



Introducing Curated #8: Reflections on drugs and drug policy by South East Europe CLT and YAG members

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Abstract: Welcome to our eighth Curated Series, which provides a space to explore how some children and youth from South East Europe perceive drugs and drug policy and the significance of addressing their impact from a human rights and child rights perspective.

We chose the topic of our eighth Curated series to provide a space for some of the current members of the Global Campus Children Leadership Team (CLT) and Youth Advisory Group (YAG) for South East Europe, who participated in the online consultations that were jointly organised by the Global Campus of Human Rights (GC), the United Nations [Global Commission on Drug Policy](#) (GCDP) and [Youth RISE](#) between October and December 2025. Precisely, in the context of a joint collaboration on the global initiative 'Transforming Drug Policy: A Focus on Children and Youth' and acknowledging the relevance of meaningful child participation, both organisations [partnered](#) with the GC, drawing on its established child and youth networks and experience. Those consultations *inter alia* explored ways information about drugs is shared in different regional

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contexts and collected children and young people's thoughts about how current drug laws and rules are affecting them and how drug policies can better support and reflect their rights, needs and realities.

The blog posts are co-authored by five children along with five young people who were present during those consultations or contributed to the regional research and preparatory sessions. They loved that global initiative so much that they decided to reflect further on drug-related issues and jointly draft five contributions to our Blog.

Every Monday over the coming weeks of June and July there will be a post addressing multiple aspects of drugs and drug policy in relation to three countries of South East Europe. In particular, the first post explores how the common myths about drugs among youth and teenagers in Bosnia and Herzegovina shape their perception of risk. Through semi-structured interviews with young people from Sarajevo and a review of secondary sources, the co-authors ground their analysis of three misconceptions in real voices surfacing young people's attitudes, experiences, and beliefs. The need for effective prevention through interactive education, open discussion and critical thinking enhancement, with the involvement of communities, schools, and civil society organisations, is emphasised.

The second post examines youth drug use in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in view of social, family, and psychological factors behind addiction. Based on relevant statistics, scholarly research findings, and an interview with a highschooler, the co-authors emphasise the importance not to nurture marginalisation when approaching vulnerable teenagers who partake in substance abuse. Criticising the indifference of people and institutions, they stress that many systematic changes could be made to aid these teenagers, especially with empathy, understanding, and stronger support systems for them.

The third post analyses how media cover youth and drug use in Serbia, focusing on reporting around drug deaths involving minors, police actions in schools, and trends in youth substance use. Drawing on five news articles from Serbian tabloids, including readers' comments, and comparing the findings against international reporting standards and human rights guidelines, the co-authors highlight the broader impact of such a kind of coverage on young people. They especially call for the adoption of a non-stigmatising, person-first language as well as the consistent framing of drug use as a public health issue and the significance of directing accountability questions at institutions.

The fourth post examines institutional and civil society approaches to drug use in Bosnia and Herzegovina and addresses a youth-led shift from a purely criminalisation-based framework toward a broader public health perspective,

also evaluating the extent of youth influence on discourse and policy. Although the co-authors acknowledge that youth direct influence on legislation remains limited in the country, they emphasise the youth substantial impact on social perception and public dialogue: by reshaping how drug addiction is understood and debated, youth act as long-term catalysts for policy evolution.

The last post addresses how drug-related incarceration silently punishes thousands of children alongside their imprisoned parents in Croatia and Serbia, highlighting that parental imprisonment shapes children's emotions, mental health, economic stability, and social inclusion. Reflecting on the increased risks of poverty, disrupted schooling, and social marginalisation, as well as comparing policy responses across both countries, the co-authors emphasise that Serbia and other countries in the region can consider and adapt the steps already taken by Croatia in making these children more visible. Attention is particularly called for child-protection services and child-needs assessment and ongoing support.

The co-contributors to this new Curated section include Merjem Patković and Anela Bašagić, Bakir Cernica and Ognjen Spasojević, Marta Milosavljević and Nina Gavrilović, Hana Pita and Merjem Pašić, Una Čosović and Yasmine Estela Grado.

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