

**MUNICIPALITIES AND CITIES ALONG THE ENTITY  
BOUNDARY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:  
PROBLEMS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Boris Avdić**  
**Ranko Mirić**  
**Haris Gekić**  
**Aida Bidžan Gekić**

Faculty of Science, University of Sarajevo, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**ABSTRACT**

The Dayton Peace Agreement established a new political and territorial division of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, which led to changes in the internal regional structure and the concept of regional development, which was decisively influenced by the Inter-Entity Boundary Line. Such circumstances have caused certain changes also at the local level, where the number of municipalities/cities has increased from 109 to 143. The subject of research in this paper are newly formed units of local administration, among which the majority are those that were created by the inter-entity disintegration of once unique municipalities. In most cases, these are small, rural, underdeveloped and marginalized municipalities, whose economic self-sustainability is highly questionable. This study analyzes the basic socio-economic parameters, which also indicate a certain degree of differentiation among the observed municipalities, with those areas that are closer to larger urban centers being perceived as more positive examples.

**Keywords:** municipalities, regional development, marginal areas, disintegration, Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL)..

**INTRODUCTION**

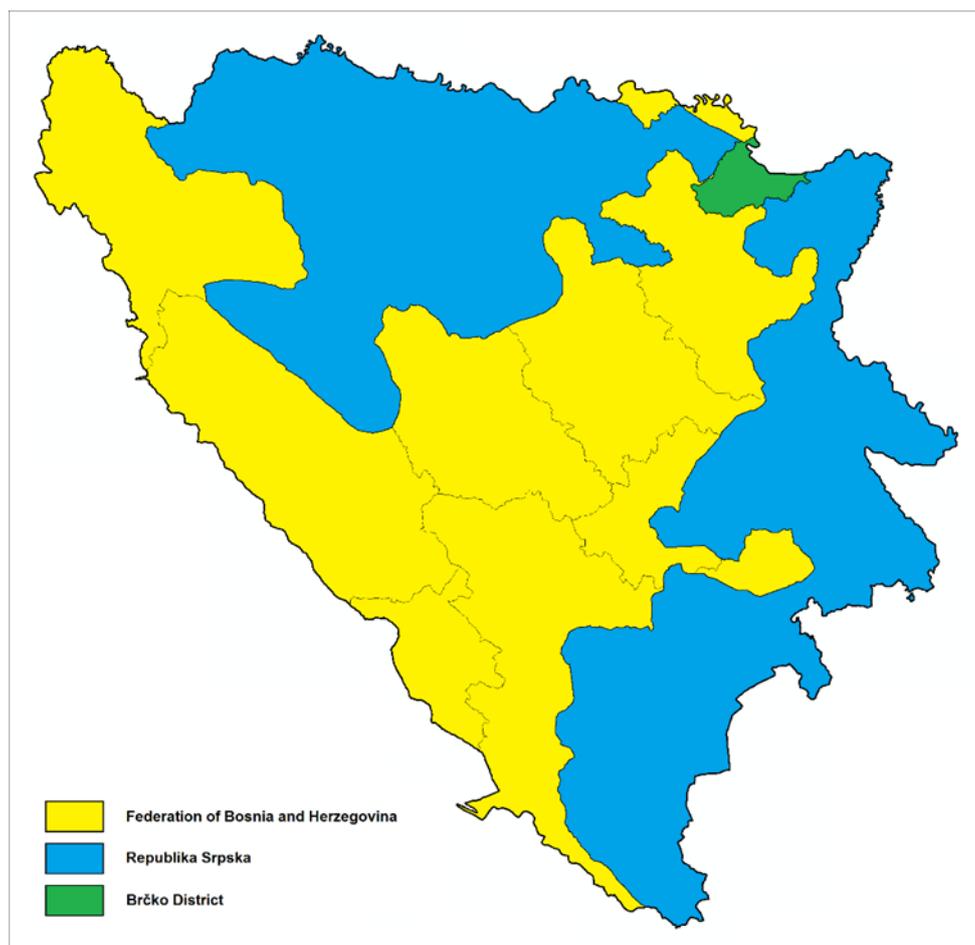
The turbulent process of disintegration of Yugoslavia left the most severe consequences on Bosnia and Herzegovina. The war, which lasted between the spring of 1992 and the fall of 1995, took about 100,000 lives, caused unmeasurable material damage, contributed to major geospatial transformations and permanently disrupted social relations. It ended with the Dayton Peace Agreement, which established an asymmetric two-entity administrative structure, and a few years later the Brčko District was formed as a separate territorial unit. The entities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska represent integral parts of the state with a high degree of autonomy, as well as the right of veto in decision-making at the national level. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of ten cantons, which are formed primarily on ethnic criteria (ethnic majority in them are Bosniaks and/or Croats). On the other hand, the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska is a fairly centralized entity, in whose administrative division there is only the local level, i.e., the municipalities and cities. Apart from the entities, the political representatives of the above-mentioned constituent peoples also have the possibility of vetoing any decisions of the national government level, which has significant implications for the political functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a

whole. The post-war development of this country in the political, economic, social and even geographical context has often been analysed by various authors, who often emphasize the dysfunctional character of the existing administrative system [1], [6], [8]. On the other hand, relatively little attention among authors in the field of geographic, political or social sciences is paid to the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) itself. It is the administrative boundary between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, which was the focus of peace conference in Dayton, Ohio (USA) in 1995. It ultimately became a key element of the Dayton Peace Agreement. It was primarily drawn along the military front at the end of the war, with certain practical changes in some of its segments, such as removing the 'siege ring' around Sarajevo, establishing a corridor to Goražde, allocating Odžak to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or returning of Šipovo and Mrkonjić Grad back to Republika Srpska. Apart from the proclamation of the Brčko District by the decision of the Arbitration Commission in 2000, which neutralized entity line on the territories of this former municipality, there were almost no subsequent corrections, although there was an objective need for it in many places. The biggest exception is the relocation of the entity line in the Sarajevo neighbourhood of Dobrinja in 2002, which only mitigated the negative functional effects of the negligent delineation through a densely populated area [2], [3]. Remenyi (2011) writes of the entity line as a symbol of violent secessionism, which prevents the re-establishment of ethnic mix [5]. It is also interpreted as a factor that limits the functional regional development, as well as the construction of adequate transport infrastructure [7].

The effects of IEBL on local communities has so far been studied to an even lesser extent. It is even difficult to find reliable cartographic sources with a precisely delineated entities, so that popular internet sources usually show a more or less inaccurate representation of the territorial coverage of the Bosnian entities. As this line is not compatible with the local administrative structure from the pre-war period, which practically means that its drawing did not take consideration of the municipal borders from 1991, nor any other geographical criteria, it is clear that it caused significant changes in territorial and the functional organization of many local administrative units [4]. The principal aim of this short study is to start the process of evaluating the geographical implications of IEBL in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the political, demographic, urban, rural, economic, infrastructural and social dimensions of regional and local development.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES ALONG IEBL**

The IEBL was defined during the Dayton peace talks in 1995 in such a way that the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina roughly gained the central, southern and western parts of the national territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Republika Srpska got northern and western regions (Figure 1). However, the spatial reality of this division is much more complex, as it largely reflects the military situation on the ground at the end of the war, as well as various strategic interests, and the pre-agreed principle of 51-49% territorial distribution in favour of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In order to facilitate the analysis of the social effects of this type of administrative delineation achieved through difficult and exhaustive negotiations, this line of demarcation needs to be dissected into several spatial segments. At the same time, special attention is paid to cases of division of once unique municipalities into two or even more newly formed local administrative units (municipalities and cities).



**Figure 1.** Territorial extension of entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The western sector of the entity line between Republika Srpska and the two Federal cantons, Una-Sana and Canton 10, emerged almost entirely after the joint final offensive operations of the Army of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Croatian Defense Council and the Croatian Army in the autumn of 1995, i.e., significant reduction of territories under the control of the Army of Republika Srpska, and boundary correction and consolidation in Dayton. In this part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as Bosnian Krajina, IEBL significantly changed the territorial scope of six pre-war municipalities: Bosanska Krupa, Sanski Most, Ključ, Bosanski Petrovac, Drvar and Kupres, with minor changes in the case of Šipovo and Glamoč. Most of the municipality of Bosanska Krupa belonged to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while a new municipality in the Republika Srpska – Krupa na Uni, with its center in Donji Dubovik, was formed from several villages on the southeastern periphery of the municipal territory. The entity line also divided two municipalities in the Sana River valley - Sanski Most and Ključ. The urban centers of these municipalities went to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the territory of the Republika Srpska, rural municipalities were formed – Oštra Luka and Ribnik. Oštra Luka is characterized by an elongated ‘snake-like’ shape of the territory, and Ribnik is territorially the largest municipality in Bosnia and Herzegovina that was created in this way. One of few cases of the subsequent alteration of the original IEBL took place in this area – Bosniak village of Velečevo was transferred from the municipality of Ribnik to Ključ, while in return the Serb village of Koprivna was transferred from Sanski Most to Oštra Luka. The village of Drinić was

excluded from the federal municipality of Bosanski Petrovac, thus creating the municipality of Petrovac in the Republika Srpska. The three mountain villages (Potoci, Uvala and Srnetica) were separated in the same way from the municipality of Drvar in Canton 10, thus creating the municipality of Istočni Drvar, which has the smallest population in the entire country. The municipality of Kupres is also divided into two parts, which interestingly retain the same name. However, the municipality of Kupres in Republika Srpska, which includes only a few villages on the northern edge of the Kupres field, is incomparably smaller than its counterpart in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The second analyzed sector refers to the delimitation of the Republika Srpska towards the Central Bosnia and Zenica-Doboj cantons in the central part of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Here, the front lines in the war shifted significantly less compared to Krajina, and changes at the local administrative level are smaller. In the Vrbas River valley, the municipality of Donji Vakuf underwent minor changes (transfer of one village to Šipovo municipality), while the entity line caused a somewhat greater effect on the municipality of Jajce, which became part of Central Bosnia Canton, excluding the smaller western segment, that became the municipality of Jezero. Formerly named municipality of Skender Vakuf is divided into Kneževo in the Republika Srpska (most of it) and Dobretići in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Here the IEBL passes along the Ugar River, which is one of the few cases where it follows a geographical feature. Certain changes in the municipal borders also affected Travnik, Kotor Varoš, Teslić, Zenica, Žepče and Maglaj, but no new local administrative units were formed in that area. However, the same cannot be said for the area between Tešanj and Doboj, where two new municipalities were established, while being among the smallest in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These are Doboj Jug, which consists of the villages of Matuzići and Mravići (separated from Doboj in Republika Srpska), and Usora, a municipality that includes villages predominantly inhabited by Croats, which were previously part of the municipalities of Tešanj and Doboj.

The northern sector of IEBL is also the most complex. It refers to delineation of the two Federal cantons, Tuzla and Posavina, towards the Republika Srpska, and as previously mentioned, the Brčko District was subsequently formed within identical boundaries as the pre-war municipality of the same name. The meandering entity line delimiting the Tuzla Canton divides the following pre-war municipalities: Doboj, Gračanica, Gradačac, Lopare, Zvornik, Ugljevik and Kalesija. In that way, the new municipalities of Doboj Istok, Čelic, Sapna and Teočak in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Petrovo, Pelagićevo and Osmaci in the Republika Srpska were established. All of them have a distinctly rural character, as they do not have a classic urban core. A special case are the units of local administration within the Posavina Canton, which were formed by the division of the previously unified municipalities of Orašje, Bosanski Šamac and Odžak. Most of the territory of Orašje and Odžak became part of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while their small rural segments in Republika Srpska formed the small rural municipalities of Donji Žabar and Vukosavlje. On the other hand, the town of Bosanski Šamac and most of the belonging municipal territory became part of the Republika Srpska, while a small municipality of Domaljevac-Šamac was formed in the Posavina Canton. The complexity of the geographical position of this canton is further enhanced by the fact that it is a double exclave. Namely, Posavina Canton is territorially separated from the rest of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the municipality of Odžak is territorially separated from the rest of this canton.

The eastern sector of IEBL refers to the disintegration of the wider Sarajevo region. Here, opposite to the territory of the Republika Srpska, lies Sarajevo Canton, Bosnian Podrinje Canton and the eastern periphery of Zenica-Doboj Canton. In the period up to 1992, Sarajevo was broadly made up of ten municipalities. Most of that territory became part of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thus the Sarajevo Canton was formed, which includes the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is also the most densely populated and developed region of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among the ten former Sarajevo municipalities, only Vogošća and Hadžići have not undergone any territorial changes. The entity line has only slightly reduced the coverage of the municipality of Centar, while in other cases the changes are significantly greater. The urban part of the municipality of Stari Grad remained part of the City and Canton of Sarajevo, but in the Republika Srpska the mountain municipality of Istočni Stari Grad was formed, which included also a smaller part of the pre-war municipality of Ilijaš, the majority of which became part to Sarajevo Canton. It is interesting that the municipality of Istočni Stari Grad is characterized by territorial discontinuity, which means that several of its villages can be considered as exclaves. The urban part of the municipality of Novo Sarajevo belong to Sarajevo Canton in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but a much larger, initially rural, and subsequently partially urbanized part of it today represents the municipality of Istočno Novo Sarajevo in the Republika Srpska. Smaller segments of the pre-war municipalities of Novi Grad Sarajevo and Ilidža were also assigned to the Republika Srpska, so the municipality of Istočna Ilidža was formed in that area. A specific case is the once unified municipality of Trnovo, which is divided in such a way that the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina got most of its territory, but most of its urban center together with the territorially separate northern, southern and northeastern parts of the municipality became part of Republika Srpska. That is how two municipalities were created, which today bear the same name. The municipality of Pale became a part of the Republika Srpska to a much greater extent, but its extreme southern segment went to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and became part of Bosnian Podrinje Canton. This canton, with the smallest population in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, includes only three municipalities - Goražde, Foča (FBiH) and Pale (FBiH). The genesis of this canton comes from the war enclave of Goražde and its need to connect with the rest of the territory of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina through a corridor. Part of the pre-war municipality of Goražde was still assigned to the Republika Srpska (today's Novo Goražde), while on the Federal side of the entity line, a smaller, northern segment of the municipalities of Foča and Pale remained. When it comes to the eastern part of Zenica-Doboj Canton, only the municipality of Olovo comes into contact with IEBL – its territory was partially changed (in favor of Sokolac and to the detriment of Han Pijesak), but no new municipalities were formed. The six mentioned municipalities in the Republika Srpska (Sokolac, Pale, Istočni Stari Grad, Istočno Novo Sarajevo, Istočna Ilidža and Trnovo) today together make up the City of Istočno Sarajevo.

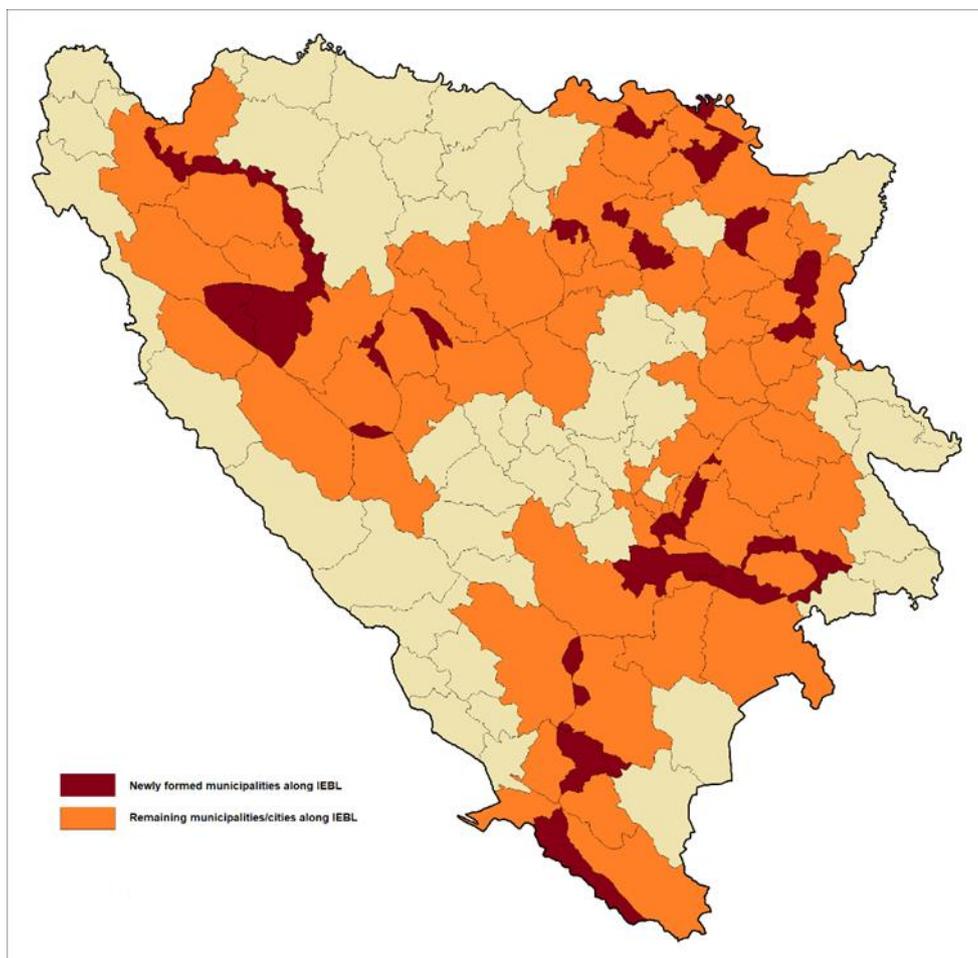
The last, or the southern sector of IEBL refers to the territory of Herzegovina, the eastern third of which was assigned to the Republika Srpska, while the rest is in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Herzegovina-Neretva and West Herzegovina cantons). As Western Herzegovina is the only canton that does not have physical contact with the entity line, this sector is entirely about the delineation of Republika Srpska and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. In the northern zone, the municipal boundary of Konjic was moved to the east, as several villages from the pre-war municipality of Kalinovik were transferred to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but no new municipality was formed in that

area, due to the fact that it is a sparsely populated mountainous region. However, similar geographical features did not deter the inhabitants of the village of Zijemlje from forming a new municipality of Istočni Mostar from the three territorially discontinuous mountainous segments of the pre-war municipality of Mostar. The entity line also divided the once unified municipality of Stolac. Its territorially smaller, but more populated part with an urban core is today located in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the rural municipality of Berkovići was formed in the Republika Srpska. The southern end of the inter-entity demarcation line is located in the area of the former municipality of Trebinje, which today includes the city of Trebinje in Republika Srpska and the municipality of Ravno in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The entity line in Herzegovina mostly stretches through high mountainous areas – the only exception is the delineation between Trebinje and Ravno, which only partly goes through the flat and low Popovo field

### **DEMOGRAPHY OF MUNICIPALITIES AND CITIES ALONG IEBL**

If we take as a criterion any physical contact of the municipal/city territory with IEBL, regardless of the length of the contact sector, then at the very beginning of the analysis an interesting fact can be stated. Namely, the IEBL touches slightly less than two thirds of local governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 92 in total, or 64.1% of all municipalities/cities (Figure 2). This area covers a total of 59% of the state territory, and according to the last census, 58% of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina lives in this zone (2.1 million in 2013). It should be emphasized that in 1991, 2.6 million people lived there, which is half a million more than in 2013. Although it is well known that the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced a significant population decline in the same period (from 4.4 million to 3.5 million inhabitants), in municipalities along IEBL this decline is more pronounced in relative quantitative terms (22% versus 19%), which indicates the direct consequences of the war, that were generally greater in these municipalities/cities than in the rest of the country. According to the 2013 census data, the average population density of the observed area is 68 inhabitants per square kilometer, which is very close to the national average. However, large spatial variations are expressed in this regard, since the densest settlements of municipalities/cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are located in this area, as well as most of those least populated ones. Vital statistics of municipalities/cities along IEBL also reflect similar values to the national average. In the last pre-pandemic year 2019, less than 17 thousand children were born in this zone (birth rate of 8‰), while at the same time more than 22 thousand people died (death rate of 11‰). A natural decrease rate of -3‰ clearly indicates negative demographic trends. Within the age composition, according to the 2013 census, the number of young and old population is almost equal, with the population under 15 still slightly outnumbered those over 65 years old (15.2% vs 14, 3%). Generally, the ageing process is evident. In the ethnic composition, Bosniaks are the most represented group with 59%, which is significantly more than their share in the total population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the other hand, the share of Serbs and Croats in the population of this zone is lower than in the population of the whole country – 25% and 12% respective. A much higher percentage of Bosniaks in relation to Serbs indicates a significantly higher concentration of population in the segment of the observed zone that belongs to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in relation to the Republika Srpska. The most favorable aspect of demographic statistics in the area along IEBL is related to the education structure, which can be related to the fact that four out of the five largest cities

and university centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are located in this area. A tenth of the population is highly educated, and a third is completely computer literate



**Figure 2.** Municipalities and cities along the IEBL in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Thus, it is obvious that according to most of the analysed and available parameters, local administrative units along IEBL in the total do not deviate significantly from the national average. However, when analysing the structure of these municipalities/cities, it is possible to reach some differentiated conclusions. Among the 92 municipalities/cities considered, only 14 (or about 15%) did not experience significant territorial reductions, and some such as Žepče, Konjic and Modriča were even territorially enlarged. The majority of the considered municipalities of cities (48 or 52%) belong to the category of those whose territorial extension is significantly reduced compared to the state from 1991. However, it should be noted that this category of local administrative units is defined by retaining the urban core as it had in the pre-war period, due to which their local development problems have been mitigated. On the other hand, a special category of local administrative units along IEBL consists of 30 municipalities that emerged during the war or after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (Table 1). In most cases, these are completely or predominantly rural areas, where even municipal centers have not experienced a significant degree of urbanization. This fact is a great obstacle to their socio-economic development, and special attention is paid to them in the following segment of this paper.

**Table 1.** Demography of recently formed municipalities along IEBL

Municipality/city	Area (sq km)	Population 1991	Population 2013	Population density (2013)	Average age
Istočna Ilidža	28	8590	14763	527	41,4
Sapna	118	14091	11178	95	34,7
Istočno Novo Sarajevo	35	4082	10642	304	40,2
Čelić	140	12337	10502	75	38,7
Doboj Istok	41	9002	10248	250	37,8
Teočak	29	7773	7424	256	37,1
Usora	50	8627	6603	132	39,5
Petrovo	144	9155	6474	45	45,1
Ribnik	511	9134	6048	12	44,8
Osmaci	78	7340	6016	77	38,9
Pelagićevo	122	10333	5220	43	46,0
Domaljevac Šamac	44	6315	4771	108	39,9
Vukosavlje	95	8082	4667	49	40,7
Doboj Jug	10	3259	4137	414	35,8
Donji Žabar	47	4092	3809	81	42,3
Ravno	331	1804	3219	10	43,5
Novo Goražde	119	4813	3117	26	44,2
Oštra Luka	205	5746	2786	14	43,0
Berkovići	250	3512	2114	8	43,7
Foča (FBiH)	169	4373	1933	11	43,9
Dobretići	59	4790	1629	28	42,0
Krupa na Uni	84	2960	1597	19	46,3
Trnovo (FBiH)	338	3138	1502	4	49,1
Jezero	56	2161	1144	20	40,6
Istočni Stari Grad	70	1380	1131	16	48,1
Pale (FBiH)	86	1961	904	11	42,2
Petrovac	155	408	361	2	46,5
Kupres (RS)	48	781	300	6	53,7
Istočni Mostar	88	562	257	3	44,9
Istočni Drvar	75	61	79	1	48,0

Source: Population Census Data, 2013, Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

These 30 municipalities cover an area of 3625 km<sup>2</sup>, which represents slightly more than 7% of the national territory. In 2013, almost 135,000 people lived in these areas, or only 3.8% of the total population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This data shows that these municipalities are significantly less populated compared to the national average. The average population density for these 30 municipalities is only 37 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. However, it is interesting that the population decline experienced by these municipalities in the last inter-census period (16%) is actually lower than one at the state level (19%), which indicates that the establishment of these municipalities managed to mitigate the depopulation that these rural areas would otherwise experience after separation from their pre-war urban centers, to which they gravitated. However, all other socio-demographic parameters indicate a higher degree of deprivation in these areas. Among other things, they have a lower birth rate (6 ‰ in 2019) and higher mortality (12 ‰ in 2019) compared to the national average, which is why the rate of natural change can already be considered practically irreversibly negative (-7 ‰). The vital index is less than 0.5, which means that the continuity of the trend has already been established that in the mentioned municipalities almost twice as many people die every year than there are newborns. The number of the old people (over 65 years of age) was already higher than the young population (up to 15 years of age) in 2013 - 16% versus 15%. The educational structure

is also less favorable than national average - only 5.7% of the population is highly educated, and 27.2% computer literate. In addition, these areas have a general illiteracy rate of more than 4%. In the combined ethnic structure of these 30 municipalities, the most numerous are Serbs (44%), followed by Bosniaks (40%), Croats (15%) and others (1%). The ethnic composition indicates the fact that 60% of the observed municipalities are located in Republika Srpska, and 40% in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Among the 30 recently formed municipalities, there is a high degree of similarity in the level of socio-economic development, but a certain degree of heterogeneity can also be detected. The territory of only one municipality in this category can be considered larger than the Bosnian average. That is the municipality of Ribnik (511 km<sup>2</sup>), while Trnovo (FBiH) and Ravno are within the scope of average values. The other 27 municipalities are relatively small municipalities, most of which have an area of less than 100 km<sup>2</sup>. When it comes to the population numbers, all municipalities observed here, without exception, have a smaller population than the municipal average at the national level. Only five municipalities have more than 10,000 inhabitants – Istočna Ilidža, Sapna, Istočno Novo Sarajevo, Čelić and Doboj Istok, while on the other hand five municipalities have less than 1,000 people according to the last census from 2013 – Pale (FBiH), Petrovac, Kupres (RS), Istočni Mostar and Istočni Drvar. The greatest degree of heterogeneity is observed in the analysis of population density. Slightly more than a third of the observed municipalities are characterized by a higher concentration of population compared to the national average. Very densely populated (above 200 people per km<sup>2</sup>) can be considered two municipalities that make up the urban core of the city of East Sarajevo – Istočna Ilidža and Istočno Novo Sarajevo, and three small rural municipalities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Doboj Jug, Doboj Istok and Teočak. A small number of these municipalities are characterized by a medium level of population density, and practically half of them can be considered sparsely populated. Ravno, Berkovići, Kupres (RS), Trnovo (FBiH), Istočni Mostar, Petrovac and Istočni Drvar have a particularly low population density (less than 10 people per km<sup>2</sup>).

In terms of vital statistics, it is important to point out that among these 30 municipalities, only Doboj Jug had a positive natural change in 2019, and as many as two thirds of them are characterized by extremely low rates (below -5‰). Among the municipalities with a relatively young population (average age below the national average and over 15% of the young population) are Sapna, Doboj Jug, Teočak, Doboj Istok and Čelić. In most other cases, the ageing process is very pronounced, especially in Kupres (RS), Trnovo (FBiH), Istočni Stari Grad, Petrovac, Krupa na Uni, Pelagićevo and Petrovo, whose population has an average age of over 45 and more than 20% of older people (over 65). The most favorable education structure is in the urbanized municipalities of Istočna Ilidža and Istočno Novo Sarajevo, as well as Ravno in Herzegovina, with less than 2% of the illiterate population and over 10% of the highly educated. Kupres (RS), Krupa na Uni, Dobretići and Ribnik have the highest illiteracy rates (above 8%) and the lowest share of the university-educated population (below 5%).

## **PROBLEMS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

Although municipalities/cities positioned along IEBL on average have similar demographic and socio-economic parameters as the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is necessary to point out that in this zone are located four of the five largest urban centers in the country – Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica and Mostar, which significantly affect the raising of the average values of the observed indicators. Given this heterogeneity, special

attention should be paid to those units of local administration whose regional and local development is largely determined by IEBL, primarily in a negative sense. This is in particular true of municipalities created during the war or after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, whose economic self-sustainability is very questionable. As previously pointed out, these are mostly rural municipalities, whose population is predominantly dependent on agriculture or the exploitation of primary resources, such as timber. The local population in these areas also enjoys certain benefits of this status, such as employment in the municipal administration or the establishment of other local institutions of social importance, such as schools, ambulances, police stations, post offices, etc. Despite significant budget allocations from the state and entity level for these purposes, this has not instigated the economic development of these deprived areas.

The IEBL radically changed the social relations and spatial interactions that were previously established, which in many cases influenced the strengthening of socio-economic disparities. Long-term gravitational connections have been interrupted in this way, both in the case of many local communities and at the level of wider regions. A number of regional centers have weakened their centripetal function due to the reduction of their gravitation area, and many municipalities/cities have lost significant parts of their pre-war territory. On the other hand, the new local and regional centers have generally failed to fulfill the role assigned to them, i.e., to be the driver and backbone of the social development of the narrower and wider surrounding area. Often the lack of population potential in these divided regions proved to be the primary limiting factor, while in some cases spatially dysfunctional administrative solutions were also created, characterized by inadequate transport connections and coherence, and even complete territorial discontinuity. A special dimension of this problem is the role of IEBL as a political and social barrier. Given the interethnic tensions and mistrust as a legacy of the past war and the obvious differences in the social landscape, crossing the entity line in many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina on a perceptual level causes a certain sense of discomfort. The low level of coordination between political structures in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska greatly hinders cooperation between local communities along IEBL, however with significant exceptions in the form of successfully implemented joint projects.

Finally, it is necessary to discuss the problems that IEBL has posed to researchers in quantitative terms. While the qualitative implications of drawing such a political-administrative line can be realistically seen by applying a range of research methods, one should be particularly careful when using statistical parameters (as is the case in this study). Thus, for example, territorial division on entity level does not respect the borders of municipalities and even settlements from 1991, and it is not possible to simply or accurately compare data from the last two censuses due to this territorial inconsistency. More than 300 settlements are divided by IEBL, and there are even residential buildings located on the line itself [3], which in addition to statistical doubts is a major practical problem for local residents. In some cases, residents of the areas near IEBL fictitiously report their place of residence in one entity, even though their property is located in another. They do so for ethnic, political or practical reasons, but so often they are prevented from exercising all their rights in the place where they live. It is not uncommon for children on one side of the entity line to enroll in school in neighboring municipalities/cities on the other, or for people to use health services in a different entity than the one in which they actually live. In some units of local administration, the 2013 census determined the number of inhabitants that does not correspond to the real situation, due to a politically

motivated campaign aimed at fixing the ethnic composition of population. All these phenomena deserve special treatment in some future studies, and through this paper some topics have just been opened within which geographers can contribute to the rationalization of spatial relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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