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UDRUŽENJE IZBORNIH ZVANIČNIKA U BIH

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Subject: Report from the study trip to the Czech Republic

In the period from 30.9.2023. year, until 4 October 2023. year, and at the invitation of the Association of Election Officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina and under the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, a study trip was made. On the study trip were four (4) professors, representatives of four partner secondary schools, participants in the project, and two (2) representatives of the municipality/city, which are partners in the project.

The goal of the study trip was to present successful examples of youth inclusion at the local level and to see how to increase youth participation in public life and how it contributes to better functionality of local government.

During the four days of their stay in Prague, the participants had the opportunity to visit the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Czech Republic, and to familiarize themselves with the work of the Association itself (UIZBIH), as well as with the work of the schools that the professors represented, and the work of the Municipality/City, Ilijaš and Cavalry. After that, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic was visited, where the delegation, in addition to presenting the work and progress of the Association (UIZBIH), schools, and the municipality/city, thanked them for their full support, both verbally and financially, and expressed their desire for further cooperation.

What could be drawn as the conclusion of these meetings is that we need to be "louder", that is, to work on the promotion of the Association and the presentation of projects, to design better marketing, so that as many people as possible hear about the activities, work, progress and achieved results of the Association and non-governmental organizations. The same thing applies to secondary schools and municipalities/cities, that is, to be more vocal in promoting positive activities and work results, which we all have.

After the Embassy and the Ministry, the delegation had the opportunity to visit the High School in Kutna Hora, which was the first to apply the policy of youth participation in decision-making at the local level. The delegation attended the school parliament, where

young people participated in the discussion about youth problems at the school level, and this, again, is an excellent practice to be able to apply in solving youth problems at the local level. Students could express their thinking about a certain problem, as well as offer a solution to that problem.

What is evident is that young people understand their power and possibilities in improving life both on the school premises and in the local community, and actively participate in presenting problems, discussing and offering solutions. The problems of young people are the same in the Czech Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the awareness that you can change something and that you need to take action seems to be lacking among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and they should be included in workshops and projects so that they understand that they too can contribute both to themselves and to the school, so the local community, and even the state, just need to be active citizens.

After school, a constructive conversation was held with representatives of the Prague 6 Municipality and representatives of non-governmental organizations. After we presented our projects and activities in schools and the municipality/city, they presented what it looks like when the projects are done at the level of their municipality, and what the public discussions that are held on all issues important to their local community look like. What we could notice is that citizens are aware of their environment, are willing to develop it for the better, and actively participate in public discussions and make all important decisions. They also presented us with a couple of projects where we could see how active the citizens were and participated in the realization, as well as how young people are involved and how their projects are progressing. We also saw the role of non-governmental organizations in the entire process, from idea to implementation.

What could be concluded from this meeting is that there are problems in every municipality or city, and the citizens recognize what those problems are, however, the way those problems will be solved is different. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, citizens are passive and seem to expect the problem to be solved by themselves or to be solved by someone else, and don't let them ask about anything or, God forbid, get involved in some action to change the situation in the local community, especially don't let them discuss something, so if you have a Public Call on a certain topic or problem, the response from the citizens is little or none. In the Czech Republic, citizens are much more active and want to solve a problem in the local community, so the response to their Public Calls ranges from satisfactory to excellent depending on the seriousness of the problem. Citizens discuss, point out the problem, and offer solutions through projects. Non-governmental organizations actively contribute to all of this, all to improve the lives of the residents of the Municipality, and ultimately the state.

What could be the conclusion and task of this small delegation that was in Prague, is to apply the knowledge gained on this trip in their school and community. Students should be introduced to what they have learned and seen, and even though they have been told, repeat that they must be more active citizens, that they must fight to solve a problem, that they actively participate in public debates, that they write projects, that they are the ones who start the change, that they can do it and that they don't get distracted in their plans and work. Municipal representatives should be introduced to these examples to open the door for young people and their problems, thereby letting them know that young people are important, that they should at least be listened to, and that they can solve a problem together. And this, again,

is important, because when you teach children that they can change something, that they are listened to, and that you support their ideas and projects, you have got an active citizen who is ready to get involved in tackling bigger problems and is ready to do everything he can solve it and thereby help the local community and the state.

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