

UPF Balkans: INNOV8PEACE in North Macedonia Highlights Youth Initiatives

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Tetovo, North Macedonia – UPF-Albania took part in the closing event of the INNOV8PEACE Project, implemented by the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) Europe and the Middle East (EUME) in cooperation with the University of Tetovo, and co-funded by the European Union, on March 24, 2026. The conference, “From Youth Initiatives to Sustainable Peace,” was held at the University of Tetovo, bringing together around 150 professors, academics, students and peace activists.



Prof. Jusuf Zejneli, rector of the University of Tetovo, gave the opening remarks, followed by **Ms. Olga Borodankova**, sector manager for education and youth at the Delegation of the European Union in North Macedonia. Opening speeches were delivered by **Mr. Jacques Marion**, president of UPF-EUME, and **Ms. Ejona Icka**, executive director of IAYSP for the Balkans.





The first session, skillfully moderated by **Prof. Afet Mamuti**, continued with a panel discussion featuring **Ms. Klajda Gjosh**a, former minister of European integration of Albania; **Mr. Fatmir Xheladini**, professor at the Faculty of Law at the University of Tetovo and former ambassador of North Macedonia to China and Poland; **Mr. Gani Rroshi**, executive director of UPF-Balkans; and **Mr. Qebir Avziu**, professor at the Faculty of Law at the University of Tetovo. Their reflections emphasized the vital role of youth at a time when peace remains fragile.



A particularly meaningful moment of the conference was the awarding of the title Ambassador for Peace to four distinguished individuals for their special contributions in North Macedonia. In his remarks on this occasion, the chairman of UPF-Albania, **Mr. Defrim Methasani**, highlighted the significance and importance of this title and why the selected individuals fully deserved it. The honored personalities were: **Mr. Arif Ziberi**, renowned lead singer of the group ELITA 5; **Dr. Ilir Demiri**, member of Parliament of

North Macedonia and a respected doctor; **Ms. Rina Ajdari**, member of Parliament of North Macedonia; and **Prof. Drenusha Palloshi**, professor of arts and a well-known painter.



The concluding period of the conference was dedicated to youth-led initiatives developed within the framework of the INNOV8PEACE training. During this session, participants were introduced to IAYSP-EUME and the INNOV8PEACE Project, succeeded by presentations of key student initiatives such as “Deprivation as an Invisible Wound” by **Ms. Hafsa Ibishi**, “Education on Anti-Corruption” by **Mr. Mumin Osmani**, and “Education of Children with Special Needs in their Mother Tongue ” by **Ms. Elmira Amiti**.