

The World Bank has launched a new tool to fight discrimination and empower young people

According to the Amnesty International reports the violation of human rights is a serious issue across Europe and some discriminatory incidents (e.g. anti-Semitism) are even on the increase. Support for discriminated and disadvantaged groups as well as the need for human rights education becomes crucial, particularly when it comes to young people.

The World Bank Offices in Poland and in Slovakia in partnership with the Factory of Future foundation stepped up to fulfill this demand by launching a unique publication: "Youth4Diversity". It is the first such a publication in Central Europe that deals with discrimination issues and provides professional tools for activities that can be conducted by young people in their communities. The guidebook has been developed by twenty young people from Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, aged 17 to 26, from various backgrounds, who have some experience in education, business and involvement in social issues.

The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Mr. Thomas Hammarberg has written in the preamble: *"This publication is a practical tool for young people to raise awareness of discrimination and act against it. It is a map for opportunities of empowerment and ways of getting organized. Advice on accessing funding is also included. I wish that it reaches a wide audience and benefits a multitude of young people"*.

The publication was written as the result a 10 day gathering, from the 23rd of July till the 2nd of August which was a combination of workshops, knowledge sharing events and trainings. This innovative project was planned, managed and implemented by young people themselves with a minimum supervision of the Team Task Leader –Jacek Wojciechowicz, Sr. Communications Officer at the World Bank Office in Warsaw who assisted them with his professional advice and suggestions.

- I'm deeply convinced that the Youth4Diversity publication will encourage young people like us to work on filling the gap between discriminated groups and the rest of the society. It's interesting, easy to read, practical and we are all very proud of it. So far we created English and Polish editions, but we are willing to translate it into Hungarian, Slovakian and maybe even other languages – so more young people could benefit. – says Rafal Dembe, a 23 years old Project Manager, who is in charge of youth outreach activities at the World Bank Office in Poland and is the author of its Youth Outreach Strategy. Governments, educators and even youth workers often emphasize the importance of investing in young people because they are the "leaders of tomorrow" and "the hope for the future". Not that it's not true, but the fact often seems to be overlooked that young people can be very successful leaders of today and can contribute to shaping the world right now, without waiting to be older, more educated and having more experience. – adds Rafal.

The launch of the publication took place on November 15th in the premises of the World Bank Office in Warsaw and gathered representatives of non-governmental organizations,

youth organizations, students and other youth groups, representatives of the Ministry of Education, the National Youth Agency, the Council of Europe as well as the media, including national dailies, radio and television stations and other and e-media which extensively covered the event and the publication.

The launch was opened by Oscar de Bruyn Kops, Country Manager for Poland and the Baltic States, who addressed the participants with inspiring words about the great importance of youth empowerment and human rights. He was followed by Tunde Buzetky from the World Bank Office in Slovakia, who spoke about other World Bank regional activities regarding both discrimination issues and youth empowerment including: the Decade of Roma Inclusion initiative. The summary of the Youth Leadership Forum for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova –was presented by Yulia Yurova from the World Bank Office in Kyiv, who joined the launch via videoconferencing facilities.

Ms. Hanna Machinska, the Director of the Information Office of the Council of Europe (CoE) complimented on the publication as well as on the whole initiative and requested copies to be sent to all CoE offices across Europe. In addition number of other organizations and individuals indicated their interest in receiving copies of the publication to be disseminated among young active people and youth workers.

The electronic copy of the publication is available free of charge on the www.youth4diversity.eu website that was specially created as part of the Project.

The project is financed by the Small Grant Program Youth Initiative 2007 and the European Youth Foundation and organized in partnership with the World Bank Office in Slovakia, Mobilitas (Hungary), the Youth Council of Slovakia, Polis – Young Journalist Association (Poland) and TakingItGlobal (Canada) under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Terry Davis.

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