



Outcomes to Date

YIHR Croatia

Transitional Justice and Historical Dialogue Program

Youth Dealing with the Past

The organization involves youth in the process of dealing with the past since its establishment. This program has a component dedicated to these efforts. Thus, YIHR Croatia organizes trainings in transitional justice and activism for youth, strategically focusing on youth in small, war-affected communities. Under the umbrella of this component, YIHR Croatia has held numerous trainings in Zagreb, Knin, Karlovac, Petrinja, Pakrac, Vukovar, Vinkovci, Osijek and other towns. Young people who participated in these trainings later designed and implemented, with the support of the organization, activist actions, exhibitions, public discussions, public victims' testimonies, film screenings and other activities in these towns. In several instances, these young voices were the first to offer a public local stand against the mainstream nationalist discourse in these areas. Most notable event took place in Vukovar in late 2012 when YIHR Croatia and YIHR Serbia brought together youth from Croatia and Serbia to Vukovar, a town in eastern Croatia that was heavily destroyed during the 1990s war and where young Croats and Serbs are educated separately. During this action, youth from Croatia and Serbia attended a history class delivered at the town's main square by a Croatian and a Serbian history teacher and have participated in a partial reconstruction of the yard of *Europe House* in Vukovar, thus promoting an attitude of a generation willing to work together for a common peaceful future.

RECOM Initiative

Coalition for RECOM is a civil society network of organizations advocating the establishment of a formal regional fact finding commission – RECOM. YIHR Croatia has joined the Coalition following the decision of its Founding Assembly. Ever since, YIHR Croatia has been an active contributor to the RECOM process. First, during the process of consultations about the mandate, YIHR Croatia (co-)organized several consultation sessions. Several YIHR Croatia's activists underwent training in the experiences of other societies with truth commissions. These activists later held numerous lectures on this topic to regional consultation participants. After the proposal of the RECOM mandate was developed, YIHR Croatia and YIHR Serbia together coordinated a regional signature collection campaign in support of RECOM's establishment. The campaign gathered over 500.000 signatures of citizens in the region. Currently, YIHR Croatia is a part of the Coalition for RECOM Secretariat, the Coalition's executive body, where the organization assists political advocacy efforts, implements actions and organizes events in support of the establishment of RECOM.

Memorialization

YIHR Croatia has been active in the field of memorialization and commemoration since its establishment. In 2013, it became a member of the *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience*, a leading international network of memory organizations. YIHR Croatia organized, co-organized and participated in numerous memorialization and commemoration events either with the goal of informing and involving young people or to pay respect to victims of crimes that tend to be relativized or denied. Among the most notable YIHR's efforts in this respect are the commemoration of victims of the operation *Storm* and the initiative to establish a memory museum dedicated to civilian victims of war in Petrinja. In 2010, YIHR Croatia placed a commemorative plaque with an inscribed citizen apology to civilian victims of the Croatian military operation *Storm* of 1995, when several hundred civilians were killed and between 150 and 200 thousand people (mostly Croatian Serbs) were forced to flee from their homes, many of whom have never returned. Ever since, the organization pays respect to these victims and advocates that Croatian officials formally apologize for crimes. In 2013, YIHR Croatia started advocacy efforts to establish a museum dedicated to the memory of civilian victims of war in Petrinja, a small municipality in central Croatia heavily destroyed during the 1990s war. The



Municipality of Petrinja, the President of Croatia and the Minister of Culture have to date formally supported this initiative.

Missing Persons

YIHR has been monitoring the work of the *Administration for Imprisoned and Missing Persons* in Croatia since 2011. It has reported about the work of the Administration to relevant domestic and international institutions and organizations on several occasions. Further, the organization has been advocating for the improvement in effectiveness of these efforts, by providing specific insight and clear recommendations. Finally, as a result of YIHR Croatia's direct work with victims and victim groups, it has provided information on probable sites of common and mass graves on several occasions. After YIHR Croatia's claims, the Administration and the police have started an official investigation in at least one case.

Wartime Sexual Violence Prosecution Efforts

The formal legal framework, standard and pace of investigations and judicial processes in prosecuting individuals responsible for committing sexual crimes during the 1990s conflict is deeply inadequate in Croatia and has been in focus of YIHR Croatia's work since 2012. In 2012, YIHR Croatia raised its concerns on the institutions' handling of the process in a report submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee. The organization has implemented a wide comparative research and published a discussion paper on the issue in January 2013 as well as organized an expert meeting about this issue in cooperation with the UNDP in Croatia. In cooperation with the Zagreb's *Culture and Information Center*, a public discussion was organized later in 2013. The discussion was participated by activists, journalists, legal experts and the Ombudswoman for Gender Equality. YIHR Croatia continues its efforts in advocating for the amendments to the formal legal framework in order to allow for improved process of prosecution of individuals responsible for wartime sexual crimes.

Witness Protection

YIHR Croatia has been clearly voicing its concerns that the witness protection is inadequate in Croatia and that it hasn't been sufficiently reformed. Between 2012 and 2015, the organization has regularly reported on this process to local and international stakeholders. In a case of war crime trial where a defendant published the name of a protected witness, YIHR Croatia pressed charges against him with the Prosecution office and after a lack of reaction on behalf of the prosecutors, the organization suggested the Chief State Prosecutor to inform the lawmakers on the inadequacy of the procedural legal framework and to produce guidelines for the prosecutors on handling criminal complaints for revealing the identity of protected witnesses, with a special focus on war crime and corruption cases. In March 2014, in cooperation with the UNDP in Croatia and the ICTY, YIHR Croatia organized an expert meeting on witness protection, where it presented its findings about the remaining issues. Representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and Supreme Court, who participated in the meeting, informed YIHR Croatia about the preparation of new state strategy to improve the standards and procedures in witness protection. Following this, YIHR Croatia has submitted recommendations to the relevant institutions and is currently awaiting the presentation of the strategy proposal.

Fact-Promotion Round Tables

On several occasions, after the final judgments in war crime cases were delivered by the Supreme Court, YIHR Croatia organized round tables to promote and inform the public about the established facts, to give a space for voice of victims and to defy relativization and denial. Most notable round tables were organized in Zagreb about the crimes committed in 1993 in a Croatian military action *Pocket '93* was delivered and in Osijek about the crimes committed by Croatian security and military forces in Osijek in 1991. The latter round table caused a storm of reactions from the local public before it was held, as one of the convicted war criminals is also a powerful politician, enjoying strong support from a regional political party that he established. Due to security concerns, testimonies of victims were cancelled as a part of this round table; however, the presentation of factual findings was held in an event secured by the police.



ICTY Outreach

YIHR Croatia has been cooperating with the *Outreach Program* of the *International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia* since the organization's establishment. On several occasions, the organization organized youth audiences to attend presentations on the history and work of the ICTY at the ICTY *Liaison Office* in Zagreb, helped organize film screenings and university lectures. Additionally, YIHR Croatia participated in a regional project implemented in cooperation of YIHR Network and ICTY Outreach Program under which study visits were organized for youth activists to the ICTY in The Hague, The Netherlands. In 2014, YIHR Croatia has been chosen by the ICTY as its partner organization in Croatia (following the closure of the Liaison Office) in implementation of youth outreach activities. These include presentations and lectures on the history, accomplishments and the procedures of the Tribunal.

ICMP Study Visits

YIHR Croatia participated as a partner in a regional project by the *International Commission on Missing Persons*. Under this project, the ICMP and its partners organized study trips for youth from the region (young activists, journalists and students) to the ICMP headquarters in Sarajevo and field operations. These study visits offered a unique insight into the processes of locating and identifying missing persons.

Cooperation with Associations of Victims

YIHR Croatia has been cooperating with the associations of missing persons in order to assist them in areas where the organization has a developed expertise, to gain information and insight into transitional justice and reconciliation processes from their unique perspective or to inform youth about their work. This cooperation has mostly been facilitated with the organizations that tend to suffer from denial and lack of understanding from the majority of Croatian public. This cooperation includes participation in commemorations, exchange of information, assistance in program development, youth education, advocacy activities in memorialization and other transitional justice processes, etc.

Investigations and Criminal Charges

Since 2010, YIHR Croatia has been conducting non-formal investigations into cases of war crimes that are not being investigated by the relevant authorities. The focuses of these investigations were those cases that are likely not being investigated due to political pressure or their controversial perception in the public. YIHR Croatia's aims in those terms are to collect accessible data (documents and statements from victims and witnesses) in order to instigate formal processes of investigation and prosecution. In several cases, these investigations resulted in criminal charges that YIHR Croatia pressed against probable perpetrators. In other cases, documentation was delivered to the State Attorney's Office to contribute to other available sources of legal evidence. Following YIHR Croatia's charges, investigations were started in a couple of cases. Most notable cases of investigations were crimes committed in Vukovar in Summer 1991 by Croatian security forces and crimes committed after the operation *Flash* in 1995.

Regional Transitional Justice Reporting

YIHR Croatia regularly collects data about transitional justice processes in Croatia. This data is collected through questionnaires sent out to relevant institutions, at meetings with representatives of these institutions, analysing press and reports of the institutions as well as by direct monitoring, such as trial monitoring. In 2011 and 2012, YIHR Croatia worked on a research for the regional report *Transitional Justice in Post-Yugoslav Countries*. The subject of this report are relevant events in the transitional justice arena in the successor countries of the former Yugoslavia: trials for war crimes committed in the period 1991-1999, institutional reform referring to lustration, approach that institutions and public have to convicts, media reporting about war crimes, truth commissions, work of civil society organizations on documenting facts about war crimes, resolution of the issue of missing persons, return of refugees, reparations, memorials. The report was made in joint efforts of the *Humanitarian Law Center, HLC Kosovo, YIHR Croatia, Center for Research and Policy Making* from



Macedonia, *Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Memory Association* in Bosnia and Herzegovina from Sarajevo, the *Centre for Democracy and Transitional Justice* from Banja Luka and *Civic Link* from Slovenia. YIHR Croatia submits general or advocacy transitional justice reports to national and international human rights mechanisms (OSCE, UN, etc.), and international human rights organizations. The organization has also been providing insight into these processes to organizations such as *Amnesty International*, *TRIAL* and others.

Regional Cooperation and Mobility Program

Regional Exchange Program

Since its establishment, YIHR Croatia has joined efforts with other YIHR organizations in the region in implementing youth exchanges, bi-lateral and regional youth exchange projects under the umbrella of the Regional Exchange Program. YIHR Regional Network has been working on this program since 2003 and has reached over 15000 young people in the region. In 2010, the YIHR Regional Network decided to start advocacy efforts with a goal of establishment of a formal, state-sponsored youth exchange program in the region, modelled after similar initiatives in the Franco-German post-war context. Since, meetings with political parties, institutions, NGOs, media and international stakeholders were held to accumulate support for this initiative. Currently, YIHR Croatia is involved in both organizing youth exchanges and implementing advocacy activities for the formal formation of the youth exchange program in the region.

Political Youth Network

Since 2009, YIHR Croatia has been a driving force behind YIHR Regional Network's activities related to supporting and facilitating regional cooperation among young politicians, centred on the issues of human rights, reconciliation and EU integration. In February 2014, at a conference in Zagreb, a network of youth branches of political parties – *Political Youth Network (PYN)* was established. Over 23 major parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia joined PYN. This is the first network of its kind and is becoming a significant arena for discussions and education about relevant and current human rights issues as well as a platform for improvement of human rights policies in political programs of the member parties.

Regional Youth Actions

On occasions on anniversaries and international days related to issues relevant from the perspective of human rights and peace, the YIHR Regional Network organizes regional youth actions. Some of these are conducted via on-line communication tools and social networks whereas others are conducted as regional activist meetings. Most relevant among these actions are implemented on the *International Day of the Disappeared*, when all YIHR organizations in the region pay respects to missing persons and publicly call for a prompt and more effective approaches in uncovering the fate of the missing. Further, meetings are organized on occasions of relevant bi-lateral or regional meetings of officials to advocate resolving of remaining open issues representing the legacy of recent conflicts. An exemplary action of this kind was held in Vukovar in 2010, when Croatian and Serbian presidents met to promote reconciliation and continuation in building friendly relations among states in the region.

Sarajevo Film Festival: DocuCorner

Every year, YIHR participates in the Sarajevo Film Festival (SFF) at the *DocuCorner*, where it organizes discussions among young human rights activists from the region on human rights issues raised by the documentary films shown at the Festival. YIHR puts special emphasis on the issues of dealing with the past in the Balkan region and human rights issues. Filmmakers or protagonists of documentary films participate in these discussions with young human rights activists. As a part of the program, the activists take a tour of *War Sarajevo* to learn about the siege of Sarajevo and crimes committed during the 1990s war. YIHR Regional Network also participates in the *Human Rights Day* organized as a part of SFF.



European Civic Awareness

In order to promote values of human rights, democracy and peace as well as the concept of the EU as a peace project, YIHR Croatia organizes a practical education program for youth in Croatia, in cooperation with over 15 EU member states' embassies. Under this education program, young participants (high-school students from Zagreb and several war-affected communities) visit embassies of EU member states, Croatian institutions dealing with international affairs and the EC/EP institutions in Zagreb. These visits give them information about the relations of Croatia with other member states, benefits of being an EU citizen and offer a space for discussion about the most relevant social and political issues that the EU faces today. By this, the program promotes civic awareness among young participants, with the specific understanding of the European context.

Human Rights Monitoring and Advocacy Program

Research on Human Rights Mechanisms

After the decision of YIHR Croatia's Board to establish the Human Rights Monitoring and Advocacy Program, the organization first implemented a wide research into all human rights mechanisms that apply to Croatia. On one hand, this research made YIHR Croatia able to respond and use all relevant mechanisms for research and advocacy. On another hand, it enabled YIHR Croatia to understand which relevant mechanisms were not signed or ratified by Croatia. This research has been implemented in 2012 and serves as the basis for the Program ever since.

Human Rights Monitoring

YIHR Croatia focuses on several human rights issues and groups. These are: i) rights of national minorities; ii) rights of LGBT people, iii) transitional justice mechanisms; iv) combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and related intolerances and v) rights enshrined in the European Union's Charter on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. On the basis of research from the above paragraph, YIHR Croatia monitors measures in these fields under the coordination with the applicable national, regional and international mechanisms. YIHR Croatia collects relevant data through official channels, by conducting interviews, by analysing press and by other means. YIHR Croatia has developed and is currently leading the widest human rights monitoring program in the nation, covering over 500 measures.

Reporting

Reporting is one of the key activities in the Human Rights Monitoring and Advocacy Program. YIHR Croatia submits reports to relevant national, regional and international human rights mechanisms and institutions. Likewise, the organization reports on specific issues, when there is a need for advocacy by reporting. Finally, since 2013, YIHR Croatia publishes a concise annual human rights report, focusing on recognizing relevant trends in human rights state. Some of the mechanisms to which YIHR Croatia submits its reports are institutions within the systems of the United Nations, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Croatian parliamentary committees and others.

Human Rights Advocacy

YIHR Croatia organizes its advocacy efforts in two major groups: (a) general human rights advocacy and (b) issue-based advocacy. General human rights advocacy encompasses regular advocacy activities undertaken by YIHR Croatia as a result of announced legislative or policy novelty or changes falling under the auspice of the five thematic areas. This allows YIHR Croatia to serve as a *watchdog* at any moment when such activities are necessary in order to ensure a higher standard for the protection of human rights. Issue-based human rights advocacy puts special focus on particularly worrying social initiatives trying to undermine human rights protection. Its wide monitoring allows YIHR Croatia to promptly respond to these challenges on the basis of clear and relevant data and analysis.



Combating Anti-LGBT Trends in Croatia

YIHR Croatia significantly contributed to human rights civil society advocacy efforts combating anti-LGBT initiatives in Croatia. The most notable initiative aimed at limiting the rights of LGBT persons was lead in Croatia in 2013, when right wing and religious groups instigated a public referendum aiming to constitutionally define marriage exclusively as a union of a man and a woman. A wide human rights civil society coalition *Građani glasaju PROTIV (Citizens Voting AGAINST)* was formed, where YIHR Croatia had one of the coordinating roles. The referendum was successful and the amendments to the Constitution were introduced. However, the campaign was deeply relevant as an initiative raising awareness around the issue of LGBT rights in Croatia.

Combating Anti-Minority Trends in Croatia

In 2013, after the results of the population census of 2011 showed that ethnic Serbs represent a 1/3 minority in several areas in Croatia, the rights from the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, the *Constitutional Law on Rights of National Minorities* and several other mechanisms were supposed to be recognized to the Serbian minority in these areas in Croatia. However, the right wing groups and political parties, numerous veteran organizations, and *ad hoc* initiatives started protesting against the right to public use of minority language. The protesters used public advocacy, but also violence in their opposition, attacking public institution buildings and breaking the bi-lingual tables on them, even when those were protected by the police. After the initial protests, the groups organized a signature-collection campaign to instigate a public referendum on the issues, wishing to suspend rights measures. A wide human rights civil society coalition was formed in cooperation of the *Platform 112* (civil society platform monitoring issues from the EU accession *acquis*), Civic Committee for Human Rights and YIHR Croatia to advocate against the limitations to minority rights. YIHR Croatia authored and co-issued a submission to the Croatian Parliament's relevant committees and the Constitutional Court, as well as international stakeholders, primarily in the EU. This submission listed all the obligations of Croatia with respect to national, regional and international human rights mechanisms, thus contributing to the argument that such a referendum should not be allowed as it would counter the country's obligations and would be unconstitutional. The initiative was successful as the Constitutional Court deemed the initiative unconstitutional and banned the holding of such a referendum.

Zagreb and Osijek Pride Marches

YIHR Croatia closely cooperates with LGBT organizations in Croatia. This cooperation includes monitoring data exchange and logistical cooperation for the organization of pride marches. YIHR Croatia's Human Rights Monitoring and Advocacy Program Coordinator served on the Zagreb Pride's Organizational Committee. Further, in 2014, YIHR Croatia's Osijek Office was involved in supporting the organization of the first Pride March in Osijek.

Human Rights Education and Internships

Every year since 2013, YIHR Croatia organized human rights trainings for students (mainly law students) in Zagreb. These are intensive trainings in which the participants are informed in-depth about the human rights mechanisms including human rights institutions from committees to courts. The participants analyse legal cases and processes as well as learn about advocacy and reporting. After the trainings, the most interested and best candidates are selected for an internship with YIHR Croatia's Program. This internship gives that insight into practical work and actual cases.

Advocacy for the Protection from Enforced Disappearance

In 2014, YIHR Croatia started with preparations for the advocacy campaign aimed at Croatia's ratifying of the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*. YIHR Croatia analysed the measures that need to be undertaken in order to formally ratify this Convention as well as those that need to be undertaken in order to guarantee respect of standards defined in it.



YIHR Croatia in International Networks

YIHR Croatia is a member of several international (European and global) human rights and democracy networks.

Coalition for the ICC

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) includes 2,500 civil society organizations in 150 different countries working in partnership to strengthen international cooperation with the ICC; ensure that the Court is fair, effective and independent; make justice both visible and universal; and advance stronger national laws that deliver justice to victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. (<http://www.iccnw.org/>)

International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is the only worldwide network dedicated to transforming places that preserve the past into dynamic spaces that promote civic action on today's struggles for human rights and justice. From its founding, the Coalition has fostered a global movement around the urge to remember, resulting in its extraordinary growth from nine founding sites to almost 200 Sites of Conscience working together to connect past to present and memory to action. (<http://www.sitesofconscience.org/>)

World Youth Movement for Democracy

The World Youth Movement for Democracy (WYMD) is a network that aims to support the development of sustainable democracy movements by empowering the next generation of democracy activists. The World Youth Movement provides a space for young activists to build relationships with each other, to collaborate across borders, to deepen their knowledge on key issues, and to develop practical skills. It also serves as a platform for young activists to promote democratic values and a forum for sharing information and ideas. (<http://www.democratic-youth.net/>)

UNITED! for Intercultural Action

UNITED coordinates, supports and strengthens a network of 560 organizations from 46 European countries. They all share values such as intercultural communication, diversity and Human Rights. We are concerned about the international situation and about the direct and indirect forms of discrimination, hate crimes and intolerance and highlight intercultural understanding, equal rights for all and a Europe without racism. (<http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/>)

European Grassroots Antiracist Movement

The European Grassroots Antiracist Movement EGAM was founded in November 2010 in Paris. Its main objective is to answer the rise in racism, anti-Semitism and populism in Europe and to structure civil society's commitment to equality and justice. (<http://www.egam.eu/>)

** YIHR Croatia had a Youth and Education Program prior to integrating those activities in other existing programs. Retroactively, the activities implemented under this program have been integrated in other programs in this paper as well.*