



Human Rights Education for Active  
Citizenship in the Western Balkans

## **Human Rights School for Youth, Kovacica, March 2012 Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia**

Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia held a Human Rights School for Youth (The School) between March 23 and March 29, 2012 at hotel Relax in Kovacica.

Twenty secondary school students who were chosen from 120 applicants, came to Kovacica from secondary schools in Surdulica, Sremski Karlovci, Varvarin, Kikinde, Backa Palanka, Novi Sad, Nis, Kisac, Belgrade, Novi Knezevac, Senta, Cuprija, Loznica, Pirot, Bor, Smederevo, Backi Petrovac , Zajecar i Sremski Karlovci.

The aim of the school is to introduce secondary school students with the theory of human rights and its ideas, principles of democracy, tolerance, solidarity, non-violent communication and to develop and improve participants' critical thinking skills.

On the first day at Basic level of The School, which lasted between March 23 and March 29, Pavel Domonji, Chief of Staff of the Provincial Ombudsman was lecturing on human rights concept and its development, human rights and democracy. The same day Deputy Ombudsman Eva Vukasinovic talked about the protection mechanisms at the national level about the rights of marginalized groups, and national minorities. The second day psychologist Tamara Tomasevic talked about Communication models - a speech that leads to violence, or connecting, about Listening skills and Empathy. The third day the lecturer Boban Stojanovic presented lectures on Gender, sex and sexual orientation, LGBT human rights and mechanism

of homophobia. The same day Iva Martinovic from Radio Free Europe made a reportage with the participants after they watched short movies about refugees. During the fourth day the lecture Denial of the reality/truth or facing with it: the responsibility of society and the individual held Nebojsa Tasic. The same day secondary school students Sara Velimirovic, Jelena Bjelica and David Djokic presented the work of Youth Groups of Helsinki Committee for Human rights in Serbia and talked about youth activism in general. And the last day was the European Union day, where politicologist Milos Ciric were lecturing on EU history, system and values and Serbia's integration to EU.

This is an open-concept teaching where along with theoretical lectures students were introduced with other teaching methods such as watching films and documentaries, attended forum theater on daily basis, and visited Naiva Museum. After the lecture Facing the past/truth participant also watched the documentary The Good Father - A Daughter's Indictment by Yoash Tatari.

One of the participants, Miroslava Parežanin from Kisac, describes her stay at school in Kovacica: *„Human Rights School is a great program, which gave me the opportunity to learn so much things. It will be very important for my future education. After this Human Rights School I know how to express my opinion without fear, in a sense that everyone will accept it. Also, I gained different skills which will help me to communicate easier, without conflict, and to respect other opinion. This has been great experience, and it make me stronger to go forward, to raise awareness about various topics, and to try to influence people to be active, and make this world better!”*

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