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SUBJECT: REPORT ON A STUDY TRIP TO PRAGUE

Dear All,

I was given the special honor of being a participant in a study trip to the Czech Republic. The study trip was organized in the period from September 30 to October 5, 2023, organized by the Association of Election Officials in BiH (UIZBiH).

UIZBiH is implementing the project "Young Heroes - Empowerment of young people in BiH at the community level" from January 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. The project was financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. The main goal of the project is to increase the participation of young people in public life at the local level, as well as to improve the functionality of local government based on the active participation of young citizens.

A study trip to Prague was organized for teachers of partner secondary schools and officials of partner municipalities/cities to present successful examples of youth inclusion at the local level.

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.

We started a pleasant and safe trip on Saturday, September 30, 2023, with rest breaks and a lunch break in Osijek, Republic of Croatia, and arrival at the destination and accommodation in the comfortable rooms of the New Town Hotel in Prague, around 11:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 1, 2023, accompanied by Kristýna Fantova, we got acquainted with the sights of Prague and discussed the visits that followed as part of the study trip.

I can't help but convey my delight and impressions permanently engraved in my memory, collected during a tour of the city. For me personally, the attitude of the Prague community towards cultural and historical heritage is impressive. Facades without damage and ugly graffiti are what I particularly emphasize, and I would like us, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to have the same attitude towards material heritage and our heritage. The Czech capital cannot leave anyone indifferent. The whole city exudes history, enlightenment, and culture.

Monday, 02.10.2023. In the company of Magda Podsedníková and Frantisek Havlin, we visited the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Czech Republic. The cooperation between Agora and UIZBiH was presented to the friendly employees of the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ernes Jusović, acting director of UIZBiH, presented the work of the association and the project "Young heroes - empowering young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina 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 young people are interested in participating in public and political life and how much the 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 very complicated education system in BiH, that is, the division into 12 ministries of education (10 in the cantons of the Federation of BiH, 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. Professor Dragana Kartal, based on many years of experience in teaching, pointed out a noticeable progress compared to the generations that attended high school 10-15 years ago. New generations are slowly realizing that there is no democracy without the constant participation of citizens, however, some time of continuous work with young people is needed so that they become active citizens in the true sense who will contribute, 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, he considers projects like "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. She also thanked 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 so that they 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 a practical example that they too can change something in their local community and contribute to its further development.

After talking with the representatives of the Ministry, accompanied by the curator of the palace, we visited the premises of the palace 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 in 1948, in one of the most challenging periods for the Czech people.

On Tuesday, October 3, 2023, we visited Jířího Orten High School in Kutná Hora. I am delighted with the equipment of the school building, sports halls, laboratories, botanical garden, courtyard, and outdoor sports fields. It is fully justified that this school has repeatedly won the title "Gymnasium of the Year" in the Czech Republic.

We attended a meeting of the Student Parliament where they presented problems for which they sought solutions together. Special attention during the session of the Parliament is devoted to the exchange of students that this school organizes with schools in the USA, China, and many European countries.

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 director 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 their lack of faith that they can change

something with their activism. In the field of education, this project responds to insufficient and too theoretical education and the constant poor contact between decision-makers and the youth in the country.

In schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are student councils consisting of 2 representatives from each department in the school. Students in the Student Council fight for a better position of students and working conditions at school, but they do not have the opportunity to point out the problems faced by young people in the local community. I consider the idea of constituting a Parliament of students at the municipal level, which would consist of representatives of students from all primary and secondary schools at the municipal level, very important. The presence of representatives of local authorities at the sessions of the Student Parliament will contribute to a faster passage and solving the problems of young people at the local level.. In the following period, the idea will be presented to schools, as well as to representatives of the executive and representative authorities of the municipality of Ilijaš to gain support for the constitution of the Student Parliament

In the afternoon, a gathering was organized in the "Lastavica" Association. This Association brings together people from the Balkans who have found their new home in the Czech Republic. I was happy about the multiculturalism of this association because it gathers emigrants from all republics, our former common state, which, to be honest, is a rare example of cooperation and mutual support. 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. The President of the Association introduced us to many projects, especially of a humanitarian nature, that the Association implemented in the previous period. The association provides a special type of support during the treatment of the youngest citizens of BiH in Czech clinics, providing accommodation for parents during the treatment of their children.

On Wednesday, October 4, 2023, we visited the Municipality of Prague 6, where we spoke with representatives of the local authorities. We were presented with the creation of a participatory budget on which citizens have a direct influence. Every citizen, including the youngest, can present their proposal for a project idea that is voted on "online". The best 3 project ideas received the support of the municipality for their implementation. I consider the approach of the Municipality of Prague 6, in which the participatory budget is about 2% of the total budget, very useful and encouraging for youth activism from an early age.

Until now, we have not had similar practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

After the meeting in the municipality of Prague 6, we headed towards BiH, where we arrived in the early morning of the next day.

I would like to thank Agora and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for making this study trip possible and for being excellent hosts.

I express my special gratitude to the Association of Election Officials in BiH, Ernes, and Ervin, for the excellent technical organization of the trip, and their kindness and helpfulness.

Ilijaš, October 16, 2023, Sanja Zagorac-Jozić