

YOUTH DECLARATION

Dayton 30 – Generation After Peace

Sarajevo, December 2025

Preamble

We, young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, gathered at the forum “*Dayton 30 – Generation After Peace*”, come together to articulate our shared concerns, priorities, and expectations for the future of our country.

Thirty years after the Dayton Peace Agreement, our generation inherited a society in peace but constrained by a political and institutional system that often fails to serve its citizens; particularly *young people*. While Dayton ended the war, it did not complete the task of building a functional, inclusive, and democratic state in which young people can thrive, participate meaningfully, and envision a future for themselves.

This Declaration represents the first step in a longer process of youth advocacy and engagement. It reflects lived experience, informed reflection, and a collective commitment to building a Bosnia and Herzegovina grounded in democratic values, social cohesion, and equal opportunities for all.

1. Education Reform for Active and Informed Citizenship

We call for comprehensive reform of the education system to ensure that it prepares young people not only for the labour market, but for active and informed citizenship.

Educational curricula at all levels must include mandatory civic education that covers:

- the constitutional structure of the country,
- basic rights, responsibilities, and mechanisms of democratic participation.

Curricula should be harmonized at the state level to ensure equal access to quality education, while respecting diversity. Particular attention must be given to vocational education, which requires updated curricula, stronger links to practice, and closer cooperation with employers.

Schools must also become spaces of dialogue. We recommend the introduction of structured discussion formats such as regular homeroom debates and partnerships with civil society organizations to deliver non-formal education on youth rights, critical thinking, and democratic engagement.

Teachers, school management, and education authorities share responsibility for encouraging student-led initiatives and ensuring that youth voices are genuinely reflected in school decision-making processes. Education must move beyond simple memorization and become a tool for empowerment.

2. Connecting Young People Across Entities and Social Divides

We believe that sustainable peace and social cohesion depend on regular, meaningful contact between young people across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We call for systematic institutional support for:

- school and university exchange programs,
- cultural and educational visits,
- youth mobility initiatives that enable cooperation across entities and regions.

Public institutions should invest in safe, affordable, and accessible transportation infrastructure to reduce physical and symbolic barriers between communities.

At the same time, hate speech, whether verbal, online, or expressed through vandalism and graffiti, must be addressed through clear accountability mechanisms. We recommend the introduction or strengthening of sanctions, including fines and publicly accessible registries of violations, combined with preventive education.

Inter-entity and interethnic contact must become normal, frequent, and accessible to all young people, not an exception dependent on donor-funded projects.

3. Inclusive Sports and Cultural Life Free from Political Influence

Sports and culture are powerful tools for connection, identity-building, and shared experience. Young people must be able to participate in these spaces without political interference.

We call for:

- depoliticised participation and representation of athletes, artists, and youth groups,
- transparent and fair public funding for inclusive sports and cultural initiatives,
- long-term investment in youth spaces, sports infrastructure, and cultural institutions.

Clear safeguards must be established to prevent political instrumentalisation of sports and culture. These fields should unite young people, not reproduce divisions or serve narrow political interests.

4. Participation, Integrity, and Accountability

Young people do not reject politics. We reject politics that excludes, discourages, and disrespects us.

We demand:

- stronger and harmonised conflict-of-interest legislation, with consistent implementation across all levels of government,
- regular inspections and accountability mechanisms for educational institutions and political officeholders,
- clear regulation of political mandates to prevent manipulation and abuse of institutional positions.

We support the digitalisation of the electoral process as a means to increase transparency, trust, and youth participation in elections.

Young people want political leaders who are credible, ethical, and inspiring. Leaders who explain how change is achieved, who encourage civic engagement, and who do not fear peaceful protest or youth-led initiatives. Politics has the potential to inspire; it is the responsibility of political actors to restore that potential.

5. Staying, Working, and Living with Dignity

Young people want to stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but staying must be a viable and dignified choice.

We call for:

- equal access to scholarships and educational opportunities,
- fair wages and secure working conditions,
- recognition of young workers as contributors to economic development, not disposable labour.

Youth employment policies must move beyond short-term measures and address structural insecurity, exploitation, and inequality in the labour market.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This Declaration is not an endpoint. It is a foundation.

We commit to continuing this process through dialogue, advocacy, and cooperation with institutions, civil society, and international partners. We expect decision-makers to engage with this document seriously, not symbolically, and to include young people as partners in shaping reforms that affect our lives.

The generation after peace does not ask for privileges.
We ask for responsibility, opportunity, and a future worth staying for.