



**YIHR** 2014.

YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA

NISMA E TË RINJVE PËR TË DREJTAT E NJERIUT



RADOVAN RAŠA KUPRES, steering committee member

# Everything is difficult when you're young

## Especially

IN SERBIA. It is not by chance that this is where a university blooms, that sends an advertisement cry to the freshmen to wrap up their studies as quickly as possible so they could “scoot“ country. Youth Initiative for Human Rights was founded at the moment when the culprits for the horrible past invested all their forces to make the future disgusting to the new generations. Although he was very young, Andrej Nosov recognized the state of affairs with impeccable instinct and he rolled the snowball that continues to grow.

The idea spread from Belgrade through the area that, for various reasons, we call the region. It turned out that there are many young (and less young) people who do not want to be packed in a box. And they refuse to take the path of least resistance. They do not swallow the candy wrapped in the so-called traditional values, that causes sickness such as prejudice, hatred, discrimination... They do not see the borders between the neighbors as trenches. And they ask the generation of their fathers without hesitation – What did you do in the war? They do not think that it is only possible to organize themselves

into a pack of hooligans disguised as sports fans. And they know that the rule of law is only a dead letter, and on a bureaucratic paper, without full respect for human rights always and everywhere – on the street, at school, company, in the media, at the barracks, in prisons... Over more than 10 years of work, YIHR developed considerable skills for articulation of the powerful youth's lust for life into actions that make the society more decent and freer. It did things that the establishment ignored as cases of madness only to, after some time, present them as its own unquestionable convictions. Thanks to YIHR, many girls and boys discovered that activism is, in fact, sexy!

YIHR bridged epochs. It is sufficient to say that it was founded before Facebook came into our lives. I am exhilarated and encouraged that, as time passes, YIHR is getting younger. I do not only think about the age of its members, but primarily about its contagious dynamism and open culture of the organization. Today's YIHR proves that digital natives are not only the Me Me Me Generation. Yes, it is difficult when you are young. But, it is far from impossible.

# One Helluva Team!



### Giulia Naboni

PARIS SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, ITALIJA

During my bachelor's in Italy, I studied Serbian history and politics, which I found both complex and fascinating. In addition, I felt the necessity to understand and experience how a Human Rights NGO worked on a daily basis. The YIHR gave me the chance to combine the two!

At the Youth Initiative I was given the opportunity to attend extremely interesting events and conferences about Transitional Justice and Memorialization, the topics I was working on. Being surrounded by young activists that share enthusiasm for what they do and are always open to debate has been one of the best sides of my experience in Belgrade.

# Our

### Drew Haskins

DUKE UNIVERSITY, VAŠINGTON DC, SAD

I visited YIHR through DukeEngage and SIT program, and loved working there because I like the way they are involved with the youth. It is inspiring to see them work with future young leaders and instill great values in them. My favorite experience in Belgrade was organizing peaceful viewings of World Cup matches as part of YIHR's "Navijaj za Komšije" program. I enjoyed seeing how people could cheer for their neighbors in a safe space free of violence.



### Marine Morin

LILLE 2 LILLE UNIVERSITY, FRANCUSKA

I came to Belgrade to conclude my masters degree. I chose YIHR because of the promotion of protection of human rights, while at the same time it was an opportunity for me to see what kind of policies of European integration exist in Belgrade and how they are applied. While being an intern at YIHR, I met many amazing people, I learned a lot of interesting things about Serbia and what kind of fight is to defend human rights there.

### Jovana Panić

FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCES, BELGRADE

I fell in love with Youth Initiative three years ago, when I was a RECOM activist. Since that moment I tried my best to participate in as many activities as possible. But only when I became an intern at YIHR did I realize how many things happen there. It is incredible how passionate all of the team members are when it comes to creating and implementing projects. Every day I have the opportunity to learn something new and to meet extraordinary people. I am very thankful for the opportunity to be an intern at YIHR and I strongly believe that this experience will be of great benefit in my further career.

# Interns

### Ana Podjanin

UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA, ŠVAJCARSKA

I was really impressed by all YIHR projects and besides all the things I've learned about the problem of the emigration of intellectuals (which was the the subject of the paper I've written), I think there was not a single day when I didn't learn something new, in particular about the Balkan region in general, and YIHR's cross-border cooperation. Otherwise, Belgrade is a city where I do come from time to time and which I absolutely love!





# Exchange

# Programs

Although established to connect young people from Prishtina and Belgrade- two cities so close, yet so culturally distant, YIHR widened its focus on the youth exchange in the whole region. Creating a space where it is possible to establish some new connections between young people whose fate was much affected by the past, remained a mission of YIHR, as something to be recognized among other organizations dealing with the protection of human rights.

More than 15 000 people participated in YIHR exchange programs, and among them there were those whose parents were the war victims, and sometimes even the participants carried the burden of tough past. That is why it was not possible to speak about the future, without the understanding of the events from the last decade of the 20th century. In all of the agendas of the exchanges, never did the YIHR forget the conversation about the Fall of Yugoslavia, crimes committed in this region, always focusing on the facts.

It was a pleasure to see how prejudices about “the others” disappeared when the youngsters visited Kosovo, Croatia or Bosnia for the first time. It was never easy to take a group to Prijedor, Sjeverin, Konjic, Ovčara, Prekaz, but it was important to break the images media constructed in order to create a better future.

Working over a decade on cross-border youth connections, YIHR has decided that it would be much easier if non-governmental institutions had other regional institutions as their partners. Would regional cooperation be promoted since primary school, and the students got the chance to meet people from the countries they learnt about from history books and media that informed mostly concerning the war, the investigation of the Public Opinion about stereotypes which youngsters in our region have, would lead to different conclusions. If we were to promote the tolerance, cooperation and trust through the structured programs of youth exchange supported by the every branch of the authority - from the local authorities to the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Western Balkans would have different future ahead.

That is precisely why YIHR has been advocating institutionalization of a regional exchange program. The year of 2014 was marked by talks with institutional representatives in the region of ex-Yugoslavia about possibilities this program offers.

Last August, YIHR was publicly supported by the highest level of authority in the Republic of Serbia. Establishing the Western Balkan Youth Union was one of the five things our Government presented at a conference in Berlin where all the leaders of the countries in region gathered.

While working intensively in the previous 12 months on advocating the institutional exchange program, YIHR worked at the same time to conduct the program of cross-border cooperation with the intention to get the chance to as many people possible to visit the region for the first time. Having in mind that program participants are the best for spreading the word about this way of work and breaking of stereotypes and prejudices, YIHR cooperated in 2014 with numerous partners from both governmental and non-governmental sector in region and beyond.

Regional Network of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights with its offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia is dedicated to the establishment of an official mechanism for interethnic and cross-border youth exchanges in the Western Balkans region. YIHR believes that such a mechanism should be established and funded by the governments in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania.

Due to turbulent history in the Western Balkans throughout the 20th century and especially violent process of dissolution of former Yugoslavia, official cooperation among countries in this region is not yet properly developed. Particular governments' interests and lack of sense for regional dimensions of mutual problems and joint efforts for progress influences this cooperation. This situation has significant impact on youth generations. YIHR finds it important to provide young people with tools for creating new ties among post-war generations and gaining personal experience about neighbors that will be free of stereotypes inherited from official narratives, political discourses, media reporting and official educational systems.

Since its establishment in 2003 YIHR Regional Network is conducting various informal cross-border and visiting programs among different ethnic groups within countries and among the countries in the region. Parallel to this YIHR is advocating the establishment of official channels of communications for young people in the Western Balkans. Through its rich experience in bringing young people from post-conflict countries together, YIHR realized that such circumstances are created in the region, which opens space for establishment of official channels for youth exchanges.

## YIHR believes that in the process of establishment of an official youth exchange program in the Western Balkans region it is important to follow these criteria:

- ➔ Governments as founders of the program: Respective governments of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania should establish and support this program. They should be in charge of its functioning and sustainability. This will be a sign that regional governments are dedicated to strengthening regional cooperation and willing to take active role in providing space for young people to tear down existing barriers, break down prejudice and create atmosphere for tolerance that will replace xenophobic attitude of young people in the region of former Yugoslavia towards their neighbors.
- ➔ The role of civil society: It is extremely important to have regional governments as founders of this program and their dedication to the idea of regional cooperation among young people through certain financial sources that will be invested in the program, but civil society should also play a significant role in outlining its mandate and designing its activities. Organizations that have valuable experience in dealing with cross-border programs that in-

volve young generations as well as those that gather great number of young people through their activities should contribute to this process, especially in its initial phase.

- ➔ Enabling mobility where obstacles still exist: The role of this program should be to inspire mobility of young people and intensify it in circumstances where it is needed. Special focus should be put on the issue of mobility among people from Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as on finding solution for visa liberalization between these two countries. Additionally, the procedures of acquiring visas for regional countries which are EU members should be simplified for those that still can not travel freely through Schengen zone. In this regard the issue of enabling foreigners to enter Serbia through Kosovo (instead of traveling through Macedonia) should be solved.
- ➔ Opening official schooling system for participation in regional exchanges: In order to involve greater number of people, gain multiple effect and ensure full support for various programs that involve schools in exchanges, special focus should be put on enabling cooperation among elementary and high schools as well as universities with no obstacles.
- ➔ Ensuring recognition of university diplomas in the region: Since the borders in the Western Balkans region are not ethnical and lot of students are gaining their university degree in some of neighboring countries in their native languages, it is important to create mechanisms for simpler process of diploma nostrification. General diploma recognition might have an impact on higher flow of young people in the region.
- ➔ Raising awareness among young people about multiperspectivity of historical narratives in the Western Balkans: The issue of dealing with the past should play important role in this program and may not be ignored. It is not to be applied only for programs whose content is related to this topic, but also to other programs that do not necessarily deal with it. Participants of this program should be inspired to learn about differences among existing perspectives and think in this spirit. This is why this program requires qualified people who will be handling these visits. Awareness on existence of parallel and conflicting narratives might create more understanding in political terms among young people in the region.
- ➔ Dedication of governments to promote good neighboring relations and serve as promoters of need for enhanced regional cooperation: It is important that in official discourses of regional governments, through synchronized activities of different ministries, media and general spirit in educational system regional cooperation is highlighted as necessary tool for progress and brighter future. The freedom of movement should be especially promoted in areas with existing division in communities and where, despite nonexistence of formal obstacles for mobility, people have psychological barriers to visit neighboring communities.
- ➔ Program Sustainability: From the very beginning of establishment of this program special focus should be put on its sustainability. It should be secured through precise fundraising strategy, but the financial contribution of regional governments should play significant place in operationalization of regional mechanisms that will enable youth visiting programs.

In the light of above mentioned criteria, Regional Network of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights offices finds mutual interest in advocating establishment of the Regional Youth Exchange Program and commits itself to contribute to the process of establishment of this program in the Western Balkans.

# ① Partners at the Highest Levels of Authority

## BTD's Professional Exchange of the Representatives of the NGOs in Belgrade and Prishtina

The first planned move for the representatives of authorities in ex-Yu countries, YIHR made in February and March of 2014 with the idea of the Regional Youth Exchange. During those two months, Jasmina Lazović from Belgrade and Besart Lumi from Prishtina, both working in YIHR, participated in a program of professional exchange hosted by Balkan Trust for Democracy. The goal of this project was to switch the employers in civil sector for a month and let them feel the life and how it is to work in Belgrade, i.e. Prishtina. Jasmina and Besart used this time to investigate the existing initiatives for regional youth exchange and gave that information to the institution in Kosovo and Serbia.

## Yihr and Serbian Umbrella Organization Partnered up With Ministry of Youth and Sports in Establishment of the Youth Union of Western Balkan

During December, YIHR's long lasting work of advocacy for the exchange program was supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry became actively involved in consultations about the process of establishing Western Balkan Youth Union. YIHR expressed the willingness to join efforts with the Serbian Umbrella Organization in institutionalization of current exchange programs so that the idea of regional cooperation could get a new dimension.

## YIHR Visiting Regional Governments

During the October and November, YIHR team traveled in all those regional countries with its offices in order to speak with the current authorities, political parties and international organizations about the Serbia Prime Minister's idea about establishing the Western Balkan Youth Union which is supposed to cover all of the ex-Yu countries and Albania.

The Vice President of the National Assembly of Montenegro Suljo Mustafic is just one of the representatives that had a meeting with YIHR's team. During that meeting, he said that it was important to work on building the tolerance towards our neighbors on Balkan and creating conditions for young people with no prejudices to connect. He fully supported this initiative and its goals and added that it was necessary to make a good and working model for connection that includes both non-governmental and governmental institutions, as well as others willing to participate. The Vice President Mustafić suggested that these conversations should be continued in future on conferences and panels, where all the implementers would be present, supported by the authorities.

## YIHR Visiting the Balkans

YIHR got the support for this program even from the European Union. The political support was given through a three-day visit in Brussels at the beginning of November when the team had meetings with the representatives of different departments of European Commission and discussed the need of establishing an official exchange program. The European Union also financially supported the regional YIHR network by approving the funds for a campaign of advocating the program of the youth exchange in the West Balkans.

## YIHR Visiting Berlin

The establishment of the regional exchange program was the main topic of the study visit in Berlin organized by German Ministry for External Affairs where five representatives of the YIHR's network participated. The representatives of 13 youth organizations from the Balkans were hosted by numerous institutions and organizations from Berlin, including the German-French and the German-Polish Youth Office. The team was hosted in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where the Germany strongly supported the establishment of the youth exchange program in West Balkans.

At the same time, YIHR team from Belgrade met with the representatives of the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs in charge of conducting the youth policies on international level, who came to Serbia to, as they said in conversation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, get more familiar with the actions taken in Serbia with the goal of establishing the Western Balkan Youth Union.

## ② Cooperation With the Civil Sector in the Region

### Cooperation Between the Faculties for Political Science in Belgrade and Prishtina

In 2013 a group of 12 university assistants from Faculties of Political Science in Belgrade and Prishtina tried to establish the first step in the official cooperation between those two faculties from Kosovo and Serbia. Work on fulfilling this task came to numerous obstacles both in Prishtina and in Belgrade, therefore YIHR's project "Cooperation of the Kosovo-Serbia faculties" has not been yet implemented, although the young assistants of the faculties mentioned above did finish their papers which will be found in a publication named "Perspectives of multiethnic society in Kosovo". In this publication the results of field research of ethnic distance between Serbs and Albanians in Prishtina, Gračanica and north and south part of Mitrovica will be presented. The obstacles did not discourage YIHR, but assured the whole team of how necessary was to receive the support from the highest levels for the regional cooperation of young people.

### Having a Coffee with my Neighbor—About Contemporary Literature in Belgrade and Prishtina

As well as previous years, cultural manifestations were one of the means of the exchange YIHR supported. In 2014 YIHR arranged visits for 10 young people from Kosovo and Serbia to the "Polip" festival in Prishtina and "Krokodil" festival in Belgrade as a part of the program "Having a coffee with my neighbor". The participants had the chance to visit, besides capital cities, two more multiethnic places - Prizren and Novi Sad, where they talked with the representatives of different organizations, media and cultural centers.

### Online Activism—Youth LINC Platforms

A website that helps disabled people to find approachable education, a website that fights against the hate speech and a website that would gather all of the young activists in region - all these were the ideas that got the financial support from the Internews organization on the I-lab held in June 2013. YIHR started in 2014 to work on that project with its activists.

The platform Involved not Invalid has the goal to give information about online and offline education for persons with physical disability. Since online education is available to all the Internet users, YIHR conducted wide research for non-formal offline education which would physically be accessible to persons with body disability. Besides providing information about possible education, the platform, as well as the campaign which will follow this program from 2015, aims to raise awareness about problems people with disabilities have to deal with on a daily basis.

Watch Your Language Platform has had a wide support since the previous year - especially of those who deal with freedom of expression online. Besides analysis of the legal acts in the region and asking questions about where is the limit of freedom of speech is, i.e. when does the freedom of speech turn into hate speech, the website serves to show media examples that are somewhere between freedom and hate speech and invites the community to give its opinion

whether some content should be on the Internet. Next to the public's verdict, the website will also present the marks of experts from this area based on the analyses of the legal acts.

Active Balkans is a platform that serves to gather all the information relevant for all those young people that want to do something in their community. On this platform, you can find informative but also fun content about organization establishments, organizing of street actions, online schools of activism, and contacts of organizations and individuals that would potentially support the young activists.



*Krokodil in Prizren*



*YIHR visiting regional governments*



*Youth LINC platforms*

Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia and Croatia worked on implementation of a project in 2014 dealing with cross-border cooperation supported by IPA fond, under the name “Europe Equals Equality”. Through training courses, friendship caravans and finally a festival dealing with human rights, young people from Šid, Apatin, Bačka Palanka, Subotica, Osijek, Vukovar, Pakrac and Slavonski Brod had a chance to meet, work together and create programs in their communities which promote human rights.

The first step in this program was education for trainers, where 24 young people learned about human rights, the Fall of Yugoslavia and its impact on contemporary socially-political life in new countries. These participants shared their knowledge about mechani-

“Vukovar of Freedom”, “Vukovar of Love” sending a message that ethnically motivated violence needs to stop. They consider that violence cannot be a solution for any problem and that by using force the ethnic distance between two communities just keeps getting worse. Bojan Fligler from the YIHR in Zagreb condemned the violence and highlighted the importance of promoting other values among youngsters, values such as peace and tolerance. “It is important to us that media broadcast that at this moment young people from Croatia and Serbia are in Vukovar, working on the promotion of the regional cooperation and protection of minority rights. Here are the people that send messages filled with love in two scripts.”

and in time in solving issues like this. He invited the media to do their job professionally in order to stop sensationalist reports that lead to bigotry between local Serbs and Croats.

Young people that protested on the evening of April 27 in the Vukovar city center wanted to send a message that it was possible to build better relations in the region. Đorđe Bojović from YIHR Belgrade thinks that a different approach to the past is the solution for this problem. “Young people from Serbia need to realize what was going on during the nineties of the last century in Vukovar, to visit Ovčara and the Hospital, to insist on asking questions about responsibility of Belgrade for the existing situation. It is only with that responsible attitude

In Subotica, the Caravan participants conducted monitoring of public institutions aiming to check the level of respecting the right to use mother tongue and script. In Croatia, the Friendship Caravan was opened in Osijek and Vukovar when participants gathered at the city squares in order to find out more about the problems people from these communities have. Citizens left messages on the improvised hangers about what they would like to change in their cities.

In Slavonski Brod, the Friendship Caravan visited a Roma community Josip Rimac with about 1500 people. A large number of young people joined sharing their experiences and problems as well as positive examples from their local

# EUROPE EQUALS EQUALITY

sms for dealing with the past and regional cooperation, status of minorities in Croatia and Serbia, impressions from the visit of the memorial center in Ovčara with over 100 peers from their home towns.

Training program in Vukovar was most certainly marked by a protest which was a reaction to the incident that had happened in the Joker café, when several Serbs were hurt in the attack of Croatia basketball fans.

Young people from these 8 cities carried posters written in Cyrillic and Latin script stating “Vukovar of Peace”, “Vukovar of Equality”

Leo Tot from Vukovar, one of the participants and organizers of the activity said that incidents like this happen often in his city, but that he had the need to react because the media altered the facts. “Media said that members of both Serbian and Croatian team participated in the fight, hiding the fact that the incident was started by Croatian spectators that deliberately got in the café owned by Serbs from Vukovar. Information we got at the place where incident had occurred was that Croatian spectators deliberately entered the café and started making mess. These spectators were not even from Vukovar, but from other cities”, Tot explained and added how important it was for the institutions to start acting responsibly

towards the past that we can contribute in improving interethnic relations both in the past and in present”.

In the meantime, Friendship Caravan was established and it was visiting Croatia and Serbia for a couple of days. The caravan started its journey in Šid, where participants paid their respect to Miroslav Milenković, a reservist of JNA that committed suicide in September 1991, refusing to participate in the Vukovar attack. After Šid, the Caravan travelled to Bačka Palanka to a discussion called “Unfitting citizens” held by Vojvodinian Civic Centre. The topics were expulsion of Croats from Srem in the nineties and institutional responsibility for the crimes committed.

communities. The Caravan in Pakrac dealt with the question of the relations between Serb and Croat community, as well as the integration of postwar generation in this city. Messages that activists got from the youth of Pakrac were mostly connected to the necessity of creating a space where young people could meet and talk, as well as opening some hard topics from the past as a necessary condition for reconciliation.



Protest in Vukovar (above)

Training in Vukovar



Visit to Ovčara



Caravan in Osijek

Caravan in Apatin (below)





Caravan in Slavonski Brod

# CARAVAN





*Caravan in Vukovar*

*Caravan in Subotica (right)*

*Caravan in Šid (far right)*



# The Month of Human Rights

## November 29

**Debate** Position of Bunjevci (Subotica)  
**Exhibition** Under the Same Roof (Subotica)

## DECEMBER 5

**Exhibition** Corax's cartoons (Bačka Palanka)  
**Debate** Genocide Lawsuits of Serbia and Croatia before the International Court of Justice (Bačka Palanka)  
**Round table** Regional programs of youth exchanges (Bačka Palanka)  
**Testimony** Unfitting citizens, Vojvodinian Civic Centre (Bačka Palanka)  
**Concert** Peđa and Raša band (Bačka Palanka)

## DECEMBER 8

**Exhibition** Personal Stories (Apatin)  
**Debate** The status of Roma and Croats (Apatin)  
**Testimony** Unfit citizens, Vojvodinian Civic Centre (Apatin)  
**Round table** Regional programs of youth exchanges (Apatin)

## DECEMBER 10

**Street actions** u in Apatin, Šid, Bačka Palanka and Subotica- Human Rights Day

## DECEMBER 18

**Exhibition** Belgrade and Osijek Pride (Šid)

## NOVEMBER 29 AND 30

**Film** Completely personal (Subotica)

## DECEMBER 5 AND 6

**Film** Completely personal (Bačka Palanka)

## DECEMBER 8 AND 9

**Film** Survival Guide (Apatin)

## DECEMBER 16

**Round table** Regional programs of youth exchanges (Subotica)

## DECEMBER 23

**Concert** Elemental band and the debate with Marčelo and Remi (Belgrade)



Exhibition in Subotica



Caravan promotional materials



## The Library Director Prohibited the Action in Šid

The director of the library “Simon Piščević” in Šid, Slavica Varičić, prohibited not only the exhibition, but also the rest of the program that was about to happen as a part of the festival “A Month of Human Rights”.

Because of the exhibition of Osijek and Belgrade’s Pride named “This is the Pride”, the director Varičić prohibited the exhibition two hours before it was due to start as well as the debate named “Expulsion of Croats from Srem” and the presentation of the project “Unfit Citizens” by the Vojvodinian Civic Centre.

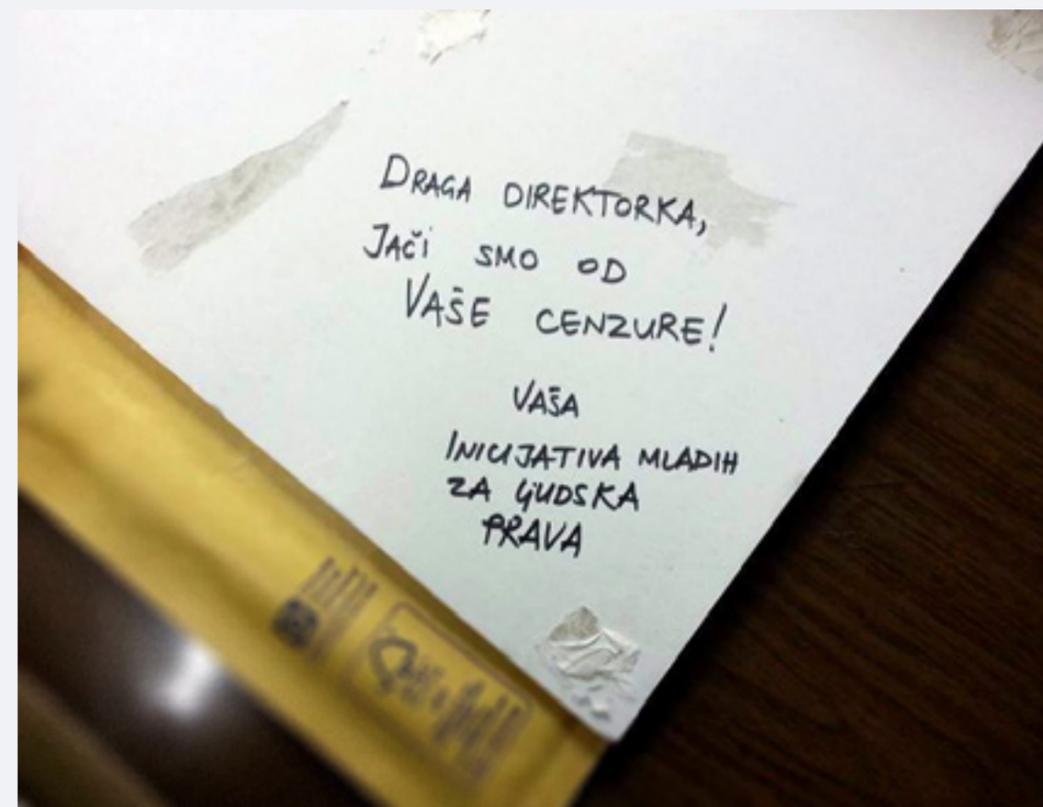
Half an hour after the exhibition was set up, around 4 p.m., the organizers got a call from the director of the library saying that the exhibition was taken off and that the stuff was waiting for them in the library. The apparent reason for this was because they “damaged the wall” although the organizers started setting up the exhibition in the presence of people that worked there. Then there was a meeting where the director said that none of the three activities planned could be held in the library.

A dozen of YIHR activists organized an action on the streets of Šid, as a reaction to this homophobic and discriminatory decision. With the items from the prohibited exhibition they took photos in front of the City Library, City Municipality and City Park. Activists sent one of the photos to the director with the message: “Dear director, we are stronger than your censorship. YIHR”

It is sad that in the year with the first peaceful Pride, a director of such an educative institution prohibits an exhibition which illustrates this event. Steps of joy made in Belgrade in September 2014 lose their significance if the will of certain people had greater strength than the power of law.

Due to this homophobic reaction, YIHR demanded an apology from director Varničić, first of all to LGBT community, as well as public scrutiny from the Minister of Culture who personally supported the Pride and participated in the walk.

YIHR then asked all the other public office holders, who had said several days before the Pride that the fight for LGBT rights must continue after the walk, to react to this discrimination act.



The apparent reason for this was because they “damaged the wall”.

## Elemental Concert and Debate with Remi and Marčelo

The closing event of the festival “Month of Human Rights” was the concert of Elemental band as well as the debate before the concert with the frontman of the band Mirela Priselac Remi and Marko Šelić Marčelo - a Serbian writer and musician, which took place in Belgrade on December 23.

Elemental and Marčelo are a great example of the cooperation between Serbia and Croatia in postwar times. What makes these artists different from the others are their texts that are well known to all the youngsters in the whole region. The reason for that is the similar environment where these young people are raised. Torn between the past that our countries did not deal with and an unpredictable future, they tend to idolize persons promoting violence, chauvinism, bigotry and negative role models. Those role models are precisely what these musicians criticize, fighting against the violence, corruption, nationalism...

The conversation started with a subject that always brings up one question: should the music as an art be politically oriented? “Music has that fun component but we always try to send a message. I think that music that does not carry any message does not fulfill its purpose”, said Remi. Marčelo added that nobody deals with politically oriented art with an intention to change the world, but because of “one very personal need to react to some injustice in society”.

The key activity in breaking the prejudices is meeting whatever that “different” is, that’s why Remi said that it was necessary for young people from Zagreb and Belgrade to meet each other in Berlin for example. Marčelo corrected her: “I think that young people from Belgrade need to visit Zagreb first and people from Zagreb need to visit Belgrade”.

Concluding that the exchange is crucial if we want to move forward, as a society and individuals, the debate in Božidarac Centre was over, and then everybody headed to the concert which gathered over 500 young people from Serbia and Croatia.



„I think that young people from Belgrade need to visit Zagreb first and people from Zagreb need to visit Belgrade”.

# ③ Help and Support of the French-German Youth Office

French-German Youth Office (OFAJ) is the main inspiration to YIHR's regional exchange program, and OFAJ's Office in Southeast Europe is the main partner in advocating a body similar to this one in the Western Balkans. The experience of the Governments of France and Germany in breaking prejudices among the young people after World War II, on which these countries have actively been working since 1963, motivated the Government of the Republic of Serbia to present a plan on the Conference for Western Balkans held in Berlin in August, for establishing a program similar to theirs for the young people from the southeast Europe.

While YIHR is actively involved in conversation with French-German partners and gets their support, at the same time it is working on implementing projects with OFAJ. YIHR and OFAJ are partners on programs "The Academy for Dialogue and Cooperation for Young People" and "War Crimes and Convictions".

YIHR's associates were in 2014 participants of the "Memory Lab" which among others is organized by YIHR office in Bosnia and French-German Youth Office. As a part of this program, an organized study visit to Kosovo and Macedonia took place in October and its participants had the opportunity to learn about massive violations of human rights and the ways monuments were used to build national identity in these countries.

## The Academy for Dialogue and Cooperation for Young People

During 2014, the second generation of the Academy for Dialogue and Cooperation for Young People started as a part of the project called Thinking Europe. Young people from Germany, France, Serbia and Kosovo had an opportunity to find out more about the future of Europe and European Union, national identities opposing the European identity, high level of nationalism and populism in Europe, all that just through two study visits.

Seven days in Berlin were enough to open conversation and intercultural dialogue among the young people coming from different areas, while the other study visit to Serbia and Kosovo (which was two took place two months later) was far more important - not only for the participants from France and Germany that visited the Balkans for the first time, but also for the young people from Serbia and Kosovo that had a chance to visit Kosovska Mitrovica, Prishtina, and Belgrade also for the first time.

The third phase of the Academy was the visit to Strasbourg that took place in March 2015 which offered a group of 20 participants an opportunity to present their papers on which they have been working for eight months.

## War Crimes and Convictions

In March 2014, young people from Serbia, Croatia, Germany and France visited France as a part of the third phase of the program called "War Crimes and Convictions". A group of twenty young people had a chance to speak in Paris and Limoges about World War II and its impact for France, the way that Paris treats crimes committed during the war in Algeria and about what they think of their role in the genocide in Rwanda. During the program, the group visited Oradour, a village completely burned down during World War II, whose citizens mostly died.

The seminar in France was the last chance to go together through the trials and national and international justice in the reconciliation processes. What helped them was the experience they had gathered in the previous two phases of the program when they visited Dachau, Nurnberg and Munich in Germany, The Hague in the Netherlands as well as Zagreb, Osijek and Vukovar in Croatia and Serbian capital Belgrade. During the previous phases the group studied the World War II in those four countries as well as the last war in Yugoslavia, with special attention dedicated to Croatia.

During the previous year, an idea was born about the second generation of this program that will be conducted in Germany, France, Serbia and Kosovo in 2015 and 2016.

A vibrant scene from a Pride parade. In the foreground, two women are laughing joyfully; one has her arm around the other's shoulder. They are surrounded by a crowd of people, some holding rainbow flags and others holding colorful balloons in shades of green, blue, purple, and red. The background is filled with more balloons and the movement of the parade. A large, stylized graphic of a star with a rainbow trail is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Action!**

# Action!

In 2014 YIHR conducted several activities with its activists, in which all of them had an opportunity to participate in various training programs that YIHR organized. Our activists are mostly students of Faculty of Political Science and other social sciences but there are others whose main field of interest is electrical engineering or languages, but who also think that

**human rights are very important.**

„One of the main reasons I decided to stay in Serbia and study here is Youth Initiative for Human Rights. I believe that what we do can really make some change.”

**Nina T.**

„Because it is nice to be a part of something bigger than ourselves.”

**Ivan K.**

# Do not underestimate human rights—

action  
dedicated to  
December 10<sup>th</sup>

For years now, non-governmental organizations in Serbia dedicate December 10 to summing up all the work from the previous year, always reaching the same conclusion: level of respecting human rights is low and we should continue working on it. Every year, society supports and understands less the importance of this job, non-governmental organizations, institutions and human rights defenders. The support and solidarity of those citizens who enjoy their human rights on a daily basis, without even thinking about it.

Instead of summing up 2014 concerning human rights, YIHR activists tried to talk to people and remind them that some of the basic possibilities and procedures, like schooling, medical treatment, traveling are in fact secured by documents for protection of human rights.

While majority in Serbia can get medical treatment, travel, get married, vote – it is the minority that has to deal with these problems daily. We are speaking about thousands of people without their personal ID and health cards, girls and women that get married involuntarily, irregular migrants who had their travel documents taken away, LGBT persons that cannot get married to the persons they love, journalists and activists whose shows and texts had been censored.

Marking the International Human Rights Day, YIHR called for solidarity with these people through actions held in 11 cities in Serbia: Bor, Vrbas, Vrnjačka Banja, Apatin, Šid, Bačka Palanka, Subotica, Kragujevac, Novi Pazar, Jagodina and Belgrade.

Human rights are not just a phrase often told but bearing no meaning; on the contrary – the level of respect for human rights is a measure of quality of everyday life.

# Attacks on Albanian Property

After the football match between Serbia and Albania was abandoned on October 14 due to incidents on the field, a series of attacks on non-Serb property took place. Bakeries and pastry shops were targeted, most of them owned by Albanians in Apatin, Sombor, Novi Sad, Vršac, Stara Pazova, but a mosque in Subotica was attacked as well. Some of the bakeries were completely destroyed, and it was sheer luck that no one was killed.

Both before the game and during the days when these attacks happened, tabloids spread the hatred towards Albanians, and utterly offensive comments could be found on the Internet portals and social networks. Press Council of Serbia found that the Informer and Telegraf violated the Journalists' Code of Ethics by using the word "šiptar" as "colloquial, offensive and imprecise naming of a specific group is not allowed", in this case, naming of Albanians.

Even four months after the attacks, a great number of cases remain unsolved, including the most dangerous ones and both assailants and their motifs remain unknown.

YIHR investigative team visited the places of attacks and talked to owners and employers in bakery and pastry shops. YIHR will publish a report in the spring about the attacks and follow possible trials.



## OPEN DOOR

# BALKANIST БАЛКАНИСТ

## Support for Balkanist Magazine, Lily Lynch— The Journalist and Freedom of Media in Serbia

Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized an action called “Open Door” after men dressed as policemen entered the apartment on Zagrebačka street in Belgrade in January where Lily Lynch, an American journalist and editor of Balkanist magazine lived.

During an online action, dozens of social networks users published photographs of their doors opened using hashtag #otvorenavrata as support for Balkanist, Lily Lynch and freedom of the media in Serbia.

Let us remind you that after the men entered the apartment belonging to Lily Lynch, because of - as they explained - a door wide open, asked her questions concerning her stay in Serbia, private and business life (they asked whether her husband was also a journalist) and asked for her passport. During the time Lily got dressed up and found her passport, these men left the apartment saying: “In the future, keep your door closed”. Lily Lynch neither saw them write a police report, nor did these men dressed as policeman write down her personal information.

After this intimidation of Lily Lynch, Ministry of Interior replied in one Belgrade newspaper that “the on-call service received a call in 11:30 pm saying that the door of one apartment on Zagrebačka street was open”, as well as that “the police went on the spot and concluded that the door was closed and that there was no sign of forced entry - therefore there was no intervention of police”. Who are then men in uniforms that interviewed Lily Lynch in her bedroom?

That case has not been solved. One of the reasons was that Lily Lynch, who left Serbia at that point fearing for her safety, asked Youth Initiative for Human Rights to stop further investigation and insistence that Ministry of the Interior should make public the accurate and complete information about this event, and that all possible law breaking and abuse of position of authority on part of the Ministry of the Interior should be punished adequately.

ALEKSANDAR SEKULIĆ

# The Year of Censorship

During our recent history, the freedom of expression in Serbia suffered many harsh attacks. In our country journalists were killed, and the murderers of Slavko Ćuruvija, Dada Vujasinović and Milan Pantić were never brought to justice. Towards the end of the rule of Milošević, the opposition media were severely punished under the regulation of the non-democratic Public Information Law. The independent media, were, even briefly, shut down just as Radio B92 disappeared from ether with a bizarre explanation that water entered into coaxial cable.

In the last few years, especially since the current government was formed, serious and argumentative criticism of the people in power has been harder to find both on television and in the press. After landslide election victory of the members of current ruling coalition, the white noise of praising the most powerful politicians in the country deafened some of the rare opposing votes in the National Assembly. Critical opinion can be found among conscientious journalists and non-governmental organizations, as well as on social networks and blogs.

Last February a series of videos were uploaded to YouTube showing an action of then Vice President of the Government rescuing citizens in a snowstorm at a place called Feketić. The videos disappeared one after another, and in the end the director of the "Internet team" of the current ruling party confessed on Twitter that colleagues from his political party reported those videos for violating the rules of YouTube in order for them to be deleted. This is just one of the fights that has been lasting up until today, the fight between those who refer to these populist and other moves of the Government satirically and critically, and those who do not want to tolerate the negative treatment of the ruling parties, even if that treatment is only seen in YouTube videos.

While the citizens fought with floods in May, several bloggers and internet portals pointed out at the slow and inadequate government reaction. Several websites where the authorities were severely criticised were shut down, while the whole blog section on the website of a popular daily newspaper was permanently shut down because one blogger reposted a text that asked for the Prime Minister to resign. During website shutdowns and bad reaction of authorities to

the floods, a group of citizens started an online initiative named „In the Face of Censorship“ and called on the authorities to take responsibility. This initiative was supported by hundreds of bloggers, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, internet portals and citizens, among which were the members of Youth Initiative for Human Rights. The demands of those who signed the initiative „In the Face of Censorship“ were mostly not fulfilled, but the subject of the attack on freedom of expression became known in the public, and the international organizations reacted, both governmental and non-governmental.

In the previous year the web portal most commonly targeted was Peščanik which was shut down several times since publishing a text in June about allegedly plagiarized PhD thesis of the Minister of Interior. The investigation did not lead to the responsible for the attacks, but they did continue. Texts from Peščanik were much easier to find as screenshot versions on some social networks that on their website.

It became clear that freedom of expression was not in danger only on the Internet where it is defended by Twitter users with nothing better to do and Peščanik fans, but also when some of the most popular shows on Studio B and B92 got removed from the program. Studio B lost 3 political shows in which a critical word could be heard during different governments. B92 gave up in September on the most viewed information program in the country - Impression of the Week. Olja Bečković, the author of the program, clearly said that she thought that her show was forbidden and that the Prime Minister of Serbia was the one to blame.

Reasons for removing the content from the Internet and television were numerous, from abuse of reports for inappropriate content on YouTube, hacker and similar attacks, to explanation about change of editor politics or unprofitability of some of the shows - for almost all cases it was possible to find a clear connection. All contents clearly criticized, and sometimes mocked what authorities did. For all the content removed, authority representatives and people close to them denied any responsibility, mocking the allegations of censorship and claiming that this does not exist in Serbia. Instead of answering to citizens and journalists with arguments, they answered with accusations.

In order for citizens to get some information nowadays, they need to be skillful enough to find it. If the information is somewhere on the Internet, those now using this piece of technology are not likely to succeed. And if screenshot is needed in order to grab the information before a hacker attack destroys it, majority of citizens will stay uninformed. Where freedom of expression is in danger, so is the civil society. Where freedom of expression is in danger - so are we.

# Cheer for Your Neighbors



Youth Initiative for Human Rights started a campaign called “Cheer for Your Neighbors” before the Football World Championship in Brazil had started in 2014. Since Serbian national team did not qualify for the competition, a campaign was organized for our closest neighbors: national teams of Bosnia and Croatia.

For six nights in June hundreds of spectators supported their neighbors in the Cultural Center Grad, under the flags of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia. Not only football fans came to the games, but also the ones that wanted to express their support for these teams, no matter if they knew little about football.

This campaign initiated a discussion in public whether this kind of support for our neighbors was “normal”. The campaign was supported by Milojko Pantić- the legend of Serbian football. “Why do we always want the

worst for our neighbors? Once and for all we need to teach our people to change that attitude into cheering for them!”

Our impression is that positive reactions overcame the negative ones and that many spectators of the World Championship this time really did cheer for neighbors, especially for Bosnia which appeared for the first time on this competition.

YIHR considers that sport should not be one more cause of conflicts and that every café or other public space where football or some other sport is being watched should become “safe haven” for everybody cheering for the neighbors just as the KC Grad was, during the summer of 2014.



MAŠA MILUTINOVIĆ

# Our Ball

Neither Croatia nor Bosnia went through the first phase of the Championship. The referee signaled penalties where there were none, he annulled clear goals - but we still managed to win. Exactly six nights we spent in the KC Grad, under the flags of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia cheering for our closest people - our neighbors!

The excitement that is present during every championship was there, but this time even more intense as Croatia played the opening game with the host of the Championship.

Some of us gathered at 9 pm in the KC Grad, putting the tables closer to the screen and waiting for our first guests. Not even fifteen minutes passed when a group of people unknown to me appeared and sat. I did my best not to approach them and tell them that the game starts in 45 minutes and that it may become loud, so if they want, they can go and sit outside the café. I was sure that they were random people sitting for a drink.

The next group sat beside the big screen - they brought an extra table, wrote on a piece of paper “reserved” and grabbed the rest of free seats in first rows while waiting for the rest of the crew. I didn’t know these people either. The game started and in the KC Grad all the seats were taken, and there was not much place for standing either. When the ball smashed into the back of

the net in 11th minute everybody jumped on their feet! People were kissing, hugging, congratulating to each other!

My euphoria did not last long because in the group of about 80 people I noticed five of them that did not look as Croatia fans, which the security confirmed for me, saying that they were Radovci. With frowns on their faces they looked at a girl wearing Croatia jersey, and from time to time they checked out the flags covering the walls. When Brazil scored their first goal, they were the only ones cheering.

Even though we notified the police of the event, taken by years of experience with rather obvious events, they passed next to the KC Grad and, probably seeing the private security, moved on. It didn’t take me long to grab my phone and dial 911, I mean 92. No, when it’s emergency, you need to put 1 ahead. Yes, 192! After the ringing, that appeared to last for minutes, a female voice answered. Trying to stay calm, I explained to her what was going on, being careful about the details as if I were reporting from some war zone:

-Maša Milutinović speaking, I’m calling because in the KC Grad there is organized football game watching with Croatian team playing. Moments ago a group of five guys appeared who are, as our security confirms, Rad fans. Although nothing is currently happening, I am worried about our safety and I



beg you to send a patrol car because we did report this event. There are five of them, and only two guys from our security.

After what I had said she asked me for the address:

-Braće Krsmanovića, 4, under Branko's bridge, Savamala. Across the Čorba diner.

-Which municipality is that?

-Savski... Stari... I do not know. Savski venac or Stari grad. How could I know! I told you the address.

-Ma'am!Ma'am! Calm down! Tell me the municipality where you are in.

In the meantime I managed to remember that the border was right there

under the bridge and that we are in the Savski venac municipality. I waited until she connected me with Police management of this municipality to whose representative I repeated the whole story. This time more calmly and with more facts.

At the same time, my colleague had a similar conversation, with a little less success - first time they hung up, another time he told them he had already been beaten once and that he did not feel pleasant that five guys were there and that he was not sure what they would do.

The policemen arrived quickly at the address in three vehicles. Not paying attention to the beer I held in my hand, even though it was the second one for which I believed that would help me stop shivering or act conscientiously if something happened, I ran outside the place. One guy from the security was with me and tried to explain that he should not be the one doing their job. After chatting with the policemen who did all the formal things: questioned me, wrote my personal information, watched the game through the glass door of KC Grad, I asked what our next step was. They explained to me that they can't do anything if nobody's causing problems.

Until the end of the evening, they never entered KC Grad, but they did spend all of their time dealing with our reports: Where is that colleague of yours who reported he was being beaten? Ivan surely didn't say that because he had passed more law exams than the guy in uniform. The second half of the game we spent in front of the KC Grad.

Croatia fans kept watching the game, now paying attention to the five guys with body tattoos of 88 and similar ones. Most of the girls screamed: "Let's go boys!" and those knowing more about football and rules added: "The ball is ours! Offside! Corner!" Boys followed them, although they had some sharp remarks for the referee from 71st minute when he unfairly signaled a penalty, which was crucial. When the uninvited guests figured out they were a minority, they left the KC Grad.

Perhaps our neighbors did not win the Championship, but we did win in KC Grad under these three flags of our countries. We were finally the majority. Belgrade cheered for its neighbours - and it was completely normal.

# Our Day for an Accessible City

During one day in August, YIHR opened its door to all those citizens who were in the mood to donate an hour of their time and help fill in the Map of Accessibility. This map shows objects, both public and private ones, and gives information whether they are approachable for persons with disabilities.



DURING TEN WORKING HOURS,  
OVER 40 PEOPLE CAME AND ENTERED

**1245 objects!**



ANTI-FASCIST PROTEST IN NOVI SAD

# Don't Mess With my Neighbor

YIHR activists from Belgrade, Subotica and Novi Sad joined us on October 23 for the anti-fascist protest march organized in Novi Sad by Vojvodinian Civic Centre. Around 1500 citizens of Novi Sad and activists from non-governmental organizations decided to go to the streets on this day and clearly oppose the escalation of extremism and fascism which marked October 2014 when many attacks targeted the property of Albanian citizens in Vojvodina. The participants of the protest expressed their attitude that fascism and extremism in Serbia must stop using signs such as “Stop fascism” and “Don't mess with my neighbor”



# Humanitarian Concert in Subotica

During May 2014 when YIHR established its office in Subotica - Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia suffered from large floods. Subotica activists, besides raising money for citizens of flooded areas, organized a humanitarian concert in which artists from Subotica and Osijek participated and all the money was donated to municipalities of Obrenovac in Serbia and Gunja in Croatia.

YIHR activists participated in the marathon held in Belgrade and Prishtina in April and May 2014 as part of their campaign “I run for RECOM” . The marathon in Prishtina was the last opportunity for the citizens to support, by running the marathon, the establishment of RECOM - an independent regional commission for determining the facts about all victims of war and other heavy violations of human rights in the area of the ex SFRY from 1991 until 2001.

People who support RECOM were, as runners, aware that the path from the start until the finish line is long, but they did not give up. They are dedicated to their goal, persistent and in spite of all the difficulties, they never lack the strength to fight until the finish line, no matter how far away it is.



# I Run for REKOM –

regional support for establishing RECOM

DEBATE IN SUBOTICA

# Meeting the Pride

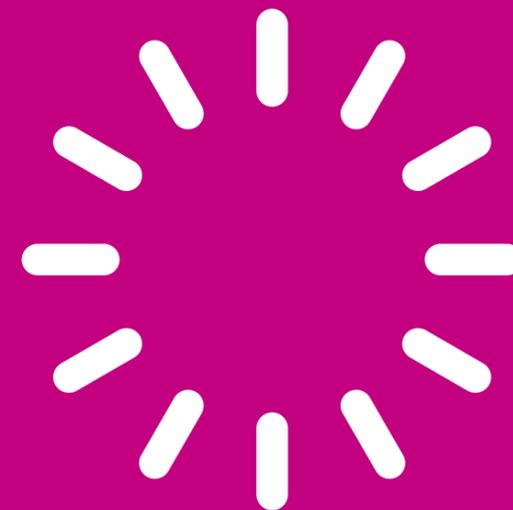
**In mid September**, on the occasion of the upcoming Pride in Belgrade, the activists from Subotica YIHR Office initiated and organized a debate “Meeting the Pride” in which Boban Stojanović, one of the organizers of the Belgrade Pride, Jelena Dubovi, an activist from Subotica, Joco Glavaš, one of the organizers of Osijek Pride and Marko Ilić from YIHR spoke.

One of the reasons this debate was held precisely in Subotica was “the passivity of people of this town which belong to the LGBT community”, as Jelena Dubovi said. This brave activist considers that “fear is normal up to a point, afterward it is just cowardice”.

The violence leading to fear, i.e. not having right to lead a normal life is one of the biggest problems of LGBT population in Serbia, as Boban Stojanović said. In YIHR experience, monitoring the trials in which LGBT persons were involved, there is some progress but the punishments are still mild, and the trials last too long, highlighted Marko Ilić.

In comparison to a bad situation in Serbia, where in the last 5 years the state forbid 4 Prides and successfully carried out only one, the neighboring state of Croatia had a better tradition. As Joco Glavaš said, Osijek Pride was first time organized in September 2014 and Osijek will be remembered as the third city where Pride was organized, but also as the first city where there were no incidents during the Pride.

What is more important than the number of towns where Pride was organized in one country is the guarantee that the state is going to respect human rights of all citizens, no matter their sexual and other orientation, but before that, guarantee of safety for all citizens and the right to normal life.



*Prajd.*

Normalno.

Belgrade Pride Parade

KRISTINA KASTELEC, volunteer at the Pride

# Belgrade as I Want it

I am one of those persons who think that volunteering is a unique way to contribute to your community in a completely selfless way. Even when it gets a bit hard, even if you're doing it for the first time and you don't really have social skills, even when your job is to move five chairs and lasts for an hour, you return to your home happy and fulfilled.

What makes volunteering at the Pride Week different from others is that you are always surrounded by positive energy and really nice people that create friendly atmosphere. People from YIHR every day take care after their volunteers first. How we got there, is everything ok, are we thirsty/hungry and whether we need anything are just some of the questions that need to be answered before we proceed with the work, feeling that someone really cares whether everything is perfectly fine with us.

If you want to participate in more events during one day, someone will bring you a sandwich, and remind you not to forget to go to the KC Grad to have a juice or a coffee. Along the way, you meet a bunch of people coming from everywhere and you make wonderful friendships. And how can someone not volunteer the following year?



I'm giving my best to describe how wonderful and special everything is, but I think that it is something you need to feel for yourself. Imagine a week of that special atmosphere and energy at every event, positive people, feeling of pride because you're doing something good and useful. My girlfriend and I did our best to make the Pride Week of 2014 special by going to as many events possible, and that in the days after, it was unusual not to see as many smiling faces across the city. What describes the best volunteering during the Pride Week is the strong sense of community. The Pride Week ended too quickly. Every day was so filled up with events from morning till night that I found myself surprised when I realized the Sunday came.

It was the most bizarre week ever. Breakfast with other volunteers in the hotel, nervous smiles, unconnected thoughts, hugs. I could not eat, I could not even finish my coffee. I was watching people around me. You simply cannot stop thinking about it.

It was sunny, nice, Sunday morning. Volunteers walked around me, guests carried flags and balloons, people sat in cafés and had their morning coffees. I needed her next to me. To hold my hand and walk with me. We walked slowly but decisive, around 10 am. People waved from cafés, said hello, and smiled. They observed our little group with curiosity- the first Pride group. People in front of us already spread their flags, someone was blowing the whistle. Everybody started clapping their hands, so we joined them.

The feeling I had during that short walk from the hotel to the Government building, two and a half hours before the Pride is something I will never be able to forget nor describe. I held her hand realizing that we were really doing the walk this year. I stopped to kiss her and then let her, so we could continue with the clapping and cheering. And for the first time at some gathering, I wasn't ashamed to let my voice be heard. Nor am I ashamed now to say that I almost cried for a moment. And that my heart was full, and that my stomach twisted.

I felt different then than during the walk itself. There was something stronger that morning. It is that feeling I cannot describe. Something happened in me and in Her, something strong enough to shake me up and then stay calm in us for weeks. In some strange way, it was our personal Pride in the Pride. And it was absolutely perfect.

The message Pride sends is absolutely clear. We are not second-class citizens. We are not "just some gays". We are your neighbors, friends, family. Visibility has a high importance, and you're wrong if you think that that's not the case. If we are invisible and if we hide in our places, that doesn't mean we won't ever leave them. Nobody ever fought for their rights by staying hidden and invisible.

And you're wrong if you think that there is just that one day. We are present 365 days in a year and we are working on LGBTIQA rights every day. The difference is that you can only see us and hear us on one day.

The path to realization of human rights was never easy. Everywhere people fought for it. In countries where same-sex marriages are permitted, where couples can adopt or have children of their own, where policemen share gift pens saying "We are proud to be your friends", not even in those countries was the situation much different than the one in this country.

Serbia is very special, but no different than other countries. Everybody changes, so do we. Change is natural - both change and progress. And that is what I want for my country.

That day we protested. And that day we celebrated. And we were very proud of ourselves.

I know that there are not much people who can understand that. I walked behind Her. We waved with our flags, from time to time I would join the crowd and screamed what people scream on big gatherings. That scream that comes from your soul, the one that cannot be kept inside anymore.

I walked not feeling tired at all, I watched the streets of my city, balloons and flags, blue sky and the only thing I could think about was: "what a beautiful, sunny day it is". Some may be disappointed we did not bring natural disasters, plague of locust, neither did we demolish the buildings with our teeth. On that September 28th we brought one spring day after many rainy ones.

I walked these streets before. I walked with Her. I held her hand and whenever I wanted to kiss her I did that. We'll also take a walk tomorrow.

During the Pride week I was asked lots of questions. One kept repeating itself: "What kind of Belgrade do you want?" And while we were walking, and I watched her waving the flag, that question popped into my mind. I cannot remember what I had answered previously, but I do remember that in that point I answered: "This is the Belgrade I want".

I don't want to be afraid to be who I am. Because who I am does not put anybody in danger.

I don't want to have to estimate every time whether I can hug her.

I want to walk and feel safe without the need to be protected by 7000 policemen.

I want Belgrade that celebrates the life and tolerance, love and family.

I want Belgrade where there is no place for hatred.

Vivid Belgrade.

I want to see people smiling around me.

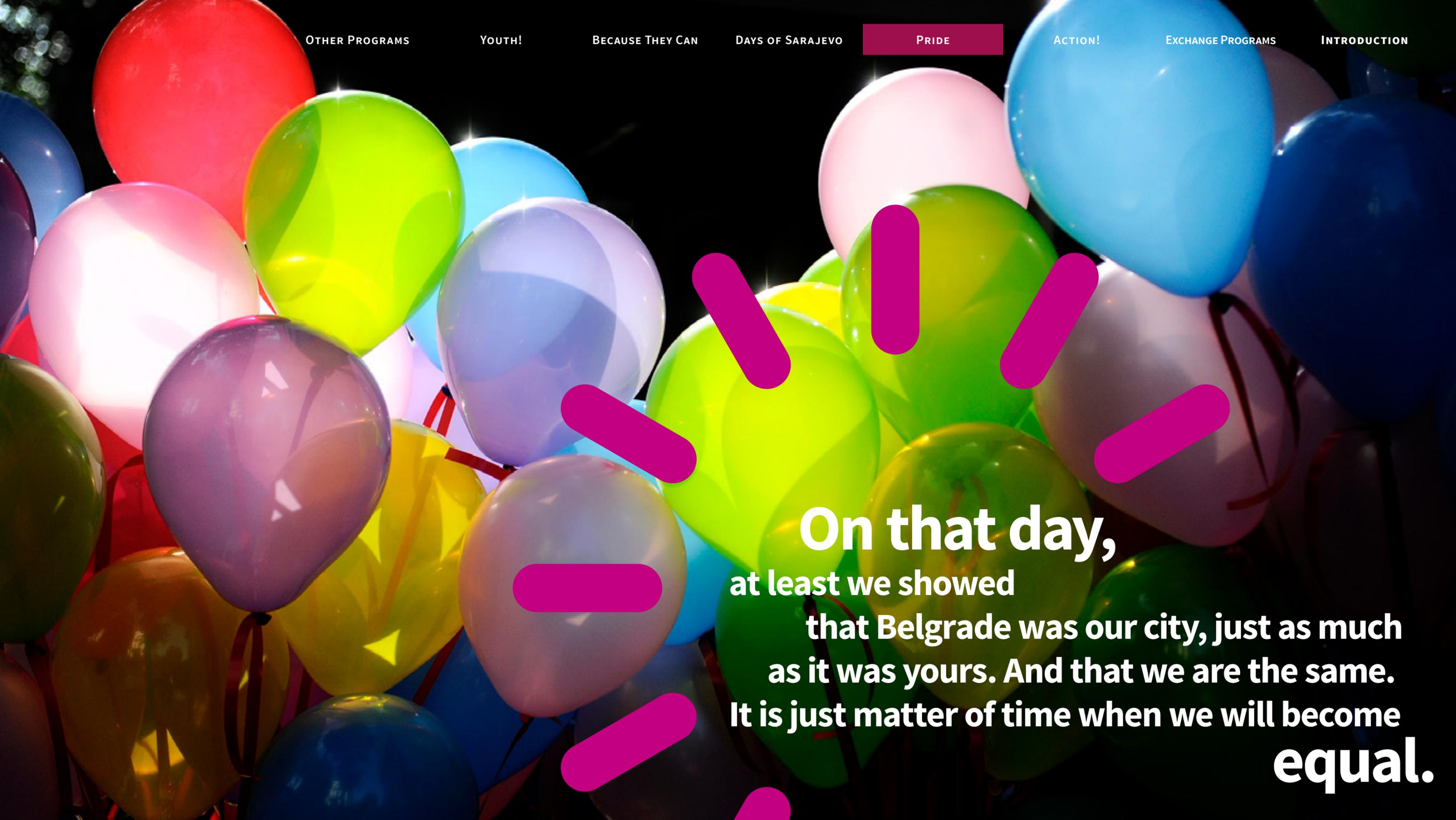
I want Her. And her hand holding mine.

I want that my friend who cannot leave his house two days before the Pride walks freely next to me.

On that day, at least we showed that Belgrade was our city just as much it was yours.

And that we are the same.

It is just matter of time when we will become equal.



**On that day,  
at least we showed  
that Belgrade was our city, just as much  
as it was yours. And that we are the same.  
It is just matter of time when we will become  
equal.**

DAYS OF SARAJEVO

# Last Time as a Festival

**It is the eight year in a row,** that the festival Days of Sarajevo is being held in Belgrade. This time, it is not held in May, as it used to be because we marked the beginning of the Siege of Sarajevo, but the following month - June 14-17.

Although it is not the main topic anymore, the Siege of Sarajevo is still a significant part of the festival. It marked the faces photographed by Imrana Kapetanović. While Imrana takes photos of man and woman from Sarajevo, Aleksandra Nina Knežević, a young graphic designer, illustrates Sarajevo as it appears to her on objects such as cups, baskets, badges, T-shirts, magnets. On those objects we can also see Sarajevo City Hall - the one that was destroyed during the Siege, but restored and reopened in 2014.

The youth exchange between Sarajevo and Belgrade, meeting people from these countries is one of the most important characteristics of this festival. Young artists from Belgrade that had an opportunity to visit Sarajevo, interpreted to their fellow citizens some famous art, put it into a new cultural and historical context with critical attitude towards present and past. As a part of an art program named "prim. prev." they asked questions: whom would Voltaire defend today, does Fikreta still wash stairs, did Suada get happily married...? This project was conducted by Maja Beganović, Jelena Paligorić, Jasna Dimitrijević and Đorđe Miketić.



The reputation of Days of Sarajevo as a theatre festival is justified even in 2014. Mirjana Karanović and Ermin Bravo have once more, even after ten years after the premiere, performed “Helver’s Night“ on small stage twice in one day.

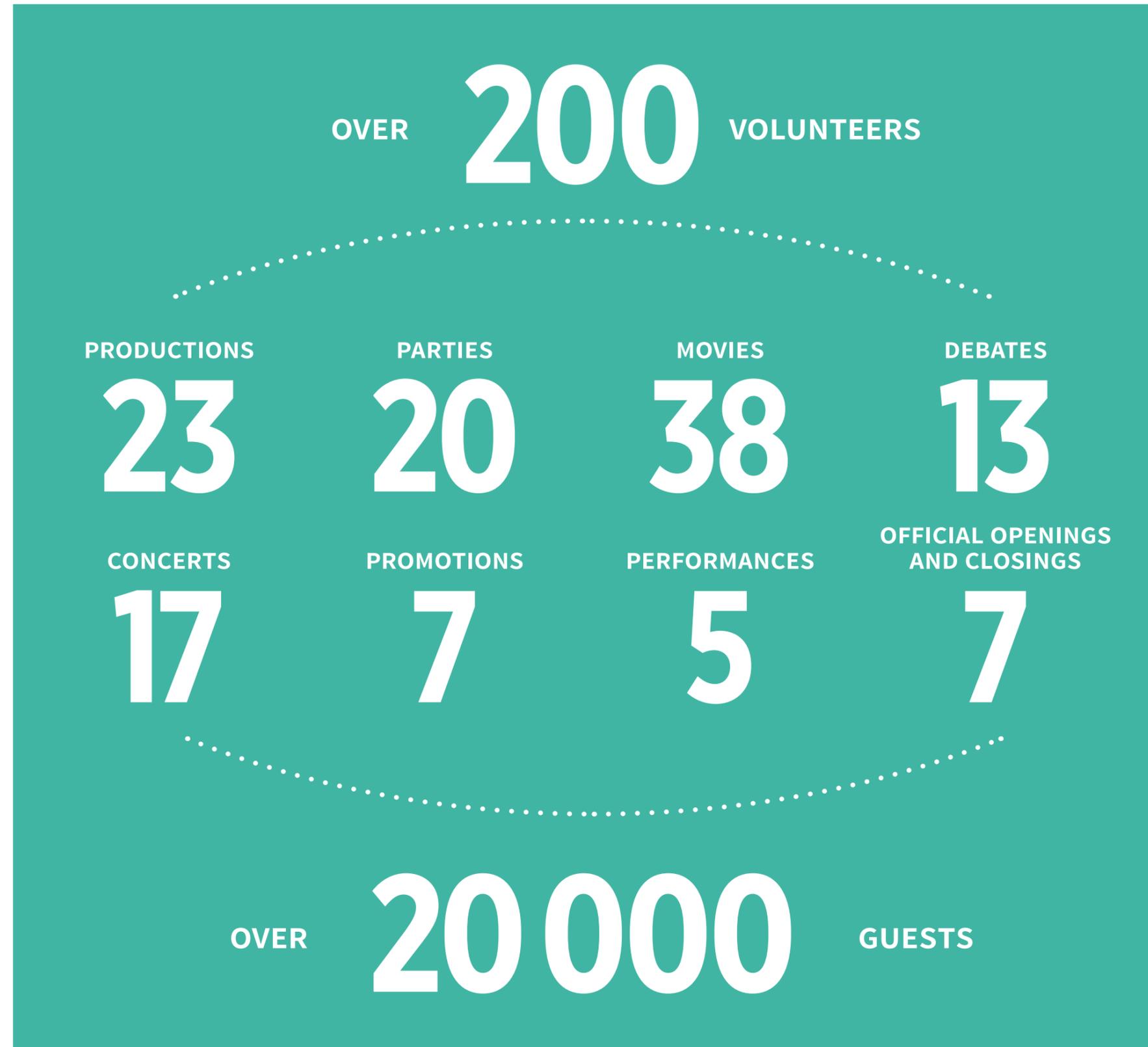
Having in mind that “Helver’s Night“ represents the first cooperation concerning culture between Sarajevo and Belgrade after the war, this production had to be on the repertoire of Days of Sarajevo. It is the product of mutual work between Atelje 212 from Belgrade and Kamerni teatar 55 from Sarajevo which supported through all these years the rebellion of this festival, always being happy to be either the guest or the host. Their support for the rebellion of young people that back in 2007 wanted to speak about past, to create new connections, brings us to the present - present in which Sarajevo productions have guaranteed places on repertoires of theaters in Belgrade.

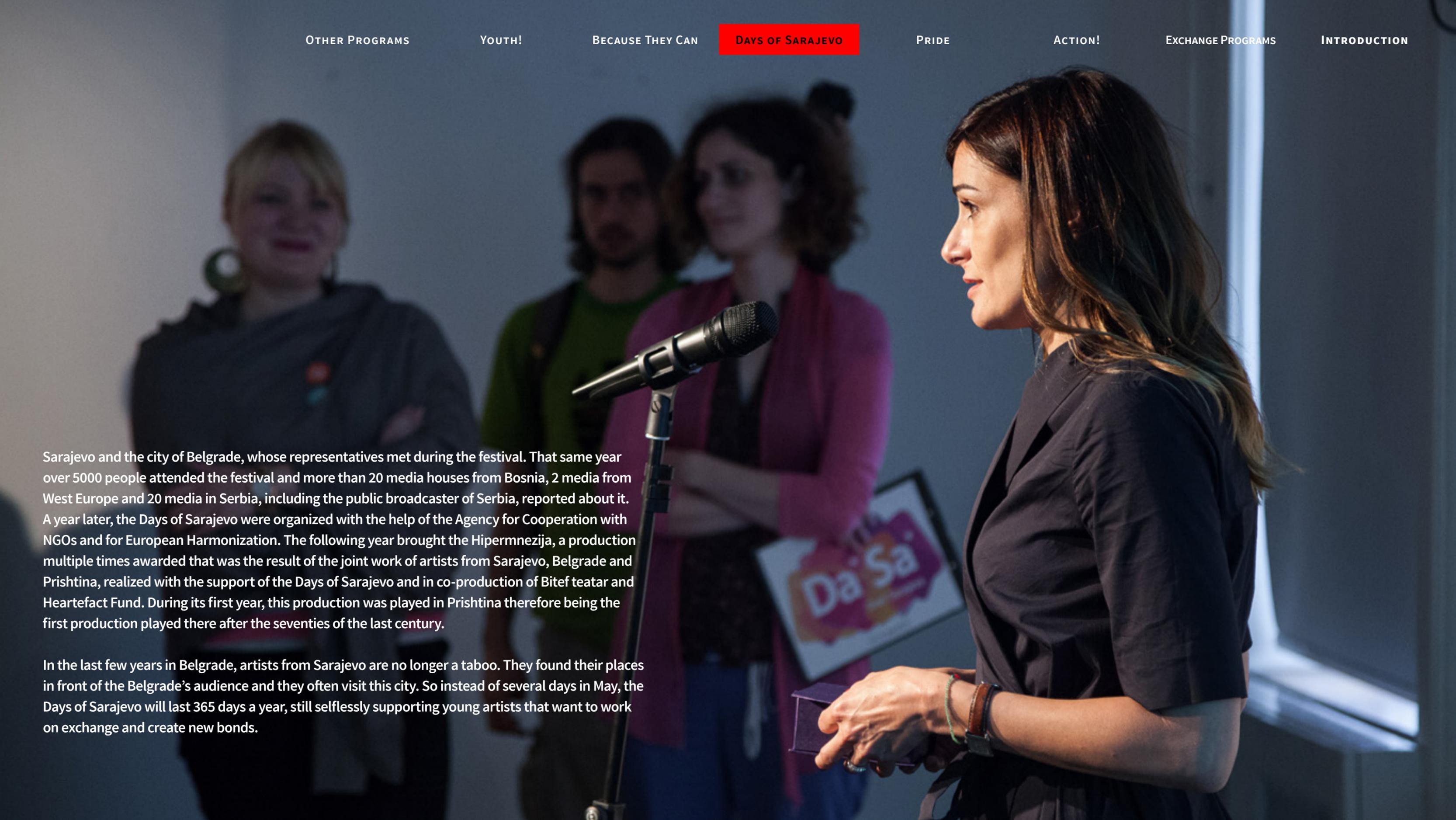
And the REBELLION (BUNT) of men and women of Sarajevo was captured by Velija Hasenbegović in the center of Belgrade in the Knez Mihailova Street. Twenty eight photographs of protests in Sarajevo were stopping people from Belgrade for seven days in June to have a look and reminded them of the, now already forgotten, need to “raise your voice”.

The last day of the festival, Biljana Srblijanović got the “Days of Sarajevo” award. This playwright through the production “Mali mi je ovaj grob” examines the role of member of Young Bosnia back from that time and names the members of Black Hand as a dark invisible force which prevents the progress and development of healthier relationships in our region, but also creates a clear idea of how main human values and uncompromising fight for them, despite the price, are still worth it. That is why Biljana is the winner of the fifth “Days of Sarajevo” award, through which the organizers of the festival express special thanks and admiration for her courage.

Eight years ago, the siege of Sarajevo was a subject public knew nothing about. Six years ago, the Days of Sarajevo were supported by the city of

# 38



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue blazer, is speaking into a microphone on a stage. She is holding a small purple box in her hands. In the background, three other people are visible, slightly out of focus. One person is holding a sign that says "Da Sa".

Sarajevo and the city of Belgrade, whose representatives met during the festival. That same year over 5000 people attended the festival and more than 20 media houses from Bosnia, 2 media from West Europe and 20 media in Serbia, including the public broadcaster of Serbia, reported about it. A year later, the Days of Sarajevo were organized with the help of the Agency for Cooperation with NGOs and for European Harmonization. The following year brought the Hipermnnezija, a production multiple times awarded that was the result of the joint work of artists from Sarajevo, Belgrade and Prishtina, realized with the support of the Days of Sarajevo and in co-production of Bitef teatar and Heartefact Fund. During its first year, this production was played in Prishtina therefore being the first production played there after the seventies of the last century.

In the last few years in Belgrade, artists from Sarajevo are no longer a taboo. They found their places in front of the Belgrade's audience and they often visit this city. So instead of several days in May, the Days of Sarajevo will last 365 days a year, still selflessly supporting young artists that want to work on exchange and create new bonds.

IGOR ŠTIKS with photographs of VELIJA HASANBEGOVIĆA

# REBELLION

**They were not allowed to return.** They made them run away, thinking it would last forever. The war destroyed the place where they could return. The peace didn't do any good. The fear, traumas, humiliations were a strong affirmation that we'll never see them again. No, they were not allowed to return. And yet they did, in spite of everything. Like a powerful blow, like a scandal.

Citizens, men and women, words carrying the burden of history, used differently, not always in the right context. Words we understand differently. Is this that person in whose name the states act, in whose name someone rules, from whom legitimacy is asked? Are those just the terms that cover the internal conflicts, diversity, power hierarchy, overruling one group over the another, one class over the other. What does it even mean to be a citizen of a country? These questions are asked everywhere around the world, in every political community, every day, but in Bosnia they carry extra weight. Because in that country there are members of certain nationality but they are not considered as citizens, and those with certain nationality are convicted with peace agreement to live only as members of ethnic groups: there, members of some communities and minorities and those who refuse to be classified do not have the same civil rights as members of dominant groups. In different parts of the country that same citizens do not have the same status or rights, but suffer numerous kinds of institutional and non-official





discrimination. There, in that country during the elections that are strictly controlled participation of citizens, they put a stamp on their foreheads and tape on their hands every time during the voting. That lasted for some twenty years. That is still going on. The only difference is that they returned to the place they were made to leave, at first just a couple of them, then thousands.

They thought it would last forever.

They suffered a lot, I'll give you that. But once the certain line is crossed, you cannot bear it anymore. Precisely that happened when tripartite authority of ethnic nationalist denied the right to newborn babies to be of a certain nationality, to be a number, to be written in some book, to exist somewhere. It's not much of a life, but without those numbers there is not much left. Without those numbers you'd die just like newborn babies in Bosnia did. At first dozen died, then thousands. Fighting against the abolition of the right to have a nationality, to have a number, people with nationalities became citizens. It's not something big, but it is something, minimum of dignity, minimum of community. In a country where, in the name of peace, nothing must be shared, it represented a scandal.

When they separated it became clear that they could go back, despite prohibitions. Somehow it wasn't expected they'd be back so soon. This time they came with fire. It was a sunny winter day. The smoke covered all the symbols of destructive tripartite oligarchy reign. It was a shock. Then another one happened - an unforgivable scandal. Not only did they discover

what it meant to be a citizen fighting for registration plates (which could be somehow accepted) but they re-built their municipalities. Plenum - the word itself is already a rebellion! There we made a front out of our hands. Fronts which lead us to one more, now even unbearable scandal: autonomous citizens asked a key question of every society, a question on which all societies and states create and disappear, the question of social justice and equality.

Velija Hasanbegovic's photos show these scandals that shook the existing social and political order and not only in Bosnia. Because, whoever sees these photos, will know that they are looking at the rebellion upon which we define our own lives, no matter whether it is in Bosnia or not. His photographs may be politically defined: they testify but they also speak. And that speech is disturbing. Their provoking poetic moment that lies in the photographer's capability to "catch" the drama that takes place in the agora created by those people that met on the street, on a square, on Plenum and declare them as public good belonging to all of us. There they recognized others as equals and went together into a fight with the goal to give that equality some meaning. And they won't leave again. Nobody will ever be able to make them go. It is only the life in rebellion that is worth the living.





JER IM SE  
**MOŽE**  
IM SE



One of the meetings with young people YIHR organized together with Marko Selić Marčelo – a well known musician and a writer who often looks back in his work on violence. Marčelo spoke with over 200 high school students on a debate held in the Thirteenth Belgrade Gymnasium.

## STRATEGY FOR COMBATING VIOLENCE

# Because They Can

**They can do it, because the state did not put them where they belong...**

“I would report violence, but I know that it could end badly for me”. This is just one of the hundred sentences that Youth Initiative for Human Rights noted for the construction of a model for national strategy for the eradication of violence. YIHR had a chance to speak with students from high schools in 10 cities in Serbia about lack of trust in the institutions, not having adequate system for sanctioning violent persons as well as eradicating violence against woman and among young people. More than 500 students gave clear examples about how and when the system “fails” and what consequences that has on them and their peers.

Their suggestions, as well as suggestions from over 20 organizations were included as a proposal for model of national strategy for the eradication of violence, on which YIHR team was working throughout 2014.

Presentation of this model was organized in November of the same year, at the conference “Because they can”. During the conference, representatives of non-governmental organizations, as well as authority representatives spoke about the problems arising from the lack of strategy. Meho Omerović, representative of the Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, said that he thought that the state of Serbia was not efficient enough when it comes to the enforcement of existing mechanisms for violence and that strategies are often not followed by adequate actions. “We have amazing laws written, which are on the level of European standards, but it is their implementation that is lacking. Plenty of laws connected with eradication of violence is in most cases nothing more than just something written on a piece of paper”, said Omerović and added that what is causing the problems is most often lack of financial support. “By adopting this strategy which covers all the segments of fighting the violence in Serbia it would help a lot in international compliance of laws and intersectoral cooperation, involvement of different institutions and organizations for civil society which would work using one coordinated system for resolving this issue”, he concluded at the conference held on 13 November, 2014.

It is highly important that the state should pay more attention to fight the violence in Serbia, in order not to let the strategies adopted serve as an excuse for international community for some of the burning problems, while their implementation is missing. Naim Leo Beširi from the Youth Education Committee said that the fate of a strategy dealing with some social issue depends on the way the strategy was adopted. “You cannot form a new strategy if before it you don’t analyze the results achieved by the previous one. Those attempts are doomed to fail”, Beširi said.

Recalling the practice that the Scandinavian countries use, Goran Miletić, representative of the Civil Rights Defenders organization, said that a unique national strategy could lead to reduction of violence in our society, under the condition that the strategy is a result of serious consultative process. “It is important to have a clear plan that is a result of a discussion concerning whether the goals are possible to achieve and whether there is financial support for implementing planned activities in a certain time schedule”, said Miletić, who also believes that a good plan can get you support in public for working on reducing this issue. “It won’t be good to lose the support of the media and public. It is possible to lose the existing support, because violence is everywhere around us. Violence has the advantage in media in comparison to all those having a normal dialogue even if they disagree”, pointed Miletić.

At the conference several points were made speaking in favor of the violence being a serious threat to society in Serbia. Ivan Đurić from Youth Initiative for Human Rights spoke about the need for cooperation between state institutions and civil society in order to reduce the level of violence, because results are not good enough when these two work separately. “In our society the problems of violent behavior is swept under the rug. Although the football match between Serbia and Albania was supposed to last 90 minutes, it lasted for a whole month. Lots of things directly or indirectly connected to the game were spoken in public, but nobody spoke about how the spectators entered the field and started to hit the Albanian players. We got the information that one guy was arrested who spoke in front of the camera of the Radio Television of Serbia directly to the Prime Minister, but we have no information what happened to the spectator that hit the Albanian player with a chair in his head. Little is spoken about the attacks on Albanian property in Vojvodina, and no media write about what was happening those days in Preševo and Bujanovac. What worries us the most is the fact that the assailants were minors”, said Đurić.

Zorica Labudović from the Ministry of Youth and Sports said that in the National Youth Strategy from 2008 it is highlighted that the youth of today is growing up surrounded by war threats, economic uncertainty and poverty which contributes to violence among young people, but also the older ones. Violent behavior is important to be sanctioned, but it is more important to work on the prevention of this type of behavior. “Prevention is accomplished by raising awareness, education, training programs, learning skills of non-violent communication”, Labudović said and added that the Ministry organizes or supports these projects in many ways.

You can conclude that this is not enough based on numerous data given through the conference. Naim Leo Beširi spoke of statistics of the Ministry of Interior according to which 40% of criminal acts were done by young people, who are more often the assailants rather than the victims. Marjan Cvetković from the Serbian Youth Umbrella Organization presented the results of research done in Niš, according to which more than 70% of young people, aged between 15 and 30 were either a victim, participant of or have witnessed some violence. This statistics had prompted the authorities in Niš to adopt the Strategy for Safety of young people that have a working group for implementing of the action plan. There are lots of reasons for this exposure of young people to violence. “Usually they are not interested in meeting anything different from themselves, they have been wrongly informed or not informed at all. Part of the problem is also our educational system. Young people are collateral damage of the Serbian educational system in which we urgently need to add the educational component”, said Cvetković adding that the high unemployment rate certainly contributes to the high rate of violence among youngsters.



**Meho Omerović  
and Anita Mičić**

The situation is also alarming when speaking of gender motivated violence, but also the general system of values in Serbian society where violence is cultivated through family. Danica Jovanović from the Association of Roma Novi Bečej pointed out that according to data from this association, 72% of Roma women suffer violence for years, and that in 85% of the cases children are actively or passively involved in violence.” Women are not familiar with their rights, and they do

Violence has the advantage  
in media in comparison to all  
those having a normal dialogue.



not understand the consequences that violence has on their physical and psychological health. They stay with the assailant because of the children or due to the fear of community they live in, if they decide to oppose the violence”, said Jovanović.

Tatjana Nikolić from Center for Girls, Niš pointed out that victims of violence need before everything - encouragement. “Women who suffer violence hear all the time how it is their fault. It is important to explain to them that they are not the ones to blame, no matter what their families and friends say. Victims of violence are never guilty of what happens to them” highlighted Nikolić.

How small the role of the family with violence included is, Nataša Jovanović from Autonomous Women’s Center spoke presenting the data according to which one in two women in Serbia experiences some sort of psychological, and one in three women some sort of physical violence. Besides the army and the police, family is the most violent social unit. “Women are exposed to a great risk of suffering violence, and if we speak of lesbians, migrants, Roma women, older and sick women the situation is even worse”, warned Jovanović. She pointed out the problem of physical violence suffered by women. “Persecution, which happened often in the sphere of digital communication is even more present nowadays and the state does not offer any answer to it, although the Special Prosecution for High Tech Crime exists. The state is waiting for someone’s life to be endangered and then to react”, said Jovanović.

About how young people are exposed to violence spoke Ana Mirković from the Digital Communications Institute. She pointed out that 70% of students of primary and secondary schools notice the online violence but only 1% reacts, i.e. report it. She also said that the power of digital violence is often denigrated. “Digital violence is just emotional because it does not leave any physical marks- there is no bruising”. But we have data that confirms that in a not such a small number of cases when girls suffered maltreatment over the Internet, they committed suicide”, warned Ana Mirković, adding that she thinks that the cause of the large number of violence in the digital sphere lies in devastated system of values. “Youngsters respect one system of values in real life and that’s when they behave nicely towards their moms and grandmas. On the other hand, they think that there is no reason to be nice on Facebook, not realizing that this social network can actually represent the real life”.

Mia David, until recently a director of the Cultural Centre of Belgrade, spoke of a collapsed system of values and incapacity of the state to build generations that will be raised in the spirit of tolerance, understanding and respecting the diversity. Referring to the strength of the extremists groups and their domination in public space, she pointed out that the general atmosphere of fear is in power in Serbia, the one not necessarily seen through threats. “Once you start to look back on the street fearing that someone might be following you, you realize that it is just the way they

start controlling you. This won’t disappear during the night. Each of us has to find a way when we deal with this issue in our jobs”, said Mia David and added that media must be an ally in this fight. “No matter the media space is non-existent, they are looking only for the popular themes, I came out in the media with the story of the pressure under which I had been because of the exhibition dedicated to the death of the Bogujevci family from Kosovo. I never felt safer then when I said it in public. I felt that by being there in that public space, I cannot disappear”, she concluded.

There is violence all around the world, but the question is in which way the state institutions and the society treat this phenomenon, does the public support it or is the violence sanctioned in some adequate way. YIHR campaign for raising awareness about this very serious problem and the incapacity of the state to deal with it in an adequate way is precisely because of that called “Because they can”.

“I think that that phrase clearly explained the relationship between hooligans, assailants and the state, the society and ourselves. Simply put, they can do everything. We are the ones to keep quiet, because we are afraid and we let them do whatever they want. By letting them do that, we become their accomplices. Accomplices in creating a Serbia where it is fine to beat someone just because he is different, where they scream kill, slaughter, where it is fine to hate someone”, said Anita Mitić, the director of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights. She added that YIHR refuses to be an accomplice. “Both YIHR and other organizations of civil society make large efforts to stop the hatred and the violence. But today our task is much bigger. Our task is to convince the state to refuse to be an accomplice in creating such Serbia. It is the job of the state and its institutions to stand in the way of impunity policy, long trials and brutal usage of violence for political purposes”, concluded Mitić.

In order not to become an accomplice in violence, YIHR has been working, besides the creation of the strategy model, on a campaign in which it looked back on the most popular examples of those whose violent acts are well-known to public. Through a [VIDEO CLIP](#), radio jingles, [SOCIAL NETWORKS](#) and a [WEBSITE](#) where biographies of Mladen Obradović, Miša Vacić, Ivan Bogdanov and others can be found, YIHR called the state authority whose not-working brought to what we have to deal on a daily basis - the increase of violence but also the lack of trust in the institutions.

*This project was implemented through the program “Civil society for future” in cooperation with the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), and with the help of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).*



**USAID**  
OD AMERIČKOG NARODA



INSTITUTE FOR  
Sustainable  
Communities

Once you start to look back on the street fearing that someone might be following you, you realize that it is just the way they start controlling you.



YOU



## VIDEO 4 CHANGE

“Video-sprint” training activities were held in Tirana, Prishtina, Belgrade and Sarajevo as a part of the program called “Video for Change” organized by Civil Right Defenders and YIHR, and supported by the Swiss Institute. These activities were organized for human rights activists who had an opportunity to learn how to create videos representing stories about violation of human rights in their communities. During 48-hour workshops, the participants created short video clips that were later presented in all four states at an event called “200 minutes for human rights”.

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## POLICIES - FUTURE BEHIND THE CORNER

In democratically developed countries, the act of making the law and its bylaws is preceded by a clear definition of the problem and solution proposals. Suggestions to these solutions can reach experts, NGOs and governmental organization and are otherwise called policy proposals.

Not enough attention is dedicated in Serbia to this important political discipline - neither from the academic nor from the practical point of view. That's why YIHR dedicated the first five months in 2014 to work with students of the Faculty of Political Science and Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade on the policy proposals.

Besides creating a space where these young people can approach this in another way, YIHR also helped in publishing proceedings named “Public policies in Serbia: Future behind the corner”. Topics chosen and presented are: Violence at sports events, Same-sex marriages, The quality of work of public agencies, The control of safety services and Legalization of cannabis.

These topics, no matter whether people speak of them a lot or not enough, are rarely given any importance that would lead to possible solutions to the problem. With their papers students attempted to apply the stable and prosperous practice of democratically developed countries in Serbia, for now at least on the academic level.

After the proceedings were published, a conference took place at the Faculty of Political Sciences where policy proposals were presented, supported by the Public Policy Institute, local authorities and public policies of the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade.

The publication is available at this link:





# FIFTH GENERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS' DEFENDERS

Due to negligence of the subjects concerning protection of human rights at the faculties of law and political sciences and lack of practical knowledge of future lawyers, Youth Initiative for Human Rights implemented a program five years ago called "Human Rights Defenders - Next Generation". This program gives the students an opportunity to speak with the professionals from the area of human rights, but also to gain some practical knowledge.

In a course that lasts four days in which the most prominent students get to participate, judges and lawyers are lecturers, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations which have some experience in the field of human rights protection. Some of the important topics are the fall of Yugoslavia and processes that lasted or are still ongoing in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The practical work showed that this subject is discussed enough or is wrongly interpreted at faculties and that the education awareness is up to the students' personal initiative.

A large part of the training is dedicated to monitoring the trials in the domestic courts - because the best participants become YIHR's investigators and during several months they visit the trials with their mentors and participate in the making of YIHR's annual report "Applying standards of fair trial in Serbian judicial system". In 2014 due to months-long lawyers' strike, the work of YIHR's investigative team was not possible. In 2015 when the strike ends, researchers will continue to monitor the trials that would result in another, fifth to be more precise, report on the standards in the judicial system in Serbia.

This program is implemented with the aid of Human Rights Defenders organization.



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## FOREIGN STUDENTS AS FREQUENT YIHR GUESTS

YIHR often hosts foreign students from abroad - during the year roughly 100 students had the chance to speak with YIHR's representatives about events in the ex-Yugoslavia region. This subject is getting more popular with the students coming from the European Union countries, but especially with the American students. YIHR doors are always open, not only for foreign students but also the ones that study at universities in Serbia.

Feel free to email us and schedule your visit at [students@yihhr.org](mailto:students@yihhr.org)!

## ELECTION FOR THE NATIONAL COUNCILS OF THE MINORITIES

On the election for National Council of the minorities held on October 26 councils of 17 national minorities were chosen, and the councils of 3 national minorities were chosen by electoral assembly.

YIHR investigative team monitored how these elections were conducted in Belgrade, Subotica, Sandžak and Preševo valley. National councils are one of the key mechanisms for implementation of minority rights, and that is why they have such a big importance. Through the process of monitoring the election, the team visited the polling stations during the election day, and spoke to citizens about the importance of the Councils and their expectation of newly elected members.

The investigative team reported from the spot about events happening in the field. In several situations they were even a source of information for local and national media, and among other things, witnessed the irregularities and the polling places like in the Končulj village,

municipality of Bujanovac, where the elections were repeated due to irregularities, and the shooting in the center of Novi Pazar which some media tried to wrongfully connect with the elections, which our investigators demanded.

Just after the elections there was a public discussion in Bujanovac named "What now?" where people spoke about the elections for the National Council and their expectations from the new members. The speakers dedicated special attention to four areas for which the National Council is responsible: education, information, culture and language. It was concluded that the candidates dealt more in the campaign with attacking one another than with future work plans.

The participants of the discussion expressed their fear that not even a small number of promises they had heard during the campaign would be fulfilled. At the beginning of 2015 YIHR has plans of visiting the newly elected president of the National Council of Albanian National Minority and speak with him not only about the promises he had made but also about the realistic plans during his term.



# YOUTH BRANCHES OF POLITICAL PARTIES ORGANIZED A COMMON NETWORK

The network of political parties' youth organizations is an international network of branches of 19 political parties operating in Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia. It was established at the conference in Zagreb on March 29 and 30, 2014. Dedicated to December 10 - the Human Rights Day, youth branches of political parties signed a joint declaration sending a clear message to society that basic human rights and freedoms are universal values that do not allow for divisions and relativization.

## DECLARATION HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

We, young politicians of the Western Balkans region, knowing that protection of human rights is one of the fundamental bases of our society, express our conviction that the constant work on upgrading the system and protecting the human rights is our duty and we sympathize with the solidarity of all the citizens whose basic human rights were in jeopardy.

According to that, through our work we will be additionally dedicated to improve our knowledge and understanding of human rights. We are aware that our daily life is marked by certain numbers of rights and freedoms guaranteed, and while enjoying the freedom of expression, association and political action, we will actively work to improve the position of all the marginalized and discriminated social groups and individuals in our society.

We believe that socio-political, democratic, economic, social and every other improvement in our societies is inseparably connected with the respect for human rights. Therefore, despite our different political goals, we share a common vision of society where people equally enjoy their rights and freedoms.

Having in mind the universal value of human rights, this statement is signed by:



*Democratic Youth*

*Youth forum of the New Party*

*The Youth of the Liberal-Democratic Party*

*Socialist Youth of Serbia*

*Youth Union of the Serbian Progressive Party*



Regional YIHR's network supports the establishment and the work of youth political parties' network. Its main goals are support of youth cooperation and promotion of the human rights protection.



# IDEAS FAIR



Since its establishment and up until today, YIHR has supported the activism of young people and each year it does its best to gather all the young people interested in certain things and give them a chance to work together on certain projects and offer the possibility of solving some important questions through that work, both on local and on state level.

In July 2014, YIHR and Meridian International Center organized a four-day seminar, called “Ideas

Fair” at the Palić Lake. The seminar represented the follow-up of the activities of the third generation of the program “Youth Leadership Program for Central Europe”. Ten of the best students of this program worked as mentors with students from secondary schools who had ideas concerning activism in their communities, but lacked skills and experience to implement them. At the Ideas Fair 19 people from Belgrade, Surdulica, Vrnjačka Banja, Bor, Jagodina, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Novi Pazar and Niš participated.

Through the workshop “From idea to implementation” the participants had a chance to learn some basics of project implementation and to plan their activities. During the seminar three ideas were developed: Schoolyard - our safe place, Humanity Fair, and Ministry of Activism. After the seminar ended, students started working on the implementation of these projects in their local communities.

The project Schoolyard - our safe place was implemented by a group of young people from Vrnjačka Banja, with the goal to improve the conditions in their high school. Thanks to the support they got from the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Serbia as a part of the program named “Young people matter”, High school in Vrnjačka Banja got a completely renovated yard. A large number of teachers and students were actively involved in this project.



Humanity Fair is a project conducted by Parliaments of two high schools in Bor. Their goal was to raise awareness of young people about the importance of activism, dedicating special attention to floods which occurred in May 2014. Students had four workshops on the streets of Bor which happened simultaneously on several locations, so they were able to share their opinions not only with their peers but with passers-by as well.

Ministry of Activism is a program of the NGO Center for Development from Loznica. The founder of this organization is Goran Sandić, alumnus of the “Youth Leadership Program for Central Europe”. The idea of this project was created even before the Ideas Fair, but Goran saw this seminar as an opportunity to widen the network of young people included in this project. Currently, Ministry of Activism is a well-developed network of students on high school level from different parts of Serbia, and the aim of the project is to improve the role of high school Parliaments through various actions and workshops.

A great significance of the Ideas Fair was the contribution of the YIHR activists’ network and their activities, defined by the Battery network. The Battery network aims to give young activists an opportunity to contribute to further democratization, protection of human and civil rights through youth activism, and advocating young people to start asking the questions concerning their future.

Ideas Fair helped in activating some of the young local activists and creating new networks in different parts of Serbia that have now a chance to focus on key points that they can influence in their local communities. Also, during this program, YIHR had a chance to cooperate with local activists in performing other regional actions.



WHAT CAN THE WORLD LEARN FROM THE BALKAN

# The Role of Young People in Democratic Transition

The wars during the nineties in the Western Balkans shaped the relations of existing generations of young people in the region, as well as their attitudes about politics and society they live in. During many years YIHR tried to increase the participation of young people in society democratization and establish new relations in the region among the postwar generations.

Unfortunately, in some parts of the world, the war reality for young people is still ongoing and on a daily basis they face problems of violation of human rights, including the right to life. YIHR decided to spread its experience concerning protection of human rights across the borders of the Western Balkans region, so YIHR from Belgrade and Sarajevo, supported by the World Youth Movement for Democracy organized a seminar which lasted three days in Sarajevo, under the name “What can the World learn from the Balkans: the role of young people in democratic transition”.

More than 20 young leaders from Pakistan, Burma, Zimbabwe, Ukraine, Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia participated in this seminar. They shared their experiences and knowledge of the role of young people in the process of democratic transition. They also spoke about what it meant to be an activist, the issue of unemployment of young people, their role in politics, the problems of LGBT population, the problem of identity in post-conflict countries etc.

The seminar was focused on the model of the Western Balkans, so the participants had a chance to find out more about the history of Yugoslavia, how it was created and how it fell apart, as well as ethnic cleansing in the Western Balkans. In order to understand as

much as possible the complex history of the region, participants visited the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial, as well as the Tunnel of Hope which was the only way out of the town during the Siege of Sarajevo, but also the way they got food, water and weapons.

In the same time, young people from the Balkans had an opportunity to hear experiences from other regions. They found out more about the role of the young people in war situation in Ukraine, they heard stories of activists from Burma and Zimbabwe that were deprived of liberty because of their fight for human rights, how it looks like to be a woman fighting for human rights in Pakistan. Although their societies are much different, this group of young people agreed that they all want to be active citizens contributing to peace in conflict and post-conflict societies. When they discussed what peace meant for them, Adem Sylejmani from Kosovo said: “Peace is not what comes after the conflict. In post-conflict situation it is very important to connect people and focus all your energy to the future activities.”

The seminar in Sarajevo was one of those activities. Besides knowledge of activism and exchange of ideas, participants mutually motivated and encouraged each other to keep fighting for human rights in states they lived in and not to give up the fight for creating a better society where respecting human rights and tolerance is ordinary.

Young people agreed that they all want to be active citizens contributing to peace in conflict and post-conflict societies.



# **Building Societies Free of Torture and Impunity in the Western Balkans**

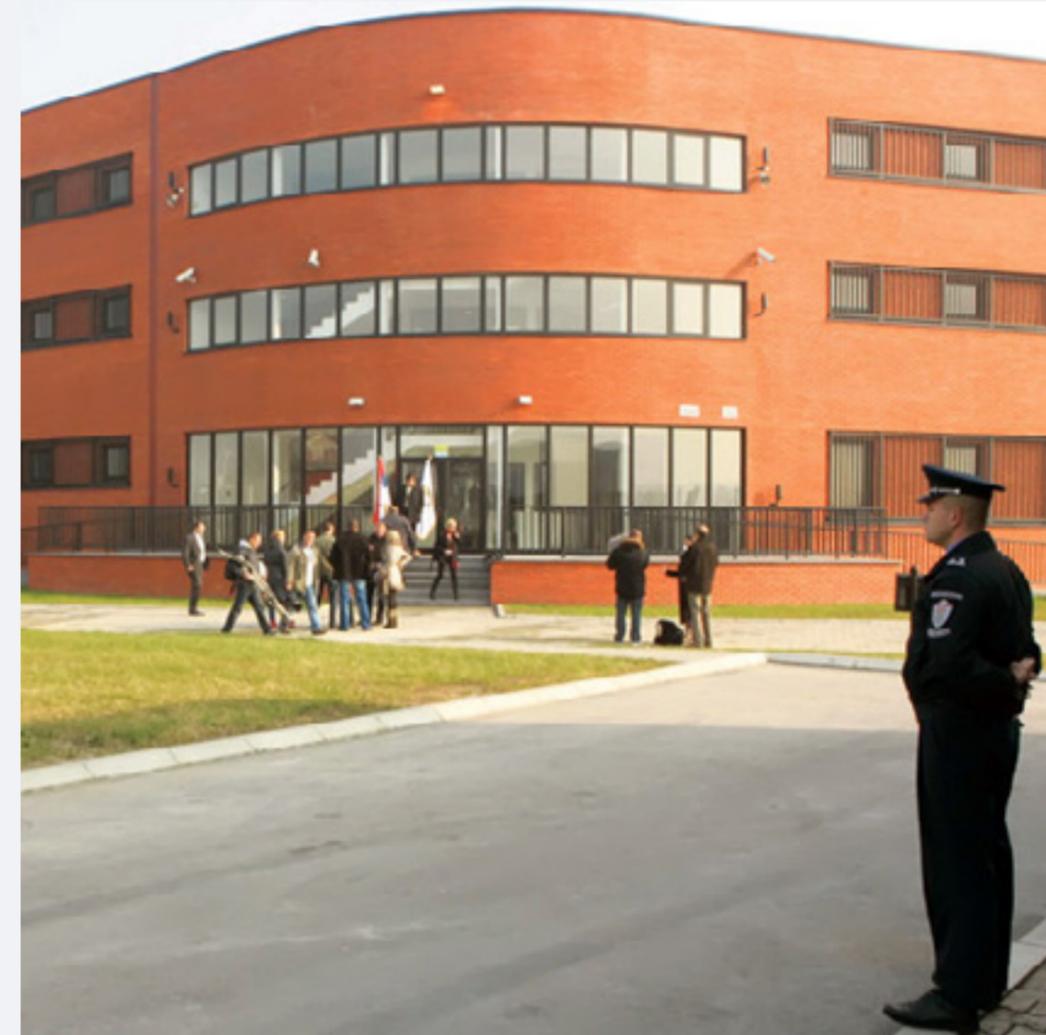
Since the beginning of 2014 YIHR has been actively working on building a society with no torture and impunity in the Western Balkan with its partners - the Albanian Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma and Torture, YIHR Montenegro and the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims from Denmark.

Besides monitoring the institutions for persons deprived of liberty, the education of the staff whose job is to take care of these people, and making leaflets informing the convicts of their right of access to information, Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized a regional study visit in Serbia for 20 representatives of prison administrations, National Preventive Mechanisms (NPM) and non governmental organizations from Albania and Montenegro.

Knowing that the countries of the Western Balkans meet similar obstacles concerning the protection of human rights and freedoms during the transition period, exchanging experience is of crucial importance. The study visit provided the insight into problems other countries are facing when preventing torture, and opened a space for discussion about possible solutions to some of the problems. The guests from Montenegro and Albania had a chance to see the examples of good practice when treating persons deprived of liberty, but they also pointed out the flaws that need to be corrected.

During the three-day study visit, the participants visited the Administration for Enforcement of Penal Sanctions, Protector of Citizens, Belgrade Police Administration, Juvenile Reformatory in Kruševac, the District Prison Belgrade, Special Prison Hospital and the Penal-Correctional Facility in Belgrade.

In 2015 YIHR will continue with trainings of employees of the Administration for Enforcement of Penal Sanctions, but will also start working on training everybody interested in the subject of torture prevention. YIHR will still have monitoring visits, and in the spring a study visit to Albania will be organized.



The project was supported by the European Commission.

# BIA Work Still not Available to Public

It is necessary that broad powers and sophisticated means come with certain responsibilities, which is not the case at the moment.

Several months after the judgment was passed by the European Court of Human Rights in June 2014, in which it concluded that the right to receive information from Article 10 of European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was violated for YIHR, and that the Security Information Agency (BIA) refused to deliver information about the number of persons being under surveillance in 2005 - Youth Initiative for Human Rights decided to test how BIA applies this court's verdict.

After the verdict, BIA delivered the information about the number of people being put under surveillance in 2005, but only a few months later, in January 2014, BIA rejected the same request made by YIHR, failing to deliver the information about people being under surveillance in 2013. In reasoning the decision to reject the request, BIA said that it would create a possibility "to share the information among unknown number of people, among others, those who represent a threat to security to the Republic of Serbia, because they have analytical knowledge to draw certain conclusions from data given, which would point on primary focus of BIA's work on protecting the security of the Republic of Serbia".

This explanation was not enough for the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, to whom YIHR complained after getting an answer from BIA. The same thing happened nine years before when the Commissioner asked BIA to deliver the information to YIHR, but this time he had the verdict of the European Court for Human Rights on his side. In the verdict of the Commissioner, all of the BIA's arguments were refuted, and special attention was brought to "the fact that

information requested, i.e. information, related to authority actions which limit the constitutional rights of citizens".

By the order of the Commissioner, BIA delivered the information to YIHR that during 2013 measures were taken that deviate the concept of immunity and secrecy of letters and other means of communication for 45 people, based on the Court's decision. Although this year, the representatives of BIA did not sue the Commissioner, as they did in 2005, and although they delivered the information requested, the fact that only a few months after the verdict was made in Strasbourg, they rejected the request, illustrates the resistance of the whole Serbian security system in a process of establishing a mechanism for controlling the security services. It is necessary that broad powers and sophisticated means come with certain responsibilities, which is not the case at the moment.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights will continue with this in 2015. However, it is important to understand that YIHR cannot investigate the validity of the data BIA provides, therefore it welcomes the efforts of the Commissioner in accomplishing head function as a controller of legitimacy of security services' work.

