



FOSTERING UNITY THROUGH NATURE: A REMARKABLE YOUTH EXCHANGE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In a world often marked by divisions and discord, there exist initiatives that shine as beacons of hope, forging connections, promoting understanding, and fostering unity. One such initiative, the "Moving Us Closer" project, implemented by the UNFPA Bosnia and Herzegovina in coordination with their partners Konjuh Lab and the International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP) from Italy, is making a significant impact in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At its core is a remarkable youth exchange program, known as the Konjuh Camp, which has become a symbol of hope and progress in a region grappling with a legacy of conflict.

The "Moving Us Closer" Project: A Path to Unity

The "Moving Us Closer" project is a year-long endeavor aimed at improving social cohesion, reducing prejudice and discrimination, and promoting intercultural dialogue and reconciliation. Its focus is on the youth, specifically those aged between 15 and 30, in divided communities profoundly affected by the scars of the Bosnian War. The project's efforts are concentrated in several key cities and regions, including Brčko, Bosanski Petrovac, Sarajevo, East Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka, and Bijeljina.

Italians in Bosnia, Bosnians in Italy

The heart of this project lies in the Konjuh Camp, which comprises two transformative phases.

The first phase witnesses the arrival of twenty Italian students in Bosnia from August 27th to September 1st. During this week-long period, they engage in a diverse range of activities outlined in the program. As the week progresses, approximately twenty Bosnian students from the aforementioned regions join them to explore and discuss topics like intercultural dialogue, hate speech, and conflict transformation.

The second phase, occurring from October 9th to the 15th, sees approximately 42 Bosnian students traveling to Italy, specifically to the breathtaking Abruzzo National Park. Here, they delve deeper into discussions on intercultural dialogue, conflict transformation, and reconciliation.

What sets the Konjuh Camp apart is its collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an organization dedicated to international cooperation and sustainable development. UNFPA has played a central role in many vital initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, working tirelessly to protect the country's natural beauty, biodiversity, and sustainable tourism. Initiatives like NaturBosniaHerzegovina and Roots of the Future exemplify UNFPA's commitment to preserving the environment and promoting responsible tourism.

Italian Diplomacy and Sustainable Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina

These initiatives perfectly align with the goals of Italian diplomacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasizing development cooperation. Projects like Via Dinarica, Bridge and Green Network, Ready for Europe, and initiatives carried out by the CIHEAM-Agroeconomic Institute of Bari complement UNFPA's work by focusing on sustainability, environmental conservation, and community development.

The Birth of the Konjuh Camp: A Vision Realized

The birth of the Konjuh Camp is a testament to the power of collaboration and shared vision. When Director Deborah Rezzaghi proposed a youth project in synergy with the "Moving Us Closer" initiative, the response was immediate and enthusiastic. The project's rapid transformation from an idea to reality underscores the commitment of all involved to its spirit and objectives.

As the Konjuh Camp prepares to welcome young participants from both Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina, it promises to be a journey of discovery, growth, and friendship. To the Italian students representing fourteen cities, this experience may well be just the beginning of a broader adventure in Bosnia and Herzegovina, potentially in one of the many "naturalistic" projects that prioritize sustainability and environmental conservation.

The Power of Teamwork: Realizing Great Projects

As we celebrate this remarkable initiative, we must acknowledge the many contributors who have made it possible. From local institutional authorities to the University of Trento, from EUDEL to CISP, AICS, UNFPA, and local NGOs, this project is a testament to the extraordinary outcomes that can be achieved through collaboration and teamwork. It serves as a poignant reminder that, indeed, great projects are only realized through great teamwork.

In a world where unity and understanding often feel distant, the "Moving Us Closer" project and the Konjuh Camp stand as beacons of hope. They demonstrate that when young people from diverse backgrounds come together, when organizations are dedicated to sustainability, and when individuals are committed to a shared vision, we can move closer to a future marked by unity, peace, and progress.

