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COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES

“WHY I WANT MY VOICE TO BE HEARD”



INTRODUCTION

Young people living in rural areas often feel that their voice is not heard enough in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives – from education and employment to the quality of life in their local community. Decisions are made, but young people rarely participate in shaping them.

The project *Take action! Because, who if not you?* was launched precisely to change that. We believe that young people are key agents of change, that they have the right to be heard, and that their perspective must be an integral part of public policies – at the local, national, and European levels.

The public call for writing a short story on the topic “Why I Want My Voice to Be Heard” was launched with the aim of encouraging young people to express their views and opinions and to speak about the following questions:

- What does it mean to you to have a voice in society and to participate in democratic processes?
- Why is it important for young people to be actively involved in decision-making at the local level?
- What change would you like to see in your community and how could more active youth participation contribute to that change?

The stories that follow are not just literary works – they are authentic voices of young people. They represent a valuable insight for decision-makers into the real needs, challenges, and potentials of youth in rural areas, and also a reminder that change begins when someone dares to speak up.



My Voice

For me, my voice and the voices of other young people mean that we can independently influence changes in our society and be involved in everything. Adults always decide instead of us, even though we can make agreements and decisions on our own or together. Also, because of their age, older people see themselves as something more than they really are. They think their ideas, plans, and everything else are more acceptable, while we young people are seen as inexperienced and immature, and in that sense no one will listen to our ideas or take our discussions on such topics seriously.

It is important for us to highlight our ideas and opinions in order to influence change. For example, if there is no recycling in a school, young people can notice that and express their opinion, because that is how a problem can be solved, and with that voice we create conversations with others.

I would like all young people to have the right to their own voice, to make decisions independently, for their knowledge to be heard because it could improve our future. In our local area, there should be more calls for young farmers, and all young people should have the opportunity to participate and achieve something for their family farms, because there are many young people who have not been given that opportunity, or a young person who has never received funding.

Author: L.R. (Aljmaš Planina, HR)

Why I Want My Voice to Be Heard

I am 18 years old and I live in the small village of Bobota. I think the main question that troubles us young people is: Why are we not asked? Why are decisions made without us and instead of us? How long will we remain “small” and until when will we not be heard or even asked? I want to participate in new ideas, learn how a business works, say my opinion, even if I make a mistake. Not only me, but all young people want to be heard. We don't want to wait for someone to make decisions instead of us. I don't want everything to be my way, but I want adults, especially parents, to ask me whether I agree, whether I would add something. Because I believe that we can create and design something good, maybe even better than some adults – we just need to be given a chance.

Author: N.V. (Bobota, CRO)



Why It Is Important That My Voice Is Heard

Even at home my father doesn't listen to me, and at work when I give a suggestion, I am often just ignored. I feel as if my opinion doesn't matter at all or as if it is assumed that I have nothing smart to say. It is similar at training sessions – I am slightly ignored because I am the youngest in the team, so over time I simply become quiet, even though I have something to say.

I am 18 years old and I think it is important that we young people have our own voice and that we are at least sometimes listened to. We are not asking for decisions always to be made our way, but to be included in discussions and in the decision-making process. This is important for our development, self-confidence, and sense of independence. If young people are constantly ignored, it is hard to learn to take responsibility and believe in yourself.

Author: S.Đ. (Dalj, CRO)

The Voice of Youth Matters

I am 18 years old and I live in Dalj in the Municipality of Erdut. In our municipality, the problem is that young people are not taken seriously and no one pays attention to our problems. I think that is not good because the world remains to the young, and they should start listening to us and our proposals. Older people have their own problems and that is why they do not pay attention to ours.

I think that we young people need to stand up for ourselves and start getting involved in things happening in our municipality, because only then will they begin to take us seriously and maybe listen to us sometimes. If we wait for the older ones, we will always stay where we are now.

In the kayaking club I attended, only older members had the right to vote. My friends and I never decided on anything – for example, trips, training sessions, or organizing the club. But on my family farm it is different. I decide what I will do and how. Of course, my parents always give advice about what is better and why, but I decide everything – what we will sow, what our plans are for the coming year, what we will build, how many sheep we will feed for winter, whether we will raise chickens, and so on. On the farm I do everything – I feed the animals, go to the fields, prepare food for livestock. I get up at 5:30 before school and go to bed very late after finishing all the work.

Author: M.V. (Dalj, CRO)



Our Voice, Our Future

For me, having a voice in society means having the right to say what I think and knowing that someone will take my opinion seriously. I would like us, young people, to have a voice because we are the ones who face problems every day that affect our lives. We understand best the challenges we face, because we live through them day by day.

I believe it is important for young people to be actively involved in decision-making at the local level, because the decisions made today shape the world in which we will live tomorrow. Our opinion can contribute to creating a better tomorrow, because the world remains to the young, and that is exactly why it is important for us to be included already now, not only in the future. When young people participate in decision-making, decisions are made that are closer to real needs and modern ways of life.

The change I would like to see in my community is greater respect for the opinions of young people. More active youth participation can contribute to a more responsible society and strengthen awareness that everyone has the right and the obligation to participate in building the community in which they live. When we are given the opportunity to have a voice, we become more aware of our role and more ready to change things for the better.

Author: U.P. (Dalj, CRO)

Why It Would Be Good to Hear What Young People Have to Say?!

I think that children who are already starting to become adults should have more respect and understanding from those who are already adults, because even though they have experience and all that, sometimes it is not enough to have only experience. Today many young people, like me and others, have a better insight into life than those who are older, and especially we who have just come of age know what things could maybe be improved.

The world does not change overnight, but every change begins with an individual – with the decision to be braver when it is hard, more honest with ourselves and others, and mature enough to stand behind our choices. Maybe we cannot immediately change everything around us, but we can change the way we react, think, and act, and that is exactly where real progress begins.

Author: M.B. (Erdut, CRO)



I Have the Right to a Voice Too

At school we learn what democracy is. We learn that elections exist so that the voice of citizens can be heard and that everyone has the right to participate in decision-making. We learn how the system should function. In real life, I often feel that some voices are not heard – especially the voices of young people. I will soon be sixteen. I do not have the right to vote, but I have the right to see, to think, and to ask. I know what is happening in the place where I live. I see things that the local government maybe does not see or does not want to see.

I see abandoned animals wandering through the village. They do not have a voice, but we do. If no one speaks about them, the problem remains the same. I see holes in the roads that we all avoid and have already gotten used to, as if they are normal. But they are not. I see elderly people. Alone. Without help. Without firewood for winter. They often will not ask for help because they have pride. It is proud poverty – people who do not ask, do not complain, and do not beg. They are my neighbors. That is exactly why someone must speak instead of them. If they are silent, we must not be.

I see my grandmother. She lives on a minimal pension. She always has something for me, but I often wonder how. She gives up things for herself so she can give to me. And she is not the only one. Most elderly people have the same problem, they have just accepted it and learned to live with it. And it is precisely for them that we should fight.

My twenty-year-old friends have different worries. Some are not in school, not studying, and do not have a job. No one asks them what comes next, who they can turn to, and who can help them. It is as if they have fallen out of the system. Young people are not invited to meetings with the local government. No one talks to us. The local authorities do not visit schools, they do not listen to the student council. And we would have something to say. We notice things. We live here.

Too often everything remains at theory. We know everything, we accept everything and say: “It is what it is,” but we cannot and must not allow that. We need our own corner. A space where we can say what we see and feel. A space where our voice will be heard before we become adults who have given up.

Changes do not begin when you gain the right to vote in elections. Changes begin when someone finally listens to you.

I want someone to listen to what I want. I want changes!

I want a Municipality without abandoned animals, I want to walk safely on the road at night, I want good pensions for the elderly, I want help for farmers, I want safe traffic, I want the local government to have coffee with the Student Council... I want my voice to be heard!

Author: T.J. (Bijelo Brdo, CRO)



Why I Want My Voice to Be Heard

It is not always easy to make the right decision. In fact, I often ask myself what it even is and whether there is an ideal decision that will make everyone's life better, whether that decision will fulfill each of us and encourage us to do better and more. All of these are universal and relative things, but in order to achieve something as a society, it is necessary to start first from ourselves, to see even the smallest improvements within us. Maybe today you read one more page of a book than yesterday – bravo, that is certainly one step and a plus for you; you are already better than yesterday. If we look at everything only as black or only as white, that is not good, we will not get anywhere that way. It is important to remain positive with a dose of critical thinking.

Young people today are often closed off and uninterested, especially if they have had unpleasant experiences and have lost trust. I myself belong to the young population, and I can notice that I am one of the few who is interested in what is happening in the world around me and who actually “runs” this world, who governs it. To reach that level, we must start from the lowest level, the local level. What are we doing for our local community, how committed are we to its progress? It is okay if we do not like something, but then we need to clearly recognize the problem and work together on solving it.

Many people, both young and old, do not go to vote because they believe that their one vote cannot change anything, that they are just a drop in the ocean. But that is not true, because those individual “drops” together make the ocean and each of them has its importance. Croatia is a democratic country, but let that not remain only on paper; it is important that we become active citizens, especially we young people who should bring new energy and perspective into this whole story. If citizens are active, the government becomes more responsible, and society more just.

Only through joint effort and work can we rise high and begin to look at one another with respect, regardless of differences in opinion. Why should we allow others to decide in our name? We are the present and the future of our state and society, and we need to show that and strive to create an ideal place for ourselves to live, united under one sky. A small circle on a ballot paper can make a big change and make us feel like members of the community in which we live. Without the participation of young people, democratic processes remain incomplete and distant from the real needs of the new generation.

Often some of us claim that their voice is not heard and that they constantly live in the shadow of some “bigger” and “better” ones, while they themselves know they have not even tried to be loud. Our Municipality of Erdut is not large nor very rich in young population, but we should take that as our advantage. The main problem of our municipality is weak connections with Osijek and Vukovar, which are the first larger cities, so for trainings and similar activities we must manage on our own. There is a lack of more entertainment and cultural content. Our municipal company takes care of the appearance and environment of our municipality, but individuals destroy it.

Our municipality is quite visited by tourists, but still not enough, even though we have great tourism potential – the house of Milutin Milanković, Erdut Tower, the Danube and the beach, parks, archaeological site, wineries, etc. Better promotion is needed.

That is why I want my voice to be heard, not because I think I know all the answers, but because I believe that each of us carries part of the solution. If we want changes in our municipality, state, and society, we must be ready to step forward, propose, participate, and take



responsibility. Our Municipality of Erdut has problems, but it also has enormous potential, and it is up to us young people to recognize it, protect what we have, and fight for what we lack. My voice may be only one, but together with others it can become a force that drives change, because society progresses only when we all dare to speak and act.

Author: T.S. (Dalj, CRO)

A place I love, but where I want more

I love my place. I love peace, nature, the Danube and the feeling that we all know each other. But loving a place does not mean turning a blind eye to what it lacks. And we, young people, lack space both literally and symbolically. First, we lack transportation. If we want to go to Osijek or Vukovar, we have to depend on our parents or infrequent lines that do not meet the real needs of young people. Especially in the summer, when we have time, but have no way to go somewhere. How can we be active if we do not have transportation? How can we participate in workshops, concerts, events, if we cannot get to them? We talk about young people staying, but mobility is the basic thing. Without transportation, there is no freedom. And without freedom, there is no participation. Second, we miss summer. Not the calendar one, but the summer that is memorable. The summer in which we gather, laugh, dance, meet new people. There are traditional events and that is nice. But where are the facilities for young people? Where are the concerts at least once a month? Why don't we have a stage where famous performers will perform, where we can go crazy, sing and prove that we know how to have fun? We often hear older people say that young people today "don't know how to have fun". And have they given us a chance? Have they given us space? Maybe we are also missing a real square, a gathering place. Not just a bench or a park, but a space intended for meetings, events, concerts, film screenings, dance evenings. A place where we will feel like part of the community, not like we are in the way. We also miss dance clubs, workshops, activities through which we can express our energy and creativity. Some young people want to dance, some want to play music, some want to organize events. But if there is no space and support, ideas remain just ideas. And then we wonder why young people leave. Maybe we don't leave because we don't like our place. Maybe we leave because we have nowhere to grow. I don't want to leave because I don't have a bus. I don't want to leave because I have nowhere to spend the summer. I don't want to leave because I have nowhere to dance, sing and be young. I want to stay. But I also want to live. I am not saying this out of anger. I speak out of concern. Because if we young people don't say what we miss, who will? If we don't suggest concerts, a square, dance clubs and better transportation, will anyone else know that it means something to us? Maybe these are "little things". But little things make the difference between a place where you just live and a place where you really belong. And I want to belong.

Author: M.R. (Dalj, CRO)



Why I want my voice to be heard

I am Una, I am fifteen years old and I live in Dalj. It is a place that I love because it is peaceful, close to nature and people know each other.

I grew up here, I went to school here and I imagine my future here. But as I get older and older, I start to think more and more about how much the voice of young people is actually heard in our community. I do not think that we are being ignored on purpose, but I often feel that decisions are made without asking those who are most affected. Young people are constantly mentioned as “the future”, but rarely as the present. And I believe that we still have the right to participate. Through conversations with my peers, I realized that I am not the only one who thinks this way. Many feel that we do not have enough space to express ideas, suggestions or problems. There is a lack of more content for young people, more activities in which we could participate and show what we know and can do.

When someone tries to suggest something, it is often seen as frivolous or unrealistic. I understand that not everything is easy to organize and that there are rules and restrictions. But I also believe that without trying, there is no change. If young people are not included in the conversation, how will we learn responsibility and active participation in society? In addition, it is important for young people to feel accepted and heard. When you know that your opinion has weight, you try harder, respect the community more and feel a greater connection to the place you live in. That is why I want my voice to be heard not to stand out, but to be part of the dialogue. I believe that young people in Dalj can contribute good ideas, energy and a perspective that is different but equally valuable. Youth participation in the community does not have to be something big and complicated. Sometimes it is enough to open a space for conversation, organize a meeting or listen to a proposal without prejudice. This builds trust and a sense of community.

I am fifteen years old and I am aware that I still have a lot to learn. But that does not mean that I do not have the right to think, propose and want better for the place I live in. I believe that society develops when everyone has the opportunity to be a part of it. That is why I want my voice to be heard. Thank you.

Author: U.R. (Dalj, CRO)



My voice is not noise – it is a right

My voice was silent for a long time. Not because I had nothing to say, but because I believed that my words did not change anything. They told me that others knew better, that it was easier to leave decisions to those who were louder, older or more powerful. So I kept quiet and watched as my life slowly took shape without me. One day, however, I realized that silence does not exactly mean neutrality. Every time I did not say what I thought, someone else did it for me. Every time I turned my head, I accepted a decision that was not mine. That was when I truly understood the meaning of the sentence for the first time: my voice is my right to decide. My voice is not just a sound. It is my attitude, my experience, my hope and my fear. It is proof that I exist as an individual and that I have the right to choose the path I will take. When I speak, I do not ask everyone to think like me, but to hear and respect me. Back in high school, my voice was put to the test. There were many whispers, divided opinions, and silent judgments surrounding my disability. Some believed that I wouldn't be able to do much. Some thought I should be grateful for what was "given" to me. I was alone in my struggle with those hidden glances — glances that didn't speak out loud, but spoke enough. In them, I read doubt, pity, and pre-judgements. They weren't words, but they hurt more than words. Those glances pre-judged and limited me, drawing boundaries before I even tried to cross them. That's when I realized that I couldn't change other people's attitudes overnight, but I could decide that my life wouldn't be defined by other people's doubts. I had a gift for writing, but also a fear — would anyone ever hear my words? Despite that, I began to speak publicly about discrimination, about rights, about the need for young people to be involved in decisions that affected their lives. The pen brought me change, opened up a space for me to be visible. I realized that active citizenship does not begin with big speeches, but with the courage to speak up when it is easiest to remain silent. I learned that my voice makes sense when it is quiet, when it trembles, and when it is different from the majority. He reminds me that I have the right to say "yes" and the right to say "no". To agree, but also to oppose. Let me ask a question. To ask for an explanation. To participate in making decisions that shape my life and the life of my community. I once heard the sentence from a good person: "You will go far." That was the first time I felt that my voice was not a weakness, but a strength. Every young person can be an initiator of change — but only if they are given the opportunity to participate, to be heard and respected. That's why - ask me before you decide on my behalf. Include me in the conversation. Give me the right to participate, not just observe. Because my voice is not noise. He is my right.

Author: N.M. (Berane, MNE)



Why I want my voice to be heard

The often held opinion that a democratic state consists only of open and free elections is wrong. Since its inception, democracy has in its essence contained the concept of the rule of the people, that is, the expression of the will of the people, and all the institutions that are tailored within it should ensure collective satisfaction. In order for things to function harmoniously, it is necessary that there are citizens who will manage the institutions and who have previously been provided with political education. The current apathy among young people affects the future of the entire population if this trend continues. That's why through this paper I want to emphasize the importance of political education before acquiring the right to vote, but also lifelong information about political events, because I get the impression that citizens have distanced themselves from topics that directly affect the quality of their lives.

Through a comprehensive analysis, I get the impression that all democratic institutions are outnumbered, but that their responsibility towards citizens is bureaucratically trapped. Society's answer to that is "reciprocal measures", that is, a complete absence of trust and the desire to participate in political games that are tailored to the party and not the rule of law. In the end result, the only and biggest loser is the public interest whose players are citizens.

The unbridgeable gap between the state and society is most pronounced in the relationship with the younger population, which is affected by the process of accelerated modernization of the world. Therefore, the outdated model of political communication, which is minimally realized most often through traditional educational processes, must be replaced if we want to motivate young people to use their political rights and stay in their country.

As I said, the whole situation creates dissatisfaction, reluctance to take concrete actions and the desire to achieve self-actualization in some other, developed countries of the world. Such systems are primarily characterized by the recognition and placement of education at the center of strategies for the development and progress of society, as well as large budget investments in public education as an investment that buys a position in the first ranks of world powers.

The existence of a clearly defined body for youth would enable adequate mediation between the state and the represented values, needs, interests and wishes of the youth. In that case, as stated in the draft Strategy for Youth 2023-2027. of the Ministry of Sports and Youth of Montenegro, there would be users of budgeting who would responsibly direct funds towards the fulfillment of the youth policy action plan.

The energy of young people remains hidden until the doors of trust and support are opened to it, after which it becomes one of the key drivers of the community. Through the cooperation of the Ministry of Sports and Youth of Montenegro, local self-government and UNDP, a strong example of an active community was created, namely the Youth Club in Kotor, which was not founded for the purpose of open political action, but offers its members the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in decision-making and cooperation with government institutions.

Young power has always been the driving force behind major changes that, in the period of their creation, were aimed at the future. Today, its biggest challenges are technological progress and achievements that become completely unimaginable even for modern man. However, I would like to end this paper with a quote that will encourage us in the further struggle for the democratic values of society: "The best way to predict the future is to create it" - Abraham Lincoln.

Author: A.V. (Berane, MNE)



The importance of youth participation

The popular saying says that, "The world rests on the youth". This connotation is often emphasized by those who direct the socialization process. It was this high school teacher's premise that motivated me to make my voice heard. Through the participation of young people in the socialization process, despite its limitations and norms, we become socially affirmed members of the community. We are representatives of tradition, connoisseurs of social norms and bearers of humane-democratic action.

However, the question arises: do we only formally exist, without the public act of addressing and participating, as passive participants in decisions that have a direct impact on young people?

We are a reference group that goes deep into the pores of the system and experiences the system directly.

Young people, in addition to prescribed roles, strive for acquired roles, which are innovative. Each of us carries a vision of the future life, on the one hand the desire for security, peace and well-being, and on the other hand, the need to realize the given as we perceive it to be harmonious and stable. Montenegrin social system, which strives for order democratic system, young people are faced with challenges. In the context of multiculturalism and acculturation, through the media we get to know the systems of others, aware of their advantages in the field of young people as accomplices, but also of their limitations. The critical attitude of young people is present and mostly requires dialogue in their community and beyond, but it is absent. Such a situation creates the misconception that passivity is acceptable social behavior, which leads to stagnation in personal and professional development. Delusion is often normalized, leading young people to a state of repression and extreme conformity. So it can happen to experience phenomena, which are unacceptable as reasonable.

The Declaration on Human Rights defines non-participation in public life as a violation of human rights. The participation of young people in the political and civic sphere is of vital importance for the progress of society. The decisions that are made, as well as changes or amendments to the law, directly affect young people who are just becoming professionally oriented. The reactions of those to whom it is brought or the possibility of supplementation is absent. They are reduced to silent acceptance instead of the possibility of dialogue and advocacy.

Young people observe the world from all angles, from climate changes, economic reckless development, pacific ideas to social problems. In moments of irresponsible and unfair treatment, ideas about more just and humane actions are born. We are often discouraged because the system does not work like that in reality. Our visions seem impossible and unattainable. Social stratification is present, but the reaction of the lower ranks is absent, as well as involvement. The change is simple. We young people can socialize awareness of social changes and the risks or urbanization they bring.

We are the immediate lens of society. Each of us has a different story and experience of the environment and aspects for which we could advocate.

"Education is the power that changes the world" - Nelson Mandela. The power that allows us to stand up for the community in an all-round and progressive way. The goal would be to take the opinion of young people into account, with the aim of transparency and supreme aesthetics in the preservation and development of our community and joint forces in the name of our planet Earth.



We are the target group, that's why I want to debate about the given and achieve new positions that will be progressive for society and above all new and innovative, and the ultimate purpose would be to enable young people to implement their visions through a critically justified model.

Author: J.L. (Berane, MNE)

Rebellion in the ashes of eternal discord

There is something so unfair about the way the Sun rises above this world.

Diversity in our world is not wealth, although it should be, but for many innocent people, it is the enemy that determines who and how will welcome the dawn, while someone else dreams under the sky of happiness, peace and well-being because there is no reason to worry.

It is selfish and sad that as human beings we are willing to stand by while another person next to us suffers, bleeds and lives a life that is not worth living. But we were taught to hate him, not to see him, not to hear him, to condemn him if he is different from us. So, day by day, we turn into soulless bodies wandering the boulevards and streets aimlessly. We separate from each other and choose to be huddled in our own solitude. I am ashamed that we need tragedy to touch each other, to make us realize how much discord there is between us in society only when we lose someone because of these differences, and then, again, after a while, we forget and become mute. I am ashamed that we have to become mere paupers, expelled from the doorstep with one bundle in hand, so that only then we can see our own brother in another exile. We humans have the ability to break into a billion pieces, to give up on everything, on happiness, on love, on life. That we do not believe in tomorrow with the same strength as we once believed that the world was ours, that each morning would bring us something more beautiful than the previous one. But sometimes it is the differences that create hatred between us, that separate us, that kill us. My vision of togetherness is to achieve this equality while we are still here, under this Sun. Active participation and engagement in society is our way of saying that we do not want to be strangers to whom our heads are turned, but beings who choose to unite humanity where diversity once separated us.

Because the earth, that black, voracious mother, does not choose whom it takes. Under the earth, it no longer matters who had palaces and who did not have shoes. It does not ask about gender, nationality, status, or the color of the skin that was a verdict for some and a shield for others.

There are many people who are victims of injustice, who are not accepted, who are condemned because they are different, because they do not belong somewhere. We recognize their tears. They are always the same, sincere and helpless, and neither nationality, nor religion, nor gender is important to us in order to understand them. But we do not want to see them, we do not want to look at them, to try to listen to the sobs of these people, these children, these mothers. We can all understand that pain, but we choose to be strangers who will turn our heads and thus only continue the agony and misery from which we as a society will not escape.

But I believe and sincerely hope that one day we will be able to look at another person and see in them everything that we are not, another religion, another gender, another nationality and that despite all that, we will recognize only their goodness. We can build equality through our voices as we live, transforming our community into a place worth living. The change I want to see in my local community is true acceptance and understanding.



We are nothing more than fragile, frightened beings hiding behind big words about origin and pride, and the truth is that we are all afraid of the dark, we all crave touch and we will all, without exception, leave here empty-handed. That is why I want my voice to be heard, because we are all here for a moment, and in that moment we are all we have for each other. In addition, we still choose to be strangers.

Author: D.R. (Berane, ME)

Why I want my voice to be heard

I often feel that the voice of young people remains in the shadow of “authority”, that it is like a whisper that is usually overridden by those who are “more experienced”. To me, having a voice in society represents an expressed thought that carries its own weight, a thought that will be heard, respected and taken seriously. It's not the need to always be right, but the desire that my opinion not be reduced to the sentence: "Let her go, she's young".

I believe that young people are the bearers of something fresh, unusual, different. If they are not involved, how will they gain a sense of responsibility? How can they become developed, if it is not their time to speak? Democratic processes do not make sense without young people, because they are not just observers - but initiators of a new tomorrow.

Berane is not just a collection of streets and buildings; it is a city that deserves to breathe through the creativity of its youth. I believe that we need spaces where silence does not reign, but where new ideas are born. We don't want to be just observers of our own growth, but active participants in making decisions that shape our school and our city. It's time for the voice of the young to be heard, because that's the only way we can breathe new life into Berane and truly feel that this city belongs to us, just as much as we belong to it.

I want my voice to be heard because silence does not bring change. If young people remain silent, decisions are made without us, and we will feel the consequences of those decisions longest. By speaking, I show that I care – about my city, my community and my future.

Author: M.M. (Berane, MNE)



Why I want my voice to be heard

It is often said that young people are the future, but we are actually the present. Having a voice in society for me doesn't just mean the right to vote in elections when I turn eighteen; it means having a platform where my fears, hopes and ideas are taken into account. Participating in democratic processes means being part of the "engine" that moves the community, instead of just passively sitting in the back seat and watching where others drive us.

I believe that it is crucial that young people are actively involved in decision-making, especially at the local level. We know best what is missing in our parks, what is the atmosphere in schools and what are the problems with the public transport that we use every day. When decisions are made without us, they often miss the mark because they are based on assumptions rather than our actual experience. Our perspective brings freshness and energy that is necessary for progress.

In my local community, I would most like to see more spaces for creative and informal gatherings of young people — places where we can develop skills that school does not provide, such as digital art or civic activism. A more active participation of young people could contribute to this by starting projects ourselves, organizing petitions or communicating directly with the municipal authorities through the student parliament.

I want my voice to be heard because I refuse to be a silent observer of my own life. My voice is my tool for building a fairer and more modern society in which everyone feels seen and heard.

Author: B.Š. (Berane, MNE)

Why I want my voice to be heard

Individuals shape society, and then society shapes the individual. That is why it is important what kind of society we are building, so that we do not create unscrupulous individuals who will, again, build an undemocratic society. Like a vicious circle, I would say. To advance in society, it is necessary that the voice of all of us be heard. Recently, emphasis has often been placed on the involvement of young people in shaping society. That is exactly the topic of this essay.

I believe that more and more work is being done to create a space for young people, when it comes to analyzing and potentially improving our community. However, that space could perhaps be slightly larger. There are still many who associate our youth with ignorance and misunderstanding, and characterize our proposals and attitudes as too ambitious. That's why many of us go to the other extreme - disinterest, which in my opinion is the worst. Despite our not so rich experience, which is a normal occurrence since we are just getting to know the world around us, we should actively participate in everything.

I would say that the very concept of active citizenship is somewhat abstract for a good part of young people. Active citizenship does not only imply conducting politics and understanding current political trends in the narrowest sense, but much more than that. An active citizen can be called someone who is aware of what is good for the society in which they live, deals with important issues, gets involved in the non-governmental sector, helps other people and tries to make their voice heard... Aren't young people the first in this? We are ready to volunteer when needed, to participate in humanitarian or ecological actions, it is precisely young people who



have the highest degree of tolerance towards differences, support new ideas. All this loudly, visibly and without fear! And yet, it seems as if there is still a certain hesitation when young people are mentioned in the same basket with certain important political and democratic decisions.

Just as a child's early childhood is often an indicator of what his later life will be like, so for us young people the local community is an important factor for further development. If we spread our wings in our own house, we will easily deal with all difficulties once we leave it. Otherwise, who knows if we will ever dare to leave that house. Similarly, the acceptance or non-acceptance of us as equals for shaping society by our local community greatly affects our future engagement. Often, local governments disintegrate young people, not realizing that they are thus collapsing the foundations of a better tomorrow. On the other hand, I think that the local community where I grew up supports young people and tries to affirm their ideas and attitudes. Finally, it should be mentioned that any society that wants to progress must be open to change when necessary. I am of the opinion that in our community the feeling of empathy should be strengthened, and the envy of each other should be weakened, the feeling of belonging and freedom of opinion should be strengthened, we should create a society in which we are all equal when it comes to building a more efficient community. In our society there is a place for everyone: for the old, the young, the weak, the strong, even those puppies and kittens from the street. In our society, there is room for buildings and factories, but also for greenery and nature. Small changes lead to big things.

In accordance with everything I have already said, I will emphasize once again how important it is that the voice of all of us young people be heard. I am happy to know that we are gradually moving towards this, that as a society we have become more aware of the importance of engaging young people in social spheres of life, and I hope that this is just the beginning, and that we will get the space we deserve to express everything we have.

Author: M.A. (Berane, MNE)

That's why my voice needs to be heard

That's why my voice needs to be heard, but not because I think I'm the smartest, but because I'm tired of the silence that suffocates us. I'm tired of the phrase young people are the future, while nobody asks us anything in the present. I'm tired of a system that measures us with ratings, likes and expectations, and never asks how we really are. They teach us to be obedient, to fit in, not to make waves, and then they are surprised that we feel lost, empty and invisible. We live in a society where we are asked to grow up too fast, but we are not given the right to make mistakes. They tell us to be ourselves, but they make fun of us when we stand out. They say that we believe in dreams, but they remind us how cruel reality is. We have to be perfect on social networks, we have to be the best in school, we have to be strong in society, and when we crack, they say we are weak. It's not a problem that we are young. The problem is that no one wants to listen to us until we are broken.

The current situation is not only bad, it is debilitating. A system that cares more about rules than people, adults who hold more to authority than understanding, a society that prefers to condemn rather than help. And then they wonder why young people run away to phones, to



irony, to silence. Maybe because every time we speak our voice is diminished, cut off or ignored. But enough is enough. Our voice is not noise, it is an alarm. We are not a problem to be fixed; we are a generation that sees the cracks and has the courage to show them. We can make a better society if we stop waiting for permission to be loud. If we support each other instead of competing who is more perfect. If we are looking for an education that teaches us to think, not just to repeat. If we build communities where vulnerability is strength, not shame.

That's why my voice needs to be heard because behind it are thousands of young people who have been whispering for too long. And maybe someone will be uncomfortable listening to us. They may say we are too loud, too emotional, too harsh. But the truth has never been silent. And we no longer have the luxury of being silent.

Author: S.S. (Berane, MNE)

Why I want my voice to be heard

I want my voice to be heard because one word can be a guide to someone who feels lost in silence. Honesty is courage, and courage inspires.

Each of us has our own fingerprint in the world, our voice, to deny it to the world is the same as denying it a part of the truth. People often remain silent because they believe that their voice is just a small drop in the ocean of others, but we must be aware that it is precisely these drops that make up the ocean. By speaking today, we clear the way for what is coming tomorrow. I would advocate for the equality of all of us. I believe that all reasonable people see divisions as undesirable and socially unacceptable. The differences in all of us are what gives color to this black and white world. Treating us differently just because of different physical, spiritual or social characteristics is never, nor will it ever be right. At the end of every story, what will be valued is who we were on the inside, not what was seen on the surface. I want my thought to resonate through the world, like an echo in a mountain, and make it a more beautiful place.

By remaining silent, we are just a mute observer of our own life. Our life is like a movie in which we are the main actor if we express our opinion. While we remain silent, we remain a secondary role in the drama in which someone else writes the didaskalia for us.

Author: J.M. (Berane, MNE)



Why I want my voice to be heard

Like a great and turbulent ocean, the world in which we inhabit and live is deep and diverse. Just like the ocean when disturbed by the tide, the world in which we all quietly and imperceptibly walk, becomes agitated and, with the forces of the whirlpool, draws everything on the surface into the greatest depths. A small and ordinary person is just "at eye" to this unrest on the surface, angry storms, ships fighting a vicious blizzard without having any magical curtain in front of them that will cover and protect them from the angry blows of nature, and often neglects the beauties of that ocean and everything that is in its unexplored depths.

Almost every depth on this earth has remained unexplored to the end, whether it is one in the ocean, sea, land or one that is so close and so seemingly shallow, yet so complex and deep. That very depth, to the bottom of which no one has yet had the courage to go, is the human soul and the core of his character and existence. It is the depth that dictates appearance and color, behavior and virtue to the surface. That depth is connected to the surface by deep furrows, canyons and turbulent rivers through which the red river teems and flows – blood, the component that connects every segment of our permanence in perfect harmony and alignment. Just as the tangible, visible and “accessible to the eye” reacts very easily to everything that these rivers bring to it by breaking the stones, so does every one of our secret desires, fears, passions or something that we keep deep down, but even under another stone or a lowered anchor, in case someone tries to peek, they never see our nakedness and mystery. Our heart begins to beat restlessly and unevenly, the blood flows rapidly, and the brain works upset precisely when it feels unaccepted, the inability to declare and express what suppresses it and creates deep and bloody scars on the heart, such that if they ever heal, they leave traces as big and deep as the largest canyons, and they hurt as if fresh lava was pouring out of them. Just like an active volcano and raging lava, a person feels in his soul when he wants something, but it is unavailable, unacceptable or limited. He then feels like he wants to reach the brightest stars, but he doesn't have a ladder big enough for that. Although the world is striving for urbanization, modernization and a way of life that will come down to distinguishing only a few buttons that will handle our day, in our society, but also in some that we do not know, there are individuals who want their voice to be heard. Such people feel that the surface is agitated, and they try to calm it down with their voice, but very often that voice of theirs is not strong and clear enough, and the sound of the crowd and rush quickly drowns it out. Maybe it's just a voice that wants to suggest that the sound of the crowd, the sirens, and the engine be reduced at least a little, that his senses rest, and maybe just the sound of leaves and nature showing the yellow card to the concrete. What that voice, that wave that hits the rocks and produces noise and the sound of breaking, is actually saying can never be heard clearly and well, until we sharpen our own senses and prepare them to pay close attention, hear and see and finally use what is naturally given to us, without relying on the use of a robot ally, artificial intelligence or similar "helper", which is actually like a trap, a beautifully decorated and decorated cage that anyone would enter and marvel at its beauty, but would also notice one, but main flaw too late - the door that will close and trap us. As man has recently been observing the world from the inside of the window of an office or doctor's office, without trying to peek in and see what is happening and hearing from its outside, he is not able to notice the shortcomings of his society, and as he keeps the windows closed, nor to hear even the voice that points it out to him.



The world relies on the older, more experienced, but sometimes we need to ask ourselves what it is that keeps us stuck. Flowers and trees would not have their charm and beauty if the four seasons did not change.

Author: M.P. (Berane, MNE)

Voice from the Edge of the City

I live on the outskirts of the city, in a neighborhood where young people often have nowhere to gather or spend time. There are no safe sports fields, no space for cultural or creative activities, and cultural centers and youth clubs are far away or not functioning. Adults often do not give us the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect our community, and I feel as if our problems and desires are not important.

Sometimes I miss a space where I could feel that I matter and that my opinion has weight. I often remember how my friends and I sat on benches as girls, talking about the future and dreaming about what we could become. Today, I see how many of those dreams have been neglected and how much space and opportunities are needed here for young people to truly express themselves and participate in change.

Sometimes it hurts me to hear that young people are “not interested”. It is true that we are, but we are tired of no one listening to us. When we suggest fixing a playground or opening a youth club, the answer is most often: “There are no funds” or “It is not a priority”. And if we are not a priority now, when will we be?

I want my voice to be heard because I don’t want to grow up feeling like I’m less valuable just because I live on the outskirts. I want equal opportunities, equal attention, and equal respect. I want my opinion to count when changes are planned in our neighborhood.

Active citizenship for me means having the courage to raise my hand and say, “We exist too.” It means showing up for a public debate even though I think no one will hear me. It means believing that my word has weight, even if it comes from the edge of town.

I dream that one day young people from the outskirts won’t have to fight to be noticed. That we will have places where we can gather, socialize, and develop our talents. That we will be a part of the city, not its shadow.

That’s why I want my voice to be heard — because every time I speak up, I feel like I’m restoring a bit of dignity to myself and my neighborhood. And I believe that change begins when someone decides to stop being silent.

Author: M.B. (Berane, MNE)



The voice of a generation

For me, having a voice in society does not only mean the right to vote in elections, but active participation in shaping the world around you, especially at the local level where changes are the most visible and the fastest possible. Active involvement of young people in decision-making is crucial because we know best what we need - from sports fields to more modern education. That is why I would like to see a significant change in my local community: the opening of a youth center with workshops for digital skills and creative projects. Through active participation, young people could organize themselves, present this proposal to the municipality, participate in the planning and eventually manage the center, turning our dream vision into a tangible reality and proving that our voice has power.

Author: B.V. (Berane, MNE)

Bridges in the fog

For me, having a voice in society means having a tool, powerful and invisible, with which I can influence the world around me, and not just be a silent observer of the decisions that shape my future. Participation in democratic processes is not only a right, but a responsibility to use this tool to build a fairer and more solidary society. It is important that young people are actively involved in decision-making at the local level because we are the driving force and bearers of change, with fresh ideas and innovative solutions that can significantly contribute to the development of local communities. By getting involved in these processes, we strengthen the community as a whole, because we build bridges of trust and joint action, not just symbolic participation. By ignoring the voice of young people, society risks losing valuable potential and perspective. The change I would like to see in my local community is more organized and safe public spaces for young people - a place where we can gather, exchange ideas and work on joint projects. The active participation of young people can contribute to this change by presenting concrete plans, organizing volunteer actions for the improvement of parks or even launching initiatives to establish a youth center. In this way, we would show initiative, solve specific problems and shape a future in which we feel like active citizens.

Author: B.V. (Berane, MNE)



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