



ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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Introduction

2022 proved to be a crucial year for Zajecar Initiative (ZI). With the unofficial end of the COVID-19 pandemic, ZI returned to its regular mode of operations. After almost three years, the winter season at Youth Center Zajecar reopened, transforming it into a vibrant community gathering spot with an increasing number of activities organized during the autumn/winter period.

This year marked the resumption of live public discussions and presentations of our programs and activities, finally shifting from an online to an offline mode. We teamed up with our friends from Novi Sad CK13 Youth Center, executing a series of joint and complementary activities.

A significant milestone in 2022 was ZI's expansion of the Youth in Motion and School Elections programs to 12 new municipalities and cities in Serbia, encompassing Petrovac, Žagubica, Kučevo, Despotovac, Svilajnac, Jagodina, Pirot, Varvain, Čičevac, Kruševac, Pirot, and Babušnica. This expansion is part of our long-term plan to make these programs accessible nationwide.

Our key partner in the area of youth engagement and civic education, the National Endowment for Democracy, awarded ZI a two-year grant for the first time since our cooperation began in the late 2000s. This significant support provides us with flexibility in implementing these programs and enables detailed, long-term planning. Our new program, the "Democracy Youth Club," is designed for young people with a strong interest in social and political issues, encouraging them to conduct mini researches and write essays on their topics of interest.

In 2022, ZI executed another cycle of Vital Signs research. For the first time, we used an interactive map to display key findings (<https://vitalniznaci.rs/vitalna-mapa>). We also used podcasts and partnered with local internet portal Glas Zajecar to disseminate and inform citizens about the results of this research. We continued our series of Vital Discussions, implementing them live.

Our GreenStock program, which ended in March 2022, marked ZI's significant progression into the field of environmental awareness. We supported five local organizations/informal groups from Eastern Serbia in addressing critical environmental issues in their communities. Given the environmental threats facing our communities, we aim to increase our focus on this field within our Community Development strategic direction.

The Foundation Stepforward, established by ZI in 2013, continued to expand and promote its Community Urgent Fund in 2022. This year, the foundation focused on the development of social capital as a prerequisite for successful philanthropy in the Zajecar community, supporting three community initiatives aimed at uniting citizens across various lines of division to address common challenges.

Implemented Activities

I Community Development

Zlman Youth Fund

Within 2021/22 cycle of the Zlman Youth Fund, Zajecar Initiative has supported 5 civil society organizations from Eastern and Central Serbia: CSO Rime (Zajecar), CSO CDP (Zajecar), Center for Creative Development (Knjazevac), Drama School Paracin and Children Center (Zajecar). Initially, ZI selected the project of CSO Alternative from Bor. However, soon after the decision has been made, this organization dissolved due to internal fights and issues. Thus, ZI decided to support the project submitted by CSO Children Center from Zajecar, that was also well rated initially. Following project were supported:

Drama School Paraćin implemented the project titled “I Choose to Communicate Democratically” that aimed to promote freedom of expression and equip young people with basic skills needed for open communication in public space. This CSO selected a group of 17 young people aged 15-30 through an open call, that participated in the two-day training on communication and democratic values. The project and call for participation were promoted through social networks – mainly Instagram and Facebook and through special Viber community that this CSO established within the project (around 220 young people joined this Viber community). Drama School Paraćin created a short promotional video (available here: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1097451170984882>) to promote the call. The video had a reach of 290 views on the Instagram page of the organization. Also, local TV station, Radio – Television Pomoravlje, made the video report about the project that was also used for the promotion. During this project, participants designed several short performances about various democratic deficits that the country is facing with and play them at several hot-spots in the center of Paracin.

CSO Rime from Zajecar gathered a group of 30 young people aged 16 – 19 seeking to empower them to effectively advocate own needs and problems in the local community. The project, titled ‘Look at us – We are the Team’ included 24 educational workshops (4 more than originally planned). These workshops aimed to equip participants with the most relevant skills and competencies for effective community engagement, such as problem identification and analysis, communication skills, advocacy etc. Participants used these workshops to create messages, which served as inspiration for the mural paintings. CSO Rime also organized a visit to the local authorities in Zajecar, when participants discussed various issues, they are facing with in the community, with a secretary of the City of Zajecar and his deputy. Finally, this CSO gathered a group of local artists that made wall murals at three different locations in Zajecar, sending messages that participants created to local decision makers and the community as a whole. The murals were based on the following messages: 1) More people need to engage in the community in order to deliver a change; 2) Young people have some mature ideas about the ways to make a community a better place to live and 3) Girls should be united in advocating own needs. Rime used both traditional media and social networks to promote its project.

CSO CDP from Zaječar implemented the project ‘Digitally Different’ that provided space for a group of 12 young people aged 20 to 28, to advance their skills in digital communication and use them to promote democratic values and activism among other youth in Zajecar. CDP organized four workshops that addressed different aspects of communication in digital arena. During these

workshops, participants planned and prepared five podcasts that were recorded and broadcasted within this project. Podcasts covered following topics: youth activism, social networks, employment, life of young people in COVID times and human rights and rule of law in the local community. This CSO established new digital communication channels (Instagram and YouTube) in order to communicate with young people more effectively. Also, the representatives of CDP used different tools, such as infographics, social media posts and podcasts to effectively reach out to other young people within this project.

Center for Creative Development from Knjaževac aimed to influence local authorities to re-establish the Youth Counseling Service in this town by launching advocacy campaign. This CSO gathered a group of 15 young people aged 16 – 25 from Knjaževac that went through 4-module training in advocacy and communication skills. During these modules, participants designed a detailed plan for the advocacy campaign. Also, the project included 4 webinars delivered by the local experts, addressing the specific areas of work of the Youth Counseling Service, and gathering 29 attendees in total. In order to gain the support of wider community for their initiative, participants surveyed high-school students in the schools as well as other citizens of Knjaževac through a series of street events. Collected inputs and ideas regarding the Youth Counseling Service were shared through Facebook and Instagram in the form of text posts and video interviews. Finally, on the basis of collected ideas, participants made a policy brief titled 'Proposals and recommendations of young people and citizens for the work of the youth counseling center in the municipality of Knjaževac'. This document has been officially presented by project participants and representatives of the Center for Creative Development to local authorities and members of the local Youth Advisory Board at the special meeting held in June 2022. At the same meeting, participants officially submitted the request for including re-establishment of the Youth Counseling Service in the priorities of the future local Youth Strategy in Knjaževac.

Children Center from Zaječar used its grant to organize the performance "I did not report it" in Zaječar. This performance is about violence against women and it gathered girls from Zaječar, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina as actresses. The performance was played in the Youth Center Zaječar in front of the audience of 50 people. Also, the project included making of a huge mural painting on the wall of the one of residential buildings in Zaječar. The mural has been inspired by the violence against women in traditional societies. The photo of this mural is attached to this report.

When it comes to 2022/23 edition of the Zlman Youth Fund, ZI team slightly modified program priorities to better reflect young people interest. Through this program, support can be given to those projects, which young people initiate, to, through traditional or innovative art forms and creative expression, a) promote the values of a democratic society, the rights and freedoms of citizens and freedom of expression, among other young people and/or b) critically referred to concrete examples of violations of these values, freedoms, and rights in the community. In addition, arts and culture are powerful ways to interact with the broader community and communicate different topics with community members.

Zaječar Initiative announced the call for proposals for the 2022/23 edition of the Zlman Youth Fund on 15 November 2022 and promoted it intensively.

GreenStock

After the end of the training series, participants had the opportunity to propose activities focused on specific environmental issues, which could receive support in the continuation of the project. The Zajecar Initiative received a total of 7 action proposals:

- Association for the Development of Bor and the informal group "For European Majdanpek"
- Eco East Bor
- RIS Podgorac
- Sokobanja Ecological Society
- Čukaru Peki Bor
- Wilderness Kladovo
- Informal group "Life is Beautiful" Zajecar

Due to the importance of the proposed activities, the team of the Zajecar Initiative decided to support a total of 6 actions, instead of the originally planned 5. Because of the similarity with other proposed activities, the team of the Zajecar Initiative decided not to support the proposal of the Eco East Bor organization.

Supported Actions Within the GreenStock Program

All organizations and informal groups, supported within the GreenStock program, have fully realized their planned actions and submitted their reports in a timely manner.

Association for the Development of Bor and the informal group "For European Majdanpek" - "Spatial Plan, do you know what it means for you?"

The Association for the Development of Bor, in partnership with the informal group "For European Majdanpek" from the city of the same name, carried out an action titled "Spatial Plan, do you know what it means for you?" from March 1 to April 1, 2022. Through this action, these organizations sought to examine the citizens' awareness of the draft Spatial Plan for the Bor and Majdanpek area, as well as their attitudes and interest in participating in decision-making processes related to this plan.

In fact, during the Easter holidays of 2021, the authorities "pushed" the so-called public debate, which in the end did not happen due to COVID measures, leaving the public deprived of key information about the draft Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2035, and what is being prepared for them in the future.

The supported civil society organizations conducted a survey on a representative sample of 539 respondents (51.4% female and 46.6% male). The results were processed and promoted to the general public in the form of a 30-minute presentation.

The research results show that as much as 75 percent of respondents are not familiar with the draft Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021 - 2035, while most of those who do have some information about this draft, are not aware of the Report on the strategic impact assessment of the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia on the environment. The full report on the results of this research is attached.

An unexpected result of this action is that the informal group "For European Majdanpek" decided to form an association.

Wilderness Kladovo - "Kladovo Sand Dune"

The Wilderness Association from Kladovo focused on the Kladovo Sand Dune located on the outskirts of the village of Kostol through their action. This location is home to very rare endemic plant species such as the Pannonian Edelweiss, Trajan's Dianthus, Helichrysum, and the especially endangered species Kladovo's Dianthus, which grows and thrives only in this area and nowhere else in the world, with a population estimated at just above 250 individuals. The area of the Kladovo Sand Dune is threatened by several illegal dumpsites and uncontrolled sand excavation, leaving incalculable consequences on this unique ecosystem.

During this action, representatives of the Wilderness managed, through a series of meetings and social media campaigns, to influence local authorities to engage a local public utility company in cleaning up illegal dumpsites at this location. The cleanup was also joined by 60 volunteers gathered by the Wilderness through meetings with local actors (sports and recreational associations, local organizations, local communities, local schools...). Also, the representatives of this association made and placed 13 information boards in the area of Kladovo Sand Dune, with warnings that it is a protected area and waste should not be disposed of there, to prevent the creation of new illegal dumpsites.

The association also successfully promoted this action through local media. During the action, they also organized a meeting with representatives of the local tourist organization, to discuss the tourist potentials of this area, as well as its better protection. As a result, at the initiative of the Tourist Organization of the Municipality of Kladovo, one of the episodes of the series "Cycling Through Serbia" was filmed exactly at the location of Kladovo Sand Dune.

Informal Group "Life is Beautiful", Zajecar - "Quality of Surface Waters of the Black Timok River"

The action of the informal group Life is Beautiful from Zajecar, carried out from March 1 to May 31, 2022, involved sampling and analysis of the surface waters of the Black Timok River. On April 13, 2022, surface water was sampled at profiles along the Black Timok River, starting from the source to its confluence with the White Timok.

Based on the Regulation on parameters of ecological and chemical status of surface waters and parameters of chemical and quantitative status of groundwater (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 74/2011), the course of the Black Timok River was classified into type 3 (small and medium watercourses, altitude up to 500m, dominance of coarse substrate) and type 2 (large rivers, dominance of medium deposits, except rivers of the Pannonian plain area) water bodies, depending on the sampling location.

Sokobanja Ecological Society - Prevent Illegal Construction in Sokobanja Nature

The Sokobanja Ecological Society carried out its action named Prevent Illegal Construction in Sokobanja Nature from March 1 to May 31, 2022. The main idea of this action was to influence the prevention of illegal construction in the protected areas located in the Sokobanja municipality. Thus, the activists of this association strived to identify and inventory those facilities (mostly holiday homes and vacation houses) that were built without permits in this area.

After touring the field (a total of 19 times) and collecting data, the Sokobanja Ecological Society systematized the collected data and prepared a final document - Inventory of Illegal Facilities on Protected Locations of the Sokobanja Municipality, with recommendations for improving public policies and practices in the field of construction in nature. A total of 192 objects were inventoried and documented. The document was submitted to decision-makers in local self-government, local construction inspection, and managers of protected areas in the territory of the Sokobanja municipality - JP Srbijašume and JP Greenery. Also, this final document is attached to the report.

The Sokobanja Ecological Society also created a dedicated website for the anonymous reporting of illegal construction in the Sokobanja municipality, as well as an animated video spot advertising the page on social networks. Also, the activists of this association have created, made, and posted posters in areas where illegal construction is common, as a call to citizens to report it.

Čukaru Peki Bor

The Čukaru Peki Association from Bor carried out an action from March 1 to May 31, 2022. This association is focused on protecting the interests of the inhabitants of the villages of Slatina, Metovnica, Brestovac, as well as suburban settlements of Bor which are in the zone of operation of the newly built copper mine "Čukaru Peki" (100% owned by the foreign investor Zijin Mining). With this action, the Čukaru Peki association wanted to document the impact of the new copper mine on the environment and to inform the inhabitants of the mentioned settlements about this, as well as the consequences of pollution.

One of the activities included an analysis of the surface water and sediments of the Brestovac and Bor rivers at locations defined by the test orderer. Water samples from the Brestovac River, Bor River, Krzanov Creek, and Krivelj River were collected and analyzed, and the same number of sediment samples. The scope of the analysis included the content of metals (Cu, As, Zn, Mn, Fe) and the content of sulfates in water samples, and the content of metals (Cu, As, Zn, Mn, Fe, Cd) in sediment samples. The sampling was performed on May 27, 2022. A detailed report on the analysis is attached to this report.

In order to present the results of this research to citizens, the Čukaru Peki association organized two educational lectures in 2 endangered local communities - Metovnica and Slatina. Also, they produced a 30-minute broadcast on Television Bor, in which representatives of the association were guests.

RIS Podgorac - Full Force for Green Black Timok

The sports club "RIS" from the village of Podgorac near Boljevac implemented the project "Full Force for Green Black Timok" from March 1st to May 31st, 2022. The goal of this action was to motivate and encourage individuals and settlements through which this river flows, competent institutions, as well as those who use the Black Timok for adventure sports and other activities to engage in cleaning the river.

Activists of the Sports Club "RIS" during March 2022 worked on mapping the illegal dumps along the Black Timok river, from its source in Krivi vir to the confluence in Zajecar. For mapping purposes, activists used a GPS device and a Custom maps phone application for precise coordinate

determination and easier overcoming of obstacles in the field and data comparison. A total of 159 dumps were mapped. The list of mapped dumps is attached to this report.

Also, the activists of the association in cooperation with thirty volunteers and activists of other local organizations carried out 2 river cleaning actions at the locations Mora lu sore and Metovnica, in order to further motivate individuals and institutions to engage with the Black Timok.

Digital stories about supported mini actions

The Zajecar Initiative has engaged the internet portal Glas Zajecara to create and publish a story about each of the supported projects. Journalists from this portal visited each of the supported associations and groups from May to June 2022, interviewed their representatives and visited the locations that were the focus of the supported actions. Digital stories are available at the following addresses:

Divljina, Kladovo - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/clanovi-udruzenja-divljina-iz-kladova-ocistili-smece-sa-kladovskog-pescara-i-postavili-info-table/>

Neformalna grupa „Život je lep“. Zaječar - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/udruzenje-gradjana-zivot-je-lep-izvrsilo-je-ispitivanje-povrsinskih-voda-na-reci-crni-timok/>

Asocijacija za razvoj grada, Bor - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/asocijacija-za-razvoj-grada-odsustvo-transparentnosti-u-vezi-nacrta-prostornog-plana-je-neprihvatljivo/>

Sokobanjsko ekološko društvo - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/lako-nice-tesko-se-rusi-kako-spreciti-divlju-gradnju-u-prirodi-sokobanje/>

RIS, Podgorac - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/clanovi-sportskog-kluba-ris-uspesno-su-realizovali-projekat-mapiranja-deponija-na-crnom-timoku/>

Udruženje Čukaru Peki - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/udruzenje-cukaru-peki-edukacijom-protiv-ekoloske-kataklizme-na-istoku-srbije/>

Documentary "GreenStock – Green East"

The Zajecar Initiative also engaged the agency Ciklotron, known for the popular series Marko Žvaka and with extensive experience in cooperating with civil society organizations, to conceive, shoot, and produce a half-hour documentary about the supported actions of groups and associations participating in this project, or about the key environmental challenges faced by the citizens of eastern Serbia. The key challenge addressed by this film is the huge number of mining research locations for which there is a permit. The Ciklotron team visited the supported associations and groups and various locations in eastern Serbia multiple times from April to June 2022 to film material for the movie. The film was published and promoted via social media, mainly through Facebook and YouTube, and is available at the following address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUWBudf1dSw>.

Youth Center Zajecar

Throughout 2022, the Youth Center operated at its full capacity. After almost three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the winter season kicked off in October 2022. In that year, the Youth Center organized 103 events, which included concerts, exhibitions, movie screenings, and public talks. These events brought together hundreds of people, including international acts.

Podcast Series "Diggin' Room"

Podcast "Diggin' Room". Within this project, all 10 episodes of the podcast series "Diggin' Room" were realized, with the aim to introduce various musical genres and authors to the local community. The authors and hosts of this series, along with their guests, "dig" through musical genres to present artists who are usually not so familiar to the wider population:

Diggin room #1: "Censorship, Culture". The first episode dealt with the strange paths of censorship in the music industry of the 20th century. How and why did Billie Holiday, The Who, David Bowie, Silvana Armenulić, NWA, Massive Attack, and others, end up under the censor's hammer? This episode was published on July 5, 2022, and had 29 listens.

Diggin room #2: Guest Šlager Majstor. Dušan Zdravković is ŠLAGER MAJSTOR, the idea generator, author, and editor of the nostalgic and long-lasting show "U ritmu mladosti" ("In the rhythm of youth"). "U ritmu mladosti" is a sentimental journey to an era, which our generation was not part of and learned about indirectly, through testimonies, films, books, and finally - music! This episode was published on July 11, 2022, and had 103 listens.

Diggin room #3: Guest DJ FOCUS. DJ FOCUS has been involved in music since 2003. He has gone from hip-hop to dub, dubstep, reggae, and drum 'n' bass, which is the foundation of his current production. He has over 20 releases, including 6 LP albums. He is a composer, producer, lyricist, DJ, promoter, organizer, graffiti artist, and the founder of the band VIS Tetini. Nearly 20 years of musical creativity is packed into this two-hour interview, in which he talks about his beginnings, the influence of local and global on personal musical development, performances in Serbia and Europe, parallels between Kingston and Zaječar. This episode was published on August 18, 2022, and had 135 listens.

Diggin room #4: "East of Eden". This episode represented a musical journey behind the infamous Iron Curtain, to the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Czech, East German, and Azerbaijani jazz, Hungarian ABBA, Estonian soul, Romanian synth-pop, Soviet version of Eurovision, etc. This episode was recorded during September 2022, but was published on October 17. It has a total of 36 listens.

The subtitle of the fifth episode of the Diggin room series was "Real – Unreal". This edition introduced songs behind which lies dark inspiration or tragic events - Legends, ghosts, the devil, psychosomatic disorders, bizarre and morbid themes and motives. The selection of songs, which we will rarely hear on the radio.

Diggin room #6 introduced Nenad Dančević - Bingo from Zaječar, who, over the past 5 years, has systematized his passion for hip-hop music and movement, and presented it to the audience through various ventures, primarily through the RAPprogram, where he publishes the most significant achievements 365 days a year, on a daily basis. Bingo talked about how hip-hop music

has gone from its beginnings and socio-cultural margin to mainstream and back to underground, before in recent years it has become closer to its roots than ever? This edition of the podcast represented a brief overview of the history of hip-hop music, offering a wealth of references for further listening!

Diggin room #7 hosted the hip-hop artist JIĆ from Bor, who talked about his project "DISKO MAHALAC", positive reviews in the region, his growing up in Bor during the '90s, Paris, punk, Goribor, differences between Zaječar and Bor. About him they said: "Being here in the Balkans at this current time when the entire population is endowed with media kitsch, political malversations in which there is no common sense except for the scramble for power 'who ... the people', to say something concrete in a 'popular' way, and not a typical joke that draws the main topic to a completely different carousel, is the matter of insightful Jić's methodology with which he remains in the company of folk musicians, urban turbo-folkers, alternates, rappers, and finally punkers, although that 'punk' is not initially felt."

Diggin room #8 brought one of the currently longest-lasting and most diligent author bands from Zaječar – Vacuum. The band consists of Dejan Nikolić – guitar, Marko Ranđelović – bass guitar, and Ivan Andrejević - drums. Vacuum plays instrumental music that is a mix of alternative rock, punk, funk, and electronics. They released the album "Prologue" in 2015 for the Croatian publishing house "Slušaj najglasnije". The band members spoke about their creativity in the Diggin room podcast, but also about numerous bands that influenced them.

The guests of Diggin room #9 were members of one of the first hip-hop assemblies in Zaječar, remembered by the people of Zaječar as the Odred Loših Navika (OLN), and now members of the Romanian punk band Debela Rodica, which held its first performance at the Youth Center in January 2023 - Davor Jevtić and Predrag Mitrović.

Diggin room #10, which lowered the curtain on the first season of this podcast series, introduced the accordion teacher at the "Stevan Mokranjac" Elementary Music School in Zaječar, Dušan Đorđević. When not practicing, alone or with students, besides compositions of Rahmaninov, Mossenmark, Shostakovich, Morricone, Vivaldi - he also plays covers of Arctic Monkeys, Muddy Waters, Ed Sheeran, Senidah, and many other popular performers on the accordion. Dušan spoke about his rich experience - from playing on the streets of Germany, Czech Republic, and Austria to concert halls; from his mother's suggestion that the accordion is better than the piano, because it is (presumably) cheaper - to the vice-champion of the world in the same category.

Podcast Series " Scrolling "

Podcast " Scrolling ". Over the course of the project, a total of 10 episodes of the "Leafing Through" podcast series were produced. Two authors, Marija Živković and Milica Burazor, talk with creators responsible for the development, maintenance, and nurturing of the written word in Eastern Serbia and beyond, introducing the audience to their literary work and creative achievements in other fields.

"Scrolling" #1 hosted Stevan D. Jovanović, a poet, prose writer, dramatist, musician, and teacher of Serbian language and literature in Zajecar. He is known for his work with young people. He has published three poetry collections: "Contemporary Poetry of Spirit and Body," "From the Song," "Philosophers in Pajamas" and the drama "Another School Lesson." He was the recipient of the Zajecar City Award for 2013. This episode was published on June 11, 2022, and had 152 listens.

The guest in "Scrolling" #2 was Ana Marija Grbić, a creative writing mentor, literary editor, former radio, now television host, and illustrator from Belgrade. She has published three poetry collections: "Yes, but don't be afraid" (2012), "Venere's and Other Hills" (2014), "Earth 2.0" (2018) and the biography of the band Idoli, "Idols and the Last Day" (2019). She also published a collection of stories "Deer's Back" (2021). She is the founder of the literary association ARGH, a poetry organization founded in 2011. She is a member of the Serbian Literary Society and the Serbian PEN Center. This episode was published on July 9, 2022, and had 55 listens.

In the third edition of "Scrolling" the guest was Zajecar poet, Saša Jelenković. He has published the following collections of poems: "Unpleasant Geometry" (1992), "What Remains" (1993), "Cherubic Secrets" (1994), "Royal Explanations" (1998), "Book About the Heart" (2002), "Elpenor's Letters" (2003), "Elpenor's Awakening" (2004), "Elpenors" (2006), "Book About Doubt" (2010), "Naked Prayer" (2013), "Fifty" (2014), "Memories Begin After Death" (2017), "Gibraltar" (2018), "Selected Poems" (2019). He is a recipient of the literary awards: "Matićev šal" (for the book "Unpleasant Geometry"), "Milan Rakić" (for the book "What Remains"), "Vasko Popa" (for the book "Book About the Heart"). For the synopsis of the novel "From One Hunger to Another" he received the literary scholarship "Borislav Pekić". He was awarded the "Golden Librarian" award by the Belgrade City Library and Radio Television Serbia for promoting books and reading culture. He is the recipient of the "Dis Award" for his entire poetic work. This episode was published on September 23, 2022, and had 144 listens.

"Scrolling" #4 hosted Mladen Šljivović, an award-winning physics teacher in Zajecar's High School and a poet. He has published two poetry books: "Fifteen Postcards for Twelve Addresses" (2006) and "Handbook for Dreams and Quantum Mechanics" (2008). For his first book of poems, he received the "Matićev šal" (2006) and "Aladin Lukač" (2007) awards. He received the Andre Gavrilović Award for the best short story of 2017. He has received numerous awards for his achievements in educational work.

The guest of "Scrolling" #5 was Miljan Ristić from Negotin, a writer, poet, aphorist, essayist, reviewer, publicist, and author of a radio show (podcast). He is also involved in digital art and has published a total of 10 books so far. He is the author of the blog/portal eXperiment where everything is possible (exxperiment.net), which has been in existence since 2009. This portal deals with art, culture, and social issues and includes the author's prose, poetry, reviews, essays, and criticisms of literary, film, music, and visual works. The eXperiment also features the works of other authors to a lesser extent.

"Scrolling #6 presented the oeuvre of Zajecar writer, musician, and art historian, Ivan Potić. Ivan has so far published 15 books (novel, stories, essays, and poetry), and he edited two professional books in the field of historiography. He also released two music albums with the band S.L.A.M, one for the domestic and one for the Croatian market. He is a member of SKD, published in foreign and domestic periodicals, in the book of stories dedicated to Crnjanski "Traveler from the Far Sky", the book "Mysterious Traveler", an anthology of poets from southeastern Serbia, the anthology of the shortest Serbian stories "Grains", as well as in the anthology of younger Serbian prose "From Belgrade with Love."

The seventh Scrolling hosted longtime journalist and writer, Božidar Andrejić. He started working in journalism back in 1969. He wrote for a number of newspapers and magazines, regularly in Youth Newspapers, of which he was also the editor-in-chief (NON). He was an editor in Borba and

Naša Borba, from 1991 to 2000. He is a correspondent for the reputable Bratislava Pravda, and has also collaborated with WDR and Deutsche Welle. He is one of the founders and the first director of Danas, as well as a long-time journalist and editor in the same newspaper. He was a member of the Presidency of UNS and one of the founders of NUNS. He is the editor of a number of books and the author of three.

In Scrolling #8, guest star was Ana Bretšnajder-Tanasković, an actress and poet. She graduated in acting in 2002 at the FDU in Belgrade in the class of Prof. Dr Vladimir Jevtović. She has performed numerous theater and film roles. She is a member of the ensemble of the National Theater Timocka Krajina - Center for Culture "Zoran Radmilović" in Zajecar. She recently published her first collection of poems titled "Ginko Logorrhea".

In Scrolling #9, the guest was dramaturg Stefan Cokić, who spoke about his beginnings, collections, poetics, the local artistic movement "KOBizam", a broken heart and a broken nose as poetic inspiration. Stefan Cokić was born in 1991 in Zajecar, where he completed elementary school and Gymnasium. He graduated in dramaturgy from the Academy of Arts, University of Novi Sad. He published two books of poetry: This too shall pass (2013) and Dream a Poem (2015). He currently lives and tries to work in Zajecar.

Scrolling #10 - In the last episode of the first season of the podcast Scrolling, the guest was Irena Jović Stanojević, owner of the "Calligrapher" bookstore in Zajecar. Irena is a former journalist of Radio Television Zajecar, as well as an entertainment program editor. She is the author of several hundred hours of audio and video material (shows Old Fiaker, Hotel Putnik, Nostalgia, Step by Step, Old Zajecar Residents Tell Us). From the abundance of material, her first novel "Shanko si Bonka zalibi" (2017) was also born."

As part of the Scrolling series, a Poetry Evening was held at the Youth Center in Zajecar on October 21, 2022. The authors of the Scrolling podcast were joined by young Zajecar poetess Anja Dimitrijević for this event. The three of them presented their poetry through reading and conversation with the host, writer Stevan D. Jovanović, during this evening. The event was attended by about 40 people.

Also, on November 10, 2022, a promotion of the literary work of author Miljan Ristić and his "eXperiment" portal was organized at the Youth Center in Zajecar. During this evening, about 30 visitors had the opportunity to listen to selected music from the "Radio-eXperiment" podcast broadcast on Underground radio, as well as to attend the promotion of the "Video-eXperiment" video.

On August 10, 2022, a Literary Evening titled "Sour Tree under the Sour Tree" was organized in the garden of the Youth Center in Zajecar, when the double book "Sour Tree Eats Serbia", by author Božidar Andrejić, was promoted. The event was attended by about 40 citizens.

On June 20, 2022, an event titled "Conversations about Literature" was also organized in the garden of the Youth Center in Zajecar, during which the work of Zajecar's Ivan Potić was presented. The moderator was Stevan D. Jovanović, and the event was attended by about 20 people.

The play "Lelek, kanterija and opanci" is a dramatization of the book "Letters from Serbia" by Bojan Ljubenović, which satirically deals with various stereotypes of Serbian society today - from geographical position, demography, economy, agriculture, public enterprises, relations between

Serbia and Montenegro, Serbia and Croatia, Serbia and America, Serbia and the EU, Russophilia, football, BIA, Serbian Slava (and weddings), SANU, the military, relations between Belgrade and the interior, Corridor 10, banks in Serbia, intellectuals as a "profession", gambling, Serbian managers, Serbs at the sea and in the mountains, ambassadors, gay parades, morning shows, Serbian jet set, pensioners, unions, elections, Serbs abroad, tourists in Serbia - to public toilets, tycoons, eavesdropping, New Year's celebrations and discounts, Serbian women, courting in Serbia... A total of seven young people perform in the play, while the dramatization and direction is signed by Stevan D. Jovanović, a literature professor from Zaječar. The play had its premiere on November 5, 2022, at the Youth Center in Zajecar, in front of about 50 viewers. Due to great interest, the play was rerun on January 20, 2023, when there were about 45 people at the Youth Center in Zajecar. The play was performed in front of a full hall of the Youth Center CK13 in Novi Sad, on November 13, 2022. It is estimated that there were about 50 people.

The presentation and concert of the Turbotronic movement - The event in Zajecar was organized on August 13, 2022, in the garden of the Youth Center. Turbotronic is a unique movement that brings together authors who combine modern electronic music with the folk genre, mainly using samples of songs from old-school performers of newly composed music. Zajecar is specific in that it gave 5 authors who promoted this movement. This event brought together 3 performers – DJ Focus, VIS Prženo and Disko Mahalac – Jić and was one of the most massive events held in the summer of 2022 in the garden of the Youth Center in Zajecar. These authors promoted their opus in front of more than 250 people.

During the project implementation period, the Zaječar Initiative, as part of the music program of the Zaječar Youth Center, continued organizing concerts of authorial bands from the country (Orthodox Celts, Buč Kesidi, Proces, Good ol' Bastards, Čvrge, Pero Defformero, Artan Lili, Atheist Rap, Popečitelji, Električni orgazam, Dejan Gvozden (Kristali), Repetitor, Dža ili Bu...) and abroad (Alex Kelman (Russia), Elli De Mon (France), James Leg (USA), Norman Beaker Trio, Five Points Gang (UK), Xtreme Blues Dog (Brazil) and (UK)), as well as local performers (Fonodrom, Vakuum, Debela Rodica and DJ Fokus). The film program also continued, by showing over 20 authorial achievements as part of the European Film Festival, Free Zone and French Film Caravan. Seven public discussions were organized that dealt with current social topics and were streamed on the Facebook channel of the Zaječar Youth Center.

II Civic Education

Youth in Motion Program

By the deadline ZI received eight project proposals for the Youth in Motion program. Received application forms were fully completed. ZI team positively evaluated all submitted proposals for the Youth in Motion program. However, Biotechnology School Šumatovac from Aleksinac that planned to deal with gender equality and the participation of girls in the work of the school parliament within their project did not start the implementation of activities due to internal challenges that parliament was facing with. So, ZI supported seven projects of student parliaments within the 2021/22 edition of the Youth in Motion program.

Branislav Nušić High-school from Sokobanja implemented the project titled 'Stop Apathy', seeking to address civic apathy of high-school students and their growing distance from politics. This project is a real success story. School's parliament has been struggling for a long time to motivate its members to actively represent students' interests. Through this project, few

parliament members succeeded to engage other students to take an active role in the activities. The parliament organized the survey among high-school students about the problems they are facing with in the school and possible motives that would stimulate them to participate in various activities organized by their student parliament. 40 students in total took part in the workshop titled 'How to find your position in the political spectrum?', delivered by political analyst, Boban Stojanović from Belgrade. Several school professors also joined this workshop. Finally, the parliament organized the simulation of the process of the executive government forming, involving 42 students in various roles (members of parliament, political parties, NGOs etc.) Also, representatives of Bor Gymnasium, both students and school authorities joined this activity as a result of cooperation among two student parliaments that took part in the Youth in Motion program.

Medical high-school from Zajecar implemented project titled 'Gender Equality in 21st Century', aiming to raise awareness of school students about gender equality. Parliament members organized workshop 'Gender and Sex' in order to provide basic information about project's theme to participants. The training was delivered by Marija Sebic, gender activist from Zajecar. Also, Marija led additional workshop that aimed to educate 6 project participants to be facilitators of the World Café event. World Café workshop was organized as the final event of the project, gathering 52 students, not only from Medical high-school, but also from Gymnasium and Economical high-school from Zaječar. This workshop provided space for participants to rethink possible systemic changes in such areas as health care, education, safety, political participation etc. that would contribute to more equal position of men and women. Also, on the basis of project activities, participants have designed and made several posters about gender equality that were placed in the school hall.

The parliament of **Zajecar Gymnasium** used the support provided through this program to improve the knowledge of 28 high-school students about democratic processes and institutions. Parliament members organized a series of 3 interactive trainings on following topics: Basics of democracy, political parties and elections, and disinformation and fake news (delivered by CINS journalist, Dina Djordjevic) as well as skills building training related to filming and editing short videos. Following this series of trainings, participants had the assignment to film own videos about their understanding of democracy and share them through Facebook or Instagram in order to spread the knowledge they have gained during workshops. The project was titled 'demokraTIliJA'.

Paraćin Gymnasium implemented the project titled 'Fighting Against Violence and Discrimination' seeking to address a big challenge this school and its students face with through a variety of activities. The parliaments organized 3 workshops that dealt with possible measures for preventing and addressing various forms of violence and discrimination in the school. Finally, the parliament organized a public discussion in the school, involving school authorities, students and local experts to discuss how to fight against discrimination and peer violence among the students.

The Parliament of **Bor Gymnasium** sought to develop critical thinking of the students through the project 'Get on the Line'. Parliament members believe that developed critical thinking of young people is pre-requisite for genuine democratization of one society. The parliament firstly conducted a survey among school students in order to assess their level of understanding and knowledge of democracy and related concepts. Then, parliament members organized a workshop that dealt with the basics of democracy. Professors of Sociology and History discussed with students such issues as elections, political parties, and pros and cons of a democratic society. Following the workshops, the parliament organized a tournament in debating that brought 8

teams in total, consisting of three students each. This debating tournament involved such topics as dead penalty, voting restrictions for seniors, free education etc. Finally, parliament members organized the simulation of UN Security Council meeting dealing with Kosovo independence. Project participants were also invited to visit Sokobanja Gymnasium and to participate in simulation of the Parliament meeting that was also supported through the Youth in Motion Program.

The parliament of **the School of Trade and Economics from Bor** aimed to increase participation of students in decision-making through student parliament. The title of the project was "What do You Mean by Saying We?" The parliament organized a discussion on the role of the parliament and possibilities for students to address problems and challenges there are facing with in school. The discussion gathered representatives of student parliaments from all Bor high-schools. Also, the parliament conducted a survey among students of Bor School of Trade and Economics in order to understand their attitudes and opinions regarding participation and ability to influence school decision and authorities. The results and findings of this survey were presented to students in the form of posters that have been placed in the school's hall. The parliament also organized a screening of three motivational movies dealing with youth participation, using them as a basis for discussions with students that followed this screening. Finally, the parliament organized a study trip to Zajecar for 29 students in order to provide them space to discuss successful examples of youth participation with local CSOs and student parliaments. This student parliament managed all project activities very well.

Parliament members coming from **Nikola Tesla high-school from Boljevac** sought to improve students' understanding of key democratic processes and institutions by organizing a series of workshops within the project 'Activating the Youth'. Five workshops took place in the premises of the local library, bringing together 41 students in total. Workshops dealt with such issues as elections, political parties and ideologies, and principles of democratic society. As there is a student from Turkey in the Nikola Tesla high-school, who participate in the official school exchange program, he presented the situation in his country, openly admitting that it would be almost impossible to organize such workshop in Turkey.

The priorities of the Youth in Motion program:

- Promotion of democratic values and citizens' rights and freedoms among high-school students;
- Development of critical thinking of young people;
- Education of high-school students about democratic values, processes, and institutions;
- Development of democratic culture and inclusive participation in high schools;
- Enhancing youth activism and
- Raising awareness about specific problems and negative social phenomena in the community

The Concluding Seminar

Concluding Seminar took place at Stara planina mountain from 24 to 26 June, 2022, bringing together 21 high school students from Timok Region (3 male and 18 female) that were actively involved in the implementation of projects awarded within 2021/22 edition of the Youth in Motion program. This year, the Concluding Seminar has been merged with the Candidates' Convention (the final event within the School Elections program) again, due to changes in the project's

timeline, caused by COVID-19 related measures. The Concluding seminar served as a venue for young people from Timok Region interested in civic activism to meet, talk and share experience.

The seminar began with the presentation of projects and campaigns, supported through both programs. Each parliament had up to 10 minutes to present project activities, aims and outcomes. Participants also had much time to discuss their projects after the presentations. On the third place there was the project 'Gender Equality in 21st Century' of the Medical High-School from Zajecar, while Gymnasium 'Bora Stankovic' from Bor was on the second place with the project 'Get on the Line'. The winning project was 'Stop Apathy', implemented by the Branislav Nušić High-school from Sokobanja. Seminar's agenda, included interactive workshops on following topics that were selected on the basis of their relevance for participants' future civic engagement communication, public speaking and debating: Trainer was Mr. Elmedin Kurtović (certified by the National Democratic Institute's program in Serbia).

By using presentations, exercises and examples, participants were guided through checklist for public speaking; how to write a public speech; developing public speaking messages and soundbites; delivering the message on media; conducting an interview; using bridging techniques in debate; constructing arguments; verbal and nonverbal communication; radio, TV and social networks presentation.

On the first day, trainer explained how to effectively communicate a message verbally and non-verbally by using visuals, storytelling, and simple language. Participants received helpful hints on how to effectively deliver a speech, including speaking clearly, maintaining good posture, making eye contact, and smiling and discussed stage fright and mechanisms to overcome it. Students were advised that they should focus on their message, repeating it several times. They were encouraged to provide personal examples in order to connect with an audience and share personal experience in public speaking. This segment was followed by one dealing with the interview techniques, including how to respond to difficult questions, bridging technique and tips for TV and radio presentation. A short introduction to social media campaigns was also included. In the afternoon, participants were asked to plan a one-minute speech on a topic of their choice and deliver the speech in front of all participants. Each speech was then evaluated, having both trainer and participants providing feedback. Most of the participants have successfully created and delivered a one-minute speech using skills and techniques learned. The next topic covered was public debate. Engaging in competitive debate helps young people cultivate and sharpen important interpersonal skills that could be used in many aspects of daily life. It helps to shape and improve communication skills, public speaking skills, communication, critical thinking and self-confidence. Furthermore, debating boosts teamworking skills and develops the ability to express opinions in a logical and persuasive manner and raises awareness of local, regional, and international issues. Participating in debates also helps young people to develop a better understanding of perspectives on all sides of the complex decisions that have a wide-reaching impact on society. Trainer guided participants through essentials about debating.

At the end of the first day, participants selected two topics to debate about in the simulations that took place during the following day. Students were divided in two groups and assigned with different tasks and roles as debaters, judges and the audience. Before leaving them with the assignment to prepare for a debate simulation next day, participants were introduced to the rules of the British parliamentary debate format that was used in this simulation. The debate simulation was a crown of two-day work. As the result of this seminar, participants learned and improved public speaking techniques, communication and, debating skills, what will be of major importance

for their further civic engagement. They will continue to practice and exercise their public speaking and debating skills, as some of participants expressed intention to join / launch debate clubs in their school.

For the 2022/23 edition of the Youth in Motion program, ZI made a significant breakthrough by expanding Youth in Motion and School Elections programs to 11 new municipalities and cities in Serbia. ZI team has presented both Youth in Motion and School Elections programs in 21 participating municipalities of the Timok Region from 19 October to 9 December 2022.

Throughout September and October 2022, the Zajecar Initiative team mapped all high schools in the municipalities and cities where the Youth in Motion Program and School Elections were expanded to. In addition, these high schools were reached out to schedule live presentations.

Zajecar Initiative announced the call for proposals for the 2022/23 edition of the Youth in Motion Program on 15 November 2022. On the same day, ZI announced the call for participation in the School Elections program. Submissions of proposals were open until 20 February 2022. However, due to the requests that came from the student parliaments, the original deadline for Youth in Motion and School Elections programs was extended to 25 January 2023.

Presentations enabled parliaments representatives to get detailed information about both programs and the application process and ask questions and get feedback. Professors of Civic Education and those in charge of the parliaments also attended the presentations. Each presentation lasted for 45 minutes on average. 234 high-school students and professors (160 female and 76 male) from 50 schools participated in these presentations.

School Elections Program

Following Schools have been supported through the School Elections Program in 2022: The School of Trade and Economics from Bor, Gymnasium 'Bora Stanković' from Bor, Gymnasium Zaječar, Čuprija Gymnasium, and Gymnasium 'Mile Arsenijevic Bandera' from Majdanpek.

ZI signed the Memorandum on Understanding with all high-schools, which parliaments applied to organize school elections. Firstly, these schools have established the School Election Commissions that invited interested students to submit candidacy and run for the president of school parliament. The commissions have actively promoted the program in their schools. In Zaječar, 4 students submitted their candidacy, in the Bor Gymnasium, there were 2 candidates, the School of Trade and Economics had 3 candidates (4 applied, but one gave up), the Gymnasium in Majdanpek had 2 candidates, while in the Čuprija Gymnasium, there were 4 candidates.

All candidates passed through the two-day intensive training related to planning and conducting election campaigns. The training was organized in Kladovo, from April 15 to 17, 2022, in the "Đerdap" hotel. A total of 16 participants (candidates and representatives of candidates' teams - 14 women and 2 men) attended this training. This interactive training included following topics: political parties and ideologies, election systems, policy and message development, campaign planning, public speaking, and voter outreach. A variety of delivery techniques were employed in an attempt to enable this training to be participatory and interactive. Over the course of the training there was a combination of following techniques: Facilitated group discussions; break-out group work/assignments, role-plays and verbal and written presentations. Participants actively participated in discussions and exercises during all two days. The training was delivered

by Elmedin Kurtović, trainer of the National Democratic Institute and Danko Nikolić, Executive Director of Zajecar Initiative.

Following this training, the candidates, together with the team members, started planning their campaigns. All candidates needed to submit their campaign plan and related budget to the Zajecar Initiative that provided schools with transparent ballot boxes, ink and UV lamps in a timely manner.

As in previous years, the candidates designed their campaigns in different ways, coming up with very creative outreach activities. Candidates used printed material, various giveaways, videos, and social media posts to present their programs to other students in the school. They were also organizing stands, various public events in schools, debates and other activities that allowed them to communicate with fellow students directly and deliver messages they have crafted. All candidates completed their campaigns successfully, implementing all planned activities.

Supported schools did not organize the Election Day on the same day, due to different schedules and obligations. The mandate of newly elected Parliament presidents will start in September 2022. All candidates were invited to participate in the final Candidates' Convention that was merged with the Concluding Seminar of the Youth in Motion program this year due to COVID-19 related reasons. At this event, they were able to present their campaigns and share success stories and challenges they were facing with during campaigns in the participating schools.

Democracy Youth Club

Zajecar Initiative announced the call for proposals for participation on Democracy Youth Club program on December 7, 2021, and the submission of applications was opened until February 1, 2022. The original deadline was extended to February 25, 2022, due to school lockdown. By the deadline, February 25, 2022, ZI received 17 applications (4 male and 13 female, 2 from Bor, 1 from Sokobanja, 1 from Majdanpek, 4 from Negotin and 9 from Zajecar) for the Democracy Youth Club program. Received application forms were fully completed and ZI team positively evaluated all submitted applications and accepted 17 students to participate in this program.

Webinars - During the reporting period, participants took part in a series of 4 webinars:

- 'Political ideologies - How do we decide who to vote for?' – Vladimir Pavićević, political scientist (May 12, 2022); political theorist, activist and analyst, former professor at the University of Belgrade and Member of Parliament of Serbia from 2014 until 2016. He is currently active as director of NGO "Policy Research Society" (Društvo za istraživanje politike i političke teorije), as well as political talk show host at Montenegrin Adria TV. In this webinar, participants explored and analyzed the various types of political party systems and learnt about the general characteristics of political parties. Students had the opportunity to explore and analyze the various types of political party systems and learn about the general characteristics of various ideologies.
- 'Flaws of Democracy and How to Counter Them' – Boban Stojanović, political analyst (July 13, 2022); Boban Stojanović is a PhD candidate at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences. His research interests include: political parties, elections, democracy, local elections, local self-government, public policies and especially youth policy. He published 12 monographs and 24 articles in scientific journals and edited publications. This webinar allowed participants to dig a little deeper in democratic societies and to find out what makes democracies healthy and

what are the roots of major challenges that democracies are facing with. Also, participants were able to discuss what would be possible correctives to the flaws of democracy that might be applied.

- ‘Authoritarianism and democratization’ – Prof Dr Nebojša Vladislavljević, University of Belgrade (May 26, 2022). Nebojša Vladislavljević teaches comparative and Serbian politics at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade. He received a PhD from the LSE where he later taught comparative politics in the Graduate School (LSE Fellow, 2004-2008). His research interests include authoritarianism and democratization, contentious politics, nationalism and ethnic conflict regulation, and media and democratization. He served as President of the Serbian Political Science Association. This webinar aimed to expose participants of the program to major theories of political authoritarianism and democratization in order to account for patterns of regime change and continuity across the globe. It also enabled participants to assess the process of democratization in a comparative context.
- ‘International Relations and International Politics’ – Filip Ejodus, assistant at the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade (April 21, 2022). Filip Ejodus is an Associate Professor in International Security at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science. He studies how identity, memory, emotions and rationality affect security policy and international interventions, while the geographic focus of his interests are the EU, Western Balkans, the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. This webinar allowed participants to look at and discuss contemporary issues in world politics, including current conflicts. Thus, one of the key topics, discussed during this webinar, was the war in Ukraine.

Workshops

Public Speaking / Presentation Skills (May 17, 2022) - This workshop dealt with public speaking and presentations skills. Basic aspects of public speaking were covered, including verbal and non-verbal communication. The session also addressed the mechanisms and techniques of handling fear of public speaking. Trainer used relevant videos that further explain the subject matter. Participants openly spoke about own challenges regarding their public appearance, focusing on school classes. During this session, trainer walked participants through key steps that should be undertaken during the preparation for any public and media appearance and provided them with useful advice for making public and media appearances even more effective. Finally, participants were able to practice the skills they gained during public appearance simulation (stand-up). They had the task to present themselves as a candidate for the president of their student parliament. Each participant had up to 90 seconds for this task. Participants’ presentations were discussed in a plenary.

Peer Learning Skills (May 24, 2022) - Participants were introduced to the basics of peer education, learning principles, including key teaching tips. The aim of this session is to help participants to successfully manage group dynamics and to understand its importance for stimulating peer group interaction and accelerating learning. Participants were able to learn how to successfully engage trainees in learning activities and make them review activities critically, abstract useful insights, and apply results in practical situations. Participants were also introduced to the most relevant learning activities (role plays, simulations, case studies), visual aids and key facilitation skills. Finally, participants learnt how to handle various challenging situations they could experience when delivering trainings.

For the third workshop (June 9, 2022), ZI took participants to Felix Romuliana historical site, where a tournament in debating was organized by the European Debating School within the European Debating Caravan program. Therefore, 24 young debaters from all over Serbia participated in the debate tournament that is part of the European Debate School. Grouped into eight teams, the debaters discussed cultural heritage, introduction of free health insurance, environment. Participants of the Democracy Youth Club project were able to involve in the follow up discussion that was organized after the tournament. For many participants, this was the very first contact with debating.

Debating (June 21, 2022) – Engaging in competitive debate helps young people cultivate and sharpen important interpersonal skills that could be used in many aspects of daily life. It helps to shape and improve communication skills, public speaking skills, communication, critical thinking and self-confidence. Furthermore, debating boosts teamworking skills and develops the ability to express opinions in a logical and persuasive manner and raises awareness of local, regional, and international issues. Participating in debates also helps young people to develop a better understanding of perspectives on all sides of the complex decisions that have a wide-reaching impact on society. Trainer guided participants through essentials about debating, focusing on argumentation and the structure of an argument. Participants were also introduced with key debating formats, focusing on the British parliamentary debate. At the end of the workshop, participants selected topics to debate on in the simulations that took place as a follow-up of this event.

These workshops combined lectures, group discussions, group work/assignments, interactive exercises and verbal and written presentations. With a spirit of collaboration, participants actively worked together during the training, being ready to openly discuss and explore challenges they are facing with in their school and communities. Participants also discussed how they could use the experience and insights gained during the seminar and how they will share acquired knowledge and skills. Workshops took place in the Youth Center Zajecar and were led by Danko Nikolić from Zajecar Initiative.

Debates

For each debate simulation, students were divided in two groups and assigned with different tasks and roles as debaters, judges and the audience. Before starting the first debate simulation, participants were introduced to the rules of the British parliamentary debate format that was used in these debates. Also, before each debate, participants were able to vote for the topic they would like to debate about through specially made Viber group. Following topics were covered over the course of 4 debating sessions: Mandatory military service (June 30, 2022); Should Serbia join the EU? (July 6, 2022); Legalization of marijuana (July 19, 2022) and Imposing sanctions against Russia (July 27, 2022).

Debate simulations, that also took place in the Youth Center Zajecar, were a crown of this series of events. As the result of these simulations, participants learned and improved public speaking techniques, communication and, debating skills, what will be of major importance for their further civic engagement. Some of participants expressed intention to join / launch debate clubs in their school.

Essays

Nine participants in total have completed their essays that dealt with following topics:

- The Role of the United Nations in the Modern World (Marta Trajić)
- We Need More Women in Politics and in Decision-Making Positions (Jovana Jovanović)
- Who Needs the Agenda 2030? (Uroš Lalović)
- Independent Media - Fairy Tale or Reality? (Milica Nikić)
- Globalization as a Positive Phenomenon (Mila Lukić)
- Advantages and Disadvantages of Democratic Systems (Janko Mihajlović)
- The Influence of Women in Politics (Marija Stanojević)
- How did We Get Here? (Ilija Đuričić)
- All the Downsides of Democracy (Bogdan Vučić)

Firstly, students were introduced to the project's theme and given a list of potential essay topics to choose from. They were expected to conduct independent research on their chosen topic and write an organized essay that demonstrates their understanding of the issue. Throughout the process, students received feedback from their teachers and ZI staff to help them refine their writing and improve the quality of their work. Finally, the essays are collected, printed and distributed to other high – students from participating municipalities, allowing them to read and learn from their peers' work.

This is a valuable resource for students, as it not only showcases their writing but also provides an opportunity for them to engage with diverse perspectives on important social issues. Also, this approach allows students to develop their research and writing skills while exploring topics related to important issues that impact society.

Also, each participant filmed a short video about the topic he/she has work on. Videos were published on ZI Facebook page and sponsored in order to reach as many young people as possible.

Final Seminar

The final seminar took place from 9 to 11 September 2022 in Stara Planina Mountain. This weekend seminar for project participants was specifically designed to provide them with the skills and knowledge required to educate their peers about topics they have written essays on. During the seminar, participants learnt about effective communication, presentation skills, leadership, and team building. They were also introduced to various training techniques, including how to structure and deliver engaging presentations, facilitate group discussions, and address challenging questions. By the end of the seminar, students gained the confidence and know how to educate their peers. This seminar was an excellent opportunity for high school students to develop their leadership and communication skills enabling them to make a positive impact on their school community. The workshops were led by Mr. Elmedin Kurtovic, trainer of the National Democratic Institute.

Documentary

The documentary "Who Needs Civic Education?" explores the importance of both formal and informal forms of civic education for young people. The film highlights the critical role that education plays in promoting civic engagement, and argues that teaching young people about their rights and responsibilities as citizens is essential for building a healthy democracy. Through interviews with educators, civil society representatives, and students, the documentary illustrates

how formal civic education in schools can help young people develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to participate in the political process. It also emphasizes the value of informal civic education, such as community service, and youth-led advocacy groups, in providing hands-on learning opportunities and inspiring young people to become active citizens. Overall, the documentary makes a compelling case for the importance of civic education in shaping the future of democracy and encouraging young people to engage in civic life. The movie is available here: <https://youtu.be/-lpKn0SdhVA>

Democraft

The Democraft project organized two series of meetings with high-school students from eight Serbian municipalities/cities: Zajecar, Knjazevac, Sokobanja, Boljevac, Bor, Negotin, Majdanpek, and Kladovo. The first round of meetings aimed to collect inputs from students for the design of an educational board game that would help them learn about democratic processes and institutions. The second round of meetings was organized to present the concept of the game and receive feedback from the students. The project team organized these meetings in collaboration with local high schools and teachers, who helped to identify and invite students to participate in the project.

The project team used a participatory approach to engage students in the design of the educational board game. Students were encouraged to share their ideas and perspectives through group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and feedback forms.

Overall, the meetings were successful in engaging students and collecting valuable feedback for the development of the educational board game. In the first round of meetings, participants positively reacted to the idea of the game and were eager to share their thoughts on the design and content of the game. This round took place from 22 November to 6 December 2022.

The Democraft project has successfully engaged high-school students from multiple municipalities/cities in Serbia in the design of an educational board game that aims to promote democratic values and principles. The project has demonstrated the importance of involving young people in the design and implementation of projects that aim to promote democratic participation and active citizenship. The educational board game is expected to be a valuable tool for educators and students alike, helping to promote greater understanding of democratic processes and institutions in Serbia.

The concept of the educational board game was developed through a collaborative and participatory process, which ensured that the game was relevant, engaging, and effective in promoting democratic values and civic education among high-school students in Serbia.

During the process of designing the educational board game on democracy, project team began with a comprehensive analysis of existing games, both educational and non-educational. This research allowed the team to identify key mechanics, themes, and engagement strategies that have proven successful in the industry. Following the initial research phase, the team conducted a review of existing educational resources on democratic processes and institutions, including textbooks, lesson plans, and online materials. This research helped to ensure that the game's content would be accurate, engaging, and accessible to high school students.

As already explained above, the team held two rounds of consultations with high school students. In the first round, the team collected inputs from students for the design of an educational board

game. In the second round of consultations, the team presented the concept of the game and received feedback from the students. This feedback from the students was instrumental in refining the game's concept and mechanics to better suit the needs and preferences of our audience. Also, based on this feedback, the team developed a concept for an educational board game that would be engaging, interactive, and informative.

Finally, the team created a prototype of the game including the game mechanics, the game board layout, the cards and tokens, and the rules and instructions.

III Citizen Information and Public Engagement

Vital Signs

In 2022, ZI implemented another cycle of the Vital Signs research. 'Vital Signs' was an initiative that identified key issues impacting local communities. By integrating existing research, data, and surveys from local residents and institutions, the Vital Signs report offered a comprehensive view of social trends and crucial community needs. Vital Signs, which originated from The Toronto Community Foundation over a decade ago, had since grown into a national initiative across Canada and had expanded to other countries in the USA and Europe. ZI carried out the first Vital Signs research in 2018 in partnership with the Olof Palme International Center. This allowed citizens, local authorities, media, CSOs, public institutions academics, key influencers, and decision-makers to obtain first-hand information from communities, which could be used as a guideline in their field of operation. This knowledge, sourced from Vital Signs, served as a credible resource and a catalyst for promoting fair and progressive change. Recognizing a community's needs and the challenges it encountered was the initial step in engaging people and finding solutions to these issues.

In this project, ZI introduced two novel methods of sharing Vital Signs findings and results with citizens:

Vital Cast was a series of 10 podcast episodes focused on Vital Signs themes. Podcasting is a form of web-based audio broadcasting. Similar to a radio program, it could be downloaded on demand and listened to on the move. This content medium didn't require full attention from the target audience, unlike a video or blog post. Podcasting was high in demand as its listenership had been increasing each year. ZI believed this format would be a good fit to not only peak the interest of citizens in Vital Signs research but also help them gain a better understanding of research findings.

Vital Stories consisted of 10 texts published on the Glas Zaječara news portal. Through this method, ZI utilized storytelling to bring the Vital Signs findings closer to citizens. Journalists from Glas Zaječara shared personal, action-inspiring stories of citizens and their experiences as narratives that citizens could comprehend.

Both Vital Cast episodes and Vital Stories were extensively promoted via digital channels.

ZI also utilized its Vital Signs website to collect inputs from citizens and to promote research findings. New Google Maps features that had been added to this website in 2020 were utilized for this round of Vital Signs research.

Vital Discussions

To engage citizens in a public debate and facilitate community discussion about key local issues, ZI organized a series of six discussions, involving relevant community stakeholders. Additionally, these discussions were streamed online and archived as webcasts, allowing a broader range of citizens to watch these events remotely and comment and ask questions through Facebook. ZI aimed to include a guest speaker in four out of six public discussions to attract even a broader group of citizens to participate in genuine community debate. In scenarios where there was no public debate in the media or physical spaces like town halls, such discussions represented a rare opportunity for citizens' voices to be heard. The discussions dealt with the following issues: Law Reform, Mining in Eastern Serbia and critical political and economic developments expected to happen in 2023.

RESULTS

1. Results at the policy level

Projects supported within ZIman Youth Fund and GreenStock program achieved following results at the policy level:

The local government in Boljevac, following the commencement of the RIS Podrograc action, contacted the representatives of this organization and donated funds in the amount of 19,200.00 dinars for the creation of 15 signs stating "Littering Prohibited". These will be installed at critical locations within the municipality of Boljevac, near the Crni Timok river. In addition, the Boljevac local government has expressed interest in supporting the installation of video surveillance at critical locations with the aim of preventing improper waste disposal.

Drama School Paraćin actively cooperated with the local Youth Office to promote the call for participation in their project. The Youth Office used own communication channels to share information on project activities. Also, this CSO established relations with a local councilor in charge of youth within this project, creating a solid base for future efforts aimed at influencing local youth strategy both in Paraćin and Čuprija, primarily in the area of arts and culture programs and opportunities for young people at the local level.

The Center for Creative Development from Knjaževac successfully advocated for the re-establishment of the Youth Counseling Service in this municipality. Representatives of this organization together with the participants of the project developed a policy brief titled 'Proposals and recommendations of young people and citizens for the work of the youth counseling center in the municipality of Knjaževac' that has been successfully promoted among wider audience and key decision makers – representatives of the Municipal Council and the local Youth Advisory Board. Moreover, at the end of the project, the Center for Creative Development officially submitted the request for including re-establishment of the Youth Counseling Service in the priorities of the future local Youth Strategy in Knjaževac.

2. Increased level of civic engagement

Based on our data, the 11 projects backed by CSOs and informal groups in 2022 were successful in directly involving over 600 people in various community activities. This signifies a heightened level of civic participation.

3. Heightened Citizen Awareness of Critical Community Challenges

In promoting the findings and results of the 2022 edition of the Vital Signs research, ZI successfully informed citizens about significant community issues, involving them in both online and offline public debates, and fostering community discussions around key community challenges.

Posts on Facebook related to Vital Signs' findings and results engaged 2,798 people. Six live-streamed public discussions garnered a total of 2,486 ten-second views on Facebook, according to the platform's analytics. It is estimated that more than 170 citizens attended these public discussions—whether online or offline—and actively participated in the debates. During the project implementation, the Vital Signs webpage attracted 894 unique visitors.

When it comes to GreenStock program, since the publication of the stories, a total of 378 users have accessed them on the Internet portal of Glas Zajecar, while 49 users have shared these stories. However, the supported organizations/groups have also successfully communicated their activities and achievements. For instance, Divljina from Kladovo made 7 posts on Facebook, which collectively reached around 12,000 views, gained 250 likes, and over 20 shares. Additionally, an animated video spot created by the Sokobanjsko Ecological Society reached 6,641 users, with 9,635 interactions, 9,608 video plays longer than 3 seconds, 27 reactions, and 12 shares.

4. Increased understanding of high-school student of civic mechanisms – demonstrated by the ability of participating individuals and teams to organize and carry out successful school parliament election campaigns and mini projects.

Comparing to the previous year, the Gymnasium "Bora Stanković" from Bor participated for the first time in the School Elections program, joining the pool of other schools that continued their participation in the program. The parliaments organized the election process very well and the school authorities enable all activities to be implemented smoothly, demonstrating very positive attitude for this kind of process. When it comes to the campaigns of the candidates and voting, candidates succeeded to attract significant number of students to join their teams and actively participate in the campaigns. Also, regardless of the complicated situation caused by COVID-19 related measures, candidate and their teams succeeded to implement successful and mobilizing campaigns in their schools, attracting fellow students to vote during the Election Day. Thus, 133 (out of 377) voted in Zaječar High School, 233 (out of 322) in Čuprija High School, 20 (out of 44) in Majdanpek High School, 71 (out of 182) in Bor High School and 99 students (out of 287) in Bor Economic School.

Also, parliaments supported through the Youth in Motion program implemented very quality projects. This year, the Youth in Motion program resulted in the cooperation among two student parliaments from two different towns – Bor and Sokobanja, that organized the simulation of the National Parliament session together. The parliaments were able to fully complete their projects, implementing all planned activities regardless the challenges related to COVID-10 pandemic.

What is obvious now, is the fact that Parliaments supported through Youth in Motion program, have started dealing with more complex issues over time. In the very beginning of the implementation of this program, the parliaments in Eastern Serbia dealt mainly with youth activism-related topics. However, by promoting such issues as democracy values, principles and institutions through this program, parliaments started addressing related concepts and themes

within their projects. Finally, their projects evolved further by introducing such themes as fake news and disinformation (Gymnasium Zajecar), gender equality and participation (Medical high-school from Zajecar) and work of international institutions (Bor Gymnaisum).

All participants of the Democracy Youth Club project had to complete a short pre-assessment questionnaire. On the basis of the pre-assessment results, it is concluded that this is rather mixed group of participants. There were 3 participants with above average knowledge on topics related to democracy and politics. 12 participants demonstrated average knowledge (50-70% correct answers), while 2 of them correctly answered less than 50% of questions. In order to assess any change in participants' level of knowledge, participants needed to complete the final questionnaire. 14 of them scored better comparing to the pre-assessment questionnaire. 2 participants did not demonstrate an increase in the number of correct answers, while 1 participant failed to complete the final questionnaire.

5. Enhanced Youth Engagement and Participation

Participation in the Democracy Youth Club have also encouraged project participants to engage with other programs and issues in the community. For the most of participants, this was the very first time that they participated in a program of any civil society organization. While interacting with ZI team and other participants, 13 out of 15 participants stated that they have started to follow other programs available for young people in order to engage further and/or they have engaged in other available initiatives. E.g. Milica Nikić, a first grader of Zajecar Gymnasium began to participate actively in various local projects and volunteer activities in order to become eligible for applying for the European Youth Parliament, as an effect of this project; Also, Uroš Lalović, a first grade student of Zajecar Gymnasium, thanks to participation in this project, became a volunteer of local youth – related CSO “Timok Youth Center”.

6. Amplified Visibility of Zajecar Initiative

ZI is also extremely satisfied with media coverage of its activities in 2022. It is estimated that real number of media reports is more than 160.

7. Enhanced Accessibility to Quality Cultural and Artistic Experiences

It is estimated that approximately 1500 individuals were able to access high-quality cultural experiences in 2022 through the programs implemented at the Youth Center Zajecar.