

Helsinki  
bulletin

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## A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SOCIAL TOPICS

### HELSINKI COMMITTEE IN THE PERIOD AUGUST-NOVEMBER 2011

In the past period the Helsinki Committee, committed to its long-term strategy and mission, was endeavoring to open up the issues crucial for Serbia's standing as a modern, European country, to build up public debate as a key instrument of democratization and social reconstruction, to advocate structural reforms in delicate areas such as institutionalization or education and to promote alternative platforms for the way out of the obvious political and economic impasse the country has reached.

We hope that the summary of our activities in the paragraphs below is telling enough of our comprehensive approach to hot social topics.

Public debate "**Kosovo: A Test of European Option**" (September 6, 2011) on one of the hottest issues of Serbia's Euro-Atlantic integration. As keynote speakers we had Vuk Draskovic, leader of SPO, Cedomir Jovanovic, leader of LDP, columnist Bosko Jaksic and Professor Predrag Simic.

Public debate "**Candidacy: Cutting the Kosovo Knot**" (October 24, 2011), the debate meant to restrict the partisan monopoly on decision-making and further mobilize at least a part of the public opinion manifesting an unquestionable pro-European commitment. As keynote speakers we had Zarko Korac, leader of SDU, Nenad

Canak, leader of LSV, Vuk Draskovic, leader of SPO, and Bojan Djuric, MP from LDP.

**Helsinki Bulletin No. 80** "*Kosovo: An Unsustainable Status Quo*" (August 2011).

**Helsinki Bulletin No. 81** "*Visit by Angela Merkel: A Test of European Option*" (August 2011).

**Helsinki Bulletin No. 82** "*Partition of Kosovo: A Mission Impossible*" (October 2011).

**Helsinki Charter No. 153-154** (September 2011) thematizing the process of Serbia's EU integration; published under the front-page banner "*Fear of Candidacy.*"



**Helsinki Charter No. 155-156** (November 2011) mostly focusing on the orchestrated crisis in Kosovo's north and the stumbling blocs on Serbia's course towards Europe; published under the front-page banner *"The End of the Myth of Kosovo."*

**Public debate** in Smederevo (October 25, 2011). Apart from promoting the topics covered in the Helsinki Charter bimonthly, the public debates staged throughout Serbia are part of the long-standing project of building up a social climate propitious to transitional justice and culture of non-impunity. The non-existent concept of transitional justice and reconsideration of the context, causes and consequences of the wars in 1990s constantly burdens constitution of a modern society in Serbia and the process of its EU accession. As keynote speakers we had historian Latinka Perovic, columnist Bosko Jaksic and the magazine's editor-in-chief Seska Stanojlovic.

Seminars for students on transition, law and justice, nationalism, conservatism, social reconstruction and accountability for war crimes

belong to the same body of activities. As lectures we have domestic and international authorities. One of these seminars was held at the Novi Pazar International University in June 2011. By the end of 2011 we plan to organize the next in Novi Sad (November 26) and Belgrade.

**Intercultural education, human rights and peaceful resolution of conflicts** – a one-semester course for the students of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad (September 15 – December 10, 2011). These interactive lectures with participation of 25 students are delivered on weekends. Up to now we have had five lectures addressed by ten experts.

**Regional school of human rights for the young** (Novi Pazar, September 4-8, 2011). We had 33 participants – secondary school students – from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. This year's regional school thematized the situation in Sandzak. The participants had meetings with representatives of the Novi Pazar municipal government, Bosniak National Council, Sandzak Committee for

the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, local and regional broadcasters, European Movement, Urban In and Cultural Center DamaD NGOs, as well as with Ms. Aida Kozar, director of the Novi Pazar theater.

**Presentation – publication “Views and Value Orientations of Secondary School Students in Serbia”** (November 8, 2011). Findings of the survey on the views predominant in the student population in six towns in Serbia on the scale of traditionalism, homophobia, anti-Roma, ethnic stereotypes and the right to abortion. Interviewers were activists of the Committee’s youth groups from Belgrade, Krusevac, Novi Sad and Zrenjanin.

**Monitoring of the prison system reform 2011** – a team of independent experts paid fact-finding missions to prison institutions in Krusevac (September 8-9) and Valjevo (September 12-13), women prison in Pozarevac (September 18-19), the Zabela prison (September 29 – 30), the Valjevo reformatory (October 10-11), the prisons in Nis (October 17-18) and Sremska Mitrovica (October 19-20), and then double-checked Zabela (October 24-25), Sremska Mitrovica (November 3-4) and Valjevo (November 11).

**Presentation – the report on the situation of human rights in the Pozarevac Women Prison** (October 6, 2011). Team members Milena Jerotijevic, psychologist, and Ljiljana Palibrk, jurist, addressed the press.

**Visits to Novi Sad and Sandzak** within the delegation of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee. The delegation secured support from the rector of the Novi Sad University and the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad for a major course program, as well as from the dean of the Novi Pazar International University for piece studies graduate program.

**Seminar on the struggle against discrimination for NGOs** (October 26-28, 2011). Participants – 23 NGO activists from Belgrade, Novi

Sad, Leskovac and Novi Pazar. The next seminar to be also realized in partnership with Human Rights Consultancy is scheduled for February 2012.

**Panel discussion and exhibition “Fascism, Nazism and the Young in Serbia”** in Children’s Cultural Center (September-October 2011) – a project entirely realized by the Committee’s youth group. Zarko Korac, Olivera Milosavljevic and Marija Radoman spoke to secondary school students about the concept of fascism and Nazism – original and actual – whereas the visual segment of the project, a photo exhibition of fascist and Nazi actions in the WWII was realized in cooperation with the Jewish Museum in Belgrade.

**Participation in the conference “Beyond Frozen Conflicts in South East Europe: the Belgrade-Pristina/Pristina-Belgrade Dialogue and its Regional Implications”** (September 22-25, 2011) convened by Study Group Regional Stability in South East Europe, framework of PfP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes. Formulation of conference recommendations.

**Participation in “Human Rights Implementation Meeting”** in Warsaw (September 2011). Within the process of networking CSOs in the Western Balkans and lobbying for the region, the Committee will participate in OSCE conference in Vilnius at which European and Asian NGOs will draw a common platform for combating nationalism, xenophobia and racism in OSCE member-states.

**Participation in working groups** such as those for the National Convention on EU (European Movement), struggle against discrimination (Fractal), Belgrade security week (YUKOM) and human rights defenders (OSCE Mission in Belgrade).

**Regular analysis of the media** and participation in the meetings dealing with Serbia’s media scene.