

## RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE YOUTH FROM THE PODGORICA SUMMIT

### ORGANISED BY YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Date: 13th of May, 2022

In the past years, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights has implemented five summits that brought together hundreds of young civic and political activists from Africa, Asia, Europe, America and South America to share experiences and intensify networking and advocacy effort to support the reform processes required for the Balkan countries' democratic transitions and European integration.

During this year's Podgorica Youth Summit young people from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia have gathered to discuss the following issues: transitional justice and reconciliation, human rights and rule of law, democracy and democratic values, civil society resilience and civic education, accountability and transparency in the Western Balkans, and access to information and media literacy.

Furthermore, in the light of the current political situation in the region and Europe, young people have recognised that:

**1. Young people are a vital part of every society, including Balkan countries and they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect by their institutions;**

Young people are keen to take control of their lives and become an active part of society. They are facing various uncertainties during their development, hence they have to be supported by the society in engaging and becoming an integral part of the society.

**2. Young people should have the right to access democratic mechanisms and be part of the decision-making processes;**

Young people have a crucial role in a society as carriers of responsibility and accountability and their inclusion must not be understood as tokenism. They have to be supported in their learning and empowerment on their path as responsible citizens in a democratic society.

**3. Young people must have a platform free from nationalism for their voices to be heard without the fear of being negatively labelled by the societies and state representatives;**



This Summit's vision *Don't stay silent* enables young people to be equipped with the necessary resources to become agents of positive change, promoting the EU values and multiplying the idea of tolerance and solidarity among neighbours. Young people have the right to be informed about the facts of the past including the right to quality education to understand and process our cultural and historical heritage.



### **Young people accordingly agree:**

- 1. Governments and institutions have to create a safe space for young people to report and to react to violations of human rights that they experience or witness. Accordingly, young people have to be supported and protected in their efforts to speak up against injustices.**
- 2. Governments, institutions, and international organisations have to work together in reducing the hate speech both online and in the offline spaces, especially hate speech that target and stigmatise various vulnerable groups of young people.**
- 3. Freedom of speech and independent media space has to be protected at the highest levels of authorities, including the space for various groups of young people and their representations in media.**
- 4. Governments and institutions have to recognise youth as an equal and relevant partner in the decision-making process in all aspects of policy making, particularly in regard to the sensitive but vital political questions.**
- 5. Governments, institutions, international organisations and civil society organisations have to protect young refugees and people seeking asylum especially in the context of the current war in Ukraine.**
- 6. Governments and institutions have to enable the full enjoyment of the freedom of movement in the Balkans including a resolution of the political disputes that are creating obstacles for youth in the region to meet and exchange experiences.**
- 7. A visa liberalisation process between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina must be one of the top priorities, including visa liberalisation for Kosovo citizens travel to the Schengen zone.**
- 8. Civil society organisations have to show solidarity with the victims of the war in Ukraine and to offer the region's collected experience and knowledge to contribute to the transitional justice processes that will take place in Europe after the war is over.**
- 9. To encourage youth activism, provide opportunities for new generations to engage in reforming processes and gradually take leadership roles in the region's future.**

10. Representatives of the institutions and politicians must be held accountable for instigating the hostilities in the region while using the nationalistic rhetoric that is constantly undermining the mutual respect among the people in the region. Young people deserve to build their future without the burden of celebration of convicted war criminals and denial of the crimes committed.
11. Governments, institutions, international organisations and civil society organisations to show their strongest commitment to the establishment of the mechanism that will work on identifying and naming all of the victims from the war that followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia.
12. Governments, institutions, international organisations and civil society organisations have to enable active participation of all young people, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds at every level of decision-making including them in various topics, not only those related to their lives directly.
13. Governments, institutions, international organisations and civil society organisations have to strengthen the commitment of the countries in the region towards the EU by promoting the implementation of the core democratic values such as justice, freedom, peace and equity.
14. States in the region have to enable the atmosphere in their societies where women can be seen in the top leadership positions.
15. States in the region have to be more committed to the enhancement of the rule of law while adopting the laws that will guarantee the same rights for LGBTIQ+ community and other people in vulnerable situations.



Young people have the right and the responsibility to hold governments, institutions and the civil society sector accountable for their decisions and actions especially when those are impacting young people's lives. Young people's lives are shaped by the policy framework and their representation has to be guaranteed.