



## **24<sup>th</sup> Regional Human Rights School for Youth, Novi Sad, Serbia**

**April 2013**

“Antidiscrimination” was the main topic on the agenda of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regional Human Rights School for Youth organized within the Regional Program for Human Rights Education for Active Citizenship in the Western Balkans in Novi Sad, Serbia from 2<sup>nd</sup> until 7<sup>th</sup> April 2013. Participants were from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. They discussed the issue of discrimination at lectures, workshops, discussions and forum theater, all of which, as they put it themselves, was a unique opportunity to learn more about different forms of and grounds for discrimination, institutional protection mechanisms (legal, social, national and international), concepts of intercultural exchange and multiculturalism, multi-religious and multiethnic societies and discrimination LGBTIQ population throughout the Western Balkans. Lecturers and workshop leaders came from regional NGOs and institutions – Svenka Savic, Eva Vukasinovic, Miroslav Kevezdi, Srdjan Barisic, Marija Savic and Demir Mekic.

The participants also paid visits to various organizations, institutions, media outlets and cultural-historical institutions where they seized the opportunity to obtain firsthand information and firsthand answers to their many questions. In this context, they visited the Assembly of AP of Vojvodina, the Provincial Secretariat of Education, the Provincial Ombudsman Office, the National Council of Slovak Minority, the Center for Regionalism, organizations such as „Vojvodina's Political Association,“ „The Children of the Street“ and „Black House CK 13“, RTV Vojvodina, the Novi Sad School of Journalism, the „Magyar szo“ daily, museums of Vojvodina and Novi Sad, and local synagogue, Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. All these visits were evaluated by participants as instrumental to their research on the situation of minority communities, human rights and anti-discrimination mechanisms. Later on, at „moot press conferences“ the participants shared their experience with their peers role-playing reporters.

As an outcome, the participants decided to write articles that, along with photographs, would make up a comprehensive report on the school to be disseminated via social networks.

This is how Venera Qoqaj from Croatia describes her stay in Novi Sad: “This school was also the best school ever. The knowledge I've gained is precious just like the friendships I've made. What I liked the most was the hard work that helped us realize our capacities. What's really important for young people like us to create our personalities. EDU program once again confirmed my commitment: the fight for human rights and activism as a way of life!”

Filip Milanovic from Serbia says, "It was my pleasure to be a part of this great team. I'm glad I met all those nice people who knew how to create a great atmosphere. It felt good when we together overcame prejudices and solved problems. The School was perfectly organised and had excellent teaching methods. In my opinion, we all made an unbeatable team!"

Speaking of her impression, Melisa Becic from Bosnia and Herzegovina says, "Even though it was very cold and rainy all the time, I was burning with desire to learn something new. I'm very interested in youth rights, as well as in the topic of discrimination – in the community I come from and worldwide. I was especially impressed by the manner in which some professors lectured and by the Forum Theater which helped us relax, physically and mentally. Everything was planned out, harmonized and even not too demanding."

Dimitrije Jovičević from Montenegro says: "New friends and participation in this school have helped us to better understand the problematic of discrimination. First of all, the venue of the school was closely related to this topic. Multicultural environment and visits to various institutions that advocate equal rights for all helped me to imagine how it was to live in such an environment and how difficult it was to keep a balance. One of the most interesting lectures was the one delivered by the Deputy Provincial Ombudsman, which was mainly based on the examples of discrimination in everyday life and fighting against it. The visit to the Assembly of Vojvodina was most instructive - we learned how it looked like to manage an institution with all representatives of minority peoples living in Vojvodina. Also, the Forum Theatre, one of the activities during the school, made me think about the situations in which everyone could be subject to discrimination, the more so since we could "freeze" every scene until everybody from the groups spoke his or her mind or proposed a solution. All in all, this was a new and wonderful experience."

And Stevan Stevanović from Kosovo says: "It was my pleasure to be a part of this team. I've learned a lot of things that I knew nothing about before or was half-informed about. Also, I have made many friends I hope to keep in touch with and cooperate on some projects. Last but not least, I wish to thank once again the organizational team of Regional Human Rights School for this unique opportunity."

Jelena Dzombic

Project coordinator

Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia