REPORT
NATIONAL CONFERENCES
CRITIDE

Tittle:

Reports National conferences for the CritiDE project.

Project:

Critical thinking and participation as a foundation of democracy in Europe, funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive (EACEA) within the Erasmus+ programme.

Partners:

Youth Power Germany e.V. (Germany)
Carousel 8 (Croatia)
Youth Power / Snaga Mladih (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
NVO „Glas" (Montenegro)

Local community 3 days event:

Podgorica (ME) 30th Nov 2023
Zagreb (HR) 13th Dec 2023
Berlin (DE) 29th Nov 2023
Mostar (BA) 30th Nov 2023

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Report on the Conference "Empower Young Minds: Shaping Youth Activists and Media Literacy"
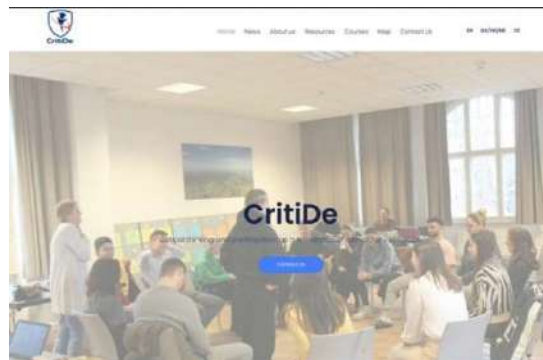
During November 30, the conference "Refresh Young Minds: Shaping Young Activists and Media Literacy" was held at the NEST Coworking space in Podgorica.

The conference was opened with welcoming words by the executive director of NVO GLAS, Milica Dedić, wishing the attendees an enjoyable day, encouraging them to create new connections, and, above all, inspiring them to collectively build the future.

After the welcoming words, Milica presented the challenges that formed the basis of the development of the CRITIDe project, its thematic areas, project objectives, implemented activities by work packages, and introduced the project platform https://critide-youth-power.org as well as the online course https://lab.learning-library.net/courses/activism-and-participation-in-democratic-processes-through-youth-work/ .

Panel 1: "Youth and Activism: Creating the Future"

Following the successful presentation of CRITIDe project results, the moderator, Jelena Vukčević, introduced the theme of the first panel: "Youth and Activism: Creating the Future." She presented distinguished speakers: Bogdan Božović, MP of the SNP in the Parliament of Montenegro; Nikola Zirojević, MP of the SD in the Parliament of Montenegro; Staša Baštrica, member of the Board of Directors of the Youth Network of Montenegro; and Jela Jovanović, representative of the Directorate for Youth in the Ministry of Sports and Youth of Montenegro.

Bogdan Božović, during his presentation, offered constructive suggestions for engaging youth in dialogue with the government and strengthening their voice in key decisions. His idea of establishing a youth office to interact with ministries, propose initiatives to the Parliament of Montenegro, and

promote youth presence in public debates, using e-petitions and events such as the "Youth Parliament - Simulation of Parliament's work," underscores the need for active youth participation in the political process.

Bogdan emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in political work, especially concerning youth seeking change. Mentioning eGovernment as a transparent portal providing access to various data and serving as a starting point for communication with citizens, he sees it as a crucial element in creating new value. Bogdan highlighted that the common goal should be to strengthen the economy and reduce the state budget's dependence solely on tourism.

In addition, Bogdan shares the view that party membership should play a crucial role in assessing the party's leadership. He also believes that the party president's mandate should be limited to a maximum of 4+4 years, contributing to the democratic process within political structures.Nikola Zirojević discussed the demotivation of most young people towards politics, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts and the creation of a Youth Club within the parliament.

Nikola Zirojević, an MP from the SD, expressed deep concern about the general demotivation of youth towards politics, where young people often perceive politics as something "dirty." Aware of this challenge, Nikola emphasized the necessity for greater involvement of young people in public dialogue, urging them to use existing mechanisms. His announced initiative to establish a Youth Club within the parliament indicates a desire to preserve the essence of young society and collective action to achieve common goals.

Showing support for young leaders in his party, Nikola highlighted that his party has a young person in the presidency, with the oldest member being 44 years old. This young politician supports the gathering of young people in various environments and expressed surprise at the knowledge of high school students who participated in the Youth Parliament program - Simulation of Parliament's work, where he himself was a mentor. He emphasized the need to raise awareness about politics among young people. Nikola also pointed out the communication problem with the government, stating that, although there is a legal possibility to request information from ministries, there is often no response to such requests, which represents a serious demotivating factor for the youth. With this stance, he

highlighted the necessity of transparency and openness in the political process to ensure active youth participation.

Staša Baštrica, a member of the Board of Directors of the Youth Network, highlighted the vision of the Network - creating a society where young people have a decisive influence on decisions. During her presentation, Staša revealed that the Network currently includes 44 organizations dedicated to working with and for young people, emphasizing the need for continuous improvement. She expressed optimism about future cooperation with the Ministry of Sports and Youth, adding that there is room for successful coordination.

Staša also shared with the audience several key projects of the Network, particularly highlighting the Youth Participatory Academy, which brought together prominent speakers and, for the first time, introduced the Romani language in Parliament. These projects not only contribute to promoting young people in public discussions but also lay the groundwork for inclusiveness and diversity in political engagement.

Jela Jovanović, a representative of the Directorate for Youth in the Ministry of Sports and Youth, brought exciting news about the adoption of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027 this year. She particularly emphasized the significant role of young members of the Working Group in creating this important document, laying a strong foundation for active youth participation in strategic initiatives. She highlighted the ministry's cooperation with non-governmental organizations, recognizing the challenges caused by the lack of a strategic document but announced strong support for projects in the field of media literacy and activism in the future. Jela pointed out plans to establish a Youth Council, where members will represent both state institutions and non-governmental organizations, playing a key advisory role. Referring to sports initiatives, Jela explained that the Ministry of Sports and Youth co-finances recreational sports activities, supports infrastructure projects, and awards scholarships to promising young athletes. With plans to expand the youth service network by the end of 2027, along with the distribution of over 60,000 youth cards in Montenegro, Jela concluded the first panel with a message about the need for joint action across all sectors of society to achieve improvements in access and support for young people.

Panel 2: "Media Literacy: Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Society"

The conference continued with the second panel, titled "Media Literacy: Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Society." In the role of moderator, Danilo Vukčević warmly welcomed experts from the media, academic community, and politics. The panelists include Prof. Dr. Nataša Ružić, a professor of media literacy at the Faculty of Political Sciences; Nemanja Lacman, a journalist and editor of the Adria portal; Snežana Burzan Vuksanović, a media and public relations specialist; and Marica Bulatović, a politician with significant experience in the media.

Prof. Dr Nataša Ružić emphasized that media literacy is often incorrectly defined, highlighting insufficient interest among young people in personal improvement in today's digital age. In her opinion, the process of gaining knowledge should be a mutual effort – if the other party is unwilling to learn, all efforts are in vain. Professor Ružić believes that artificial intelligence will help journalists create media content but emphasizes that it cannot replace journalists in reporting news.

Nemanja Lacman, editor of the Adria portal, pointed out that fake news is prevalent in today's society but stressed the importance of having fact-checkers in the online space. Media literacy gives us the ability to develop a critical approach to information received from the media. He emphasized that it is crucial for parents to explain situations to children since they won't be able to understand the complexity of media literacy on their own. Lacman highlighted that discussions about media literacy have only recently started in our country and that a larger number of fake news is present on social media, which is then further transmitted by the media.

Marica Bulatović, a politician with rich experience in the media, emphasized that in today's age, everyone has the right to be public and access channels that lead to a wider audience. Laws in Montenegro firmly protect freedom of expression and young people from the negative influence of the media. She appealed to the state to find ways to filter information and improve human resources, especially in the segment of media literacy.

Snežana Burzan Vuksanović, a media and public relations specialist, expressed her belief in humanity, emphasizing the importance of knowledge, emotions, and creativity. In an interactive presentation, she presented numerous examples of media that violate the most common standards of journalism.

The panelists shared inspirational life stories, encouraging attendees to collectively develop ideas to address key issues.

After intriguing discussions, attendees had the opportunity to exchange contacts and ideas during the networking segment of the event, accompanied by refreshing drinks and canapés, marking a successful conclusion to yesterday's conference.

Report on the National Conference CritiDE
Berlin, Germany

During the National Conference "Critide: Critical Thinking and Participation as a Foundation of Democracy in Europe," held in Berlin on 29 November 2023, the CritiDe project took center stage as we introduced and showcased the comprehensive range of activities and materials developed to enhance critical thinking, media literacy, and youth activism in democratic processes across Europe. The conference provided a platform to demonstrate the project's innovative approach to democratic education and to highlight its achievements and resources. The conference, gathered 39 participants in Berlin. This event was important for advancing the dialogue on how critical thinking underpins democratic societies in Europe.

Key figures like Nedim Micijevic and Amar Hamzic, known for their innovative work in democratic education, shared their expertise in developing and implementing programs that engage youth and youth workers. Their approaches have been instrumental in nurturing a new generation of critically-minded and democratically active individuals.

A session led by Daniel Medeiros, an art educator and activist explored the intersection of art, democracy, and critical thinking, illustrating how artistic expression has both reflected and influenced democratic changes in Europe and South America. Medeiros provided tangible examples of art as a medium for political expression and social change, demonstrating its power to stimulate dialogue and challenge societal norms.

This conference highlighted the multidimensional nature of democracy and critical thinking. The diverse backgrounds of speakers like Micijevic, Amar Hamzic and Daniel Medeiros

emphasized the project's comprehensive strategy, which extends beyond traditional education. This approach signifies a broader understanding of democracy, recognizing that nurturing democratic values and critical thinking skills is a multifaceted endeavor involving various sectors of society.

The Agenda

The Critide conference agenda was planned, encompassing various critical elements to showcase and further the project's mission. It kicked off with a detailed presentation of the Critide project, outlining its objectives, methodologies, and activities, providing a foundational understanding of its role in promoting critical thinking and democratic participation in Europe. Following this, the conference showcased the tangible intellectual outputs of the project, including educational materials and research findings, highlighting their contribution to the educational and democratic landscape.

An interactive Q&A session allowed for engaging discussions between participants and project leaders, fostering a deeper understanding of the project's implications and challenges. A key feature of the conference was the practical workshop for youth workers, focusing on the application of a newly developed manual to encourage critical thinking and democratic engagement among young people.

To ensure the project's continual improvement, feedback was collected from all attendees, an essential step for guiding future initiatives. Lastly, the conference introduced an online learning course and platform, key digital tools designed to extend the project's reach, providing accessible and comprehensive educational content on democracy and critical thinking.

Introduction to the CritiDe Project
The conference began with an in-depth presentation of the CritiDe project, detailing its goals, strategies, and the overarching vision. Attendees were provided with a thorough understanding of how the project seeks to empower youth workers, educators, and young individuals, especially those facing fewer opportunities, through a multifaceted educational approach.

Showcasing Educational Materials

- Educational Handbooks: We displayed a series of handbooks developed as part of the project, designed to equip youth workers and educators with the necessary tools to foster critical thinking and democratic engagement among young people. These handbooks cover a broad spectrum of topics, including social inclusion, democracy promotion, and media literacy, providing a rich resource for participants to engage with and adapt for their local contexts.

- Workshops (Follow ups): The creation and implementation of interactive workshops were highlighted, showcasing their role in providing practical, hands-on experiences for participants. These workshops were tailored to engage youth workers and

educators in dynamic learning processes, emphasizing the development of critical thinking and media literacy skills.

- Online Courses: We introduced the online courses, emphasizing the accessibility and adaptability of these digital resources. The platform serves as a hub for learning and engagement, offering courses that complement the handbooks and workshops, ensuring a comprehensive educational experience.

- Online Platform Critide: We introduced the online platform, given the participants a tour and presenting the articles and all accessible materials featuring in the platform.

Overview of LTTAs

The presentation progressed to a detailed overview of the three Learning, Teaching, Training Activities (LTTAs) implemented within the project, each designed to address a specific aspect of democratic engagement:

- Active Political Participation and Engagement in Democratic Processes: This LTTA focused on fostering a deep understanding of democratic processes and the importance of active participation, providing insights into effective engagement strategies.
- Media Literacy in Light of Political Participation: The crucial role of media literacy was emphasized, highlighting how critical engagement with media influences political participation and democratic engagement.
- Digital Tools and Online Campaigning: The final LTTA showcased the use of digital tools and online campaigning techniques, demonstrating how digital platforms can be leveraged to enhance democratic participation and activism.

Interactive Sessions and Practical Workshops
The conference featured interactive Q&A sessions and practical workshops based on the developed manual and materials, allowing participants to delve into the application of these resources. These sessions facilitated a dynamic exchange of ideas and provided hands-on experience in employing the project's tools and strategies in real-world contexts.

Feedback and Future Directions
A key aspect of the conference was the collection of feedback from attendees, which is crucial for the continuous improvement of the project. The insights gathered from participants will guide the refinement of existing materials and the development of future initiatives.

Conclusion
The conference served as a testament to the collaborative effort behind the CritiDe project and its commitment to fostering a well-informed, engaged, and democratic European community. By showcasing the educational materials and activities developed, the event highlighted the project's comprehensive approach to democracy education and provided a valuable resource for participants to take forward in their work with young people. The CritiDe project stands as a model of innovation and engagement in the promotion of democratic values and critical thinking across Europe.

Report on the Conference Digital Horizons Unleashed Mostar, 30.11.2023.

The Digital Horizons Unleashed Conference convened in Mostar on November 30, 2023, providing a platform to explore the intersection of digital technology, youth activism, and civil engagement.

Central to the conference was the unveiling of the project platform https://critide-youth-power.org , which serves as a collaborative space for young activists to initiate and coordinate projects aimed at social change.

The platform offers diverse tools and resources to facilitate networking, project management, and knowledge sharing among youth across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Participants lauded the platform's potential to foster collaboration and amplify youth voices in advocating for meaningful societal change.

In conjunction with the platform launch, an upcoming online course was announced,

The course available at https://lab.learning-library.net/courses/critide-bosnian-translation/ offers a comprehensive exploration of key concepts and strategies relevant to youth activism and civic engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Designed to empower young change-makers, the course covers a wide range of topics, including political participation, advocacy,

and community mobilization. Participants will gain insights into the socio-political landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as practical skills for effecting positive change in their communities. Through interactive modules, engaging activities, and real-life case studies, learners will acquire the knowledge and tools necessary to become effective advocates for social justice and democratic values. Whether aspiring to address local issues or contribute to broader social movements, this course equips participants with the skills and confidence to make a meaningful impact. With a focus on collaboration, innovation, and ethical leadership, the course encourages participants to harness their potential as agents of positive change in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The course will cover topics such as media literacy, digital campaigning, policy influence, and grassroots mobilization, providing practical insights for youth-driven initiatives.

Attendees expressed enthusiasm for the course, recognizing its value in empowering young people to enact positive change in their communities.

Turning to youth perspectives on Bosnian politics, many expressed a sense of disillusionment with the current political landscape, citing corruption, inefficiency, and lack of representation as key concerns.

Despite these challenges, there was a prevailing desire among young people to actively engage in politics and contribute to shaping the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Media literacy emerged as a critical issue, with participants highlighting the need for education and awareness to combat misinformation and promote critical thinking.

Efforts to broaden media perspectives and amplify marginalized voices were emphasized as essential for fostering a more inclusive and representative media landscape.

Social media platforms were identified as powerful tools for political activism and advocacy, enabling youth to mobilize, organize campaigns, and raise awareness on pressing issues.

However, concerns were raised about the spread of hate speech and misinformation on social media, underscoring the importance of responsible online engagement.

In response to these challenges, participants engaged in a workshop focused on media literacy and digital activism, exploring strategies for promoting informed citizenship and combating online disinformation.

In addition, participants engaged in a brief knowledge quiz related to the entire platform and the topics covered during the conference.

Through collaborative discussions and practical exercises, participants developed skills in critical analysis, ethical online behavior, and effective advocacy tactics.

Overall, the Digital Horizons Unleashed Conference provided a dynamic forum for youth to exchange ideas, build skills, and chart pathways for meaningful civic engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Final conference of the project CRITIDE
(full name: Critical thinking and participation as a foundation of democracy in Europe)

Zagreb, Croatia

On 13th of December 2023, Carousel 8 held final conference for the project "Critical thinking and participation as a foundation of democracy in Europe".
The venue for the final conference was Hotel Laguna, and there were 36 attendees.

The main presenter was Antonija Lelas, a member of Carousel 8 who was a trainer on one of the LTTAs with one youth worker who participated in LTTA and one youngster who participated in follow-up workshops and the creation of a social media campaign.

Programme of the final conference:
- Welcome by hosting partner organisation;
- Presentation of the project and activities implemented;
- Presentation of intellectual outputs;
- Q&A session;
- Workshop for youth workers on using developed manual;
- Collecting feedback from participants;
- Presentation of online learning course and developed online platform;
- Networking and cocktails;
- Closure of the event.

The presentation of the project was focused on the background of the project, all partners involved, and the needs in our local communities. Specific objectives of the project were presented, and the focus on three main interrelated topics:
1. active political participation, and engagement in democratic processes;
2. media literacy; and
3. digital tools and online campaigning.

Attendees better understood the overview of all activities implemented and the project flow. Intellectual outputs that were introduced:
- Handbook from LTTA 1 "Active political participation, engagement in democratic processes"
- Handbook from LTTA 2 "Media literacy in light of political participation and engagement in democratic processes"
- Content report from LTTA 3 "Digital tools and online campaigning for active participation in democratic processes"

In the Q&A part questions were mostly about the Erasmus+ funding and possibilities inside KA2. Also the specific sessions developed on the topic of media literacy and the importance of media literacy education.

After the Q&A, attendees selected one session according to their interests. One was from the Handbook 1 "Active political participation, engagement in democratic processes" about Political socialisation, and other was from Handbook 2 "Media literacy in light of political

participation and engagement in democratic processes"about Media as a source of information.

The feedback we received was mostly positive, with an input that the language is for older high schoolers and that for the target group younger target group (14-16 years old), we should simplify the vocabulary.

At the end of the event we presented
- CRITIDE platform
- Online learning course: "How to approach the topics of activism in participation in democratic processes and active political participation, through youth work on local and higher levels"
- Social media campaign developed by our youngsters for youngsters