

Strategic Plan

January 2020 – January 2022

Introduction

Youth Initiative for Human Rights Montenegro was established in August 2006 and it is a part of a network of Youth Initiative for Human Rights in the region, i.e. Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. The founding idea of the network was to connect and network the youth from in their attempts to overcome the consequences of armed conflicts and inter-ethnic tensions. After the first set of activities, the organization paved the way for an independent development, growing into an organization focused on the processes of dealing with the past and the protection of human rights.

The essence of ***YIHR***'s work has been organized around informing the citizens about the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY); organizing meetings of journalists and meetings of students from Montenegro and the region; supporting victims of wars throughout the former Yugoslavia (Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro); urging youth to take part in the process of dealing with the past, through workshops, seminars and public debates; informing the wider public about important issues concerning responsibility for human rights violations in the past.

YIHR has established cooperation with all the relevant domestic, regional and international organizations, institutions and foundations.

Through the establishment of Information and Documentation Center (IDC) in Podgorica in 2020, ***YIHR*** has been able to collect and archive all the available information and materials regarding the war crimes that occurred in the territory of Montenegro during the 90s and for which Montenegro is responsible. IDC has been also a place for gathering, promoting and training for young people about war crimes, the importance of knowledge about our past, transitional justice and reconciliation.

YIHR strives towards growing into an organization that will become one of the leaders in its dedication to the process of awareness-building among youth about the importance of dealing with the truth and the crimes committed in the past. A number of mechanisms are yet to be initiated in order to restore the dignity of human life, and to place responsibility and justice into the center of social life, as well as transitional justice and peace in the region.

VISION

An accountable and free society, which has learned its lessons from the past, and is based on respect for human rights and civic values.

Vision of the organization: leader and promoter of values and ideas of civil society and youth activism in all the countries in the region.

MISSION

The YIHR Montenegro is nongovernmental and non-profit organization, convinced that human rights and civic values are the basis of every open and progressive society.

In its work, the YIHR Montenegro is dedicated to dealing with the past, protection of victims of human rights abuse, promoting rule of law and strengthening the role of young people in society.

VALUES

Responsibility and Accountability YIHR advocates for responsibility and accountability in the society, taking it to be one of the basic postulates of a positive societal development.

Truth YIHR advocates for truth because we want to give things their proper name, and because we advocate for the clear establishment of facts about wars in the former Yugoslavia.

Justice YIHR advocates for justice because we believe that dignity must be restored to victims; we also believe that victims' pain must be adequately recognized and supplemented, through compensation and punishment of perpetrators.

Coexistence We truly believe that citizens of different ethnic, religious, racial, social, sexual and other affiliations can and should live together in peace and with mutual respect.

Human life and dignity We strive for human life and dignity to become the foundation of democratic development for the whole region of former Yugoslavia.

OBJECTIVES

- Citizens of the region know and acknowledge the truth about recent wars and have changed their value system.
- Countries of the Balkans are democratic, civic and accountable societies in which human rights are respected.
- Young people are participating in political and social life.
- Media which objectively inform the public concerning events of the recent past and promote values of a civic society.
- Strengthening of the capacities of the organization.

STRATEGIES

In order to fulfill our mission and meet our objectives, YIHR undertakes the following main activities:

1. Informing citizens about the truth as it was established before international and domestic courts: Workshops, panel discussions and press conferences with international and local agencies, journalists, victims etc enable us to promote the work of international and domestic courts among the professional sector and to educate young people about the significance of dealing with the past and the dangers of not doing so. This aspect of our work focuses on discussing issues relating directly to the victims. We use **various media** including **publications** (newspapers, organisational literature), and **meet directly with victims and their families**, in order to highlight their experiences. We feel it is just as important to talk *with* victims as *about* them. We seek to **educate** young people about the ICTY and its work to ensure their inclusion in its role in dealing with the past. We are working on a **media campaign** producing TV clips to promote the work of the ICTY and its importance in Montenegro and the region.

2. Research, monitoring and documenting/reporting human rights protections and violations: We conduct **research** among youth on their attitudes to dealing with the past, in order to gain an appreciation of where work is needed to promote further acceptance of the need to come to terms with the past and move forward. We also work alongside other agencies, **documenting cases of human rights violations** to allow further advocacy on behalf of the victims, **exerting pressure** on political leaders and bodies to recognize their obligations and duties. We **scrutinize the work of the media** and the (im) partiality of its reporting of various themes concerning dealing with the past (Kosovo, human rights violations, war crimes etc).

3. Education: We seek to **educate** young people, journalists, civil society activists, state employees etc about various themes related to dealing with the past, predominantly human rights, prejudices and stereotypes, reporting during armed conflicts, and *facts* concerning the past. We believe that education is a vital part of the process of dealing with the past, and that knowledge of and appreciation of facts is a crucial determinant in coming to terms with it. We use **workshops, media campaigns, publications** and written material, and occasional **seminars**.

4. Advocacy: We seek to improve the situation of victims of human rights violations, believing that an acknowledgment of and restitution for their suffering is a primary way to help restore their dignity and assist them in coming to terms with the past. We advocate at all levels by sending open letters to the media, press releases etc.

5. Capacity building: In order to achieve our objectives, we seek to work with other actors and organisations on matters of common interest. We seek to build networks of cooperation, such as with the ICTY and also domestic courts. We arrange student visits to

facilitate regional networking of youth. We bring together journalists from Montenegro and the region at meetings, conferences and seminars to promote dialogue and unbiased reporting. We also seek to train our staff, obtain funding for furthering our goals; and we work with volunteers who are dedicated to our vision and mission.

PROGRAMS

The activities of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights for the next five years will be centered around comprehensive programs. It is envisaged that some elements of each program will overlap and we feel that this will give each project extra support.

Dealing with the Past program

Our main vision for this aspect of our work over the next three years will be to strengthen the capacities of young people engaged in the process of dealing with the past; to establish conditions for institutionalizing the process of DWP; and to develop existing methods of DWP and create new ones. This will be achieved through

- the work of Information and Documentation center, i.e. through collecting and making available to all the public the data about the war past of Montenegro and the region
- organizing thematic trainings, workshops, study visits and seminars aimed at educating young people about the importance of the memory on war crimes for transitional justice and peace in the region
- educating young people through peer-to-peer methods about recent history of the region based on the truth established before international and local courts and testimonies of victims of war crimes,
- lobbying for a systematic approach in educating high school and university students on the issue
- engaging young people to get actively involved in the process of dealing with the past through supporting local activism and continuous pressure on public opinion to accept the facts about the recent past through campaigns and public events and using modern means of communication (audio, video, internet, art exhibitions).

Human Rights program

In this area of our work our goal will be to make sure that educated citizens and groups enjoy, defend and advocate human rights; to ensure mechanisms for the protection of human rights (domestic and international) are implemented in practice; and to strengthen the capacities of the HR programs in each country in the region. In order to achieve these goals we will conduct the following activities:

- research into the implementation of mechanisms for the protection of human rights (rights of vulnerable groups and civil rights)
- publishing national and regional reports
- monitoring of war crimes trials

- filing law suits for violations of human rights
- hiring lawyers who will represent the interests of victims
- media campaign which aims to inform the citizens about the human rights law suits

We plan to educate citizens and associations of citizens, as well as journalists and government employees through trainings about the basic concepts of human rights. These will include theory, advocacy and mechanisms of international justice.

Program for Youth

We are convinced that the young people in the region hold the keys for building an accountable society as future decision-makers, voters and citizens. The program for Youth aims to connect people in Montenegro and regionally, decrease prejudices and stereotypes about people in the region, and to actively involve young people in social and political life. Those goals will be achieved through:

- making and coordination of Volunteers Network of young people in the region (Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- youth exchange through shorts visits and internships between people coming from different surroundings in the region and in Montenegro.
- education about basic human rights issues, collective identities and youth activism through study visits, workshops, seminars and trainings

Education and work with youth will be based on creative and new methods, impelling learning through doing and engaged culture activities.