

Call for Papers

Future Perspectives for the Dayton Constitution

Towards European Integration: Constitutional Reform and Democratic Principles

The University of Sarajevo, supported by the academic network of scholars from the partner Universities of Banja Luka, Mostar SUM, East Sarajevo, Milan-Bicocca, Trento, Utrecht and Graz, invites submissions from young scholars from Bosnia and Herzegovina - including advanced Master's students, PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers, and early-career academics - for a **paper presentation workshop** focused on the future of the Dayton Constitution in Bosnia and Herzegovina in light of the country's prospective accession to the European Union. Five selected paper givers will have the chance to present their papers on an international conference hosted by the University of Sarajevo at the end of November 2025.

The workshop aims to foster **critical reflection on the development and reform of Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitutional framework** by engaging with the current Constitution of BiH (Annex IV of the Dayton Peace Agreement), and the complex trajectory of institutional and legal transformation since 1995. The latter may include the case law of the Constitutional Court of BiH and the European Court of Human Rights, UNSC Resolutions, the Venice Commission's Opinions (in particular the Opinion on the constitutional situation in BiH and the powers of the High Representative, 2005) and reform proposals, such as the "April Package" (2006). The recent Charter of Fundamental Constitutional Principles of a European Democracy (European Law Institute, 2024) may provide useful guidance on the common constitutional principles in Europe.

Topic and Objectives

At the heart of the debate on constitutional reform and European integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina lies a **fundamental dilemma**: how to balance the need for stable governance and power arrangements with the pursuit of genuine social cohesion and democratic development. The **opposing positions** outlined below reflect deep disagreements about the country's political future and the pathways toward sustainable peace and European alignment and thus characterize—expressly or implicitly—the debate on the constitutional transformation of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

1. Ethnic Divisions: Natural and Inescapable versus Instrumentalized and Politically Maintained

There are conflicting views on the nature of ethnic divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (and elsewhere). One perspective holds that these divisions are rooted in "ancient hatreds" and thus natural and permanent obstacles to integration. The opposing view sees ethnic divisions as socially constructed and deliberately instrumentalized by a cartel of political parties that benefit from maintaining ethnic fragmentation for political gain.

2. Power Sharing / Consociational Democracy and its alternatives

A central question for any debate on transformation is whether Bosnia and Herzegovina should continue relying on power-sharing arrangements, often described as consociational democracy. While some view consociationalism as the most realistic framework given the country's deep divisions –

“the best we can get” – the question is what are other ways to overcome ethnic tensions and build a sustainable democratic society.

3. Maintaining the Status Quo versus Constitutional Reform

Another major debate concerns whether Bosnia and Herzegovina should preserve the Dayton Constitution that structures the state for 30 years or needs comprehensive constitutional reform. Defenders of the status quo warn that radical changes may destabilize fragile peace and political balance, while advocates of reform emphasize the need to modernize and improve governance.

On the background of these key questions, participants are invited to submit papers that explore the following topics:

- The compatibility of the Dayton Constitution with the fundamental principles of European constitutional democracy;
- The key challenges for Bosnia and Herzegovina’s current constitutional framework in terms of international involvement, multi-level governance, minority rights, separation of powers, and judicial independence. How can these issues be addressed through forward-looking, reform-oriented approaches?
- The normative and practical relevance of the European Law Institute Charter in guiding constitutional transformation in a deeply divided society;
- Comparative insights from other states;
- The impasse of constitutional reform and its socio-political impacts on (young) citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pathways and proposals for reforming BiH’s constitutional structure in view of EU accession.

While all topics shall identify the main challenges, participants are strongly encouraged to focus on the consideration of potential solutions or innovative reforms, i.e. to actively explore forward-looking and constructive approaches compatible with the goal of European integration.

Submission Guidelines

Interested applicants must submit:

1. **An abstract** of the proposed paper (max. 1.000 words), clearly outlining the research question, hypothesis, and methodology;
2. **A draft structure** of the paper (headings and subheadings);
3. **A selected bibliography** (up to 10 titles), indicating key sources that will inform the analysis.

All submissions must be in English and should be sent in PDF format to youngscholars4dayton30@gmail.com by **20 September 2025**. The subject line should read: *Call for Papers – BiH Constitution*.

Selection and Participation

A selection committee composed of public law and European integration experts will evaluate submissions based on originality, clarity, and relevance. Selected applicants will be invited to present their draft papers at a **workshop to be held online in the first half of November 2025**.

The best contributions will be considered for presentation at a major international conference at the University of Sarajevo (21-25 November 2025) and publication in an edited volume or a special journal issue.

Key Dates:

- Submission Deadline: 20 September 2025
- Notification of Acceptance: 30 September 2025
- Submission of Draft papers: 25 October 2025
- Workshop Date: November 2025

For further information, please contact: youngscholars4dayton30@gmail.com .

We look forward to your submissions and to engaging critically with the future of constitutional democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.