

Opening Remarks by EUSR Valentin Inzko at a Meeting of Generation BiH for Europe In Which Young BiH Citizens Presented Key Policy Proposals to the Authorities



Making Your Voice Heard Is a Right Not a Privilege

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What we are witnessing today is an exciting new development in BiH politics.

After nine months, the main political parties have still not managed to form a Council of Ministers, yet Generation BiH has produced comprehensive and actionable proposals on key policy areas in the space of three weeks!

Young BiH citizens from every part of the country and from every profession – including artists, lawyers, politicians, academics, business people, and journalists – have produced proposals quickly by bringing fresh ideas to bear on familiar problems.

By doing this they have shown that:

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina it does not have to take an eternity to build consensus;
- Differences of opinion and other practical obstacles can be managed and overcome in order to produce sensible proposals; and
- Politics can deliver positive results.

In addition to fresh ideas, Generation BiH has applied new technology – much of the intensive discussion that went into these proposals was conducted electronically. In this respect I think it's worth noting that not only are smoke-filled rooms unhealthy, they are increasingly out of date!

Generation BiH has shown that it is entirely possible in this country to act quickly and achieve agreement and results.

Generation BiH has also brought high professional standards to the policy debate – participants have at their disposal an impressive body of expertise. The proposals being presented today are not an idealistic wish list but a practical programme that can be implemented if the political establishment chooses to respond in a positive way.

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At this point it is hard to see evidence of the political will in the country to respond to this or any other initiative positively – but that is by no means the end of the story.

In a democracy, citizens have ultimate power: When citizens lobby, when they campaign and complain, when they argue and shine a spotlight on their representatives they can create change.

I would say to the participants in Generation BiH and to all the young citizens of this country, making your voice heard is a right not a privilege.

Understand that right.

Claim that right.

And exercise that right.

The proposals being presented by Generation BiH today encompass the struggle to provide young citizens with a decent education, the struggle to roll back the tide of crime and corruption, the struggle to create jobs and deliver decent living standards and the struggle to turn the bureaucracy from a public burden into a public service.

Winning this collective struggle does not mean reinventing the wheel. The main policy planks have already been laid out in the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and the European Partnership.

The vision being presented today is the vision of young BiH citizens – a vision that has been produced through creative dialogue and compromise. The European Union wholeheartedly supports this dialogue and urges the BiH authorities to support it too.

Thank you