EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.

⚠ *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).)*

PROJECT	
Participant:	[101196593] - [Udruzenje Balkanska Istrazivacka Regionalna Mreza] ([BIRN Hub])
PIC number:	[924380901]
Project name and acronym:	[Strengthening reconciliation and non-recurrence through the empowerment of diverse communities in the Western Balkans] — [RECONCILE]

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	5
Event name:	Regional Youth Workshop
Type:	Workshop, Public Discussion
In situ/online:	*[*in-situ*]*
Location:	[Kosovo], [Pristina], [Sarajevo], [Sarajevo], [Ohrid]
Date(s):	25 - 30 August 2025 2-5 December 2025 16 October 2025 11-13 March 2026 17-22 August 2026
Website(s) (if any):	BIRN Summer School BIRN and 'Youth Initiative for Human Rights' Hold Workshop and Exhibition for Young People from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia BIRN Hosts Event on Surveillance and Digital Rights in Bosnia Workshop on Transitional Justice and Archiving Equips Regional Youth to Document Atrocities - BIRN BIRN's 16th Summer School Begins in Ohrid
Participants	
Female:	79
Male:	56
Non-binary:	1
From country 1 [Albania]:	10

From country 2 [Bosnia and Herzegovina]:	55		
From country 3 [Bulgaria]:	4		
From country 4 [Croatia]:	4		
From country 5 [Czech Republic]:	1		
From country 6 [Hungary]:	1		
From a country 7 [Kosovo]:	14		
From a country 8 [North Macedonia]:	5		
From a country 9 [Ukraine]:	4		
From a country 10 [Poland]:	3		
From a country 11 [Romania]:	3		
From a country 12 [Serbia]:	24		
From a country 13 [Slovakia]:	1		
From a country 14 [Germany]:	1		
From a country 15 (Montenegro):	5		
From a country 16 (Netherlands):	1		
Total number of participants:	136	From total number of countries:	16

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

Under the Work Package 2, BIRN has successfully held four sessions with youth from the region under D2.1 achieving participation of 136 people across the WB and EU region in the period from August 2025 to August 2026.

These events aimed to equip youth with knowledge and skills related to transitional justice, war crimes reporting, and the impacts of conflict on different communities. The initiative attracted **a diverse group of motivated young people interested in investigative journalism, human rights, transitional justice, content production, and activism from Western Balkans and the EU countries.**

1. BIRN´s Summer School Session

Dates and place: 25-30 August 2025, Pristina (Kosovo)

Number of participants per country:
Hungary 1
N. Macedonia 3
Kosovo 7
Serbia 5
Albania 3
Bulgaria 3
BiH 2

Ukraine 2
Czech Republic 1
Poland 3
Croatia 3
Romania 1
Slovakia 1
Total number of participants: 35

The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) successfully held its 15th Summer School of Investigative Reporting in Pristina, Kosovo, from August 25–30, 2025, gathering 35 participants from across the Balkans, Europe, and beyond. As a part of the Summer School, BIRN organised a youth panel session on transitional justice and war crimes reporting, as well as a visit to the Reporting House exhibition showcasing the consequences of Kosovo war in the ´90s. **The training session "Reporting in Times of Crisis: War Crimes Reporting", led by Denis Džidić, Director of BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina, provided participants with valuable insights and practical skills in the basics of international humanitarian law, and reporting about war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Participants were introduced to the journalistic techniques which can be used in real time reporting as well as in situations where atrocities have occurred in the past. Special emphasis was given to interviewing victims who were or are traumatised.** Additionally, **participants visited the BIRN´s Reporting House exhibition space, where they toured the exhibition exploring and documenting the legacies of the Kosovo war in 1999. The exhibition allowed visitors to travel through the conflict that was boiling in the 1990s, from which emerged the guerrilla movement of the Kosovo Liberation Army, which later erupted into war in 1998-1999, culminating in 11 weeks of NATO airstrikes that led to Kosovo's liberation and its independence in 2008.** After the visit to the exhibition, the participants joined the panel discussion "Investigative Journalism: Two Decades of Change." Moderated by Denis Džidić, Director of BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina, the panel brought together BIRN's founders Ana Petruseva, Director of BIRN North Macedonia, Jeta Xharra, Director of BIRN Kosovo, and Dragana Solomon to reflect on the organisation's journey and the evolution of investigative journalism in the region.

Applications and Selection

For the summer school, **BIRN received 108 applications from journalists representing Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Netherlands, Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, Egypt, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.** The high level of interest reflects BIRN's standing as a trusted organisation with almost two decades of experience in publishing and training. The Summer School, now in its 15th year, is widely recognized as one of the region's leading programs for advancing investigative journalism. Its strong alumni network and reputation for top-tier trainers make it a unique opportunity for journalists who often lack access to such expertise in their own newsrooms.

This year, BIRN secured spots for participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Uzbekistan, helping them refine their investigative journalism skills and acquire new ones**.** BIRN prioritized journalists capable of following the advanced curriculum. However, a few spots were reserved for reporters with limited experience but strong potential and a clear interest in investigative journalism. Selected participants were also encouraged to bring an investigative story idea to work on during the programme.

Agenda

Over six days, **participants engaged in more than 20 sessions, ranging from masterclasses and workshops to panel discussions and field visits.** The program covered essential topics such as investigative mindset, open-source intelligence, data journalism, the use of artificial intelligence in reporting, cross-border climate investigations, fact-checking, digital and physical security, war crimes reporting, and mental health and resilience. This diverse curriculum allowed participants to sharpen their technical skills, gain tools to protect themselves in increasingly hostile environments, and reflect on the personal challenges of working in journalism today. **(***The full programme agenda is available in this section, but can be found also here.)*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 24

19:00 - 21:00 Joint dinner for all participants arriving before 19:00.

DAY 1 MONDAY, AUGUST 25

09:00 – 09:15	**Welcome Remarks** Jeta Xhara, Country Director, BIRN Kosovo Gentiana Murati Deputy Director, BIRN HUB Blake Morrison, Lead Trainer, Investigative Projects Editor, Reuters NY
09:15 – 11:00	The Investigative Mindset: **Blake Morrison,** Lead Trainer, Investigative Projects Editor, Reuters News
11:00 – 11:15	*Coffee Break*
11:15 – 12:15	The Investigative Mindset**: Blake Morrison,** Lead Trainer, Investigative Projects Editor, Reuters News
12:15 – 13:15	*Lunch Break*
13:15 – 14:45	Masterclass in Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) - Part I: **Reade Levinson,** Visual Investigations Reporter, Reuters News
14:45 – 15:00	*Coffee Break*
15:00 – 17:00	101 Cross Border Sources for Your Climate Investigation - How to Research Climate in Digital Age: **Alexenia Dimitrova,** Journalist, OSINT Expert, Lecturer in Journalism
17:00 – 18:00	Formulating story ideas: How to structure your pitch: **Blake Morrison,** Lead Trainer, Investigative Projects Editor, Reuters News
19:00 – 21:00	*Dinner*

DAY 2 TUESDAY, AUGUST 26

09:00 – 09:15	**Wrapping Up Day 1, *Blake Morrison,*** Lead Trainer, Investigative Projects Editor, Reuters New York
09:15 – 11:00	Masterclass in Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) **-** Part II: **Reade Levinson,** Visual Investigations Reporter, Reuters News
11:00 – 11:15	*Coffee break*
11:15 – 12:45	Masterclass in Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) - Part II: **Reade Levinson,** Visual Investigations Reporter, Reuters News
12:45 – 14:00	*Lunch Break*
14:00 – 15:15	Advanced Data Journalism Part - I: **Jonathan Soma,** Knight Chair in Data Journalism, Columbia Journalism School
15:15 – 15:45	*Coffee Break*
15:45 – 17:00	AI - Do's and Don'ts: **Jonathan Soma,** Knight Chair in Data Journalism, Columbia Journalism School
17:00 – 18:00	Null Hypothesis - Pragmatic Digital Security for Journalists**: Sharbil Nammour,** Media Safety Advisor and Founder, Vallaris Solutions
19:00 – 21:00	*Dinner*

DAY 3 WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27

09:00 – 09:15	**Wrapping Up Day 2** **Blake Morrison**, Lead Trainer, Investigative Projects Editor, Reuters NY
09:15 – 11:00	Advanced Data Journalism Part - II: **Jonathan Soma,** Knight Chair in Data Journalism, Columbia Journalism School
11:00 – 11:15	*Coffee Break*
11:15 – 12:30	Protest Ready: Security, First Aid & Digital Defense: **Sharbil Nammour,** Media Safety Advisor and Founder, Vallaris Solutions
12:30 – 13:30	*Lunch Break*
13:30 – 14:00	Awarded investigative stories: **Kreshnik Gashi** Managing Editor, Kallxo.com, BIRN Kosovo **& Sasa Dragojlo** Investigative Journalist, Balkan Insight, BIRN Hub
14:00 – 14:30	*Travel to Kallxo*
14:30 – 16:30	From Exposure to Impact: Why Some Investigations Spark Change and Others Don't: **Jeta Xharra,** Director, BIRN Kosovo
16:30 – 17:00	*Traveling to Germia park*
17:00 – 17:45	Stress, burnout and other mental health hazards: **Emma Thomasson, Emma Thomasson –** Journalist & Media Consultant, The Self Investigation
17:45 – 18:30	Improving team communication, managing conflict: **Emma Thomasson,** Journalist & Media Consultant, The Self Investigation
20:00 – 21:00	*Dinner*

DAY 4 THURSDAY, AUGUST 28

09:00 – 09:15	**Focusing on what we've learned and what's next** **Blake Morrison**, Lead Trainer, Investigative Projects Editor, Reuters NY
09:15 – 10:45	Fact Checking: **Milica Stojanovic,** Journalist & Fact-Checker, Balkan Insight, BIRN Hub
10:45 – 11:00	*Coffee Break*
11:00 – 13:00	101 Open and Hidden Places to Investigate Your Country: **Alexenia Dimitrova,** Journalist, OSINT Expert, Lecturer in Journalism
13:00 – 14:30	*Lunch Break*
14:30 – 15:15	Geolocation and Visual Investigation**: Azem Kurtic,** Journalist, Balkan Insight, BIRN Hub
15:15 – 15:30	*Coffee Break*
15:30 – 17:00	Roundtable discussion - Challenges you are facing: **Blake Morrison, Alexenia Dimitrova**
17:00 - 18:00	The Art of Interview **- Blake Morrison**
19:00 – 21:00	*Dinner*

DAY 5 FRIDAY, AUGUST 29

09:00 – 09:15	**Wrap up and what's next** **Blake Morrison**, Lead Trainer, Investigative Projects Editor, Reuters NY
09:15 – 10:45	What we expect to hear tomorrow: ***Blake Morrison,*** **Sasa Dragojlo**, *HUB TBC*
10:45 – 11:00	**Coffee break**
11:00 – 12:00	How to develop complex databases with thousands of documents**: Ana Petrusheva**
12:30 – 13:30	*Lunch Break*
13:30 – 14:45	Reporting Safely: Legal Considerations, Case Illustrations, and SLAPP Insights: **Kreshnik Gashi,** Managing Editor, Kallxo.com, BIRN Kosovo
14:45 – 15:00	*Coffee Break*
15:00 – 16:30	Reporting in times of crisis - war crimes reporting **- Denis Dzidic,** BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina Director
17:30 – 18:15	*Tour at BIRN´s museum "Reporting House"*
18:30 - 19:00	Panel - Investigative Journalism: Two Decades of Change (at the Reporting House)
	Ana Petruseva – BIRN Founder & BIRN Macedonia Director Jeta Xharra – BIRN Founder & BIRN Kosovo Director Dragana Solomon – BIRN Founder Moderator: Denis Džidić – BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina Director
19:00 - 20:00	Certificate Awarding Ceremony & remarks (Reporting House Yard)
20:00 – 22:00	Reception in the Reporting House Yard with Light Gala Fare

During the week, the participants worked in groups to shape their investigative ideas, with BIRN staff providing close mentorship throughout the process. The programme included tailored sessions on how to structure and refine pitches, giving participants practical tools and dedicated time to develop their cross-border story ideas. By the end of the week, they presented 10 investigative pitches, of which five were selected to move forward with editorial guidance and financial support from BIRN. Even for those not selected, the process offered a valuable opportunity to finalise their concepts, strengthen cross-border collaborations, and leave with pitches that are ready to be developed further or submitted to other opportunities.

Respondents reported increased confidence, autonomy and renewed motivation to continue independent investigative work, particularly in restrictive media environments. One described the experience as "a booster – a reset that made me stronger and more ambitious." Others emphasized that it "promotes independent thinking and a free spirit in journalism."

Call Promotion

Call for Applications was launched on June 24 and closed on July 13. It was widely promoted on BIRN social media channels: Balkan Insight, and BIRN Network accounts.

Besides, the promotion did not stop during the event itself; BIRN staff were sending photos, trainer's quotes, and lines from the sessions to the social media team, who would regularly post them online. During the week, BIRN prepared and published a news report each day, informing audiences about what each day at the school looked like and what participants had a chance to learn and apply.

- BIRN's 15th Summer School Begins in Pristina
- BIRN Summer School Day 2: Open-Source Intelligence, Data, AI and Digital Security
- BIRN Summer School Day 3: Investigative Stories, AI, Safety and Mental Health
- BIRN Summer School Day 4: Fact Checking, Hidden Data and Knowledge Transfer
- BIRN Summer School – Day 5: Story Pitching, Big Data and Legal Risks

BIRN's Summer School content reached a broad audience on Facebook, with posts generating more than 200,000 impressions in total. The strongest-performing posts achieved up to 135,737 impressions with 156 engagements, while video content attracted 70,269 impressions and nearly 1,800 views. Engagement levels varied across posts, ranging from 9 to 162 interactions, showing consistent interest in both visual and text updates.

X (Twitter)
On X, the Summer School updates gained steady visibility, with thread views ranging from 150 to over 1,600 views per post, and engagement averaging between 10 and 20 interactions. The best-performing thread recorded 1,012+ views with nearly 20 engagements, demonstrating solid audience retention across multi-post threads.

LinkedIn
LinkedIn activity showed particularly strong engagement, especially during the event days. Posts collectively drew over 11,000 impressions, with standout performance on interactive updates reaching more than 1,200 engagements on a single post. Video updates were also effective, with one post receiving 166 views. Overall, LinkedIn proved highly impactful for professional outreach, with consistently high interaction rates.

Instagram (Balkan Insight account)
Instagram achieved notable reach, with content viewed by over 138,000 accounts. The top-performing post recorded 78,260 views and more than 2,400 interactions (including 2,256 likes and 160 shares/saves combined). This indicates Instagram's strong role in driving audience engagement and visibility among younger and visually oriented audiences.

Website
On the BIRN website, the Summer School announcement page was the most visited, attracting 10,675 views. Daily coverage of the program generated additional traffic, with article views ranging between 37 and 83 per post, underlining the added value of consistent event reporting.

Overall, the Summer School's communication campaign reached hundreds of thousands of people across multiple platforms, with the highest engagement seen on LinkedIn and Instagram, while Facebook posts secured the broadest reach. The results demonstrate effective multi-platform promotion, with a balance between wide visibility and deep engagement.

Evaluations and Results

Quantitative Evaluation Insights

The workshop evaluation in electronic form, was sent to attendees after the workshop. Please find below the evaluation survey responses based on the 80% sample (*24 out of 30 participants*).

The evaluation covered several key areas to assess the overall experience of participants in the BIRN Summer School. The main sections focused on the clarity of the application process, the effectiveness of the training programme, the quality of trainers, and logistical arrangements. Here's a breakdown of the evaluation categories:

Application Process
The clarity and accuracy of the application process was rated **4.7/5**. Participants found the process straightforward, though some suggested earlier communication of acceptance to reduce costs and allow better planning.

Planning Process
The clarity and completeness of briefing documentation was rated **4.8/5**, with participants generally satisfied and only minor requests for clearer communication.

Training Programme
The training programme met expectations with an average score of **4.75/5**. In terms of professional development, **83%** of participants said the training would be directly useful, while **17%** found it partially useful. Topics were considered highly relevant, with **46% rating them Excellent, 50% Very Good, and 4% Good**.

Skill Development
The appropriateness of the content level was rated **4.7/5**, reflecting a good balance between beginner, intermediate, and advanced sessions. The usefulness of knowledge for participants' careers was rated **4.7/5**.

Logistics
Training facilities were rated **4.3/5**, while hotel accommodation received **4.6/5**. Event organisation scored the highest with **4.9/5**, showing strong appreciation for the professionalism of the coordination.

Overall Satisfaction
Recommendation of the Summer School to colleagues received an average score of **5/5**, confirming high overall satisfaction.

Qualitative Evaluation Insights
In addition to the quantitative feedback, a qualitative evaluation was conducted using a structured in-depth interview tool focusing on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and fundraising dimensions. Six key informant interviews (KII) were held with participants representing diverse backgrounds and experience levels. The qualitative assessment confirmed that the Summer School achieved its primary objectives of delivering practical investigative journalism skills, fostering regional collaboration and enhancing participant confidence and motivation.

Learning relevance and skill application:
Participants unanimously emphasized the high relevance of the curriculum, particularly sessions on AI-assisted data journalism, open-source intelligence, and investigative storytelling. They highlighted that the training bridged a gap left by traditional academic education by providing practical, applied methods directly usable in their professional work. *"I gained valuable knowledge and practical materials directly applicable in my work,"* said one participant, while another noted that the program *"fills a practical, applied gap left by academic journalism training."*

Networking and collaboration:
The Summer School was praised as a rare regional space for professional exchange. Participants valued meeting *"like-minded journalists and people I can trust,"* and several already initiated plans for cross-border investigative projects on environmental, social, and human rights issues. This demonstrates that networking translated into actionable professional partnerships.

Professional impact and empowerment:
Respondents reported increased confidence, autonomy and renewed motivation to continue independent investigative work, particularly in restrictive media environments. One described the experience as *"a booster – a reset that made me stronger and more ambitious."* Others emphasized that it *"promotes independent thinking and a free spirit in journalism."*

Organizational and donor value:
Participants recognized BIRN's unique regional role in sustaining independent journalism and recommended scaling up the model through alumni engagement, newsroom partnerships and post-program mentorship. As one respondent suggested, *"Collaborate with journalists' home outlets so that stories developed during the Summer School are published in their media."*
The qualitative evaluation demonstrates that the BIRN Summer School is not only a successful capacity-building initiative, but also a catalyst for sustained professional collaboration and resilience in investigative journalism across the Balkans and beyond.

2. Local Meet-Up: Freedom of Expression and Accountability in the Modern Online Environment

Dates and place: 16 October 2025, Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Number of participants per country:
BiH 25
Total number of participants: 25

Within the broader framework of this WP, the Local Meet-Up on *Freedom of Expression, Digital Security, and Accountability in the Modern Online Environment*, held on 16 October 2025, represents a complementary activity that directly contributes to the objectives of this work package under the CERV project.

The meet-up gathered 25 young participants (15 women, 9 men, 1 other) and featured a presentation of findings from the Surveillance and Censorship Report in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a hands-on digital security workshop, and a panel discussion with experts in law, media literacy, and gender and digital rights.

While thematically focused on contemporary challenges in the digital sphere, the event reinforced core project priorities by addressing issues of accountability, freedom of expression, and the evolving risks faced by journalists and activists—topics that are intrinsically connected to responsible war reporting and transitional justice.

The event also served as a platform to promote the RECONCILE project and its activities, ensuring that participants were introduced to its broader objectives and outputs, including the exhibition and related educational components. Given this clear thematic and strategic alignment, as well as the overlap in target groups, the inclusion of participants from this event within this work package is justified. It reflects a coherent approach to capacity-building and outreach, where different but interconnected activities contribute to strengthening critical understanding of media, accountability, and conflict across both offline and digital contexts.

AGENDA
Freedom of Expression, Digital Security and Responsibility in the Modern Online Environment
October 16, 2025
Time:
11:00 – 14:30
History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina

AGENDA

11:00 – 11:05
Welcome and Opening Remarks

11:05 – 11:25 Presentation of the report "Surveillance and Censorship in the Western Balkans"
Key Insights from the Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina
Azem Kurtic, Journalist, BIRN

11:25 – 11:50 Discussion and Q&A

11:50 - 12:00 Presentation of the SPEAK Platform
Azra Milic, Digital Rights Programme Coordinator, BIRN

Coffee Break

12:15 – 13:15 Workshop: Cyber Security and Privacy Protection on the Internet
Senior Assistant, Feđa Kulenović, MA, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo

13:15 - 13:30 Monitoring Digital Rights Violations in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Selma Melez, Monitor and Journalist, BIRN BiH

13:30 – 14:30 The Importance of Digital Rights Protection in Contemporary Social Practices
Moderator: Aida Ajanović
Panelists:
Maja Čalović - Digital Media Expert & Trainer, Mediacentar
Nasir Muftic, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo
thanks, thanks
Prof. Dr. Lejla Turcilo, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo

14:30 Lunch

3. Reconnected regional youth workshop in Sarajevo

Dates and place: 2-5 December 2025, Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Number of participants per country:
BiH 12
Serbia 16
Netherlands 1
Total number of participants: 29

BIRN and YIHR Serbia successfully implemented the workshop titled Re:Connected - Workshop on the Role of Media and Art in Dealing with the Past, held from 2–5 December 2025 in the Historical Museum of BiH in Sarajevo. The workshop brought together young from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and provided them with practical knowledge and creative tools to explore how journalism, digital media, and artistic practices can contribute to dialogue and understanding in post-conflict societies.

Call promotion and selection of participants

The open call for the *Re:Connected* workshop was published on 30 October 2025 on both BIRN's and YIHR's websites, as well as through their social media channels. The call remained open until 20 November 2025 and reached over 20,000 people on social media, resulting in 77 applications. Participants were selected based on their experience, interest, and motivation, while ensuring national/ethnic and gender balance. The workshop achieved strong performance regarding inclusion indicators:

- Equal representation of participants from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Participation from smaller towns and rural areas, such as Mostar, Stolac, Zepce, Novi Pazar, Pancevo, Sremski Karlovac etc.
- Equal gender representation (50% women / 50% men)
- Inclusion of marginalized groups and ethnic minorities from each country (e.g Bosniak participants from Serbia)

At a time when strong polarization and ethnically divisive narratives dominate media and political discourse across the region, bringing together young people from BiH and Serbia, including members of minority communities in both countries, represented a strong and meaningful contribution to fostering dialogue, mutual understanding, and critical engagement with the past.

Workshop Agenda

The workshop empowered young participants to actively engage with and critically reflect on complex and sensitive issues such as genocide, war, and impunity. Through interactive sessions, participants developed and articulated their own creative approaches to addressing these topics through media and art, strengthening their capacity to communicate difficult histories in a thoughtful, responsible, and impactful way. The public exhibition of their works further reinforced these capacities, while fostering dialogue, visibility, and community engagement around cultural activism and remembrance. As well as providing public spaces for youth to network, create and discuss important issues around shared past and identities. These interventions enhanced participants' professional and civic capacities, encouraged cross-border collaboration, and provided tangible, practical platforms for youth to engage in informed activism, demonstrating clear progress toward achieving the project's overarching objective.

By engaging participants in shared storytelling and collaborative media production focused on Sarajevo - Belgrade, Bosnia - Serbia relations regarding history, culture, community, war in Bosnia, the activity supported longer-term reconciliation-oriented engagement and strengthened regional networks of young cultural and media practitioners. The workshop approach, connecting physical space, personal impressions, citizen interviews, and artistic journalism, promoted deeper understanding of how creative formats can foster dialogue in post-conflict societies.

The workshop began with participant introduction and contextual sessions on collective memory and youth roles in shaping narratives, followed by guided exploration of the History museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina by their curators. The sessions were led by Dalia Koler, from YIHR.

The second day focused on media narratives during and after the war, alongside sessions on artistic activism and visual reporting. Participants were introduced to short video formats and divided into mixed working groups to develop concepts. The sessions were led by Azem Kurtic, BIRN and Aida Ajanovic, BIRN and Dalia Koler, YIHR.

The third day was reserved for making the video works, filming, montaging, adding finishing touches and discussing drafts and concepts in the group. The day finished with presenting final works to the whole participant group and general reflections. The sessions were led by Dalia Koler, YIHR.
A key measurable creative output of the workshop was the production of five original video works, created by mixed teams of participants from both countries.

The videos explored themes including:

- Sarajevo as a city of memory and everyday life
- connections between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia
- youth perspectives on the war and its legacy
- citizen interviews on diverse views of the past, present, and future

On the third day, participants finalized filming and editing with mentor support and presented their works in plenary reflection. The sessions were led by Dalia Koler, YIHR.

The programme culminated on 5 December 2025 with the public exhibition ***"Re:Connecting Stories"***, hosted at the Museum of History of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The exhibition was open to all visitors and included a public dialogue with participants, mentors from YIHR and BIRN, and Anita Karabasic, artist and designer on alternative memorialisation and the role of creative formats in reconciliation. This exhibition significantly strengthened dissemination and community engagement beyond direct beneficiaries.

AGENDA
Workshop "Re:Connected" – Media, Art and Dealing with the Past
2 - 5 December
History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

Day 1: Introduction, Context and Common Goals
2 December

The workshop begins with an afternoon gathering at the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where participants get to know each other and their mentors. In a relaxed atmosphere, we open up a conversation about Sarajevo,
interstate relations and our backgrounds.

Introductory sessions will address the topic of dealing with the past in a contemporary context and the role of youth in shaping collective memory. Afterwards, participants will share their personal perspectives on media and art as tools for understanding the past through interactive exercises.

We end the day with a joint tour of the permanent exhibition The Siege of Sarajevo and a walk through Sarajevo and an informal conversation about how space, works, people, monuments and stories that places carry can become inspiration for creative and journalistic work.

16:30 - Introductory session, Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina
17:00 - Guided tour: Siege of Sarajevo Exhibition, Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina
19:30 - Dinner at the hotel (for participants staying at the hotel)

Day 2: Media, Art and Storytelling
3 December

The second day is dedicated to media and narratives. Participants attend lectures and discussions with journalists and artists who explore the topics of responsible reporting, visual storytelling and artistic activism. Through practical mini-workshops, participants are introduced to the basics of creating short video formats (short films, interviews, recorded performances) and reflect on how to tell stories about memory, identity and dialogue through a format adapted to digital platforms. The afternoon is reserved for forming smaller teams and creating ideas for videos that will be created during the workshop. Participants, together with mentors, develop concepts, choose topics and think about the visual approach and tone of the narrative.

09:00 - How young people today see historical events (group workshop)

10:45 - Media reporting: narratives during and after the war (lecture by Azem Kurtić, BIRN)

12:00 – Focus Groups and Discussion (Aida Ajanović, BIRN)

13:00 - Activism and art during and after the war in the context of dealing with the past

(lecture)

14:00 - Lunch

15:00 - Introduction to video formats - creating a concept for the works

16:30 - Free time for filming

19:00 - Dinner at the hotel

Day 3: Creation and reflection
December 4

The third day is dedicated to creative work: participants film and edit their short videos. Mentors from the fields of art and media provide support throughout the process, helping them to shape strong and authentic narratives. In the final part of the workshop, participants present their films to the group and share their impressions of the process, challenges and messages they want to convey. The day ends with a joint discussion on the role of art and media in building bridges between communities and a plan for public screening of the films in the space of the BiH History Museum.

09:00 - Post-production
13:00 - Editing
15:00 - Lunch
16:30 - Consultation and exchange of opinions in the plenary
18:00 - Presentation of the final works
19:00 - Dinner at the hotel

Day 4: Joint exhibition and dialogue with the audience

The final day is dedicated to the joint presentation of the resulting works and an open conversation with
the audience. The day begins with the joint preparation of the exhibition. During the day, the exhibition “Re:Connecting Stories” opens to the public. As part of it, a panel discussion with participants, mentors and guests from the media and arts will be held on the role of creative formats in reconciliation and building a shared memory. The day will end symbolically; with a joint closing and a discussion on how the experience from the workshop can grow into new initiatives, stories and collaborations in the future.

12:00 - Exhibition opening

Presentation: Alternative memorialization - Re-examining public memory

Anita Karabašić - Artist and designer
Dalia Koler - Program coordinator, YIHR Serbia

Evaluations and Results

Facilitators noted that the level of critical reflection exceeded expectations. Participants demonstrated analytical maturity when discussing media responsibility, denial, and contested narratives. The transition from theoretical sessions to practical production significantly strengthened learning retention.

The deliberate design of mixed-national and gender-balanced groups was identified as one of the strongest components. It prevented self-segregation and required collaborative negotiation of perspective, especially in developing video narratives. Holding the workshop in the Historical Museum of BiH added symbolic and educational value. The guided exploration created an emotional and intellectual anchor for subsequent discussions on memory and representation.

Operational Observations:

- Logistical coordination between BIRN and YIHR functioned effectively.

- The open call outreach (20,000+ reach; 77 applications) demonstrated strong regional interest.
- Time allocation for video editing for the exhibition was tight, but manageable with mentor support.

A total of 22 participants completed the post-workshop evaluation after the final day of the workshop, providing a solid basis for assessing both the relevance and effectiveness of the training.

Participant Profile

The respondent group was relatively homogeneous in age, with 100% of participants under 30. In terms of gender distribution, 50% identified as female (11 participants) and 50% as male (11 participants). **The majority of respondents (83%) participated in an individual or independent capacity, while 8% represented civil society organisations and another 8% identified as "other," indicating a primarily grassroots and early-career cohort.**

Prior Knowledge and Engagement

Participants entered the workshop with varied levels of prior familiarity with the subject matter. A majority (58%) reported being somewhat familiar with the topics, 25% indicated they were very familiar, while 17% had no prior familiarity. **Despite these differences, engagement levels were consistently high: 75% of respondents reported being very engaged throughout the workshop, and the remaining 25% described themselves as somewhat engaged.**

Structure and Methodology
Feedback on the structure of the sessions was largely positive. **Most participants (63%) felt that sufficient time was allocated for discussion, although 37% indicated that discussion time was somewhat limited, suggesting room for minor adjustments in pacing.** Practical components were particularly well received, with 88% stating that the amount of practical exercises was sufficient and only 13% expressing a need for more.

Satisfaction and Relevance

Overall satisfaction with the workshop was high. A **strong majority (79%) reported being very satisfied, while the remaining 21% were somewhat satisfied. The workshop content was also widely perceived as relevant, with 96% confirming its applicability to their interests or work, and only one respondent opting not to answer.**

Learning Outcomes and Applicability

All participants reported an improvement in their understanding of the topics covered. **Half of the respondents (50%) stated that their understanding had improved significantly, while the other half reported moderate improvement. In terms of practical application, 33% found the knowledge entirely applicable to their work or interests, and 63% considered it partly applicable.** Only one respondent (4%) indicated that the content was not applicable, suggesting a high degree of overall relevance across diverse participant backgrounds.

Trainer Performance

The trainers received consistently strong evaluations across all assessed dimensions (on a scale of 1 to 5). **Participants rated trainers highest on inclusivity (4.92) and knowledge (4.83), followed by clarity (4.67) and engagement (4.67). The organisation was also rated highly (4.50). These scores indicate a well-delivered training experience characterised by strong subject-matter expertise and an inclusive, participant-focused approach.**

The evaluation results demonstrate that the workshop was highly effective in engaging a young, diverse group of participants and delivering relevant, applicable knowledge. While minor adjustments could be made to allow more time for discussion, the overall structure, content, and delivery were rated very positively. The strong emphasis on practical exercises and interactive learning appears to have been particularly valuable in supporting both understanding and skill development.

4. Regional Workshop on Documenting and Archiving Human Rights Violations and International Crimes

Dates and place: 11-13 March 2026, Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Number of participants per country:
Kosovo 5
Montenegro 2
Serbia 5
BiH 12
Germany 1
Total number of participants: 25

A three-day regional workshop **on documenting and archiving human rights violations and international crimes concluded in Sarajevo in March 2026, bringing together 25 participants from across the Western Balkans.** The workshop aimed to strengthen practical skills in open-source investigation (OSINT) and transitional justice, while fostering a regional network of practitioners engaged in accountability and documentation efforts.

Organised by BIRN Hub in collaboration with Mnemonic, the workshop combined legal, archival, and digital investigation methodologies to address a central challenge in contemporary justice processes: how to reliably collect, verify, and preserve evidence in increasingly digital and high-risk environments.

Open call promotion

T**he participants were selected through a competitive open call promoted across the region, which attracted more than 100 applications from young researchers, journalists, activists, and practitioners**. The strong response highlighted a growing interest among younger generations in issues of documentation, accountability, and transitional justice, as well as the need for more structured capacity-building opportunities in this field.

The first day focused on transitional justice mechanisms, with particular emphasis on the role of documentation and archiving. A BIRN Senior Project Manager introduced participants to the core pillars of transitional justice, highlighting how archives underpin accountability, truth-seeking, and institutional reform. Researcher and consultant Lily Radwan presented a Syria case study, demonstrating how documentation practices contribute to truth-telling, memorialisation, and survivor recognition. Criminal law expert Goran Šimić examined the evidentiary value of archival material in war crimes trials, underscoring its importance for strengthening rule of law frameworks.

Practical exercises on the first day focused on translating complex transitional justice concepts into accessible narratives for wider audiences. Participants worked on developing scripts and communication formats designed to engage the public more effectively. As a direct outcome, BIRN produced a series of short video reels explaining the key pillars of transitional justice, aimed at increasing public understanding of these processes.

The second day shifted to the technical and methodological foundations of OSINT, led by Mnemonic director Hadi al Khatib. Participants were introduced to structured investigative workflows grounded in international standards such as the Berkeley Protocol and the Murad Code. Sessions covered source mapping in high-risk environments, digital archiving techniques, and the development of metadata schemas to ensure the integrity, traceability, and usability of collected material.

A strong emphasis was placed on documenting not only digital content but also the surrounding context and decision-making processes, critical components for ensuring evidentiary value in legal proceedings. Participants engaged in hands-on verification exercises, applying methods such as source assessment, corroboration, and geo-temporal analysis to evaluate digital materials.

The final sessions addressed ethical and legal considerations, focusing on “do no harm” principles, data protection, and the responsible handling of sensitive information. A forward-looking discussion explored the role of artificial intelligence in open-source investigations, highlighting both its potential to enhance analytical capacity and the risks it poses, particularly in relation to bias and misinformation.

The workshop concluded with a strong emphasis on sustainability and regional cooperation. Beyond building individual technical capacities, it sought to establish a network of practitioners equipped to document violations in a manner that supports accountability, safeguards affected communities, and preserves the historical record.

As a tangible outcome, participants produced seven short video reels during the workshop, which have been published and promoted across BIRN’s social media platforms, contributing to broader public engagement with transitional justice and documentation practices.

Social Media Outreach

The project's online outreach demonstrated strong performance across multiple digital platforms. According to Google Analytics data, BIRN website news recorded a total of 5,808 views, reaching 4,070 active users, indicating a solid level of audience engagement and interest in the published content.

Social media channels further amplified this reach. On Facebook, the content achieved 133,173 views and reached 53,545 individual users, reflecting significant visibility among audiences. Although interaction levels were more modest, with 72 recorded engagements, the platform served as a key driver of awareness.

On X (formerly Twitter), the content generated 206 impressions and 7 engagements, suggesting limited but targeted interaction on this platform.

LinkedIn showed comparatively strong professional engagement, with 3,357 impressions and 213 engagements, indicating that the content resonated well with a more specialized and professional audience.

Agenda

Documenting and archiving human rights violations and international crimes using open source investigation technique

Day 1 – Wednesday, 11 March

Time	Session	Core focus
09:30–10:00	Registration & Opening	Welcome, workshop objectives, introduction of participants and facilitators - *Nejra Mulaomerovic, Senior Project Manager, BIRN Hub*
10:00–11:00	Introduction to Transitional Justice	What transitional justice is, why it matters, and when it is used; overview of core pillars - *Nejra Mulaomerovic, Senior Project Manager, BIRN Hub*
11:00–11:15	Coffee break	—
11:15–12:15	Archives and Documentation in Transitional Justice	Role of archives, documentation, and evidence in truth-seeking, memorialisation, and survivor recognition; examples from post-conflict contexts - *Lily Radwan, Consultant and Researcher in Transitional Justice*
12:15–13:15	Archives, Evidence & Criminal Prosecution	How documentation and archives are used in war crimes trials; link between archives, accountability, and rule of law - *Prof.dr Goran Šimić, Criminal Law Expert*
13:15–14:30	Lunch break	Restaurant Klopa

14:30–14:45	From Knowledge to Public Communication	Translating complex TJ concepts into simple, engaging messages for a broader audience; *Nejra Mulaomerovic, Senior Project Manager, BIRN Hub*
14:45–15:15	Group Work: Concept & Script Development	Participants work in 6–7 small groups (1–2 people per group) to choose a TJ concept or mechanism and prepare a short explanation - Group work
15:15–17:00	Recording Short Reels	Filming short videos where participants explain TJ concepts and mechanisms in accessible language - Group work

Day 2 – Thursday, 12 March

Time	Session	Core focus
09:30-10:00	Arrival, Registration, Tech Check	Devices/accounts readiness; no-recording/sharing rules
10:00–10:45	Opening (share Mnemonic's mission and purpose), Objectives, Operating Principles - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	Objectives; participant context mapping; do-no-harm ground rules; trauma-informed norms
10:45–11:30	Principles and Standards of Open Source Investigations - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	OSINT workflow; reliability/provenance; reproducibility; documentation discipline. Present: Berkeley protocoles, Murad code, and Mnemonic's methods
11:30–11:45	Coffee Break	—
11:45–12:40	Collection and Source Mapping in High-Risk Environments - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	Source landscapes; monitoring strategy; documenting collection decisions; risk notes
12:40–13:30	Lunch	Restaurant Klopa
13:30–14:05	Digital Archiving Methodologies and Tools - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	Integrity/availability/authenticity; what to capture (content + context + metadata); schema thinking; tooling overview
14:05–15:10	Archival Capture and Metadata Essentials - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	Capture set (posts/pages/videos); record required metadata; capture method logging
15:10–15:20	Coffee Break	—
15:20–16:30	Verification and Contextualization of Digital Content - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	Source assessment; content analysis; corroboration; geo/time indicators; contextualization; uncertainty handling
16:30–17:00	Day 1 Reflection and Close	Debrief; parking lot for Day 2

Day 3 – Friday, 13 March

Time	Session	Core focus

09:30–11:30	Verification and Contextualization of Digital Content 2 - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	Hands-on: Source assessment; content analysis; corroboration; geo/time indicators; contextualization; uncertainty handling
11:30–11:45	Coffee Break	—
11:45–12:40	Ethical, Legal, and Safeguarding Considerations - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	Do-no-harm; handling graphic content; minimization/redaction/access control; privacy/data protection basics; exposure management
12:40–13:25	Lunch	Restaurant Klopa
13:25–14:20	The Use of AI in Open Source Investigations - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	AI use cases; limits (hallucinations/bias); governance; human-in-the-loop
14:20–16:20	Exercises: Collection to Archive to Use - *Hadi Al Khatib, Director Mnemonic*	End-to-end workflow with scenario pack; including (deletions, verification, misinformation, safety risks)
16:20–17:30	Presentations and Review	Teams present workflow choices; review against quality checklist
17:30–18:00	Close: Reflections and Next Steps	Resources pack overview; evaluation

5. **BIRN´s Summer School 2026**

Date and place: 17-23 August, Ohrid (North Macedonia)

Number of participants per country:
N. Macedonia 2
Kosovo 2
Serbia 2
Albania 7
Bulgaria 1
BiH 3
Ukraine 2
Croatia 1
Romania 2
Montenegro 3
Total number of participants: 25

The 16th BIRN Summer School of Investigative Reporting was held in Ohrid, North Macedonia, from 17–23 August 2026, bringing together 25 young journalists from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria. The programme provided an intensive, practical learning environment focused on strengthening investigative journalism skills and supporting participants in developing their own investigative story ideas.

The agenda combined expert-led masterclasses, practical exercises, case studies, Q&A sessions and individual consultations. Key topics included the investigative mindset and story development; open-source intelligence (OSINT) and digital verification; advanced data journalism and the use of AI in investigations; digital security; interviewing and increasing the impact of investigations; engaged citizens reporting and fact-checking; legal risks and protection of confidential sources; geolocation and visual investigations; Freedom of Information; and environmental investigative journalism.

A particular emphasis was placed on practical application throughout the programme. Participants worked with real-life investigative examples and took part in exercises on identifying and verifying information, analysing data and public records, using OSINT and visual evidence, engaging citizens safely, and developing stronger investigative leads. The sessions also showed participants how different investigative approaches can be used depending on the story, from working with data and public records to engaging citizens and turning evidence into findings that can inform wider discussions.

This practical approach was also reflected in **Alex Anderson's session on policy-oriented investigative reporting**, which focused on what can happen with investigative findings after the reporting is completed and how evidence can be developed into research that informs policy discussions. Anderson introduced participants to an approach that connects **field investigation, political analysis, policy recommendations and the intended policy impact**, drawing on his experience with the International Crisis Group.

Using examples from his own work, Anderson **showed how this approach can be applied to issues involving human rights, conflict and accountability.** He discussed a 2014 project in Ukraine examining alleged abuses and war crimes by pro-Ukrainian volunteer forces, where he had to turn field research into a seven-page policy intervention report within a very short timeframe. He also presented *Leave None to Tell the Story*, a Human Rights Watch report on the genocide in Rwanda, demonstrating a very different type of investigative and research process, based on extensive documentation several years after the events.

These examples gave participants an opportunity to consider how investigative journalism and research can contribute not only to documenting human rights violations and war crimes, but also to wider discussions around accountability and transitional justice. The session highlighted the importance of connecting strong evidence and documentation with political analysis and, where relevant, concrete policy recommendations.

The Summer School concluded with participants presenting their investigative story pitches to a jury. The strongest ideas are expected to receive support for further development, creating a pathway from training to the production of investigative journalism. Overall, the programme strengthened participants' practical investigative, digital, data and editorial skills while creating opportunities for regional networking, peer learning and continued mentorship**.**

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).