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# Supporting informal citizens' groups and grass-root initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina

**FINAL REPORT**

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# 1. Background

## 1.1 Citizens' protests in 2014

In spring 2014, citizens' protest took place in large parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The protests were caused by the deep discontent of the majority of citizens concerning the prevailing living conditions, injustice, corruption and material and emotional exploitation, which is deeply rooted in all spheres of political, economic and social life.

After months and even years without having received appropriate remuneration, workers started to demand their rights in front of the cantonal government in Tuzla. Corrupt privatisation processes after the war had led to the closure of once successful production units resulting in dismissals and non-payment of workers who lost their means of existence. Soon, students, pensioners and other citizens who shared their discontent and frustration joined the workers' protests, which swept over to other cities. Even though protests were also held in previous years (2013 JMBG protests), the events in 2014 were characterised by a new social component: For the first time since twenty years, the citizens had the feeling to be able to exercise pressure on respective authorities. They felt that a transformative power is inherent in their joint uprising, which could have the potential to lead to long due changes in the gridlocked system.

During the protests, citizens' assemblies (plena) were established in several cities and smaller local communities in the Federation. In the plena, the citizens elaborated demands directed towards the authorities at the cantonal and entity level in order to urge them to deal with the problems of wide spread corruption, difficult or even missing access to human rights, unemployment, unjust privileges of elected officials, weak health care, education and social protection systems. In Republika Srpska (RS), plena were not established due to stronger repression mechanisms. However, formal and informal civic groups and activists from RS also supported the protests, thus becoming a unified struggle for a better life.

## 1.2 Civil Society as a Factor for Change – Conference in Vienna

Inspired by the citizens' protests, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights approached the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs in order to think about joint efforts and possibilities to support the citizens. Both sides were willing to establish a common framework for possible engagement, in especially because the Western Balkan region is a priority area of the Austrian foreign policy, not only due to the territorial proximity, but also due to the common history and long lasting economic cooperation between Austria and the region.

During his visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina in spring 2014, the Austrian Foreign Minister, Mr. Sebastian Kurz, invited activists and representatives of the civil society to a conference in Vienna. This invitation was the green light for the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights to start creating a framework for the conference – in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, the ERSTE Foundation and the Karl Renner Institute. The EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Central European Initiative, and the British Embassy in Vienna joined the initiative and provided valuable support and advise during the preparation of the conference, which took place from 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in Vienna.

The goal of the conference was to offer a platform for exchange on neutral ground, and to encourage a dialogue and networking between civil society actors and activists coming from different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to define a common approach aiming at a strong and sustainable civil society movement. Activists from Austria and the Bosnian diaspora also took part in working groups and discussions.

The most important outcome of the conference was the exchange of ideas and networking between the participants who met each other for the first time. Together, they elaborated joint recommendations aiming at further cooperation possibilities in the future.

## 2. Initiative to support the civil society

### 2.1 Follow-up

During the conference, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights and likeminded partners promised to continue to support the citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The conference was not supposed to be a one-off event, but a possibility to enable a framework for further cooperation and engagement. The first and most important step was to establish a basis of mutual trust as a starting point for further follow-up activities.

During the discussions in Vienna, strong mistrust was visible especially during the first day of the conference. The participants from BiH did not understand why Austrian and European institutions approached them and suspected a hidden agenda behind the initiative. At the same time, a big gap and tension was visible between the formalised non-governmental and civil society sector and the informal citizens' assemblies and grass-root activists who rejected the practices of the formalised sector arguing that during the last twenty years, different kinds of NGOs and civil society networks were created in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which received a lot of money through project grants. While many of them did implement good projects, the work of a significant number of NGOs did not reach the real needs of the citizens. Instead, they implemented projects for their own purposes, which caused a deep gap and mistrust between the formalised civil society sector and the citizens who did not benefit from these projects. These shortcomings were also part of the discussions during the citizens' protest in spring 2014. Consequently, NGOs were not allowed to take part in the sessions of the citizens' plena.

Although the plena achieved important results in some municipalities, they lost power in large parts of the country due to several reasons such as internal conflicts, weak structures and competences, pressure from the authorities etc., so that they are not in the focus of media and public interest any more. Nevertheless, in some municipalities such as Gračanica, Zenica, Bosanka Krupa etc. small, but very motivated groups remained active and continue to implement a variety of activities with the aim to strengthen the local communities and contribute to social change. Activists' groups are also very active in Banja Luka and Prijedor.

Considering these aspects, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights together with likeminded partners and supporters (Mr. Filip Radunović, Ms. Doraja Eberle and Mr. Vedran Džihčić), reflected on further cooperation possibilities and developed a cooperation scheme which would allow the informal citizens' groups to implement concrete activities according to the needs detected in their local communities. The continuation of the initiative was also welcomed by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs. The Swiss Embassy in Sarajevo joined the initiative in January 2016.

In the meanwhile, the initiative became known as the "Austrian Initiative" in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Considering this expression, some clarifications are necessary. *Initiative* refers to the fact that Austrian partners were among the first to be willing to provide support to informal civic movements. *Initiative* does in no way mean that civic activism was initiated by the conference or follow-up activities and that it did not exist before. Activists in both entities, the Federation and Republika Srpska, were engaged in different spheres of society for years and worked hard to tackle the political, social, economic and other issues in the country. At this point, the never-ending hard work of Oštra Nula, KVART and other formal and informal organisations has to be mentioned, as well as the never-ending engagement of

individuals, which lasts for years. The Austrian Initiative has to be understood from this perspective, namely not as a patronising attempt to impose concepts or a hidden agenda of the EU and International Community, but as an attempt to reach out a hand to those who believe that they can benefit from this kind of cooperation in one way or another.

## 2.2 New cooperation approach

Supporting the needs of the citizens means contributing to free their potential to act as agents of change at the micro-level, thus initiating changes from the bottom-up.

Eight groups, which had elaborated a plan and defined activities, were selected to receive small grants for the period of one year (July 2015 - July 2016): *Plenum of the citizens in Zenica*, *Plenum Bosanska Krupa*, *the Informal Group Srebrenik is ours*, *the Workers' Union Sindikat Solidarnosti*, *the Citizens' Movement Gračanica*, *Banja Luka Social Centre*, *the Informal Group for Social Justice in Prijedor* and *the Network 5f7*.

The groups are informal, non-registered grass-root initiatives, meaning that an innovative cooperation and funding scheme was necessary based on mutual trust between the parties, which enables the selected groups to receive international support without the usual donor-driven procedures and conditionality (proof of registration, application for grants, etc.).

The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights - Research Association (BIM-FV) is acting as a bridge between the informal groups on one side and project partners and donors on the other side, meaning that the BIM-FV accompanies the activists, administers, and channels the approved funds.

The activists implement their activities in a sovereign and independent way, meaning that they are free to use the financial means for activities they identified as important and necessary in their local communities. This kind of approach allows a high spectre of flexibility by overcoming rigid forms of project implementation. Given the fact that the groups are heterogeneous formations considering their composition and way of working, they develop their own implementation approaches, which also enables them to react spontaneously to current social developments.

After each implementation phase, the groups submit reports about the implemented activities, whereby they are welcome to ask the BIM-FV for support. The BIM-FV, being the coordinating unit, consolidates the reports and submits them to the partners.

The partners and supporters of the initiative hope that the financial support will encourage the activists to act, not only as opinion makers, but also as civic/political leaders and agents of change within their respective communities, not only with regard to the upcoming local elections in 2016.

The results and achievements were presented on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2016 in Banja Luka and on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016 in Zenica and are very satisfying.





Photos taken during the meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2016 in Banja Luka (Presentation of activities after the first implementation period)

### 3. Presentation of the groups and activities

The following chapter will provide an overview of the achievements and outcomes from July 2015 – May 2016. The information and description of activities was provided by the groups and compiled by Nina Radović, coordinator at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights - Research Association.

#### 3.1 Informal Group „Srebrenik je naš“

The Informal group *Srebrenik je naš* (Srebrenik is ours) was very active during the protests in 2014. The group, mainly consisting of former members of the Army of BiH, is a symbol of resistance and street activism which is their last hope for social change in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2016 the group implemented several activities, whereby all decisions were made in a basic democratic way, whereby all citizens had the possibility to express their opinion. Until today, over 100 meetings took place.

One of the regular activities of the group is the organisation of protests at the main square in the city centre. During these protests, the activists discuss publicly the political and economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in especially nepotism, corruption, the selective application of laws and other problems detected in their community and the whole country. Although the municipal government attempted to ban the protests by declaring them illegal, the activists managed to resist the accusations by referring to the freedom of assembly.

*Srebrenik je naš* contributes to awareness raising by printing and disseminating posters and leaflets in the municipality. The content of the posters and leaflets is provocative, but true (facts and documents). The group uses also the internet to broadcast their programme via the "Radio Revolution NGG Srebrenik is ours", in especially speeches recorded during the protests, or controversial and untrue statements of politicians, trying once again to show the injustices and irregularities of the current system in a satirical way. They organise public tribunals and meetings such as the public debate on the topic *Political manipulation of the masses behind ethno-nationalistic discourses* held by Professor Besim Spahić and Professor Zlatan Begić in 2015. The tribunal was visited by over 250 people.

Some members of the group are independent municipal councillors, who regularly take part in the sessions of the municipal council and raise important questions, which were previously discussed in the group. Even though the councillors are only a minority in the municipal council, their contribution is important for the citizens. The councillors' speeches are broadcasted on the local TV, which is the only way to break the media blockade and inform the citizens about the work and practices of the elected representatives.

The group supports other informal groups and takes part in different campaigns and protest such as the workers' protests organised by the Workers' Union "Sindikata Solidarnosti" in Tuzla.

Photos taken during the public tribune and protests in the city centre.



### 3.2 Plenum of the Citizens in Zenica

The Plenum of the Citizens in Zenica is permanently 'on the street'. With the new office, the plenum placed itself in the heart of Zenica. Its flags, mottos and posters on the windows and walls of the office, are visible to all and available to all.

The Plenum is open to all citizens. The members of the Plenum insist on the promise they gave right at the beginning: The Plenum is honest, transparent and open, being the change that its members want to see in the society. New people constantly join the Plenum, whereby the group is not consistent. The initiators hope that the work and success of the Plenum will persuade more and more citizens, in especially the youth, to become more active and to engage more in society.

The most important achievement is that the Plenum offers the much needed free space in which people have the possibility to say what they think, come for a quick chat or share their ideas without the fear that they will find themselves in trouble. The main objective of the Plenum is to hear the voices of the citizens, including those who are afraid to speak.

The office of the Plenum has also been used for meetings of NGOs that have nowhere to go, particularly if they were inactive for some time and want to start working again. One such NGO is the Community of Civilian Victims of War in Zenica. Other NGOs have shared their literature and info material which is accessible to all in the Plenum's office.

The activities of the Plenum are manifold: from public discussions on topics which were previously suggested by all members and decided by majority vote, to printing of the monthly bulletin which proved to be very successful as a teaching tool, or active involvement in events and campaigns organised by other groups and organisations. During these meetings the members of the Plenum exchange information and ideas and inform other activists about the Plenum and its meaning.

Leaflets for specific objectives have also proven to be very popular among the people in Zenica. The Plenum publishes leaflets at least every three months, such as the leaflet to raise the awareness on institutional abuse – i.e. long, complicated procedures and unreasonable demands of the institutions when it comes to the realisation of the rights of the citizens. By sharing the information, the citizens become more aware of the problems at the local level and dare to address them publicly.

While Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing many problems and challenges, most of which are attributed to the system and the government, the role of the citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina must not be ignored. The Plenum is already working on educating people in Zenica about their role in society. Citizens can bring along important changes if they are smart, calm and persistent. Through the monthly discussions, bulletins, and the open-door policy, the citizens became more aware and ready to deal with the problems. The Plenum will continue to work on these goals in Zenica, and plans to reach out to other cities in central Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Photos of the Plenum's office, and protests in Zenica



### 3.3 Citizens' Movement Gračanica

The Citizens' Movement Gračanica was created in 2015 after the split-up of the Plenum in Gračanica. The Movement is engaged in a broad range of activities. One of their slogans is "Think globally, act locally and become a change". Through their work, the Movement has the intention to bring back the trust and hope in a better future and to contribute to empower the social community by implementing projects and social programs. Thereby, participation plays an important role: The Movement stands for participation and asks for the inclusion of all citizens in decision-making processes in especially when it comes to decisions of public interest, concerning the lives of all citizens.

The Movement has set its goal to be the public watchdog and a corrective force of the government and public institutions. To do this, the members of the Movement depend on the awareness and responsibility of the citizens. Out of this reason, the Movement organises meetings and workshops for awareness raising and education purposes and encourages the citizens to stand up for their rights. One of the main goals of the Movement is to restore the trust the citizens should have in themselves. At the same time, the Movement is willing to cooperate with the authorities or future political leaders in order to create synergies and improve their work so that that the elected authorities fulfil their duties and hear the voices of the people they represent. The Movements is eager to diminish and eradicate the corruption, nepotism and criminal actions starting at the local, communal level, thus restoring the trust in the institutions. It stands and fights for the freedom of the citizens which is only possible if the authorities work in the interest of the community, which inter alia includes a functioning economic and social system including health and education, the development of culture and sports and a stronger non-governmental system.

Another very important aspect is the empowerment of the youth. Through their engagement, the Movement hopes to enable better working and living conditions for young people by the creation of new jobs, the development of production and tourism, and by giving young people the possibility to have a decent life and perspectives at home, in their own city, and thus to reduce the brain drain.





**KAKO NAS PRONAĆI ?**

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Poljovani sugrađani i sugrađanke, Kao što smo putem našeg letka predstavljanja i najavili, aktivirali smo adresu poštanskog sandučića na ime POKRET GRAĐANA GRAČANICE.

U narednom periodu budite slobodni iskoristiti svoje građansko pravo i te na dole navedenu adresu pošaljite sve vaše ZAHTEJEVE, PRIMJEDBE, ŽALBE, ANONIMNE ILI POTPISANE PRIJAVE KORUPCIJE, NEPOTIZMA, KRIMINALA ILI SLIČNO...

U poštansko sandučić također možete kandidovati problematiku sa kojom se nosite lično vi ili vaša mjesna zajednica.

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- RADITI ZAJEDNO SA DRUGIMA U ZAJEDNICI
- PODUZETI I POKRENUTI AKCIJU ZA OJAČAVANJE ZAJEDNICE



Photos: Informing citizens in Gračanica about the Movement and its activities; Publication of campaigns: "You are an active citizen and therefore you need to become informed, create your own opinion and ideas, and work together with others in order to strengthen the community."

### 3.4 Workers' Union "Sindikata Solidarnosti" Tuzla

The members of the Workers' Union in Tuzla, *Sindikata Solidarnosti*, are the main advocates for workers' rights, representing all those workers who have been dismissed, exploited and marginalised due to corrupt privatisation procedures in the past twenty years. The Workers' Union regularly organises meetings, campaigns and protests to raise awareness about the current problems of workers who are deprived of their rights.

In autumn 2015, members of the Worker's Union organised a protest camp in front of the government building of Canton Tuzla where the activists, unemployed and dismissed workers, protested against the current situation, the closure of production units in Tuzla, in especially *Tuzla-Kvarc*, *Polihem*, *Poliolchem* and others, against corruption, non-paid salaries and injustice. The protest camp lasted for fifty two days. Even though the authorities tried to frighten the activists by issuing a new law restricting public gatherings in front of the government's offices and threats by the police, and even though the activists were arrested several times, they remained persistent in their demands and attracted attention of the public and the media. Activists from other towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Gračanica, Srebrenik, Živinice), but also activists from other countries (Felix Fritsch from Austria and Lydia Letsch from Germany) joined and supported the workers.

*Sindikata Solidarnosti* is in regular contact with other informal groups, in especially the Citizen's Movement in Gračanica and the informal group Srebrenik is ours. Members of the Union participated in a tribune organised by the Youth Movement *Revolt*, where representatives of Worker's Unions from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia and the representative of the Union of Employers of the Canton Tuzla took part.

In September 2015, members of the Union visited the National Museum in Sarajevo during the protest "Ja sam muzej" (I am the museum) in order to support the reopening of the national museum which was closed for years due to budget restrictions as result of the missing political will.

Plans of the Worker's Union *Sindikata Solidarnosti* for the upcoming months are the making of a documentary on the destruction of the industry in Canton Tuzla, another appeal against the discriminatory law on public assemblies before the Constitutional Court, the registration of the Worker's Union and the organisation of public tribunes, to name just a few.



Photos: Protest camp in front of the government of Canton Tuzla; Meeting with the Austrian Minister, Mr. Sebastian Kurz in the Austrian Embassy in Sarajevo in June 2015; Visit and support for the reopening of the National Museum in Sarajevo in summer 2015.

### 3.5 Plenum Bosanska Krupa

Most of the activities of the Plenum Bosanska Krupa had a humanitarian character. During the implementation of the activities, the members of the Plenum tried to animate the citizens to become more involved in civic activism and volunteering. This way, the Plenum hopes to raise the awareness of citizens about the importance of civic activism, which is the only way to initiate changes at the local level. Most of the implemented activities were covered by the local media.

The Plenum was particularly engaged in the reactivation of the humanitarian centre and a soup kitchen in Bosanska Krupa. One of the main activities was to support socially vulnerable families in the municipality by providing financial means for electricity and water, or by organising a humanitarian concert for collecting financial means.

Several meetings were held with representatives from other humanitarian organisations, such as the Red Cross, LOT, and the Centre for Social Work. During the holiday season, the Plenum provided New Year's presents to socially vulnerable children.

The Plenum attends the meetings of the municipal council and follows the work of municipal organs.

His Excellency, the Austrian Ambassador Mr. Martin Pammer, visited the Plenum in October 2015. Together with the members of the Plenum, the ambassador visited the mayor of the municipality of Bosanska Krupa and the Red Cross. They discussed the actual problems in the municipality. The high unemployment rate is one of the major issues, which leads to the question of new self-employment strategies whereby the Plenum could play an important part in the future. In addition, the issue of a more professionalised self-organisation and political involvement was raised.

The Plenum is trying to induce changes in a democratic way. The members are planning to register the group.



Photos: Visits of the Austrian Ambassador, Mr. Martin Pammer in Bosanska Krupa; Members of the Plenum; Soup kitchen in B. Krupa in winter 2015

### 3.6 Informal Group for Social Justice Prijedor

The Informal Group for Social Justice in Prijedor was created by a group of young people who gathered around the February protests in 2014. After the first meetings, the group began to act systematically in late 2014 in coordination with other activists' groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The group was strongly involved in different community and volunteering activities such as providing regular visits to Ljubija, a small village near Prijedor with a very difficult social situation, or organising public kitchens and providing support to socially vulnerable groups, all in the spirit of solidarity and social justice. The group consists of about 15 young people. It is open for everyone who wishes to take part and who wants to provide support in the struggle for the realisation of social and workers' rights and the establishment of full and non-selective social equality in the local community and beyond. The group cooperates with activists from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially from Bihać, Sanski Most and Banja Luka.

One of their working groups is tasked to monitor the work of local authorities and to send requests for access to information and complaints about the work of public institutions. The material is collected, analysed and published in the form of articles and columns on social networks. The activities of the working group also include reporting on the use of the public budget in order to keep the public informed about its distribution.

Through workshops on audio and video journalism, the members of the informal group are also trained to work as journalists. They produced several videos and advocacy campaigns. With other activists from the region, the group organised the campaign of singing protest songs at *Kozara*, an important memorial place for people from surrounding villages near Prijedor and partisans who lost their lives in the fight against fascism during WWII. The campaign became a traditional annual event. Through this activity, the group's intention was to show their disapproval of the current historical revisionism of the past that is pro-nationalistic in its roots as it tries to revise the history about the WWII and its consequences for the wars in the 1990ies.

During the course of this initiative, members of the Informal Group for Social Justice Prijedor made new experiences in dealing with political themes, social justice, the organisation of actions, as well as many other practical and administrative tasks. The Informal Group for Social Justice Prijedor started to cooperate with other groups from their town. A strategic plan on widening the scope of their activities geographically, focusing on the Krajina region mostly (Bihać, Sanski Most, Prijedor, Banja Luka) was developed. A more detailed description is provided in the overview of implemented activities at the end of this report.

Photos: street action: "Food NOT violence"; protest-singing at Kozara against manipulative discourses and propaganda to rewrite the past events during WWII and the role of the citizens during that time;





Photo: Protest in the centre of Prijedor.

### 3.7 Banja Luka Social Centre BASOC

Banja Luka Social Centre (BASOC) advocates for political equality and public and common goods in the post-war and post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The activists' practice and infrastructure of the centre's work are focusing on social justice and social equality, workers' rights and their self-empowerment, work with the BiH diaspora and minorities as well as gender politics. These issues are addressed through various interdisciplinary methodological approaches (cultural and artistic etc.), thus strengthening independent cultural and artistic practices, contemporary historiography, analysis of urban policies and a number of other critical discursive and political-economic analysis.

In short, the centre provides a permanent space/house and the freedom to continue building and creating a new post-communist sociability through a horizontal hybrid between academic approaches, theory and activism.

Policies of equality include those who are not equal, such as dismissed workers and ethnic or gender minorities. Public goods include material legacy such as schools, playgrounds, parks and factories as well as intangible heritage such as socio-cultural heritage and memories including culture and politics of remembering, because the activists strive to preserve the memories of past events, which are endangered to be forgotten due the current political narratives.

This way, BASOC is actively resisting patriarchy, nationalism and economic inequality resulting from the wars of the 1990ies and the post-war transition. An overview of the activities organised within the Banja Luka Social Centre can be found in the table at the end of this report.





Photos: Entrance to the house; discussion and video screening in the garden of BASOC; Logo of BASOC; Concert of Damir Imamović



### 3.8 Network 5f7

The primary goal of the Network 5f7 was to organise and provide free legal aid to activists. Due to some organisational problems, the Network is not active any more. The means for the Network are redistributed to the groups.

## 4. Impact indicators – Summary of the results achieved so far

The informal civic groups achieved remarkable results during the last year. Most of them established a permanent office, which offers the necessary space for events, discussions and activism. The interest in civic activism and active involvement in decision making processes for the well-being of the citizens and the community is increasing. More and more young people and the new generations are getting involved and recognise the importance of being an active citizen for a better future in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Between the informal groups a strong network was created during the last year. The

activists support each other during protests and campaigns, thus creating a strong civic network from the local level.

### **Srebrenik je naš**

By its regular protest at the main square in Srebrenik, the informal group is constantly reminding those in power of more accountability. They draw the attention of the citizens to cases of corruption and nepotism and ask them to be more involved. This way, the local authorities and their work and decisions are more in the focus of the public interest which led to a more responsible use of the local budget and influenced decisions in favour of the citizens.

The group's big achievement is the mutual support and trust of the citizens who finally became more active and have the courage to express their opinion and denounce nepotism, exploitation and injustice, which are deeply rooted in the system. Srebrenik je naš, together with the support of the citizens, entered into judicial processes against those who violated their citizens' rights, the right to assembly in the first place. Even though the cases were rejected or ignored, the group is persistent in order to demonstrate that corrupt and unjust practices are taken seriously and are publicly discussed. The group hopes that this kind of activism and civic engagement will finally force those who were elected to represent the citizens, do their jobs properly.

### **Plenum of the Citizens in Zenica**

The active involvement of the citizens in Zenica led to important changes at the local level:

The House of Peoples adopted amendments of the law for the protection of animals, also dealing with the question of stray dogs, which became a big problem.

Requests were sent to councillors in order to deal with the question of heating. Even though the heating costs were very high, the quality of heating remained low and insufficient to keep the households warm. After the Plenum sent out request to every single councillor in the municipal council, the quality of the heating improved and the monthly rate was even reduced for pensioners.

The Plenum insisted on more responsibility and accountability of the municipality and demanded measures against corruption and the misuse of positions. As a result, the respective authorities became more active. The director of the public company for heating received a court decision of one and a half years of prison due to the misuse of his position and non-compliance with the law.

The Plenum expressed its concerns regarding taking another loan for the cantonal hospital in Zenica which would have had the purpose to pay off the already existing debts to Siemens, which is in charge of the medical equipment. Another loan would have led to over-indebtedness of the hospital. Instead, the parties came to the agreement that the cantonal government should gradually pay off the existing debt without taking new loans. This ensures the further functioning of the medical machines and makes the use of the hospital equipment possible.

The activists published 11 bulletins dealing with current problems and important issues for the community such as disregard of laws, the quality of the water, taxes, the importance of civic activism etc. Also, a paper on the competitiveness of the economy in BiH was prepared and sent to thirty three officials with a request for proposals and ideas how to improve the economic situation in the country.

Together with the organisation *Lotos*, the Plenum will start to implement a project with the aim to tackle the collective state of depression in BiH by offering psychological support and therapy to the citizens.

## **Movement of the Citizens in Gračanica**

The activists of the Citizen's Movement in Gračanica achieved remarkable results in their efforts to strengthen active participation and engagement in society. The indicators increasing civic activism and progress can be described as follows: the first stage was characterised by social revolt accumulated in 2014, which resulted in the creation of the civic assembly (plenum). The second stage was characterised by attempts of manipulation and infiltration of members of political parties in the ranks of activists in the plenum with the aim to sabotage the civic engagement. During the third stage, a group of proven activists formed a new movement and developed joint activities, which swept over to other cities that joined them, based on the principle "If they did it (referring to the activists in Gračanica and their achievements), we can also change things!" As a result, a so-called *base of trust* was and still is being created during the fourth stage. The fifth stage will be the development of political options as alternatives to existing political parties. The broad range of activities of the Citizens' Movement is summarised in the table attached to this report. In the following, the most important achievements are summarised:

Awareness raising campaigns: The campaigns *Pokreni se i budi dobar gradjanin* (Move and be a good citizen), *Dosta ste nas trovali* (you poisoned us long enough) took place against the irresponsible behaviour of the state and cantonal authorities causing environmental damage and poisoning around Gračanica for years. The protests were supported by youth organisations and other civic movements from other cities.

Several public tribunes took place on the topic Security for the citizens in order to raise the awareness about rights and duties of every single person.

Empowerment of the youth: The first youth camp was organised by the informal youth organisation Gračanica - OMG (which operates within the Movement of the Citizens in Gračanica) together with the Youth Council of the Municipality and the Association of High School Students in Bosnia and Herzegovina - local team Gračanica, bringing together 30 students from several municipalities in BiH, who, through various workshops (tolerance, discrimination, reconciliation and coexistence and other problems that young people face), socialised, worked together and developed proposals and solutions.

Cooperation with local authorities: The cooperation with local authorities increased in order to create synergies, improve their work and fulfil duties for the benefit of the citizens. Demands were raised and project proposals developed by the members of the Movement which were presented to local authorities.

## **Sindikati Solidarnosti**

Support was provided in several individual cases of exploitation and unjust treatment of workers. With the support of the members of *Sindikati Solidarnosti*, the court decided in favour of the disempowered workers, so that the workers and pensioners finally received the non-paid pensions, salaries and compensations: After a meeting with the Federal Government concerning the workers of the production unit *Borac* in Banovići, which was shut down, the Worker's Union achieved an agreement with the respective authorities: The Federal Government is willing to contribute 15.000 KM (ca. 7.500 EUR) in the bankruptcy proceeding, which will allow one part of the former workers to retire and get their pensions and the other part to get a small compensation of 330 KM (165 EUR) from the bureau of employment. The Workers' Union is also active in the case of the *Hotel Stela* in Neum concerning the share capital of workers which was taken away from them during the privatisation of *Polihem*. The members of the Worker's Union hope to get back their share capital through the revision process.

The activists were actively involved in the petition against the opening of a private law faculty (an extension of the private law faculty in Travnik). The decision to open the private faculty, despite the



fact that more than 1000 lawyers are unemployed in Tuzla, resulted from an agreement between the prime minister in Tuzla Canton, who recently graduated from the private law faculty in Travnik and this institution (which is not recognised to meet the European academic standards).

The Worker's Union held successful meetings with the president of the Trade Union with the aim to become an umbrella organisation on entity or state level.

### **Informal Group for Social Justice Prijedor**

Political engagement: the group monitored the work of local authorities and sent several complaints and requests for access to information. After the successful cooperation with a lawyer, the group got several responses. Some of the information obtained served as the basis for their activities (see annex below).

Workshops and campaigns: Several workshops and campaigns were organised or co-organised together with BASOC and other civic movements, such as the campaign Food – Not Violence. Through their work, young people were motivated to take part in civic activism. Voluntary work increased, all with the aim to reduce social injustice and stop the tendencies and aspirations to change discourses about the past in terms of rewriting history.

Humanitarian work: Support was provided to the poorest parts around Prijedor, in especially Ljubija, where the group contributed directly to the wellbeing of the beneficiaries. The voluntary work goes hand in hand with fighting against social injustice on a more political level.

### **Plenum Bosanska Krupa**

The number of the members of the Plenum increased in the last six months and also the work and civic engagement of the Plenum. Beside humanitarian activities which were predominant in the first half of the initiative (providing material support to the poorest members of the community, reconstruction of houses and distribution of food – soup kitchens), the plenum became more and more active at the political and cultural level. The Plenum deals with questions of creating better conditions for coexistence and mutual understanding, the future of B. Krupa, the creation of better conditions for the youth.

Political engagement: Support was provided to demobilised soldiers and other marginalised groups in their attempts to realise their rights. The Plenum was actively involved in the pre-election period by publishing relevant information on the candidates and their programme, in order to increase the active involvement of the citizens.

Community work: Cleaning and reparations works of the orthodox and catholic cemetery in B. Krupa took place. The cemetery was inaccessible and neglected for many years; Request were sent to the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to construct a bridge in B. Krupa.

### **Banja Luka Social Centre**

The centre, an old traditional Bosnian building, was partly reconstructed by the activists, thus preventing it from further ruin and saving the cultural and historic heritage. The centre is used as an open space for the free exchange of ideas, which is very restricted in Banja Luka, and offers freedom and space for different activities for awareness raising, activism, new discourses which deconstruct the current mainstream nationalistic paradigms and dichotomies. Some of the achieved results are:

Feminists coffees: Danijela Majstorovic, Drazana Lepir and Vladan Vuklis's cooperation with the government's gender centre, public library, the RS archive, and Faculty of Philology and the NGO Oštra nula to create an exhibition about Krajina's women in the Partisan movement and their subsequent work on education and agitation through the Antifascist Front of Women (AFZ). The exhibition was organised on the 8th of March 2016 in the Banja Luka's Public Library. A permanent exhibition is intended to be installed in BASOC's front yard;

Feminist coffee on the contemporary Bosnian context concerning women and labour: Different groups engaged with the topic through an online forum. Several productive meetings with women lawyers, economists, journalists etc. took place. A very well visited and provocative panel chaired by Sonja Lokar, a Slovenian professor of sociology and an experienced politician took place in order to point out how structural adjustments and austerity measures are first felt by women (26th of April, 2016);

Feminist coffee with Tanja Stupar Trifunovic who recently received the EU prize for literature for her latest novel (*Satovi u majcinoj sobi*) that discusses matrilineal relation in a time-space of a continuous oppression of being reduced to a social role while addressing issues of feminism, sexuality, motherhood.

Discussions, workshops and events: Panel discussion with Florence Hartman and Dražana Lepir as a part of the White Armband Day activities in Prijedor, organised by the initiative *Jer me se tiče* (Because it concerns me).

Sevdah lab workshop and a concert of Damir Imamović, a sevdah song-writer and performer that was entitled *Sevdah, Equality and Brotherhood*. An interview with the same title came out afterward.

Study visits to Zagreb, the Centre for Peace Studies, the Serbian National Council and *Documenta* in order to discuss possibilities to increase BASOC's capacities to work on and design a functional archive on culture of remembering.

A micro project on oral histories of citizens of Banja Luka who were either peace activists or common people who experienced unpleasant situations throughout the war because they fought against total ethnonational mobilisation that occurred in the nineties was initiated;

A visit by the workers of *Dita* from Tuzla to Banja Luka was organised to talk about their experience of fighting corrupt privatisation and continuous pressure to go bankrupt and closing of small production units.

## 5. Cooperation partners

The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights-Research Association (BIM-FV) is the linking coordination unit between the partners/supporters and informal civic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The main partners and donors of the initiative are the ERSTE Foundation and the Swiss Embassy in Sarajevo.

The Initiative is also supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA).

Informal civic groups and grass-root movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina are:

- Civic Movement Gračanica: Larisa Šuša and Muhamed Okanović
- Plenum Zenica: Meliha Bajramović

- Informal Citizens Group Srebrenik is ours: Sulejman Fejzić, Fadil Duranović
- Plenum Bosanska Krupa: Ermin Hromadžić and Fahrudin Mujakić
- Banja Luka Social Centre BASOC: Dražen Crnomat and Zoran Vučkovac
- Sindikat Solidarnosti (Workers' Union Tuzla): Sakib Kapić and Enes Tanović
- Informal Group for Social Justice Prijedor: Stefan Gvozden and Goran Zorić
- Network 5f7: Dražen Crnomat and Ekrem Ćerimić

## 6. Main milestones

Month	Year	Description
September	2014	Conference "Civil Society as a factor for Change", 08.-10.09.2014, Vienna
January	2015	First Follow-up Meeting in Sarajevo, 21.01.2015
April	2015	Second Follow-up Meeting in Gračanica, 27.04.2015
May	2015	Meeting with potential partners in the Austrian Embassy in Sarajevo, 11.05.2015
June	2015	Signing of the Cooperation Agreement with selected informal civic groups in Sarajevo, 18.06.2015
July	2015	Submission of defined activities by the groups and begin of the first implementation period
December	2015	Submission of reports (written, financial) after the first implementation period
January	2016	Follow-up Meeting, Presentation of achieved results, 25.01.2016, Banja Luka
January	2016	Begin of the second implementation period
May	2016	Submission of interim reports (written, financial) to the Swiss Embassy in Sarajevo
June	2016	End of the second implementation phase
July	2016	Follow-up Meeting, Presentation of achieved results, 13.07.2016, Zenica
July	2016	Submission of final reports (written, financial) to the ERSTE Foundation and all partners

## 7. Second implementation phase and beyond

The BIM-FV together with likeminded partners and supporters, in especially the ERSTE Foundation and the Swiss Embassy, hopes to have contributed to create a framework, which will enable the informal groups and grass-root initiatives to continue their work in the future. However, in order to pursue this goal, further financial means will have to be generated after the exhaustion of the existing funds (July 2015- July 2016).

At the beginning, many of potential partners were sceptical and chose rather to observe in which direction this initiative will develop, than to support the activists. The activists proved that they are highly motivated citizens who refuse to be passive observers. To ensure that the important work of the civic groups continues also after the exhaustion of existing funds (in June 2016), it will be crucial to secure additional funds, which would enable the groups to continue implementing their activities for a better future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, the BIM-FV and likeminded partners hope that this report will inspire additional partners to support the groups and provide financial contributions in order to ensure that the groups can continue their work.

Finally, we would like to express special thanks to the partners and supporters of this initiative, in especially Mr. Filip Radunović (ERSTE Foundation), without whom this initiative would not have been possible; Mrs. Doraja Eberle, who supported the initiative from the beginning; Mr. Vedran Džihić, who contributed to this initiative with many valuable ideas; Mr. Martin Pammer, Austrian Ambassador in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who supported the initiative and enabled several meetings in his Embassy in Sarajevo – among others the meeting with the Austrian Foreign Minister, Mr. Sebastian Kurz; and Mr. Johann Sattler, former Head of the Western Balkan Unit in the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, currently Austrian Ambassador in Albania.

In addition, we would like to thank the Swiss Embassy in Sarajevo for recognising the importance of this initiative and providing a financial contribution for the implementation of activities.

Last but not least, we would like to express our thanks to the activists from the informal civic groups and grass-root movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who remain strong in these difficult times and with their tireless and fearless engagement and hard work contribute to changing the ineffective and gridlocked system in the country, by showing that every voice, every individual matters in the difficult and long-lasting process of social change.

**Thank you for your trust and devotion!**

## Annex- Overview of implemented activities

<b>Informal Civic Group</b>	<b>Implemented activities from July 2015 – July 2016</b>
<b>Informal Group „Srebrenik je naš“</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The working meetings of the group took place every Monday, on a regular basis in order to define the weekly activities of the.</li> <li>- Citizens’ protests took place every Tuesday at the town square (where the group experienced great resistance from the authorities and the police, but they succeeded in launching lawsuits against individuals with assistance of lawyers, which enabled them to reduce the pressure).</li> <li>- The group upholds regular communication with civic activists from other municipalities and cities.</li> <li>- Activists took part in the protest in Tuzla and other cities in order to support disadvantaged workers.</li> <li>- Public tribunals were organised (visit of professor Spahić and Begić).</li> <li>- The group prepared and distributed posters in the whole municipality (about 600 posters), containing information about criminal activities that are the result of the misconduct of certain authorities in the municipality of Srebrenik;</li> <li>- The activists prepared a radio program which was broadcasted via the internet-radio "Radio Revolution NGG Srebrenik is ours".</li> </ul>
<b>Plenum Zenica</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The activists rented an office for the work of the Plenum, which is open for all citizens who are willing to engage in activism from 11: 00-14:00 every day.</li> <li>- Monthly Bulletins and leaflets are published regularly providing the information about the meaning and work of the Plenum and the importance of civic engagement.</li> <li>- The activists organised several public tribunals in order to inform the citizens about their rights and duties such as the public tribunal on the subject of the status of pensioners, public tribunal on the subject of institutional violence, public tribunal on the subject "20 Years of Dayton, public tribunal on the topic of heating.</li> <li>- The Plenum actively collects and documents the problems at the local level detected by the citizens.</li> <li>- The members of the Plenum visited Maglaj and other cities. Several meetings with activists from other cities were organised in the office of the Plenum, which are also open for meetings of other formal and informal civic groups and NGOs.</li> <li>- A number of meetings with the local authorities took place such as the meetings with the Chairman of the Municipal Council, Nebojša Nikolić, or a meeting with the Minister of Health in the Canton of Zenica-Doboj, Bojan Gvozdrenović.</li> <li>- The active involvement of the citizens in Zenica led to important changes at the local level: The House of Peoples adopted amendments of the law for the protection of animals, also dealing with the question of stray dogs, which became a big problem.</li> <li>- Requests were sent to councillors in order to deal with the heating question. Even though the heating costs were very high, the quality of heating remained low and insufficient to keep the household warm. After the Plenum sent request to every single councillor in the municipal council,</li> </ul>

	<p>the quality of the heating improved and the monthly rate was reduced for pensioners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Plenum insisted on more responsibility and accountability of the municipality and demanded measures against corruption and the misuse of positions. As a result, the respective authorities became more active. The director of the public company for heating received a verdict of one and a half years of prison due to the misuse of his position and non-compliance with the law.</li> <li>- The Plenum expressed its concerns regarding another loan for the cantonal hospital in Zenica for paying off the already existing debts to Siemens which is in charge for the medical equipment. Another loan would have led to over-indebtedness of the hospital. The new director managed to agree that the cantonal government gradually pays off the existing debt without taking new loans, at the same time ensuring the further functioning of the medical machines and hospital equipment.</li> <li>- The activists published 11 bulletins dealing with current problems and important issues for the community such as disregard of laws, the quality of the water, taxes, the importance of civic activism etc. Also, a paper on the competitiveness of the economy in BiH was prepared and sent to 33 officials with a request for proposals and ideas how to improve the economic situation in the country.</li> <li>- Together with the organisation Lotos, a project will start soon with the aim to tackle the collative state of depression in BiH by offering psychological support and therapy to the citizens.</li> <li>- The Plenum convinced demobilised soldiers, who are still waiting for their rights to be realised, for peaceful protests and negotiations and for more solidarity and understanding amongst each other, which would finally lead to better results.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Civic Movement Gračanica</b></p>	<p><b>Establishment of a basis for work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The group rented an office – the so called “Base of trust” which operates on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 09:00 to 14:00.</li> <li>- They established an open mailbox for anonymous complaints and detection of problems in the community (detection of cases of corruption, requests for free legal aid etc.); Citizens are welcome to visit the office, to register, to offer or to ask for help.</li> <li>- The Base of trust offers Awareness raising, social work, free legal aid, advising citizens and education on responsibilities of the respective authorities in the complex system of BiH, as some of the services of the Movement.</li> <li>- Registration of the activists has been done and is still ongoing.</li> <li>- Preparation and instruction for the creation and management of the website was accomplished.</li> <li>- A plan of all activities for the next period was developed (including visits to municipalities according to the analysis of urgent problems detected in the municipalities).</li> <li>- Regular meetings are foreseen for every two weeks (also ad hoc meetings) in the premises of the Civic Movement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Promotion of activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distribution of info-material via social media including daily updates about current issues and distribution of brochures and material in the city center, while wearing the new blue shirts with the logo of the Civic Movement</li> </ul>

	<p>during the promotion (5000 pieces in A5 size containing 4 pages were ordered).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distribution of information on current social and political issues in other municipalities: Pribava, Donja Lohinja, Orahovica, Miričina, Lukavica, Soko.</li> <li>- Promotion of activities of the Civic Movement through the webpage of the Bosnian Cultural Centre (BKC) in Gračanica: <a href="http://bkc-gracanica.ba/">http://bkc-gracanica.ba/</a> and via Radio Gračanica (activists were guest in the broadcast program “The topic of the day”, and “Info 5”.</li> <li>- Promotion of activities of the Civic Movement on the webpage Gračanica info and the TV channel Hayat.</li> <li>- Promotion through a monthly educational radio program on civic activism on Radio Gračanica is foreseen (once a month in the framework of the program “Indirect” or “Radio parliament” beginning in November 2016).</li> </ul> <p><b>Implementation of activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The group supported the protests of disempowered workers in Tuzla through: daily visits and overnights in tents, meetings with respective ministries, the cantonal court, the trustee for bankruptcy and the cantonal tax administration in order to claim the fulfilment of workers’ rights.</li> <li>- In this context, information on corrupt privatisation practices of some companies such as Grafopak doo. was published, serving as a basis for two court applications and proofs on irregularities.</li> <li>- In addition, a working group for disempowered workers was created. Due to the pressure exercised by the group, 12 workers of the company <i>koka product</i> were retired and got their pensions, taking into account their years of service, thus enabling social and health services for the unemployed.</li> <li>- The group became part of the movement “Union of women”, which will – through three unions of women (UG Plodovi zemlje Lukavica, UŽ Pribava and UG Gračaničko Kreanje) – set an example of awareness raising of the citizens and promotion of civic activism in all municipalities in order to promote civic values as a basis for a social community.</li> <li>- Activists provided knowhow and workshops to women in the field of development and applying for funds conducted by one of the activists.</li> <li>- Also, trainings on the topic “How to be an active citizen” were conducted in Lukavica and Miričina and additional trainings will be conducted in other communities.</li> <li>- A youth initiative “Bring the disco back to our city” was initiated, aiming at motivating the youth to become part of the Civic Movement.</li> <li>- Activists exercised pressure on the municipal commission for education, culture and sports by conducting an analysis on their work in the whole municipality of Gračanica including an analysis of schools. As a result, two projects were developed for reparation works in three schools: the activists of the Civic Movement sent the project proposals to different donors, however they are still awaiting the decisions.</li> <li>- The group raised demands to be included in public discussions on the draft budget for the municipality in 2016. In this framework, the activity “NOTHING WITHOUT US” is being implemented.</li> <li>- Activists exercise pressure on local authorities in order to force them to take into account the demands of farmers while drafting the Strategy for agriculture development for the next five years (in especially demands considering infrastructure such as roads and access to fields, contamination of fields and rivers etc.).</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation with other informal civic groups is ongoing (NGG Srebrenik je naš, Sindikat Solidarnosti, youth initiative REVOLT Tuzla...), as well as active participation in the creation of the “Bosnian Council” for the region Tuzla;</li> <li>- The group developed project proposals together with other partners and applied for grants in the UK Embassy aiming to implement projects for creating bridges between citizens and institutions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Outreach to the Municipal Council</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Members of the Civic Movement took part in an ordinary and an extraordinary meeting of the municipal council in Gračanica and presented the work of the Civic Movement in August 2015).</li> <li>- Activists conducted an analysis on the political will to initiate changes for the benefit of the citizens.</li> <li>- Official meetings were held with the mayor of the municipality in October 2015, whereby the Civic Movement had the opportunity to present its work to the local council of Gračanica.</li> </ul> <p><b>Awareness raising campaigns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pokreni se i budi dobar gradjanin (Move and be a good citizen), Dosta ste nas trovali (you poisoned us long enough) – protest took place against the irresponsible behaviour of state and cantonal authorities causing environmental damage and poisoning around Gračanica for years. The protests were supported by youth organisations and other civic movements from other cities. Several public tribunals took place on the topic Security for the citizens in order to raise awareness about rights and duties of every single person.</li> </ul> <p><b>Empowerment of the youth:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The first youth camp was organised by the informal youth organisation Gračanica (OMG), which operates within the Movement of the Citizens in Gračanica, together with the Youth Council of the Municipality, the Association of High School students in Bosnia and Herzegovina-local team Gračanica, bringing together 30 students from several municipalities in BiH, who, through various workshops (tolerance, discrimination, reconciliation and coexistence and other problems that young people face), socialised, worked together and developed proposals and solutions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cooperation with local authorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The cooperation with local authorities increased in order to create synergies, improve their work and fulfil duties for the benefit of the citizens. Demands were raised and project proposals developed by the members of the Movement which were presented to local authorities. One of the results is that a playing ground for children was rebuilt in Gračanica.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Workers’ Union “Sindikat Solidarnosti” Tuzla</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Workers’ union organised protest camps in front of the government of Canton Tuzla (housing in tents for weeks in order to exercise pressure to save a company with 70 employees).</li> <li>- Participation in public tribunals.</li> <li>- The members of the union provided support to activists from other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and visited the National Museum in Sarajevo as a sign of protest due to the closure of the Museum, which was finally reopened.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Workers' Union regularly organised meetings, campaigns and protests to raise awareness on the current problems of workers who are deprived of their rights. Support was provided in a large number of individual cases of exploitation and unjust treatment of workers. With the support of the members of Sindikat Solidarnosti, the court decided in favour of the disempowered workers, so that the workers and pensioners finally received the non-paid pensions, salaries and compensations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Plenum Bosanska Krupa</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In spring 2016, the group registered the plenum and is operating as a formal organisation of citizens which should allow an easier access to additional financial means in the future.</li> <li>- The number of the members of the Plenum increased in the last six months and also the work and civic engagement of the Plenum.</li> <li>- Beside humanitarian activities which were predominant in the first half of the initiative (providing material support to the poorest members of the community, reconstruction of houses and distribution of food – soup kitchens), the plenum became more and more active at the political and cultural level.</li> <li>- The Plenum deals with questions of creating better conditions for coexistence and mutual understanding, the future of B. Krupa, the creation of better conditions for sports and athletes, cultural engagement, youth and legal aid.</li> <li>- <u>Political engagement</u>: Support was provided to demobilised soldiers and other marginalised groups in their attempts to realise their rights. Currently, the Plenum is actively involved in the pre-election period by publishing relevant information and informing the citizens on the candidates and their programme, in order to increase the active involvement of the citizens and to form an objective opinion.</li> <li>- <u>Community work</u>: Cleaning and reparations works of the orthodox and catholic cemetery in B. Krupa took place. The cemetery was inaccessible and neglected for many years; Request were sent to the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to construct a bridge in B. Krupa.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Informal Group for Social Justice Prijedor</b></p>	<p><b>Voluntary work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Informal group for social justice Prijedor organised voluntary work actions/activities with young people, in order to ease the everyday lives of socially endangered members of the municipality Ljubija.</li> <li>- The volunteer group went several times a month to Ljubija and helped the socially endangered people by performing manual labour tasks (painting walls, splitting wood, cleaning homes) in order to help those who were unable to perform those tasks themselves, some because of illness, some because of their weak financial situation.</li> <li>- The group also organised a lecture event whereby one of the activists with a medical education background held educational lectures on personal and domestic hygiene especially for members of the public kitchen who spent a lot of time together, all with the aim to reduce the risk of diseases caused by the lack of hygiene. The response was good, and progress was made on defining the issues amongst the users of the public kitchen. Providing</li> </ul>

information is crucial for progress in this field as well as self-motivation among the members.

- During the last six months (January 2016 – July 2016) the group started working with two organisations from Prijedor, the association of parents of intellectually impaired children “Neven”, and the association of parents with four and more children “Roda”. Together with Neven and Roda, the group established a strong basis for addressing the local institutions and their neglecting of socially endangered people and lack of help for organisations that work with them.

**Monitoring the work of public institutions and advocacy campaigns**

- The IG for Social Justice formed a working group for following the work of the public institutions and the use of the public budget. While analysing the use and distribution of the budget many inconsistencies were found. The group also came to the conclusion that the budget was socially insensible.
- According to the outcomes of their research, the group proceeded to advocate for changes. For this purpose, the group worked together with the “Foundation for Creative Development” (Fond za Kreativni Razvoj), an NGO from Sarajevo, which has experience in the field of media, advocacy for social themes, youth and more. With them, a couple of videos demonstrating the situation in Ljubija as well as in Prijedor were recorded, criticising the attitude and policies of town authorities towards the socially endangered population. The videos were shown on federal television as part of the established television series for the youth “Hayd u Park”.
- The IG for Social Justice also went on an advocating mission together with a NGO from Prijedor. Together, they elaborated common standpoints for an upcoming public discussion on the town budget. When that public discussion took place not only the two groups, but also other participants debated on various topics concerning their particular problems, which were related to social issues and the budget. After the public debate, the town authorities increased the funds for social issues.
- The same working group had also the task of preparing requests for access to information. Several requests for access to information were sent to town authorities, amongst them a request for clarification on town budget items, a request for having access to audio recordings on discussions on the town budget for 2016. During the second implementation phase, the workgroup managed to increase the number of positive responses due to finally being able to hire an attorney. His job was limited to helping the group to write requests and to follow procedures and deadlines. This proved to be the kind of professional support the group needed to be more successful. Through this cooperation and experience the group was strengthened for further independent work in this area. Together they started to work on a case for the revision of the pension status for one of the users of the public kitchen in Ljubija. The group managed to get responses for several inquiries concerning access to information, one of

them dealing with war-time changes in street naming which led to a street action described above.

### **Organising of street actions and public events**

- The IG for Social Justice, with the support from the Centre for Youth “Kvart”, successfully organised the street action “Food, NOT violence”, on August 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 which took place on a town square in Prijedor as a reaction to the increasing number of interethnic incidents. The reaction of the citizens was positive: The activists exchanged their opinion with the citizens while enjoying a hot meal and came to the same conclusions. Interethnic conflicts were caused by actions of irresponsible individuals and were even more emphasised by irresponsible power holders in the local community thus projecting fear and uncertainty. All agreed that these efforts in manipulating the public opinion must not be tolerated. Younger generations are the potential for social and economic changes which can only be achieved in the long run. Many citizens also agreed that interethnic tensions are attempts of those in power to divert the public opinion from real problems as unemployment, corruption, criminal, poverty and others. Besides distributing vegetarian food, the street action consisted of handing out flyers with the inscription “Flags are NOT the issue, unemployment IS” and “(UN)EMPLOYED of all identities UNITE”.
- Members of the group took part in a regional street action, which was organised as a sign of support to the radio station “Slobodni Drvar” (Free Drvar). This street action took place in Banja Luka, Prijedor and Kozarska Dubica at the same time, with participants wearing the same shirts and handing out the same flyers. This radio station is run by people from the town of Drvar. Their goal is to reveal all sorts of criminal activities performed by local power holders, who are mainly from the ruling political party in RS. Hence, they were banned and made illegal by those same authorities.
- During the second implementation phase from January to July 2016 several successful events were organised: Installing of a fence for the vegetable garden of Ljubija public kitchen and installing of a 40 square meters greenhouse, which will greatly improve the productivity of the garden managed by the users of the public kitchen in Ljubija. In addition, the activists also cleaned and repainted five houses of public kitchen users, making their lives more pleasant and their living spaces healthier.
- Another street action the group implemented was changing the names of the streets to their pre-war state. This street action was implemented on May 16<sup>th</sup>, the date of the anniversary of the liberation of Prijedor from occupying forces during WWII. Changing the street names is a political interference in the public space, which became a common practice of local authorities throughout BiH to this day, in all three ethnicities. The slogan of the action was “Who liberated Prijedor?”, to point out that although festivities are held to remember Prijedor’s liberators, the Partizans, their

	<p>names are at the same time being replaced from streets and school names, their statues torn down all with the aim of historical revisionism.</p> <p><b>Work on public relations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The IG for Social Justice made an internet blog for informing the public on their past activities. They also have a Facebook page with the same name as their blog "Ustaj Prijedore".</li> <li>- The group continued improving their visibility, updating their blog and Facebook page as well as having campaigns on finding new allies, both organisations and individuals.</li> <li>- The group continued working with other similar groups, most notably with organisations and informal groups from Banja Luka such as "Oštra Nula", „Helsinki Parlament of citizens of Banjaluka“, „BASOC“ and many other individuals, activists and journalists whose work leaned on their own and vice versa.</li> <li>- The group had a great benefit from expanding their list of allies with the organisations "Neven" and "Roda" from Prijedor, thus getting more visible and numerous in public gatherings and actions. Some of the most important PR improvements came largely as a result of their volunteer work actions. The group is now recognised as one of the few groups with a genuine drive for volunteer work, unsullied by classical NGO way of working.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Banja Luka Social Centre BASOC</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BASOC entered into the premises (traditional Bosnian house) during August 2015. The space was used by Merhamet (Muslim charity organisation) almost eight years prior to BASOC. The house and the rooms were extremely ruined and damaged (almost unfit). First days of the group's entry into the house were marked by heavy reconstruction works and adapting the house for the needs of a social center. The extreme conditions meant that the activists had no drinking or running water, toilets, ruined walls, rotten planks and entire floors. Hooligans had already broken the windows when the activists took over the house. The water leakage turned out to be almost lethal for the house. The activists managed to secure (not completely adequate) heating which was the most acute problem during these early months of their work. During this time, they had visits and active participation with the program by people from Slovenia, Croatia, BiH, Serbia, Austria, Germany, Lithuania, Russia and USA. Entering the house while the last negotiations with the owners were underway (August 2015).</li> <li>- One of the first things organised was a first communal lunch within BASOC's space for participants of a two-day training session titled 'Days of Activism' organised by Oštra Nula. Young activists from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina were introduced to BASOC's conceptual pillars and what is intended for the house, and were warmly welcomed to join BASOC whenever they want (August 2015).</li> <li>- Meeting of 'Mreža 5f7' organised in BASOC concerning the funds allocated for legal aid. The meeting was attended by four groups including the Worker's Union Sindikat Solidarnosti, 'Plenum Građana Gračanice', 'Neformalna Grupa za Socijalnu Pravdu Prijedor' and BASOC where the participants decided not to continue with the plan to train and license legal</li> </ul>

	<p>observers in BiH. Instead, the participants decided to think about one (or several) public lectures about the criminalization of protests and to direct the aid towards potential critical cases inside and outside 5F7 Network. The participants mutually decided to refund the travel costs for coming to Banja Luka while BASOC was in charge of lunch and refreshments (early September 2015).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting up a cooperation with the Open University from Sarajevo (OU) and organising a complementing program from Sept 25 to Sept 27 2015. A day before the OU, BASOC organised a premiere screening of Kemal Pervanić's documentary <i>Pretty Village</i> and a friendly discussion afterwards with around 15 guests. The day after, on the 25<sup>th</sup> Sept 2015, right before the OU sessions, BASOC hosted a heated discussion titled 'Let's not talk about culture' with some of the OU guests outpouring to the house during the discussion but mostly young local students. The next day, BASOC tried to problematize something very much overlooked by the OU organisers, which is the question of migrants. That is why at 1 p.m. BASOC held a session with a friend from 'No Borders Serbia' who shared experiences from Belgrade and Subotica parks where Syrian refugees used to take shelter, problems and possible scenarios for migrant routes. Both days ended by a socialising session in BASOC, the house ended up hosting around 150 people over two nights.</li> <li>- October 2015 was crucial for tightening up activities within BASOC. General assemblies were set up on regular basis (every Wednesday) in order to come closer to horizontal decision-making. Along with it came the central ideational pillars of the centre: feminism, politics of equality and facing the past or structural problematizing of genocide in BiH. Promotion of sexism, homophobia, and exploitation, profiteering, anti-atheism and hetero-patriarchy is not welcome. As a part of this, by-weekly feminist coffee (every other Monday) was set up as an attempt to raise voice against re-patriarchalisation. This is when BASOC started a Marx reading group that evolved into a critical reading group with occasional movie screenings.</li> <li>- In mid-October 2015, BASOC managed to arrange a round table discussion with professor Vassilis Fouskas from the University of East London, who talked about possibilities of action in the current stalemate produced by neoliberal policies around the world. Prof. Fouskas also talked about Syriza and the prospects for struggle through formal political institutions, their proneness to financial structures and potential points of rupture.</li> <li>- On October 30<sup>th</sup> 2015, BASOC organised a communal event titled 'Get to know your neighbourhood' during which they had an open house for the immediate neighbours and everyone else. The event was advertised with posters on small local stores and by word of mouth. After fixing up a homemade pizza oven, the communal lunch consisted of pizzas and vegan beans. Lunch turned to karaoke in the evening with generational span from 22-90 years old guests actively participating.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BASOC hosted Oštra Nula's event on October 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 concerning culture of memory, with Tamara Šmidling, founder of Sarajevo Peace Academy, as the main lecturer.</li> <li>- November 2015 went through with minor construction tasks like cleaning the garage, setting up an oven in one of the rooms, several movie screenings, and further developments within the standard activities. Working groups were established for 'Memory room', which is supposed to historicise the local government's attempts to eradicate old Bosnian architecture from the Ottoman period as a sign of continuity with the violent 90ies.</li> <li>- Beginning of November 2015, BASOC organised aid collection for Syrian migrants passing through Croatia. BASOC attempted to coordinate the efforts with Caritas from Banja Luka but just as other charitable or humanitarian organisations from Bosnia they had no plan or desire to deal with this problem as they were assured the refugee crisis would not hit the country, so they were not helpful. BASOC received substantial aid from the community in cash, food and clothing and took it to Slavonski Brod by a private vehicle. Although there was some trouble crossing the border and getting volunteer accreditation, BASOC delivered the aid to Adventist Church activists.</li> <li>- Feminist coffee also made some concrete plans to set up an exhibition of archival materials of the Women's Antifascist Front (AFŽ) within the National Library. It will include several institutions like the Gender Center in Banja Luka, the Archive, National Library, BASOC and Oštra Nula. It is scheduled for March 8<sup>th</sup> 2016 and will be accompanied by a march through the city and a round table on the resistance and self-organisation within the AFŽ. The exhibition will be co-authored by Danijela Majstorović (BASOC), Vladan Vukliš (Archive) and Dražana Lepir (Oštra Nula). The speakers are already confirmed as well, including Banjaluka University students and two prominent feminist scholars from Serbia and Italy.</li> <li>- In December, BASOC organised several interesting public lectures, movie screenings and poetry readings. BASOC was also visited by a Belgrade-based independent journalist running an online radio show about the underground scene in former Yugoslavia titled K.U.P.E.K. Noa Triester from the 'Ignorant schoolmaster' co-op came to talk about their experience with Serbian war veterans and attempts to self-organise. After that, on Dec 12<sup>th</sup> 2015, BASOC hosted Jasmila Žbanić, Bosnian filmmaker who holds a Golden Bear for the movie Grbavica. BASOC screened <i>For Those Who Can Tell No Tales</i> and had a heated discussion about various kinds of activism and its limits in Bosnia. The same day, there was another communal lunch for both the neighbourhood and the people coming to the screening. Towards the end of December 2015, BASOC hosted a versatile artist from Sanski Most, Enes Kurtović, who read poetry and talked about the multi-genre approach to writing. He also agreed to become a co-editor of the bimonthly wallpapers.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BASOC translated several theoretical texts and uploaded them on their Facebook page until the group gets a proper website and finish the ideational stage of their wallpaper project when the texts will also show up on the house outer wall.</li> <li>- BASOC attended meetings of a potential local initiative titled 'Our space' where several non-governmental organisations gathered around the Centre for Environment and actively participated in preserving a local playground that was targeted by the Orthodox church for a temple. The idea is to continue cooperating and tackle some of the government's attempts to privatise public space.</li> <li>- <u>Feminists coffees</u>: Danijela Majstorovic, Drazana Lepir and Vladan Vuklis's cooperation with the government's gender centre, public library, the RS archive, and Faculty of Philology and the NGO Oštra nula to create an exhibition about Krajina's women in the Partisan movement and their subsequent work on education and agitation through the Antifascist Front of Women (AFZ). The exhibition was organised on the 8th of March in the Banja Luka's Public Library. A permanent exhibition is intended to be installed in BASOC's front yard; Feminist coffee on the contemporary Bosnian context concerning women and labour: Different groups engaged with the topic through an online forum group and several productive meetings with women lawyers, economists, journalists etc. A very well visited and provocative panel chaired by Sonja Lokar, a Slovenian professor of sociology and an experienced politician took place in order to point out how structural adjustments and austerity measures are first felt by women(26th of April, 2016); Feminist coffee with Tanja Stupar Trifunovic who recently received the EU prize for literature for her latest novel, Satovi u majčinoj sobi, that discusses matrilineal relation in a time-space of a continuous oppression of being reduced to a social role while addressing issues of feminism, sexuality, motherhood.</li> <li>- <u>Discussions, workshops and events</u>: Panel discussion with Florence Hartman and Dražana Lepir as a part of the White Armband Day activities in Prijedor, organised by the initiative Jer me se tiče (Because it concerns me).</li> <li>- Sevdah lab workshop and a concert of Damir Imamović, a sevdah songwriter and performer that was entitled Sevdah, Equality and Brotherhood. An interview with the same title came out afterward.</li> <li>- Study visits to Zagreb, the Center for Peace Studies, the Serbian National Council and Documenta in order to discuss possibilities to increase BASOC's capacities to work on and design a functional archive on culture of remembering.</li> <li>- Micro project on oral histories of citizens of Banja Luka who were either peace activists or common people who experienced unpleasant situations throughout the war because they fought against total ethnonational mobilisation that occurred in the nineties was initiated;</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visit by the workers of Dita from Tuzla to Banja Luka was organised to talk about their experience of fighting corrupt privatisation and continuous pressure to go bankrupt and closing of small production units.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Network 5F7</b></p>	<p>On May 17<sup>th</sup> 2016, the Network 5f7 met in Srebrenik in order to elaborate a new plan and strategy. The participants decided on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To form a new umbrella platform “Network 5f7” with a joint coordinating body based on the principle one coordinator for each group (member). Each group shall appoint a coordinator. The coordinating body decides on the terms and the location for the monthly meetings as well as on joint activities of the Network.</li> <li>- To provide support to disadvantaged groups (workers, veterans, pensioners and other marginalised groups deprived of their rights) in accordance to the possibilities of the Network.</li> <li>- To promote and raise awareness about the Declaration of Human Rights and its implementation at all local levels; Active promotion of ratified human rights declarations by the members of the Network 5f7 in their local communities; Implementation of the activities will be decided by the coordinating body.</li> <li>- To elaborate common paroles and slogans for the joint engagement against exploitation and marginalisation.</li> <li>- To develop a joint strategy and action plan through the above mentioned coordinating body representing all members.</li> <li>- However, due to some organisational matters, it was decided on the follow-up meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016 in Zenica, to redistribute the financial means to the informal groups which are part of the Austrian initiative.</li> </ul>

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