



HELŠINŠKI ODBOR ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA U SRBIJI
HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN SERBIA

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Annual Activity Report for 2019

I Human Rights Schools for Youth

The action contributed to reducing the social and ethnic distance of young people in Serbia, by enabling intergroup contacts and learning.

1.1. Human Rights Schools for Youth

In 10 Human Rights Schools organized between April 2018 and November 2019, high-school students from across Serbia learned about basic human rights, anti-discrimination standards and policies, and peace building, participated in creative workshops, met with relevant actors, and designed and implemented their own public actions. [Schools](#) were organized in the cities of Belgrade and in Vrdnik, in Serbia.

1.2. Youth Actions

A group of 20 most active, inspired and motivated young school participants have joined their forces within the Network of Future Human Rights Defenders Against Intolerance. They mapped the human rights violations in local municipalities, chose the most pressing issue for each municipality, and then designed and in September 2019 implemented tailored [public actions](#) in 9 different cities of Serbia.

1.3. Theatre Play

Through the reading of the Lessing's play "Nathan the Wise", and reflecting on their personal experiences with extremism and intolerance, the youngsters created original drama text and a theatre play "[Nathan the Wise, or How we Read Him Today](#)". During Spring 2019, the play was staged in 5 high schools in Serbia.

1.4. Short films

Films promoted the [Human Rights Schools](#), the Theatre Play, the Youth Actions, and shared [impressions of participants](#) in these actions.

1.5. Good Practices Compendium

["The Human Rights Education for Youth – A Manual for Teachers and Practitioners"](#)

has been published and promoted in December 2019. The Manual brings opinions and experiences of various experts and practitioners, and proposes detailed syllabi for teaching youth in human rights.

Results:

- 200 young people acquired social, civic and intercultural competences, important in preventing inter-ethnic antagonisms, intolerances, and racism

- 20 young people empowered to be active and act against intolerance in their communities
- More than 10 human-rights-related topics addressed at the local level, including violence against Roma, racist fan-clubs violence in Serbia, LGBT+ rights, workers' rights, minority rights, interreligious tolerance, youth participation, memory culture and memorialization, dealing with the past, anti-fascism, anti-discrimination.
- 50 teachers and other school personnel reached through theatre play
- More than 200 persons from the wider school community informed on human rights issues through the means of drama
- Promotional actions, including social media campaign, reached more than 1000 people.

The project was implemented in cooperation with the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia, and was supported by European Commission and the US Embassy to Serbia.

II Promoting Tolerance All Together in Sandzak

The action contributed to sensitizing local community in Sandzak about radicalization leading to violent extremism through activities aimed at promoting tolerance and developing soft skills among youth.

2.1. Theatre Workshops for Youth

During May 2019, high-school students from Novi Pazar (Serbia) participated in theatre workshops on interfaith dialogue led by renowned theatre director Zlatko Pakovic. Through the reading of the Lessing's play "Nathan the Wise", and reflecting on their personal experiences with extremism and intolerance, the youngsters created original drama text and a theatre play. The play "[Nathan the Wise or: Whom do I Believe when I Say that I am a Believer?](#)" was premiered in May 31st 2019 in Novi Pazar, Additional performances were played in early 2020 in the cities of Sjenica and Tutin (Serbia).

2.2. Seminars for Teachers

Primary and secondary school teachers participated in seminars on understanding and preventing the violent extremism, held between November 2019 and January 2020. They learned what is violent extremism, how to recognize it, how to identify and work with vulnerable groups, what are the factors and the proceses of radicalisation.

2.3. Youth Actions

In August-September 2019, a group of 20 high-school students designed and implemented several [public actions](#) in Novi Pazar:

- Short documentary "Let's understand each other", encouraging reflection on the gender-based roles that can result in the extreme domestic violence
- Street murals at the city stadium promoting tolerance and nonviolence

- Human Rights Weekend, with one “Free hugs” street action, a debate on the human rights, and a peer workshop on countering nationalistic and extremist tendencies in society

Results:

- 67 teachers and parents have been educated on the key concepts of violent extremism, skilled to recognize violent extremism in their surroundings, and learned how to identify and work with vulnerable groups, as well as what are the factors and the processes of radicalisation.
- Through several public actions organized in the Novi Pazar, young people from this town shared their ideas and advocated for peace, tolerance and interculturality. Through this action, their co-citizens had a chance to inform themselves on the human rights issues from the perspective of youth, as well as on their visions of possible approaches in resolving the pressing problems in the areas of identities, religious freedoms, stereotypes and prejudices.

The project was supported by European Union and the “Hedayah” International Center for Countering Violent Extremism.

III Citizens Action for a Full Implementation of Chapter 35

The action empowered all relevant stakeholders in Serbia and in Kosovo with the knowledge on the challenges in integrating Serbian population into Kosovo’s institutions and society, and offered an open set of recommendations for addressing remained issues. Thus, it contributed to the better inter-ethnic understanding as a crucial element in the dialogue on the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

3.1. Research

Through interviews and focus groups, the research explored the position of Serb community in Kosovo and their relations with majority Albanian population, as well as with other minority groups. The aim was to make an insight into the needs, fears and perspectives about the future, to investigate perceptions (Serb and Albanian) on the future of Brussels Dialogue, and finally to see what everyday problems are the most urgent and require fast solutions. The research involved interlocutors from across Kosovo.

3.2. Report “Serbian Community in Kosovo: Frozen Life in a Frozen Conflict”

The [report](#), published in January 2019, brings an insight into the position and perceptions of Serbian community in Kosovo, and offers a set of recommendations on the measures needed to be undertaken in improving their position and relations with other ethnic communities. The report was printed in 450 copies, with all copies already being distributed. E-version was published on the HCHR’s website. Around 200 stakeholders participated in the roundtables presenting the report and discussing the key findings.

3.3. Advocacy meetings

The findings were presented and discussed with 26 members of the Chapter 35 Working Group of the National Convention of the EU, the European Movement in Serbia, 10 Serbian MPs, as well as with the Prime Minister of Kosovo and the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Results:

- Expanded knowledge base on the position of the Serb community in Kosovo
- Empowered youth to engage in policy dialogue on important topics
- Civil society organizations equipped to advocate for full implementation of the Chapter 35.

The project was supported by the Balkans Trust for Democracy.

IV Kosovo Serbia: Cultural Icebreakers

The action contributed to the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo through art and culture.

4.1. Seminars for young artists from Serbia and Kosovo

In April 2019, the [first seminar](#) enabled intercultural exchange and learning, with participants visiting Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Prishtina. A month later, at the [second seminar](#), participants shared and developed ideas for artwork and conceptualizing the joint exhibition.

4.2. Journalists Exchange

Journalists covering culture in the prominent media outlets in Serbia (Danas) and Kosovo (Zeri), as well as from the independent Production Group Mreza (Serbia), [visited](#) different institutions, met and interviewed cultural workers and artists. Newspapers supplements with their stories and interviews presented to Serbian and Kosovar public the contemporary art scenes of both countries. The [report](#) on this action was aired at the public TV station in prime time.

4.3. Exhibition “Stories from the Vacuum Cleaner”

In June 2019, the [exhibition](#) presented the art works of the artists from Serbia and from Kosovo to the publics in Belgrade and Novi Sad (Serbia).

Results:

The connections established among the participants, young artists, lecturers and visiting institutions and organizations encouraged them to take part in wider intercultural dialogue between the members of new academic, media, cultural and artistic elites in Kosovo and Serbia. This way, and through achieving specific results, there was a clear effect on target groups that will provide stronger support to similar initiatives in the future. All

this combined provided a strong impact in achieving overall objective of renewing old, and establishing new ties between youth.

The project was supported by the Embassy of Germany and Embassy of Switzerland in Belgrade.

V YU History

The action contributed to regional normalization and building of a fact-based culture of memory through spreading solid and multi-perspective historical accounts and empowering younger, educated generations in promoting reconciliation, democratization and modernization on the entire post-Yugoslav territory.

5.1. Documentary on Young Historians

[Video](#) was based on interviews with participants in the 2019 Autumn School for Young Historians from the post-Yugoslavia countries, and presented their impressions about topics discussed during 7 days of the school's duration.

Results:

- Multi-perspective perceptions of the once common country promoted;
- Unbiased debates on the post-Yugoslavia legacy encouraged;
- Stereotypes among young professionals and future members of academic elite in post-Yugoslav states challenged by exposing them to the culture of "the other" and contextualizing the political and broader societal problems within the framework that supports the reconciliation in post-Yugoslav region.

The project was supported by the Swiss Embassy to Serbia.

VI Remembering Srebrenica

The action contributed to opening Serbian society for an inclusive, broad and fact-based dialogue on the violent past, thus paving the way to a mutual understanding and reconciliation in the post-Yugoslavia region.

6.1. Theatre Performance

In July 2019, the [Prelude](#) into the Theatre Play "Srebrenica: When We, the Killed, Rise Up", was performed, marking the anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica. The performance was created by renowned Serbian theatre director, with participation of famous Serbian actors. It has also served as an announcement of the theatre play which will be staged in late 2020.

Results:

- Srebrenica genocide commemorated by involving a variety of different groups, thus enabling a broader reflection on the crime, its victims and the responsibility to remember them.
- The lasting spotlight on the legacy of the Srebrenica genocide was put, the dialogue and remembrance expanded beyond anniversaries.
- Relevant actors, such as civil society activists, journalists, artists and youngsters, inspired to take a more active role in advocating for truth and responsibility in Serbia.

The project was supported by the Heinrich Boll Stiftung, the Open Society Foundations Serbia, and the Swiss Embassy to Serbia.

VII Local Level Youth Participation

The action encouraged students to create discussion based on arguments, informed and tolerant opinions and thus improved their ability to think critically.

7.1. Simulation games

In 9 different Serbian towns high-school students simulated the work of the local parliaments. They became familiar with communal politics in their cities and of the possibilities for their involvement in the life of the community. Each group developed written proposal on a related topic. Participants had also a chance to raise and discuss issues they find important with local officials.

7.2. Training for young politicians

10 politicians learned about methods of involving citizens in decision-making processes at the local level. They were familiarized with practical examples of citizens' involvement in public engagement in the Czech Republic and in other countries.

Results:

- More than 170 high-school students have been acquainted with the local policies and decision-making processes.
- 10 politicians active at the local level trained on the good practices in the citizens' participation.

The project was implemented in cooperation with the Czech NGO Agora, and was supported by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.