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JANUARY–JUNE

YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA

NISMA E TË RINJVE PËR TË DREJTAT E NJERIUT

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ANITA MITIĆ, Director

We live in the introduction

Dear readers, partners and friends,

It is always a great pleasure to share a semi-annual newsletter with you, and briefly summarize what we did in the previous, very dynamic, six months.

It seems that the first half of 2017 represents an introduction to long-term social and political processes in Serbia and the region. The rapid rise of extreme-nationalist groups and organizations and the radicalization of their actions is galloping, with the only obstacle in the form of peacekeeping organizations that oppose them. The state doesn't care, the Minister of Internal Affairs calls those who protest against the panels with war criminals as main speakers fascists, and the Minister of Culture develops special relations with the organization that organizes the events where Miroljub Petrović speaks.

In the regional perspective, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office is the biggest opportunity for enhancing cooperation. A year after the WB6 Summit in Paris in July last year and the signing of an Agreement on the Establishment of RYCO, the institution became operative since July 4 this year. The first programs supported by RYCO should begin before the end of this year and YIHR will continue to work closely with those whose efforts are focused on reconciliation in the region.

At the same time, newly elected President Vučić is trying to sensitize the public in Serbia to change in relations with Kosovo, insisting on the need for internal dialogue within the Serbian society. On the importance of dialogue on Kosovo, we pointed out back in June, among the first, when President Vučić put this question as one of his priorities. In an open letter, we invited the President to side with us, who promote the values of reconciliation, dialogue and cooperation for years. In addition, we noted a constant threat to this dialogue by rightists and hooligan groups which interrupt events important for mutual understanding between the two societies.

It's a big mistake to ignore the dialogue that has been going on for years in both Serbian society and between civil society representatives from Serbia and Kosovo. It's necessary to continue building the relations between the two societies based on the values that for years have been the basis of the connection and the existing dialogue: peace, mutual understanding and trust building. The priority obligation of the state must be to provide protection and security to individuals and organizations who are the pioneers of this dialogue

Open Letter to the President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić

Honorable President Vučić,

We understand as an excellent signal that among the first topics that you have opened in your presidential term is attitude towards Kosovo and the region. From our side, we want to introduce you to the fact that a very substantial, lively and intensive dialogue on this topic is for years conducted under the auspices of civil society across the region. In recent days, the dialogue is endangered by physical threats and lynch atmosphere created by the extreme right and hooligan groups. Events that represent a platform for dialogue, are violently interrupted, threats to representatives of NGOs are more open, and the escalation of violence is inevitable if state authorities do not react concretely. University of Belgrade and Belgrade Youth Center are no longer the guardians of free thought and discussion, they are occupied by the screaming masses that express their opinion only through violence.

A necessary condition for the dialogue that you announced is the elimination of all forms of violence from the public space. It is impossible to talk if extremist groups feel free to violently attack political opponents.

Therefore, we urge you to openly side with those who have been promoting the values of reconciliation and cooperation and to put your authority in function of protecting human rights defenders whose security is directly threatened. There are many questions without common answers in our society and some major disagreements on key social and political issues, and we fully agree with your assessment that the broader dialogue is necessary. We believe that meeting point and basis for this dialogue should be a message “It’s Shameful to Hate!”

In Belgrade, 02.06.2017.
Youth Initiative for Human Rights

Youth Initiative for Human Rights defends freedom of speech

Youth Initiative for Human Rights believes that defending the values of a democratic society implies a media space in which there is no room for convicted war criminals.

As an organization which is based on respect for human life as the only foundation and core value of every open and successful society, we consider that the participation of convicted war criminals in public space sends a clear message that their return is welcome and accepted under a false thesis on freedom of speech.

Without disputing the importance of freedom of speech, Youth Initiative for Human Rights asks: What about the rights of victims and why is their voice not heard? With this issue, we are focusing on the most important topic according to which the Serbian society must be determined, which is: Does a convicted war criminal, after serving a prison sentence, continues to be a war criminal?

For us in YIHR, this dilemma does not exist, we consider that our most important mission is defense of democratic values, among which is the media space protected from those who have in the past violated and restrained the human rights of others. Therefore, within the framework of our activities, we will continue to alert the public to the need to keep the media space clean and to not allow persons legally convicted of war crimes to influence public opinion.

Pervasive presence of history revision is an attempt to push the court-established facts to the background. Our society has been fighting with the consequences of disregarding the past for more than 20 years, and our opinion is that the roots of most of the problems lie in the fact that a clear boundary in relation to those who committed war crimes was never clearly set. Without this, Serbian society can not move forward and build relations with its neighbors based on reconciliation and dialogue.

In the battle for media space, where war criminals will not have a place to promote their ideas and justify crime, YIHR fought from the first moment this phenomenon appeared. As a reminder, during the last year's promotion of Momčilo Krajišnik's book, in the Belgrade Youth Center organized by the Independent DSS (on the electoral list of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party) during the election campaign, My Initiative's activists protested in front of the Youth Center and in the hall where the promotion was held. They then clearly stated that the public space can not be used for the purpose of rehabilitating war criminals who committed some of the most monstrous crimes and that they expect from relevant city institutions to not take part in such shameful promotions of the wrong value system.

So far, the most important and certainly the most significant event aimed at signaling the trend of returning war criminals to the public media space is the protest of our activists at a discussion in Beška in January 2017, organized by the Serbian Progressive Party (SPP). One of the announced speakers was Veselin Šljivančanin, a former colonel of the Yugoslav People's Army, who was sentenced by the Hague Tribunal in 2010 to 10 years in prison for crimes committed in Vukovar in 1991.

On that occasion, Initiative's activists decided to raise their voices, draw public attention and clearly oppose the participation of this proven war criminal at a public gathering. After they unwrapped a protest banner that read: " War criminals to remain silent in order to talk about the victims" activists were strongly verbally and physically attacked.

"The attack on activists is not just an attack on Youth Initiative for Human Rights, it's an attack on all people who do not agree with the idea that a war criminal should be hosted in state institutions

and allowed the space to spread his ideology and values and to deny crimes“, said YIHR’s director Anita Mitić, at a press conference held two days after the attack in Beška.

Numerous civil society organizations, political parties and public figures supported YIHR after this attack. A letter of support, signed by many organizations such as - Humanitarian Law Center, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Independent Journalists’ Association of Vojvodina, Women in Black, Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies and Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights YUCOM, states:

”The signatories of this letter strongly condemn this brutal attack Youth Initiative’s activists, the rhetoric of the ruling party, which, instead of the perpetrators, blames the victims for violence, as well as the policy that persistently encourages the hunting of representatives of those non-governmental organizations advocating the establishment of the rule of law, the democratization of Serbia and confronting the past. “

On the other hand, the incident at the panel in Beška started an avalanche of attacks and insults in a number of tabloid media who created an atmosphere in which they spinned facts, revealed inaccurate information and systematically attacked YIHR. Daily newspaper Informer, and its editor-in-chief Dragan J. Vučićević, was the leader of the media attacks. For days this newspaper wrote about Initiative, calling its activist “foreign mercenaries and fascists“.



Discussion in Beška, January 2017

Drama continued with another attack that occurred just ten days later, when a group of young men plastered hate messages on the door of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights. After this, it was clear that the statements of Prime Minister Vučić and Minister Stefanović that followed the debate where activists were called fascists, foreign mercenaries and traitors, served as an alibi for any future attacks that have become a measure of patriotism for certain hooligan groups.

Due to a series of insults, untruths and defamation, YIHR filed 10 lawsuits against Informer and its editor-in-chief, which began a new stage in this fight. Lawsuits were also filed against unidentified persons for beating Initiative’s activists as well as against the Serbian Progressive Party, as the organizer of the panel. In anticipation of the recent start of several court proceedings initiated in connection with the case of Beška, final court verdict will finally put an end to this case and give an answer to the question of whether there is an independent judiciary in Serbia.

From the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SPP), which is apparently only formally committed to European values by forgetting the final court decisions that convicted Krajišnik and Šljivančanin, we are demanding that they accept responsibility for their public actions and condemn the promotion of war-politics in Serbia.

Not giving up the fight for the ideals of a democratic society, cooperation and reconciliation in the region remain the most important values that we aim to. Fight for Serbia without war criminals in the media and public discourse remains a goal which will be pursued in the coming years. Initiative will not cease to point to the negative phenomena in society and remind of the topics that are left to oblivion ●

REKOM2017 Campaign

koalicija za REKOM

This year's petition for supporting the establishment of the Regional Commission for the Establishment of Facts about War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations committed in the period from January 1, 1991 to December 31, 2001 (RECOM) began on May 13 in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Prishtina, Zagreb and several other cities in the region.

Over the course of two weeks of the campaign, over 52,000 citizens signed the petition. The goal of #REKOM2017 petition campaign was to collect citizen signatures for the establishment of a regional commission within the framework of the Berlin Process, and for this issue to be considered at the summit of the leaders of the Western Balkans on July 12 in Trieste.

As a reminder, after the end of the war conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, which lasted from 1991 to 2001, the issue of the number of victims and missing persons was raised. Although it has been 16 years since the end of the last conflict in this region, the fate of 15,000 people is still unknown. Since 2006, more than 2,000 civil society organizations and individuals, gathered in the Coalition for RECOM, have been looking for an answer to this question. So far, 23,000 war victims and 600 camps and other places of detention have been documented, representing a minority of the total number of victims estimated at over 130,000.

At the press conference of the Coalition for RECOM, where the founder of the Humanitarian Law Center, Nataša Kandić and director of YIHR Anita Mitić spoke, it was emphasized that the countries of the region have an obligation to list the victims and places of detention from the wars of the 1990s. It was also emphasized that this year's campaign was launched with the aim to place the issue of establishing RECOM in the Declaration of the Conference of the leaders of the Western Balkans in Trieste.

"The Berlin Process is an excellent instrument of cooperation in the region, and this process should include the issue of establishing a regional commission because that is the only way to naturally and normally face what has happened," Mitić said. She also pointed out that a



large number of young volunteers from Belgrade, Niš, Zrenjanin, Novi Sad, Preševo and Novi Pazar participated in the RECOM campaign for collecting the signatures, which is encouraging and points to the interest of younger generations for the war history and events in the former Yugoslavia.

Volunteer from Belgrade, Jelena Ivković points out that she participated in the #REKOM2017 campaign because she thinks that "it is important to list the victims regardless of their nationality and that politicians need an incentive to finally resolve this issue". Also, volunteer Martin Ivanović from Niš says that although he does not remember the war conflicts from the 1990s because he was born after the beginning of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, he believes that as a society we can not move forward unless we solve the important issues from the past, among which the issue of victims' lists is the most important.

The focus of the # REKOM2017 campaign was to communicate with citizens and to seek more support from them, as well as to inform young people about the mission and goals set by the regional commission. Since 2011, when the first petition campaign began, about 600,000 signatures were collected and this figure obliges not only civil society in the countries of the region, but above all politicians not to neglect the calls for the establishment of a regional commission for establishing the facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights.

Appearing in "Kažiprst" on TV station B92, Initiative's Program Director, Ivan Đurić stated that "We still don't know the full names of the victims and their exact number. That's why we have manipulations of the number of victims, because the lack of the register enables these manipulations. All we have are incomplete data and it's necessary that all state resources be made available to resolve this issue in the shortest possible time." He also stressed that through this campaign, the Coalition for RECOM is seeking support in order to place this important topic in the program of the summit in Trieste.

During the campaign for the establishment of RECOM, YIHR held a "Truth Commissions as Reconciliation Mechanisms" panel discussion at the Faculty of Political Science on May 22, which discussed the importance of establishing such commissions and successful examples from other countries.

The next step after a successful campaign and great support from the citizens of the region is an advocacy process that will result in the support of politicians from all successor countries of the former Yugoslavia and by signing an agreement that will allow the regional commission to start working





PANEL DISCUSSION

“Truth Commissions as Reconciliation Mechanisms”

At a panel discussion, organized on May 22, at the Faculty of Political Science, the event speakers were Anita Mitić, Director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Jovan Teokarević a professor at the Faculty of Political Science, and a student of the Political Science Master’s Program, Jasmina Lazović. Panel moderator was Jovana Prusina.

At the beginning, professor Teokarević spoke about the political context of dealing with the past, pointing out that the Berlin Process, within which the RECOM issue should be carried into effect, is increasingly becoming a substitute for the European integration process, which he assessed as very unfortunate because the accession process of some countries is in a deep crisis. He also stressed that the Berlin process has no direct connection with reconciliation and integration in the region, but that these issues are now being incorporated into it. As a good example of the functioning of the Berlin Process, Teokarević cited the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office - RYCO. In the wake of the establishment of this office, there are initiatives for the inclusion of RECOM in the Berlin Process, which would establish another regional institution, but this time with a clear task to establish the facts about war crimes.

Jasmina Lazović spoke about the limits of the trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, pointing out that trials are not the best way for victims to get some sort of satisfaction because they determine the facts but there is not much space for their personal stories. “There are a number of criticisms directed at the account of the work of the Hague Tribunal, from the fact that till 1999 they had no translators and did not communicate with the media in the languages of countries from the territory of the former Yugoslavia, to the criticism of lawyers regarding the legality of the establishment of this tribunal.” It is a matter of public interest to know more about trials and events during court proceedings. “In the end when criminals are convicted and serve the sentence, the question arises of how society treats criminals and what kind of message is sent by the state when state officials are welcoming them at the airport”, Lazović said.

Anita Mitić spoke about the practical implementation of transitional justice mechanisms and the eternal dilemma of whether truth or justice is more important. “The truth commissions are extremely important because they represent a measure of preventing repetition of conflicts and their role is very important because it leads to moral condemnation of war criminals,” Mitić said, adding that it is important for the region of the Western Balkans to hear personal stories of victims from all republics of the former Yugoslavia, regardless of nationality. Mitić also pointed out that due to young generations, which are increasingly striving to far-right ideology, it is important to establish truth commissions because manipulation of numbers brings about raising tensions which ultimately produces new conflicts.

Asked by the audience, made mostly of political science students and young politicians, in whose interest is the forming of truth commissions, Professor Teokarević replied that their formation is “in the interest of the victims and their loved ones, but unfortunately not in the interests of governments and societies” and that



when we talk about RECOM, this commission has the support of all authorities, but only in words, because through everyday conflicts they cancel everything that was previously promised.

Citing examples of Truth Commissions in Latin American and African countries, Jasmina Lazović explained that they had the greatest success there and gave the best results. Explaining the specificities of the commissions in South African Republic, she stressed that for this society the truth was primarily important and a key element in society facing the crimes.

In the second part of the panel, the participants looked back on the role of the European Union in monitoring relations in the region and the political responsibility of the leaders of the Western Balkans. Professor Teokarević concluded that the EU expects good relations from the countries of the region and that this is an important precondition for progress towards integration into the European community, but that the EU can not be an arbiter in relations between states.

Speaking about the responsibility of political elites, Anita Mitić said that generations of politicians in this region don't understand what is political responsibility and don't know what is responsibility for the spoken words. "Values are sold for political points and European values are sacrificed in order to gain political points among voters", Mitić concluded. In a value system as such, it's difficult for young people to find motivation for active participation in processes important for our society, and this is why the importance of the participation of 150 young volunteers in the #REKOM2017 campaign who, although not having immediate recollection of war, consider this topic important and want to contribute to regional cooperation. "Without resolving basic issues, we can not talk about connecting young people", Mitić deems.

The panel was completed with a conclusion that the question of the wars in former Yugoslavia must not be subject to value judgment and emotional manipulation, but that it must be based on established facts ●



Chronicle of the fourth “Mirëdita, dobar dan!” festival

Festival "Mirëdita, dobar dan!"

This year's "Mirëdita, dobar dan!" festival was held from May 31 to June 3 in Belgrade, with the participation of a large number of artists and guests from Kosovo. For the fourth time in a row, Belgrade audience had an opportunity to get to know the cultural and social scene in Prishtina, through theatrical and film achievements, as well as through the promotion of books and music performances.





The idea of this festival is that the meetings of representatives of the cultural and social communities of Serbia and Kosovo initiate continuous exchange of artistic ideas and create a tradition of cooperation and gatherings in a unique cultural space, which indirectly will contribute to the permanent normalization of relations between Belgrade and Prishtina. The inspiration for this festival is Bekim Fehmiu, the famous Albanian, Kosovar, Belgrade, Yugoslav and world actor, symbolizing unity and split in relations between Kosovo and Serbia, but also the possibility of linking two cultural spaces into a single whole.

At the Belgrade Youth Center on May 31, the festival was officially opened by actor Alban Ukaj, who reflected on the atmosphere that prevails in society and the attitude towards the war past. "Today, its no longer a shame to hate, today nobody is ashamed of killing and later hiding, today we are not embarrassed when we are silent" and added that he regrets that such festivals are usually happening only incidentally. In spite of the protests of the right-wing organization Zavetnici, who, by singing traditional Serbian songs, tried to stop the performance "Revolt against Violence", the festival was opened and the audience's applause overwhelmed their singing and supported the group of artists who participated in the creation of this choreography aimed at highlighting the importance of fighting all kinds violence. At the end of the evening, film "Shok" (Friend) was shown, directed by Jamie Donoughue, who was nominated for the Academy award for best short film in 2015.

Speaking at the opening of the festival, Initiative's Anita Mitić stressed that the main intention of the festival is to create a space where artists from Kosovo will be able to present themselves to the Belgrade audience. "Our job is to create the space for which politicians do not have the courage", said Mitić, adding that no organizations or individuals will stop them.

On the second day of the festival, a debate on cultural cooperation and exchange between Kosovo and Serbia was held in the Media Center, where the speakers were actor Armond Morina,

visual artist Fitore Berisha, writer Saša Ilić and director Stevan Bodroža. “In order to achieve any progress in linking our artistic scenes, we must communicate directly and overcome the barriers imposed by politicians”, said Morin. He added that it’s the task of the artists to promote dialogue among people, because only in this way can problems be overcome.

Visual artist Fitore Berisha, the author of the performance from the opening of the festival, talked about the problem of violence against women in the Balkans and stressed that such violence is unacceptable because it is a part of a conservative understanding of family relationships and relations between partners. She emphasized that we can establish new models of cooperation and communication within artistic scenes only without violence.

At the end of the debate, director Stevan Bodroža concluded that it is the obligation of artists in post-conflict societies to help people through the process of catharsis through their artistic and public actions and that they must be the ones who will build bridges between two communities and two societies. At the end of the second day of the festival, film “Miss,” directed by Genc Berisha was shown.

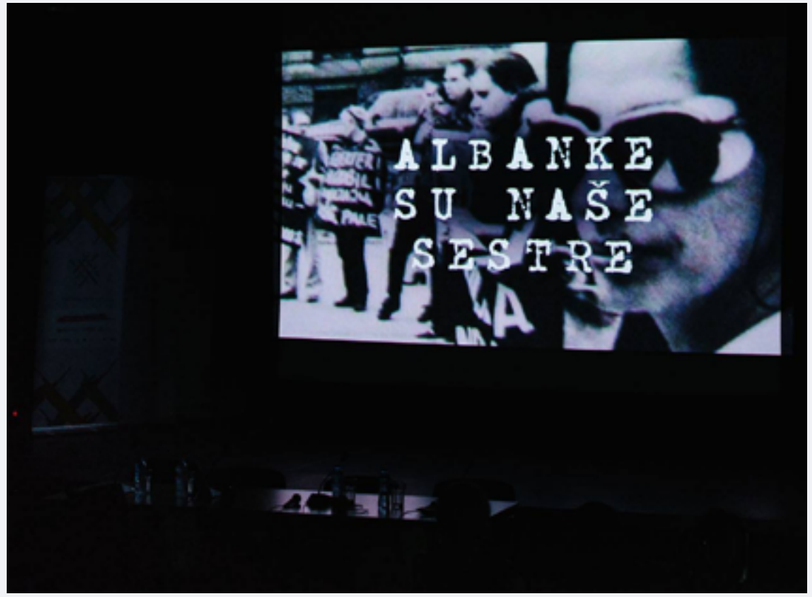
The second day of the festival did not go without protest and incidents either, involving members of the “Delije” football fan group and the extreme right-wing organization “Alternativa”. They insulted and intimidated the guests and organizers of the festival. At no point did the police react to verbal attacks and threats of physical violence from these groups of hooligans.

Promotion of the book “I want to be heard - a book of memories with stories of women who have been subjected to torture in the last war in Kosovo”, where the former President of Kosovo Atifete Jahjaga was supposed to speak, attracted the most public attention, but also of the right-wing organizations who have again protested in front of the Center for Cultural Decontamination on the third day of the festival. Despite strong police forces, one of the members of right-wing organizations managed to enter the panel and tried to break it, and another young man skipped the fence and tried to provoke an incident.

Prior to the promotion, Initiative’s activists, facing the right-wingers from “Zavetnici” and “Alternativa” developed a banner with the message “It’s shameful to hate”, which clearly sent a message to the general public that they see the future in dialogue and regional cooperation and not in hatred and conflict.

At the beginning of the promotion, the former president of Kosovo addressed the public through the video link because she was denied entry into Serbia and prevented from participating in the festival. In her message, she commented on the reasons why she could not enter Serbia and marked the ban on entry as a violation of the Brussels Agreement. “The authorities in Serbia continue to deny the independence of Kosovo, but I am happy that there are people who











support us in Belgrade and that through this festival we will talk about the victims of sexual violence in Kosovo".

The book was subsequently discussed by Kushtrim Koliqi from the organization Integra from Kosovo, Korab Krasniqi of the Kosovo forumZFD and Milica Kostić from the Humanitarian Law Center. They jointly emphasized the importance of the book "I want to be heard" in dealing with the past and war crimes committed by Serb soldiers and police in Kosovo. Koliqi stressed that Jahjaga played a significant role in drawing public attention to the crimes committed against women in the last war, and that therefore her address to the audience at this forum was very important. The representative of the forumZFD, Korab Krasniqi, assessed that this book is a testimony that can help in understanding what victims are surviving.

A concert by jazz trio "Visar Kuci" completed the program of the third day of the "Mirëdita, dobar dan!" festival.

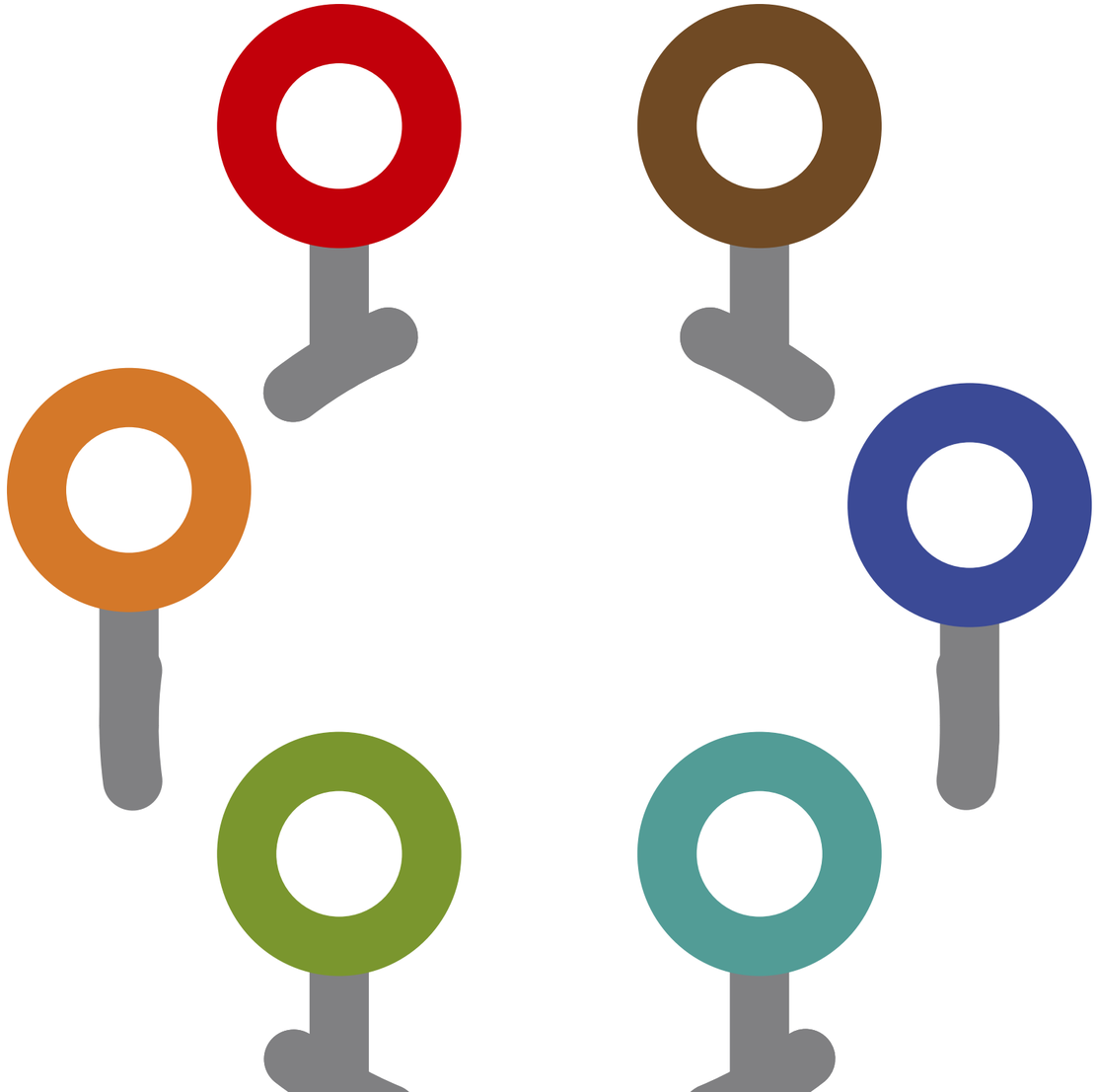
The last day of the festival began with the promotion of Petrit Imami's book "Serbs and Albanians through the centuries" published by Samizdat b92, which, according to the participants of the discussion about this two volume work, is the first book in which the crimes of both sides can be seen through history. "It bothers me that this and similar festivals, only gather people like us, those who agree and are willing to talk with each other. We should discuss with the nationalists, who not only negate the crimes of their own, but also do not want to hear about anything that happened" said publicist Shkelzen Gashi.

Following the book promotion, festival visitors could see a documentary about the anti-war movement in 1999, "Albanian Girls are Our Sisters". After the screening, the discussion with actors and filmmakers followed. Participants agreed that the main problem of our post-war societies is that they created the myth that they are the victims, and that the people who live humiliated cannot be expected to make progress. Journalist Milena Popović, co-author of the film, said that there is no public space in Serbia today for a different interpretation of the past, except for the one being served, nor for individuals or groups who dare to question the national discourse.

"Play with four actors" directed by Blerta Neziraj, who uses parody to talk about the mutual relations between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as the race for joining the European Union closed the program of the fourth "Mirëdita, dobar dan!" festival ●

RYCO

Regional
Youth Cooperation
Office
Western Balkans



Regional Youth Cooperation Office — a chance that we must seize

On the occasion of the constitutional session of the Governing Board of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), held in Tirana on December 8, Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized a conference in Belgrade on the same day, that discussed the importance of RYCO for reconciliation in the region.

Jasmina Lazović from Youth Initiative for Human Rights spoke about the process of establishing, functioning and goals of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office. “There is a large number of organizations that have been organizing youth exchange programs in the former Yugoslavia for years, but the novelty is that the Regional Youth Cooperation Office was founded by the governments of the Western Balkan countries. The ultimate goals of establishing the Regional Office are reducing ethnic distance, reconciliation in the region, mobility and empowerment of young people to engage in socio-political life”, Lazović said and praised the decision that, besides the representatives of the ministries responsible for youth, the Governing Board will also have one representative of youth from all signatory countries.

Aleksandar Voštić, from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, thinks that cooperation with non-governmental organizations was necessary when establishing the Regional Office. “The Regional Office is a real example of cooperation between the civil sector and state authorities in Serbia. We hope that young people from Western Balkans will be able to recognize the opportunity and significance of this initiative. The idea is that the projects that the Regional Office will implement will make a difference and change the perspective of the people who participate in them”, Voštić stressed, adding that the next year is crucial for the visibility and success of the Regional Office.

“We are still living in the shadow of the 1990s conflicts. Specifically in Serbia, 50% of young people are unemployed, 70% have never left the country, and only 10% of the total population is highly educated. The Regional Office should contribute to increasing the mobility of young people leading to increased employment opportunities. In addition, prejudices and social distance among the people of the former Yugoslavia are reduced only if we communicate and meet each other,” said Naim Leo Beširi of the European Affairs Institute.

Jovana Prusina from Youth Initiative for Human Rights pointed out that the Regional Office is not a success yet, but an enormous opportunity and a chance to improve regional cooperation. “This is a chance that we have an obligation to take advantage of. The enthusiasm that was present when advocating the establishment of the Regional Office should not be futile,” Prusina said. She believes that in its work RYCO should not be painted with the notes of proportionality and function in the spirit of collecting points with political elites. Praising the



constructiveness of the Republic of Serbia in the process of establishing the Regional Office and its cooperation with the civil sector, Prusina nevertheless emphasized that this cooperation could be even better.

One of the main conclusions of the conference was that in the initial phase of the functioning of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, a lot of work will have to be done on increasing its visibility. Beside civil society organizations that are naturally interested in the process of establishing this office, there are few who are familiar with the fact that on July 4 in Paris, an agreement was signed with which the prime ministers of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania committed themselves to annually allocate a total sum of 1 million € for youth exchange programs. In order for this office to have as many different users from different spheres as possible (such as high schools and universities) in the future, additional efforts will have to be invested in the promotion of the office. As an example of the fact that the process of establishing RYCO is insufficiently visible, it is indicated that only six people in Serbia applied for a youth representative in the Office’s Governing Board ●

The Friends of the Regional Office — from youth to youth

Youth Initiative for Human Rights and Franco-German Youth Office (OFAJ/ DFJW), with support of the Embassy of France and Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, organized the first Open Space Conference dedicated to the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans (RYCO) at French Institute in Belgrade on January 23rd, 2017

The Open Space conference was attended by 20 young people from Serbia who had the opportunity to propose topics in an informal atmosphere, give suggestions and debate how the Regional Office should function.

During the first part of the conference, participants suggested 13 discussion topics and then they were divided into groups where they discussed those topics, mostly speaking about the promotion of the RYCO, connecting young people through entrepreneurship, educating them about war past, similarities and differences in comparison with already existing ERASMUS+ projects, as well as potential donors of RYCO. Next, participants voted for the six topics which were further discussed.

The conclusions of the group work of young people from Serbia were presented at the Goethe Institute at the panel discussion organized by French and German Embassy on occasion of 54th anniversary of Élysée Treaty which was signed with aim to contribute to the reconciliation between these two countries. During this discussion Christine Moro (Ambassador of France), Axel Dittmann (Ambassador of Federal Republic of Germany), Snežana Klašnja (Assistant Minister of Youth and Sports) and Milica Škiljević (Youth Representative of the Governing Board of RYCO) discussed about the Franco-German Youth Office as an inspiration for establishing Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans.

This discussion was followed by the presentation of the participants of the Open Space Conference with recommendations concerning the work of RYCO. The first group which dealt with the role of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office in the reconciliation process concluded that the Regional Office, together with RECOM, in future should work on education of young people about the events from past. The second group dealt with regional cooperation through entrepreneurship, and they concluded that we need to endorse entrepreneurial spirit of young people through the exchange of information, ideas and skills. The third group discussed the insufficient mobility of young people in the Western Balkans. They concluded that RYCO could look up to successful practices of other mobility programs such as Erasmus+ in order to increase the mobility in the region. The fourth group talked about the promotion of RYCO, saying that not enough has been done in this regard and that we must use media and other forms of promotion in order to make RYCO closer to its beneficiaries. The fifth group tackled the question of informal education and its recognition and promotion by official educational institutions explaining that it should be one of the topics RYCO should deal with. Finally, the sixth group discussed the financing of RYCO and concluded that, besides states, private companies should also be encouraged not only to donate but also to become active partners of the Regional Office.

Recommendations which young people, as friends of RYCO, created at the Open Space Conference will be presented to the Governing Board of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans, while in following period young people all across the region will also have a chance to participate in similar conferences ●

The opportunity for MPs to support young people from Serbia and the region

Youth Initiative for Human Rights welcomes the placing of the Bill on Ratification of the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, on the agenda for discussion in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. We believe that this agreement is of particular importance for all young people in the Western Balkans, especially at a time when political tensions are at the highest level.

Regional Youth Cooperation Office will provide a broader perspective on regional issues and the youth dialogue in the Western Balkans. Initiative believes that we can hope for a lasting reconciliation in the region only when all the young people had the opportunity and an incentive to travel, meet, talk and have dinner together.

The representatives of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights met in December with members of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia to discuss the Bill which will confirm the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Office. On this occasion, the support of all political parties was requested in order for this agreement to be passed in the National Assembly as soon as possible. Initiative expects from MPs not only to vote for this bill, but to use the time for discussion to send a strong joint message of encouragement to young people in Serbia to connect with their peers in the region.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights has advocated for seven years for the idea of establishing an institution modeled after the Franco-German Youth Office, which has proved to be very successful mechanism for reconciliation in post-conflict societies, in the Western Balkan region. Declaration on the Establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) was signed on July 4, 2016 in Paris, by the Prime ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia. The signing of this declaration is the culmination of the efforts of the countries in the region, but also civil society and international partners, to establish the, currently most important, mechanism for reconciliation in the region ●

Belgrade 25 / 5 / 2017
Youth Initiative for Human Rights


Exchange
programs

BLOG DUNJA ŠORMAZ

Recollection and (co)existence in Tuzla, 2017

Recollection and (co)existence is a study visit organized by Youth Initiative for Human Rights from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period from May 24-27, 2017 in Tuzla. The participants were young people from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main goal of the visit was to introduce this heterogeneous group of young people to each other and exchange political, economic and social experiences that they gained in their surroundings.



In addition to exchanging experiences with our peers from Tuzla, together we participated in the commemoration of the crimes at the Tuzla Gate, which took place on May 25, 1995. During the study tour of Tuzla, we were also able to discuss the past war events which took place in the area of this city.

This study visit was, in my opinion, extremely well designed and very informative. We had the opportunity to get to know the historical, geographical, political and social context of the city, the Canton of Tuzla. To be honest, I did not have very high expectations because I was in many cities in Bosnia and somehow the situation and atmosphere were the same everywhere - you could feel that the war was present here. It did not circumvent Tuzla, but what left the biggest impression on me was the very ideology of the city - multiculturalism is still present. The war was run on ethnic and religious grounds, and Tuzla managed to largely preserve such divisions. The proof is that the left is still represented as the main political governing structure. During the sightseeing of the city, the graveyard in the Park of National Heroes particularly attracted my attention, where the victims of the war were buried, regardless of their religious or ethnic affiliation.

We had the opportunity to meet friends from different associations like “Revolt”, “25. May 95. Gate”, “Renewal”, “Association of antifascists and fighters NORA” of Tuzla canton, “ Forum of citizens of Tuzla”. They helped me to discover and understand the very political, social and economical structure of the city of Tuzla. What has left me with a negative impression is the educational program “Two schools under the same roof” and the understanding of the language itself (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian). It is a program of segregation and discrimination.

I must admit that I knew little about the event at the Gate and that I was very unpleasantly surprised that nobody talks about this in Serbia. That day was my paradox. On one hand, we have a really horrific event that breathes with symbolism (25th of May - Youth day, a grenade falls where young people gather and 71 people are killed, the average age being 22, the intent of those who committed this crime is quite clear and unfortunately very “wisely designed”), mourning parents, complete silence (especially that evening when the sirens were turned on, I had the feeling as if this event is happening again). On the other hand, we have the politicization of this event by the authorities and hate speech. When the whole day was over, I checked on the news whether somebody had mentioned anything in Serbia - I did not find any news. So much about that.

This visit certainly helped me to get to know the city, to meet new people who are fighting for justice, rights and who try to make Tuzla a city for everyone. I believe this is a difficult job, but not unreachable. Multiculturalism is possible, if everyone really wants it. Citizens of Tuzla showed initiative and progress can be seen. I hope that, in other parts of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia, this model will be taken both by the citizens and by the political power itself. Only by joint effort can we achieve this. This visit was a small step towards a tolerant society. Nurture it and repeat it for some future generations ●

Students of Faculty of Political Science visiting Kosovo



In the period from March 15-17, another study visit of the students of the Faculty of Political Science to Kosovo was organized. Young politicologists were able to meet with numerous officials during this visit and find out more about the political situation in Kosovo.

On the first day of the visit, they talked with Director of the Office of Community Affairs in the Government of Kosovo, Ivan Tomić. In the continuation of the visit, in the parliament of Kosovo, students had a chance to talk with Nenad Rašić, a deputy of the Serb List on the status of Serbs in institutions, the relation of the official Belgrade to the Serbs in Kosovo, and the boycott of institutions by the Serb List.

On the last day of their stay in Kosovo, students visited the Humanitarian Law Center of Kosovo, where they discussed the riots of March 17, 2004 with representatives of the organization, and then visited the New Social Initiative in Kosovska Mitrovica

"Social Trauma & Resilience" Program

In Zagreb, from April 18-20, 2017, a series of events were held within the "Social Trauma and Resilience" program, whose goal was to present ways in which art and culture participate in the process of dealing with social trauma.

Initiative hosted ten young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia as part of the regional exchange program. They attended all the events of the program and additional activities that were organized for them. They visited the exhibitions "Dubrovnik in the Homeland War 1991-1995" in the "Croatian Historical Museum" and „D(r)ugo sjećanje" (Long/other memory) in the premises of the Croatian Design Society dealing with the culture of memory and attitude towards civilian war victims, as well as the "Serbian National Council" where they discussed the culture of memory and facing the past in Croatia.

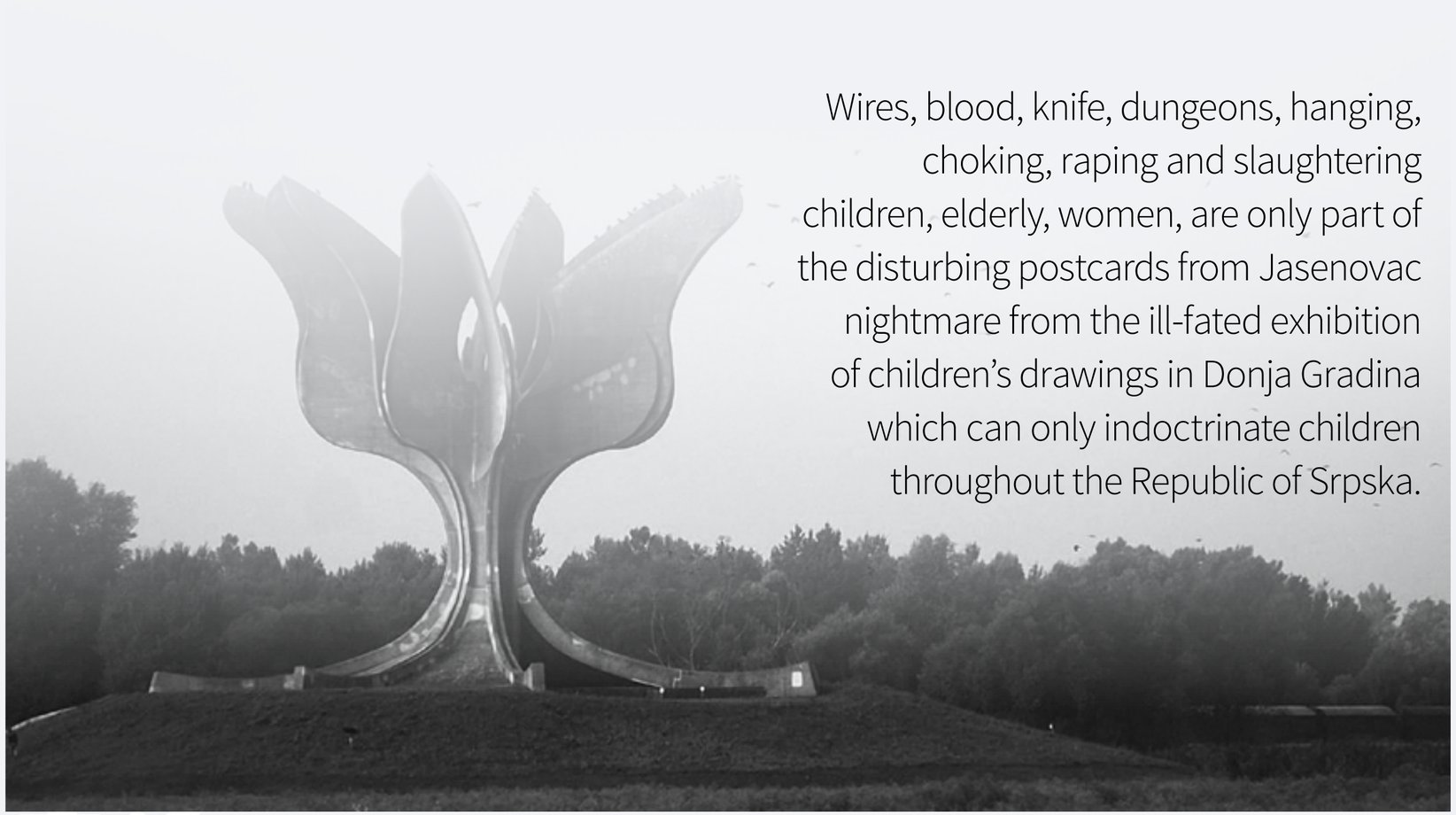
The first lecture in the main program was given by Boris Cyrulnik, a French ethologist, neurologist, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. The speaker talked about social trauma and personal traumatic experiences he faced as a Jewish child during the Second World War in a lecture titled "Traumatic Memory and Concept of Resistance". After that, a panel discussion on the subject of the traumatic past on the film was held, where the film directors Goran Dević, Ognjen Glavonić and Kristina Kumrić, as well as the theater director Borut Šeparović, spoke. After that, the film "Depth II" by Ognjen Glavonjić was shown.

The last day of the program began with a panel discussion on the topic of social trauma in literature, where writers Ivica Đikić, Ivana Bodrožić and Barbara Matejčić talked about their experiences on writing about topics involving social trauma. The program ended with the screening of the film "The People Against Fritz Bauer" directed by Lars Krause



BLOG NIKOLA KRSTIĆ

View from Belgrade: Jasenovac is still working, it turns out it was never shut down



Wires, blood, knife, dungeons, hanging, choking, raping and slaughtering children, elderly, women, are only part of the disturbing postcards from Jasenovac nightmare from the ill-fated exhibition of children's drawings in Donja Gradina which can only indoctrinate children throughout the Republic of Srpska.

"The best period was when Croatia was still entering the European Union. Everything was possible then and they couldn't do anything as they do now. While the EU today is powerless against the blows of neo-ustasha ideology," an acquaintance from Zagreb said. "That awaits Serbia as well, you'll see, just wait till you enter the community. You get to do what you want because you will no longer have an aim."

Through the collapse of the former Yugoslavia - through a decade of infection of pervading nationalism and through the storm of the worst battlefield on the European soil ever since World War II - the number of victims was the easiest topic for bickering among local politicians in post-Tudjman-Milošević era.

Since I live in Belgrade, I know that for decades now in the minds of Serbian generations, mentioning the word "Jasenovac", that place of former inferno in the Balkans, causes foaming at the mouth, fuming, threatening with a finger, banging on the table, that a person would think, dear god, they would go with their bare hands to today's Croatia. That, more or less, happened in 1991, when the RTS Dnevnik was doing it successfully.

Anyway, watching Aleksandar Vučić - the Serbian prime minister, now the future president of the Republic - in the city of Donja Gradina, last year, taping on the microphone stand, waving his hands before the general public that came to give "honor" to the opening (!) of the concentration camp , that is, in this case, Donja Gradina, which is now on the territory of the Republika of Srpska, the warmongering rot in the state of Denmark was felt again. His thunderous words that resembled those inflammatory ones of the nineties, how "the Serb will never go in the pit again", resonated in Serbia and Republic of Srpska last year.

The white board with a magical black, round and flat number of, a total of 700,000 dead, killed, missing, and deceased was appearing on tv screens on those days. Then, this figure is further





distributed, equally and roundly, to 500,000 dead Serbs, 40,000 Roma, 33,000 Jews, 20,000 children, and then 127,000 antifascists, which gives a round number, somewhat smaller of a million. But, not to be cynical, what these numbers hide, while they are secretly piling up in the years to come, is a much deeper evil, so muddy, slippery and sticky, that you can barely approach it normally, without accidentally getting injured, poisoned or lost it in forever.

Highway to Hell

In travels to Croatia, in a project in which I participated, visits to Jasenovac and Donja Gradina were also included . In short, for those who are unfamiliar: all of it was once a large concentration camp Jasenovac, which, unfortunately - when I must say so - worked from 1941 to 1945. Donja Gradina was just one part of the complex, and now parts of the remnants of the separated camp belong to Republic of Croatia, while the other to Republic of Srpska.

For the first time in my life, for this 23 years, I have gone to the place about which I've heard so many times, watched documentaries, listened to the news and various inflammatory rhetorics about it, and even I myself explored it, as a occult site on which a common man was a demonized enemy of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). Serbian children have been taught from youth, in all possible ways, that today's Croatia has Ustasha heritage; that nothing has changed there; that the Croats continue to kill the Serb infants and that "we" have nothing to look for there.

In front of the Jasenovac memorial center, one of the curators was waiting for us and for an hour he took us through those green fields, where once the devil's dungeon stood.

Pushed away from nationalistic manipulations - of which, I admit, I was a big part of, - I was trying to assess whether our guide is yet another attempt in this twisted wave of historical revision.

"Did the population of the NDH knew what was happening in these camps?" I probed.

"Of course they knew, it's just that nobody was allowed to do anything. Just a word against them, and they would be brought here. For example, the Ustashas would just ran in a nearby village and kill a few hundred people. So, everything was known, everybody just kept silent ", he said.

When asked about officially confirmed number of dead people found in the camp area, he answered that the figure reaches some 84,000. On the website of the Jasenovac Memorial Center, there is a number of 83,145, which was last updated in March 2013.

"I don't believe that the number of victims will ever be final, because many have already died, some, who are still alive, were very young then and can barely remember anything, but we think that it's about 100,000, but I would not want to play with such numbers", the curator pointed out.

In the continuation of the visit, he was thoroughly trying to explain to young students why the Jasenovac was commemorated in three lines for the second year in a row, why we have monstrous revisions, relativization and revitalization of the NDH and whether there are some other historians who will stand on the way of the schizophrenic force of Ustasha.

"Annually we have about 12,000 visitors, perhaps not so much, and as far as schools are concerned, in the past year there were, I think, 12 grades. And that is it. On the level of whole Croatia", he recalled.

You could see on his face that he didn't knew what else to say. He would have probably cried if he could.

As we talked, word by word, he said: "This madness should be put to an end. For once we will really have to draw a line that we must not cross. The whole revisionist team, including the one that filmed "Jasenovac - the Truth", the former Minister of Culture, and others, if it continues like this, we will have to say to them: "Okay, you claim there were no casualties. Then we'll put out that figure of 700,000, as 84,000 is obviously not enough for you, so we'll see what it will do, because all they do is find our mistakes, and so far they have not given any argument or proof", he says , and continues, "You know how someone said: "They came for the communists, I was not a communist. They came for the social democrats, I was not a social democrat. They came for the Jews, I was not Jewish. And then they came for me".

The whole time he was trying, as rationally as possible, to explain how the camp functioned.

"5000 Ustashas received salary here. And they all fled when it was time to run. Do you think any of them were caught? All those poor, ordinary people who were used as a human shield were all killed at Bleiburg, to which they so zealously allude. They all fled, and now they are trying to, as Tuđman called it, "mix our bones." Well, they can't! Victims from Jasenovac and Bleiburg are not the same, and they never will be," he finished, visibly agitated.

In the tour of the memorial museum, different opinions can be noted in the book of impressions.

"It's a shame how the largest death camp is shown. Insufficient display of what really happened here," it was written, while the second comment was: "Stop slandering Croatia and its people with such disgusting lies and untruths. There is no evidence for anything that is claimed here".

It was time for Donja Gradina.

Nightmare in Republika Srpska Street

If I was only ten years younger, a hundred percent crazy, cut off from the entire planet and came from a place where water and electricity are only just being introduced, then maybe I would say that what is displayed in Donja Gradina is normal, but I really can not.

I tried to understand the pictures I saw on the white walls.

I honestly wanted to understand what kind of an Goebbels-like mind you need to have, so that you force a child to draw anything disgusting on the topic of "Jasenovac".

I imagine how the art professor is entering the class where she says that today's topic is "Jasenovac" and that the best works will be sent to the competition.

And then all kids rush to their parents, who expect it with a ready creativity, to draw the abstract, surreal, baroque, and all other possible directions of the idea on how hell on earth looks like.

What's going on? After a short drive, the crossing of the Bosniak-Serb-Croat border, on the left curve we headed for the over-Sava region, where the Ustasha led the detainees in the woods, where they killed, butchered, choked, tortured and buried them in the end. And here, of course, we are being awaited by another curator who addresses us, briefly explains where we are and what actually happened here.

After a short speech, we stop in a small cottage, which should be something like a small museum, as the paintings are displayed on the walls, and in the middle of that room there are various archival data and information about the criminal state and its camp. We soon scatter around, exploring another part of inferno.

Wires, blood, knife, dungeons, hanging, choking, raping and slaughtering children and old women, are just some of the fascinatingly disturbing postcards drawn from the Jasenovac nightmares.

Our second curator kept silent while we were quickly looking. On the table, next to the door where we entered, there was a huge book of impressions. I browse through the pages, and I don't see any comment, glorification, praise, criticism, as in Jasenovac, but only the names of some children and in which school grades they were enrolled. The spark of the sixth sense roamed the corridors of my consciousness.

At the same time, I looked back at the pictures that hung on the wall, and fixed my eyes on the barely visible papers on which the author's names were written. And right next to them, it was written in which grade the creator was in and in which school is he enrolled.

"Wait, these are primary school kids?" I asked.
"Yes, yes they are," he replied.
"Is this a competition?" I continued, bewildered.
"Well, yes, it's on every year," he answered.
"Are there perhaps some of the best works?" I asked, slightly ironically.
"Yes, yes, just the one you stand in front of," he pointed with his finger.

Frozen from the nothingness that appeared before my eyes, I just walked alongside a multitude of these pictures, not looking at them, but at the names and surnames of those children who were at their arts class, or at home, with their parents above their heads who were surely helping them in the picturesque construction of how their grandmothers, grandfathers, and other relatives were killed by the Ustasha knife.

"But is there a higher goal for all this?" I asked.
"There is - a culture of memory," he cemented.

Coming out of this "memory factory", we headed for the forest where all these crimes took place. On the way there, I spoke a few words with a woman from the French Embassy in Croatia, who was with us all the time.

"Is that not a bit too much?" she said in English.
I don't know what to tell you," I smiled sadly.

In front of us, in the midst of the forest, those whiteboards from the television appeared, with those even blacker numbers. All so big, so round and so full of everything and anything. We sat in a circle around our curator who began his regular speech for everyone who came.

"And who are those 128,000 antifascists?" I interrupted him.
"Well, these are other ethnic minorities".
"Croats?"
"Well, they are not just Croats, there are Slovenians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, but none of them have suffered like the Serbs".
"So they are mostly Croats?" I was persistent.
"Um, not only them, there are Macedonians, and Slovenians . . ." he repeated as a broken record.

After a short story about the "butchering endeavor", the curator first answered that there was a list of all 700,000 murdered, but then, only when slightly more pressed by us, he nearly said to "keep it between us" that the number on the board is not exact at all.







"There is an official figure in Belgrade of about 84,000 people, probably over 100,000, but I can not say that," he whispered to everyone.
"Why is this board here then?" Someone asked, as he only shrugged and shook his head desperately.
"I don't know what to tell you," he smiled sourly.

Back in Black

As soon as I was coming back to Zagreb, a lightbulb of suspicion in the hell I felt there light up in my head.

On the Croatian side, the museum was exhaustively empty, shy and wrapped in whitish-diplomatic gloves. The fact is that it's a permanent exhibition since 2006, but what has not been noticed, is how the perpetrator actually looks. Such a site needs a direct framework of evil, or it will, as it is widely done, be dispersed and switched to different forms. So today, like Serbia, Croatia has criminals, bloodsheders and executioners who got off free, only to spite each other in all of this, while the victim ultimately pays the most.

Serbian part of "Donja Gradina" neither warns, nor imposes, nor sees, nor frames, but in a passionately masochistic manner employs evil that, unfortunately, happened here. A miserable exhibition hanging on the walls of a house will not produce any normal culture of memory. On the contrary, it is a systematized indoctrination of children throughout the Republic of Srpska that will not see a clear distinction between NDH and today's Croatia. And what is most prominent here is a primitive system of vengeful character.

However, this exhibition was preceded by a whole series of decisions. Literally written: first it was an idea, then an accepting of the idea by the state institutions, then finding the money for it, announcing the competition, the date of submission, then a bunch of children who create everything, then forming the commission, and commission reviewing, taking the best works, opening the exhibition, and organizing excursions and exhibitions, then ... A whole branch perfected to the last end.

In the end, what should be expected from the people who, instead of marking the liberation, mark the opening of Jasenovac?

And this is precisely what the "memorial exhibition" serves. To create hatred and to cast an anathema of evil in the eyes of their children towards all people, who, incidentally, live in a neighboring country. There is also a problem with those alleged 128,000 antifascists, because - if it is the exact figure, I won't go there, there is certainly someone who is competent - they are majority Croats and Muslims, but that's, god forbid, not politically correct to say.

What Slovenians and Macedonians?

And that's why, unfortunately, Jasenovac still works. Because there is constant "killing" of new people, and creating new monsters.

On one side of the Sava, this vile black hole arouses Ustasha ghosts, while on the other, it creates bloodthirsty avengers. It turns out that it had never been shut down



Regional training on the necessity of establishing a dialogue

In Ulcinj, from April 21- 23 , a regional training was organized for youth wings of political parties gathered at the PYN (Political Youth Network), which brings together young political activists from the Western Balkans. The aim of this training is to strengthen the capacities of youth wings of political parties through establishing dialogue. The training was attended by 30 young people from five countries in the region (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Montenegro).

The issue of establishing a dialogue is presently particularly important when we take into account the current political climate in a region where there is no communication among key political actors. In order to keep the democratization of all the societies in the region going smoothly, the beginning of dialogue is of great importance, especially when such kind of communication is established among young people.

During the three-day regional training sessions, representatives of youth wings of political parties were able to listen to numerous lectures and participate in the discussions on the topic of dialogue. On the first day of the training there was talk of dialogue and its basic characteristics as a method for responding to social conflicts. The following day, participants were able to learn how to use dialogue in the process of facing the past on the Montenegrin case, and how establishing a dialogue in the region looks on the example of Macedonia. The last day of the training was opened by lecturing on the subject of ideology and political parties and then a lecture on the topic of dialogue between Israel and Palestine. A large number of different topics and concrete examples that dialogue is possible, not only in the region, but also in societies that have long been confronted by social conflicts, for which a permanent dialogue between the parties needs to be established, opened up new perspectives for young people in the region.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights, in cooperation with the partner offices from the region, initiated the formation of a regional Political Youth Network three years ago, with the aim of gathering youth structures, within party organizations, about universal democratic values regardless of political ideologies and different political views . This Network has the mission of mutually linking young people in the region and better mutual cooperation and the launch of significant processes that are essential for the successful future cooperation of all Western Balkan countries ●



Rožaje Regional Program

The Montenegrin Civic Alliance and Youth Initiative for Human Rights from Serbia, from May 23-25, organized a study visit to Rožaje. The program brought together young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Kosovo, and the theme of the program was to face the past in Montenegro. Namely, we often talk about the process of coping with the past in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, but Montenegro is rarely mentioned in that context, even though there were serious examples of human rights violations during the wars of the 1990s. On that occasion, we wanted to organize such a program to open up a space for youth talks on war crimes and the transitional justice process in this area. ●

BLOG ANTE PEREZA

Every country in the Balkans has its own version of history

We live in a place where everyone is engaged in history, but at the same time rarely anyone understands it. We, young people, are learning the version of history served by politics, censoring and choosing what we need to know, and what not. Unfortunately, the majority of young people remain on it, forming their views on unfinished black and white stories. In the Balkans, each country has its own version of history, that is, each nation. One event is interpreted differently in Croatian, Bosniak and Serbian books. The story is different, but the model is the same - we justify and hide the mistakes of "our own", carried by the cult of victim, manipulate the figures of the victims to make us the greatest victims. In this political-historical struggle, people's lives become only a figure, twisted depending on affiliation.

I grew up in Croatia, graduated from elementary and secondary school, and currently attending university. Since the beginning of learning history in elementary school, the smallest part has been related to our recent history. As we approach the present, we learn less and less. On ancient civilizations we will know everything, to list Roman emperors, medieval and Austro-Hungarian rulers, and to some extent even the SFRY factors, but these few pages dealing with the period from 1990 till nowadays are certainly insufficient. Few facts from the school, and too much bombardment with a variety of information from the environment leads us to the present situation - we have young people with misguided worldviews, taught to look at only one side of the story, and unwilling to hear the other. Every Croat knows what happened in Vukovar in 1991, but does he know what happened in Ahmići in 1993? There are those who know and deny, but even more terrible are those who justify it.

In the events of the 1990s, today's Montenegro was involved, then as part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was formed with Serbia. Although Montenegro was directly involved in the events, it was always left out of the story in some way. I'm talking about it from the Croatian viewpoint. The blame is mostly shifted to Serbia, and terms such as serbian grandism and chetniks are used. We are acquainted with the attack on Dubrovnik, with the famous '' Lovćen's villa cries, please forgive us, Dubrovnik '', but more than that it's hard to tell. Especially for events after the peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube region in 1998 after the end of the war in Croatia.

The goal of each program of dealing with the past is to raise the issue of civilian casualties, to honor them regardless of the nation and religion, and regardless of who committed this crime. During this study tour, we mostly dealt with two crimes - Kaluđerski Laz and the massacre in the village of Bukovica. Chronologically first , the crime in Bukovica, occurred between 1992 and 1993 against members of the Muslim population of that settlement in the northwest of Montenegro. The city was badly damaged in First and Second World Wars, and the suffering of the nineties was the last nail in its head. We watched the documentary about the subject, which illuminates the details of this tragic event and calls on the authorities to finally punish the perpetrators.

The second crime, Kaluđerski Laz, was the topic of the second day of this journey. In 1999, the refugee column moved through the mountains, fleeing from Kosovo in that snowy spring, wanting to find security and peace in Rožaje. Unfortunately, this thought, as well as their lives, will be extinguished by the bullets of soldiers hidden on the surrounding bends. Journalist Sead Sadiković and the then chief of the Rožaje police, Šemso Dedeić, told us about the terrible event. No books or documentaries can be compared with talking to people who have lived through it. At that moment, you are shook by even the smallest details that you wouldn't even notice. We spent the afternoon in the surroundings of that place, enjoying the benefits of nature that by no means gave away what had happened there. Still, hidden in the forest, today there are trenches from which the criminals "defended" Rožaje from innocent civilians who only wanted peace and security for themselves and their families. Later we find out that none of them has been convicted. With extra bitterness, we leave the place that does not have a suitable monument, hoping that justice will win someday.

This trip was my first visit to Montenegro, and there are probably not many of us who previously visited inland than the coast. But Rožaje and the surroundings left me with a big impression. The warmth of the hosts, the warmth of the city and the beauty of nature would leave everyone without words. The places of tragedy were not the only places we visited, we also saw the Ganića kula, a museum replica of a defensive residential tower that testifies how much Rožaje nurture their history. We also entered the Kucan mosque, one of the oldest mosques in the city. A Muslim friend from Bosnia and Herzegovina told me quite suddenly about this, introducing me to other customs and culture. It's fascinating when you think about how much you connect with people in just a few days. Since that moment when we met in Sarajevo, and then in Rožaje, when you remember people only by faces or some detail, until the moment of goodbye which is difficult for you, together we have passed many moments that will forever remain in my memory. Getting to know new places, events from our history, as well as new friends from all countries, is the reason why everyone should attend such programs



Working in Partnership

Within the first part of the Erasmus plus exchange program “Working in partnership” from November 3-10, Initiative was part of a group that worked on creating mechanisms for bringing socially vulnerable groups of youth closer to business sector in Schwerin (Germany) together with colleagues from France , Lithuania, Romania and Germany.





The second part of the “Working in partnership” program began on May 5 in Belgrade and during the five-day program participants continued working on recommendations for better linking marginalized groups of young people, the education sector and companies. In addition, they were able to hear lectures on the topic of social and economic rights, as well as to get acquainted with models of cooperation between young people and the educational and business sectors.

On the last day of their stay in Belgrade, the participants of the Erasmus plus program, were part of the celebration of Europe Day and Victory Day over Fascism, together with activists of Youth Initiative for Human Rights. During a walk in Belgrade, where they were able to get acquainted with the most important monuments and sites important for our anti-fascist past, participants of the program were able to hear the most important facts about the events before and during the Second World War from the historian Milovan Pisari. That day, we visited the Old Fairground (Sajmište) together, the cemetery of the liberators of Belgrade and several other locations, and then we participated in the campaign “Antifascism is my choice!” with the organization Women in Black. ●

“Propose public policies” program

Activism in local communities as a generator of change



During May and June, Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized public policy writing workshops in four regions of Serbia (Vojvodina, central Serbia, southern Serbia and the City of Belgrade), then a national skills training, and the final conference of the “Propose public policies” program.

After the activist workshops, 80 participants of the program had the opportunity to develop a solution of mapped socio-political problems at the local level through four regional public policy writing workshops. Initiative’s mentoring team, comprised of Marko Milosavljević, Luka Božović and Boban Stojanović, helped participants develop a proposal of local policies and discussed the specificities of the Serbian political system with a focus on democracy at local level, examples of good practice of local initiatives and advocacy strategies for solving mapped problems.

The process of work at regional workshops contained two parts: the first, which dealt with the cycle of policy proposals and other, in which program participants, through several lectures (human rights policy as a public policy, panel on illiberal democracies and sessions on how to advocate Ideas in political organizations), had the opportunity to learn about the shortcomings and advantages of democratic order in both Serbia and the world.

From May 12-14, the first regional public policy writing workshop was held in Belgrade, where the participants went through the entire policy cycle for solution proposals such as the introduction of a food bank, sanitary landfill, regulation of night traffic, and reforms of electoral institutions in the city of Belgrade.

Priority of the first day of regional workshops was the evaluation of the mapped problems, and in light of the upcoming elections in Belgrade, the most discussed subjects were public transport and social services, based on which it came to current topics such as the need for better regulation of public transport, the establishment of a sanitary landfill in the city and changing the method of elections to the representative bodies of local governments in Belgrade.

The second regional workshop was held in Zrenjanin from May 16-18, where the participants from Novi Sad, Temerin, Pančevo, Kikinda and Zrenjanin with Initiative’s mentoring team developed policy proposals for addressing communal problems (public areas, sanitary services, city transport), and incentives for better business of small producers in agriculture. The regional workshop in Zrenjanin was an opportunity for participants from different political organizations, parties and civil society organizations from several cities in Vojvodina to compare different approaches to (non) addressing the problems that are being implemented by local authorities.

From May 21-23, a public policy writing workshop was held in Kraljevo, where the participants from Sjenica, Bajina Bašta, Kruševac, Kragujevac and Kraljevo had the opportunity to work on creating solutions for inaccessibility to public institutions for blind and visually impaired persons, recognition of volunteer experience of young people, security issues, as well as proposals for the institutional exchange of young people in the cross-border municipalities of Srebrenica and Bajina Bašta. Program participants at this workshop were very interested in improving the position of young people, especially in the rural parts of the municipalities and cities from which they come. (Kraljevo, Sjenica, Bajina Bašta). Their suggestions, although focused on different topics, advocate redistribution of the budget of the relevant local and national institutions that would lead to positive changes.

For the region of southern Serbia, a workshop was held in Vranje from May 26 - 28, in which participants mapped the problems and worked on policy proposals aimed at creating a local action plan for youth of the Municipality of Preševo, setting criteria for more transparent funding of civil society organizations by cities and municipalities (Vranje), as well as solutions for more accessible movement of persons with disabilities (City of Niš).

Working groups for writing proposals were formed at regional workshops, and received their mentors i.e. members of Initiative’s project team. During a period of one month, the participants had the opportunity for consultations on how to write a draft proposal, obtain information from the relevant institutions as well as the argument for the selection of certain solutions, at least once a week.

After regional workshops and work on drafts of public policy proposals, from June 8-11, in Belgrade, the national skills training was organized for the 20 most engaged participants. Designed with the aim to introduce young people from 12 cities of Serbia to a range of knowledge and skills that would help them advocate public policy proposals, the training was composed of lectures on the development of democratic institutions in Serbia, the process of European integration, the budgeting of public policies through the presentation of successful advocacy processes, to workshops on information of public importance, strategic planning and public speaking and negotiation. In addition to the members of the mentoring team, as well as the representatives of Initiative, the guest lecturers at the national training were Naim Leo Beširi (Institute for European Affairs), Mihailo Gajić (LIBEK), Bobana Macanović (Autonomous Women’s Center), and Igor Jurić from the Tijana Jurić Foundation.

The results of the “Propose Public Policies” program through the presentations of 14 policy proposals for 12 cities were presented to the audience on June 30 at the conference “Youth Who Launch Policies” at Dorćol Platz.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights will, following the completion of the “Propose Public Policy” program, monitor the development of the resulting policy proposals and help participants in the further advocacy process

Tranziciona pravda

Vulin & Initiative don’t share the same values



In December of last year, Initiative’s activists from Croatia taped over the plaque with the Ustasha salute in Jasenovac, after which they were taken in for questioning to the police station. Minister in the Government of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vulin, in a statement for Tanjug condemned the actions of Croatian police and detention of our colleagues named as a “shame of the Croatian state”. In response to his statement, we condemned such selective support for the values that Initiative advocates and instructed Minister Vulin that our organization in all the countries of the former Yugoslavia in which it operates equally requires the responsibility of state organs for committing crimes and the responsibility of society in relation to the recent war past.

Regarding the statement of the Minister Aleksandar Vulin, in which he condemns the detention of our activists for taping over the plaque with the Ustasha salute in Jasenovac, Youth Initiatives for Human Rights of Croatia and Serbia jointly declare that they do not accept selective support for their values and activities and instruct Minister Vulin to concentrate on the process of dealing with the war past in Serbia, and the plight of civilian victims of war in Serbia, as is in his job description, which, so far, he performed so catastrophically.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights is a regional network of organizations operating in Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, and in each state we demand the responsibility of state authorities for committed war crimes, responsibility for the fate of missing persons and for the overall attitude of society towards the war past.

On the other hand, Minister Vulin devoted his entire political career to denying and justifying crimes committed by Serb forces, exalting the myth of the Serbian people as the greatest victim of all conflicts in history and disrupting relations in the region. Minister Vulin spoke very loudly about the conduct of the Croatian police, but he doesn’t consider it a disgrace to initiate a misdemeanor proceeding against Anita Mitić, Director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia, for organizing a commemorative gathering for the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica.

Vulin’s reference to anti fascist values in his efforts to further antagonize Serbian and Croatian society represents a particular type of hypocrisy.

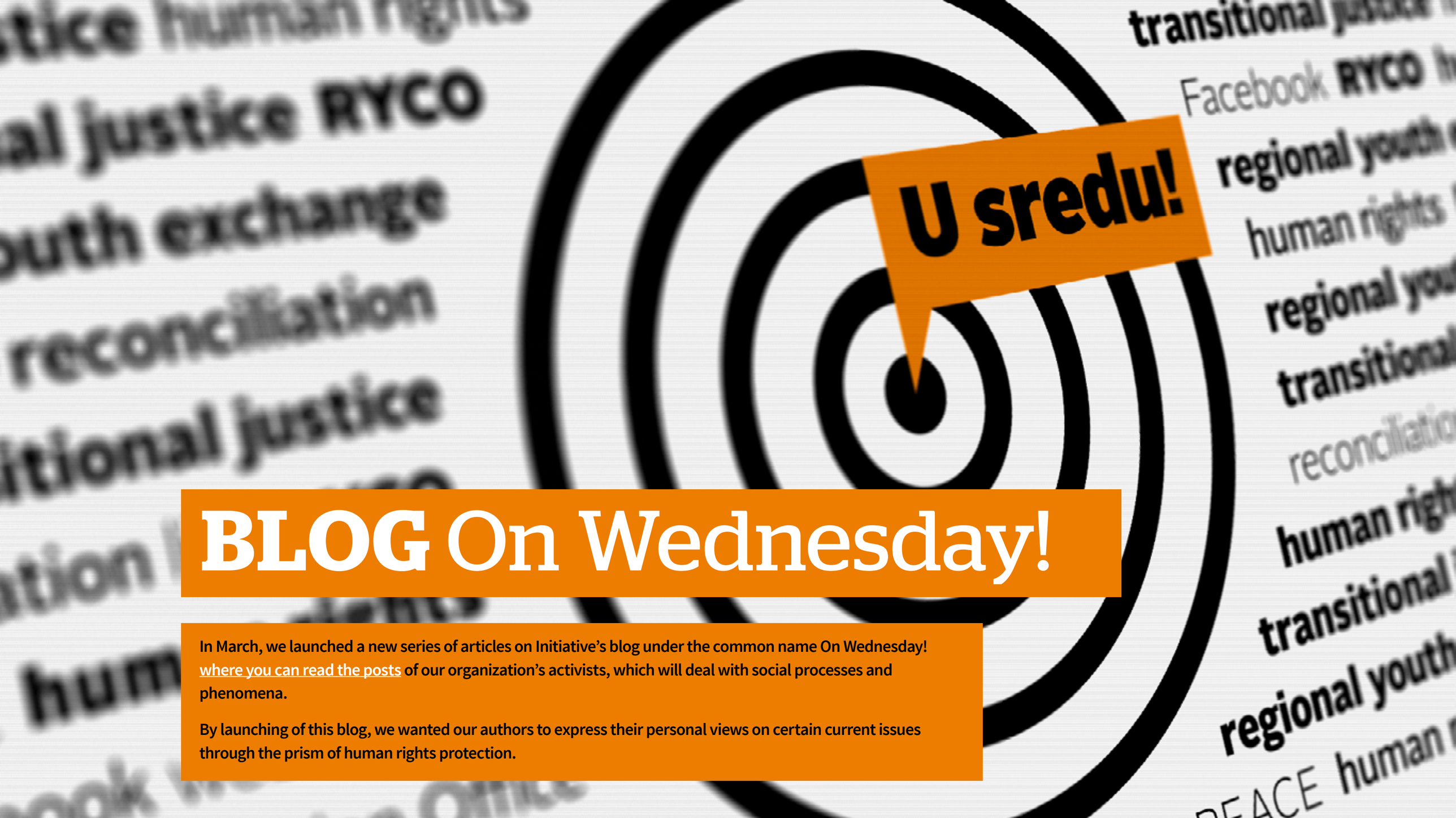
Initiative warns that the policy of watching the neighbor over a gunpoint and the rise of nationalist rhetoric has in the past led to the twilight of all civilizational values, took hundreds of thousands of lives in our countries and destroyed all the moral foundations of our societies, and demands from Minister Vulin and all other politicians in the region to finally stop gambling with our destinies.

Open letter of YIHR Croatia to Minister Vulin

“You, Mr. Vulin, are opposed to Croatian nationalism, but Serbian nationalism you sell every day of performing your public duties. You are far closer to those who have set up this plaque and those who set up commissions instead of removing it, than to us who are ashamed and opposed to it.“protivimo.”

Read the entire letter

→ YIHR.COM



BLOG On Wednesday!

In March, we launched a new series of articles on Initiative's blog under the common name On Wednesday! where you can read the posts of our organization's activists, which will deal with social processes and phenomena.

By launching of this blog, we wanted our authors to express their personal views on certain current issues through the prism of human rights protection.

BLOG INES LUKAČ

Erdoğan's referendum from trans* perspective: Queer strategies and alternative paths of the LGBT movement in Turkey



The constitutional referendum in Turkey, which consisted of eighteen proposed amendments, gave the absolute power to the executive branch of Erdoğan's AK Party on April 16. The most important among these amendments is the abolition of the position of the prime minister (hence the transformation of the presidency from the previous ceremonial position to the raw political leadership), as well as the discretion of Erdoğan to appoint ministers, judges and state officials at his own volition. In the process of creating the autocratic rule of the current president, this election also means that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will have a constitutional right to extend his presidential mandate by 2029.

One of the first challenges to Erdoğan's willful autocracy happened in June 2015, when the pro-Kurdish political option HDP crossed the 10% census and secured a seat in Parliament where the AK Party had an absolute majority. In the next elections in November of the same year, AK Party again failed to get absolute support from the voting body in Turkey. First of AK strategies that could be observed after these elections was increased violence against ethnic and religious minorities in Kurdistan, imprisonment of critical thinking journalists, academics, professors, disgruntled members of the working class, as well as LGBT activists. Anyone who expressed resistance to the dictatorial regime and protested was labeled as a "terrorist" by the ruling regime: Kurds, Alewis, leftists, activists, sex workers, students. In July 2016, media articles were packed with headlines of an alleged coup attempt by armed formations in Turkey and to date it has not been clarified who initiated this act. The ruling party directly accused the religious leader Fethullah Gulen who was living in USA in that period. Based on the data available to Counterpunch, 34,000 Turkish citizens were dismissed and suspended from work, including 7,300 university professors and 4,300 judges. 231 journalists were detained, while 140,000 people were detained at least once in accordance with the newly-enacted Emergency Law.

In his political address on March 17 this year, president Erdoğan said that the referendum of April 16 will be "a revenge for July 15" (the date of the attempted coup). Following the announcement of a state of emergency by the ruling party, violence based on nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and patriarchal values escalated in Turkey. The "security" discourse in the political speeches of the ruling party's representatives has contributed to Turkey's streets never being more dangerous for LGBT people, as well as a fertile ground for organizing homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic groups who used the atmosphere to "defend the Turkish people, unity, and honor". Wisam Sankari, a gay refugee of Syrian descent, and Hande Kadar, a trans* activist, were brutally killed during July and August of the previous year and to date the legal process has not been initiated due to the state of emergency in Turkey. The perpetrators of these abominable crimes are still unknown.

I called the perspective from which I approached the topic of the referendum in Turkey as a trans* perspective. The reason for this lies not only in my trans* identity, but in the transgression process itself against and beyond the perspective of a political analyst positioned as an outsider of this country. In the period from 2012 to 2016 I was a student of sociology at Bogazici University in Turkey: a period of insecurity, the arrest of my professors, colleagues, LGBT activists, friends, and acquaintances. A set of pride and fear is something that was typical for students of our university during these years. Pride because we live in a LGBT-friendly vacuum where we can actively organize ourselves and be in constant contact with professors who appreciated and respected our work. Continuing fear over the fact that I knew that my university average was the highest compared to other scholarship holders in the state of Turkey, but my trans* identity eventually proved to be an obstacle to receiving recognition from the Turkish Ministry of Education as the best graduate student in 2016. This act has made my fear even more intense, and it all pointed out that in the end I would not be able to get a Bachelor's degree on which I

worked hard after my emigration from Serbia. Fortunately, my university decided on its own to reward me with a formal acknowledgment for human rights activism at our graduation ceremony in June last year. For me, this recognition was an obvious example of conflict potential among the academic and political elite in Turkey with whom Erdoğan is fighting with all forces. As in medieval France, Erdoğan is seeking a healing remedy for this conflict through centralization and concentration of power in his hands as a "sultan" who is not restricted by any law. His mechanism for resolving the structural political conflict in the country has had a strong impact on all minority groups in Turkey, and primarily on the LGBT population which is marginalized and excluded in his vision of the new Turkey. After all, it does not matter at all whether this queer* existence is embodied in a murdered trans* sex worker or trans* student with an average of 10: marginalization, exclusion, and the deprivation of basic human rights is part of our common precariousness created by the policies of the ruling party in Turkey.

Why is the emphasis on queer* important in the post-referendum atmosphere in Turkey?

Homophobia and transphobia certainly have a fertile soil for expansion in a system that works to destroy democracy in the process of institutionalization of the state of emergency. Such a vision is not inclusive for safe places intended for LGBT population, taking into account the AKP discourse related to LGBT rights. Erdoğan certainly showed it in 2015 at a pre-election rally in Diyarbakir holding the Quran in his hand and shouting, "This country will not have a gay presidential candidate," thus alluding to the pro-Kurdish HDP policy that proved to be highly inclusive for feminist and LGBT groups all over Turkey.

Creating an atmosphere in which queer* lives are invisible in the public space and before the law is a strategy of heteropatriarchal regulation that is carried out by the AKP. The concrete reference to this claim is the ban of protests, gay and trans parades in Istanbul and Izmir, as well as the non processing of killers of trans* activists and sex workers. So far, opposition forces in Turkey have managed to maintain their visibility on the streets of Turkey, regardless of police control, intimidation and surveillance. Of course, this process of deleting the LGBT scene in Turkey is not something that this referendum brought, but the intensive process that began on July 15 this year when the AKP mobilized its supporters "in the name of democracy". A crude example of the appropriation of the queer* strategies by the right-wing movements and the fundamental Turkish Islamists who perform a performative parody and promptly remind us of how Judith Butler is right.

After the ban of Trans Pride Week in Istanbul, Trans Pride has been declared illegal by the state authorities. Regardless, trans activists including myself had gathered in the main square in Istanbul. As a direct result of the state ban, several paramilitary groups and jihadist factions have tried to prevent the march followed by a direct call by the group called the Anatolia Muslim Youth claiming that those who join the jihad (holy war) go to heaven. Side by side with the police, jihadists attacked Trans Pride and it was a direct product of irrational decisions of the state administration to send 20,000 police officers to forcibly stop the march in which we participated.

The focus on queer* in post-referendum Turkey is important because of the history of common and intersectional activities between LGBT population, women, activist for environmental protection and anti-urban transformation, as well as the child rights activist. The reason for this coalition is the fact that all these groups are faced with obstacles that are a direct product of the gender binary system and the model of a "proper citizen" of Turkey (" proper citizen" syndrome), which patriarchy preserves in many modern states. In addition, killers of trans* women and hate crimes directed towards trans* communities are a direct product of the same patriarchal power. If these groups have a common enemy, it is rational that their struggle must be united in certain historical moments such as this one.

Public discussion regarding court procedures, the creation of social pressure, and the disclosure of details of murders and torture of LGBT activists in Turkey has been a regular strategic practice of queer* organizations in the past. The possibilities are great that the activist strategy does not continue in the same direction in the presidential system chosen at this referendum. Certainly, the law enacted in the form of a decree, which is made possible after this referendum, opens up space for Erdoğan to finally implement controversial laws on the banning of abortion and entering into marriage with minors proposed by the AKP officials, but in the end it was not adopted by Parliament.

Although the question of the Turkish referendum is of crucial importance for the LGBT movement in Turkey, everything indicates that this topic is lost in the discourse of major changes related to the systematic amendments proposed by the ruling party. The newly adopted changes to the Turkish Constitution do not include even the indication of the protection of individuals based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The new constitution of Turkey is not a mere transformation of the parliamentary system into a presidential, but rather the accumulation of power in the hands of one man who hinders queer* monitoring of court proceedings related to hate crimes and the disapproval of free assembly in the streets of Turkey. It seems that the alternative path for the LGBT movement is not clearly defined after several days since the referendum, but certainly the intention of the AKP to erase the existence of LGBT scenes in Turkey is not feasible given the historical fight that has always been led by a coalition with the Kurds and other minority groups in Turkey. Perhaps Erdoğan's Turkey is based on heteronormative and phobic patterns that were never more visible than now, but this certainly does not erase the activist intersectionality in practice and the association of different minority currents. There are very few modern countries that can boast about this fact ●

Human rights are a *must have* every season



On the first day of April, a one-day human rights training session was held for high school students who, after successful completion of the program, became “junior human rights defenders”.

Through our years of work with young people, we have realized that human rights are for many abstract concepts that everyone thinks they know, but it is difficult for everyone to define and describe. This interactive training was an opportunity to show what human rights are for us and how we fight for them on a daily basis.

At the beginning of the training participants were addressed by Nina Trifunović, Program Coordinator for High School Students of Youth Initiative for Human Rights, who spoke about the idea on which this program was created. After the introductory lecture on the basic concepts, the history of human rights and the Universal Declaration held by Sofija Todorović, Initiative’s Program Assistant, we talked with high school students about discrimination - what is discrimination for them, how to recognize it in their surroundings and how to fight it.

At the next lecture on democracy and activism, high school students could hear from Initiative’s director, Anita Mitić, how it looks to live activism for 24 hours, seven days a week, and fight for ideas that change society. Ivan Kutlarović, an activist and lecturer in this training, told high school students about his first visit to Kosovo and participation in numerous activities of Initiative. The two of them, together with young participants in the training, discussed democracy, how we all understand it and how we daily question it through activism as a necessary phenomenon in the way of building democratic values in society.

At the end of the training, the first generation of junior human rights defenders were awarded diplomas.

Only a few weeks later, there was another lecture for high school students who, on the previous training, selected the topic of the module that was processed. Namely, the topic that was singled out as the most important one that was talked about on the second one-day human rights lecture, was the war conflict in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

In the introductory lecture, Sofija Todorović spoke about the historical, social context and events that preceded the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. Jasmina Lazović, an activist and lecturer, then talked about the beginning of war conflicts in all the countries of the former Yugoslavia individually, as well as massive violations of human rights that took place during the war.

We look forward to all future lectures that we will organize for high school students in the future ●



We remember the crime in Štrpce

On February 27, we marked the anniversary of the crime in Štrpce, in which members of the Republika Srpska Army killed 20 non-Serb civilians.

Together with organizations Women in Black and the Humanitarian Law Center, we organized a peace action called “We remember the crime in Štrpce” in black and silence in front of the main entrance of the Belgrade railway station. With this action we reminded of the 1993 event when armed detachments “Osvetnici” took passengers from the train number 671 that took off from Belgrade



25 years since the beginning of the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina

Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Women in Black, Autonomous Women’s Center, Dah Theater, Women against Violence Network, Women in Black Network, Reconstruction Women’s Fund and the Anti-Fascist Alliance on April 6 marked a quarter of a century since the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina through a “Remember! 25 years since the start of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina” peace action, on the Belgrade Republic Square.

Participants of the action, held the performance “25 years - 25 mirrors”, in which mirrors with black ribbon reminded of the cities that suffered during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Sarajevo, Žepa, Višegrad and many others. Large banners that read “Solidarity” and “Responsibility” announced that together we will persevere in striving to punish those responsible for the crimes and that we will never forget the victims.

With this action, we also reminded of the siege of Sarajevo that lasted 1,475 days, during which more than 11,000 adults and more than 1,600 children were killed, and over 480,000 missiles were fired



European Leaders Training Seminar

From March 11, a seminar was held in France which brought together 20 human rights activist who, among other things, dealt with issues of the rise of the extreme right in Europe and the participation of civil society in countering the growing extremism.

Participants of the seminar also spoke about the current refugee crisis and the fight against hate speech.

During the ten days of the seminar, participants had the opportunity to visit the Museum of immigration, Shoah Memorial, participate in a protest against the hate speech used in the presidential campaign of the National Front, Marine Le Pen and be part of the festival "Sarajevo sur Seine"



Visit to Strasbourg

Participants of the program visited the Struthof-Natzweiler Memorial, the first concentration camp liberated by the US Army as a part of the training "Remembrance and learning from World War II" organized by the Council of Europe and the Russian Federation from April 24-28. Among the detainees from all over Europe, there were detainees from the area of former Yugoslavia at this concentration camp

Interns about YIHR

Before my internship in YIHR I wasn't able to engage in activism more seriously, although the desire for it existed for a long time. After 5 months spent in Youth Initiative for Human Rights, I leave with a few interesting experiences, learned skills and new friendships. Walking exhibition in Novi Sad or action in Beška are events that surely left a deep mark on my views on activism. Skills such as organizing conferences or working on different reports are part of a practical set of skills that I carry into some future internships. Friendships, which I built during internship, with people who truly try to make a small part of Serbia and the region better are of great value to me. In the end, I hope that Initiative will remain a refuge and a place for learning for all young people like me, who think differently and want work for it!

—Marta Vasić



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