

Podgorica, 15.06.2011.

END THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AS IT ENCOURAGES DISCRIMINATION

Human Rights Action, Centre for Anti-discrimination EQUISTA, Centre for Civic Education (CCE), Centre for Women and Peace Education ANIMA, LGBT Forum Progress, Shelter and Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro insist on suspension of the current campaign against discrimination implemented by the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights (MHMR) within the program “Exercising Human Rights”.

Without any justified reason, MHMR chose to take on the visual identity of the campaign, previously carried out in Croatia, but with somewhat different messages.

The current campaign against discrimination in Montenegro, in our opinion, will not produce the intended effects and results because of inadequate graphic and visual solutions and their connection with text messages, which creates confusion. Content of the campaign messages was not discussed with the groups to which the messages refer, whose equality was actually supposed to be promoted by this activity of the MHMR. We find the campaign to be superficial and formal, without focusing on real challenges in the acceptance of the vulnerable groups. We believe that such campaign can not contribute to improving the situation of discriminated groups, and that its continuation is a waste of taxpayers’ money, as well as further humiliation and systematic discrimination against vulnerable groups. In a democratic society, an opinion of groups covered by respective campaigns would have to be taken into account.

Due to the absence of promoting the fight against racial discrimination, the Roma Scholarship Foundation joined the protest. Most recent public surveys show that discrimination against Roma in Montenegro is most prominent. This group is not even included in the campaign against discrimination.

1. Part of the campaign which refers to persons with disabilities (PWD) has the slogan “No one should be on the margins”. However, visual solution shows the opposite – the silhouette of a person with a disability (wheelchair user) lacking a part, since on the right margin. Such depiction is misleading, because the text says one thing and graphics completely different thing. Also, a symbol denoting the PWD has been turned away from the symbols that mark the rest of society, on which the inclusion of PWD depends. Such imagery is not appropriate for persons with disabilities, as the campaign should not further emphasize their poor status in the society and depict them with faults. It is necessary to give emphasis to encouraging and inclusive messages and content. MHMR could have counted on many successful examples of PWD community, whose organizations were not consulted when planning this campaign.
2. Part of the campaign dedicated to fighting discrimination based on gender shows pictures of two male and two, almost invisible, female figures on a black background with the message “Pushed back”. We remind that the solution of the original campaign was “Pushed back?”, which questioned,

but did not confirm the underrepresentation of women. The relation of visual and textual in Montenegrin campaign is thus dangerously ambiguous, because a campaign designed in this manner may convey a message to women that they will be “taken away by darkness” if they make efforts to change the existing situation.

3. Part of the campaign promoting LGBT rights bears the slogan “Not everything is black and white”, and graphic design shows five silhouettes, two male and three female, three of whom are black and white, and two in the rainbow colours (one male and one female), on a black background. We believe that this message and its visual representation do not achieve the desired goal, i.e. the promotion of tolerance. It is not an affirmative example or a necessary change, but only a conclusion, provided that the general public knows the meaning of the rainbow colours, that the LGBT population exists.

Once again we emphasize that, in addition to being unoriginal, the campaign is confusing, inappropriate, and further encourages discrimination. **We publicly invite the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights to end the campaign without delay and discontinue the use the disputed images. We expect the Ministry to reach clear and appropriate solutions through a dialogue with groups that suffer discrimination and work with marginalized groups.**

A copy of this letter is addressed to the Prime Minister Igor Luksic, who must bear in mind the credibility and reputation of the Government.

Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro
Human Rights Action
Centre for Civic Education
Centre for Women and Peace Education ANIMA
LGBT Forum Progress
Shelter
Centre for Antidiscrimination EQUISTA
Roma Scholarship Foundation

Centar za antidiskriminaciju „Ekvista“
Fondacija za stipendiranje Roma