

Highlights 4 January - March 2024



Young European Ambassadors sending a loud and clear message from Budapest: Say NO to hatred!

More than 50 Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) got introduced to methods on how to effectively address hate speech and discrimination. This will enable the YEAs to make a difference in their communities through the promotion of equality and diversity, ultimately contributing to combating hate speech and discrimination online and offline. YEAs from the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership regions participated in the “Promoting equality and non-discrimination and combating hate speech” training held at the premises of the European Youth Centre in Budapest.

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STRENGTHENING JUSTICE



Protecting the rights of detained persons in the Western Balkans

Enabling equal protection of rights of everybody, and especially members of

vulnerable groups, is in focus of the Horizontal Facility programme. Persons deprived of liberty represent one of the vulnerable groups whose rights are in need of better protection, and the knowledge and skills of penitentiary staff should be further supported. The European Union and the Council of Europe are working with the authorities of the Western Balkans on the penitentiary reform, with the aim of a better protection of human rights of persons deprived of liberty.

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Transparent and efficient justice system, a necessity for a democratic society

Increasing transparency and efficiency of judiciary institutions in the Western Balkans through improved court management and performance constitutes a priority of the Horizontal Facility actions working in the field of justice. In this context, the Council of Europe is providing its expertise and key methodologies in support of the process to ensure quality services for justice users in the region.

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Building accountable and accessible judicial systems in the WB

A principal contribution of the Horizontal Facility programme is to enhance the accountability and access of the judicial systems in the Western Balkans Beneficiaries and, thus, ensure better protection of human rights, in line with the European values and the Council of Europe recommendations. The actions in the field have continued to provide important assistance and capacity building to domestic actors, in their efforts to improve human rights standards in the judiciary.

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FIGHTING ECONOMIC CRIME & CORRUPTION



Authorities in Türkiye enhance understanding of comparative practices for mitigating money laundering risks from virtual assets

“Action against money laundering in Türkiye” has been working on strengthening capacities of authorities of Türkiye in the area of prevention of money laundering. In that framework and in co-operation with the Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK), the action organised a training session on the risk assessment of virtual assets /virtual assets service providers. Virtual assets, despite their potential benefits, can be misused by illicit actors in the absence of robust regulation and undermine the integrity of the financial system.

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Tackling environmental crime through addressing related illicit financial flows and corruption

A regional conference focusing on the intricate relationship between money laundering, corruption and environmental crimes in the Western Balkans took place in Tirana, Albania. Organised with the support of the EU and the Council of Europe, the two days event brought together key stakeholders from law enforcement, environmental and financial intelligence agencies, as well as civil society representatives and experts in the field, to tackle the interconnected challenges of environmental crime, corruption, and other financial crimes that pose significant threats to the environment and socio-economic stability.

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PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY



Supporting fight against discrimination and hate

The anti-discrimination actions in the Western Balkans continue to play a pivotal role in collective efforts of the public authorities and related actors to combat discrimination, racism, hate speech, and hate crimes. Through the provision of expertise, capacity building, and awareness raising initiatives, these actions have made tangible contributions in the harmonisation of legal frameworks and institutional approaches, thereby enhancing mechanisms for the protection of human rights, particularly for vulnerable communities.

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Advancing the fight against human trafficking

Strengthening prevention of trafficking in human beings and ensuring identification, protection, and access to remedies for victims of trafficking are crucial for upholding standard human rights values.

The programme is continuing to work closely with institutional partners and key actors in the field in their efforts to strengthen legislation, policy, and practice for effectively combating human trafficking and respond to new challenges and trends in the Western Balkans



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Ensuring quality education for all

The main goal of the Horizontal Facility education actions has remained unchanged since the beginning of the programme - nurturing inclusive, discrimination-free environment

in schools, where democratic culture and education for democratic citizenship are equally valued by students, teachers, parents, and broader communities. The programme has been supporting authorities, civil society organisations, local communities, schools, students, and their parents in achieving the aforementioned goal.

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Increasing knowledge of university students on gender-sensitive legal services

With the support of the programme collaborative meetings with the Faculties of Law, Economics, Administrative Sciences and Social Sciences at Ankara University, Atılım University, Çankaya University, Başkent University and Bilkent University in Ankara on 22 - 25 January. The aim was to promote the tutored course on “Access to justice for women”, developed within



Lawyers from İstanbul enhance their knowledge on “Detention in the Context of Migration”

20 lawyers from the İstanbul Bar Association, completed a two-day training on “Detention in the Context of Migration” in co-operation with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations. The training was delivered by experienced lawyers/mentors who were previously trained under the action and aimed to enhance the knowledge of lawyers on, *inter alia*, international and

the European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP). The action also engaged with the Turkish Education Association and the career centre of the Union of Turkish Bar Associations to increase outreach to students across the country.

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European human rights standards related to the principle of *non-refoulement*, the right to liberty and security including lawfulness of detention, alternatives to immigration detention, and the protection of persons in a vulnerable situation.

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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA



Protecting freedom of expression and freedom of the media in the Western Balkans

The programme has been supporting the main actors in the Western Balkans on the promotion and protection of freedom of expression and freedom of the media. In this context, beneficiaries' institutions, civil society organisations or media associations have built their capacities and have raised their knowledge on how to protect these two essential freedoms in line with the European standards.

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EXPERTISE CO-ORDINATION MECHANISM



Venice Commission adopts the Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina requested an opinion of the Venice Commission on eight questions relating to the functioning of the Constitutional Court, namely on the measures that could be taken in a situation in which the authorities deliberately block the election of judges to the Constitutional Court, as well as the appointment of *ad hoc* judges, prolongation of the mandate of current judges and anti-deadlock mechanisms.

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

New publications available online

Get to know the most recent publications developed and published under the Horizontal Facility programme!



They were prepared to assist beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and in Türkiye, and to provide knowledge and valuable resources regarding protection of fundamental human rights in line with the European values and the Council of Europe standards and recommendations.

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