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# E-MINDFUL PROJECT

/ Bosnia and Herzegovina

# CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

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## Executive summary

The migration landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina is characterized by its temporary and transit-oriented nature, much like other nations on the so-called “Western Balkan Route”, over which migrants travel with the aim of reaching the European Union (EU), especially since 2015. Since that year, Bosnia and Herzegovina has witnessed a significant migratory influx registering around 100,000 migrants entering the country, with 60% leaving within three months and 80% within six months. Only 1-3% eventually apply for asylum. The current estimated migrant population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is below 3,000 individuals.

The analysis of the dominant narratives on migration-related topics identified four main perspectives: economy, demography, humanitarianism, and security. When analyzing the economy narrative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it becomes clear that the prevailing belief is that the country is merely a transit country for migrants, and not a final destination. In this context, the general public does not seem to be concerned that migrants can overwhelm the Bosnian economic and welfare systems. As such, the economy narrative is deemed socially irrelevant. The demography narrative is, in general, relevant to the Bosnian society, considering the aging population and high emigration rates, however, it is not significantly present in relation to the topic of migration. The report does address the significant possibility that this narrative will gain prominence in the coming years due to the demographic challenges the country is facing. The analysis of the humanitarian narrative section suggests that while there are certainly some humanitarian sets of values and concerns among Bosnians, this narrative is limited. Nonetheless, although not overwhelmingly large, humanitarian narratives are the second most common when discussing migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Then, by far the most dominant narrative is the security narrative. This narrative plays mostly on existing fears and distrust towards other ethnicities, which is, regardless of the topic of migrants, already significantly present in Bosnian society. In this context, narratives that instill fear and distrust affect the perception of migrants considerably.

The report analyzes a number of stories that are told about migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that can be found in the media. The analyzed stories mostly include elements of victimization, struggle and personal destiny, appealing particularly to humanitarian values. However, one story that was examined is that of a migrant worker in Tuzla, who is working as a chef in a restaurant, but is still awaiting a decision on his asylum request. The story focuses on his employment and on the combined effort of both himself and the community to facilitate his integration. According to a study, Bosnians are more tolerant toward foreign workers than they are toward asylum seekers. As the story of the chef combines both elements, with a focus on the utilitarian aspect of his employment, the report concludes that this type of story is most likely to resonate with the Bosnian public, compared to personalized stories about hardship.

The media landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina can be categorized into print (e.g. newspapers, magazines, etcetera) and electronic media (e.g. television, radio and online platforms). The multifaceted functions of media include information dissemination, agenda setting, criticism, education, aesthetic expression, socialization, entertainment, and integration. With the rise of digital platforms, social media has become a key player, influencing public thought and speech. On these platforms, a preference can be identified for short, clear, and provocative content among the new audience. Especially video is a powerful storytelling tool, with platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok playing crucial roles in content consumption and dissemination. When analyzing different communications methods, including theater, art, comics, music and film, it is concluded that film combines some of the best elements of literature, art, theater and music, and has the power to attract the attention of the modern digital audience. Short, clear and provocative messages are favored and most likely to resonate with the broader public. They are best disseminated on social media as these are considered to be interactive and accessible platforms.

The prototype to be developed will follow a narrative structure that purposely rejects the four main narratives for their lack of novelty. Instead, an integrative narrative centered around the theme of “moving” and being constantly on the move is chosen. This narrative focuses on movement, not the destination, as a goal. This choice is also based on the insight that half of the Bosnian youth is considering leaving the country, as well as connecting the theme of “moving” to the country’s historical context of displacement as a result of the Bosnian war. The narrative aims to convey the omnipresence of the moving individual or group without explicitly using the term “migrant.” The focus is on deep human positiveness, personal experiences, and engaging the “movable middle”. Although it does not cover all complexities of Bosnian reality, its strengths lay in being rooted in local cultural and social understandings. It has the potential to function as a model for communicating, involving and mediating crucial issues surrounding migration. The message centers on humanism, anthropocentric values, social cohesion, and personal catharsis to emphasize the importance of human dignity.

## Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina, situated at the crossroads of Southeastern Europe, has been predominantly a transit country for migrants rather than a final destination. In this context, the legal framework governing international migration primarily focuses on the management of transit and temporary stay of migrants. Several key laws and policies inform the approach to international migration within the country.

The country is actively engaged in international agreements related to migration. On 1 September 1993, Bosnia and Herzegovina became party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, which outlines the rights and obligations of refugees (The Institute of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018). By becoming a party to the Convention, Bosnia and Herzegovina agrees to abide by international standards concerning the protection and treatment of refugees. This includes granting certain rights and protections to individuals recognized as refugees, such as the right to work, access to education, and other social benefits, as well as the obligation not to return refugees to a country where they may face persecution. Additionally, the country is a signatory to the European Convention on Nationality, underpinning its commitment to promoting inclusive and non-discriminatory nationality laws, aiming to reduce statelessness and facilitate naturalization, family reunification and access to citizenship (ibid.).

On a national level, migration management is coordinated, mainly, by the Minister of Security and, to a lesser extent by the Minister of Human Rights and Refugees. The “Law on Movement and Stay of Foreigners” lays the groundwork for the entry and temporary stay of foreigners (ibid.). This law outlines the procedures for the issuance of visas and residence permits, thus establishing the regulatory structure for the temporary presence of migrants within the country. Additionally, the “Law on Asylum” provides the legal framework for the processing of asylum claims, outlining the procedures for individuals seeking international protection as well as eligibility criteria for asylum applications and appeals (ibid.). The “Law on Foreigners” outlines the rules and procedures governing the entry, stay, and residence of foreigners in the country, including requirements for visas, permits, and registration of foreign nationals (ibid.). Finally, the “Law on the State Border Service” establishes the framework for the country’s border control and management, including the duties and responsibilities of the State Border Service in regulating the entry and exit of individuals at the national borders (ibid.).

Despite not being a destination country, Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced a significant influx of migratory movement since 2015. Notably, approximately 100,000 migrants have entered the country since that year, while the current estimated migrant population residing in Bosnia and Herzegovina is estimated to be less than 3,000 individuals. Evidently, the majority of migrants tend to utilize Bosnia and Herzegovina as a transit country, as 60% of migrants leave the country within three months, and 80% depart within six months of arrival, while 1-3% of migrants apply for asylum as reported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2022.

Moreover, the temporary reception centers (TRCs) play a critical role in managing the transient migrant population. The average monthly presence in these centers amounts to 2,000 migrants, with 90% of assisted migrants departing from the TRCs monthly. This data underscores the temporary nature of migrant presence within the country and highlights the fluidity of the migration patterns.

Regarding work permits, Bosnia and Herzegovina issued a total of 2,275 work permits in the last year. Notably, the recipients of these permits were primarily citizens from neighboring countries, including Serbia and Croatia, as well as non-neighboring countries such as Turkey, China, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Montenegro. However, it is noteworthy that no work permits were issued for Afghan citizens in 2018, 2019, and 2020, despite Afghanistan being the most frequent country of origin for the transiting migrant population in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Overall, the legal framework and migration data reflect the dynamic nature of international migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasizing the temporary and transit-oriented character of the country's role in the larger European migration landscape.

# /Chapter One

This chapter presents an analysis of four targeted narratives about migration, i.e. economy, demographics, humanitarianism, and security. The analysis identifies the security narrative as the significantly most dominant one. The humanitarian narrative is present in the public discourse, but the targeted audience (the age group 18–30) does not seem to prioritize moral obligations towards others according to the referenced studies. The demographics narrative is barely present, but it is found relevant and potentially dominant soon. The economy narrative is found rather irrelevant to the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Economy Narrative

A recent report on Bosnia and Herzegovina (European Commission, 2022) reveals that Bosnia and Herzegovina made insignificant progress and remained at a beginning stage with addressing the following issues:

1. Public administration reform;
2. Judiciary;
3. Establishing a functioning market economy;
4. Developing a capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces in the EU;
5. Taking on the obligations of EU membership;
6. Aligning with EU acquis on the internal market;
7. Securing inclusive growth;
8. Utilizing and developing resources, agriculture, and cohesion;

One of the major consequences of such slow growth and delayed reforms is a negative trend in the emigration of young individuals. The “Survey on Youth Emigration” (UNFPA, 2021) reveals that 47% of young people (aged 18–29) have considered leaving the country. Twenty-two percent of the respondents (n= 5,001) had aspirations to leave temporarily and 24,1% could leave permanently. Only 36,8% have described their standard of living as satisfying. The surveyed youth identified the following as the top five reasons for leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina:

1. Looking for a sense of stability and perspective;
2. Pursuing a job that is appropriate to their levels of qualifications and their professions;
3. Utilizing emigration as the only option for them or their families to improve their financial status;
4. Looking for better career prospects;
5. Need to live in a less corrupted society.



A study on Socioeconomic Perceptions of Young People in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNDP, 2017)(n= 1,200; age group 15-30) shows that the young people of this country think that the country is stagnating in its development (76.8% agreed) and that the BiH authorities are not dealing adequately with the economic, social/welfare, and the political problems in the country (p. 19). In addition, they do not think that the authorities have enough capacities and will to develop constructive politics and social dialogue. These results are only projecting a few minor details of the general dissatisfaction with the government which indeed does very little to increase the quality of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a result, it seems highly unlikely that the economy narrative linked with the migrant population can resonate with the Bosnian public. The data collected for this report (a review of the 41 latest articles published on two most frequently visited news portals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Avaz and Klix (Akta, 2019) shows that only two articles have implications for the economy narrative, and only four comments (out of twenty most liked comments on the twenty articles published on Klix) connote economic and welfare/social concerns (see Appendix 1).

The report of the fifteenth joint data collection exercise (IOM, 2022a), which observed 652 migrants, shows that the declared final destinations for this sample of migrant population are Germany (38%), followed by Italy (25.6%), France (7.6%), Belgium (4.9%), Portugal (2.3%), Spain (1%), as well as Denmark, North Macedonia, and Switzerland (less than 1%). Although the interviewed migrants also declared Bosnia and Herzegovina as the final stop (4%), this information may be misleading; it has been observed that the asylum protection laws are “abused” for the purpose of buying time. On average less than 1% of asylum applications get resolved. Aware of the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a transition rather than a destination country, the general public does not seem to be concerned that the migrants and refugees can overwhelm the Bosnian economic and welfare systems. And it seems that the migrant and refugee populations know about the limitations of these systems too; both Bosnian and non- Bosnian populations know that western Europe has more to offer in this regard. As a consequence, sixty-five percent of migrants spend less than a month in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 82% leave in less than six months, and the Bosnians know that they will not stay for good.

## Demographics Narrative

**Demographics Narrative (the major goals: the integration of refugees and migrants into the labor market and using migration as a tool to tackle negative demographic and population trends)**

Although this narrative is relevant to Bosnian society (due to the fact that the population is rapidly aging and young people are emigrating at high rates), the demographics narrative was only identified in one article out of 41 articles reviewed



particularly for the purposes of this study (See Appendix 1; reference 26). It reports the story of Oussama Nouari, a Moroccan man who is working as a chef in a hotel located in Tuzla.

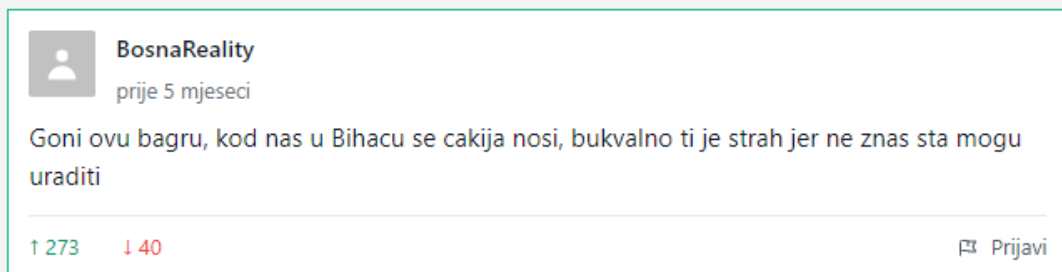


Picture: *Oussama Nouari, a Chef*  
(Klix.ba, May 23, 2022)

The story is well characterized by demographics and humanitarian narratives (it speaks of the effort of the local community and their humanitarian principles). The portal that published the story has a comment section that allows comments to be shared, liked, and disliked. Unfortunately, the most liked comment (273 likes; see Figure 1) states the following:

“Screw this scum, in Bihać we carry pocket knives because we are literally scared as we do not know what they are capable of doing”

**Figure 1:** The most liked comment on the story about Oussama Nouari; Source: Klix.ba, reference 26 in Appendix 1



This comment reveals the priority of safety concerns, to which Oussama himself cannot have contributed, that scientifically speaking precedes the love and morality concerns (see Maslow’s hierarchy of needs). The center for fear is located deep in our limbic system and is intertwined with our sensory channels (see Zull, 2011). The way we grasp new information is conditioned by the affective attitude with which we receive new information. This project looks for an audience that will have neutral or not strongly held attitudes towards migrants; neither negative (driven by fear, anxiety, or worry) nor positive (driven by love for the other). Should we then design the final message for the youth, who indeed have many unresolved positions about

themselves and others, or rather the business people, who are assumingly driven by the opportunity-cost balance and profit, stripped of love for or fear of the other?

The demographics narrative may not be dominant in the mainstream news media, but it is relevant and quite familiar to the Bosnian nation. Between 1971 and 2013 the

share of the youngest population (0-14) dropped from 34.4% to 15.4%, and the share of the 65+ population went up from 4.7% to 14.2% (FES, 2019). On average there are 6,000-7,000 more deaths than there are births per year (ibid.). The negative population trend is very obvious at all levels of formal education and is significantly noticed in less populated areas. Approximately one-fifth of the Bosnian population can be classified as young (15-30), and 13,6% of them hold a university degree (ibid.). It should be noted that the pursuit of a tertiary degree seems to grow in percentage recently (USAID, 2018). However, almost one-half of the Bosnian population has been thinking about leaving the country (UNFPA, 2021). These statistics suggest that the demographics narrative will start asserting itself very soon in the public discourse.

It is worth noting that foreign workers receive more social tolerance from Bosnians than migrants and refugees do (Scheerder & Guest, 2021). Interestingly, the Bosnian Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats display varying levels of social tolerance towards the three groups of foreigners. The Bosniaks are most and the Croats are least willing to interact personally with the foreign workers, migrants, and refugees (ibid. 2). Yet all of the three ethnicities seem to show more tolerance for the workers than they do for the migrants and refugees. This finding supports the premise that the aspect of the demographics narrative which deals with the integration of migrants and refugees into the labor market has partly fertile grounds in Bosnia and Herzegovina, even though this narrative is not significantly present in the articles reporting about migration.

## Humanitarianism Narrative

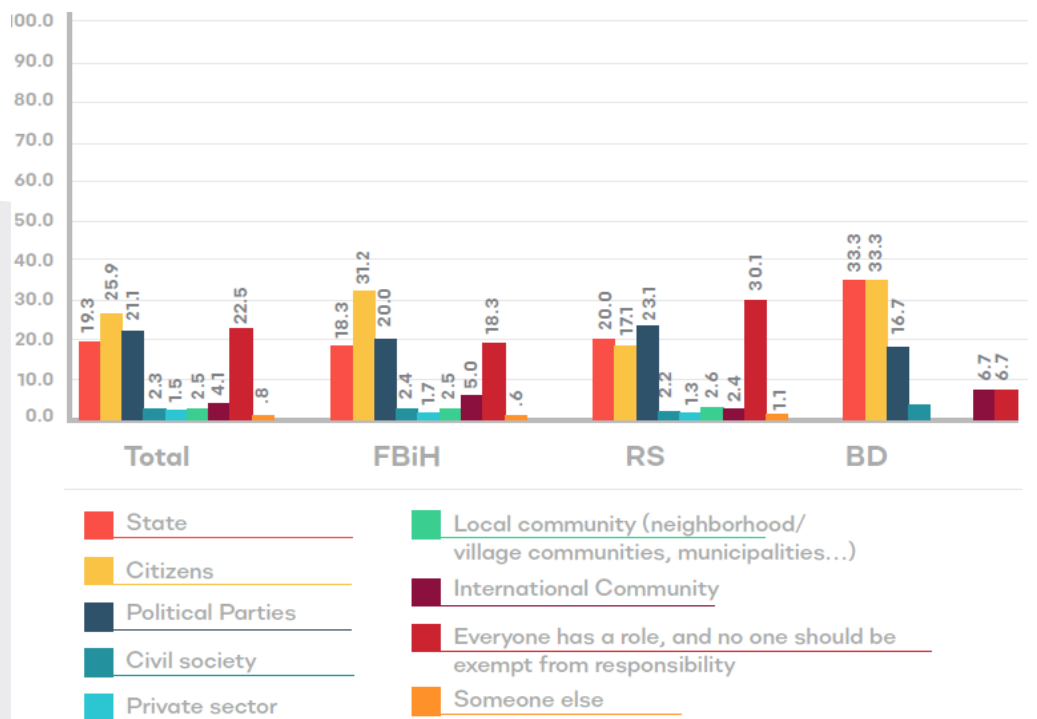
### Humanitarianism Narrative (the major drive: moral obligations towards others)

Humanistic perspectives cannot be rendered to a simple system of values where the other is always prioritized over oneself. This would be a significant misconception. Aloni (2007) argues that there are at least four schools of humanistic thought:

1. The Cultural-Classical Approach: the pursuit is after the notion of the higher man, virtue, and wisdom.
2. The Naturalistic-Romantic Approach: The focus is on the inner self rather than social/universal truths.
3. The Existential Approach: Freedom defines and drives the human being.
4. The Critical-Radical Approach: The goal is to fight the ideologies that drive poverty and discrimination, and change the world around us and defeat certain ideologies that oppress individuals, induce poverty, discriminate, and destroy communities and families.

If an integrative approach is an answer, the humanistic narrative can be viewed as a deliberate link that bends under a tension existing between the individual and the society/culture, and the question of who is at service to whom?. If the individual serves society, and if the society serves the individual back, perhaps the sought balance can be guaranteed. When asked "...who has the greatest responsibility for driving change and improving the quality of life in BiH?"(UNDP, 2017), the respondents (n= 1, 200; the age group 15-30) identified the citizens, everyone, political parties, and the state as key factors for the change and progress.

**Figure 2:** The answer to the question In your opinion, who has the greatest responsibility for driving change and improving the quality of life in BiH? as reported in the study Socio-economic Perceptions of Young People in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNDP, 2017, p. 20).



This is an encouraging result as it indicates that the youth hold themselves responsible to a certain degree for the current circumstances in which they live. Therefore, it can be assumed that they take action to make their country a better place to live. However, when they were asked about the values they cherish most, altruism (8.3%) lost to personal dignity (19.8%), justice and equality before the law (16.8%), willingness to fight for goals (15.3%), freedom and safety

(13.9%), tolerance (12.9%), and social prestige (9.3%). Altruism as a value scored higher only than material wealth (2.9%). This partly confirms the premise that the answer to the question of what I can do for others? is more often filtered through a preconditioned outcome of self- reflection and perception of the inner self in the context of the Bosnian youth. To further support this premise, it should be noted that the same study reports that 81.2% of the respondents did not take part in any

volunteering activities for twelve months before the survey (UNDP, 2017, p. 34). To what degree an average Bosnian young woman/man prioritizes the needs of others can be additionally understood from their answers to the question of whether they participated in one of the following activities;

1. Openly expressed views on an issue in public;
2. Openly expressed views on an issue through social media (FB, Twitter, Instagram, forums, websites, etc.);
3. Signed a petition;
4. Tried to persuade other people to agree with their views;
5. Participated in the meeting/gathering to support the certain idea;
6. Wearing badges or T-shirts with slogans/pictures as a support of a cause;
7. Volunteered in/was a member of an organization.

Approximately two of three respondents never took these actions. To what extent then the humanitarianism narrative resonates with the Bosnian public, i.e. the Bosnian youth? Our review shows that seven articles (out of 41), and one most-liked comment (out of 20) connote a humanitarian tone/message. Contrasted with the results presented in Socio-economic Perceptions of Young People in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNDP, 2017), significantly limited but existing humanitarian sets of values and concerns can be associated with the Bosnian public. However, it seems that this narrative is also not the dominant one.

## Security Narrative

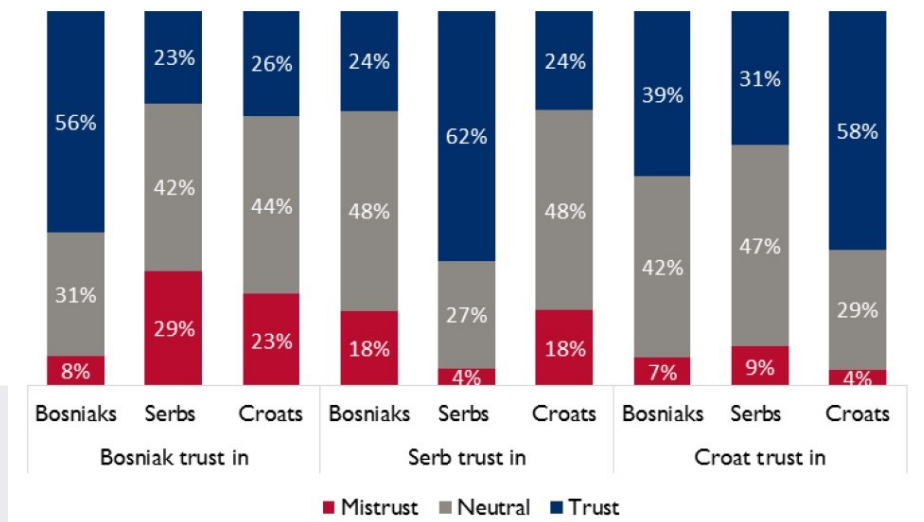
**Security Narrative (the major drives: perceived threats, crimes, and terrorist attacks by migrants)**

Twenty (out of 41 articles) and 10 (out of 20) comments reviewed for the sole purposes of this report have been categorized as having the security narrative connotations (see Appendix I). Compared to the other three narratives, this one significantly dominates. What is fueling this narrative is hard to estimate. To verify the finding, we reviewed a significant number of articles published on other news portals (such as [dnevnik.ba](http://dnevnik.ba) and [rtrs.tv](http://rtrs.tv)) and recognized a similar pattern; in the case of reporting about migrants and migration, the focus is on the threat for national security/borders, their crimes, and the EU's systematic attempts to rather keep the migrants in

Bosnia and Herzegovina and far from the EU. Several articles report successful attempts of guarding EU countries' borders and set an argument that it can be done. The articles connoting the security narrative strengthen the sentiment of distrust towards other ethnic groups which is already significantly strong in Bosnia and

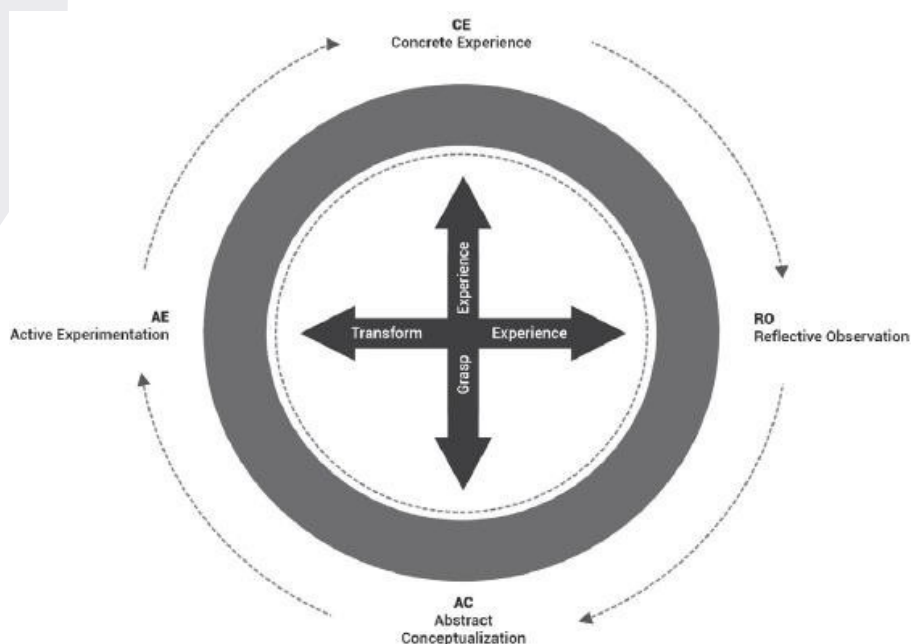
Herzegovina. When asked to rate the levels of in-group and out-group trust among youth in BiH, the respondents (n=3,002; the age group 15-30) declared the highest trust in their own ethnic group (USAID, 2018) (see Figure 3). Interestingly, one of the leading ethnic-nationalist parties in the latest elections used the word *sigurno* (safe/secure/secured) on its promoting materials while trying to appeal to its voting audience.

**Figure 3:** The levels of in-group and out-group trust among youth in BiH as presented in National Youth Survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina (USAID, 2018, p. 45)



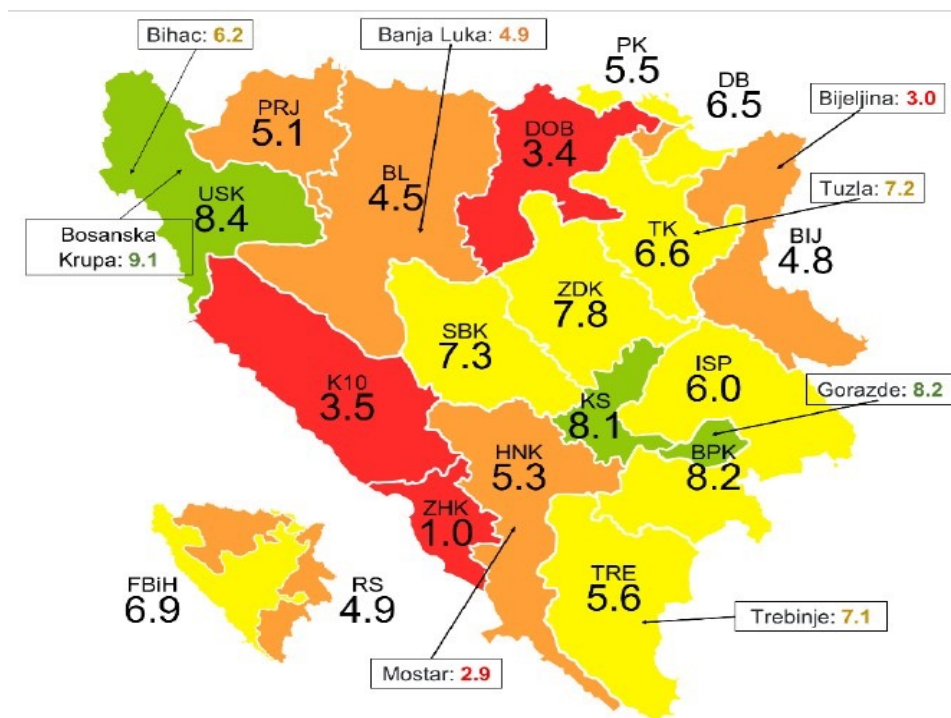
Kolb (2015) and his experientialist theory of learning are teaching us that we learn employing the learning cycle; we experience, reflect, hypothesize, and test, then we restart the cycle with any following relevant experience (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4:** Kolb’s learning cycle as in Kovačević (2021)



While many think that Kolb is right, the cycle is rather incomplete. Each of the stages is intertwined with our emotional dynamics, i.e. the limbic system. The four stages are dependent on our fears, anxieties, disinterests, as well as pleasure-seeking, joy, interest, or positive appeal (see Zull, 2011). In other words, if the fear of others is systematically stirred through the news, ill politics, and deconstructive values teaching, then it can validly be concluded that the majority of the Bosnian youth will experience a degree of threat to their personal/national security by the migrant population. Interestingly, the areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina which were actually in significant contact with the migrant population are rated with the highest social tolerance index as identified in the report by Scheerder and Guest (2021, p. 3). This supports the premise that social tolerance cannot be imposed but rather developed through experience.

**Figure 5:** Heatmap of Social tolerance towards Migrants/Refugees as reported in Scheerder and Guest, 2021, p. 3.





# /Chapter Two

In this chapter, we will lay out some stories that are most likely to resonate in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the findings of chapter I. Only one personalized story was found that was recently shared on one of the two most frequently visited news portals in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the story of Oussama Nouari, a Moroccan chef temporarily employed in Tuzla who is waiting for his asylum request resolution (Appendix I, reference no. 26). The story connotes the utilitarian narrative (one aspect of the demographics narrative according to which the focus is on the integration of migrant population into the labor market). The story reports on both Oussama's and the local community's efforts to facilitate the integration.

The three stories published by IOM in the most recent situational reports about Bosnia and Herzegovina (IOM, 2022b; IOM, 2022c; IOM, 2022d); (see Story I, II, and III) portray the experiences of victimization, struggle, and personal destinies, as well as the IOM's systematic effort to help the ones in need. While these three stories appeal mostly to the humanitarianism narrative, Oussama's story appeal not only to humanitarianism (in regard to the local community's effort) but also to the utilitarian narrative. The potential of Oussama's story to appeal to the moveable audience is larger than the potential of the three stories of victimization; it needs to be recognized that the Bosnians are more socially tolerant of foreign workers than they are tolerant of migrants and refugees (Scheerder & Guest, 2021, p. 2).

## Story I: Mohsen's story (IOM, 2022c)

BIH MIGRATION RESPONSE

Situation Report | 10-16 OCTOBER

### Mohsen's\* Story

IOM Protection and MHFSS team shared a story

In all reception centres in BiH, migrants have the option to participate in various creative and recreational activities. When Mohsen\* arrived at a reception facility in August 2022, he was elated to find a social corner where he was able to engage in creative activities, particularly to draw and share his work with the broader community at the centre.

When IOM staff spoke to Mohsen about his talent for drawing and painting, his eyes grew wide and lit up. He said that he was "born with it" and that no one ever taught him, he simply paints by feeling. He likes to draw human faces because that's what he feels closest to.

When Mohsen was offered the opportunity to paint and decorate wall in the social corner, he agreed immediately and said that it would be a pleasure to leave his mark at the centre. However, with the current trend of increased arrivals and departures in reception centres at BiH, Mohsen ultimately did not stay and left the reception centre before finalizing the painting on the wall. Nevertheless, a trace of his presence and talent remains in the form of the drawings that he painted with the desire that him and other migrants like him would always be remembered.

Engaging in social activities has proven beneficial to the well-being of migrants, strengthening their resilience and coping skills in adverse life situations. In all four reception centres in BiH, dedicated CCCM staff and cultural mediators work with local partners to conduct various social activities. This work directly contributes to IOM's Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) framework, an active commitment for IOM to take into account, give account to, and be held accountable to the migrants and local communities that IOM seek to assist.

\*The name was changed to protect privacy.



MOHSEN'S DRAWINGS CAPTURE HIS FAVORITE SUBJECT  
- A HUMAN FACE.  
©IOM BIH 2022



## Story II: Jana's Story (IOM, 2022b)

BIH MIGRATION RESPONSE

Situation Report | 3-9 OCTOBER 2022

### Jana's\* Story

IOM AVRR counselor Aleksandar Jugović shared a story

Jana, a minor victim of trafficking coming from a Western Balkan country, was sold in a marriage agreement to a man in BiH. Jana contacted the local police authorities and the SFA who immediately relocated her to a safe house, where the Centre for Social Welfare (CSW) appointed a legal guardian for her. The Prosecutor's Office of BiH took the necessary steps to gather information with the relevant counterparts and specialized agencies to determine the best way forward. Eventually, Jana expressed to her legal guardian that she wanted to return to her country of origin and was subsequently referred to the IOM's AVRR team, who organized several counselling sessions to ensure Jana was fully aware of the AVRR process.

After conducting a risk assessment, the AVRR team worked with the CSW to complete an in-depth Best Interest Determination (BiD) and vulnerability screening.

\*Name has been changed to protect privacy

In collaboration with CSW counterparts in Jana's country of origin, IOM initiated family tracing and evaluated that return to her family was not safe, based on their direct role in the forced marriage decision.

Following discussion with Jana, her legal guardians, the IOM mission in her country of origin and the Department for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH, the IOM AVRR team in BiH facilitated the steps, including a medical evaluation, to help Jana return to her country with access to care and institutional support. A reintegration plan was also developed to ensure Jana's access to housing education and training upon her return.

An IOM Reintegration Officer in the country of origin will continue to assist Jana over the coming months.

## Story III: Suvada's Story (IOM, 2022a)

BIH MIGRATION RESPONSE

Situation Report | 26 SEPTEMBER-02 OCTOBER 2022

### Suvada's\* Story

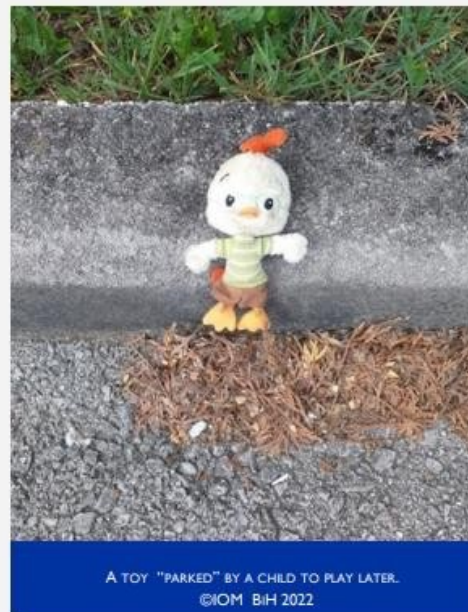
IOM's Information Management Assistant Suvada Malčić shared a story

One of the recent exhibitions of children's artwork and handicrafts made me recall a personal experience working in reception centres accommodating children with families.

I don't want to share a story about one special child. They are all special. This story is about all children, little heroes who left their homes, their friends, and found themselves in an unfamiliar environment full of strangers. Over 20 years ago, I was in the world of adults, working with lawyers, police, physicians, the army, and politicians. Some would say that it was a significant experience but working at IOM has given me the opportunity to have more insight into human nature, thanks to the children who show me the world through their eyes.

Thanks to the little Iraqi girl Aisha\* who, worried about her mother in bed and not feeling well, made sure that we did not forget her during the regular distribution of NFI and hygiene items. And little Shamsia\*, a 10-year-old girl from Afghanistan who was always ready to help or join different events organized for children, who loved to cook and taught us how to prepare her delicious Kabul Palaw. Or the little Iranian girl Deniz\* who, with the serious expression on her face, entrusted us with her doll and felt so at home that she instantly fell asleep in the armchair of the office. Or a group of 4-year-old boys who gathered around their leader, loudly conspiring their next mischief. Or the older children who showed a deeper understanding of their situation and revealed their talents through artistic works created at child friendly spaces.

Once, on my way out of a centre that was soon to be closed for good, I saw a small toy carefully placed on the sidewalk by a tiny little hand, to wait for another day full of play. It made me smile and I cherish this image to this day as if that little toy is saying, ***Children are here. Love them, take care of them. Respect them. Respect their characters because they are the ones who will show you what really matters in this world.***



A TOY "PARKED" BY A CHILD TO PLAY LATER.  
©IOM BIH 2022

Currently around five to fifteen per cent of all accommodated people in reception centres are children in families and unaccompanied minors. IOM works with the SFA, partner organizations and local institutions like centres for social work to enable implementation of children's rights for migrant children and create protective and nurturing environment.

\*Names were changed to protect privacy.

# /Chapter Three

Media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions, disseminating information, and facilitating discourse. Its multifaceted nature enables it to serve various purposes, from information dissemination and education to entertainment. (Mass) media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as defined in the 'Law on Communications', includes "telecommunications, radio, broadcasting (including cable television) and associated services and facilities" (Law on Communications, 2002). Understanding the role of media and its influence is crucial when examining how it shapes the narrative around migrants.

## Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be broadly categorized into two main types: print and electronic media. Print media includes newspapers and other printed materials, while electronic media encompasses television, radio, and internet portals. Each type of media has its unique characteristics and modes of distribution, and the choice of medium can significantly impact the way narratives about migrants are disseminated. The perspective on the role of the media varies across different domains such as science, business, and politics. However, some of the primary functions of media that can be identified include:

1. **Information:** the media increases the general awareness of the community in order to better understand the most important issues, including on matters related to migration.
2. **Articulation:** the media enables and facilitates shaping and setting the problem, often according to a certain framework.
3. **Agenda Setting:** establishing priorities when treating social issues; putting problems and issues before the public.
4. **Criticism and Control:** It enables transparency and oversight of government actions and societal matters, with the intention of effecting necessary corrections within society.
5. **Education:** Media provides specialized programs that enrich and facilitate learning, with channels such as National Geographic, History Channel, and Discovery offering informative content.
6. **Aesthetic Function:** Media can also serve artistic and creative purposes, using visuals and narratives to engage and entertain the audience.
7. **Socialization:** Media plays a role in transmitting societal norms, values, and cultural information, contributing to the process of socialization.
8. **Fun:** Entertainment is a key function of media, providing a source of enjoyment and relaxation for the audience.
9. **Integration:** Media, regardless of its flaws, unites people, cultures, ideas, and religions, fostering a sense of interconnectedness.

Media in itself is neither good nor bad, it is just a tool. Like any tool, media can be used with good and bad intentions, in positive and negative ways. Numerous studies have been conducted on the role of the media in the lives of children and adults. The conclusion is quite clear - the media is one of the key means of socialization, and it influences behavior, attitudes and worldviews. It is "the central storyteller of our time" (Kolucki & Lemish, 2011, p. 9). The media is able to "enrich lives, change unhealthy behaviors, stimulate imagination and creativity, expand education and knowledge, encourage inclusion and tolerance, reduce the gap between social classes and contribute to overall development" (ibid.). On the other hand, the media can "numb the senses, inhibit the imagination, produce insensitivity to the pain of others, encourage destructive types of behavior, maintain stereotypes, lead to the decline of moral values, suppress local cultures and contribute to alienation from society" (ibid.). This duality of the media's potential impact underscores its significance in shaping the narrative surrounding migration.

## Digital Platforms - New Media

The digital age has ushered in a new era of media platforms, profoundly impacting how information is disseminated and consumed. Digital platforms have undoubtedly already contributed to the development of democracy, encouraged freedom of public thought and speech. Censorship, as we know it from earlier periods, has been defeated or at least changed its shape. Namely, the freedom of speech seems immeasurable, the possibility of spreading news seems unlimited, but we cannot forget - no one can stop the spread of untruths, fake news and hate speech anymore. Social networks have become the main media channels of communication, primarily thanks to the mass culture of using mobile phones. The modern media audience gets the greatest amount of content precisely through new media - the social network. Digital media do not only offer content, but also an audio-visual experience, which additionally enhances communication and audience engagement. However, the most distinctive characteristic of the digital audience (and the media) is its fragmentation (frames of individual and ideological preferences). For example, during the Arab Spring, as well as in numerous less successful protests and movements in the region, different entities united and connected through the internet (for example through Facebook).

A good local example was the "Justice for David" movement. David Dragičević died under suspicious circumstances, possibly at the hand of government or police officials, but officially as the result of an "accident" in 2018 in Banja Luka. Initially small-scale protests against the lack of a proper investigation, but later also the silencing and the tampering with evidence, led to massive, long-lasting protests across ethnic borders, the likes of which had never been seen before in the short history of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Majstorovic, 2023). The "Justice for David" movement was able to grow so massively due to social media (especially Facebook, X and YouTube). This is also how the Egyptian protests were described, by one of the most famous activists, with the sentence: "We use Facebook to schedule the protests,

Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world" (Rashed, 2011). However, it is worth reminding again that the media is a tool.

According to research, digital media is used by 85.8% of respondents as an aid in searching for information, 51.4% for education and 46.6% for entertainment, while 7% of respondents use it to follow daily political events and 4% use digital media to buy various products. It should be noted that as many as 99.1% of respondents "stress the importance of security in the credibility and relevance of content on the Internet", and 53.4% of them believe that "the content of the media platforms they follow is true." The type of content that the respondents prefer are "special content" (73.5%), "entertainment" (51%), "politics" (28.1%), and "sports" (16.2%). In order to get to this content, most of the respondents use social media (83.8% of respondents). Other platforms for reaching their preferred content include "specialized portals" (51%), "political portals" (35.2%) or "mobile applications" (30%). Finally, the preference for left-leaning media in Bosnia and Herzegovina is an intriguing aspect of media consumption patterns. The study revealed that 76% of the respondents prefer "left spectrum" media, and that "they rarely read (open) the content of opposing ideological preferences". Some of the things that social media is teaching young people is to "stay active", "be present", and "on the move".

The five biggest social media platforms, Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok are all considered to be important arenas for marketing and disseminating information. According to a survey, 74% of marketers consider Facebook to be vital as it enables interaction and sharing. X is a micro blogging platform with about 255 million active users. YouTube offers video communication, with the advantage of the availability and acceptance of short videos that are easy to find with the help of the Google search engine. Instagram is currently used by 23% of teenagers and is, along with TikTok, considered to be the fastest growing platform.

## Key media platforms for disseminating migrant narratives

The word "movement" is one of the keywords that combines the "perfect" media platform and the central point of our interest, the migrants themselves, i.e. people on the move. Instead of a conclusion, we should be reminded - and this is what experience points us to, the experience gained by simply watching - these people are often without suitcases, carrying just backpacks, a minimum of things, but everyone is "armed" with a mobile phone. It is their compass and help in communicating with the unknown world, but also a connection to what they left or ran away from. In this context, we should look at a number of platforms for disseminating our message. There are different types of communication, and each of them has its own advantages and disadvantages. Art is an excellent way to "send a message", to change someone's attitude or to make even the most stubborn among us think. We will discuss theater, art and comics, as well as music and film.



The first possible way of disseminating our message is through a theater performance. This requires a meeting of people, at least two - one actor and one spectator. The definition, which may not be the best, says that the theater performance is “now and here”, and that, in this case, is a drawback. We want to communicate with a larger number of people, simultaneously, not only at one moment, but “on demand”. There are similar limitations for “fine art” and for using “comics”. Music is a “universal language”, but the message can be misinterpreted, everything is left to free interpretation, and our message must be precise and clear. Film, in its essence, is a combination of all other arts, through literature, fine arts, theater, music. It is, according to one definition, “visual projection in motion (with or without sound)”. A film can be a short film, a feature film, a documentary or an animation. Television is becoming a medium to which an older audience is loyal, while the younger generation, apart from being attached to digital media and social networks, turns to the screen only occasionally to watch programs that interest them. Netflix, for example, is winning the attention of this audience that consciously avoids news programs and content related to politics. Years of research have made it clear, and everyone agrees, that the “new audience” demands content that is “short, clear and provocative.” Video is the form they prefer, and it can be consumed via laptops and mobile devices as an advantage. The quality of photography and sound, which the film insists on, and the projections are organized in the halls suitable for that purpose, video artists (and their audience) are not in the first place. The content is, however, in the first place, as well as the “effective” way in which it is presented.

Video is the name for “a series of technical procedures that are used to record, process, transmit and display moving images that are viewed on a television or computer screen.” Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube enable the reproduction of video material, as well as its sharing, and it becomes far more accessible than television content. Digital “culture” prefers a short form, thus influencing the style of storytelling and communication itself. Our task is, among other things, to attract attention, “the ability to direct and maintain psychic energy and activity in a certain direction, towards a certain goal, as well as the ability to change that direction and goal”. Or, as Karl Jaspers said - “Attention is the condition of clarity of experience”. Video, in this case, is like poetry versus novels; placing a message (or a story) in a frame of three or five minutes is a big challenge, and because of the possibility (and hope) that the idea expressed in this way can be memorable and impressive.

## Conclusion

Media platforms have a profound impact on shaping narratives about migrants and migration. From traditional print and electronic media to the dynamic world of digital platforms, each medium plays a unique role in disseminating information, influencing public perception, and fostering discourse. The fragmentation of digital media audiences, along with the prevalence of mobile devices, creates both opportunities and challenges in shaping narratives about migrants. The diverse

preferences of media consumers and their demands for short, provocative content highlight the need for engaging and impactful storytelling. Understanding the power of media platforms and their diverse roles in shaping public discourse is essential for promoting inclusivity, combating misinformation, and fostering empathy toward migrant communities. By leveraging the strengths of various media forms, especially film, we can create narratives that resonate with a broad and diverse audience, ultimately fostering greater understanding and awareness of the migrant experience.

## **/Chapter Four**

With the aim of identifying a master narrative frame, we started our research by limiting the contextual analysis to the four dominant narratives. The analysis revealed that the security, utilitarian, or humanitarianism narratives can be adopted. The security narrative was the most dominant one in the Bosnian online media. However, we realized that adopting these narratives would hardly generate anything novel; it would not inform a creative product that can make the targeted audience reflect on migration issues and eventually assess their current beliefs. So, we started looking for an integrative narrative (one that combines the three relevant narratives), a narrative/theme that is rational, factual, common, and one that can unite people but one whose transforming power may have been neglected. This directed us to the phenomenon of moving because humanity has always been on the move.

The main narrative that will be incorporated into the campaign is about moving and being constantly on the move. "Moving" is a common subject in the past, recent, and probably the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The careful and mesmerized gaze of the world and the people around, as well as an appreciation for the details, form the crucial framework for the campaign's articulation. The main insight that arises from this is to focus on the practice of "moving" as a goal. The destination itself is not the goal, it is the movement towards it. (see p. 24)

We also presented the results of two different studies that found that half of our youth is considering leaving the country, i.e., moving. The people are living in a country where a large portion of the population has been displaced as a result of the Bosnian war that lasted from 1992 to 1995. Our ancestors kept moving throughout history, whether for short (e.g., from a village to a town) or long distances (e.g., crossing the continents). The notion of 'moving' seems to embed the notions of danger and safety, purposeful journeys, and empathy, with which our society is familiar.

The content of the message that we want to convey to the "movable middle" is about the omnipresence of the moving individual or group. According to the biology and natural sciences, this is man's natural state of existence. In the video campaign, we want to speak about humans' need to move and change their states of being.

Notably, the term “migrant” should be avoided. We intend to speak about the topic without mentioning the topic by its name. This strategy intends to evoke and initiate deep human positiveness and involve humans in the core of the problem. We would love to use personal experiences as a distinct comparison or resonance model for engagement with movable middle.

The strength of the narrative implemented into this campaign is rooted in local understandings formed by culture and social values. The weakness of this attempt is that it is not comprehensive in the term; it does not cover all complexities of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian reality from its political, demographical, and economic perspectives. However, it can serve as one of the models that can be tested and implemented to communicate, involve, and mediate crucial issues of the problem.

The message that needs to be transmitted is that of humanism and its form of various anthropocentric values—also, social cohesion with its various forms and meanings, as well as personal katharsis. We believe the video can achieve the essence of something higher to emphasize the importance of human dignity and the feeling of self-value based on a very personal perspective.



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## Appendix I

**Table 1:** Distribution of narrative associations in recent articles and most liked comments on the articles

Ref. Number	News Portal	Implications (x) and most liked comment (o) in forty recent online articles which were published on twomost frequently visited news portals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and have the word "migrant" in the title; (use the indicated reference number to trace the link; see references)					
		Security	Economy	Demography	Humanitarianis	Identity	Other (explanation)
1.	<a href="https://avaz.ba/">https://avaz.ba/</a>						x (Neutral; Reporting results of an IOM report about Yemen)
2.							x (Neutral; Reporting the results of a trial against migrant smuggler)
3.					X		
4.		X					
5.							x (Neutral; Reporting on the actions against illegal entering)
6.		X					x (Neutral; Reporting about migration dynamics on the eastern border)
7.		X					
8.							x (Neutral; Reporting actions by Greek coast guards and accidents on the sea)
9.							x (Neutral; Reporting a crime against migrants committed in Libya)
10.		X					
11.							x (Neutral; Reporting an accident that involved several migrants)
12.							x (Neutral; Reporting general stats about migration)
13.							x (Neutral; Reporting stats about a migration center)
14.					X		x (Reporting a solution for the accommodation of migrants)
15.		X					
16.							x (Neutral; Reporting an accident)
17.							x (Neutral; Reporting action on a border in Western Europe)
18.		X					
19.							x (Neutral; Reporting action on a border in Western Europe)
20.					X		
21.		X					

Ref. Number	News Portal	Implications (x) and most liked comment (o) in forty recent online articles which were published on two most frequently visited news portals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and have the word "migrant" in the title; (use the indicated reference number to trace the link; see references)					
		Security	Economy	Demography	Humanitarianis	Identity	Other (explanation)
	<a href="https://www.klix.ba/">https://www.klix.ba/</a>						
22.		X/O					
23.		X/O			X		
24.		X	0				x (Reporting deportation actions)
25.		X/O					
26.		0		X	X		
27.		X			0		
28.		X/O					
29.		X	0				
30.			0				x (Reporting stats about a typical migrant profile)
31.		X					o (derogatory)
32.							x/o (Neutral; Reporting a failed smuggling effort/the comment is related to the reporting style)
33.		X/O					
34.					X		Reporting COVID concerns and assistance in migration)
35.						X/O Cosmo- politan	A story of successful integration
36.			X/O				
37.		X/O					
38.		X					o (an ironic remark implying the same solution in BiH)
39.		X/O			X		
40.		0					x (Neutral; Reporting an accident)
41.		X/O				0	x (Neutral; Reporting an accident)

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