

Project „Equal services for all citizens of Vracar municipality”- the first step toward change

As a public servant in the City Municipality of Vracar (Belgrade), which is obliged to ensure equal treatment and equal access to services, I realized that the municipality had to undertake all available measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination. It was evident that the municipality was providing its services in unequal manner : there were physical barriers, no sign language interpreter, no clear and understandable information and general acts with a discriminatory provisions.

The opportunity to start the process of change was given to me by ICLD within the participation in ITP Programme “Local Governance with Rights Based Approach” which was a unique training comprised of both practical and theoretical knowledge, gained from experts from Swedish local government, organizations and eminent university lecturers.



My change project aimed to increase awareness and sensitivity of employees and decision makers toward discriminated groups. I conducted a survey which showed a low level of sensitivity and knowledge of civil servants and decision makers about discrimination and anti-discrimination legislation, prejudices and stereotypes. That fact inspired me to organize the training for employees

and decision makers in these fields.

The one day training “No to discrimination” focused on psychological and legal aspects of discrimination. A representative of discriminated groups (person with disabilities-deaf person), who was provided with a sign language interpreter, presented his problems and the barriers he has been facing in a daily life and before public bodies . The most interesting fact was that the participants were very interested in discussing problems and solutions directly with the representatives of discriminated groups.



Nevena Jokic , one of the participants said: “I gained knowledge that will be useful at work, especially knowledge concerning better understanding of discrimination and the ways of avoiding traps which can lead to discriminatory behavior in daily work.”

Despite of the challenge of initiation and involvement of a greater number of employees and decision makers, the training was very important, as it eventually had an influence in changing the

perception toward discrimination.

Furthermore, I want to emphasize that this project has started up a general development of positive changes regarding discrimination and Human rights in Vracar municipality. Civil servants conducted the street action “Raise hands for Human Rights”, for the promotion of the International Human rights day, on December 10th, and had a conversation with citizens about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The new department responsible for managing projects has also now been established. In the next period, a free service of Serbian language interpreter in the municipality will be introduced, an informative material will be printed on Braille Alphabet, titles will be put in videos and another training for the other civil servants and decision makers will be held in March.

Finally, participation in this program gave me valuable experience which was of utmost importance for my professional development and successful implementation of my project. The main conclusion of this professional journey is that the development and prosperity depends on ourselves and every single step toward change has a positive effect which further multiplies.

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