



***Forum MNE***

# 2024 ANNUAL report

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# FORUM MNE

**Forum MNE** is an organization for youth that has been working on the development of youth work and youth policy through non-formal education since 2002. Forum MNE evolved from an international project (PRONI Institute for Social Education of Youth and Forum Syd into a local civil society organization, which was registered in March 2007.

Our figures so far show 23 years of work, 40,000 young people who have gone through our programs, 90 implemented projects and 384 educated youth workers and activists. The organization employs 6 people and 10 trainers. It is governed by a five-member board. The Assembly of the organization consists of representatives of young people/youth groups with which Forum MNE works, partner civil society organizations and relevant institutions. The organization formed the Young Assembly body, consisting of 15 young people, in order to ensure their active participation in decision-making. The organization gathers a large group of volunteers from all three regions.

## **THE VISION OF THE FORUM MNE IS:**

A peaceful and just society with young active citizens contributing to its development.

## **THE MISSION:**

Forum MNE is an organization which develops its vision by supporting the development of young people into conscious, responsible and active individuals and citizens capable of recognizing, seeking and exercising their rights, while contributing to the development of a peaceful and just society.

## **VALUES:**

Forum MNE strongly opposes any form of discrimination. Forum MNE creates a safe environment in which everyone feels welcome and is treated based on the principle of equality. Forum MNE programs are based on the following principles and values: non-discrimination, tolerance, lifelong learning, promotion and personal responsibility, transparency, optimism, proactivity, respect and appreciation of young people and active participation of young people in the decision-making processes.

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# INTRODUCTORY WORD

**ELVIRA HADŽIBEGOVIĆ**

Dear partners, members, and friends of Forum MNE,

Before you is the Annual Report for 2024 – a year in which we bravely continued to open important topics, break down barriers, create opportunities, and empower young people to actively shape their communities.

As always, our commitment to the development of youth work, the improvement of youth policy, and the creation of spaces where the voices of young people are heard has been the foundation of our work. Through regional, local, and European initiatives, we connected practitioners, institutions, researchers, and young people themselves – believing that only together can we shape a more just and resilient society.

This year, we placed a special focus on the professionalization of youth work through activities carried out within the Erasmus+ project “Uncovering Youth Work Potential in the Western Balkans.” Through training, research, and networking with regional partners, we contributed to the development of higher quality, more visible, and more recognizable youth work in line with European standards. Among the most significant results, we highlight the founding of the Association of Youth Work Practitioners of Montenegro, an important step toward strengthening the profession and creating a sustainable support system for young people.

Throughout 2024, we continued to support young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) – creating spaces for skills development, connection with employers, and the advancement of entrepreneurial ideas. Through projects such as “Inclusive Progress Toward EU Integration” and the “Regional Academy for Increasing the Employability of NEET Youth,” we empowered hundreds of young people to take steps toward personal development and economic independence.

The health and safety of young people, their understanding of the world and of each other’s differences, were equally important parts of our mission.

Through the project “Change the Rules of the Game,” we opened up topics that are often left unspoken – we explored the real accessibility of alcohol to youth and, in collaboration with schools, developed tools that encourage them to choose healthier and safer paths.

At the same time, through “(De)polarization of Youth,” we initiated a sensitive but necessary dialogue about divisions, prejudice, and extremism – aware that open conversation is the first step toward understanding and unity.

We remained dedicated to nurturing a space where young people can connect, express themselves, learn, and critically engage with the world around them – through media and digital literacy projects, intercultural exchanges, and initiatives that promote gender equality and social justice.

In that spirit, we proudly highlight our role as co-founders of the European Civic Education Network (ECEC Network) – a confirmation that our voices, ideas, and experiences resonate beyond the borders of Montenegro. This year was both challenging and empowering – and we carried it together.

We are grateful to all the young people who placed their trust in us, to all the partners who believed in our shared vision, to all the volunteers who gave of themselves, and to everyone who followed us, criticized us, and supported us.

We enter 2025 with the same enthusiasm – ready to grow alongside young people, to learn, and to build a society in which every young person has the opportunity to be seen, supported, and free to change the world around them.

Thank you for standing with us.

With respect,

**Elvira**

President of the Assembly

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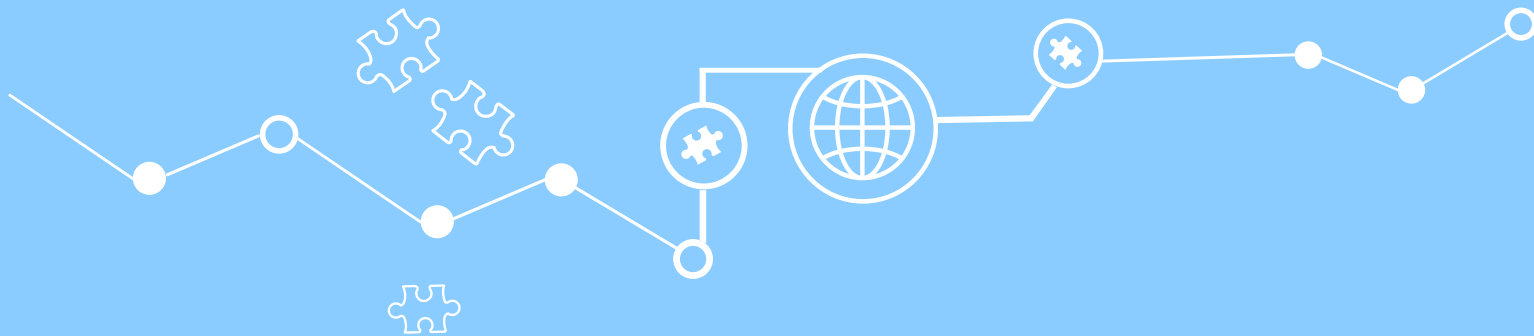


# 1. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS OF FORUM MNE



Forum MNE implements all the programs in accordance with its 4 strategic directions

- Welfare and well-being of young people
- Youth and solidarity, cooperation and cohesion
- Youth and healthy environment
- Activism and participation of young people in the democratic life of society, as a direction that cuts across the previous three and all the activities implemented by the organization.



## 1.1. WELFARE AND WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Forum MNE provides support to young people for personal development and self-actualization, as well as the acquisition of essential skills, building resilience and agility, independence and dignified work. This program is implemented through the following fields and activities: youth camps, youth exchanges, youth independence programs, psychosocial support for young people, cultural, artistic and research workshops, youth information, development of critical thinking, career counseling, development of essential skills, harmonization of education with labor market needs, entrepreneurship and service learning.



### 1.1.1. MAKE THE GROWTH INCLUSIVE TOWARD EU INTEGRATION...

In 2024, Forum MNE successfully continued the implementation of the project *Inclusive Progress Toward EU Integration – Empowering Civil Society for Effective Contribution to Inclusive Local Community Development*. The project aims to contribute to and stimulate inclusive development of local communities in Montenegro by empowering civil society organizations, local organizations, and other community stakeholders from the public and private sectors, and through networking for joint action. The project is implemented in partnership with the Center for Youth Education, with the support of the European Union and the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro.

In 2024, fifty young people from the central region of Montenegro (Podgorica, Tuzi, Nikšić, Danilovgrad, and Cetinje) had the opportunity to be part of the third generation of participants in the “one-stop-shop” training program. The “one-stop-shop” training program offers a comprehensive approach and provides a set of skills necessary to enhance the competitiveness of young people in the labor market. The six-month training included: a soft and digital skills course, as well as a career counseling course.

Upon completion of the training program, a job fair titled Digital Skills – The Key to Career Advancement was organized. The event took place on July 11 and was hosted by ICT Cortex – the cluster for information technologies, innovation, design, education, and technological development of Montenegro, and the Technical-Research Laboratory – TechLab, who had conducted digital skills courses over the previous six months as part of the mentioned program. The event brought together the one-stop-shop program participants and nearly 50 employers from the civil, business, and IT sectors. It marked the conclusion of the educational program and the efforts of the organizers to provide an opportunity for young, innovative people to showcase their skills and acquired knowledge, to introduce themselves to employers through one-on-one meetings, receive career development advice, gain insights into labor market needs, and possibly secure employment opportunities.

This was followed by a call for a three-month entrepreneurship course organized by the Youth Entrepreneurs Union, developed to support young and creative individuals (aged 17–30) from the central region of Montenegro who want to develop or implement their business ideas. After the call closed, candidates were selected through interviews and signing of scholarship agreements, after which the course began. With mentorship and support, the participants worked diligently on developing their business plans and preparing to present their entrepreneurial ideas at the final event. Upon completing the course, the Youth Entrepreneurs Union organized an event titled *Entrepreneurship Idea Arena*, where eight outstanding business ideas were pitched – ranging from sustainable products to innovative digital platforms. A panel of three expert jury members selected and symbolically awarded the top three business ideas.







The public advocacy campaign represented the most challenging endeavor within the project. It included the production of a documentary titled *NEET Youth in Montenegro – Advocating for a Better Future*, 10 journalistic articles, and the collection of support for three public advocacy initiatives aimed at:

1. Recognizing NEET youth in strategic and legislative documents;
2. Transforming the Employment Agency of Montenegro to increase its efficiency in supporting NEET youth, especially those who are marginalized or without qualifications;
3. Improving career counseling programs with a focus on developing skills necessary for career advancement.

The event titled *Public Advocacy – NEET Youth Deserve Special Attention and Support* was held on December 4 at the European House. The event brought together representatives of civil society organizations, relevant institutions, the private sector, and interested young people. During the conference, we presented the main findings of the research *NEET Youth – Situational Analysis*, followed by the presentation of the three public advocacy initiatives. We invited all attendees, with a focus on representatives of the civil sector, to support our advocacy initiatives and thus demonstrate the willingness to achieve a shared goal – improving the position of NEET youth in Montenegro.

As part of the panel *The Position of NEET Youth in Montenegro – The Necessity of a Multisectoral Approach in Addressing the Issue*, we brought together relevant stakeholders in the field of youth employability, who spoke about the current situation regarding young people, as well as the importance of multisectoral cooperation in addressing the issue.

The press conference held on December 4 at the PR Center was also the final public event within the project. During the press conference, we presented the main results of the two-year project and the public advocacy initiatives, with appropriate media coverage.

*The project Inclusive Progress Toward EU Integration – Empowering Civil Society for Effective Contribution to Inclusive Local Community Development is implemented by Forum MNE and the Center for Youth Education with the support of the European Union and the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro.*



## 1.1.2. Regional Training Academy for boosting employability of vulnerable youth .....

In 2024, we also began implementing the project *Regional Academy for Increasing the Employability of NEET Youth*, aimed at enhancing the employability of young people in the cross-border Sandžak region (municipalities of Bijelo Polje, Rožaje, and Berane in Montenegro and municipalities of Sjenica, Tutin, and Novi Pazar in Serbia) by supporting them in overcoming the skills gap necessary for accessing the labor market through capacity-building programs focused on improving knowledge and skills. The project is implemented by Forum MNE in cooperation with partner organizations: Citizens' Youth Initiative Rožaje, Center for Youth Work (CYW) – Novi Sad, Serbia, and the Youth Office – Novi Pazar. The project is financially supported by the European Union and the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro.



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The first phase of the project involved the development of a study titled *Employability Study – NEET Youth in the Cross-border Sandžak Region*. The research aimed to identify the gap between labor market supply and demand by analyzing youth interests, actual development opportunities in the observed geographical area, and identified labor market trends. It also sought to map the NEET youth population in the Sandžak region at a given point in time and highlight key barriers in the transition from education to the labor market. The research was conducted simultaneously in both countries, and the consolidated report can be read and downloaded at the following link.



Following that, we issued a call for expressions of interest for four experts to form a working group that would develop the curriculum for a 7-month one-stop-shop training program and create a document (Manifesto) with guidelines for promoting the employability of NEET youth in the cross-border Sandžak region.



The initial event within the project *Regional Academy for Increasing the Employability of NEET Youth* – the Kick-off event – was organized by Forum MNE on October 14 at the Regional Business Center in Berane. The event brought together about 40 participants: representatives of the Employment Agency, NGOs, former one-stop-shop training program participants, and interested young people. It marked the beginning of the Regional Academy's activities, the announcement of the educational "one-stop-shop" training program, the presentation of the Employability Study – NEET Youth in the Cross-border Sandžak Region, and the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation – a document that formalizes further cooperation in the field of youth employability in the cross-border area of Montenegro and Serbia. The signatories of the Memorandum include Forum MNE, the Center for Youth Work, Citizens' Youth Initiative Rožaje, the Youth Office Novi Pazar, the Vocational High School Berane, and the Regional Business Center Berane. A draft of the Manifesto – a document containing guidelines for improving the position of NEET youth – was also presented.

Immediately following the Kick-off event, we issued a call for the fourth generation of participants in the "one-stop-shop" training program in Montenegro, intended for 25 young people. The program consists of three courses: a soft skills course, a digital skills course, and an entrepreneurship course. The selection criteria for candidates included their place of residence – the program is intended for youth from three northern municipalities of Montenegro: Bijelo Polje, Berane, and Rožaje; age – between 18 and 30 years; and current employment status – priority was given to young people who are not employed, not in education, or training (NEET youth). What differentiates this one-stop-shop training program from previous ones is the opportunity for a three-month internship offered to five participants upon completion of the training. The internship opportunity will be given to those young people who demonstrate the highest level of proactiveness and responsibility during the course of the training.

During the call, we focused on organizing information sessions in all three project-covered municipalities with the goal of informing youth and potential training participants about the program, its objectives, and the selection criteria.

After conducting interviews with shortlisted candidates, we completed the selection process and signed scholarship agreements. In the coming year, we will begin implementing the seven-month training program for the fourth generation of participants.

The project *Regional Academy for Increasing the Employability of NEET Youth* is implemented by Forum MNE (Forum for Youth and Non-Formal Education), in partnership with the Center for Youth Work, Citizens' Youth Initiative Rožaje, and the Youth Office Novi Pazar. The project is supported by the European Union through the *Cross-border Cooperation Programme Serbia – Montenegro 2014–2020* under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) allocations for the years 2018, 2019, and 2020.



### 1.1.3.Unlocking Potentials of Youth Work in the Western Balkan Region

In the complex socio-political context of the Western Balkans, young people face numerous challenges while simultaneously becoming key actors of social change. In this process, youth work practitioners play a significant role by empowering young people through their engagement and creating opportunities for their personal and professional development. These practitioners were at the core of the activities of the project Unlocking the Potential of Youth Work in the Western Balkans, which aims to improve the quality of youth work in the region and align it with European standards through:

- Improving the conditions for the development and standardization of youth work, recognizing its multifaceted impact;
- Connecting and empowering the community of youth work practitioners to enhance and support the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda;
- Promoting and gaining socio-political recognition for youth work;
- Encouraging intersectoral and regional cooperation, with a special focus on young people with fewer opportunities



During the first year of project implementation, capacities for conducting youth work in the region were strengthened through training, research, and the development of a framework for improving the quality of youth work. Special focus was placed on aligning practices with European standards and enhancing regional cooperation.



The document *Youth Work Quality Framework* is a comprehensive guide for enhancing youth work. Focusing on key aspects such as values, principles, legislation, recognition, funding, professionalization, and intersectoral cooperation, the document provides concrete recommendations to support youth work practitioners, youth organizations and organizations for youth, youth centers, clubs, services, and decision-makers in creating and establishing sustainable and accessible support systems for young people. The document also emphasizes the importance of intersectoral cooperation, standardization of practices, and capacity building to ensure that youth work meets the needs of all young people, especially those from marginalized and underrepresented communities. Implementing these recommendations is a shared responsibility of all actors – youth work practitioners, CSOs, and policymakers. Through investment in professionalization, recognition, and sustainability of youth work, the region can create an enabling environment in which young people have the opportunity to grow and actively contribute to society.

The research component of the project provided a foundation for better understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the youth sector, as well as for making informed decisions in the future. The comparative analysis *Policy Dimensions of Youth Work Recognition in the Western Balkans* offers insights into the differences that exist in approaches to youth work in the region, but also points to the need for a systematic approach, improved coordination, and increased investment in youth work to ensure its sustainability, effectiveness, and balanced development across the entire region.

The project also included research on the perception of youth work in the region, the challenges and opportunities faced by youth work practitioners, CSOs, and young people. The research involved focus groups in each Western Balkan country, as well as an online questionnaire. The research results will be published in early 2025.

In 2024, two partner meetings were held – one in Tirana (Albania) and one in Sremski Karlovci (Serbia) – which enabled joint planning of activities, and also served as a platform for the exchange of information and good practices.

*The project is implemented by Forum MNE in cooperation with partner organizations: National Association of Youth Work Practitioners (NAPOR) – Serbia, Union for Youth Work – North Macedonia, PRONI Center for Youth Development – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Youth for Social Changes – Albania, THY – Kosovo, and Human Rights Education Youth Network (HREYN) – Belgium, with financial support from the European Union and the Ministry of Public Administration.*



### 1.1.4. Change the rules of the game! .....

Most Montenegrin students believe that alcohol is freely available to them, at any time and in any place, as long as they have money.

The sale and serving of alcohol to individuals under 18 years of age in Montenegro is prohibited and regulated by the Law on Tourism and Hospitality and the Law on Public Order and Peace.

Despite clear bans, we witness that the law is not being respected. This is confirmed by the views of young people—most Montenegrin students believe that alcohol is available to them without restriction, at any time and in any place, as long as they have money. To empirically verify these claims using the “mystery shopper” method, Forum MNE conducted research in 2024 in four Montenegrin municipalities: Kotor, Berane, Mojkovac, and Danilovgrad, on a sample of 100 retail outlets.



The “mystery shoppers” were high school students aged 14 to 17. Minors were able to purchase alcohol without any problems in 96% of stores, and in only 5% of cases were the students asked their age when attempting to buy alcohol. Warning signs indicating that the sale of alcohol to minors is prohibited were not noticed by the mystery shoppers in 85% of the stores.

The normalization of alcohol sales to children and young people is particularly concerning given that every third student in Montenegro aged 13 to 18 occasionally or frequently consumes alcohol. Every second student personally knows someone who consumes alcohol. These are findings from the researcha [Health Culture and Alcohol Use among Young People in Montenegro](#), conducted by Forum MNE in cooperation with the Bureau for Education Services in 2023, covering all primary and secondary schools in Montenegro.

On the other hand, there is no data from the competent institutions on inspections or monitoring of alcohol sales to minors in retail outlets. These findings clearly point to an alarming situation and the need for urgent action to protect children and youth. The legal framework for reducing the physical

availability of alcohol must be improved and aligned.

Since the research showed that the impact of educational programs on young people’s attitudes largely depends on the quality of teaching – that is, how engaging and tailored it is to their needs – Forum MNE piloted a teacher training program aimed at improving the health education curriculum. Over the past year, two training sessions were held: one for representatives of primary schools and one for representatives of secondary schools, bringing together a total of 44 participants. After completing the training, and with mentor support, participants implemented activities in their schools, directly involving over 250 students.





As part of this program, an educational digital tool [Alcofacts and Myths](#) was developed, which uses engaging questions and explanations to help students deepen their knowledge, debunk widespread myths about alcohol, and develop critical thinking. This interactive resource not only provides relevant information but also encourages young people to question their attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol consumption.

Direct work with young people continued in 2024 through various activities. Members of the youth volunteer club, operating within Forum MNE, actively participated in organizing various events aimed at raising awareness about the harmful effects of alcohol and promoting healthy lifestyles, under the slogan #IDontWantIDontNeed.

One of the activities was the organization of a *Living Library* event, which allowed young people to have an open conversation with a person in recovery from addiction, exchanging views and gaining new insights into the challenges and consequences of alcohol use. The volunteer club also organized a *Longboard MeetUp* and picnic aimed not only at promoting physical activity but also at creating a positive and supportive environment where young people can develop healthy habits and make informed decisions.

Collaboration with the broader community was also present – in cooperation with the organization *Biciklo.me* and the Youth Office of the Capital City, a *Critical Mass* event was organized to mark the month of addiction prevention, with a special focus on alcohol. The event brought together various social actors – young people, parents, institutional representatives, and civil society organizations – to promote healthy lifestyles and raise awareness about the issue of alcohol consumption.

As part of the regional component of the program, regular meetings were held with partners from the region – the Center for Youth Education (CEM, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Center for Youth Work (CZOR, Serbia). Forum MNE, along with representatives of other Montenegrin organizations CAZAS, Juventas, and Roditelji.me, participated in a study visit to Ljubljana (Slovenia) organized by CEM. The study visit was an opportunity to exchange experiences and good practices in alcohol prevention with colleagues from Slovenia, as well as from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The program was held at the Impact HUB in Ljubljana, where participants attended a series of lectures and workshops covering a wide range of topics – from alcohol consumption trends among youth and adults, to its impact on health and society, and a hands-on workshop on policy advocacy related to alcohol and successful campaigning.

The training *How to Say NO?*, focused on assertive communication, was organized for Forum MNE staff and youth work practitioners, and was dedicated to techniques that can be used when working with young people in the context of alcohol prevention (setting boundaries without guilt, resisting peer pressure, etc.).

All activities were implemented as part of the *Change the Rules of the Game!* program, which Forum MNE carries out with the financial support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) through ForumCiv and the IOGT NTO Movement.



### 1.1.5. (De)polarisation of youth in Montenegro – Causes and Consequences

In 2024, Forum MNE launched the implementation of the project *(De)polarization of Youth in Montenegro – Causes and Consequences*, with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to social polarization and radicalization among young people, as well as strengthening their resilience to extremist narratives. The project explores the values, attitudes, and perceptions of youth, with particular focus on social divisions, prejudice, and the factors influencing their formation.

Through this initiative, Forum MNE, in cooperation with the Bureau for Education Services (ZZS) and the National Operational Team for Combating Violent Extremism (NOT), will:

- Conduct research among youth in Montenegro using surveys, focus groups, and analysis of existing data sources to identify key drivers of polarization;
- Implement activities in four local municipalities, including workshops, public discussions, and creative initiatives that promote dialogue and social cohesion;
- Promote research findings through public events and campaigns, with the goal of raising awareness of the issue and encouraging inclusive policies and practices.

Throughout 2024, the focus was placed on preparing the research framework, mapping key stakeholders, and planning field activities. Full implementation of the research and interventions is anticipated in 2025. With this project, Forum MNE continues its long-standing efforts to enhance youth resilience and contribute to the development of a society grounded in dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect.





## 1.2. YOUTH AND SOLIDARITY, COOPERATION AND COHESION

Forum MNE encourages solidarity and cooperation among young people and supports their active contribution to social cohesion, justice and peace. Within this strategic direction, Forum MNE works in several fields: reducing the ethnic and social distance of young people, mobility and migration of young people and the development of local communities and youth organizations.

### 1.2.1. Active youth for peace and prosperity

The project Active Youth for Peace and Prosperity aims to strengthen local and regional partnerships between CSOs and local governments in support of good governance, with a focus on youth participation in decision-making processes and the advancement of participatory democracies across the Western Balkans.



This regional project is implemented by MIOS (Bosnia and Herzegovina), in partnership with TOKA (Kosovo) and Forum MNE (Montenegro), and spans six countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia. During the 2023 training sessions, next steps in project implementation were agreed upon, with a key role assigned to education practitioners in supporting youth-led service-learning initiatives in the field of digital and media literacy, in collaboration with local authorities.

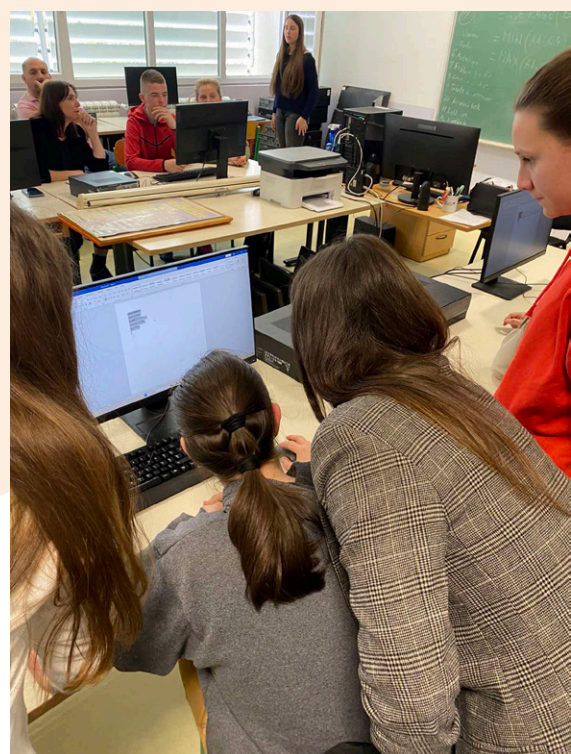
As part of the project, two initiatives were carried out involving over 30 young people from Podgorica and Tuzi, in partnership with the Mirko Vešović Secondary School of Economics and the 25th May Mixed Secondary School.

#### Navigating the Digital Landscape

Students of Mirko Vešović Secondary School of Economics identified low digital literacy among the elderly as a key issue. They organized workshops at the Podgorica Pensioners' Club, offering older citizens the opportunity to acquire basic digital skills. For those unable to attend the workshops, individual home visits were arranged with the support of social workers. To ensure sustainability, the students formed a volunteer group to continue providing support to elderly residents.

#### The Internet Is Not a Scary Thing

Students of the 25th May Mixed Secondary School focused on children with special educational needs and their parents/guardians. In cooperation with the NGO Children of Montenegro, they organized workshops on the basics of using computers and the Microsoft Office package, equipping participants with practical digital skills.



Throughout project implementation, collaboration was established with the Association of Pensioners Podgorica, the Secretariat for Social Welfare of Podgorica, the Capital City of Podgorica, the Secretariat for Local Self-Government of Tuzi, and the NGO Children of Montenegro, further strengthening the ties between young people and local institutions.

These initiatives clearly demonstrate how young people can be drivers of positive change, contributing to the development of a more inclusive and digitally literate society.

With these two initiatives, Montenegro participated for the first time in the competition for the Regional Service-Learning Award. The project The Internet Is Not a Scary Thing was selected as a finalist and won third place in the category of educational institutions.

The award ceremony took place during the First Regional Conference on Activism, held in November 2024 in Tuzla. The conference theme was Empowering Youth Through Civic Activism and Service Learning.

More than 80 participants from Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina shared their experiences, discussed citizen mobilization, and explored building strong partnerships for driving social change.

One of the key moments of the conference was the presentation of the Service Learning Strategy, a framework for sustained youth engagement in addressing community challenges.

At the close of the conference, participants symbolically signed a joint declaration, committing to further strengthening youth civic activism in the region through the application of service-learning methodologies.

This event marked not only the conclusion of a project, but the beginning of a new phase of regional cooperation and deeper youth engagement for positive transformation.

The project is supported through the regional grant SMART Balkans – Civil Society for a Connected Western Balkans, implemented by the Center for Civil Society Promotion (CPCD), the Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM), and the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), with financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway.





## 1.2.2. Establishing Sustainable Mechanisms for Youth Empowerment at the Local level • • • • •

In 2024, Forum MNE implemented the project Establishing Sustainable Mechanisms for Youth Empowerment at the Local Level, with activities carried out in the municipalities of Mojkovac, Pljevlja, Petnjica, and Plav. These regions were identified as areas where young people face limited opportunities to develop their personal competencies and achieve their full potential.

The project aimed to strengthen the capacities of local youth administrators, as well as other key stakeholders working with youth, in order to effectively respond to challenges such as peer violence, radicalization, extremism, and discrimination.

Following initial preparatory activities, two training sessions were organized for representatives of local governments, educational institutions, and youth organizations from Mojkovac, Petnjica, Plav, and Pljevlja.

The first training, a three-day workshop titled Prevention and Suppression of Peer Violence through Service Learning, was held in Mojkovac and focused on the concept of service learning as a tool for preventing peer violence.

- Day one introduced participants to the fundamentals of the methodology, teamwork, and core principles through interactive exercises and discussions.
- Day two addressed the recognition and prevention of peer violence, analyzing its causes and underlying social factors. Participants developed strategies to combat violence in their communities through practical group work.
- Day three focused on designing outreach strategies and planning concrete youth engagement activities.

The second training, Project Proposal Writing and Budgeting, lasted two days and focused on equipping participants with skills in project development and financial planning. Participants learned about the project cycle, problem analysis, logical framework matrix development, and budgeting. Using interactive methods—including presentations, group work, and hands-on exercises—they were trained to identify community problems, define project objectives and outcomes, and evaluate project results. The training concluded with a discussion on next steps and program evaluation.

Following the training, a public call titled Local Heroes and Heroines was announced for young people from the four municipalities. Together with their mentors, youth teams developed and implemented community-based actions aimed at preventing and addressing peer violence. Youth groups from each municipality, supported by mentors and newly acquired knowledge, designed and carried out creative violence-prevention initiatives.







- In Mojkovac, youth implemented the initiative *Gather Your Crew, Create a Better Story*, promoting peer solidarity and unity.
- In Petnjica, high school students transformed their schoolyard into a welcoming space through the project *Flower Park – A Place of Peace and Friendship*, encouraging positive values.
- In Pljevlja, young people created *Friendship Kindergarten: A Place Where Kindness Grows and Violence Has No Place*, a safe environment for children to learn about non-violence through play.
- In Plav, the project *Youth for Youth – Plav Without Violence* used creative activities to promote tolerance and togetherness within the local community.

A final event brought together youth participants, mentors, and community members to celebrate the results and the inspiring changes initiated by these young individuals. As a contribution to the continued work of youth centers and clubs in the participating municipalities, symbolic donations were made to support their future activities.

Additionally, a short documentary video was produced as part of the project, capturing the story, development, and implementation of the youth initiative in Mojkovac. The video will be released in early 2025.



The project *Establishing Sustainable Mechanisms for Youth Empowerment at the Local Level through Service Learning Programs and Support for Youth Services* is implemented by Forum MNE in partnership with the Center for Rural Development, within the broader initiative *Socio-Economic Empowerment of Youth through Effective Youth Services*, financed by the Ministry of Sports and Youth and UNDP, and implemented by UND



### 1.2.3. Youth in Western Balkan - a Virtual Postcard .....

The project aims to contribute to the enhancement of media literacy and critical thinking among youth in the Western Balkans region, while also creating space for intercultural dialogue among young people from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

In 2024, project activities in Montenegro focused on organizing virtual intercultural exchanges, bringing together more than 150 high school students from Montenegro and other participating countries.

As part of the project, a regional media content competition was launched, inviting young people to create media outputs addressing topics related to media and information literacy and intercultural dialogue. The winning video explores how cultural awareness shapes youth perspectives and also touches on the topic of graffiti as a form of expression. The winning team was composed of Nađa Stojanović and Ema Nikočević from Podgorica (Montenegro), Natalija Petrović from Novi Sad (Serbia), and Simona Paskoska from Skopje (North Macedonia). These young women took part in an intercultural exchange held in Skopje in November 2024, during which they created the video under the mentorship of Ognjen Janeski.

The annual project partners' meeting was held in early April 2024 in Skopje, providing an opportunity for sharing experiences and coordinating joint efforts to further empower youth across the Western Balkans.

The project is funded by the European Union, with co-financing for activities in Montenegro provided by the Ministry of Public Administration.





## 1.2.4. Smart Balkans Core Grant

Forum MNE's activities supported through the SMART Balkans Core Grant focused on the advancement and professionalization of youth work in Montenegro.

Youth work and non-formal education are essential for skills development, youth empowerment, and the creation of communities that encourage participation and drive social change. However, Montenegro continues to face significant challenges in this area, including a lack of standardized youth work training programs, qualified personnel, and sustainable youth services. The profession of youth worker is still not formally recognized, and youth work activities and non-formal education programs are primarily implemented by non-governmental organizations. These programs often vary in content, lack quality assurance mechanisms, and the services available to young people remain fragmented, unsustainable, and largely inaccessible across many municipalities. This situation results in limited support for young people as they transition into adulthood.

During two public consultative meetings, Forum MNE brought together various stakeholders from the youth sector to discuss ways to enhance and ensure the quality of youth work. These discussions highlighted a strong need for the formal recognition of youth work as a profession through legislative frameworks, as well as for the establishment of a professional association of youth work practitioners. As a result of these initiatives, the Founding Assembly of the Association of Youth Work Practitioners of Montenegro (UPORCG) was held in December 2024. The newly established association will advocate for the standardization and institutionalization of youth work, the capacity building of practitioners for active involvement in the development and implementation of youth policies, and the creation of a community rooted in solidarity, respect, and equal opportunities for all. Youth work practitioners will be recognized as key actors in advocating for the rights and interests of young people.

The institutional support also enabled Forum MNE to strengthen its organizational human resources by hiring a financial and administrative assistant, and to improve specific technical features of its website, aiming to enhance communication with users, increase transparency, and raise the overall professionalism of the organization.

Support for the implementation of these activities has been provided through Core Grant of the Regional project SMART Balkans – Civil Society for Shared Society in the Western Balkans, implemented by Centar za promociju civilnog društva (CPCD), Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) and Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) and financially supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA).



## 1.2.5. Breaking the barriers • • • • •

In collaboration with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Forum MNE organized a screening of the Dutch film *Fight Girl* (2018) on December 3rd at the KIC Budo Tomović cultural center. The film tells the powerful story of a young girl who discovers her inner strength through kickboxing, delivering a message of resilience, the fight for equality, and the empowerment of women and girls.



Following the screening, a panel discussion was held featuring two remarkable women from the world of sports – Zorica Kostićić and Marijana Goranović. Their stories of courage, overcoming obstacles, and the importance of women's representation in sports inspired the audience. Participants had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the role sport can play in combating gender-based violence.

More than 80 students from “Mirko Vešović” Secondary School of Economics and the Secondary Medical School took part in the event.

### Martial Arts Workshop Using the S4D Methodology



On December 7th, regional kickboxing champion Lea Boshevaska led an inspiring martial arts workshop at the Morača Sports Hall. The session brought together 25 young participants aged 14 to 16 and applied the Sport for Development (S4D) methodology. Through sports activities, the workshop explored gender equality and helped participants build confidence, solidarity, and resilience. The focus was on linking physical activity with the core values of equality, respect, and non-violence.

This initiative, titled *Breaking Barriers*, was part of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign and was implemented in cooperation with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The project aimed to raise awareness about the importance of empowering women and girls, and to inspire youth to engage in activism and solidarity through sport and culture. Through informal education, the project successfully connected young people and emphasized the importance of collective action and social responsibility.



## 1.3. YOUTH AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Through activist and information campaigns, Forum MNE creates conditions for youth activism and youth creativity related to the environment and climate change. Forum MNE is one of the member organizations of the network of Socially Responsible Companies in Montenegro (CSR), within which, since 2013, it has been actively participating in the implementation of the strategy of sustainable development through the activities of the network.

Numerous workshops, dialogues and quizzes on the subject of human rights, ecology and environment protection, sustainable development, climate change, poverty, intercultural education, etc. were organized during the Global Education Week.

### 1.3.1. Global Education

Since 2013, Forum MNE has been a member of the Global Education Network. The North-South Centre is a partial agreement of the Council of Europe, aiming to develop, enhance, and sustain strategies and capacity-building for global education. It focuses on institutions and professionals in the field of global education across formal, non-formal, and informal sectors.

The annual meeting of the Global Education Network took place in April 2024 in Malta. It brought together all coordinators and members of the Network, where achievements from 2023 were presented and strategies and ideas for the upcoming year were developed.



Later in the year, Global Education Week was organized from November 18–24 under the theme Connected People for an Inclusive Planet. Numerous campaigns, quizzes, competitions, dialogues, and debates were held, focusing on topics such as human rights, ecology and environmental protection, sustainable development, climate change, poverty, and intercultural education.



At the end of November 2024, Forum MNE participated in the International Global Education Conference, organized by the Hungarian organization HAND. The conference gathered local actors, partners, youth workers, and Global Education coordinators from around the world.

## Povezani ljudi za inkluzivnu planetu

Nedelja globalnog obrazovanja  
2024



Co-funded  
by the European Union



Co-funded and implemented  
by the Council of Europe

### University on Youth and Development

From September 16 to 21, Forum MNE also participated in the Long-Term Training Course on Global Education and Education for Sustainable Development, held in Mollina, Spain. This event was organized by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe as part of the 23rd edition of the University on Youth and Development 2024 – For Culture, Human Rights and the Rule of Law. The event gathered 150 participants from 55 countries worldwide.

The course aimed to strengthen knowledge and competencies related to Global Education and Education for Sustainable Development, build intercultural and pedagogical skills, provide experience with diverse non-formal learning methods, and promote networking and a multiplier effect at both local and global levels.

The course runs from September 2024 to February 2025 and involves 25 education practitioners from both the formal and non-formal sectors. These participants are active in civil society organizations, youth organizations, platforms, and institutions working with youth. During project implementation, Forum MNE collaborated directly with Global Education coordinators from Slovakia and Italy.





## 2. OTHER ACTIVITIES

### 2.1. Support for the implementation of activities of OEAD GmbH in Montenegro

The partnership with OeAD GmbH continued throughout 2024 through the implementation of two projects.



The project “*Increasing the quality of work based learning by strengthening the role of vocational practice coordinators*” was carried out in Montenegro from 2022 to 2024. It resulted from cooperation between the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD), the Centre for Vocational Education (CSO), and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation (MESI). The project aimed to enhance the quality of vocational education and training through the effective development of quality assurance mechanisms in practical education, with a focus on the role and responsibilities of practical education coordinators.

As part of the project, four training sessions were held for practical education coordinators, attended by a total of 27 participants. In addition, a set of quality assurance indicators for the work of practical education coordinators was developed.

A *Guide for Organizing and Implementing Practical Education with Employers* in both school-based and dual education formats was created as a key project output.

The final project conference was held in December 2024, during which the Guide was presented to representatives of the education and business sectors, and certificates of appreciation were awarded to project participants.

#### *Simulation of Parliamentary Work*

An educational program titled Simulation of Parliamentary Work was organized with the goal of introducing young people—specifically high school students—to parliamentary procedures and practices. The program addressed themes such as democracy, the parliamentary system, the electoral system, dialogue and debate, and focused particularly on the legislative process in the Parliament of Montenegro. The initiative combined theoretical and experiential learning to empower young people to participate as active, informed citizens in civic life.

A total of 41 students from 14 secondary schools—including 10 vocational and mixed schools—from 10 municipalities across Montenegro took part in the program.

Preparations for the central event (the simulation) included three thematic workshops covering:

- Democracy and Dialogue
- Parliamentary Democracy and Electoral/ Party Systems
- Legislative Procedure

During the two-day simulation focused on vocational education, participants had the opportunity to simulate work within parliamentary groups, review a draft law in a designated committee, and participate in plenary sessions—thereby experiencing the full legislative process firsthand.



## 2.2. Nonviolent Communication (NVC) . . . . .

As a team, we had the opportunity to participate in two consecutive Nonviolent Communication (NVC) trainings in Poland, organized within the Erasmus+ project framework: CommuniCARE and CommuniCARE+. These trainings enabled us to develop a deeper understanding of the principles of nonviolent communication and apply them in both our professional and personal lives.

CommuniCARE was our first step in this learning journey, where we were introduced to the fundamental concepts and tools of nonviolent communication. Through interactive exercises and reflective sessions, we learned how to recognize and express our own needs and emotions, as well as how to actively listen to others and build relationships grounded in empathy and mutual understanding.

The CommuniCARE+ training allowed us to go a step further. With the support of a certified trainer, we explored more complex aspects of nonviolent communication. The focus was on hands-on practice through real-life scenarios, which helped us build confidence in applying NVC methods and improve our facilitation skills in challenging communication situations.

These experiences have been invaluable—not only for our professional development but also for how we relate to others in everyday interactions. The trainings equipped us with tools to communicate more effectively, resolve conflicts, and create an environment where everyone feels heard and supported.

## 3. WE ARE A PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Alongside the projects, we give great importance to the activities and improvements in all the relevant domains at the national and local level through participation in public discussions and consultations, and therefore this year we continued with the activities in the area of youth work development, focusing on its recognition and standardization.

Forum MNE took part in the youth-orientated activities of the European Commission and the Council of Europe partnership, representing our activities and sharing the good practice examples and learning from other countries' experience.

We continued to participate in the work of the National Operational Team for Combating Violent Extremism, Terrorism, Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing and other relevant activities and events in the area of prevention and combating violent extremism.

This year, Forum MNE continued to actively participate in networks, such as: Central and Eastern European Service-Learning Network, the Youth Network of Montenegro, the Coalition for the Rights of LGBTIQ+ Persons in Montenegro and the Network of Organizations Fighting against Peer Violence in Montenegrin Schools.

The goal of the Central and Eastern European Service-Learning Network is to introduce the concept of service learning in education systems and the work of NGOs in the countries of this region to encourage innovation in education through local capacity building.

The Youth Network of Montenegro is an organization, i.e. an association of non-governmental organizations/associations that implement youth policy, and it assembles 46 organizations. Network of Organizations Fighting against Peer Violence in Montenegrin Schools was established on 26 July 2018 within the project Coalition against Peer Violence in Montenegrin Schools, whose main goal is to create protective mechanisms for elementary and high school students in Montenegro. The mission of the Network is to develop a supportive environment, free of violence, based on understanding and accepting diversity among students.



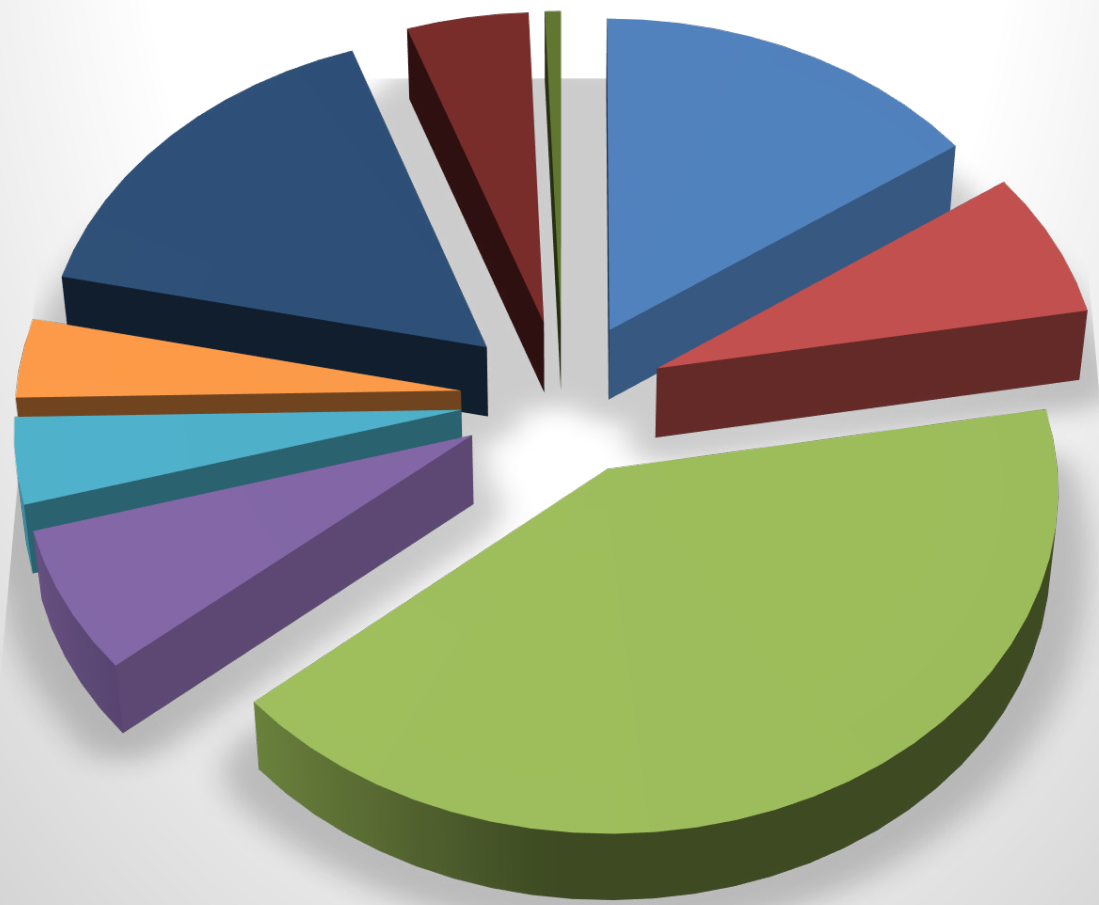
EQUALLY – Coalition for the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons in Montenegro, formed in 2022 with the goal of joint work and advocacy of various social actors for the full legal and social equality of LGBTIQ+ persons in Montenegro in all fields. It functions on the principles and values of total respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, equality, voluntariness, feminism, egalitarianism, solidarity, mutual support and respect and direct democracy. In the last year, the network developed a methodology for monitoring the work of the system institutions in the domain of LGBTIQ+ persons' access to justice, as well as methodology for monitoring the work of the civil society organizations and their services of support to the LGBTIQ+ community.



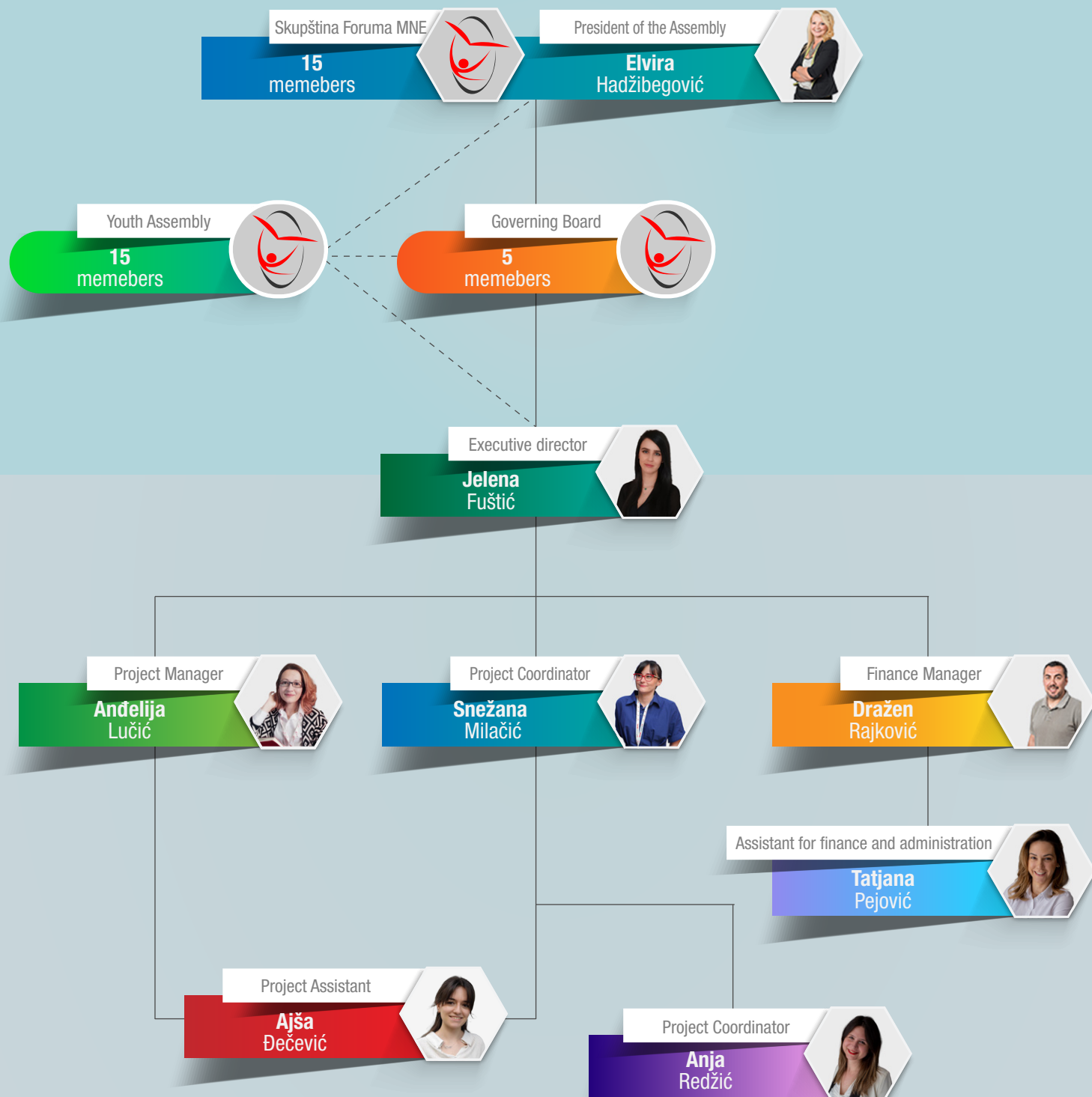
# 4. FINANCIAL REVIEW AND DONOR REVIEW – 2024

■ IOGT-NT0 MOVEMENT	63698.14 €
■ OeAD	29390.00 €
■ European Commission	174193.26 €
■ Ministry of Public Affairs of Montenegro	28639.56 €
■ Smart Balkans	17341.86 €
■ UNDP	15933.00 €
■ Ministry of Forein Affairs Netherlands	67893.50 €
■ ECEC Network	19835.00 €
■ Other donations	2613.53 €

Total: 419537.85 €



# 5. FORUM MNE TEAM



**Forum MNE**