BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA'S YOUTH ONLINE:
VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF DIGITAL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, as technology has developed, violations of human rights in online interactions have surged. Violations of digital rights appear in various forms and target various parties. Notably, young people who engage with online tools from an early age find themselves in the roles of both perpetrators and victims of digital rights violations. Despite the roles that parents, schools, and educational authorities are expected to play in shaping a safe and secure digital space for young people, in most cases they are left to navigate the complexities of the digital ecosystem on their own.

In 2021, the European Union (EU) adopted its first comprehensive strategy on the rights of the child, including the Better Internet for Children strategy, with the aim of protecting, empowering and ensuring respect for children and young people online. As a country aspiring to join the EU, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) should follow similar practices and adopt or update existing laws, strategies, and policies to protect young people's digital rights – however, it seems that the country is lagging behind in this area. At the same time, various stakeholders, including international organisations and civil society groups, are actively engaged in developing informal educational programmes aimed at enhancing young people's digital literacy and online security skills. But the question remains whether these efforts are sufficient to protect young people online and make them aware of real-life consequences if they become perpetrators of violations.

The research paper investigates the challenges faced by young people in BiH in the digital world. Through an analysis of cases of digital rights violations monitored by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, the research paper offers insights that can inform policies and educational strategies, fostering a safer and more responsible digital environment. At the same time, the research delves into the young people's awareness of their digital rights and online safety, aligning with the principles outlined in the EU strategy.

The report is structured in three key sections. The methodology section provides an overview of the methods applied for data collection and analysis. The analysis section delves into the research findings and provides an in-depth analysis of both existing documentation and the primary data collected. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations section offers key takeaways and recommendations tailored to inform and guide relevant stakeholders in implementing strategies aimed at raising awareness and safeguarding young people's digital rights.

This research paper will serve as a basis for informing subsequent publications, activities and policies that concern young people in BiH in the digital arena.

BIRN's Monitoring of Youth-Related Digital Rights Violations

The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network continuously monitors digital rights violations in south-east Europe through its Digital Monitoring database. The database documents violations of digital rights and freedoms, detailing cases and corresponding sources while categorising cases based on the type of violation, the means used and the parties involved, including both victims and perpetrators.

Focusing on youth-specific cases, we analysed cases of digital rights violations in BiH covering incidents from September 2022 to August 2023, identifying 19 instances of digital rights violations concerning young people. These cases

provide a general overview of the violations that young people face online and the risks and challenges of the online world.

One of the most disturbing cases involved cyberbullying and culminate in the suicide of 22-year-old Mladen Dulic, triggered by a video showing a petrol station worker mocking him while he filled out a job application. This cyberbullying case is part of a global trend, as Radio Free Europe reported, highlighting **UNICEF data from 2019[i]**, which showed that out of 1 million young people aged 15 to 24 who were surveyed, 70% had been victims of cyberbullying or digital harassment.

During BIRN's monitoring, several cases involving child pornography were identified, including the 'System 2022' police operation that led to the arrest of four individuals in the Republika Srpska entity on suspicion of exploiting children for pornography. The suspects allegedly used various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Discord, Kik and Telegram to both distribute and receive child pornography material. The victims were children aged from two to 12 years old. Similar incidents occurred in Bihac and Visoko, while in Bijeljina, a person was reported to the authorities for accessing websites containing child pornography and for disseminating such content. The Ministry of Internal Affairs in Republika Srpska also arrested nine people suspected of committing offences related to child exploitation.

Cases of threats of violence and expressions of ethnic intolerance have highlighted the misuse of online platforms by young people in BiH. An 18-year-old from Bihac threatened on Instagram to replicate a mass school shooting in Serbia. His post, which was circulated on social media, warned: "For some time now, I have been preparing an unforgettable massacre at the School of Economics. I swear on my life." Cases like this raised concerns among experts about young people's reactions online to such violent incidents, particularly young individuals who expressed support and admiration for the school shooter in Serbia.

In another case in August 2023, a teenager from Bijeljina posted videos on TikTok threatening his Bosniak neighbours. Despite expressing regret about his actions, as noted in BIRN's Digital Rights Violations Annual Report 2022-2023[ii], he continued posting similar content on **TikTok**[iii]. These sensitive cases involving minors also led to violations of ethical standards by media outlets, including the exposure of a minor's identity, as highlighted in BIRN's report.

In addition to these cases, BIRN uncovered instances of young people spreading false appeals for help on social media, exploiting investigations and evacuations resulting from fake bomb threats in several schools in Sarajevo, endangering the safety of students.

Lack of Online Child Protection Legislation in BiH

According to the **National Youth Survey in 2022**[iv], 96% of young people in BiH have regular internet access, with 55% of them spending four hours online daily. Facebook is one of the most popular social media platforms among the **younger generation**[v]. Research into privacy on the internet confirms that young people predominantly use the internet for accessing social media accounts and exchanging messages, often without an understanding of their rights to protection online.

With the widespread use and popularity of social media, protection mechanisms have become crucial for everyone, particularly children. "There is a large amount of personal data collected and stored on social media and other websites, regardless of the fact whether this data has been released/posted with a view to being shared or whether it has been designed by the very website of the respective social media," **law professor**[vi] Agnieszka McPeak, an expert on social media use, has written.

Despite international actors recognising the importance of regulating the online space, state efforts to regulate and protect children online appear

sluggish. In 2012, the UN adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which advises the implementation of mechanisms like content control and moderation, while not restricting children's rights to access information and freedom of expression.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a lack of legislation addressing online abuses and dealing with online child protection. **The Criminal Code of BiH**[vii] only recognises the production, offering, and distribution of child pornography through computer systems. (Sexual exploitation and child abuse are regulated as a criminal offence in Criminal Code of both the countries' entities and the Brcko District.) Specifically, the lack of a legal definition of the internet as a public space often leads to online criminal activities going unpunished. In practice, if there is a case of online abuse in which all parties involved are children, it usually ends with police intervention that involves discussions with the children, parents and school officials.

Research indicates[viii] that parents in BiH often lack sufficient knowledge of how to ensure children's safety online, while also lacking media and digital literacy. Similarly, research by the BiH Regulatory Agency for Communication and **UNICEF in 2019**[ix] highlighted parental uncertainty about whether the benefits of the internet outweigh the risks, and whether they have enough knowledge to help their children stay safe online. Media and information literacy is not included as a regular subject in school curricula, although the subject Digital World was introduced in Republika Srpska in 2021 for second-graders in primary schools **(7-8 years of age)**[x]. The subject's aim is to educate students about how to use digital devices safely and respond to any inappropriate digital content.

European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children

Recognising the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children online, the EU developed a Better Internet for **Children strategy**[xi]. The strategy is organised around four main pillars:

I   Stimulating quality content online for young people

II   Increasing awareness and empowerment

III   Creating a safe environment for children online

IV   Fighting child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation

The first pillar, stimulating quality content online, refers to educational content that will stimulate the imagination, promote a positive internet experience and enhance children's digital skills. It is recommended in the strategy that EU member states implement standards for quality online content.

The second pillar focuses on digital and media literacy, aiming to raise awareness among children, parents and teachers about online risks and to promote tools and mechanisms to protect children online. The strategy also emphasises the need to introduce mechanisms for reporting online violence against children.

The third pillar emphasises creating a safe environment for children online, which involves implementing age-appropriate privacy settings, parental controls and content classification.

The fourth pillar prioritises faster, systematic identification of child sexual abuse materials disseminated through online channels and cooperation with international partners to combat child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation.

METHODOLOGY

This This research paper was conducted as part of BIRN's 'Reporting Digital Rights and Freedoms' project. Focused on BiH, the research analysed the experiences of high-school-aged (14-19 years old) young people on the internet and their awareness of digital rights and safety in the online world. For the purposes of this research, we chose not to use the term children, but the term 'youth' as, according to the **United Nations Resolution**[xii] 36/28 in 1981, this includes people between the ages 15 and 24.

In particular, the research was inspired by an increasing number of recorded cases of digital violence and hate speech by young people, often directed toward other young individuals in BiH. The purpose of the research is to inform the development of educational strategies in BiH and raise awareness among the relevant authorities, media and the general public about digital threats and the ways in which young people's digital rights are violated.

To obtain comprehensive data, a mixed method was employed with the following data sources:

■ Desk review of secondary documentation. Relevant documents, reports and data sources were reviewed.

■ Online survey. The online survey was designed for high school students, consisting of a total of 16 questions divided into four dimensions: demographic data, internet and social media usage, hate speech and discrimination, and digital rights and security. The survey was developed to

streamline BiH's progress towards a European strategy for a better internet for children, highlighting protection, empowerment and respect of children and young people online. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. In total, 590 high school students participated in the survey (see the table below). The survey is available as Annex 1 of this paper.

590 RESPONDENTS					
Females: 409 (69%)				Males: 181 (31%)	
BIRTH YEAR					
2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
19 (3%)	103 (17,5%)	167 (28%)	192 (32,5%)	108 (18%)	1 (0,17%)

■ Semi-structured interviews. To enhance the applicability of the quantitative research results, we included semi-structured interviews with three educational authorities and one other relevant institution dealing with young people's digital rights and security. Overall, we conducted four interviews, as noted in the table available as Annex 2 to this paper.

The data obtained from these sources was analysed by BIRN to validate the credibility of the findings and ensure robust conclusions and recommendations. One difficulty was gathering data from a representative sample of the young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To ensure a larger and more representative sample, with support from BIRN's team, we collaborated with two prominent youth organisations in the country, the Association of Secondary School Students in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Student Council Network, who distributed the survey among their members.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Survey Insights: High School Students Prioritise Internet Use for Communication Purposes

In order to correctly assess the threats that young people face in the online environment, it is crucial to understand the purposes for which they use the internet and to understand their habits in using it. There is a widespread opinion that the positive potential of the internet is not being fully utilised and that young people, especially those in adolescence, use the digital environment solely for virtual socialising, entertainment and passing the time.
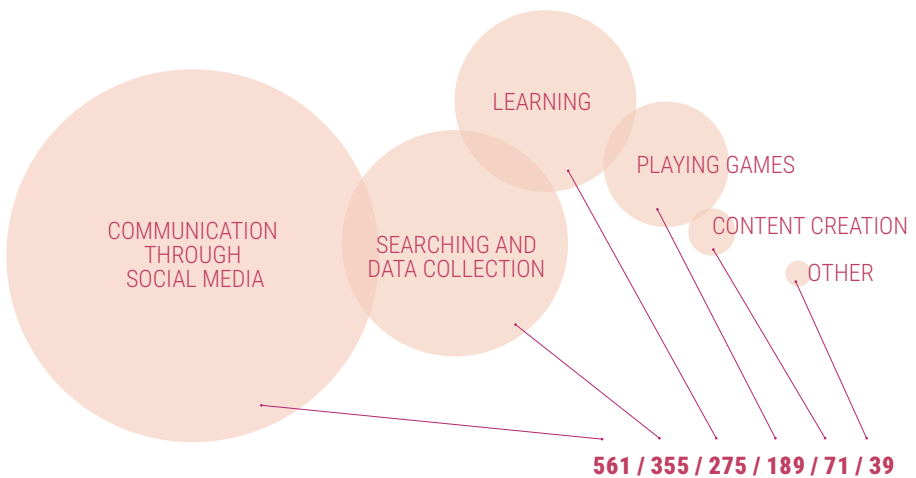
This research partially confirms these claims, as 95% of high school students who were surveyed identify communication with friends and family through social media as one of the purposes for which they use the internet.

However, a significant percentage also use the internet for gathering information and learning. The findings show that out of every 100 high school students, 60 use the internet for searching and as a source of various information, while 47 use it as a learning tool.

When we compare this data with a similar study conducted by the Association for Addiction Prevention NARKO-NE in 2016, we can see that the situation has not significantly changed. Back then, socialising with friends was the main purpose of the internet for 80 out of 100 individuals aged 13 to 17, while 46% of respondents used the internet for school and learning.

There has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of young people using the internet for playing games, with the current research indicating that 32% of high school students use the internet for this purpose, compared to 23% in the 2016 survey. Just over one-tenth of high school students (12%) currently use the internet for content creation, while a smaller percentage (6%) mentioned other specific purposes such as watching movies, reading books, online shopping, etc.

What do high school students use the internet for?

LEARNING

PLAYING GAMES

COMMUNICATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

SEARCHING AND DATA COLLECTION

CONTENT CREATION

OTHER

561 / 355 / 275 / 189 / 71 / 39

As is evident from the survey results, almost every high school student currently engages in various forms of communication through social media. This exposes them to daily threats arising from the inability to fully control the content on social media platforms. Private communication via social media represents the most significant risk, particularly if parents do not monitor the circle of friends with whom a young person is in communication. In the following sections of this paper, we will specifically focus on social media. To begin with, it is essential to examine which social media platforms today's high school students use and to what extent they trust the information they receive through these networks.

In the survey, we presented the six currently most prevalent global social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, X (formerly Twitter) to students and asked them to rate the frequency of their usage on a scale of 1 to 5. A rating of 5 indicates daily usage, while a rating of 1 suggests that the respondent never uses that particular social media platform.

The most popular social media platform among high school students currently is Instagram, as indicated by the data showing that 75% of respondents use this platform daily, 13% use it multiple times a week, and only 3% never use it. In contrast, the platform that high school students hardly use is X (formerly Twitter). A total of 80% of those surveyed stated that they never use this social media platform, while just under a tenth of respondents (9%) use X once or twice a month. A total of 9% of respondents use this platform at least once a week. Regarding the Facebook, an interesting finding is that 60% of high school students use it once or twice a month or never, despite Facebook still being at the top of the list of the most popular social media platforms globally.
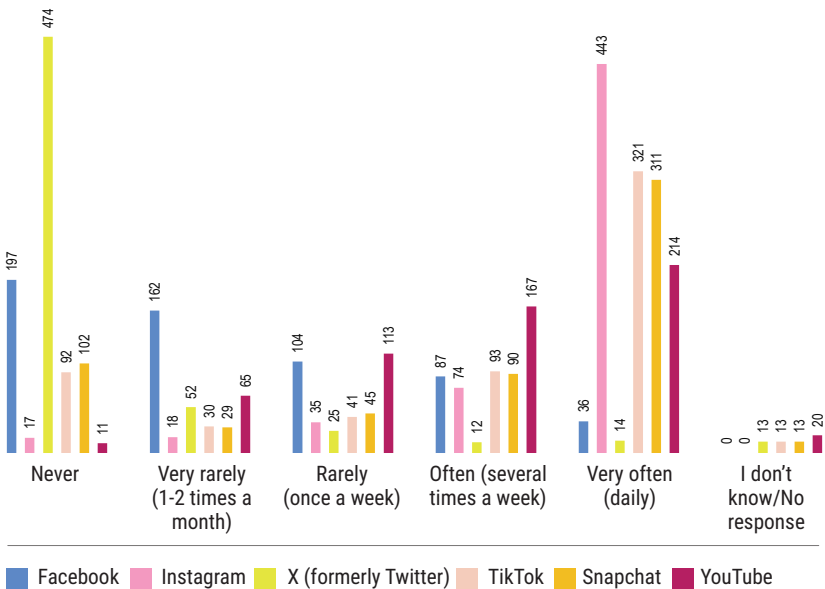
Frequency of social media use among high school students

While Instagram is the most popular platform, high school students extensively use the three other social media platforms, TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube. TikTok and Snapchat are used almost equally. Just over half of the respondents use these two platforms daily (54% for TikTok and 52% for Snapchat, respectively), while almost equal percentages of high school students never use these platforms - 16% for TikTok and 17% for Snapchat. The results also indicate that YouTube is quite popular among high school students, but the frequency of its usage varies, with a significantly smaller number using it on a daily basis. A total of 95% of the students surveyed use YouTube.

How often do you follow news about events in the local community through social media?

- Very frequently (every day)
- Frequently (few times a week)
- Rarely (once a week)
- Very rarely (1-2 times a month)
- Never
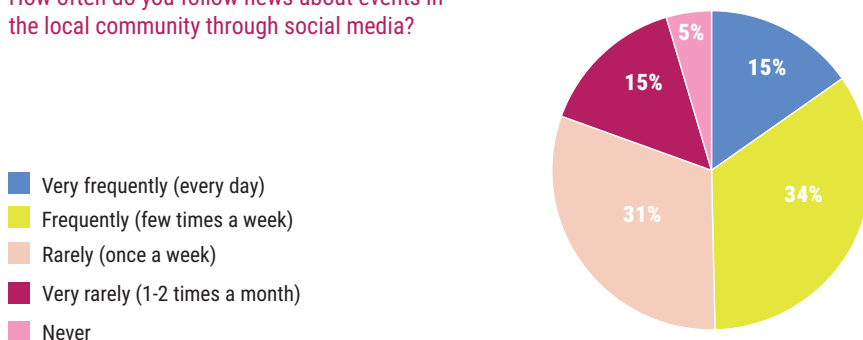
In the study, we were particularly interested in how often high school students follow news about events in the local community (the city or municipality in which they live) through social media. Half of the respondents receive news about various events in their city or municipality through social media daily or at least several times a week, and a significant portion of the remaining respondents also use social media for this purpose. 45% of the high school students surveyed follow this type of news through social media, but less frequently than the others who were surveyed, who follow such news once a week or only a few times a month via social media. Only 5% of high school students never follow this type of news via social media. This data suggests that the high school population is always up to date with local events, and that

social media can be used to raise awareness among this group about various topics and events.

It is evident that social media plays a significant role in high school students' leisure time. However, the findings of this research suggest that social media platforms enjoy a relatively low level of trust among this group.

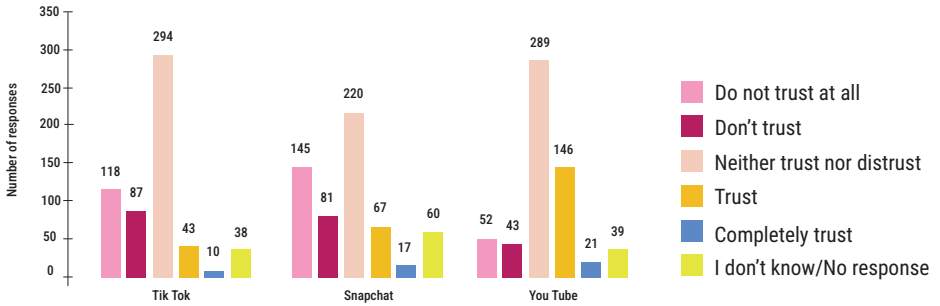Level of trust - Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter)
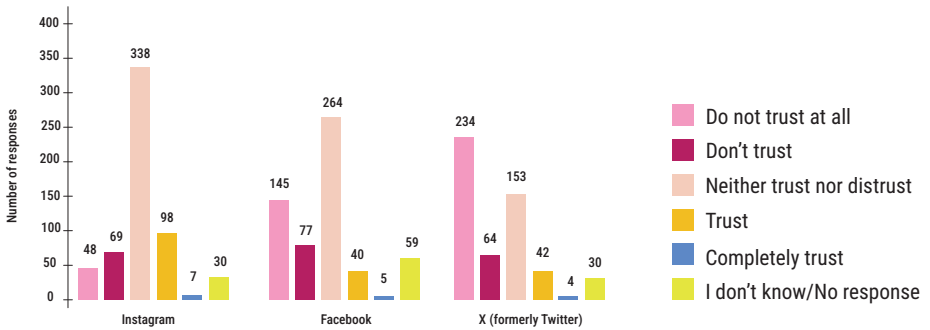
The majority of high school students said they did not either trust or distrust the social media platforms mentioned in the survey. This ambivalence is clearest in their attitude towards the content on Instagram (which 57% of those surveyed said they neither trusted nor did not trust), TikTok (50% expressed ambivalence), YouTube (49%), and Facebook (45%). If we analyse those who are not ambivalent and expressed either trust or distrust in social media platforms, it can be concluded that in the case of all platforms except YouTube, a significantly larger number expressed distrust. Almost a third of the sample trust the content on YouTube (28%). The largest number of students trust information received through Instagram (18%) and Snapchat (14%). In contrast, high school students show the greatest distrust towards X, which may be one reason why they do not use this platform. A significant 50% of respondents stated that they do not trust this social media platform to some extent or that they do not trust it at all. Distrust of Snapchat, Facebook, and

TikTok runs 38%, 37% and 35% respectively, while only two out of ten students expressed distrust towards Instagram.

Level of trust - TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube

Chart: Number of responses by platform (Tik Tok, Snapchat, You Tube)

Legend:
- Do not trust at all
- Don't trust
- Neither trust nor distrust
- Trust
- Completely trust
- I don't know/No response

Tik Tok: 118, 87, 294, 43, 10, 38
Snapchat: 145, 81, 220, 67, 17, 60
You Tube: 52, 43, 289, 146, 21, 39

Hate Speech and Discrimination on Social Media: One in Three High School Students Exposed to Peer Hate Speech Online

Hate speech is defined as any form of communication in speech writing or behaviour that attacks or uses discriminatory language against a person or group based on their religious, ethnic, national affiliation, race, background, gender or other identity factors.

Discrimination is any act of differentiation and unequal treatment of a person or group of people based on personal characteristics that make them different from others.

Hate speech is widespread in the digital world, and many people who use it hide behind false profiles that disguise their identity. The goal in every instance of hate speech is to cause harm or hurt someone else, and it is often associated with discriminatory behaviours intended to denigrate people or deprive them of certain rights. In this research, we were interested in the frequency of hate speech and discriminatory behaviour among high school students on social media. We asked them whether they have ever experienced hate speech from their peers via social media, whether they have ever been discriminated against by their peers based on some personal characteristic, and if so, which

one. We also inquired about whether they have reported or would report the insult or incident of hate speech they experienced on the internet.

The responses were alarming. Every third high school student said they had experienced hate speech from their peers via social media, while 7% of high school students said that they did not want to answer the question about whether or not they have experienced hate speech online, citing personal reasons.

Have you ever experienced hate speech on social media by your peers?

■ Yes
■ No
■ I don't want to respond

33%

60%

7%
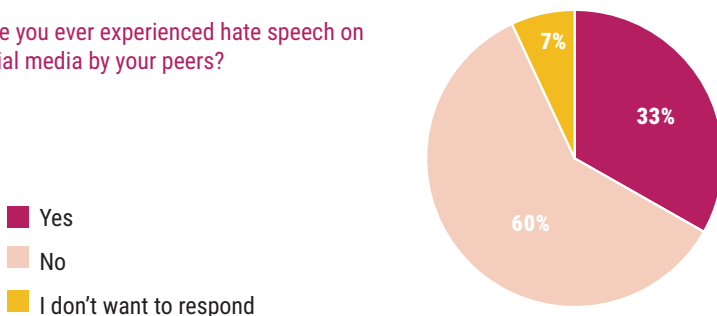
If we analyse the geographical areas from which these high school students come, we can see that hate speech is present in both multi-ethnic and mono-ethnic environments. Clearly, although nationalism is one of the most common causes of hate speech in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is not the only one. The results also indicate that young men are slightly more exposed to hate speech, as 37% of young men surveyed had experienced hate speech, compared to 31% of young women (a difference of 6%).

Looking at the social media platforms most frequently used by the high school students who have experienced hate speech, we can see that all social media platforms are represented. About a third of users of each platform have been victims of hate speech, except for X, on which half of those surveyed who use the platform frequently or very frequently reported

having experienced hate speech, along with 40% of those who use the platform at least once a week.

Social networks usage by students-victims of hate speech

SOCIAL NETWORK	VERY FREQUENTLY OR FREQUENTLY (%)	RARELY OR VERY RARELY (%)	NEVER (%)
Facebook	33.33	35.34	30.96
Instagram	33.46	33.96	29.41
X (formerly Twitter)	50.00	40.26	31.22
TikTok	35.27	38.03	21.74
Snapchat	32.67	40.54	30.39
YouTube	33.07	33.71	27.27

Another important issue that poses a serious threat to the comfort of using the internet space and the digital environment is the issue of discrimination. The data obtained in this research indicate the existence of various forms of discrimination among high school students, but with fewer incidences compared to the issue of hate speech. However, regardless of this, the data are concerning since every fifth high school student has experienced some form of discrimination from their peers.

Have you ever been discriminated against by your peers on social media?

- Yes
- No
- I don't want to respond
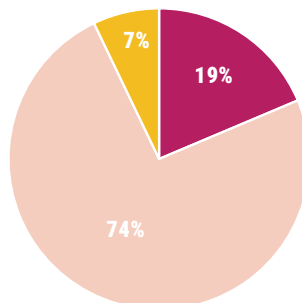
Analysing the demographic data of individuals who answered affirmatively to this question, we can see that there is no significant correlation with

geographical area, age or gender. Peer discrimination among high school students is present in all parts of the country, among all ages of high school students, and almost equal for male and female students. However, discrimination is slightly more common among young women, with 20% having experienced it, compared to 17% of young men.

Determinant: GENDER

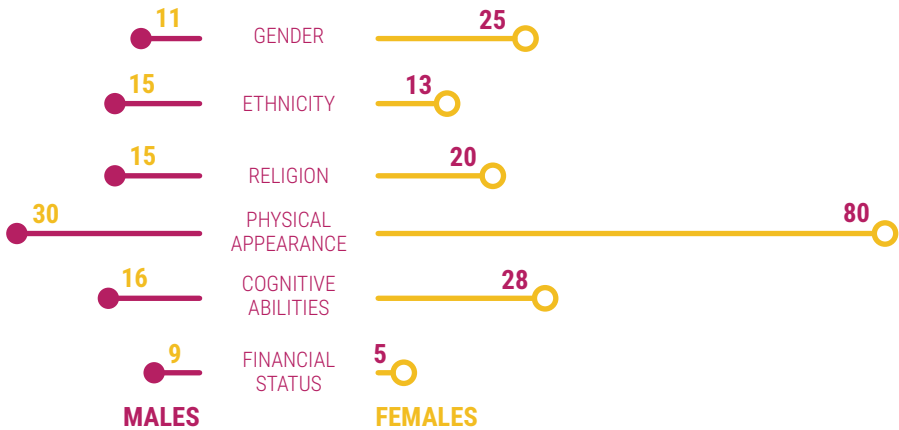|	Males	Females
% of 'Yes' responses	16.57	19.56

Determinant: AGE

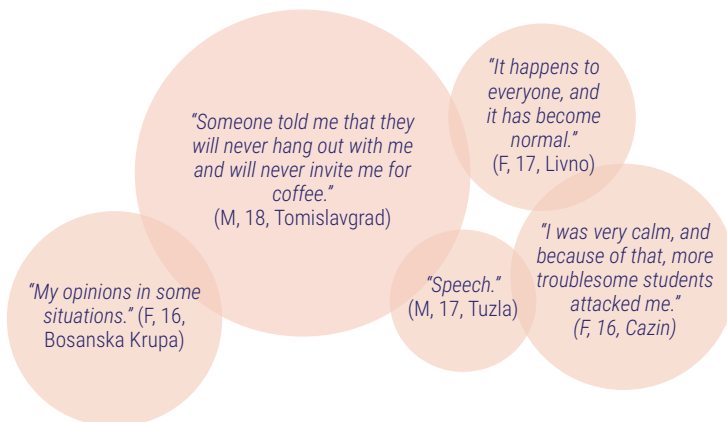|	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
% of 'Yes' responses	15.79	20.39	17.96	19.27	17.59

The most common basis on which high school students discriminate against each other is physical appearance, as indicated by every high school student who responded affirmatively to the question about their experience with discrimination in the survey. All 19% of surveyed high school students who experienced discrimination from their peers through social media have been primarily discriminated against based on their physical appearance, while some of them also mentioned additional reasons.

If the data is extrapolated, every fifth high school student in Bosnia and Herzegovina faces discrimination from their peers based on their physical appearance. Of the respondents who experienced discrimination, 40% also stated that they were discriminated against based on their mental or cognitive abilities, while a third mentioned discrimination based on gender and religious beliefs. One-quarter of all respondents who said they were discriminated against also experienced discrimination based on their ethnic background, and a slightly smaller percentage (13%) were discriminated against based on their financial status.

Types of discrimination among high school students (%)

	MALES	FEMALES
GENDER	11	25
ETHNICITY	15	13
RELIGION	15	20
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	30	80
COGNITIVE ABILITIES	16	28
FINANCIAL STATUS	9	5

In the section of the survey that allowed respondents to name other reasons why they were discriminated against, some additional, specific reasons were mentioned that warrant special attention. Particularly interesting is a comment from one high school student who said that discrimination has become normal and happens to everyone. Further research could be dedicated to a deeper analysis of such incidents and the consequences they have for personality development.

"Someone told me that they will never hang out with me and will never invite me for coffee." (M, 18, Tomislavgrad)

"It happens to everyone, and it has become normal." (F, 17, Livno)

"My opinions in some situations." (F, 16, Bosanska Krupa)

"Speech." (M, 17, Tuzla)

"I was very calm, and because of that, more troublesome students attacked me." (F, 16, Cazin)

Unreported and Unpunished Online Violence Among Young People

Although hate speech and discrimination are present in the high school students' digital environment, a very small number of them are willing to report such forms of digit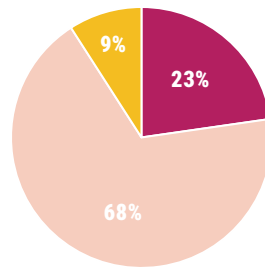al violence, and some are unaware of the options available if they decide to do so. Of the total number of high school students surveyed who confirmed exposure to hate speech, only 16% reported it, while one-tenth of them did not know how. 74% simply ignored the hate speech they experienced. Among the total number of high school students surveyed who were discriminated against by their peers on social media, 23% took specific steps and reported the discrimination, while 9% did not know what their options were. 68% of them did nothing and did not report the discrimination they experienced.
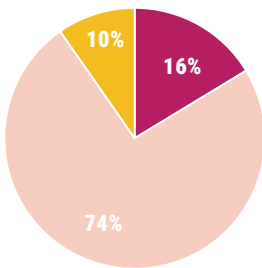
Reported hate speech   Reported discrimination

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ I don't want to respond

Digital Rights Awareness and Education

The research results presented so far have shown that the high school population's digital security is compromised and that their digital rights are being significantly violated. The question, however, is whether they are aware of this and whether they even know that, as in the real world, they have certain

rights that should not be violated in the virtual environment. The next part of this research is specifically focused on high school students' awareness of digital rights and digital security. Examining their attitudes and behaviour should provide an answer to the question of how secure they feel on the internet and whether they behave responsibly in the virtual environment, as well as indicating the extent of the success of the implementation of the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children in BiH.

Awareness of
digital rights

Learning about digital
rights in schools

■ Yes   ■ No
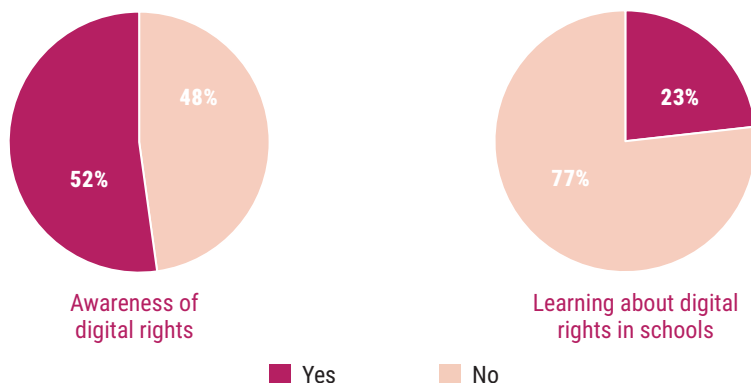
The findings indicate that just over half of the high school students surveyed (52%) had not heard of the concept of digital rights before. In other words, every other high school student has never encountered the concept of digital rights and, consequently, probably does not know what their digital rights are.

According to the responses of high school students to the question of whether they learn about digital rights and digital security in schools as part of regular classes, it is clear that this topic is not part of the curriculum, but is occasionally addressed in some places. Specifically, the results show that 76.8% of surveyed high school students say they do not learn about digital rights and internet security in regular classes, while 23.2% of high school students responded affirmatively. Although the perspective of educational

authorities will be presented later in this paper, it is important to note here that representatives of educational authorities have confirmed that digital security, including digital rights, is not studied as a separate subject, but these topics can be addressed, mainly in the regular classroom meetings students have with the overall supervising teacher responsible for their class, or in civic education classes.

Existence of extracurricular activities


Yes
No
I don't know

Based on the data obtained, however, we see that the vast majority of high school students surveyed have been left to familiarise themselves with these topics independently or at home, with the possibility that they may never do so. Only one-fifth of high school students have had the opportunity to learn about digital rights in schools, mainly through regular teaching activities, as only 5% of high school students confirmed the existence of extracurricular activities allowing them to learn about this topic. More than half of the respondents confirmed that there is no such extracurricular activity at their school, while 39% of respondents do not know whether such a thing exists or not.

Based on this, it can be concluded that a very small number of high school students have any awareness of digital rights as something they possess, while the majority of high school students have little or no contact with this topic as part of educational activities in schools. This research did not investigate the existence of a causal relationship between the lack of awareness of digital

rights and digital security and risky behaviour on the internet, which could be the subject of future research.

Online communication with unknown person

Meeting set up with people met online
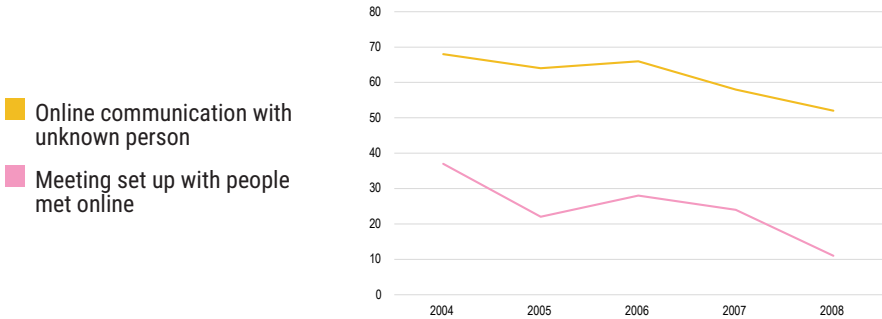
However, the results definitely confirm the existence of risky behaviour among this age group. For example, 60% of high school students surveyed said they have communicated via social networks with people they have never met in person, and 23% of high school students have arranged face-to-face meetings with someone they met online.

If we analyse the respondents' answers by age, we can see that older high school students engage more in such risky activities than younger ones. However, the overall rate of high school students who communicate with unknown individuals online ranges from 70% to 50%, and the rate of those who have arranged face-to-face meetings with people they have met in this way ranges from 37% to 11%.

It is not known to what extent these communications between high school students and unknown individuals were non-harmful for the students, or whether the individuals they communicated with were using their true identities. Therefore, we cannot evaluate the real-life risks to which high school students were exposed. However, the responses to other questions, in the context of this research, are sufficient to conclude that the internet is

still not a completely safe environment. High school students are exposed to various inappropriate content, and some become victims of various forms of digital violence, while others become perpetrators of digital violence.

On a positive note, it can be emphasised that 82% of the respondents say they have not experienced online violence so far. However, this is still far from the ideal level of zero, as noted in all relevant conventions, something which Bosnia and Herzegovina is also striving to achieve.

Every tenth respondent confirmed having experienced some form of online violence in the digital environment, and 7% of respondents chose not to answer this question, which is also concerning since they did not decisively deny experiencing online violence. The research findings also show that 18.47% of high school students surveyed have experienced someone else posting a photo of them on social media without their permission. Two-thirds of these high school students are female, and one-third are male, suggesting that female students are twice as exposed to this phenomenon. A slightly smaller percentage of high school students, 7%, said that their personal data has been misused online. All this further confirms the hypothesis that the internet is currently not a secure environment, and there are still various forms of digital rights violations that need to be prevented.

In addition to these digital security issues, the high school students also confirmed that they are being exposed to various content on the internet that promotes socially unacceptable behaviour or the consumption of substances harmful to their health. Nearly half (48%) of the high school students surveyed confirmed exposure to content promoting alcohol, and 23% confirmed exposure to content promoting the consumption of various drugs. If the data is extrapolated, that means at least every second high school student has been exposed to the promotion of alcohol consumption, while every fifth high school student has been exposed to the promotion of drug consumption. A similar percentage, 24%, indicated exposure to content promoting anorexia.

On top of that, 26% of high school students surveyed said they had been exposed to content promoting self-harm or suicide.

Exposure to content that promotes: % of exposure

| Content	% of exposure
Self-harming/suicide	26
Anorexia	24
Drugs	23
Alcohol	48
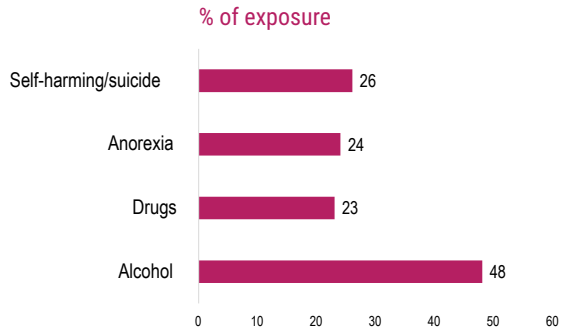
Future research should focus on these threats, or rather, on dangerous content that could have a significant impact on those who come into contact with it. One question arises as to whether this content is unavoidable advertising/ marketing content, or if users have actively searched for it. Another question is whether these students trust these media or channels and if there is any risk that they are going to start drinking alcohol, taking drugs or even deciding to self-harm or lose weight needlessly. Another question is whether the media outlets or channels on which this content is published are trusted by the high school students, and whether it will have any influence on their actions. The findings of this research only indicate that these are threats that need to be addressed to make the internet a safe place for all users and to harness its full potential.

Assessing European Strategy: High School Students' Perception
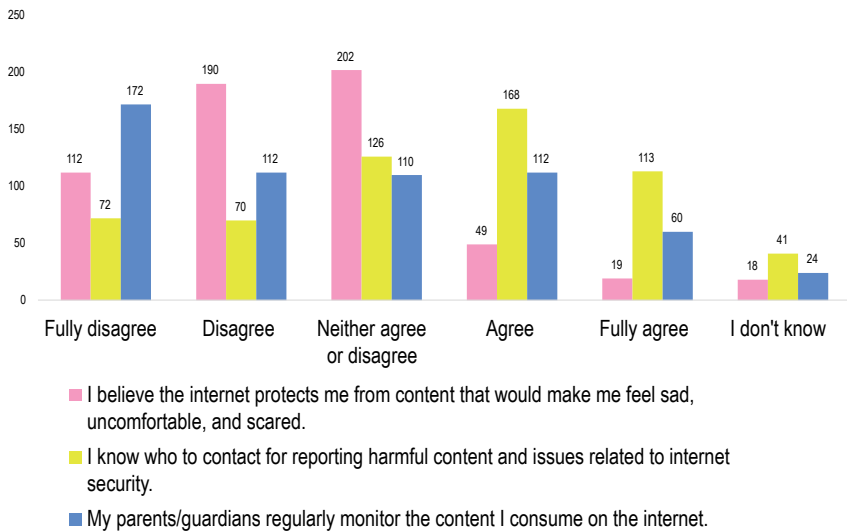
The European strategy for a better internet for children (according to the law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the term 'children' encompasses all individuals up to the age of 18) is based on three pillars: firstly, ensuring a safe internet that protects children from material that makes them feel uncomfortable, scared or sad; secondly, empowering children so they know how to use the internet

in a safe and fun way; and thirdly, ensuring the active participation of children and making them aware of ways to give feedback and report unauthorised behaviour. The findings of BIRN's research show that there is still work to be done on all these issues and that the goals of this strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been only partially achieved.

The best results, it seems, are related to the second pillar of the European strategy, as a significant portion of the respondents, through their answers, gave the impression that they are aware of the potential of the internet and know how to use it properly. 83% of the respondents stated that they know how to use the internet in a safe and fun way, 81% confirmed that they find creative and educational content on the internet, and 80% said that they are aware that the internet provides them with the opportunity to learn new things and share their ideas. The rest of the respondents were mostly indecisive about these statements, although only a small number of them disagreed with them. A little over half (56%) of the respondents said they feel comfortable using the internet, while 34% gave an ambiguous response to this question.

Legend:
- I feel comfortable while using the internet.
- The internet gives me the opportunity to learn new things and share my ideas.
- I know how to use the internet in a safe and fun way.
- I find creative and educational content on the internet.
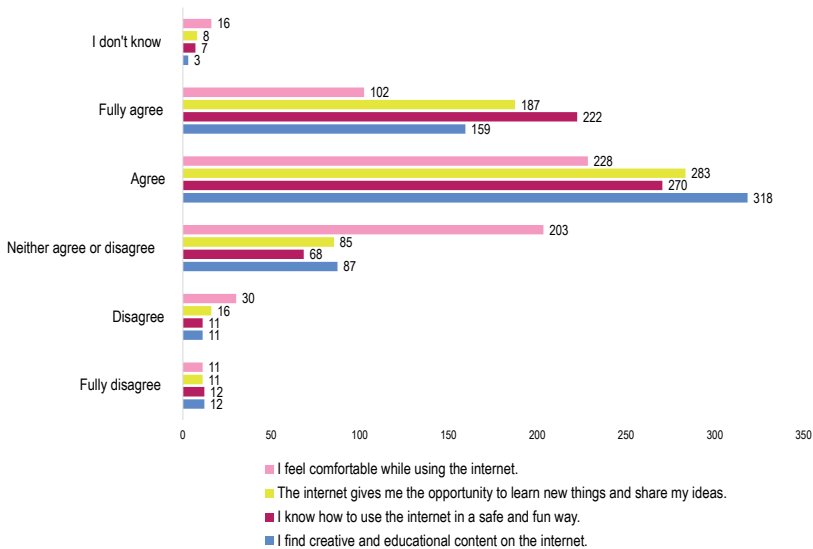
Contrary to these positive indicators, the next findings show that in future, a lot more resources should be invested in achieving the goals outlined by the other two pillars of the European strategy. Specifically, 51% of high school students who were surveyed do not believe that the internet currently protects them from content that would make them feel sad, uncomfortable or scared, and a significant 45% of the high school students surveyed have no idea who to contact to report harmful content and issues related to internet safety. This means that their active participation in creating a safe environment is being hindered. All this data becomes even more significant it's taken into account that the parents of 48% of the high school students surveyed do not monitor the content they consume on the internet, making any inappropriate content a greater threat.

- I believe the internet protects me from content that would make me feel sad, uncomfortable, and scared.
- I know who to contact for reporting harmful content and issues related to internet security.
- My parents/guardians regularly monitor the content I consume on the internet.

BIRN's interpretation of the findings of this research suggests that the internet is currently not a safe place for high school students. But the question arises of what they students themselves think about it and whether they perceive the internet as a safe or unsafe space. One interesting piece of data is that a half of the high school students surveyed (49.8%) said they neither agreed not

disagreed that the internet is safe for them or not. The remaining high school students have divided opinions, with 26.6% saying they think that the internet is a safe space for them, while 22.7% think the opposite. The task for society and all relevant institutions is to continue working on improving internet safety until none of them feel that the internet is not a safe space for them. In the next part of this research paper, we will further elaborate on the perspectives that educational authorities shared with us during the interviews that were conducted, with specific examples and recommendations about what can be done to improve the current situation.

I think the internet is safe for me.

- Fully agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Fully disagree
- I don't know
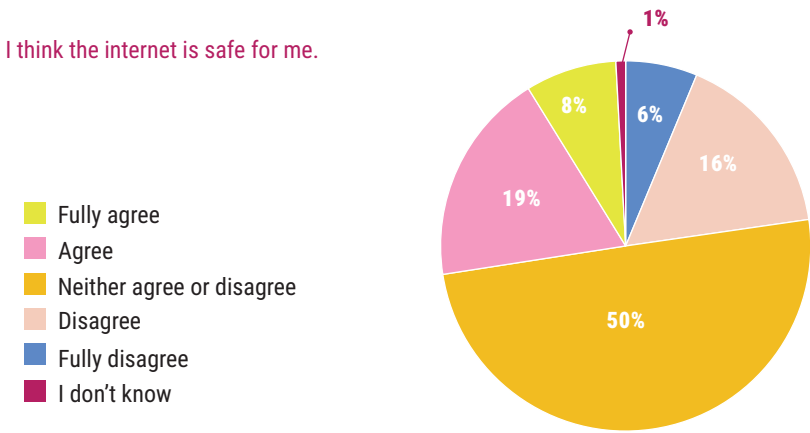
The Role of the Educational Authorities

As the focus of this research is on high school students whose education is still ongoing, educational institutions, high schools and relevant educational authorities can play an important role in raising awareness among students about online safety. Learning about digital rights and digital safety should begin much earlier, at elementary school (6-14 years of age). Considering that adolescence is a critical period in children's development, everything that a student is exposed to in or out of school during this period has a greater impact. To better understand the potential application of these research results and to develop appropriate recommendations, we sought the

perspective of representatives of the educational authorities and discussed current challenges and concerns about digital security with them, as well as potential solutions.

Responsibility for education is divided among 12 administrative units in Bosnia and Herzegovina (10 cantons, 1 entity, and 1 district), so actions and measures taken in this sphere vary from one administrative unit to another. There are noticeable difficulties in achieving zero tolerance for violence among students in general, including in the digital environment. Schools are in a challenging position because it is difficult to determine the boundary between what is within the school's jurisdiction or responsibility and what is the obligation or responsibility of parents. Certain patterns of behaviour are being transmitted from the virtual to the real world, and schools lack the ability to control or restrict access to content outside classes, and even face difficulties in controlling access during classes. Parents are generally unaware of the dangers posed by the internet, and students have a lack of knowledge and understanding of various forms of violence and harassment in the digital environment. With the support of international organisations, authorities in schools occasionally undertake initiatives that contribute to raising awareness about this topic, such as teacher and parent education, but there are no continuous activities or educational programmes. As one interviewee noted, digital violence was not prevalent at all seven to eight years ago, and so educational authorities did not address it, but today, it is one of the most common forms of violence among students. However, it seems that digital security is still not being sufficiently addressed, as it is mostly dealt with together with other forms of violence rather than as a separate topic. In practice, regulations related to dealing with violence in general exist, and dealing with digital violence is just one element of these regulations. For example, the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton adopted a protocol for dealing with violence in schools in 2012, which includes violence through the misuse of information technologies. In 2016, a guide document for

the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton protocol entitled **"0% tolerance for violence in schools"[xiii]** was developed.

As an example of good practice, we can highlight a regulation adopted in October 2023 in the Tuzla Canton - the regulation on school rules in high schools[xiv]. This regulation defines three levels of digital violence in schools, as well as other forms of violence, defining responsibilities and procedures when any of these forms of violence occur. When they address some forms of violence, teachers involve only parents, while in some cases, directors and school support services are also involved. For the most severe forms of digital violence, the regulation envisions the involvement of social services, health services and the police. The regulation restricts the use of mobile phones in schools during classes, saying they should only be used for educational purposes. All forms of recording are prohibited, along with any other misuse of phones.

Although these regulations, and all other documents addressing this issue, contain sections related to prevention and highlight the necessity of undertaking preventative activities, the focus in all of them is primarily on measures to be taken when violence has already occurred. Prevention is only a secondary part of the documents, and there is no data on whether these preventative provisions are actually being applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina or how effective preventative activities are in practice.

When it comes to raising awareness among students and improving their knowledge of this topic, it is mainly limited to the regular classroom meetings students have with the overall supervising teacher responsible for their class, or individual work with students within the school's support services during which personal issues are discussed. In some schools, there are extracurricular activities dedicated to information technologies (informatics, programming, etc.), enabling students to learn more about digital security. At the moment, digital violence and digital security are not among the subjects taught as

separate teaching units within the regular curriculum, but teachers have the freedom to address these topics within their subject areas. For example, in Canton 10, the existing curriculum, which is based on a cantonal law adopted in 2004, includes the study of this area across the curriculum, which means that digital safety and digital rights should be taught within thematic units in each subject in the regular curriculum. However, amid increasing cases of digital violence among students, the educational authority in Canton 10 realised that this is not enough and that there is a need for the creation of regulations to regulate this issue, in addition to the existing guidelines for dealing with violence.

The role of educational authorities in this case is to create regulations and establish a structure for taking action, both preventatively and reactively. Ministries generally do not get involved in resolving individual cases unless they involve serious violations of rules and severe forms of violence. All other cases are usually resolved at the school level, but there are also individuals who can get involved in such cases in higher instance institutions like pedagogical institutes, ministries of education, centres for social work, government, etc.

An incident that happened in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton shows how educational authorities should protect their students. A student who appeared on a TV show, as part of a project his school took part in, stated that he had never been to the Old Bridge in Mostar, which led to him being subjected to mockery and hate speech. After that, the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton education ministry issued a public statement and instructed schools that in similar situations, students must be familiarised with the broader picture of a topic and its potential risks prior to any media appearance related to the school (organised by the school or the ministry, or organised by others in school premises or during classes), and schools must do everything they can to prevent students from finding themselves in similar situations and to protect them if problems occur.

Because this student was exposed to digital violence not only from his peers but also from adults, this example proves what educational authorities generally agree on: society in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not ready to deal with this problem, and we are not sufficiently aware as a community of the impact we can have on each other in the digital environment. The digital environment can exert a positive influence, but can also cause negative consequences. Hate speech, discrimination and digital violence are prevalent among adults who represent role models to children and young people, and who are emulated and learned from by young people. For this reason, the responsibility for addressing the problem of violence among high school students and students in general in the digital environment cannot and should not be solely addressed by educational institutions. As individuals, every member of the community sets a certain example for the younger population, and parents play a crucial role in developing awareness. Therefore, educational authorities need to improve cooperation and engage more with parent councils on this topic. It is crucial to work on recognising violence and raising awareness of what can be considered violence, which in the digital environment often takes new forms that parents follow much more slowly than their children. Educational authorities also point out that teachers themselves are often less informed than children about digital content and the possibilities for violence in the digital environment. Therefore, representatives of educational authorities say that there is a need for continuous education of parents and teachers and all other relevant actors, along with advocacy campaigns and the dissemination of information about this topic so that everyone knows how to recognise violence and what to do if it occurs.

SAFER INTERNET CENTRE

The Safer Internet Centre[xv] was established in 2018 as part of the International Forum of Solidarity (IFS) EMMAUS, a domestic non-governmental humanitarian organisation - the only institution of its kind in the country. The Centre is part of a pan-European network of institutions conducting various activities to educate children about safe internet use and to teach other digital citizens how to protect children online and create a safe digital environment. For the purposes of this research, Amela Efendić, the manager of the Centre and a consultant at IFS-EMMAUS, spoke its perspective on the current digital security situation.

Currently, the centre's activities are divided into four components:

■ Prevention and awareness-raising (schools, children, young people, teachers, educators, etc.)

■ SOS line for reporting inappropriate content (an online mechanism for reporting child abuse and bullying in the digital environment)

■ HELP line – support line (for victims of violence and their relatives),

■ Youth panel (working with children who assist as peer educators and provide inputs for specific activities from their perspective)

The Centre cooperates and has signed protocols with all the police agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through its work, it addresses cases of violence against children in the digital environment, including high school students up to 18 years of age, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, despite its significant importance for the safety of children as one of the most vulnerable categories of people in society, the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not support the work of the Centre financially. Since it was

established, its activities have been fully funded by international organisations, development agencies, projects, etc.

If we had to assess internet safety in Bosnia and Herzegovina, our country would probably receive a very poor rating. Of all types of digital violence reported by children, the most frequently reported is cyberbullying (insults, mockery, offensive images), which affects them emotionally, creating a traumatic sense of isolation or exclusion from society.

Data supplied by the Centre also shows how unsafe the internet is for children. Since the establishment of the Centre's SOS line in 2010, there have been 4,517 reports of online violence and abuse of children, mainly for the purposes of pornography. By the end of 2020, the total number was 1,140, but in the year 2021, 3,021 new cases were reported. This means that the number of cases increased tenfold during the pandemic.

The term "child pornography" is considered inappropriate due to the voluntary nature of the pornographic industry, and should be replaced with the formulation "creating pornographic material through the abuse of children". This term is most commonly used in current legal regulations in Bosnia and Herzegovina as one form of digital violence against children, although the regulations do not recognise newer forms of violence such as cyberbullying, sexting, sextortion, grooming, etc. All the undertakings and procedures envisaged in these regulations are reactive and focused on acting when a child has already become a victim, with very little emphasis on prevention and the timely detection of attempted violence before the child becomes a victim. The criminal law should treat every attempt as a criminal offence. For example, when someone falsely represents themselves, lures a child and prepares them for exploitation, the police should be able to respond.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we generally do not have legislation on digital technologies and the misuse of digital technologies for violence against

children that is harmonised between the country's various administrative units, and this should be a priority for the future. The criminal law of Republika Srpska, for example, is the only one that speaks about the abuse of children through information technologies, while all others refer to child pornography. It is also necessary to synchronise the work of state legislative and judicial institutions, media, local authorities and educational institutions, and to involve the entire community to make the internet a safe place for all users in the long term, especially for children and young people.

KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina predominantly use the internet and social media for communication, leisure activities and information-gathering. Instagram is the most popular platform, with 75% of students using it daily, followed by TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube. High school students are ambiguous about whether they trust social media platforms. While YouTube is the most trusted, other platforms have varying levels of trust, with distrust more prevalent. Social media plays a crucial role in keeping students informed about news from the local community in their town or municipality, as 50% receive news through these platforms daily or weekly.

A significant concern arising from this research is that every third high school student said they have experienced hate speech from their peers on social media. The alarming data suggest that hate speech is present across various social media platforms and in various geographical areas within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Males are slightly more exposed to hate speech, with 37% of surveyed males experiencing it compared to 31% of females, according to the survey data. Although less prevalent than hate speech, every fifth high school student has experienced some form of discrimination from their peers on social media. Discrimination, while less influenced by geography or age, was slightly more commonly experienced among female respondents (20%) than male respondents (17%). Physical appearance is the most common basis for discrimination, affecting every fifth high school student who experiences discrimination.

More than half (52%) of students are unaware of the term 'digital rights', reflecting a lack of awareness about their rights in the online environment. Digital rights and digital safety are not integrated into the regular curriculum, as confirmed by 76.8% of students who stated that they do not learn about these topics in regular classes. A significant number of students engage in

risky online activities, 10% of them confirming that they have been involved in such activities. Many students are exposed to inappropriate content promoting alcohol, drugs, anorexia, and self-harm or suicide. In 48% of cases, parents do not monitor the content their children consume on the internet, contributing to an increased risk of them encountering inappropriate content.

Despite the challenges, students recognise the positive aspects of the internet, with 83% stating they know how to use it safely and find creative and educational content. However, active participation in creating a safe online environment is lacking, as evidenced by students not knowing who to contact to report harmful content.

There is a lack of legislation to ensure online protection and harmonisation of efforts between Bosnia and Herzegovina's various administrative units to address the issues of digital security and violence among high school students across the country. Educational approaches and regulations vary, resulting in inconsistent awareness and protection measures. Educational institutions face challenges in distinguishing their jurisdiction from parents' responsibilities in dealing with digital violence. Regulations often treat digital violence alongside other forms rather than as a distinct issue, even though digital violence, once not prevalent, has become one of the most common forms of violence among students.

In conclusion, collective efforts are needed to improve the digital safety of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Educational authorities must take the lead in creating regulations, infrastructure, and educational programmes that address digital security both preventatively and reactively. Constant effort is needed to align regulations with the evolving nature of digital violence.

In the next section of this report, we offer recommendations that involve all relevant stakeholders and include various levels of activities - the harmonisation of educational approaches, the enhancement of students' education within

school curricula and extra-curricular activities, teacher and parent education, prioritising preventive education and the organisation of constant public awareness campaigns.

Education about digital rights and digital safety should be integrated into school curricula. Through digital literacy programmes, students need to be educated in responsible internet use, online safety and critical evaluation of information, as well as to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from potential risks associated with social media and internet use. Positive aspects of the internet should be emphasised while addressing potential risks, and not all the risks should be presented in great detail to students as they tend to copy behaviours (for example, one should never specifically name online platforms or apps that can be used to create offensive images as students will most probably go and test them). Students should be encouraged to question the credibility of content and verify information from reliable sources. Activities to raise awareness about the consequences of hate speech and discrimination should be integrated within these educational programmes, together with education about reporting mechanisms and the importance of taking action against hate speech and discrimination. Students should be made aware of the existing reporting instruments and, if necessary, new anonymous channels for reporting hate speech and discrimination incidents should be established. Educational content that promotes diversity and inclusion should be developed and used throughout the whole education system, from early childhood. Educational authorities and schools should foster an environment in which students appreciate differences and understand the negative consequences of discriminatory behaviour. Schools should also offer extracurricular activities focused on digital rights and internet safety to supplement formal education programmes.

For these digital literacy programmes to be effectively implemented, it is necessary to provide training for **educators/teachers** in how to effectively teach digital rights and internet safety, enabling them to incorporate these

topics into various subjects. Teachers should also be empowered to recognise and address digital violence promptly.

Schools should improve their collaboration with **parent councils** to involve parents in understanding and addressing digital violence. Parents' awareness about the dangers their children may face online should be raised. One potential activity is to organise workshops to enhance parents' understanding of the digital environment and how to safeguard their children. They should be encouraged to monitor their children's online activities.

Schools could establish mechanisms to continuously monitor hate speech and discrimination trends among their students. They should also recognise the potential impact of hate speech and discrimination on mental health and provide accessible mental health support to help students cope with the emotional consequences of such experiences.

Educational authorities should provide clear legal and policy measures against hate speech and discrimination in the digital sphere. Regulation dealing with digital safety should be harmonised between administrative units, ensuring consistency in addressing digital violence in schools. Common preventive measures should be established and effectively implemented. Focus should be put on creating a legal environment that prioritises prevention and timely detection, which means that criminal laws should treat every attempted act of digital violence as a criminal offence.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's state institutions should provide financial support to institutions like the **Safer Internet Centre**, which plays a crucial role in educating children, parents and teachers, as well as handling reports of online violence and providing support to victims and survivors of online violence.

Constant public awareness campaigns should be organised to inform society about the impact of digital violence, emphasising collective responsibility for

creating a safe online environment. **The entire community** should be aware that every single member of the community can be a positive or negative example and role model to the younger population. Members of society should share a common vision of being as positive an example as possible.

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ANNEX 1: Survey on digital rights and digital security among high school students in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dear student,

This is a short survey that we intend to use to analyse high school students' awareness of digital rights and digital security in accordance with the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children. The survey is completely anonymous, and your honest answers will help us understand the digital rights and security situation for young people on the internet in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

a. Basic information:

1) Gender (choose one):

Male   Female

2) Year of birth: _____

3) Place where you live: _____

b. Internet and social media usage:

4) What do you most frequently use the internet for? (mark all that apply to you)

Playing games

Learning

Searching and data collection

Communication with friends and family through social media

Content creation

Other: _____

5) In the table below, rate from 1 to 5 which social network you most commonly use. A rating of 1 means you do not use that social network, and a rating of 5 means you use that social network very often.

	Never 1	Very rarely (1-2 times a month) 2	Rarely (once a week) 3	Often (several times a week) 4	Very often (daily) 5	I don't know/No response
Facebook	1	2	3	4	5	9
Instagram	1	2	3	4	5	9
X/Twitter	1	2	3	4	5	9
TikTok	1	2	3	4	5	9
Snapchat	1	2	3	4	5	9
YouTube	1	2	3	4	5	9

6) How much do you trust the information you receive through each of the listed social networks? (1 - do not trust at all, 5 - completely trust)

	Do not trust at all 1	Don't trust 2	Neither trust or distrust 3	Trust 4	Completely trust 5	I don't know/ No response
Facebook	1	2	3	4	5	9
Instagram	1	2	3	4	5	9
Twitter	1	2	3	4	5	9
TikTok	1	2	3	4	5	9
Snapchat	1	2	3	4	5	9
YouTube	1	2	3	4	5	9

7) How often do you follow news about events in the local community through social media? (circle one option)

  a) Very frequently (every day)
  b) Frequently (a couple of times a week)
  c) Rarely (once a week)
  d) Very rarely (1-2 times a month)
  e) Never

c) Hate speech and discrimination (circle one)

8) Have you ever experienced hate speech from your peers on social media?

Yes   No   I don't want to respond

9) Have you ever experienced discrimination by your peers on social media?

Yes   No   I don't want to respond

10) If your answer to the previous question was YES, on which of the following grounds have you been discriminated against by your peers: (mark all that apply to you)

   a) Gender
   b) Ethnicity
   c) Religion
   d) Physical appearance
   e) Cognitive/mental abilities
   f) Financial status
   g) Other: _____
   h) I've never experienced discrimination on the internet

11) Have you reported the insult or hate speech that you experienced on the internet?

Yes   No   I don't know how to do it

d. Digital rights and digital safety

12) Have you heard of the term "digital rights" before?

         Yes   No

13) Do you learn about digital rights and digital safety in school as part of regular classes?

         Yes   No

14) Is there a section (extra-curricular activity) in your school where you discuss digital rights and digital security?

Yes   No   I don't know

15) In the table below, rate how much you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 - fully disagree, 5 - fully agree):

	Fully disagree	Disagree	Not agree or disagree	Agree	Fully agree	No response
I think the internet is safe for me.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I find creative and educational content on the internet.						
I believe the internet protects me from content that would make me feel sad, uncomfortable and scared.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I feel comfortable while using the internet.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I know how to use the internet in a safe and fun way.	1	2	3	4	5	9
The internet gives me the opportunity to learn new things and share my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	9
I know who to contact for reporting harmful content and issues related to internet security.	1	2	3	4	5	9
My parents/guardians regularly monitor the content I consume on the internet.	1	2	3	4	5	9

16) In the table below, indicate whether the following statements apply in your case:

	True	False	I don't want to respond
I have communicated online with a person I have never met in person.			
I have been exposed to content that promotes alcohol consumption.			
I have been exposed to content that promotes drug consumption.			

I have been exposed to content that promotes self-harm or suicide.			
I have been exposed to content that promotes anorexia.			
My personal data has been misused online.			
Another person has posted photos or videos of me on social media without my permission.			
I have set up a meeting with a person I met online.			
I have experienced online violence.			

ANNEX 2: List of interviews conducted and questions posed

.No	Institution	Person interviewed	Position of the inter-viewed person	Date and time of the interview
.1	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Herzegovi-na-Neretva Canton	Sudo Marić	Assistant Minister	at 2pm 16.11.2023
.2	Safer Internet Centre	Amela Efendić	Manager	at 4pm 16.11.2023
.3	Ministry of Science, Education, Culture and Sport of Canton 10	Mate Križanac	Assistant Minister	at 9am 17.11.2023
.4	Ministry of Education and Science of Tuzla Canton	Alisa Memić	Assistant Minister	at 11am 17.11.2023

* Educational authorities from the Una-Sana Canton and the Republika Srpska entity were also invited to take part in the research, but Republika Srpska showed no interest in doing so, while Una-Sana Canton only expressed interest after the research had already been finished.

Questions for the semi-structured interviews with representatives of educational authorities:

1. What are the current challenges that the Ministry is facing or concerns it has regarding the digital security of students?
2. Are there any documents regulating this field or providing guidelines on how to deal with it?
3. Research has shown that high school students are generally not familiar with the concept of digital rights. Are these topics part of the curriculum or are there plans for them to be included in the future? Are there any extracurricular activities in the canton/entity that address this field?
4. How common are cases of digital violence among students, at least those you are dealing with or are familiar with? Can you recall any specific cases, and what actions has the Ministry taken in response?
5. What are your recommendations for improving this field in schools? What could be done to reduce the level of peer violence, hate speech, and discrimination on any basis in the digital environment?