

Internet Governance Forum of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2025

Final Report BH IGF 2025



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INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

Bosnia and Herzegovina

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What is the Internet Governance Forum?

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was initiated as a direct result of the World Summit on Information Society (UN World Summit on Information Society, WSIS) which began under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva in 2003 and continued in Tunisia in 2005. The IGF event on a global level has been convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations since 2006.

The IGF is an international policy forum for discussions and cooperation on topics related to the development of the information society, Internet management and challenges around the Internet in general. The IGF is not a decision-making body, but a forum where challenges and approaches are discussed and shaped into public, international or national policies and forwarded to other bodies - within the UN or other international organizations or governments - for consideration.

IGFs, especially national and regional, tend to produce practical ideas for intersessional activities by participants themselves and result in changes and successes which are then presented in the next yearly gathering. For several years now, IGFs are, in addition, resulting with key messages from sessions held which shape both national and regional IG agendas as well as feed into global IG-related discussions.

This year, the global IGF is held in Oslo, Norway, under the overarching theme "Building Digital Governance Together", as a multistakeholder platform to discuss IG issues in a bottom-up, open and inclusive manner.

Principles on which the IGF is based are:

- openness and transparency (including allowing all interested parties, and public at-large to participate in the IGF from shaping the agenda to discussing, public insight into all segments of the IGF work)
- inclusivity (enabling active involvement of all interested parties)
- bottom-up approach (involving public at-large in creation of the IGF program)
- not intended for sale of goods and services
- multi-stakeholder model (academia, business sector and industry, civil society organizations, state and public administration, and [more often in recent years] media)

The role of the Internet Governance Forum was further reinforced in December 2025, when the United Nations General Assembly held the WSIS+20 High-Level Meeting and adopted by consensus the WSIS+20 Outcome Document, reaffirming the WSIS vision, extending and institutionalizing the IGF's mandate, and underscoring the importance of multistakeholder cooperation, human rights, digital inclusion and sustainable development in shaping global digital governance for the next phase of the information society.

BH IGF: History and Why It Matters?

The IGF in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH IGF) took place in [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#), [2023](#), [2024](#), and this year, 2025. It is part of the national and regional initiatives (NRIs) network of the global IGF. It has been organized in the multi-actor spirit of the IGF, as a joint initiative of several organizations and institutions. In 2015, the initiative [started when a small group of individuals](#) and enthusiasts from BiH, who attended other IG events regionally and globally, recognized the value, understood the importance of shaping human rights-based policies around the Internet, and felt the need for such an event on the national level for inclusive discussion. From 2015, the BH IGF became an important and unique platform in the country, for its openness to all stakeholder groups as well as for giving the opportunity to young audiences to participate in such an event, including to attend introductory training on Internet governance before the event itself.

Overarching themes over the years:

[2015](#): "Internet for All – Opportunities and Challenges within Internet Governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina"

[2016](#): "BH Internet - Open and Secure?"

[2017](#): "The Network Effect: from infrastructure to children"

[2023](#): "Reviving Internet governance [Forum] in BiH"

[2024](#): "Shaping responsible Internet governance - connecting local challenges to global solutions"

[2025](#): "Navigating Internet Infrastructure, Legislation, and Safety for the Welfare of the Bosnian Society"

This year's BH IGF placed a renewed emphasis on the technical foundations of the Internet, opening with a session that, for the first time in many years, brought a strong regional perspective by actively engaging Network Operator Groups (NOGs) to discuss practical cooperation on Internet infrastructure, network resilience and operational capacity building, while subsequent sessions addressed online safety, disinformation, media challenges and regulatory alignment, collectively highlighting a deliberate shift toward grounding Internet governance debates in technical realities and regional collaboration alongside policy discussions.

As the report will show, the BH IGF 2025 achieved a great participation of different – and more regional this year – stakeholders, high-level participation, grabbed media attention, as well as brought to the attention IG topics and has provided some solutions for ways forward.

BH IGF 2025 - Preparatory Process

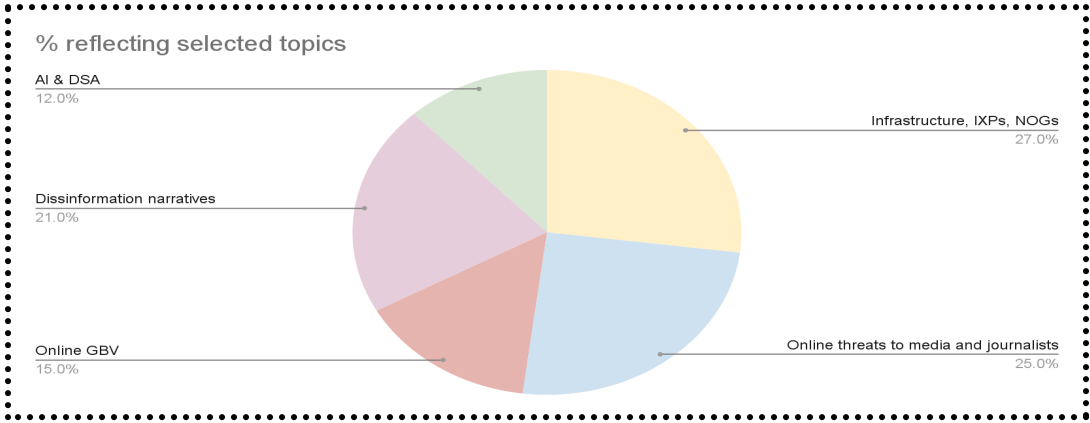
BH IGF was scheduled for October 2025, however due to internal and external challenges it was moved to November 3, 2025. As planned, it was held in Sarajevo, venue Hotel Swissotel, room Geneva. The preparatory process for the event began in August 2025 with a somewhat changed, more inclusive organizing committee. BH IGF tends to diversify the organizing committee as well as sessions' organizers to provide more active participation in terms of organization and inputs. [see: *BH IGF 2025 Organizational and Executive Committee*]

Once the Committee was formed, they got involved in agreeing upon first topic inputs which would be put forward for comment to different platforms, initiatives and coalitions composed of different stakeholder groups. Each of the members agreed to help out on reaching out to relevant communities and potential speakers in order to prepare a BH IGF 2025 program consisting of key notes, setting the scene talk and three panel discussions.

It was proposed for BH IGF from this year onwards to include more technical perspective. Around 25 inputs were collected by the Organizing committee, mirroring the following:

- Infrastructure, IXPs and NOGs
- Gender-based violence online and through ICTs
- Threats to media and journalists
- Disinformation narratives
- Artificial Intelligence and Digital Service Act¹

In parallel to this process, funding outreach for BH IGF 2025 was conducted by BH IGF lead coordinator Aida Mahmutović, reaching out to both national and international organizations which have the internet, policies, and human rights at its core, ensuring this year additional support from RIPE NCC in addition to previous supporting entities [see under "BH IGF 2025 Supported by"]



¹ Both of these were incorporated as well through discussions in the final agenda

BH IGF 2025 - Organizing and Executive Committee

BH IGF 2025 lead coordinator, Aida Mahmutović (former IGF MAG member)

1. [Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (BIRN BiH), **NGO/Media** [finance & administrative focal point]
2. [Zašto ne?](#), represented by Darko Brkan (director) and Maida Čulahović (policy and advocacy) - **NGO/Fact-checking organization** [also, session co-organizer]
3. [Coalition for freedom of expression and content moderation in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), represented by Maja Čalović on behalf of MediaCentar Sarajevo - **NGO/Media** [also, session co-organizer]
4. DISTI, represented by Fernala Sejmen-Banjac - **Technical community**
5. Nebojša Regoje, personal capacity - **Government**
6. Feđa Kulenović personal capacity - **Academia**

BH IGF 2025 - Supported by

BH IGF 2025 is recognized and supported by the [Internet Governance Forum UN Secretariat](#); and supported by the [Internet Society / Internet Society Foundation](#) (ISOC), [Regional Internet Registry for Europe, Middle East and Central Asia](#) (RIPE NCC), [Hanns Seidel Stiftung](#) in Sarajevo, [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (OSCE)

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BH IGF 2025 - Program and Visibility

BH IGF did not make any logo changes from previous years.

The website was updated and refreshed as well as cooperation with external designers has been achieved to produce design for agenda and other Forum visibility material.



BH IGF logo 2015-2017



BH IGF logo revamped 2023

The website provides information about all BH IGFs held throughout the years, including yearly reports.

💬 The BH IGF website is planned to undergo additional upgrades, including [in terms of capacity building efforts](#) in the future including the School on Internet Governance activities as well as revamped BH IGF. ♦

In cooperation with Coalition for expression and content moderation in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Zašto ne? information about BH IGF 2025 was shared. BIRN BiH / Detektor also [published an overall article](#) about the BH IGF.

Digital Watch (DigWatch) by DiploFoundation wrote about [enlisted BH IGF 2025](#) on dig.watch platform as part of global monitoring of IG developments and events.

BH IGF 2025 - Agenda

The following agenda with distinguished speakers, experts in the field, was created and published:

09:00 - 09:30

Arrival and registration of participants



09:30: 09:40

About BHIGF

- vale hvale, Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

09:40 - 10:00

Keynotes

- Siniša Šešum, Head, Antenna Office in Sarajevo, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe
- Ambassador Rick Holtzapple, Head of Mission, the OSCE Mission to BiH

10:00 - 11:00

From Talk to Action

Case studies on how local IGF and NOG (network operator group) collaboration has already shaped policy and where the needle can be pushed further. SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) depend on resilient, scalable, and locally-rooted Internet infrastructure. Local IGFs, NOGs and IXPs connect operators and community partners so technical realities and policy evolve together. Understanding successful collaboration models helps replicate impact across the region.

Speakers:

- Desiree Milošević, RIPE Cooperation Working Group Chair
- Enes Halilović, Association Network Operators Group in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHNOG)
- Zoran Perović, Owner and CEO, Serbian Open eXchange (SOX)
- Zdravko Jukić, Coordinator at Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries

Introduction and moderation by Jan Žorž, Provision

11:00 - 11:05

Intro to panel: Gender-based violence and journalists experiencing violence - chilling effects and infrastructure of affections

- vale hvale, Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

11:05 - 12:15

Journalism and Safety of Reporters – Online Threats and Harms

Addressing online harassment, surveillance, and threats to journalists in the Balkans, with proposals for regional protections. The safety of journalists is a critical component of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, specifically SDG 16.10, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies by ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms. The UN and UNESCO are leading efforts to promote and monitor the safety of journalists by tracking crimes against them, advocating for accountability, training law enforcement, and establishing international norms.

Speakers:

- Darko Martinčević, Cantonal prosecutor, Contact person at the Sarajevo Canton Prosecutor's Office for cases of attacks on journalists, Cantonal Prosecutor's Office of the Sarajevo Canton
- Maja Sever, President of the European Trade Union of Croatian Journalists
- Sanja Vasković, Journalist, Spin.info
- Azem Kurtić, Journalist, BIRN Hub
- Anida Sokol, National Program Officer for Freedom of Media, OSCE in BiH

Moderation by Enes Hodžić, Journalists, BIRN BiH (Detektor)

12:20 - 13:30

LUNCH for all participants



13:40 - 14:50

Disinformation in the Balkan Media Space

Exploring how misinformation spreads regionally and how IGF dialogue can support fact-checking, media literacy, and responsible platform governance. Misinformation and disinformation pose a significant threat to the SDGs by undermining public trust, hindering partnerships, and slowing progress on key issues like health, democratic processes, climate action etc. These false narratives can polarize societies and divert resources, making it harder to achieve goals related to poverty, gender equality, and clean energy. Addressing this requires a multi-faceted approach, including building media and digital literacy, supporting independent journalism, and using both technology and human oversight to counter harmful content.

Speakers:

- Irvin Pekmez, Journalist, BIRN BiH (Detektor)
- Bojana Kostić, independent researcher, digital rights and platform accountability advocate
- Tajana Broz, Faktograf, Croatia
- Vesna Radojević, KRIK, Serbia
- Predrag Puharić, CEO CSEC, Deputy mayor of the City of Sarajevo

Introduction and moderation by Emir Zulejhić, CA Zašto ne?

14:50 - 16:00

Are We Ready to Regulate the Digital Environment: Institutional Capacities and Challenges of Aligning with EU - Confirmed session

The EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) establishes a comprehensive framework to strengthen transparency, accountability, and user protection in the online environment. Integrating the DSA's principles into domestic legal and regulatory systems requires more than simple legislative transposition. It calls for an innovative, out-of-box approach and strong institutional capacity. The first step, however, is for decision-makers to recognize the urgency of launching this process and to place the protection of citizens from online harms at the forefront of policy priorities. In addition, the model of digital platform governance introduced by the DSA calls for a structured cross-sector coordination and cooperation in both legislative alignment and subsequent implementation - among stakeholders at the national level as well as within the wider regional context.

Speakers:

- Nasir Muftić - Assistant professor at the Faculty of Law, UNSA
- Amela Odošević, Director of Broadcasting at Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Snežana Nikčević, 35mm CG
- Maja Čalović, Coalition for Freedom of Expression and Content Moderation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Vlatko Drmić, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Communications and Transport of BiH

Moderation by Maida Čulahović, Policy and Advocacy, CA, Zašto ne?

BH IGF 2025 - Discussion overview

The sixth Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Bosnia and Herzegovina was held in Sarajevo, November 3, 2025, with the primary topics being navigating the internet infrastructure, legislation that Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the countries of the region have, lacks in the process of digital transformation, and the challenges in fighting for digital security.

At the opening of the Forum, a number of internet governance issues were enlisted that were set to be discussed, with cooperation and a multi-platform approach as key to starting the process of digital transformation. *hvale vale*² from the *Association for Progressive Communications* (APC) emphasized that platforms like the IGF are indispensable for making decisions for the benefit of the entire society.



It was pointed out that Bosnia and Herzegovina still lacks a central regulatory body for internet connectivity, it was pointed out, as well as a number of other strategic and legal frameworks needed for the proper management of online spaces.

OSCE Head of Mission Rick Holtzapple reminded, among other things, of the growing risks related to harmful narratives, disinformation, but also algorithms and the power that social media owners have in determining what users can see.

“This phenomenon, combined with the shrinking space for civil society and the abuse of legal frameworks and mechanisms for targeting media and journalists, has a particular impact on freedom of expression, media and the safety of journalists,” Holtzapple added.

² Written in small letters [as per bell hooks](#)



During a panel on the roles of network operators in the Western Balkans, **Serbian Open eXchange (SOX) Executive Director Zoran Perović** said that Serbia, along with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, has a problem with European standards.

“We still don’t have a legal Starlink in these countries. It just means that we haven’t regulated something properly at the European level,” says Perović, who also identifies that a special type of closed internet is slowly emerging in Europe itself, modeled after Russia, China or Arab countries. Perović warns that our region is still lagging behind in the development of the internet, which has changed our lives.



The Forum discussed the protection of media rights and the right to freedom of expression, and it was emphasized that the internet, in addition to its numerous benefits, often becomes a space for creating and spreading negative influences on society, especially on journalists, who are the public voice of societies.



As part of a discussion on digital dangers for the media profession, [the president of the Union of Croatian Journalists and the European Federation of Journalists Maja Sever](#) said there is a gap between public statements and agreements of public officials, compared to the real lives of people who become targets through online and offline space. “Journalists have become a legitimate target. Politicians in power give the green light for anyone who wants to attack these people. Any regulation is a dead letter on paper,” said Sever. She notes that female journalists are particularly vulnerable when it comes to online violence, and that she herself witnessed how the police in at least one case sided with the attacker, who threatened to “break the journalist’s head in”.



On the other hand, the prosecutor of the Cantonal Prosecutor's Office in Sarajevo, Darko Martinčević, says that there are examples of preventive action when it comes to threats, but that, unfortunately, journalists are not defined as a special group of targets of threats.

He also says that a threat needs to be classified as serious in order to be dealt with, that is, it must be a threat to the life or body of a person.

The need for media and journalists to communicate more directly with large online platforms, which are often a breeding ground for threats, but also for the creation of various problematic content, was also raised. Azem Kurtić from the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) stated that the number of users on some platforms is simply too large, so the slowness of the reaction is guaranteed, despite numerous other existing problems.

He adds that there should be an exchange of good practices and experiences among the countries of the region, so that the authorities protect media workers, in the capacity in which it is necessary, because the state is the key to the solution.

"It all comes down to the states. If there is a good example in Serbia, where journalists are recognized in law, then we could do the same. We don't have to invent new things, just copy the good stuff," says Kurtić.



The head of the Sarajevo Antenna Office, UNESCO's regional office for science and culture, Siniša Šešum, said that journalists have recently been massively victims of violence and pressure.

"UNESCO has provided protection for 15,000 journalists during this period, including journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the problem of impunity for perpetrators remains," Šešum added.



Speaking about threats in the online space, the Forum participants listed disinformation as one of the most frequent anomalies they encounter.

Emir Zulejhić, editor of the Raskrinkavanje portal, said that in the report on disinformation, they recorded an increase in 2024 on various networks. They detected three groups of disinformation, through narratives and topics used on social networks, among which ethno-nationalism and local political topics, electoral processes and anti-Western narratives, which are on the rise.

"The most common sources of information were social networks. Facebook is the most dominant, because it is still the most used platform, and an interesting fact is that the Telegram service has risen to second place as a source. Also, TikTok, which was below 50th place a year ago, is now in the top ten sources," added Zulejhić.

A similar situation is also seen in the countries of the region, where the growth of disinformation, which is used according to needs and political circumstances, is also recognized. Vesna Radojević from the Serbian KRIK media states that in her country the media has turned into an "organized criminal group" that promotes narratives in favor of one party and one person, while Tatjana Broz from the

Croatian Faktograf says that disinformation in her country is more often associated with European policies and anti-gender narratives.

Bojana Kostić, an independent researcher, advocate of digital rights and platform responsibility, says that for years the wrong approach has been applied in attempts to regulate social media algorithms, while today we are witnessing more correct regulation of ownership itself and the influence of owners on the content of these platforms. According to her, regulation is key, but some concepts need to be redefined in order to manage them more efficiently.

“It is a dangerous direction we are heading when we separate discussions about disinformation and freedom of expression,” adds Kostić, believing that the two concepts are naturally connected.



The last panel was dedicated to the institutional capacities for regulating the digital environment in BiH, especially with regard to the laws and acts of the European Union, which our legislation aspires to.

Assistant at the Faculty of Law of the University of Sarajevo Nasir Muftić said that the main question for our country is how much knowledge and experience there actually is in the institutions for implementing complex laws, the impact of which goes beyond the borders of our country, such as the Digital Services Act (DSA). The reason is the fact that these are very complex laws for regulating content on the Internet, which affect numerous segments of society.

“Once we revise domestic regulations, there are many other issues that we need to revise, from political advertising, media ownership and others. It is necessary to enable the mobility of experts between institutions, so that they complement each other's capacities for implementing such laws,” added Muftić.

Montenegro is the first country in the region to have started the process of harmonizing its laws with the EU's digital services acts, and Snežana Nikčević from the NGO “35mm” explained that this is an extensive process, which brings problems to all segments of society.

“This is the first time we have been unable to rewrite, because many laws are mostly just rewritten. These are supranational legal frameworks. (...) We have already encountered a problem at the terminology level, because some terms are not even defined in the laws,” Nikčević stated.

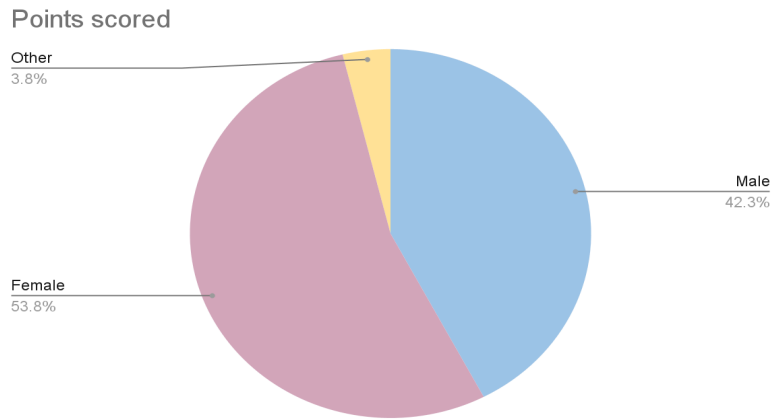
It was concluded that the experience of Montenegro is important for all countries in the region, and that the exchange of experiences such as that at the IGF has no alternative for regulating the Internet space in the region, but also in the world.

BH IGF 2024 - Participants and audience

- Participants

The following chart gives a visual overview of the gender representation concerning all - *speakers, moderators and individuals who delivered key messages*. The overall number in the section of speakers in comparison to last year (18) increased from 18 to 26.

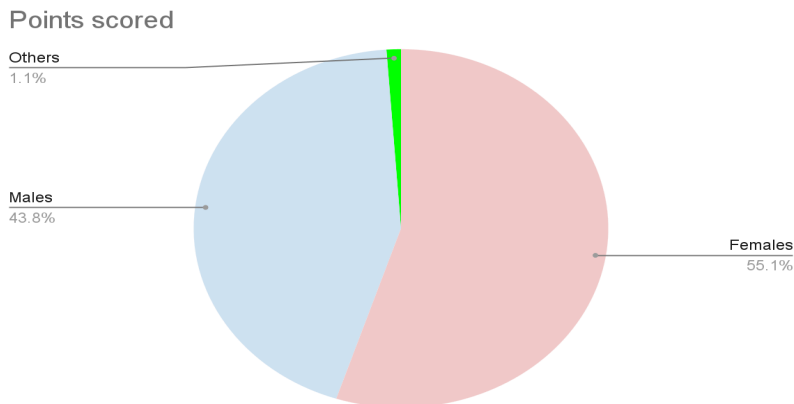
Female	14	Total: 26
Male	11	
Other	1	



- Audience

BH IGF 2024 was attended by around **90 participants**³, out of which, per the signature sheet, **49 females (55,1%), 39 males (43,8%), 1 Other (1,1%)**.

Attendees come from government institutions, NGOs, private sector, media, academia, technical community, as well as students.



In a thank you note and final conclusions, Aida Mahmutović, BH IGF lead coordinator, announced BH IGF 2026 along with intentions to reactivate the regional school on Internet Governance (Balkan School on Internet Governance).

³ High-level participants did not sign the signature sheet

BH IGF 2025 - Thank you to

The Internet Governance Forum Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH IGF) wish to thank the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Bosnia and Herzegovina (Detektor) as the BH IGF 2025 administrative focal point for its cooperation this year, as well as to give a special note of appreciation to the Executive Committee 2025, as well as two session organizers “Zašto ne?” and Coalition for freedom of expression and content moderation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thank you to all past and present BH IGF multistakeholder speakers, moderators, attendees, and general public for shaping the agenda and passing forward key messages in their own field of work.

And finally but equally important, thank you to the supporters – the Internet Governance Forum UN Secretariat; the Internet Society / Internet Society Foundation (ISOC), Regional Internet Registry for Europe, Middle East and Central Asia (RIPE NCC), Hanns Seidel Stiftung in Sarajevo, and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSCE) for enabling the Forum to continue to be a key multistakeholder policy space on internet governance discussion in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

BH IGF 2025 / 2026 - More information and contact

- <https://www.bhigf.ba>
- aidamahmutovic.ba@gmail.com (on behalf of the Executive and Organizing Committee)