

## **REPORT ON A STUDY TRIP TO PRAGUE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN YOUTH CIVIC ACTIVISM IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

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The study trip to Prague was organized with the aim of getting Civic Education/Democracy and Human Rights professors and representatives of local authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina familiar with local youth activism and the functioning of local authorities in Republica Česká. UIZBiH implements the project "Young heroes - Empowerment of youth in BiH at the community level". The very goal of the project is to increase the participation of young people in public life and contribute to the functionality of local government based on the active participation of young citizens.

The study trip lasted 5 days, during which we had a meeting with the representatives of Agora Kristýna Fantova and Magda Podsedníková, visits to the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, the Jířího Orten Gymnasium in Kutná Hora, socializing in the association Lastavica and a meeting with representatives of local authorities in the Municipality of Prague 6.

On the first day, on Sunday, accompanied by Kristýna Fantova, we got acquainted with the sights of Prague and discussed the visits that followed as part of the study trip.

2.10.2023. we visited the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Czech Republic. Magda Podsedníková and Frantisek Havlin were also visiting with us. Agora's representative Magda Podsedníková spoke about Agora's cooperation with UIZBiH, and Ernes Jusović, Acting Director of UIZBiH, presented the work of the association and the project "Young heroes - youth empowerment in BiH at the community level".

The visit to the Embassy was followed by a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, where we discussed youth activism with representatives of the Ministry. The representatives of the Ministry were interested in how many young people are interested in participating in public and political life and how educational authorities promote such participation, as well as what kind of engagement the local community has in this matter. They were also interested in the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is, the division into 12 ministries of education (10 in the cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one in the Republic of Srpska and the Department of Education in the Brčko District). In the Republika Srpska for a long time, the Ministry has not allowed many projects that various associations have tried to implement, and the Civic Education subject itself has been abolished in primary schools as of this school year. On this occasion, I presented my observation related to youth activism. Namely, there is noticeable progress compared to the generations that attended high school 10-15 years ago. The new generations are slowly realizing that there is no democracy without the constant

participation of citizens, however, a certain period of continuous work with young people is needed in order for them to become active citizens in the true sense, who will make their contribution both in the local and in the wider community. Young people want to participate and show great interest in such projects, but the educational authorities do not sufficiently offer them the opportunity for such a thing. Therefore, I consider projects such as "Young Heroes - Empowerment of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the local community level" to be very important in the formation of Bosnia and Herzegovina society into a democratic "healthy" society. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, as well as Agora, for recognizing the importance of such projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Secondary education is perhaps the last instance where we can influence young people during their secondary education so that they can continue to be active citizens dedicated to democratic values in their lives. It is important that young people, in projects like this one implemented by UIZBiH, see on a practical example that they too can change something in their local community.

After talking with the representatives of the Ministry, accompanied by a very kind guide who told us about the history of the palace, we visited the palace premises and the apartment of Jan Masaryk, the son of Tomas Masaryk, who was the first president of Czechoslovakia. Jan Masaryk was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia

3.10. we visited Jířího Orten Gymnasium in Kutná Hora and this visit left the biggest impression on me. We attended a meeting of the Student Parliament where they presented problems for which they sought solutions together. We don't have anything like that in our school and municipality. Namely, in schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are student councils that consist of 2 representatives from each department in the school. Students in the Student Council fight for a better position of students and working conditions in the school, but they almost never address the representatives of the authorities. At the municipal level, we do not have a Student Parliament, which would consist of student representatives from all schools at the municipal level. I find the idea of a Student Parliament very useful because students can influence problems in the whole local community as well as in their schools. It is also very good that representatives of local authorities are required to attend this meeting. The student council we have in our school has no influence on the local authorities.

After the Student Parliament, we spoke with the president of the Parliament, as well as with the representative of the local authorities and the deputy of the school. The representative of the local authorities spoke about the relationship between the local authorities and the Student Parliament, as well as what projects the students initiated. Also, the representative of UIZBiH presented the goals of the project "Young heroes - Empowerment of youth in BiH at the community level." The project is a kind of response to the weak participation of young people in public life in Bosnia and Herzegovina, their lack of trust in politics and doubt that they can make a difference. In the field of education, this project responds to insufficient and too theoretical education and to the constant poor contact between decision-makers and the youth in the country. Mapping of community needs, youth communication and local government will take place in 10 municipalities.

The result will be 10 student projects for the benefit of the community. The goal is to spread awareness about the possibilities and advantages of youth participation at the local level and changes in formal education.

At the Jířího Orten Gymnasium, we spoke with the principal and deputy of the school, who showed us around the school premises. The very appearance of the school left a strong impression on me. One gets the impression that the atmosphere in this school is much more casual than in schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the students are dressed much more casually. I really liked the idea of hearing music instead of the school bell. It should be noted that the teaching is more focused on practical knowledge than on the theoretical part. This Gymnasium has been declared the Gymnasium of the Year several times. As far as it seems to me, communication in this school is not based on orders but on mutual respect, and there is peace and a pleasant atmosphere in the halls of the school.

In the afternoon, a gathering was organized in the "Lastavica" Association. This association gathers people from the Balkan region in the Czech Republic. We had the opportunity to talk with members of the association, as well as with the ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Czech Republic, Martina Mlinarević-Sopta.

4.10.2023. we visited the Municipality of Prague 6 where we spoke with representatives of the local authorities. We were presented with projects that young people applied for during the competition, presenting their ideas. The best 3 ideas received the support of the municipality for their implementation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, young people aged 20-30 usually apply for projects like these, and primary and secondary school students rarely have the opportunity to present their ideas. I consider this approach of the Municipality of Prague 6 very useful and encouraging for youth activism from an early age.

Once again, I would like to thank Agora and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for making this study trip possible for us, during which we managed to learn a lot. We will try to apply examples of good practice as best as possible in our schools and local communities.