their families, even with their children. People then stopped to come, because they stopped believing that something can be done or changed. The Government wanted to organisation to stop operating and the organisation was even proclaimed a terrorist organisation. However, during the floods in Bosnia & Herzegovina, the people of Srebrenik je nas collected goods and distributed those in the whole country without any separation of ethnicity or parts of the country. During the war, machines were stolen from companies. The representatives of Srebrenik je nas are in agreement with the representatives of Sindikat Solidarnosti saying that there are no jobs available anymore and what hurts the most, is that people cannot find jobs without any connections. Nepotism is in the foreground of the country. It is hard to make changes, when elections do not have rules. Why should there be elections if you cannot change a thing with those. In Bosnia & Herzegovina there is no opposition with which people could work. A reliable opposition is missed in the whole Western Balkans. At least in Serbia there is currently an awakening of the citizens.

Moreover, the representative of BASOC stated that more and more companies in the private sector are shutting down. In terms of being an activist in Banja Luka, this activity was illustrated as “poor friends living a poor life trying to change the system”. People are fighting to change the Government, but it appears that there are no changes with elections. The question arose whether activists would be different if they would govern the country. Since the people in the Government have the possibility to steal and they use this possibility. It was argued that it is not certain if an activist who is now fighting to change the government and the corruption would be an honest employee when he or she would have the change to steal at the current people in the government do. Therefore, it can be claimed that the introspective is painful. The elections are not even legitimate.

Finally, the representative of Plenum Zenica argued that three Governments were dismissed and that the State did not even feel it. The panel which was planned for 2018, is now postponed until 2021. For now, the focus is on research. Furthermore, it was argued that people should not

give up fighting for their own rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was claimed that in Bosnia there are apparently no professionals who know how a Government functions, therefore people have to take what they need. Otherwise the question arises “what would happen if there would not be activists and if everyone would go home?”



Representatives of Civil Society Groups in BiH talking about activism and social engagement in the country

- Part II: Civic Engagement and Activism in Southeast Europe

Bosnia & Herzegovina, along with Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia is facing a time of civic movements. Therefore, in the second part of the conference, Ana Balković (Disobedient Democracy, Croatia/ PhD candidate University in Barcelona), Blazhen Maleski (Think Tank Reactor - Research in Action, Macedonia), Igor Štiks (Faculty of Media and Communication, Belgrade), Lura Pollozhani (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Prishtina, Kosovo), Kristina Četković (NGO 35mm, Montenegro) and Elvira Hadžibegović Bubanja, (Forum MNE) and Klodiana Vogli (Legal Expert – Albanian Justice Reform) provided input to the first part in context to the current political situation in Southeast Europe.

In Croatia, an initiative called “Mi Mozemo” (“We Can”) was founded in the beginning of February. Balković claimed that we, the civilians, do not have any time to wait anymore. We are important, because **we are the generation that can change the future for our children.** We have to focus on the groups that are willing to change something.

Maleski explained why Macedonia is always seen as positive example for uprising. There are three types of civic engagement: 1) constructive 2) contact 3) so called “you reach the limit and you go out to protest”. Those three types of civic engagement are connected to each other. The uprising in Macedonia is called “the Macedonian scenario” and it is especially always feared by Aleksandar Vucic and Milorad Dodik. In 2011 architecture students started with protests and put every information on twitter. In information overflow began. Social media connected all parts of the society and changed the narrative. Change something in the way people are changing.

Štiks agreed with the Austrian Ambassador who had said before that politicians are owners of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, he noted that there are paradoxes in which people are living. Many things were destroyed during the wars, but the regional dynamic does definitely work which can be seen based on the student protests. It is a **bottom up initiative against politicization and radicalization.** If ones observes the current yellow vest protests in France,

one can say Bosnia was definitely further. It is a gathering of people who maybe would never sit together at one table under other circumstances.

Pollozhani explained that Kosovo has more than 70 ministers. The state is not focused on one body or constitution. In Kosovo party loyalties run very deep. Mass protests started. The last strike was hold by teachers and doctors: debates between unions and parents while the Government left. Women mobilize more in Kosovo, because the police does not take action e.g. in cases of domestic violence. There are new forms of mobilization. **Activism and civic engagements make us political critical.**

Ćetković stated that nationalism is in favour of politicians in the Western Balkan region. **Politicians take nationalism and sell it as patriotism.** Especially people who have never went outside the borders of Montenegro are ones who believe this ideology. Montenegro is officially a multi-ethnic country, but when it comes to inter-ethnic marriages, then the one who is moving into the others house is changing his or her believe. Ćetković claims that people in the Western Balkan region are in urgent need of changing their mentality first, if they want to change the political system. She argued this idea based on the example that any person - whether activist or non-activist - in this region always has 5-10€ in the pocket in the case that a police officer is stopping their cars. It is easier to tip the police officer rather than accepting the fine. **It is useless to change the law, when the law has always loopholes.** Therefore, it is important to change the mentality. Bubanja added that regional cooperation is missing and that it should be focussed on establishing a successful regional cooperation in the Western Balkan region.

Finally, Vogli illustrated the two biggest protests in Albania: first, the protest against the demolition of the National Theatre and second on the students' protests against the high tuition fees and the poor infrastructure of the universities and dormitories. After the protests started, the first reaction of the government was total ignorance. Nevertheless, the protesters did not give up and the law passed that the national theatre has to be full reconstructed. In relation to the students' protests, the requests are not fully resolved, but the hope amongst the society revived that everyone can fight for their rights without any political backup.



Kristina Ćetković discussing about Civic Engagement and Activism in Montenegro



Kloda Vogli explaining the protest movement in Albania



Lura Pollozhani explaining the situation in Kosovo



Igor Štiks encouraging to keep fighting for social rights

- Part III - Thoughts on what can be done or changed in the future regarding activism/civic engagement in the SEE region and what is necessary to overcome the challenges?

In the third part, Srđan Puhalo (Political Analyst), Senada Šelo-Šabić (IRMO Croatia), Besjan Pesha (Executive Director, Hashtag Initiative Albania), Chiara Milan (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Center for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz), Milica Pralica (Ostra Nula), Miso Sikman, (Pravda za Davida) and Stef Jansen (University of Manchester) discussed the questions what can be done or changed in the future in relation to activism/social engagement in the Western Balkan region and what is necessary to solve the challenges.

In this discussion round, the activists stressed on the importance to conquer politics and it was stated that through practice everyone can reach the political system. Furthermore, it is important that the opportunity exists that one can go to the streets without any fear. It shall be also noted that within movements, there are always constructive and destructive parts. Consequently, people should not give up when there are setbacks, instead keep on fighting for their rights. It is also important to educate the new generations.

Furthermore, it was argued that there is no trust in the police anymore. It seems that especially when someone is an activist, there is no point in reporting a criminal act to the police, because the police seems not to care enough to investigate on criminal acts, when those were reported by activists. Another point made in this discussion round was that it is difficult to change something in Bosnia and Herzegovina when 2/3 of the citizens do not regard Bosnia as their country, but rather Serbia and Croatia. On the other side, young people from Banja Luka go to Sarajevo to demonstrate and vice versa, which shows that the ethnic identities are losing priorities.

It is a huge offence that people leave others to change what they want to be changed instead of fighting themselves. In Bosnia, the political party SNSD is only prepared to give jobs to its own members, whether it is a job at a highway tollhouse or in the government. People always have to keep in mind against whom they fight. It is more difficult to fight against the Government when people in your surrounding say that you are either paid by foreigners or you are a national traitor. Citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina need NGO's and people with attitudes and not people who decide to give up and move to Germany to become cleaning personnel.

Several participants claimed that there is no freedom of media in the Western Balkans. Furthermore, academia has excluded itself. One can go from civil society to politics, but it does not matter who goes into this ethnic politics, because everyone will become the same. Hereby, it was argued that **the best possibility to foresee the future is to create it yourself.**

In the case of David Dragicevic and the movement Pravda za Davida, one can claim that it has been a fight for truth and justice for more than 11 months. Nowadays the State claims that David planned an attack on the State. Citizens are being tortured, now gatherings at the main square are not allowed anymore. It is necessary that people must create a union and people need to create their own goals. Furthermore, he claimed that the **people need to be united in the fight against the Government, because the fight is for the people.**



Discussing the challenges of activism and social engagement in SEE

- Public Panel Discussion “Towards an active utopia? Protest movements and activism in SEE” at the centre “Dom Mladih”

In the evening, the participants of the conference were invited by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe to a panel discussion at the centre “Dom Mladih”. Igor Štiks (Faculty of Media and Communication, Belgrade), Aleksandar Trifunović (BUKA, Banja Luka), Lura Pollozhani (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Prishtina), Blazhen Maleski (Think Tank Reactor - Research in Action, Macedonia), Besjan Peshja (Executive Director, Hashtag Initiative Albania), and Larisa Šušja (Movement of the Citizens of Gracanica, PGG) discussed the topic “Towards an Active Utopia? Protest movements and activism in Southeast Europe”.

The panel emphasized on the importance of people taking action and on the positive examples of people going to the streets to fight for their rights. Pollozhani noted that in Kosovo citizens realized that there are different ways of occupying public space. There were several protests in Prishtina, because one girl got raped by a police man and shortly after the same girl got raped by a teacher. This was regarded as perfect example for citizens being abused by many levels of power. For years, the government has preached to the citizens that it is important to fight for Kosovo to become independent, but now it is important to fight for the civil rights. This is happening in Prishtina through little steps of reclaiming public space.

Blazhen explained that the example of social activism better known as the “Macedonian scenario” is feared by certain people such as Milorad Dodik and Aleksandar Vucic, because it is about reforming a political State. He explained how activists do everything they can to make a change, but that it is hard to catch citizens. One issue that he observed was when he arrived somewhere, people would immediately distance themselves from political topics. In the case of the movement against police brutality, he noted that people have to be clever when they are in a movement and to always be aware that people are fighting against a machinery.

Pesha explained how ten thousands of students gathered in front of the Ministry of Education in Albania and that it was impressive that they came as a union. There was no leader, no organization, no talk, nor representation. Only a group of students fighting for a better educational system in the country.

A prominent voice of the critical newspaper BUKA, the journalist Trifunović from Banja Luka emphasized that there is no time anymore for questions nor is there any more time for any explanations. The trends in Bosnia and Herzegovina are showing that more and more people are leaving the country and close their eyes from the reality that is happening in Bosnia & Herzegovina. In his opinion it is enough of creating hypothesis, rather people should start taking action and start their own small revolution. There is also no need to express oneself through ethnicity, because in Bosnia & Herzegovina everyone is hungry regardless of ethnicity.

Šuša stated that no one will give anything to the citizens unless the citizens start demanding and taking what they need. She made clear that trust and solidarity are of highest importance in order to be able to do that.



Nina Radović thanking the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung for the invitation to the public panel discussion in the youth centre in Sarajevo



Public panel discussion chaired by Vedran Džihić and with the valuable input by Lura Pollozhani, Blazhen Maleski, Larisa Šuša, Igor Štiks, Besjan Pesha & Aleksandar Trifunović

After the public panel discussion in the youth centre, the participants of the conference were invited by the Austrian Ambassador to BiH, H.E. Ms. Ulrike Hartmann to a reception at the Embassy of Austria.



Reception at the Embassy of Austria to Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Second Day of the Conference

- Alternatives for the future

The participants discussed openly and emotionally about possible alternatives for the future. Hereby, Crnomat, a representative of BASOC, noted that the problem is that people are leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina while the Government seems to be living for Brussels, Moscow and Turkey and not for the best interest of its people. The Government is not human, and it appears that every opportunity for emancipation is legally taken away from the people.

It was noted that there are concerns facing activism and social engagement nowadays and in the years ahead, but when activists and people fighting for their rights have a goal and a direction, they should not care about challenges such as financial issues. There is no recipe for success. There have to be gatherings, people have to communicate and then start working. It was argued that it is important to focus on young people and women and that it is necessary that in general, people should stop caring about ethnicity because everyone should have the same rights as citizen of a country.

The participants agreed on the idea that there has to be **put pressure on the Media**. The media is manipulating the simple people. 30% of the population in Bosnia & Herzegovina have only graduated from compulsory school. The question arises how to work with simple people. If those people are angry, then **there has to be a way to channel this anger and turn it into something productive**.

In relation to the movements for the killings of the young men Dzenan, David and Hamet, it was stated that it is one thing to join a Facebook group in favour of justice, but it is another one to experience the unjust and the pain. Therefore, it is important to mobilize people to go to the streets. **“There is no fight for David and no fight for Dzenan anymore, there is a fight for the people’s future”**. Finally, it was stated that **activism is not anymore about “I want or I do not want”, it is an obligation**.



The participants discussed on alternatives in the future on the second day of the conference

## **Outlook to the Future and Special Thanks**

Although the project “the Initiative to Support the Civil Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina” came to end with this final conference “retro- / intro- / per-SPECTION 2014-2018-2022 - Activism and social engagement in the Western Balkans” in Sarajevo from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019, the activism and social engagement on the fight for the rights of citizens will continue. The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights would like to thank everyone who had been a part of adventurous and successful journey since 2014.

The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights would also like to express its gratitude to all cooperation partners who contributed to make the final conference in Sarajevo possible:

- Our partners and supporters from the Erste Stiftung, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe and the SEE Democratic Left
- Austrian Ambassador to Bosnia & Herzegovina, her excellency, Ms. Ulrike Hartmann and Deputy Head of Mission, Wolfgang Thill for the support and reception at the Embassy
- All experts, activists, intellectuals and representatives of the civil society from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Western Balkan region and internationals who have been fighting for social justice
- The translators of the conference, Bjanka Pratellesi & Amela Kurtović
- A special thanks to Nina Radović who has coordinated the Initiative to support informal and grass- root movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2014 and who put all her inexhaustible energy and expertise in this project in order to create a network for the fight for social justice in the Western Balkan region
- A special thanks to Dajana Bjelovuk for her support before, during and after the conference in particular for organising the conference and finalising the written and financial reports.

## Our Partners and Donors



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