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EU SUPPORT TO **CONFIDENCE BUILDING IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**



BASIC DATA

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* For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to position on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UNDP, all references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244/1999.



“ Through these workshops we gained strength to move forward and tell our stories and testimonies. We worked through our traumas and I was thrilled to see that young people are open to listen to the stories of survivors as they will be writing our history. ”

Mirsada Tursanović, war crime survivor from Zvornik, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“ Some of the main points we talked about during the „Youth Rights Talks“ conference are intersectionality between cultures and languages but, most importantly, what is predominantly occupying us as youngsters. Being in touch with various different people from diverse cultures and backgrounds is helpful and never enough. ”

Hannie Lohaj, journalist from Pristina, Kosovo



“ Great things can be achieved through cooperation. It's important that we work on stronger connections and develop concrete steps for the future. ”

Noli Osmani, a young activist from Debar, North Macedonia

“ One of the prerequisites for success in prosecuting war crimes in the Western Balkans is building partnerships and close cooperation between regional prosecutors' offices and international institutions. ”

Milorad Marković, Supreme State Prosecutor of Montenegro



“ The EU strongly believes that young people, as future political leaders, can be active change agents. Through peaceful dialogue and democratic political engagement, they can develop a climate of trust and the confidence that will ultimately lead to a more peaceful world. ”

Plamena Halacheva, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia

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Acronyms

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSO	civil society organization
EU	European Union
CRSV	conflict-related sexual violence
ICMP	International Commission on Missing Persons
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTY	UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IRMCT/Mechanism	UN International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
IRH	UNDP's Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and Central Asia
RBEC	Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures (in Beneficiaries' institutions)
SSPO	Special State Prosecutor's Office (of Montenegro)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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I. Executive Summary

The project “EU Support to Confidence Building in the Western Balkans” is implemented in the region of Western Balkans - Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia (hereinafter also referred to as “Beneficiaries” or “participating jurisdictions”). It helps step up institutions’ efforts for resolving the remaining backlogs of war crimes cases and missing persons, as the consequences of the conflicts in the region in the 1990ies, through strengthening the capacities of local judiciaries, law enforcement, and other relevant institutions as well as their regional collaboration in war crimes cases. The project also improves the frameworks and capacities of local actors to provide and secure rights and services to victims of war crimes. Finally, by working with and expanding, especially among the youth, the networks of civil society actors, activists, academics, young professionals, and new opinion leaders, it seeks to promote and enhance public support for accountability for war crimes, fact-based dialogue about the recent past, especially towards a shared understanding of the war crimes, and strengthen confidence and social cohesion with and among the societies across the region.

Summary of the key progress in 2024:

Under Output 1

- Significant steps were made towards the improvement of legal and policy frameworks in some of the participating jurisdictions: the four-year War Crimes Strategy adopted in Montenegro and the Transitional Justice Strategy in Kosovo; Standard Operating Procedures for the Institute of Missing Persons in BiH is underway; draft Law on Missing Persons in Serbia completed and awaiting adoption.
- Close to 200 justice practitioners (230 since the start of the project) from Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia (judges, prosecutors, their legal associates, police investigators, forensic experts, attorneys-at-law) involved in war crimes investigation, trials, and search for missing persons have undergone specific and tailor-made training and participated in other forms of knowledge transfers, based on the needs assessments from 2023. Training modules on an e-learning platform that would be available to practitioners across the region have been in preparation.
- An uptick in and improvement of cross-sectoral cooperation between the war crimes investigation institutions (prosecution offices, police) and institutions for search for missing persons, especially in BiH, with the first written and consolidated Standard Operational Procedures for the BiH Institute of Missing persons being developed.

Under Output 2

- Regional judicial cooperation has continued, including, notably, through periodical high-level meetings of prosecutors, and become more inclusive with Kosovo prosecutors and other judicial representatives

participating. A breakthrough has been achieved in case transfers from BiH to the neighboring countries, which should lead to trials in at least 24 cases against suspects who were at large in those countries, thus narrowing the impunity gap.

- The legal framework for regional judicial cooperation was further expanded and improved by Montenegro signing agreements on prosecutorial cooperation in victim and witness support in cross-border cases with BiH and Serbia.

Under Output 3

- At least 90 victim support professionals (115 since the start of the project) across the region trained by UNDP and 450 aid providers trained by CSO grantees, based on the needs assessment from the project inception phase.
- Cross-border cooperation in victim support reinvigorated and became more institutionalized (including through the signing of bilateral agreements); a network of over 40 victim support professionals from across the region created, meeting periodically and harmonizing practices and sharing experiences.
- Cross-sectoral policy dialogues between relevant national institutions and victim groups, especially in BiH, with over 200 victim representatives participating, provide a platform for dialogue on improving support mechanisms available to victims and their families and for them to receive information on the progress of war crimes cases and search for missing persons.
- The network of CSO support to victims across the region strengthened. CSO grantees provided support or capacity development directly to over 2000 victims as direct beneficiaries, enhanced skills and knowledge of around 450 support providers (healthcare and psychosocial support professionals, current and future CSO activists and volunteers), and significantly stepped up victim communities' public outreach and human-rights based advocacy.

Under Output 4

- Generated new cohorts of activists and opinion leaders to promote fact-based dialogue about the past; increased testing of new approaches, including using art and culture as a medium, in confidence building and reconciliation. Over 2000 individuals benefited from the activities supported by sub-grants as direct participants (in training and other educational programs, skill-building workshops, etc.) aimed at generating activists and professionals, especially among youth, who may be opinion leaders, knowledge-based decision makers, and public advocates at the local, national, or regional level.
- Between 1,8 and 1,9 million people were reached through information material and campaigns prepared or promoted by the grantees and disseminated.

Of the overall budget of 7 million EUR for the four-year implementation (2023-2026), the cost incurred in 2024 was 2,005,943 EUR, making the total of 3,665,446.03 EUR utilized since the beginning of the project.

The project is operating in the complex and sensitive social and political environments across the region, marked with conflicting narratives and interpretations of the recent past, which pose continuous risks and challenges for its implementation; they also include trust deficits among the institutional actor from different Beneficiaries, complex dynamics of relations and talks between Belgrade and Pristina, frequent elections, etc. The progress has been achieved in many areas and the challenges are being overcome by context-sensitive and adaptive planning and implementation and successful approaches in building and maintaining communication with and among the direct beneficiaries, their inclusive participation, identifying and expanding commonalities among them and focusing on technical aspects of regional cooperation and experience and knowledge sharing mechanism, maintaining status neutrality, and strengthening local ownership.

II. Introduction / Background

The project is addressing societal challenges in the five Beneficiaries from the Western Balkans that come from the consequences of the conflicts in the region during the 1990s, and the project seeks to help the institutions and the societies to overcome them in the areas of rule of law and human rights (or, more precisely, in what is referred to as post-conflict or transitional justice) and to strengthen social cohesion and build confidence between and within the societies.

While there has been a significant social and economic advancement of the Western Balkans region over the last decade, so as a general improvement in co-operation across the border and boundaries, the region, at the same time, continues to deal with unresolved issues and legacies of the conflicts in the 1990s. Transitional justice and reconciliation remain uncompleted, with politics and inter-ethnic tensions continuing to impact domestic and regional relations. Many war crimes cases remain unprocessed or blocked, which requires, i.a., strengthened regional judicial co-operation. Together with almost 10,000 persons still missing due to the conflict, this creates an impunity gap leaving victims and societies in grievances, anxiety, and division. Many victims need access to justice without re-traumatization and to social services and reparations. The public, especially young people, is largely unfamiliar with objective findings about war crimes committed in the 1990s, and the perception of the recent past and justice is marked with increasing voices of denial and revisionism and the antagonistic ethnic-based narratives and perceptions. These all create an environment of polarization and division not conducive to reconciliation and good neighbourly relations.

Against this background, the project provides **expertise and support** to better equip judicial and law enforcement authorities of the participating jurisdictions in **handling war crimes cases** at the domestic level, including through multi-disciplinary and cross-sectorial approaches in knowledge sharing and improvement of legal and policy frameworks (**Output 1**). It also aims to improve the conditions for **regional (cross-boundary/cross-jurisdictional) cooperation** in handling war crimes cases through bilateral and multilateral high- and technical-level peer-to-peer meetings and policy dialogues (**Output 2**). The project furthermore provides **expertise and support** to enhance victim-centred and gender-sensitive approaches in the handling of domestic war crimes cases, to increase the delivery of **support services to victims of war crimes** and their access to justice, and to strengthen the capacity of other relevant actors, especially civil society organisations (CSOs), that work with victims, at domestic level and across the region, including through the rolling out of a sub-granting scheme (**Output 3**). These three outputs will contribute to enhancing the **efficient and effective domestic handling of war crimes (Outcome 1)**. In parallel, the project provides expertise and support **to equip grassroots actors and young opinion leaders better to raise public awareness** of past crimes and promote **dialogues and exchanges** amongst a wide range of stakeholders such as youth, historians, academics, students, journalists, local community actors, and others. (**Output 4**). This is primarily to be achieved by setting up a sub-granting scheme supporting grassroots initiatives, with a strong consideration for promoting intra-regional partnerships. This output will contribute to an **increased and shared understanding of the crimes** committed during the 1990s conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia (**Outcome 2**). Overall, all the interventions will aim at increasing both accountability for war crimes in the region and the public support for it, and at enhancing dialogue within societies and between ethnic groups about crimes committed during the 1990s, all with the vision of achieving sustainable peace in the region and leaving more resilient societies with stronger social cohesion.

The project is implemented by the UNDP's Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and Central Asia (UNDP IRH) together with UNDP offices in the five Beneficiaries in the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). The project team of 16 UNDP staff is based in Belgrade, Podgorica, Sarajevo, Pristina and Skopje, in the respective UNDP offices, including the IRH's immediate regional team also based in Belgrade. The IRH responsible for the overall financial and programme management, guidance, quality assurance, and reporting.

III. Progress Review: Key Activities and Results

(1 January – 31 December 2024)

Section 1: Analysis of Theory of Change

All the assumptions underlying the Theory of Change (ToC) remain holding at the end of the second year of the project implementation. There has been sufficient political and institutional will among the judiciary, police and line ministries to accept the project and engage as partners and beneficiaries in the implementation and no major political obstacles have been detected in that regard. Victims, including victims groups and associations, as well as various stakeholders across the society, such as youth groups, CSOs, students, and young professionals (social scientists and researchers, academics, transitional justice and human rights advocates, and media workers) have also demonstrated a willingness to engage and partner up with the UNDP, not least through their participation in the project's sub-granting scheme and implementation of their projects supported by the sub-granting. The existing legal and institutional frameworks across the region remain sufficiently adequate for all the project components to be rolled out and implemented, while further important improvements of such frameworks remain among the project goals and certain significant steps have been made by the end of 2024, as explained in the report.

More effective and efficient local prosecution of war crimes will be achieved and delivery of support to victims strengthened, with local actors' and victims' capacities improved, by continuing to strengthen judicial and institutional capacities handling war crimes cases and searching for missing persons, regional judicial cooperation, and enhancing capacities of institutions as well as grassroots actors in providing victim support. Besides that, further expanding networks of various grassroots actors, and building their skills and expertise too, to raise public awareness of past crimes and engage in cross-societal and inclusive dialogue on the legacies of the 1990s conflicts, shared understanding of the crimes committed during the 1990s conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia will be increased and will contribute to social cohesion and a more sustainable peace.

The project strategy, with the ToC, is still relevant and brings the means to attain the objectives and no changes to the strategy and the ToC are proposed.

Section 2: Overall progress against outcomes



Local capacities for handling war crimes cases at the domestic level have been incrementally enhanced i.a. by training and other forms of knowledge transfer for justice and law enforcement professionals (with close to 230 individuals trained since the project start) and with the development of strategic internal documents, institutional settings, and legislation drafting including the adoption and implementation of the first comprehensive four-year War Crimes Investigation Strategy in Montenegro, Transitional Justice Strategy in Kosovo, drafting of the missing persons law in Serbia, and internal protocols for search for the missing persons in BiH. Conditions for regional co-operation in war crimes cases between judicial practitioners, mainly prosecutors are improving and gradually progressing from a medium towards a high level of mutual co-operation among the jurisdictions: UNDP-facilitated multilateral and bilateral regional prosecutors meetings remain a platform for advancing cross-border co-operation, addressing contentious issues, improving information and evidence transfer, and experience sharing; at least 53 regional cooperation actions (including rendering cross-border legal assistance, evidence sharing and other instances of operational cooperation) were reported to the project team, including, most notably, agreed transfer of 24 cases from BiH to the neighboring countries; new cross-border cooperation protocols between the prosecution offices of Montenegro, BiH, and Serbia have been signed.

Capacities of judicial and non-judicial victim support offices to provide gender-responsive justice and services have been gradually improved towards the medium level of development i.a. through training, by UNDP and CSO grantees, of at least 115 victim support officers and 450 other support providers (psychosocial and healthcare providers, activists and volunteers) throughout the region, expansion and continuation of the technical level meetings of victim support professionals from the region, more frequent dialogues between victim communities and institutions, especially in BiH, while victims' own support networks and advocacy platforms have been built or strengthened, i.a., through sub-grants that have benefited at least 2000 individuals.

This has brought progress towards the outcome level - more efficient and effective handling of war crimes cases and improved victims' access to justice and services. Data concerning actual increase in number of cases processed, or reduction of the case backlogs, across the region, as an indicator are not available yet. Some of such data, especially those concerning investigations, are usually confidential (as also explained below under Monitoring section). Moreover, moving a case from the phase of exchange of evidence and information and coordination of investigations, which are main topics of prosecutors' meetings facilitated by the project, to the trial phase and completion of a case by a court decision most often takes several years. Therefore, establishing more solid linkages and conclusions about the project activities' contributions towards more efficient case processing will be possible towards the end of the project.

The project successfully started enhancing the structure of grassroots actors and generating new cohorts of future opinion leaders to raise public awareness of past crimes and cross-societal and inclusive dialogue on the legacies of the 1990s conflicts, by, i.a. 27 selected CSO-led grassroots-level initiatives, of which 14 successfully completed, which, across the region, involved at least 2000 individuals (young professionals, academia, CSOs, media, youth) and at least 1,83 million people from the public at large. This, as planned by the ToC, further builds a pathway for increased shared understanding of the crimes committed during the 1990s conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia and contributes to social cohesion and a more sustainable peace in the sub-region, as the result at the outcome level. Upon analysing some of the local public opinion surveys by CSO grantees and completing a more comprehensive and regional public opinion survey, now planned for 2025 (Activity 4.1, below), concrete data will be available to assess trends and possible progress at national and regional levels.

Section 3: Monitoring of activities

Monitoring of the activities by the project team was regular. This was directly done by maintaining regular communication with the institutional beneficiaries as well as those from the civil sector, including the grassroots organizations and victims associations (meetings with the beneficiaries, field visits, telephone communication, correspondence, etc.). Apart from concrete activities directly organized and implemented by CSO grantees, other activities were organized directly by the project teams, based in all the five participating jurisdictions, which have monitored in-person developments, challenges, and progress during the implementation, including also collection of participants' surveys.

It should be noted that not all the data and information that are necessary or relevant for reporting against the indicators, especially those at outcome level, such as number of cases processed, are not always or yet available. They should come from the prosecution offices and courts and some of them are (still) confidential, especially those related to prosecution offices' or police's ongoing or planned investigations and some are available only a year or less after the reporting period: e.g. judicial statistics for the preceding year, are usually issued or made available in the second half of the next year (hence, those covering 2024 will be available later in 2025).

The regional public opinion survey which should, i.a., measure people's attitudes towards the issues concerning war crimes from the 1990s and other consequences of the conflicts and their acceptance of established facts, has not been conducted and is postponed for 2025 (more on that under Activity 4.1. below).

Activities organized and implemented directly by the CSOs, as part of their projects selected by UNDP and supported by the sub-grants (as explained in details below under activities 3.7 and 4.3), were monitored by the project team through, i.a., periodical monitoring field visits, attendance of some of the activities, receiving regular reports from the grantees and providing feedbacks.

Section 4: Progress against each output

Project Output 1: Judicial authorities in the region are better equipped to handle war crimes		
Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
# of judges, prosecutors, police investigators, court staff, attorneys, and professionals from other relevant institutions trained on war crimes case processing	Baseline: 0 2026 target: 500	Reporting period (2024): 206 individuals trained Cumulative total (since the start of the project in 2023): 231

Key Activities:

Activity 1.1: Assessment study of needs and capacities of the beneficiaries' institutions (courts, prosecution services, police investigation units, and other as relevant), including gender analysis, to handle and process war crimes cases

The needs assessment was completed in 2023. The findings and recommendations from the assessment are regularly used for planning and designing activities and for guiding and advising the beneficiaries on their capacity development and improvement of legal and policy framework.

Activity 1.2: Provision of expert and technical support to line ministries for improving domestic legal framework (laws, bylaws, regulations), strategies, and protocols

In the reporting period, **key national strategic documents** were adopted in Kosovo and Montenegro, prepared with support provided by the project, which set benchmarks and victim-centered operational guidance and action plans for processing war crimes cases and, in Kosovo, other mechanisms of post-conflict justice, for the next several years. They are also important steps in setting up proper and comprehensive frameworks for upholding the rule of law and human rights and a part of meeting the respective EU accession pathways' criteria. In BiH, major progress has been made in producing internal written standard operational procedures and guidelines for the institution in charge of search for missing persons.

In *Kosovo*, the final workshop of the Ministry of Justice's Working Group for drafting **the Transitional Justice Strategy** was supported in February 2024 in Pristina, where the final draft presented by the Ministry was discussed, leading to its concluding version. The Government approved the Strategy on June 13th 2024. UNDP will continue to support different institutions in Kosovo in their efforts to address dealing with the past. As a part of that, human resource expertise was provided to the Institute for Documenting Crimes Committed in Kosovo resulting in the development of the terms of references for all positions in the

Institute's organizational structure, successful recruitment of over 40 employees (record-high within the public administration), and full integration of the newly hired staff into its system, thus enhancing the Institute's long term operational capacities and expertise. Additionally, support was provided to the Institute to complete key additional tasks in its inception period, including training for the senior human resources officers and the development of the core values and principles, confidentiality policy, and a human resource manual essential for its functioning.

In *Montenegro*, the new four-year **War Crimes Investigation Strategy 2024-2027** for the prosecution service, with the accompanying **Action Plan**, was developed with the extensive support of two UNDP consultants (one local and one international, who were part of the drafting Working Group). They were adopted by the Montenegrin Supreme State Prosecutor's Office (SSPO) in June 2024. The Strategy represents the key benchmark document, and the first consolidated and elaborate document of its kind in the country, setting up strategic and operational goals and action points for four years with a view of establishing a war crimes cases prioritization system, strengthening institutional, infrastructural and personnel (including through training) capacities of the [Special State Prosecutor's Office, improvement of their inter-sectoral cooperation with other institutions, enhancement of the country's regional and international cooperation](#) in war crimes proceedings, establishing and [strengthening protection and support for victims and witnesses, improving mechanisms for resolving the fate of missing persons](#), and [increased transparency of war crimes proceedings and judicial reform processes](#). For the first time in developing a national war crimes judicial strategic document in the region, a representative of the local civil society participated, at UNDP's request, in the Strategy drafting. Besides being a document that should lead to creating better conditions for the domestic handling of war crimes cases so that they reach higher standards of quality and become accelerated, the document also contributes to advancing the country's EU accession and the fulfilment of the membership criteria in the rule of law area. [The SSPO publicly presented the Strategy and the Action Plan](#) in September, with the Supreme State Prosecutor and the Chief Special Prosecutor personally participating in the presentation and the ensuing debate. UNDP also supported the SSPO in developing a methodology for reporting on and evaluation of the Strategy implementation and training on the reporting on the Action Plan for key institutional focal points.

The Strategy and the Action Plan are in their implementation and the Montenegrin prosecution service has already initiated a number of actions required by the Strategy including i.a. [reviewing and reopening some earlier cases](#), as well as the actions that will be supported by UNDP such as training, drafting of bylaws, and signing of international co-operation agreements.



Figure 1 - Presentation of War Crimes Investigation Strategy 2024-2027 in Montenegro, September 2024



Figure 2 - Project activities gained additional exposure with the adoption of the Strategy

In a major step forward over many years in improving the institutional framework for the operation of the Institute for Missing Persons of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the country's institution with the mandate to work on the issue of persons that went missing during the conflict in the 1990ies), the UNDP-supported and -facilitated process of consolidating practices and developing for the first time a written set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Institute has advanced towards the completion. The SOP, expected to be finalized and adopted in early 2025, will consolidate and define many internal procedures within the Institute and better define and formalize its cooperation with the (police) State Investigation and Protection Agency of BiH and the BiH Prosecutor's Office in the process of information analysis, search for and documentation of missing persons cases, and exhumation and identification of the remains, in line with national and international legal frameworks and best practices. Such SOP, which is expected to streamline and improve the efficiency of the Institute's work and its cross-sectoral cooperation with other institutions, will also serve as a model for developing similar SOPs across the region.



Figure 3 - Round Table on Exhumations and Analytics in Mostar, BiH, March 2024, was a major step forward in improving the institutional framework for the operation of the Institute for Missing Persons of Bosnia and Herzegovina

For drafting the Law on Missing Persons in Serbia – see *below, under Activity 3.5*

Activity 1.3: Knowledge transfer for prosecution offices (POs), courts, police, defence attorneys, and other relevant authorities and stakeholders as appropriate

- The first and pilot training on international humanitarian law for a new cohort of 18 Montenegrin judges, prosecutors, and legal associates (11 women and 7 men) who will be dealing with war crimes cases was delivered in June 2024 (the [agenda](#) is accessible) under the auspices of the state's Center for Education in the Judiciary and Prosecution Service. A comparison between the pre- and post-tests developed by UNDP, which the participants took immediately before and after the seminar, showed that the average individual score was 2.75 times higher after the event, thus indicating the improvement in their knowledge and capacity. The training series continued with a three-day training, in September 2024, on conflict-related sexual violence crimes cases and modes of criminal liability (the [agenda](#) is accessible). The event also represented one of the first steps in the implementation of one of the key aspects of Montenegro's War Crimes Strategy. The materials from the two training courses have been included in the knowledge products repository of the Center for Education.
- An interactive workshop organised in Belgrade in October 2024 with the participation of a representative of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) improved the knowledge of 27 Serbian legal practitioners – judges and prosecutors and their legal assistants as well as private attorneys who represent victims and defendants in war crimes cases - on standards under the European Convention on Human Rights and the ECtHR's jurisprudence in the context of war crimes proceedings (the [agenda](#) is accessible).
- The project supported the participation of two representatives of the Kosovo Commission of Missing Persons in intensive training at the ICMP headquarters in the Hague, from 16 to 27 December 2024, to strengthen the Commission's international cooperation in addressing the issue of the missing persons and their technical knowledge about scientific DNA identification methods. The training focused especially on the next-generation sequencing method, which is soon expected to be accredited in Kosovo. A follow-up training course on DNA analysis will be organized in April 2025.
- In December 2024, 27 investigators (21 men and 6 women) from the Department for Investigation of War Crimes of the Kosovo Police were trained on gender-sensitive investigation of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) focusing on the concept and specifics of CRSV, clarification of the roles and responsibilities in the CRSV investigations, and how to proactively apply trauma-informed and gender-sensitive approaches in such investigations in Kosovo (the [agenda](#) is accessible).
- Six prosecutors from the War Crimes Department of the Kosovo Special Prosecution Office (SPRK) enhanced their skills for drafting indictments in complex war crimes cases and preparing case files for trial in a two-day workshop, in December in Pristina, which focused on command responsibility and joint criminal enterprise as most complex modes of criminal liability and on the cases prioritized for 2025 (the [agenda](#) is accessible). As a part of bolstering the SPRK's international knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer cooperation, the project also enabled the participation of the SPRK's Head of the War Crimes Department in last year's leading global conference on restorative justice and peace-building (in Bogota, Colombia, 25-26 November 2024), where the focus on discussions was on victim-centred approaches, prosecutorial strategies in addressing sexual violence in conflict, and reparations for survivors as a key mechanism for peacebuilding.
- An e-learning online module on international humanitarian law, which will include video lectures, written presentations, and quizzes on a number of thematic segments, is in preparation in Serbia. Once completed and uploaded, which is expected in March-April 2025, this tool will be embedded in the existing e-learning platform of the Serbian Judicial Academy, which guarantees sustainability and maintenance of the platform.

The Judicial Academy has committed to giving free individual access to all interested users (judicial and legal practitioners) across the region. The module can be used by anyone who understands Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian, or Montenegrin, and its translation into other languages of the region will be considered at a later stage. The e-learning module is planned and designed to be a long-term and sustainable source and solution for legal professionals across the region who are required or interested in learning or improving their knowledge of international humanitarian law as the area of law essential for war crimes cases.

- The cross-sectoral coordination workshops in BiH also have training and knowledge transfer purposes and effects for the prosecutors and police, but as they programmatically more directly belong to Activity 1.4 they are described below.

Activity 1.4: Internal cross-sectoral co-ordination meetings between judicial, law enforcement and other institutions towards enhancing practices and jurisprudence for handling war crimes

- Several BiH institutions – including investigators and analysts of the BIH Missing Persons Institute, prosecutors, police investigators, and Federal Administration of Civil Protection - were gathered to discuss ways to improve the search for missing persons, address challenges in their mutual co-ordination and achieve synergies between the search for the missing and war crimes investigations in two [two-day workshops](#) (one in Mostar, in March 2024, the [agenda accessible here](#), gathering 36 participants - 19 men and 17 women, and the other in Konjic, 29 October-1 November 2024, also with 36 participants - 24 men and 12 women. Representatives of the ICMP, ICRC, and the Mechanism also participated. Such workshops for developing analytical skills for searching for mass graves, collecting and analyzing evidence of missing persons and war crimes cases, and improving critically needed intersectoral cooperation in BiH - as the country with the largest case backlog and the highest number of missing persons in the region - will continue and are planned to result also in internal guidances and SOPs for these institutions.
- Two meetings were arranged in Serbia in 2024 between the Serbian prosecution service, police, and other relevant institutions making steps towards closer and more coordinated intersectoral cooperation in war crimes cases. One of the meetings was dedicated in particular to improving witness protection and, as a result, several recommendations were made for passing or amending bylaws for better cross-sectoral communication and cooperation in protecting witnesses' identities, which will be for the country's ministries of justice and interior respectively to turn into concrete actions towards changing the relevant witness protection legal framework in Serbia.

Activity 1.5: Regional peer-to peer knowledge and experience sharing meetings on handling war crimes cases, particularly targeting young professionals in the authorities

One of the key legal challenges in war crimes cases, and criminal proceedings in general, admissibility of evidence received from foreign jurisdictions in the region and from the International Residual Mechanism, was addressed in the [two-day peer-to-peer forum](#) for consultations and experience sharing that gathered 36 (18 women and 18 men) judges, prosecutors, and, for the first time, defense lawyers, organized in Budva, Montenegro, in April 2024 ([Agenda](#) and the [List of Participants](#) are accessible). This was the first gathering of judicial professionals, not only in this project but in connection to war crimes cases in the Balkans, where legal professionals from all the five project beneficiaries participated (with representatives of Croatia and the Mechanism attending as well). This regional meeting provided valuable insights for all the participants into the complexities of prosecuting war crimes in the jurisdictions across the Western Balkans and highlighted the importance of cross-border cooperation, familiarity with procedures, standards,

and practices in the neighbouring jurisdictions, and alignment with international legal standards. Moving forward, continued efforts to harmonize practices, enhance mutual trust, and strengthen regional judicial cooperation will be essential for advancing war crimes trials and dealing with serious crimes in general and thus achieving the objectives of reconciliation and sustainable peace in the Western Balkans.



Figure 4 - The first gathering of judicial professionals from the W. Balkans in connection to war crimes cases with the participation from all the five project Beneficiaries – peer-to-peer forum in Budva, Montenegro, April 2024

Project Output 2: Improved conditions for regional cooperation in war crimes proceedings		
Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
2.1 # of documented regional cooperation actions in handling war crimes 2.2 # judges, prosecutors, attorneys, other relevant justice and law	Baseline: 2.1: 0 2.2: 0 2.3: Low/Medium	Reporting period (2024): 2.1: at least 38 regional cooperation actions ¹ 2.2: 133 individuals participated in regional

¹ The number includes transfers of cases, transfers of evidence, mutual requests for cross-border legal assistance, agreed bilateral protocols, and other instances of cross-border/regional cooperation in war crimes proceedings among the five participating jurisdictions, chiefly among BiH, Serbia, Montenegro; cooperation of the participating jurisdictions (Action's Beneficiaries) with Croatia for cases processed by their justice authorities also count. The data is based on the monitoring by the project team and information received in the communication with the partner local judicial institutions and the Mechanism; full and official data on mutual requests and other forms of regional co-operation are not available yet or cannot be available if related to the investigation phase.

enforcement officials participating in regional peer-to-peer meetings related to cross-border co-operation in war crimes handling supported by the action 2.3 level of regional cooperation between prosecution offices improves	2026 target: 2.1: 80 regional cooperation actions 2.2: 170 individuals participating in regional cooperation 2.3: Medium/High	cooperation² 2.3: Medium towards High Cumulative total: 2.1: at least 53 regional cooperation actions 2.2: 185 individuals participated in regional cooperation 2.3: Medium towards High
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² The number includes prosecutors, police investigators, judges and other officials participating in the regional multilateral prosecutorial or judicial meetings and conferences, including peer-to-peer meetings under Activity 1.5, and in bilateral operational meetings (based on information obtained from the prosecution offices or evidenced by the project team's participation in such bilateral meetings).

Activities 2.1 and 2.2: Regional (multilateral and bilateral, technical, and high-level) peer-to-peer meetings, dialogues and mutual working visits of prosecutors and judicial officials and representatives of other relevant authorities for improving regional co-operation in war crimes proceedings (with participation of the IRMCT)

- The [annual regional conference of prosecutors](#) on mutual cooperation in processing war crimes cases was organized and co-hosted by UNDP, together with the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office of Montenegro, in Podgorica, on 17-18 September 2024. It gathered chief national or chief war crimes prosecutors from BiH, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, as well as the Chief Prosecutor of the IRMCT (Mechanism). The event is a continuation of the UNDP-facilitated process of strengthening regional judicial cooperation in war crimes proceedings in the Western Balkans, which includes, i.a., holding high-level regional meetings of prosecutors at least once a year under the UNDP auspices and with strong national/regional ownership.

The national prosecutors agreed to increase the mutual transfer of cases, especially between BiH, Serbia, and Croatia, and to prepare and start transferring concrete cases from the Prosecution Office of BiH to Serbia (12 cases) and to Croatia (another 12 cases). This has been a major breakthrough in the regional cooperation in war crimes proceedings over the past years. The prosecutors also agreed to intensify their work on encouraging witnesses to testify in war crimes trials in the neighbouring jurisdictions; to conclude bilateral agreements on cooperation regarding witness support between those national prosecution offices that have not concluded such agreements yet (which resulted in the signing of such agreements by Montenegro with BiH and Serbia at the end of 2024); to make more use of the ICTY/IRMCT's documentary evidence. They agreed also to assist victims in submitting their claims for compensation to the courts to address them already in the course of the criminal proceedings, instead of referring the victims to cumbersome and additionally traumatizing civil proceedings.

The prosecutors from the region appreciated continuous UNDP and EU support in the processes of regional cooperation and agreed to increase bilateral and trilateral meetings for addressing concrete cases, investigations, evidence transfers, or other issues of mutual interest, especially in preparation for the case transfers.

The event was the first multilateral prosecutorial meeting to have brought high-level prosecutors from all the jurisdictions from the region, including, for the first time in the same meeting, Serbian and Kosovo prosecutors. While a breakthrough and progress in bilateral cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia had been neither realistically expected at this stage nor achieved, as it depends mainly on the Brussels talks between the Serbian and Kosovo political leaderships, the meeting showed a model of a multilateral forum where practitioners from both jurisdictions can engage in constructive knowledge sharing and beneficial practical dialogue with their peers across the region.



Figure 5 - The first multilateral prosecutorial meeting to have brought high-level prosecutors from all the jurisdictions in the region – High-level Prosecutors' meeting in Podgorica, Montenegro, September 2024

- Facilitation of and support towards advancing cross-border cooperation of the prosecution offices, especially following up on the commitments made in the Podgorica conference, has been a part of the continuous engagement of the project team throughout the year which, for that purpose, has been maintaining regular communication with the national prosecution offices and the Office of the Prosecutor of the Mechanism.

The prosecution offices from the region also continued to have bilateral communication concerning concrete cases following their agreements reached at the October 2023 regional prosecutors conference in Sarajevo and the September 2024 conference in Podgorica. Of most important bilateral meetings, the Prosecutor's Office of BiH made four bilateral visits (in March, June, November, and December 2024) to the Public Prosecutor's Office for War Crimes of Serbia regarding the exchange of evidence and co-ordination on investigations and transfer of cases. Two bilateral meetings were held between the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of Montenegro and the Serbian Prosecutor's Office for War Crimes, in Montenegro and Serbia respectively. In addition to bilateral meetings within the region, the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor's Office made two bilateral visits to the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the Mechanism which primarily served to discuss the transfer of evidence and cases from the Mechanism, but also between Serbia and the jurisdictions in the region, which the OTP also facilitates and supports.

- A number of activities reported under Outputs 1 and 3 aimed at training and other types of knowledge and experience sharing that included participants and/or trainers from different jurisdictions in the region also had an effect of furthering regional cooperation and addressing concrete matters of bilateral or multilateral cross border judicial and police cooperation. This was both by design and because the participants and the trainers use the opportunity to discuss concrete problems and solutions with their colleagues from the region in an event they attend. For example, the regional judicial conference in Montenegro in April (reported under Output 1) provided a forum where many concrete issues regarding

the mutual admissibility of evidence were addressed and it represented a part of continuing efforts to harmonize practices, enhance mutual trust, and strengthen regional judicial cooperation.

Activity 2.3. Technical advice for developing and/or amending policy and legal frameworks to further foster cross-border co-operation on war crimes handling

The legal framework for cross-border judicial cooperation in the region has been supplemented with two new agreements: the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office of Montenegro, also in the course of the implementation of its War Crimes Strategy (see above under Activity 1.2), signed the Agreements on Understanding and Cooperation in the field of Witness and Victim Support in War Crimes Proceedings [with the Prosecutors Office of BiH](#) (on 5 November 2024, in Sarajevo) and [with the Public Prosecutor's Office for War Crimes of Serbia](#) (on 6 December 2024, in Belgrade, with the participation of the UNDP's Regional Project Manager). The agreements, prepared with the help of UNDP-facilitated regional meetings and following the first such agreement signed in 2023 between the BiH and the Serbian prosecutors' offices and based on a model previously developed by UNDP, will enable faster and more efficient cooperation in war crimes cases by improving protocols for arranging for testimonies and participation in proceedings by witnesses and victims who reside in one country and need to testify in the other. Montenegro is also discussing with Croatia to amend the cooperation agreement in war crimes cases that has been in place since 2013 between the prosecution offices of the two states.

Project Output 3: Increased delivery of gender-sensitive support services to victims and witnesses of war crimes and stronger capacity of relevant actors

Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
3.1.# of sub-grants of the action successfully implemented by civil society partners	<u>Baseline</u> 3.1: 0 3.2: 0 3.3: 0	<u>Reporting period (2024):</u> 3.1: 14 sub-grants implemented (9 completed) ³ 3.2: at least 2000 individual victims reached out and benefited from the sub-grants ⁴ 3.3: 90 victim support officers trained; 450 support providers (healthcare and psychosocial support professionals, CSO activists, volunteers) trained by grantees
3.2. # of individuals especially women victims of conflict related sexual and gender-based violence) benefitting from sub-grants and activities to improve access to justice and services	<u>2026 target:</u> 3.1: 40 sub-grants 3.2: 400 individuals benefitting 3.3: 200 victim and witness support officers trained	<u>Cumulative total:</u> 3.1: 14 sub-grants implemented (9 completed) 3.2: at least 2000 individual victims reached out and benefited from the sub-grants 3.3: 115 victim support officers trained; 450 support providers (healthcare and psychosocial support professionals, CSO activists, volunteers) trained by grantees
3.3 # of victim and witness support officers trained on techniques of interacting with sensitive victims and cross-border co-operation		

³ Activity 3.7.

⁴ Based on the reports from the CSO grantees available as of January 2025; 9 sub-granted projects are still in the implementation.

Activity 3.1. Update of UNDP's 2019 regional needs assessment report on institutional capacities and needs in the area of victim support (with special attention to gender responsive justice for women victims and survivors of armed conflicts) to tailor the activities and streamline interventions with EU acquis in the area.

The needs assessment was completed in 2023. The findings and recommendations from the assessment are regularly used for planning and designing activities and for guiding and advising the beneficiaries on their capacity development and improvement of legal and policy framework.

Activity 3.2.: Capacity building to strengthen support for victims of CRSV and other war crimes and to enhance capacity of victim and witness support services from relevant institutions

- At a workshop in Belgrade, in March, 14 Serbian legal practitioners—judges, prosecutors, and legal assistants from the war crimes departments—improved their knowledge on awarding compensation to victims within the course of war crimes proceedings through discussion with their BiH colleagues about this country's experiences and best practices. This is essential for making war crimes trials in Serbia more victim-centered and gender-responsive and for redress to victims to be more available and efficient (the [Agenda](#) is accessible).
- The project enabled the participation of 10 representatives of victim support services (6 women and 4 men), from all the five Beneficiaries in the Victim Support Europe's 2024 Annual Conference – 'The Bridge Over Troubled Water: Celebrating and Strengthening Victim Support' (22-23 May in Zagreb, Croatia). The conference is the largest and widely considered the leading annual meeting of victim support professionals in Europe and beyond. It gave a unique capacity-building and networking opportunity to the professionals from the beneficiary institutions, ranging from courts and prosecution offices to national CRSV commissions and municipal victim support centers, especially for learning about the most contemporary trends and practices of various national victim support systems. Participants from the beneficiary institutions also gave a presentation about their experiences working with war crime victims from the region.
- As a part of enhancing the capacities of the judicial and prosecutorial victims and witness support services, a joint training was organised for 16 professionals (12 women and 4 men) from such services from Serbia and BiH, in Novi Sad, Serbia, on 5-6 June (the [Agenda](#) is accessible). The training, led by a clinical psychologist and systemic therapist, was dedicated to stress-coping techniques and peer-to-peer counselling of the victim support professionals. A similar three-day training program about stress management and burnout prevention was organized in November 2024, at Jahorina (BiH) for 38 professionals (14 women and 24 men) from BiH institutions – police investigators, prosecutors, employees of the BiH Missing Persons Institute. Such workshops, based on the recommendations from the needs assessment in 2023 and the conclusions of the 2023 regional victims support conference in Skopje, have been recognized as one of the most urgent needs and serve to help the professionals who are continuously exposed to elevated stress and trauma transfers while working on war crimes investigations, search for mass graves, and with victims and survivors to detect, manage, and cope with such challenges. In such ways, they help increase institutional efficiency and resilience through human-centred approach.
- Skills and knowledge of 10 policemen from the Serbian Police War Crimes Investigation Service were improved with regard to interviewing and interrogation techniques. The seminar, including i.a. role-playing and self-assessment techniques, organized in Belgrade, in October 2024, and led by two experienced experts and police investigators from BiH, addressed the psychology of interviewing, understanding the

impact of trauma, preventing repeated and secondary victimization, advanced interrogation and interviewing gender-informed techniques, witness statements analysis, as well as strategies to mitigate the police investigators' own professional burnout ([the agenda](#) accessible).

Activity 3.3: Regional (multilateral, bilateral) peer-to-peer meetings of victim and witness support services (from courts, prosecution offices, police, and other relevant institutions)

The series of annual regional experience-sharing meetings of victim and witness support professionals launched in 2023 with the conference in Skopje continued in 2024, on 5-6 November 2024 in Ohrid, North Macedonia with the gathering of [over 40 professionals from the victims support services](#), mainly from the justice sector, of the five beneficiary jurisdictions from the Western Balkans, Croatia, and, on this occasion, also Ukraine. Deputy Director of Brussels-based Victim Support Europe, the leading global NGO for victim support, also participated as an external expert. The participants shared experiences and best practices from the Western Balkans, as well as Ukraine - another country that deals with a large number of victims of the conflict and war crimes, and learned of recent developments in victim support practices across the region, including updates on domestic frameworks and standards developed within the EU and international bodies including anticipated amendments to the 2012 EU Directive on victims' rights. They discussed preparing victims for trials, individual assessment of victims' needs, stress and trauma management, and collaboration and coordination across borders and within the jurisdictions among court services, prosecutors, police and medical and psychosocial professionals for more comprehensive victim care policies. The participating professionals agreed on the necessity to continue and advance their mutual cross-border cooperation including operational co-ordination and knowledge and experience sharing.



Figure 6 - Annual regional experience-sharing meeting of victim support professionals, Ohrid, North Macedonia, November 2024

Activity 3.4: Regional and domestic cross-sectoral policy dialogues of institutions and victim groups on improving victim support mechanisms available to victims and their families

- In collaboration with the BiH Institute for Missing Persons, the cross-sectoral policy dialogues in BiH between the authorities and victim groups on improving support mechanisms available to victims and their families resumed with two round tables between the associations of the families of missing persons and representatives of the country's various institutions involved in the search for the missing (the Institute, prosecution, police), also involving relevant international organizations such as ICMP and ICRC. The events,

held in Lukavac, in Tuzla Canton, in April 2024, and Travnik, Central Bosnia Canton, in October 2024, focused on the victims and cases of the missing from the specific geographical areas of BiH, and gathered 77 representatives (44 women and 33 men) of local victims' associations and families ([Agenda](#) is accessible). The conclusions of the meeting called, i.a., for wider public awareness about the issue of unsolved cases of missing persons and stronger involvement of religious leaders.

- Three similar meetings in Serbia, in June, August, and December 2024, between Serbian victims associations - mainly those gathering the families of the missing persons - and the Serbian Missing Persons Commission, prosecutors, and police investigators were also supported as a part of the continuing dialogue between victims and Serbian search and criminal investigation authorities.
- Two associations gathering missing persons families from Serbian, Albanian and other communities from Kosovo (Kosovo-based *Missing Persons Resource Center* and Serbia-based *Association of the Families of Kosmet Victims*) jointly convened [two one-day roundtables in Belgrade and Pristina](#) in December 2024. The events, also marking the International Human Rights Day, with almost 80 participants, brought together Kosovar and Serbian members of the missing persons families associations and representatives of the missing persons institutions, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies from both sides (in Belgrade – Serbian, in Pristina – Kosovar), so as international organizations and interested embassies, to discuss how to accelerate the search for missing persons, respect and improve their families, share information on active missing persons cases, and address challenges the families of victims of all the ethnic communities in Serbia and Kosovo have been facing. These events are currently the only platform for the missing person's families from both communities to jointly meet with the relevant authorities and the project will continue to support them in 2025.

Such gatherings of victims' and institutions' representatives in BiH, Kosovo, and Serbia represent a platform for dialogue, coordination and information sharing between the victim communities and institutions. They give a unique opportunity to the victims' communities to hear relevant and updated information from the authorities on the progress of investigations, search and identification processes, challenges, and situation analysis, for the victims to advance their advocacy for the realization of their rights under national and international law in the respective countries, and to improve the communication of relevant institutions with victims and other affected communities.

Activity 3.5: Provision of expertise for improving policy and legal framework for victim support and victim reparations (laws, bylaws, protocols for supporting victims, reparations strategies and policies), gender mainstreaming, and aligning them with EU acquis.

Expert support was provided for drafting the Law on Missing Persons in Serbia. UNDP's consultant was assigned to the government's Working Group (WG), as the WG's lead expert, which completed the draft law in December 2024. This has been the most significant step forward in Serbia over many years regarding reparations to victims. UNDP, together with victim groups it supported, continuously advocated for such a law to be passed in Serbia which will comprehensively address and regulate many rights of the families of missing persons based on the principle of social solidarity, including their right to compensation, like elsewhere in the region. An inclusive and expert public debate about the draft law, with the support of the project, is expected to be opened by the Serbian Government in February 2025 and the draft law tabled for adoption in the Parliament in spring 2025 (with the exact timing depending on local political circumstances and the announced Government reshuffle).

Activity 3.6: Technical assistance for developing and providing information materials to victims and their families as right holders (toolkits, booklets, print and online materials on their rights in criminal proceeding, access to existing reparations, access to services, etc.)

A new information brochure for victims and witnesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the rights, support services, and reparations in criminal proceedings has been developed. It is in the final designing stage, and upon approval by the Court of BiH will be printed in early 2025.

Activity 3.7: Sub-grants for CSOs, including victims associations, for assisting victims and survivors and their families in gender-informed and -sensitive manner locally or regionally

Following a public call for proposals, in July 2023, in BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia, 14 projects submitted by CSOs were selected for sub-granting to assist victims, survivors, and their families in a gender-responsive manner: in BiH - 4 grants, in Kosovo – 3, in Montenegro – 2, and Serbia – 5, in the total value of 810,291 EUR. The 2023 Annual Report covered in more detail the application and selection process, and presented the [Summaries](#) of the selected grant proposals.

Of the 14 selected projects, 9 will be completed by the end of January 2025 and 5, which were either designed to end in 2025 or were granted extensions based on their justifications, are to be finished by mid-2025; approximately 108,000 EUR already committed through the grant agreements is still to be disbursed to these grantees in the first half of 2025. Some of the completed projects were still expected to share their final reports and knowledge products by the time of submission of this progress report. The interventions made by the grantees through the selected projects included, i.a., the provision of psychological support and legal services for victims of war crimes, rehabilitation of individual victims, specific aid to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) survivors, training of institutional service providers and trauma centers, search for missing persons, advocacy for victims rights including legislative changes and systemic solutions, memorialization and commemoration initiatives, publishing books and monographs, etc. A more comprehensive account of the results, products and progress achieved through grant implementation, including lessons learned, would be more suitable for a separate thematic report, especially once all the CSO projects are completed. Trying to balance between the need to substantially report on the sub-granting, on the one side, and a good practice of not making the project's overall annual report too lengthy and overly detailed, on the other, most of the implemented sub-granted CSO projects will be presented below, per each participating jurisdiction, outlining their key and distinctive accomplishments. (The same approach will be followed in reporting on sub-grants under Output 4, further below.)

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Center for Women's Rights from Zenica supported victims and survivors, including the returnees, mainly women, civilian victims of war, and their family members from the municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac in Eastern Bosnia in better access to justice and institutional services. The Center delivered 130 sessions with a total of 1803 free legal aid services and provided legal counselling and psychological assistance to 560 individuals (528 women and 32 men). The grantee built the partnership with the local social welfare center in Srebrenica which will enable continuous delivery of legal aid and future sustainability and institutionalization of free legal aid and support services through its integration into the local support system. In addition, through educational sessions and field visits, they reached out to 244 individuals (195

women and 49 men) mainly in Srebrenica, but also in Bratunac, informing them of their rights and available resources and training them how to assist civilian victims of war, or gender based violence of other violence in their local communities. One of the final products was the publication "Challenges of Sustainable Return in the Municipality of Srebrenica."

Vive žene from Tuzla had a two-prong project: one component dedicated to improving support for victims and witnesses of war crimes, and the other was the intergenerational confrontation of the past and overcoming transgenerational trauma. Through all activities, the grantee's project included 381 participants (90 men and 291 women), of which 113 were war victims (90 women and 23 men), 200 students (150 women and 50 men) and 68 professionals (51 women and 17 men from public institutions (local cantonal ministries, mental health centers, social work centers, clinical center, university). Support to victims included workshops to increase victims readiness to testify, focusing particularly on managing physical reactions and preparing for cross-examinations and strengthening also cooperation among the victims associations and their organizational development. Over 50 victims and witnesses received direct psychological and emotional support during the criminal proceedings and post-testimony assistance. The second component of their project explored and pioneered novel approaches through workshops bringing together war victims and youth to speak in innovative ways about dealing with the wartime past and building peace in BiH. Two series of workshops were organized: one for intergenerational group of 30 participants – of which 9 victims of torture (6 women and 3 men) and 19 university students from Tuzla, which combined lectures and discussions on transitional justice with psychological and emotional support and experience sharing sessions. The other was with 44 participants (36 women and 8 men), of which 8 were victims (3 men and 5 women) and 30 students (4 men and 26 women), which resulted in 4 documents on intergenerational experience in dealing with the past, in the publication "Intergenerational Dialogue: Stories of Survivors and Student Messages", a [documentary "Together for Remembrance"](#) about the process of intergenerational dialogue about the past, and [a short video](#). The project was finalized with the round table discussion "Intergenerational Dealing with the Past—The Importance of Nurturing the Culture of Remembrance", in cooperation with the University of Tuzla and local victims' associations, and the final [conference "Rehabilitation, reparation, and intergenerational coping with the past,"](#) with 100 participants,

including victims of torture, legal and psychological experts, representatives of international organizations, students, and academia.

Women of Una, from Bihać, focused also on victims and witnesses in war crimes cases, and families of victims and survivors. They created a model of standard operating procedures for various victim support professionals - from CSOs to public social and healthcare centers to support victims and witnesses involved in war crimes cases - offering guidance for both individual and group therapeutic treatments, counselling and comprehensive information on various forms of assistance available. An analysis of the social needs of victims, survivors, and their families was produced (revealing a continuous lack of adequate psychological support, family counselling, medical rehabilitation, financial assistance, and employment opportunities). In addition, the grantee also delivered: 52 training and therapy sessions in mental health centers in five municipalities in the northwest Bosnia for victims and their family members; training of 19 employees of the mental health centers to provide targeted assistance for trauma recovery and of 40 employees of local social work and mental care centers and CSO activists on communication with and referral pathways for the survivors of sexual violence crimes; bulletins and informational materials for victims; procurement of



Figure 1 - CSO Vive žene organized commemoration of June 19, the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, with the message “Women build peace together”, in Brčko, BiH, June 2024

low-value equipment (IT and communication tools, furniture, art supplies, and other materials for hands-on activities) for five mental healthcare centers in the municipalities of Bihać, Velika Kladuša, Ključ, Sanski Most, and Bosanski Petrovac.

Kosovo

Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims established and ran a free legal clinic for CRSV survivors and other vulnerable groups in Kosovo providing specialized legal aid, psychosocial support, promoting and supporting survivors’ access to justice and a holistic approach to services. Besides directly engaging with the survivors, it also trained 27 professionals from social and mental health centers across Kosovo to support CRSV survivors using a trauma-informed approach and 10 Free Legal Aid Agency officials. The center also published a case study on survivors’ perspectives of justice, amplifying their voices while

examining challenges and underscoring the need for inclusive justice mechanisms, published survivors' personal stories, and promoted inter-ethnic cooperation and community engagement in Kosovo.

Medica Gjakova, whose project is still ongoing, also focused on CRSV survivors. It has provided legal support to CRSV survivors, including help to file their submissions or complaints to the Commission for CRSV Survivors (resulting in successful compensation in several cases and moving previously unresolved cases forward), preparation for testifying in war crimes trials, and filing criminal charges against suspected perpetrators. It has also provided psychosocial support to the survivors through 55 individual, 29 family, and 18 group sessions across many Kosovo towns and villages and contributed to the economic empowerment of women survivors by providing five small sub-grants to support their start-up businesses. Medica Gjakova also produced two thematic short videos to raise public awareness; an audio clip from one of the videos was broadcast on multiple local and central radio stations, and the videos were aired on various television channels; lately it presented a report to raise awareness and provide concrete recommendations for effective support and institutional interventions for the benefit of the Kosovo conflict CRSV survivors.

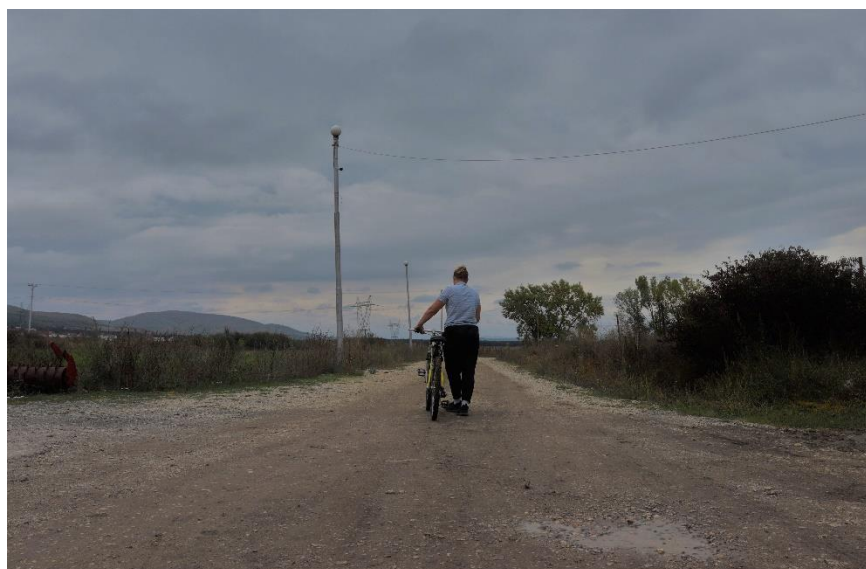


Figure 8 - Through the grants to Medica Gjakova, CRSV survivors in Kosovo received mini-grants for their economic empowerment

Democracy Plus mapped and then mentored and coached 10 local CSOs to fundraise and achieve financial sustainability, organize campaigns and engage in public advocacy for improving the rights and status of the victims and survivors.

Montenegro

Civic Alliance, within the project "Culture of Remembrance for a Brighter Future", formed [a network of activists](#) (24 people - 12 women and 12 men) who are dealing with war crimes in Montenegro and organized two three-day trainings for the network of activists and grassroots organizations who support the victims. Additionally, the organization developed a [publication on the testimonies of the victims](#).

Within the project “Together towards justice – legal, psychological and social support for victims of war crimes”, **Human Rights Action (HRA)** produced a [public opinion survey among the citizens of Herceg Novi](#) about the war crime of deportation (of dozens of Bosniak refugees from BiH who sought shelter in this Montenegrin city at the beginning of the war in 1992 and were forcibly deported to BiH, most of whom were later killed). The survey showed, i.a., that most of the citizens do not know facts about the war crime that occurred in their city in 1992 while the majority have a neutral stance towards erecting a monument to the victims. The HRA also [actively advocated for the rights and status definition of the civilian victims of war](#).

Serbia

Romani Asvin organized a youth camp for 25 young people (16 women and 9 men), mostly from the Roma community, including many of the victims’ family members, discussing topics of transitional justice and reconciliation, but also prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes, and promoting inclusion and empowerment of Roma, as a particularly vulnerable and additionally marginalized group, in victims’ rights advocacy and reconciliation efforts.

Two associations gathering Serb victims from Kosovo, including families of the missing persons, continued their advocacy for victims' rights but also engaged in memorialization efforts. **“The Association of the Families of Kosmet Victims”** produced and published a three-lingual (in Serbian, Albanian, and English) [publication “We share the same pain”](#). It features personal stories of victims and family members of the missing from Serbia and Kosovo - from ethnic Serb, Albanian, Roma and other communities - as the only such multiperspective and multiethnic collection of personal accounts, emphasizing also the evolving co-operation with their partner victims association from Kosovo and building their mutual trust. **“The Association of the Families of Kidnapped and Missing Persons from Kosovo and Metohija”** produced [50 video testimonials](#) of young family members of the missing persons from the Kosovo conflicts about their growing up, challenges, and search for truth and justice.

International Aid Network (IAN) empowered victims, mainly wartime detention camp inmates and torture victims, from the Bratunac, Višegrad, and Birač areas of Eastern Bosnia - Bosniak and Serbs alike - to testify in war crimes investigations and trials before the courts in Serbia and BiH and mitigated the effects of re-traumatization during their participation in the proceedings. More precisely, it provided group psychological support for 74 survivors and victims (51 men and 23 women), individual psychological support for 64 survivors (50 men and 24 women), and medical and psychiatric assistance for more than 80 survivors. In addition, IAN also reached out to 13 individuals from the local victims' associations from the aforementioned geographical areas and improved their capacities for fundraising, managing and administering projects.

Activity 3.8: Surveys among victims, using focus groups, and other data collection (disaggregated by gender, age, and other relevant criteria) for updating needs assessment and evaluation of the project implementation

Some of the grantees’ projects, under Activity 3.7, include focus groups and certain types of surveys and research among the victim communities. Once all the CSO projects under that activity are completed, the results will be available to the project team for analysis and comparisons. For that reason, no separate surveys or focus groups have been solicited yet by UNDP as there would be no significant added value for money at this point in time.

Project Output 4: Grassroots actors better equipped to raise public awareness and foster mutual understanding through fact-based dialogue about crimes committed during the conflicts in the 1990s on the territory of the former Yugoslavia		
Output indicators	Targets	Progress against targets
4.1. # of initiatives related to the 1990s conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, led by civil society organisations and supported by the action 4.2. # of people participating in reconciliation events related to the 1990s conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia 4.3 # of people reached through information materials/ campaigns prepared or promoted by the action and disseminated through social and mainstream media 4.4. # of civil society and media representatives participating in public awareness raising events supported by the action.	<u>Baseline:</u> 4.1: 0 4.2: 0 4.3: 0 4.4: 0 <u>2026 target:</u> 4.1: 30 initiatives 4.2: 300 people participating in reconciliation events 4.3: 120,000 people reached 4.4: 130 media and civil society representatives reached	<u>Reporting period (2024):</u> 4.1: 27 initiatives implemented by CSOs (sub-grants), 14 completed⁵ 4.2: at least 2000 individuals, mainly students and young professionals, participated in the grant-supported events (public awareness raising and skill/knowledge building workshops, etc.) 4.3: at least 1,83 million people reached through the grant-supported actions 4.4: app. 650 media and civil society representatives participated in the grant-supported actions; 10 journalists trained by UNDP <u>Cumulative total:</u> 4.1: 27 initiatives implemented by CSOs (sub-grants), 14 completed 4.2: at least 2000 individuals, mainly students and young professionals, participated in the grant-supported events (public awareness raising and skill/knowledge building workshops, etc.) 4.3: at least 1,83 million people reached through the grant-supported actions 4.4: app. 650 media and civil society representatives participated in the grant-supported actions, 23 journalists trained by UNDP

⁵ Activity 4.3.

Activity 4.1: Regional study on public perceptions, behavioral insights and communications needs regarding war crimes trials and other transitional justice processes

Due to several public opinion surveys planned by CSOs in 2023-2024 and because of certain political circumstances in the region, the public perception study was postponed for 2025 to avoid overlapping as well as adverse effects of the political conditions on public perceptions that the planned survey should measure. Namely, several CSOs projects supported by the low-value grants and public perception studies on similar issues designed by other CSOs were planned in the reporting period. Several political developments, including the adoption of the Srebrenica Resolution by the UN General Assembly in May 2024 and the strong reactions it caused in the political and public discourse in Serbia and among the constituencies in BiH and Montenegro, were assessed as potentially causing sensitivities and reactions across the public in the region that could have led to results obtained through the public survey to be somewhat different than in other years thus representing a risk that informed the project manager's decision to postpone the activity for 2025.

Activity 4.2: Development of victim-centered and gender informed communication strategies to help identify training/learning support, advocacies, and communications initiatives targeting common awareness and understanding of war crimes

The project team has continued dialogues with the partner prosecution offices, courts and other institutions from the participating jurisdictions on how to improve communication between the judiciary, law enforcement and institutions for search for missing persons and the media, the public at large, as well as with victims communities or particularly affected groups (such as women victims, families of missing persons, victims of wartime torture, etc.). This also intersects with Activity 4.4. Communication and public outreach were regularly a part of discussions between victim communities and representatives and institutions under Activity 3.4 described above.

Steps to increase and improve public communication and outreach to victims and other affected communities were a part of the adopted War Crimes Strategy in Montenegro and will also be addressed by the SOPs for the BiH Institute of Missing Persons that is under preparation (as reported under Activity 1.2).

Activity 4.3: Sub-grants for civil society (CSOs, including victims associations, think tanks, academia , media associations, culture operators, etc.), especially at grassroots level, for dealing with legacies of the conflicts and promoting reconciliation

Following a public call for proposals, in July-August 2023, in all the five Beneficiaries, 27 CSO projects were selected for sub-granting under this programmatic Output: in BiH - 6 grants, Kosovo – 6, Montenegro – 3, North Macedonia – 5, and Serbia – 7, with the total value of 1,383,728 EUR. The 2023 Annual Report covered in detail the application and selection process, and presented the [Summaries](#) of the selected grant proposals.

Of the 27 selected projects, 14 were completed by the end of January 2025 and 13 are to be finished by mid-2025; most of them were planned to be completed in 2025 and some were granted extensions based on their justifications. The sum of 204,000 EUR already committed through the grant agreements is still to be disbursed to the grantees in 2025 for the projects remaining to be finished.

The project included a variety of interventions, with geographical, demographic, and gender diversity and inclusivity, aimed at raising public awareness and promoting fact-based dialogue about the recent past, mutual tolerance, and reconciliation, such as: peacebuilding and conflict resolution dialogues and training in multi-ethnic communities; regional and local seminars on transitional justice issues and introduction of transitional justice in official curricula and programs; cross-societal dialogue workshops; empowerment of youth groups; strengthening the role of women and the gender perspective in confidence building, local governance and inter-ethnic reconciliation; assessments of local communities' attitudes; intergenerational dialogues; exhibitions, plays, documentaries, TV debates, etc.

Same as observed in relation to sub-granting under Activity 3.7, a more comprehensive account of the results, products and progress achieved through the grant implementation, including lessons learned, would be suitable for a separate thematic report, especially once all the CSO projects are completed. Given the number and coverage of the grantees' projects, some key and distinctive accomplishments, especially of the exemplary projects, will be outlined below.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

By two Schools of Transitional Justice, **Association *Pravnik* ("Lawyer")** from Sarajevo educated 43 young professionals and activists (35 women and 8 men) - historians, sociologists, political scientists, lawyers, political activists, women leaders - about transitional justice and peacebuilding in the BiH and Balkans context to empower them to further engage in public advocacy and research. In the course of the transitional justice schools, the Association's collaboration with the International Residual Mechanism and its Information Centre in Sarajevo stepped up further enabling better access to the documentation of the ICTY/Mechanism to the researchers and activists. Following the TJ school, at least 20 academic research papers were written focusing on fact-finding research of war crimes, trials, and transitional justice 10 of which were published in the *International Journal of Transitional Justice, Human Rights and Rule of Law*, created and published annually by the Association "Pravnik" since 2011; online access is expected in 2025.

While most of the grantees' projects in BiH under Activity 4.3 are planned to be completed by 2025, most of them have already yielded some results in 2024 worth highlighting in this report. **Human Rights Center** from Mostar is working on introducing the studies of transitional justice at the two major universities in Mostar - one in the Bosniak majority part and the other in the Croat majority part of the city), and, in 2024, started with a needs and feasibility assessment, organized an interdisciplinary legal clinic on transitional justice and prepares the curricula and teaching content. **CSO Lara** from Bijeljina promotes the role of women in peace-building, reconciliation, and the culture of remembrance. The completed activities included the Women's Peace Camp for 23 young women and girls from different communities of BiH, the workshop curriculum "Women's Approach to Peacebuilding" developed, and several local community activities promoting reconciliation and diversity through custom and art, with women as main actors, such as local bazaars and cultural exhibitions with over 200 direct active participants so far. **Balkans Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)** focuses on cases of children who went missing during the Bosnian war and related personal stories, developing a database of the missing children at their website www.detektor.ba, and has published four [articles](#) as a result of their investigative journalism on the topic. **Post Conflict Research Center** from Sarajevo, organized, i.a., a regional conference on building a common agenda for prevention in the Western Balkans, attended by 61 participants (16 male and 55 female), including institutions from the region, CSOs, and the international community (including the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights), resulting, i.a., in the report [Building a Common Agenda for Prevention in the Western Balkans](#) at the end of 2024. They also organized an exhibition showcasing 10 stories of women Srebrenica genocide survivors) the Srebrenica Youth School together with the Srebrenica Memorial Center bringing 48 young participants (38 female and 10 male) from the region.

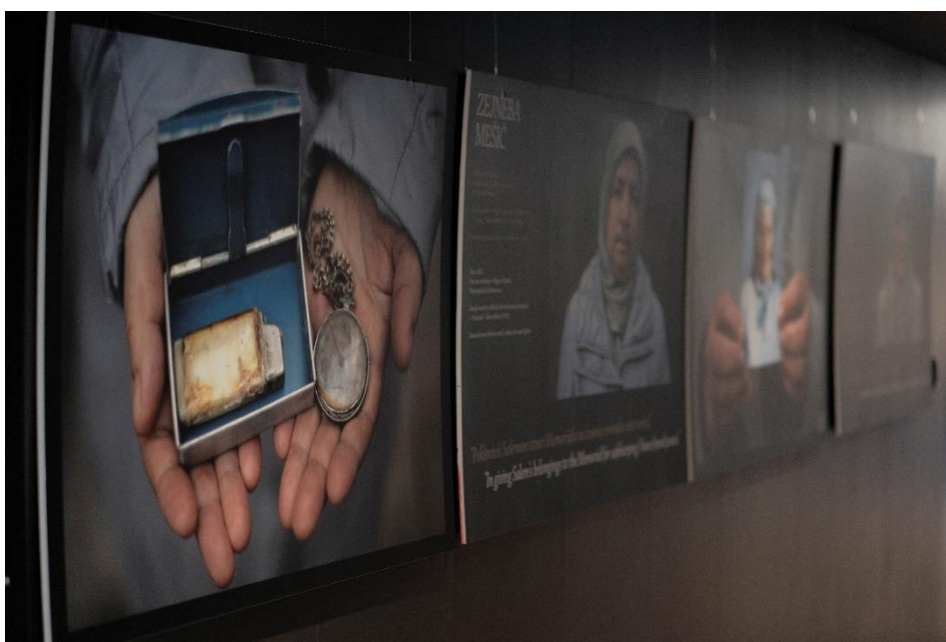


Figure 9 - The Post-Conflict Research Center from Sarajevo hosted a regional conference on building a common agenda for prevention in the Western Balkans in Podgorica in March 2024, featuring an exhibition highlighting the stories of 10 women who survived the Srebrenica genocide.

Kosovo

NGO Avoko fostered peacebuilding, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding among the youth of the Albanian, Gorani, and Bosniak communities in the multiethnic Gora geographical region (Dragash municipality) including by establishing [multi-language mini-libraries](#) in three primary schools, curated multiethnic cultural exhibition, facilitated storytelling sessions for local 35 girls and 25 boys, peacebuilding and conflict resolution training and cross societal [workshops](#) for 10 boys and 12 girls. As an example of such engagement's impact indicators, the evaluations showed a 57.14% increase in knowledge about intercultural communication and a 47.62% improvement in understanding barriers to intercultural dialogue.

Prishtina Institute for Political Studies piloted a curriculum and delivered [a local seminar on transitional justice](#) for 18 women and 13 men from Albanian, Serb, and Roma communities from Kosovo. It also delivered, together with a partner CSO from Serbia, a regional transitional justice seminar, in Pristina, gathering 40 participants from Kosovo and Serbia as one of the groundbreaking moves to foster dialogue and cooperation on post-conflict issues between Serbian and Kosovo young professionals.

Three [TV debates](#) on war crimes trials were organised by the **Kosovo Law Institute** enhancing public awareness of war crimes and judicial responses in Kosovo, featuring representatives of relevant institutions, civil society (including some of the grantees), experts, and journalists. They reached an audience of at least 19,029 online users, plus regular TV viewers.

The Jahjaga Foundation delivered two seminars "Transitional Justice Fundamentals and Gender Perspective", for 41 social sciences and law students from the universities of Prishtina, Peja, Prizren, and Gjakova, and six [workshops on transitional justice and gender perspective](#) involving altogether 122 students from law and related fields, activists, and civil society representatives. The workshops resulted, i.a. in recommendations on enhancing gender perspective and youth involvement in the field and a research and policy paper "Integrating Youth Perspectives in Transitional Justice in Kosovo". The Foundation also elevated the conversation around the gendered narratives of transitional justice, challenging traditional remembrances and power dynamics, through five artistic installations, displayed in different areas and municipalities, and three short educational video animations. It is preparing, for 2025, two transitional justice e-learning courses for the general audience.



Figure 10 – One of the five artistic installations by Jahjaga Foundation in Kosovo

Promoting what is referred to as 'journalism for reconciliation', the CSO **Kosovo 2.0** published a zine (a self-published print magazine) titled 'Memory', in Albanian, English, and Serbian, featuring five stories (selected from 40 submissions following an open call), including visuals, and organised a panel discussion with the authors at the zine's launch.

With their project still ongoing, **Alternative Dispute Resolution Center (ADRC)**, so far organised [Youth Peace Camps](#), with 76 young participants (male and female being approximately 50% each) from Albanian, Serb, Bosniak, Egyptian, and Roma Kosovo communities to discuss interethnic cooperation and learn about dialogue facilitation, conflict mapping, critical thinking, and public advocacy. As one of the goals, the participants also developed their own initiatives for promoting interethnic cooperation of which several have already been implemented such as adaptation and maintenance of the public space they called the Social Community Garden, supporting people with disabilities and other marginalized groups, exploring environmentalism as a bonding theme for different ethnic communities, and a joint victim commemoration in the Mitrovica/Mitrovica region through a poetry night and a panel discussion. The ADRC also organised [Harmony Talks sessions](#) bringing over 130 young participants, with keynote speakers of different backgrounds, focusing on themes such as women as decision-makers at the local level, inter-ethnic cooperation and reconciliation, conflict resolution and mediation, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental sustainability through civic engagement in ethnically diverse communities. An open call was announced for publishing, in 2025, a series of six op-eds on dealing with the past, reconciliation, and peacebuilding by researchers, journalists, and local activists.

Montenegro

The CSO **Human Rights Action (HRA)** produced a theatre play dedicated to the 1991-92 siege of Dubrovnik which [premiered on 20 June](#) in Podgorica with five media outlets covering the event resulting, i.a., in six articles and four video reports. The play explores the role of Montenegro in the 1991 military attacks by the then Yugoslav National Army on the city of Dubrovnik in Croatia - a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and reconciliation themes, aiming to foster critical thinking about the past, especially among youth. It also played in a couple of national festivals in Montenegro, with a direct audience of over 300 people, and is scheduled to play in Croatia, in Split and Dubrovnik, in 2025. Promotion across social media and university platforms led to 25,094 views (with 52.8% female and 46.1% male engagement, mostly aged 18-24) by far surpassing the goal of informing 5,000 people. The HRA also prepares a research book by three local historians exploring the role of Montenegro in the conflict in the Balkans in the 1990s.

Centre for Civic Education organized a [Transitional Justice School](#) for 20 young people (16 women and 4 men) and produced a [manual for history teachers on conflicts and war crimes from the 1990s](#). **Youth Initiative for Human Rights Montenegro**, within their project "Transitional Justice Initiative Through Education and Art", organized two literary nights in Bijelo Polje, [prepared an exhibition on the siege of Dubrovnik](#) based on the materials from the archives of the Mechanism, curated and opened [the exhibition "Stories from Srebrenica"](#) in co-operation with the Memorial Center Srebrenica from BiH, produced and screened a [documentary](#) about 1999 war crimes in Kaluderski Laz in Montenegro, and organized a study visit to Dubrovnik for a mixed group of 18 judges, prosecutors, journalists and young artists (9 women and 9 men).

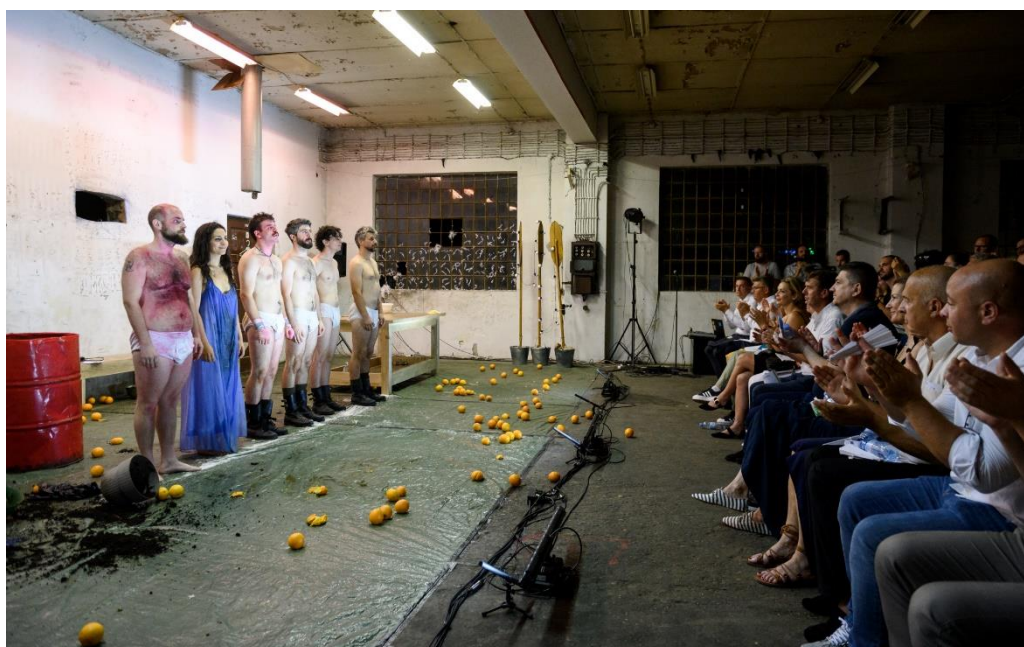


Figure 11 - Theatre play dedicated to the 1991-92 siege of Dubrovnik, produced by a grantee from Montenegro (Human Rights Action) premiered in June 2024, in Podgorica

North Macedonia

Unlike in other jurisdictions, the selected CSO's projects in North Macedonia do not include addressing the crimes from the conflicts in the recent past as an explicit goal or element, due to the country's specific post-1990ies history not marked by the conflicts of the same intensity like in the rest of the region and the fact that there are no domestic war crimes trials. The projects serve to foster dialogue and exchanges, especially among the youth, to strengthen social cohesion within this multiethnic country. Many young people today have little to no knowledge of the country's past conflicts, yet the lingering effects continue to shape their interactions and connecting young people from different ethnic groups is among the key purposes of the sub-granting and selected CSO projects.

To overcome the challenges of education in a multiethnic environment, CSO **Human Rights Institute Skopje** organised several [workshops](#) in four multilingual high schools in Skopje, Tetovo, and Kumanovo, attended by 103 students (78 girls and 25 boys) of Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, Turkish and Bosniak ethnic background who discussed their ideas for multiethnic inclusion in schools, overcoming stereotypes and prejudices in the classrooms, and promoting diversity and inclusion in the education system. The project also included cinema evenings, students' artwork exhibition, a photo contest, and the publishing of eight blog posts - all stimulating inclusivity, diversity, and equality. Report *The Voice of Youth: Recommendations for Enhancing Interethnic Dialogue and Creating an Inclusive Society* was also published. The project successfully created safe spaces for dialogue among ethnically diverse youth helping break down barriers and stereotypes.

Policy Research Association 'Analytica' promoted intercultural dialogue, human rights awareness, and youth engagement through a [series of activities](#) involving young participants from Skopje, Strumica, and Gostivar including a Youth Training Camp (offering also a photography course) for 18 young participants from diverse regions, seven workshops involving visits to 24 key cultural and historical sites focusing i.a. on the common historical and cultural heritage of the country.

To empower youth to become advocates for peace and cooperation and contribute to confidence across the ethnic lines, **Proficio** delivered two [workshops](#) for 50 young CSO on ethnological characteristics and the tradition of coexistence and tolerance, and three online seminars for 20 participants, aged 15-25, on conflict, hate speech, reconciliation, and interethnic dialogue. It also produced an online survey, with 79 respondents aged 14-25, showing that most young people are open to dialogue and inclusion despite ethnic differences.

Using mainly music as a confidence-building tool, **the Association for Multi-Ethnic Music Education 'Roma Rock School'** worked towards preventing violence fueled by ethnic intolerance through 28 facilitated music workshops for instrument and band sections respectively, 16 individual and small group sessions, and 16 facilitated themed workshops, preparing also a research paper on the topic. It also organised a [summer camp](#) for 28 participants engaging in discussions about volunteering and prevention of ethnically motivated violence through music.



Figure 12 – One of the music workshops for building tolerance among youth and preventing violence fueled by ethnic intolerance, organized by the Association for Multi-Ethnic Music Education 'Roma Rock School' in North Macedonia

Through the **Youth Alliance's** Virtual Laboratory Mentorship Program, 12 young local leaders received tailored mentorship to lead local and regional initiatives and create action plans. The grantee's key activity was the [22nd International Youth Conference](#): "European Values for the Future of the South-Eastern European (SEE) Countries" bringing in person 58 young leaders from 16 countries of the SEE and 578 young participants online, enabling them to engage directly with decision- and policy-makers and researchers discussing and fostering the common vision of the EU integration and regional cooperation, youth-inclusive decision-making and civic participation. Real talk sessions, chitchats, fireside chats, hackathons, and other innovative formats were used at the conference. In the post-event survey, 87% of participants reported an increased understanding of the EU integration processes and 80% that their capacities to contribute to regional cooperation and the EU integration had been significantly strengthened. A digital platform was developed to foster ongoing collaboration and networking and as a sustainable space for further knowledge-sharing and resource mobilization. Seven national committees were created as a conference result ensuring that the momentum would be maintained and the local youth would continue to engage with the issues of interest.

Figure 13 - Youth Alliance's 22nd International Youth Conference under the title "European Values for the Future of the South-Eastern European Countries" in North Macedonia



Serbia

Belgrade Centre for Human Rights explored various means for young people from the region to have inter-ethnic dialogue about the past, promote reconciliation, and advocate for sustainable peace through workshops and training, but also [podcasts](#) and [promotional videos by music stars](#). Their final *Youth Rights Talks 2024* conference gathered 121 young participants (86 women and 35 men) from BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.



Figure 14 – Making a podcast about peace and tolerance among the youth of the region, during the Youth Rights Talks conference, by Belgrade Center for Human Rights, October 2024, Belgrade

Most other grantees from Serbia are still to complete their projects in 2025, but they all already implemented new ideas and approaches and produced some results. Most innovatively, **Center E8** combined transitional justice, teaching and art, with young people turning their own learning into a medium for influencing others. A group of 20 Serbian young women and men selected via an audition went through

a six-month process of thematic workshops about the recent past and the region from the perspectives of history, sociology, anthropology, political science, and law. The group then turned into amateur actors in the production of a play ([“My Country: what the Young Think of Patriotism” by Reflektor Theatre](#)), written and directed [by two leading Serbian theatre artists](#), which critically examined the conflicts and their consequences and effects and the concept of patriotism. The play performed in Belgrade, but also in [Croatia](#) and BiH receiving ovations, and is expected to play in Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia and will continue to be on the repertoire beyond the project. In addition, the grantee produced a documentary film showcasing the work behind the scenes in the preparation of the play.



Figure 15 – Theatre play “My land – What Youth Think About Patriotism”, produced by grantee Center E8, premiered in November 2024 in Belgrade and went on a regional tour

The Culture Front curated the innovative exhibition *Museum of the 90s*, based on research and collection of wartime materials, and, as a pilot outside Serbia, presented it at the Historian Museum in Sarajevo from May to October 2024. The exhibition, attended by over 7000 people, presents the traumatic decade from several angles – e.g. from the viewpoint of those whose lives were destroyed, those who were deceived, refugees and internally displaced, those who were against the war, etc. The grantee also helps history teachers and students in Serbia and BiH to produce prototypes of teaching materials based on the results of four joint workshops. **Civic Initiatives** organised a seminar for young historians and other social scientists (university lecturers, PhD candidates, researchers) on how to research and write about the conflicts in the 90ies, which was followed by an expert-guided study visit for over 20 Serbian young social scientists to Srebrenica. A visit to Kosovo and a joint round with Kosovar historians, so as the publication of academic articles, are planned for 2025. **Europolis**, working on promoting a new victim-centered approach to memorialization, organised, i.a., a study visit of a group of young people from Serbia to the sites of crimes and commemoration of Croatian victims in Vukovar and Osijek in Croatia and met with their peers.

Lessons learned from the grant implementation

Same as for the grants under Output 3, the project team is regularly monitoring the grant implementation, including programmatic monitoring and quality control, respect for UNDP and EU project administration rules and principles applicable to the sub-granting, including communication and visibility, coordination among the grantees when needed, and providing all the necessary guidance and support. Based on the experience from the implementation of this sub-granting cycle, including the grantees' feedback, for the next sub-granting cycle in 2025-2026 (the calls for proposals published in January and February 2025), the project team will consider and make adjustments in the internal monitoring policies and the guidelines for grantees.

While proper and more comprehensive stock-taking of the programmatic lessons learned would be possible once most of the remaining grants are completed, in 2025, some observations, including those that may inform the decision making in the second cycle of sub-granting, could be summarized as follows.

- There is a strong demand by CSOs for support to their activities by international organisations, especially because most of the governments in the region remain not interested in supporting dealing with the past in inclusive and multi-perspective manners based on judicially established facts while the donor's offer was shrinking over the past years.
- The demand, both by CSOs and the direct beneficiaries, especially among young generations, is particularly strong with regard to educational content and opportunities for transitional justice and confidence-building mechanisms and for inter-community dialogue across ethnic lines.
- A lot of innovative approaches have been offered, especially those combining art and culture with peace-building and overcoming the past, and they bring a strong potential of a wide societal reach.
- There are a lot of commonalities across the region and within each society which can also be explored for identifying new points for mutual confidence building (such as preservation of the natural environment, local community challenges, the position/role of women and youth, building mutual interest in art forms, etc). Use of the social media platforms should be further expanded or supported across the region
- Cross-border CSO projects work and deliver successfully and have a great potential of multiplying effects across several countries and communities not only those where the lead grantee applies.
- The data collected through grantees' activities provide valuable insights into the realities of interethnic relations in various communities and may serve as a foundation for future interventions.

Activity 4.4: Policy and communication dialogue – cross-sectoral and between justice authorities and the media – to increase public information and outreach on war crimes and transitional justice

As mentioned in relation to Activity 4.2, the project team maintains continued dialogues with the partner prosecution offices, courts and other institutions from the participating jurisdictions on how to improve communication between the judiciary, law enforcement and institutions for missing persons and the media, the public at large, as well as with victims communities or particularly affected groups (the latter also being covered under Activity 3.4 described above). While a regional conference on increasing the transparency of war crimes proceedings in the interest of the public and victims, by, i.e., making the verdicts more accessible and less anonymized was generally planned as a means for making improvements in that regard, the project teams' estimate was that the moment was still not ripe for such undertaking given the current reservations of the judicial authorities and ministers of justice to go beyond the current level of visibility and accessibility of judicial documents. Such an event remains a goal until the completion of the project.

Activity 4.5: Training of journalists on gender responsive reporting on war crimes and transitional justice

- In January 2024, UNDP trained 13 Kosovo journalists (11 women and 2 men) on gender- and conflict-sensitive reporting, in Peja, Kosovo. The training equipped journalists with techniques for achieving better results in reporting on gender-sensitive conflict issues, dealing with the past and conflict transformation, including communication with victims, and will contribute to fostering ethical, impartial, and impactful journalism. (*The 2023 Annual report covered the activity; it is only summarily mentioned here since it was implemented in the reporting period*).
- Ten journalists from the region were among the participants and benefited from the regional workshop for civil society activists and social influencers in December in Belgrade (reported below under *Activity 4.6*).

Activity 4.6 Training for CSO activists, bloggers/vloggers, media influencers, and young professionals engaged in public advocacy and activism of promoting reconciliation and dealing with the past (on public advocacy skills and techniques, use of social media, designing and conducting campaigns, targeted fundraising and activity planning etc.), with an aim to strengthen CSOs and grass-root level sustainability.

- A [regional workshop](#) was organized in Belgrade, on 4-6 December 2024, for civil society activists, bloggers/vloggers, social media influencers, journalists and other young professionals engaged in public advocacy and activism of promoting reconciliation and dealing with the past ([the agenda](#) is accessible). It brought a diverse group of 33 individuals (22 women and 11 men) from BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Croatia selected as those who may have a role in shaping or influencing public opinion in present and the future. The interactive workshop was designed to increase their basic knowledge and understanding of the concept and mechanisms of transitional justice, present them with tools and methods for searching for and using the judicially established facts about the conflicts from the '90s, how to identify and counter misinformation and disinformation, and how to communicate with the public and promote reconciliation and dealing with the past and design effective advocacy campaigns. The workshop discussions also served to garner good and successful examples of and exchange ideas about new and innovative ways of engaging with target audiences or the public at large in the region in promoting fact-based dealing with the past and reconciliation. In addition, the participants attended a theatre play produced under a sub-grant (see Activity 4.3). The project team will continue working with the participants, create their sub-group(s) for further engagement, and expand the network of future activists and opinion leaders while exploring innovative approaches for promoting reconciliation and confidence building in the region.



Figure 16 – Regional Youth Workshop on gaining skills for activism and public advocacy in promoting reconciliation and dealing with the pas, Belgrade, Serbia, December 2024

- The project equipped 66 history teachers from elementary and high schools across Serbia with skills and knowledge on how to prepare lectures on the period of the conflicts from the 90s, teach the contemporary and multiperspective history of Southeast Europe and use the archives of the ICTY/Mechanism to create teaching materials. In partnership with the local CSO *Association for Social History – Euroclio* (accredited by the Ministry of Education for seminars to history teachers), three two-day seminars were organized for history teachers outside the capital: in September, in Pančevo (29 teachers, [the agenda](#) is accessible, as an example) and in Sremska Mitrovica (17 teachers), and, in cooperation with the Information Programme for Affected Communities of the Mechanism, in November in Divčibare (20 teachers).

Activity 4.7: Media monitoring (including monitoring traditional media reporting, political and official statements, new media and social media, and big data) to identify trends and issues in transitional justice evaluate progress and impact of the project

Regular media monitoring for UNDP by contracted professional press-clipping companies continues. Based on keywords (such as war crimes, transitional justice, etc.), it includes monitoring and collecting the content of the local and regional media (print, electronic, online) to track and, when needed, analyze media contents, political and public discourse, identify trends in transitional justice processes and public domain about the recent past, accountability and reconciliation, find out about developments (if made public) related to case processing, regional cooperation or other issues of interest, and follow victims' and local communities' perspective, etc. Such monitoring also helps to detect, identify and address risks, follow media coverage of

the project activities, and evaluate possible effects and impact of the project implementation (if reflected in the media reporting).

Activity 4.8 Targeted regional and national experience sharing and peer-to-peer meetings of various stakeholders involved in public awareness raising about the recent past, promoting reconciliation, and addressing misinformation and disinformation

- War crimes in Prijedor and its Surroundings Conference – Learning from the past – messages for the future: An international conference was organized in Sarajevo, on 30-31 May 2024, on the day of marking the anniversary of mass atrocities committed in northwestern Bosnia in 1992, in partnership with the local CSO 'Association Pravnik' and the City of Sarajevo (with [the Deputy Mayor opening the conference](#)). It brought over 60 participants, including victim representatives, journalists, local and international transitional justice academics, researchers, and experts, including former media correspondents from the Bosnian war, high-school and university students, and representatives of the international community, who discussed experiences and ways forward to promoting victim-centered and fact-based narratives about the conflicts.

Section 5: Cross-Cutting Integration

Human and Social Context:

- **Leave No One Behind**

The project has victim-centered approach and addresses the needs of war crimes victims and survivors and improves their rights and well-being (especially Output 3). It takes into account victims and survivors as right-holders as an especially vulnerable group in each post-conflict society in the Western Balkans. The group is a potential agent of change in the region, and the activities under Output 4, aimed at public awareness raising, will seek to empower the victims/survivors to get actively involved in advocacy, activism, and standing for their own and the rights of others.

- **Human Rights**

The interventions, which support efficient and effective victim-centred and human rights-based domestic handling of war crimes, directly concern and are at the core of the implementation of human rights - especially rights to a fair trial, legal remedy, compensation/reparation for unlawful harm, equal access to justice, non-discrimination, right to truth, etc. By working through institutional structures and mechanisms, especially through prosecutors' offices and courts, as well as with the civil sector, the project strengthens the foundations for long-term institutional capacities and system, so as non-state capacities, for accountability and protection of human rights and consolidation of the rule of law and human rights based legal order and societies across the region.

Upholding and promoting human rights are among the project's cornerstone principles and all the activities include human-rights-based approach: they were developed and implemented in such a way as to take into account and be kept in line with international human rights standards so that their expected results and effects uphold and improve the human rights of the beneficiaries, especially vulnerable or previously deprived groups – such as victims of war crimes and enforced disappearance and their families. The activities are also designed in such way not to negatively affect the human rights guaranteed to the beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Right to truth, access to justice, and equality before the law are at the centre of the activities.

In particular, the actions aimed to improve the legal frameworks in the region are key for advancing the human rights-based approach. For example, the War Crimes Strategy in Montenegro and the Transitional Justice Strategy in Kosovo embody and promote international human rights standards, especially those concerning victims of international crimes and gross human rights violations, the right to truth, access to justice, various modalities of reparations, and equality before the law. A set of victims' rights was included in the draft law on missing persons in Serbia and reflected in the victim support protocols between the prosecution offices of Montenegro, Serbia and BiH. The sub-grants for victim and witness support enable the implementation of CSO-led projects designed to enable and enhance the rights and interests of war crimes victims and their families as right holders, including access to justice and reparations, right to truth, protection from secondary victimization and traumatization, and other human rights. They will also improve their visibility and enhance individual victims' and victim groups' ability to advocate for and seek their rights.

- **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

Gender analysis of transitional justice mechanisms was carried out in the inception phase of the project, helping the project implementation and activity planning have a stronger gender approach. Its key recommendations have informed the project implementation. Gender perspective was included in the capacity-building efforts with the beneficiary institutions and in the dialogue agenda in bilateral and multilateral regional cooperation, especially in relation to conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) cases and various forms of gender-informed reparations. In training and other capacity building activities in relation to CRSV case processing and victims, a holistic approach has been promoted. Public awareness raising initiatives include addressing the stigma attached to CRSV victims and their families, informing survivors of their rights, and raise gender-sensitivity among justice and other professionals. Generally, the partnerships with the grantees and other CSOs included promotion of a gender transformative agenda.

Another needs assessment from the inception phase, on institutional capacities and needs in the area of victim support, serves as a basis for informing the project implementation under Output 3 and has lead to paying special attention to gender-responsive justice for women victims and survivors of armed conflict, particularly with a view of improving legal and institutional frameworks, policies, and practices.

Some of the activities implemented substantially included a strong aspect of empowering women, especially victims of war, including, especially, some of the CSO's projects, particularly in Kosovo, that included not only various types of psychosocial support but also economic empowerment of women survivors of CRSV.

Particular care for women victims and witnesses, especially victims of sexual violence, was the focus of activities aimed at enhancing regional co-operation of the victim and witness support services and their training. Gender-responsive approaches and empowerment of women victims of war were among the conditions for sub-granting in the area of victim support and 14 grants have been disbursed for such purposes. Additionally, in some of the awareness-raising projects and transitional justice workshops for youth implemented by CSO grantees among the key topics and discussions were always CRSV crimes and women as crime survivors and victims entitled to certain rights. That was also covered by training for journalists. Young women have also been well represented in the groups of students and young professionals targeted by the grantees' educational and awareness-raising activities in order to generate new opinion leaders, transitional justice activists and promoters of reconciliation.

IV. Partnerships and Sustainability

Partnerships

The project team and UNDP have continued to engage in coordination and experience sharing meetings with other organisations involved in transitional justice and promotion of the rule of law and human rights, including the OSCE missions to BiH and to Serbia, ICMP, ICRC, as well as embassies, bilateral and multilateral donors, regional and international think-tanks.

Special and most frequent communication and coordination has been maintained with the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the IRMCT and the IRMCT's Information Programme for Affected Communities, especially with regard to their implementation of activities funded from the same EU source. The OTP was a partner in the preparation and facilitation of the regional prosecutors' conference in Podgorica and in organising working and training visits of prosecutors from the region to the IRMCT (as explained in more details in the activities section above). With the IRMCT's Information Programme, regular co-operation and communication included joint co-ordination and brainstorming meetings, especially with regard to coordinating the project's Output 4 activities with their activities, using each other's staff as lecturers at the UNDP activities organised by the project (or the Information Programme's own activities), and exchange of information and ensuring joint approach between UNDP and IRMCT with regard to CSO grantees whose projects include the legacy of the ICTY/IRMCT and use of their resources (data base, know-how, etc.). Such close co-operation will continue in 2025.

Close coordination has been regularly maintained with the EU as the donor but also as the key development partner. Monthly progress briefings with the EU DG NEAR and direct communication between the Regional Project Manager and the DG NEAR's focal point were maintained and the EU was kept regularly informed about project implementation, including about delays and challenges. Periodical meetings were also held between the UNDP offices, including project team members, and the EU Delegations in the five Beneficiaries enabling information sharing about the project plans and implementation as well as complementarity with other EU-supported interventions and policies on transitional justice and related fields.

Internal coordination was maintained with various relevant UNDP offices, units, and projects across the organisation, in the region and beyond, to exchange best practices and foster synergies, including periodical briefings for other UN agencies and entities.

An important mechanism for maintaining national-level partnerships and coordination and aligning the project's strategic direction and implementation with the key beneficiaries' needs and national policies are the Boards of Partners. They consist of representatives from the key stakeholders in each of the five Beneficiaries. The Boards' meetings were organised once or twice a year in each respective Beneficiary to which the respective EU delegations were always invited.

Sustainability

Periodical UNDP-facilitated high- and technical-level meetings of prosecutors from the region, have continued and have been accepted by the national prosecution offices as their main platform for identifying and addressing problems and improving cross-border cooperation in war crimes cases. The prosecutors have been gradually taking over ownership of the process, which will lead to decreasing the need for UNDP's facilitation and initiative and leaving a sustainable regional collaboration platform in this area. This strong(er) sense of national prosecutors' offices' ownership is important for the future of regional cooperation as it can bring more engagement of the national offices and their sense of responsibility for and commitment to the process and increases the sustainability of these efforts and a perspective for continuing and successful regional cooperation. Many legal and practical impediments to regional cooperation continue to be addressed and potentially removed through the platform so that mutual co-operation in criminal matters in general, across the region, becomes more self-sustainable, institutionalized, and resilient.

In rolling out the two sub-granting programmes, concerning victim support and public awareness raising, the public call for grant applications and the selection of the grantees included, as one of the key selection criteria, the longer-term capacity building and sustainability effects on the development of local grassroots level organisations. This was particularly emphasized in relation to the victims' association's capacity to provide self-help (in the sub-granting scheme under Output 3). The sub-granting, in line with its design and rationale, has strengthened the capacities of small CSOs from local communities, including through training on planning, fundraising, grant administration, advocacy, communication, activism, improvement of their operational infrastructure, self-help skills, as well as through capacity building and mentoring of small-size CSOs by more experienced organisations. This would enable their long-term resilience and engagement, and strengthen their ability to design, fundraise and implement their activities. In the area of

public awareness raising and promotion of fact-based dialogue (Output 4), the project focuses on and empowers specific target groups that have the potential to further expand and influence others: journalists, youth activists and young CSO activists, representatives and leaders of the victims' communities, students of social sciences and young professionals (especially historians, lawyers, political scientists), young leaders and local community level actors.

Generally, by working through institutional structures and mechanisms, especially through prosecutors' offices and court systems, as well as with the civil sector, the project is strengthening the foundations for long-term institutional capacities and systems as well as non-state actors' capacities in the area of accountability, transitional justice, and protection of human rights which contributes to addressing the legacies of the conflicts in the region, strengthening social cohesion, and generally crime suppression and the rule of law.

V. Update on risks and mitigation measures

Risk 1: Political contexts in the Western Balkans

Overall, the main standing risks remain to be linked to elements of the **overall political context in the region** and **bilateral and multilateral institutional and societal relations burdened with the unresolved legacies of the conflicts from the 1990ies** at the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The very purpose of the project is to contribute to addressing these unresolved legacies, especially the conflicting narratives about the past, impunity gaps, collective trauma transfers, lack of social cohesion and mutual confidence within and between many societies and communities across the region, and as such the project presupposes various aspects of conflict- and context-sensitivity to be a part of regular planning and work of the project team and the project management structure.

One of the main sensitivities surrounding the project, the **dynamic of Kosovo-Serbia relations** and developments in the Brussels talks, harmed the project's ability in 2023 to offer mechanisms for regional cooperation, as one of the project's signature activities, that would be inclusive of all five participating IPA Beneficiaries and Kosovo representatives did not participate in the regional prosecutors conference in Sarajevo in 2023. However, despite the political circumstances not creating more favourable conditions in that regard, the challenge of inclusivity has been gradually overcome already since the end of 2023, and in 2024 all the planned regional activities, including, most notably, the prosecutors high-level regional conference in Podgorica in September 2024, brought together representatives from all the jurisdictions including Kosovo. By continuing to apply key and proven mitigation measures - such as the selection of locations and hosting partners, active but sensitive communication with the authorities involved- especially Kosovar and Serbian, strengthening individual professional relations with the institutions, frequent communication with all the participants in the preparation periods, careful crafting of the agendas and invitation letters, status neutral setting for and facilitation of the conferences that is acceptable for all, the project team will continue to maintain and also aspire to broaden the inclusive participation of all the beneficiary institutions and individuals from the region.

Frequent regular or snap elections continue to mark the political landscape in the region, not least because the project is implemented in five different countries/jurisdictions and the scheduled or extraordinary elections may always occur in at least one of them. Pre- and post-election periods often bring a slowdown or freeze in the work of line ministries and, by default, parliaments, especially for drafting, proposing, or adopting legislation or policy documents. Such circumstances were present in Serbia at the end of 2023 and early 2024, and in North Macedonia in the first half of 2024. In Serbia, the elections delayed the drafting of the Missing Persons Law. The pace was

regained in the second half of the year by, i.e., the project team stepping up its advocacy with the responsible line ministry and offering and quickly mobilizing experts to aid the drafting process. (The support successfully resulted in the draft law, as explained above, but its planned adoption may be further delayed if another election is going to be called following the recent resignation of the Serbian Government.)

Some activities are rescheduled in order not to be unduly or excessively affected by certain external political or social developments at a given moment. Most notably, the regional and comprehensive public opinion survey, planned as Activity 4.1, has been postponed also because of the anticipated risk that certain political developments, such as elections in some of the countries, and adoption of the Srebrenica resolution in the UN General Assembly (which caused unusually strong political reactions in Serbia and denial-based wider societal outcry among the ethnic Serb population across the region) would excessively influence or cause shifts in the public opinion regarding the issues of dealing with the past.

Risk 2: Lack of sufficient interest, willingness, or capacity of local actors to participate in the project

Across all five jurisdictions, all the national and local level beneficiaries and partners that the project counted on for the implementation **have remained committed to cooperation** with UNDP and the EU and welcome project activities. This applies to public institutions as well as civil society partners. All project team's offers of or requests for cooperation have been positively responded to. While a possible lack of sufficient interest or capacity among local partners to accept and support the project implementation remains a standing low-likelihood and high-impact risk and will continue to be monitored, so far no such risk has materialized and no mitigation measures had to be taken. Careful and inclusive planning of activities by the project team, well-informed and aware of regional, national, as well as micro contexts and based on assessments of the needs of local stakeholders and beneficiaries, remains the main risk prevention approach. The project team will further continue to develop and sustain its partnerships with relevant institutions and stakeholders, raise awareness about and build their trust in the project, and generate local co-ownerships over project results, which all have proven instrumental for the local buy-in and smooth implementation of the project.

Scheduling of activities can be affected by judicial practitioners' changing professional schedules and this has remained a continuing operational challenge posing a risk of postponement of activities or insufficient attendance of the planned participants. Timely long- to mid-term planning, especially for regional events, anticipation of certain free dates, planning initially a larger number of participants for an event such as training or workshops, and keeping flexibility to reschedule, including moving activities from one to another year, remain as effective mitigating measures.

VI. Key Challenges, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- How to overcome a *trust deficit* in relations between the judicial, prosecutorial and governmental authorities across the region, especially between some of the Beneficiaries, is a learning and incremental process. Some of the approaches which helped in bringing all the participating jurisdictions at the table, organizing inclusive regional events, and addressing some of the contentious issues, have been tested and will serve for further planning and project implementation. They include: focusing on more technical level communication and cross-boundary collaboration addressing concrete issues and challenges; identifying and discussing commonalities among the Beneficiaries and the problems they need to rely on each other to resolve; looking for points and aspects from each jurisdiction's experience and practices which other

jurisdictions may find useful when shared; helping them maintain and, when needed, facilitate their mutual communication and cooperation between the meetings and the gatherings; organizing and facilitating regional events in status neutral manner (including avoiding references to the names of the countries, territories, and institutions or use of institutional symbols and referring to them in such way that all the participants find that acceptable and not encroaching on their institutional identity and their ownership); using regional and bilateral events and activities for providing extra opportunities for the beneficiaries' informal communication and bonding, which significantly help build bridges, expand common grounds, and create conditions for their further institutional communication.

- Beneficiary institutions' capacity building needs, including, especially, training, evolve over time, often depend on concrete problems they are facing while working on particular cases or files in a given year, and may also be affected by changes in the institutions' leaderships and new priorities they set. This requires quicker adaptation of the project plans and designs of training and other knowledge sharing and capacity building interventions that were based on the Project Document and the inception phase needs assessments so that the project can offer more, or less, or something different from what was initially planned to continue being relevant, addressing the real beneficiaries' needs, and gaining their full cooperation.
- There is a strong demand identified, especially coming from the young generations, for more information and education content and opportunities on the transitional justice and confidence-building mechanisms and fact-based analysis of the recent past, so as for inter-community dialogue across ethnic lines. The project team will further inform its planning and implementation, including concrete activities design as well as the selection of CSOs' projects for sub-granting, having this demand in mind. This also suggests that possibilities for engaging beyond the sub-granting scheme with CSOs and other stakeholders, especially those oriented toward the work with young professionals, students, and academics, should be explored.
- The CSOs projects supported through the sub-granting scheme, many of which are still ongoing, are an important element of the project and will contribute to the overall results, as many of them already have. The report has accounted for their results produced so far, as well as for several lessons learned from the sub-granting (see above, under *Activity 4.3*). Based on the experience from the grantees' implementation up to this phase of the project, the project team will dedicate more attention to programmatic monitoring of the grantees, particularly with a view of monitoring and collecting their different knowledge products and finding ways how best to incorporate them as coherently as possible in the project's overall knowledge product legacy. On the other hand, the internal guidelines for the CSOs project implementation that were shared with the grantees at the beginning of the sub-granting cycle will be reviewed and, to an extent, revised by the project team to make the monitoring of the financial and administrative management of the grants somewhat less strict and demanding and more flexible for the grantees, while staying in line with the relevant UNDP and EU rules, so that the grantees can enhance their focus on results and impact.

VII. Financial Summary

The detailed financial report for 2024 is in *Annex IV*, enclosed as a separate document.

The total cost incurred in 2024 was 2,005,943 EUR, making the total of 3,665,446.03 EUR since the beginning of the project.

There were no relocations between the budget lines or categories in the reporting period.

A saving of 28,459 EUR was made on staff salaries in 2024: one position in the Montenegro project team was vacant between June and mid-December after a project team member left UNDP, while a

position in the BiH team was temporarily suspended from financing from October to December since the colleague went on a detail assignment within the organization, in line with UNDP's internal rules.

Due to the extensions approved for some of the CSOs grants, a part of the financial resources initially planned to be spent in 2024 is relocated to 2025, and the total of 312,000 EUR is to be disbursed to the grantees in 2025 for the projects that will be completed in this year.

Same as noted in the 2023 annual report, many implemented and planned activities have multiple purposes and, as such, they most often draw costs from more than one activity budget line and often also from more than one output. For example, regional meetings of prosecutors, other judicial practitioners, or victim support officers have multiple effects and programmatically justify taking costs for such actions from several budget lines, such as from budget line 1.5 ("Regional peer-to-peer knowledge and experience sharing..."), 1.3 ("Knowledge transfer..."), as well 2.1 and 2.1m which cover various types of regional meetings for cross-boundary operational co-operation, or Activity lines 3.2 to 3.4 if the event is about victim support. Therefore, some of the implemented activities have been covered from several outputs and the corresponding budget lines. This is properly reflected in the enclosed annual financial report.

Annexes:

Appendix I: Progress Review: detailed matrix of activities and results

Appendix II: Updated Risk Log

Appendix III: Annual Work Plan for 2025

Appendix IV: Financial report for 2024

Appendix V: Budget for 2025

I. Appendix

Annex I: Progress Review: detailed matrix of results

Output 1	Indicators	Baseline	End target (31 Dec 2026)	Progress / Milestone
Judicial authorities in the region are better equipped to handle war crimes Budget (for the project): 699,479.39 EUR Expenditure to date: 329,604.65 EUR	# of judges, prosecutors, police investigators, court staff, attorneys, and professionals from other relevant institutions trained on war crimes case processing	0	500	In 2024: 206 Cumulative (since the project start, in 2023): 231
Output 2	Indicators	Baseline	End target (31 Dec 2026)	Progress / Milestone
Improved conditions for regional cooperation in war crimes proceedings Budget: 430,425.80 EUR	# of documented regional cooperation actions in handling war crimes	0	80 regional cooperation actions	2024: at least 38 regional cooperation actions ⁶ Cumulative: 53 actions
	# judges, prosecutors, attorneys, other relevant justice and law	0	170 individuals participated in	2024: 133 individuals participated in regional

⁶ The number includes transfers of cases, transfers of evidence, mutual requests for cross-border legal assistance, agreed bilateral protocols, and other instances of cross-border/regional cooperation in war crimes proceedings among the five participating jurisdictions, chiefly among BiH, Serbia, Montenegro; cooperation of the participating jurisdictions (Action's Beneficiaries) with Croatia for cases processed by their justice authorities also count. The data is based on the monitoring by the project team and information received in the communication with the partner local judicial institutions and the Mechanism; full and official data on mutual requests and other forms of regional co-operation are not available yet or cannot be available if related to the investigation phase.

Expenditure to date: 210,810.04 EUR	enforcement officials participating in regional peer-to-peer meetings related to cross-border co-operation in war crimes handling supported by the action		regional cooperation	cooperation ⁷ Cumulative: 185 individuals
	level of regional cooperation between prosecution offices improves	Low/Medium	Medium/High	2024: Medium towards High Cumulative: Medium towards High
Output 3	Indicators	Baseline	End target (31 Dec 2026)	Progress / Milestone
Increased delivery of gender-responsive support services to victims and witnesses of war crimes and stronger capacity of relevant actors Budget: 2,312,526.05 EUR Expenditure to date: 1,131,764.61 EUR	# of sub-grants of the action successfully implemented by civil society partners	0	40 sub-grants	2024: 14 sub-grants implemented (9 completed) ⁸ Cumulative: 14 sub-grants implemented (9 completed)
	# of individuals especially women victims of conflict related sexual and gender-based violence) benefitting from sub-grants and activities to improve access to justice and services	0	400 individuals benefitting	2024: at least 2000 individual victims reached out and benefited from the sub-grants ⁹ Cumulative: at least 2000 individual victims reached out and benefited from the sub-grants
	# of victim and witness support officers trained on techniques of interacting with sensitive victims and cross-border co-operation	0	200 victim and witness support officers trained	2024: 90 victim support officers trained; 450 support providers (healthcare and psychosocial support professionals, CSO activists, volunteers) trained by the grantees

⁷ The number includes prosecutors, police investigators, judges and other officials participating in the regional multilateral prosecutorial or judicial meetings and conferences, including peer-to-peer meetings under Activity 1.5, and in bilateral operational meetings (based on information obtained from the prosecution offices or evidenced by the project team's participation in such bilateral meetings).

⁸ Activity 3.7.

⁹ Based on the reports from the CSO grantees available as of January 2025; 9 sub-granted projects are still in the implementation.

				Cumulative: 115 victim support officers trained; 450 support providers (healthcare and psychosocial support professionals, CSO activists, volunteers) trained
Output 4	Indicators	Baseline	End target (31 Dec 2026)	Progress / target
Grassroots actors better equipped to raise public awareness and foster mutual understanding through fact-based dialogues about crimes committed during the 1990s conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia Budget: 2,669,158.81 EUR Expenditure to date: 1,569,847.19 EUR	# of initiatives related to the 1990s conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, led by civil society organisations and supported by the action	0	30 initiatives	2024: 27 initiatives implemented by CSOs (sub-grants), 14 completed ¹⁰ Cumulative: 27 initiatives implemented by CSOs (sub-grants), 14 completed
	# of people participating in reconciliation events related to the 1990s conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia	0	300 people participating in reconciliation events	2024: at least 2000 individuals, mainly students and young professionals, participated in the grant-supported events (public awareness raising and skill/knowledge building workshops, etc.) Cumulative: at least 2000 individuals, mainly students and young professionals, participated
	# of people reached through information materials/ campaigns prepared or promoted by the action and disseminated through social and mainstream media	0	120,000 people reached	2024: at least 1,83 million people reached through the grant-supported actions Cumulative: at least 1,83 million people reached
	# of civil society and media representatives participating in public awareness raising events supported by the action	0	130 media and civil society representatives reached	2024: app. 650 media and civil society representatives participated in the grant-supported actions; 10 journalists trained by UNDP Cumulative: app. 650 media and civil society representatives participated; 23 journalists trained by UNDP

¹⁰ Activity 4.3.

Appendix II: Updated Risk Log

#	Description	Date Identified	Type	Impact & Probability	Counter-measures / Mngt response	Owner	Last Update	Status
1	Political contexts across the W. Balkans, esp. Kosovo-Serbia relations, developments related to the recent past causing enhanced sensitivities; frequent elections	continuous risk	Political Operational	Not all the Beneficiaries are participating; cancelled, or delayed activities; legislative and policy frameworks not adopted Probability on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) P = 3 Impact on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) I = 4	Careful and context sensitive timing for organizing and implementing activities (incl. agenda drafting and selection of participants, selection of location for events); frequent communication with partners and beneficiaries promoting inclusivity; status neutrality; accelerated work with national partners before or after elections	Regional Project Manager with the Project Team	end of the reporting period	no change
2	Lack of sufficient interest, willingness, or capacity of local actors to	continuous risk	Operational Organizational	Canceled or delayed activities; insufficient reach/attendance; low absorption capacity of direct	Regular and close communication with beneficiaries and partners; promoting and supporting local (co)ownership;	Regional Project Manager with the Project Team	end of the reporting period	reducing

	participate in the project			beneficiaries; results not sustainable Probability on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) $P = 2$ Impact on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) $I = 4$	updating needs assessments; adaptive planning			
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