



Empowering young persons through human rights education necessary for ensuring democratic future in Europe

Belgrade, 9 June 2023 - The launch of the new Serbian language version of the *Compass* manual is important for human rights education of young people in Serbia, as it will help empower youth leaders, multipliers and youth workers to support young people's meaningful participation in democratic life.

Support to the participation of young persons in democratic life and decision-making processes, including through education about human rights and core democratic values is also one of the cornerstones of [Reykjavik Principles for Democracy](#), adopted during the Council of Europe Summit in May 2023.

In his opening remarks at the event to launch the new publication, Tobias Flessenkemper, the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade stressed that human rights education is a basis for young people to build peaceful society based on justice. "As Serbia remains shaken by the terrible crimes which had young people as victims and perpetrators, society, families and young people themselves are looking for practical tools to build a future without violence, where everyone can enjoy his/her human rights and freedoms. With a *Compass* manual we aim to provide such a tool", concluded Flessenkemper.

H.E. Cathy Buggenhout, Ambassador of Belgium to Serbia added: "Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo phrased it already very clearly at the Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavik: the European Convention on Human Rights, together with the European Court of Human Rights, guarantee the human rights of every person on the European continent. Therefore, we must have the courage to assert loud and clear the values which we wish to uphold. Human rights are what brings us together here in Belgrade today, and Belgium is proud to be part of the launch of the Serbian *Compass* manual. Education of our youngsters in human rights is vital."

Ivana Antonijević, Assistant Minister at the Ministry of Tourism and Youth emphasised that young people are a key factor in the development of a society in which human rights are respected. "Through the active involvement of young people in decision-making processes, we ensure that the voice of the young people is heard, and through investing in the education of young people about human rights, we create strong partners in building a society tailored to all of us. Through strategic documents and through the drafting of the new Law on Youth, we are setting an institutional framework to make this possible," said Antonijević.

Antje Rothmund, Head of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, in her key-note address, underlined that human rights cannot be protected by legal instruments alone, they need to be defended and promoted, and this is what *Compass* tries to do – to contribute to the creation of a culture of human rights. She added that young people are not a homogenous group, they can be perpetrators of violence, as well as promoters of human rights. "As educators, we can be there for those who are in between and do not know to which side to belong, to help young people associate to a community of positive values, a community of peace, a community of human rights and a community of democracy. "

Aleksandra Vidanović, human rights trainer underlined that there is a long institutional memory of *Compass* in Serbia, which started small and grows bigger and which also ought to be embedded in the formal educational sector. *Compass* is not aging, it gets more needed, Vidanović has stressed.

Presentation of *Compass* manual was complemented with panel discussions and an exchange between public institutions, youth organisations and youth workers. Participants underlined that in the current societal context, it is essential to affirm the necessary complementarity of non-formal and formal



learning, to foster dialogue between all stakeholders working for and with young people in Serbia, and to provide human rights education with the help of such resources as the *Compass*.

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