



Human Rights Education for Active
Citizenship in the Western Balkans

Human Rights School for Youth in Kovacica

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia organized the 46th in a row Human Rights School for Youth (The School) at national level, on May 18-May 24, 2012 within the longstanding project realized in partnership with the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

Twenty secondary school students, selected 45 applicants, came from all over Serbia: Surdulica, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Nis, Sivac, Uzice, Ruma, Petrovaradin, Sremski Karlovci, Sabac, Zrenjanin, Becej and Cuprija.

As they have already finished the basic level of the School organized by the Committee these students were familiar with the issues such as theory and idea of human rights, principles of democracy, tolerance, solidarity, protection mechanisms at the national level, rights of marginalized groups and national minorities, communication models, hate speech, listening skills and empathy, gender equality, LGBT human rights and homophobia, facing the past, youth activism, EU history and EU value system.

The topic of the advanced level of the School was „Media and Human Rights.“ On the first day Seska Stanojlovic, vice-president of the Helsinki Committee, and editor of the Helsinki Charter magazine addressed the students about the important role of the media in democratization processes and promotion of human rights. On the following day the topic was „GAY: Media, Sensation, Violence.“ The keynote speaker was

Slobodan Stojanovic of the Queeria. On the third day psychologist Tamara Tomasevic spoke about human rights vs. (mis)use of media, and (de)construction of the society. The topic "Facing the Past and the Media" was on the agenda on the fourth day while the keynote speaker was politicologist Milos Ciric. After this lecture participants watched the movie "Srebrenica – Mapping the Genocide," which was followed by a lively discussion. On the last day Jelena Visnjic of the BeFem organization delivered a lecture on the politics of gender representation in the media and the media portrayal of women in Serbia.

The School stands for an open-concept teaching in which students, along with theoretical lectures, are presented other teaching methods such as workshops, illustrative films and documentaries, role-playing, forum theaters, etc. At the end of the School participants evaluated their performance in the forum theater. After each lecture/workshop participants watched movies and documentaries related to the topic and discussed them among themselves and with lecturers. So on the first day the students watched the animated cartoon "Persepolis", while on the second the documentary "Miss Representation," which focuses on women's rights.

This is how one of the participants, Natasa Niskanovic from Novi Sad, speaks of her experience of the school in Kovacica: *„Human Right School is a place where you feel that anything is possible. It boosts your self-confidence and motivates your self-examination. This harnesses your energy to change this society. Every time I meet someone new and every time my trust in the youth of this country is stronger and stronger.”*

Author:

Jelena Dzombic

Project Coordinator