

## **Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM**

Daruvar, Croatia  
February 27, 2010

A Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM was organized by *Delfin* - the Center for Civil Society Development from Pakrac (Croatia) and Documenta from Zagreb (Croatia). The Initiative supports the Creation of a Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia in the period from 1991-2001 (RECOM). The Consultation was attended by over 40 participants. Key note speakers were Mirjana Bilopavlović (Delfin), Eugen Jakovčić (Documenta), Darija Marić (Documenta), Cvijeta Senta (Center for Peace Studies, Zagreb), Marko Veličković (Center for the Development of Civil Resources, Niš, Serbia), Ivan Novosel (Legalis, Zagreb).

Additionally, the Consultation had radio and TV coverage: NET TV (Independent TV, Kutina), HRT (Croatian Radio TV), and Radio Daruvar all reported on the gathering in their informational news programs and in the *Županijska Panorama* show.

### **Opinions, Suggestions, and Recommendations of the Participants**

#### **It is important to reach a consensus.**

*(...) I like very much this initiative and the idea to find the truth in which both sides would agree on. So ok, let's confront the public with some names, and as you said, these people are neither Croats nor Serbs, they are simply war crimes perpetrators. But what is important to establish is the facts in order to narrow the space for manipulation and lies. This house needs to be built from the foundation, and this means there can be no denial of war crimes to start with. (Emina Ogrizek, Daruvar, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

#### **It is important to educate people and to instil in them the sense of mutual respect and acceptance of differences.**

*I don't want to go blind and forget everything that happened, but when it comes to young people, I think a lot more can be achieved through informal forms of education and by coaching young people to accept each other's differences and to have respect for each other. My friends are the kind of people that don't show hatred. (Jelena Kolesarić, SOS, Virovitica, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

#### **It is necessary to influence the hard-line Croat nationals.**

*We have two neighbours who are not very easy-going people, so to speak. They are, let's just say, true Croats. We should especially pay attention to the hard-liners, try to win them over. They should be approached carefully and with special attention. (Karolina Melnjak, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

*There are those who are entrenched in their beliefs, and we need to instigate a change in their way of thinking. We need to try to change their opinions and to pay special attention to veterans, because many of them were barely 18 years old when they went to war. (Karolina Melnjak, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**We need to be very careful in selecting RECOM members. We should really try to mobilize true experts.**

*And, we should also be very careful who we choose as RECOM members. We need to find good lawyers, sociologists, experts in their fields, and make sure that various interest groups don't have too much influence. (Karolina Melnjak, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**It is important that in addition to the headquarters, the commission also has local offices in various locations throughout the region.**

*Simply because of organizational reasons, RECOM should probably have local chapters, local offices, in every member state, in the capital, or elsewhere. It does not really matter where the head office is because in the end our main goal is to establish the facts, and it does not matter where the office work takes place. So, yes, I personally don't mind the centralistic approach. (Una Kociper, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

*I personally favour the de-centralistic approach. There should be a roof institution, but the whole structure must be de-centralized since it is the foundation of a democratic system. I can't really support a centralistic approach. (Karolina Melnjak, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**It is not necessary to have a head office.**

*(...) I think that today's communication technologies are so advanced that we can share data and compile our reports together without sharing an office, without really having a head office. (Tatjana Petrović, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**Religious and ethnic background of the members of the Commission should not be of any importance.**

*(...) is the religious, ethnic background of the members of the Commission really important? It should not be because those participating in the work of such a commission are supposed to be interested in truth and in the facts, but one the other hand, it may not be a bad idea to include several representatives of all major religious and ethnic groups from the region, just to make sure we have included all different perspectives. (Lucija Zore, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**The Commission should be made up of experts, even from out of the region if necessary.**

*(...) I think that the Commission should be made up of experts, foreigners if necessary, which may even be a good idea in terms of increased objectivity. (Mirna Bulatović, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**The role of the media should be investigated.**

*The Commission should focus on many various things – from the acts of individuals, institutions, and so on, to the role of the media in the time before and during the armed conflict... But, if you ask me, the Commission should primarily deal with the role of individuals. (Una Kociper, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

*(...) I think that we should by all means tackle the issue of the media because they are responsible for the creation of a general picture of society. It is important for their past role as well as for their practices today, i.e. for the lack of responsibility for the dissemination of information by the media, including the official, state-run media outlets. (Mirna Bartulović, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**We should discuss the events of the distant past because they are being manipulated with.**

*We should probably start analysing the issue of the Second World War, Jasenovac, Bleiberg, and so on, because of frequent manipulation for daily political purposes. That period is still quite unclear and the well known discourse from the 1990s has its origins in these events. The question now is whether we want to discuss that period in order to be able to understand the other part, the conflicts of the 1990s. My concern is whether this Commission can do it in three years. I think it is impossible. (Lucija Zore, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**It is impossible to institutionalize the process in which the end result will find a place in history text books.**

*(...) I think that the key issue is that the Commission is established and that the whole process is in a way institutionalized. We need to have a final document, a final report which is going to be a relevant document and which will be incorporated in history books. (Una Kociper, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**It is important to make a record of the events from the past so that such things would not happen again.**

*This initiative is great and it really is important to make a historic record of the facts, of the truth, so that such things would not happen again, because that is the only way to secure growth and development. (Tatjana Petrović, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**Establishing the facts eliminates manipulations for political purposes.**

*(...) I think that it is important to establish the facts because once they are on paper, they cannot be manipulated with. (Lucija Zore, Zagreb, Croatia, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**It is important to connect people from various regions because they have suffered in similar ways. That can help them understand that they are not alone and that they share the fate of many other people.**

*Regardless of whether we make a commission or not (...) I think that in the end it is important to connect people, to help them understand that they share the fate of many other people. (Emina Ogrizek, Daruvar, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*

**The best way is to visit smaller communities and get in touch with people, open communication lines.**

*I must say that these consultations changed my opinion on this topic. As a young person, I was convinced that there was not much left to say since most of us from my generation did not really have any traumatic experiences from the war. But, after attending several of consultation sessions, I realized how important it really was to talk about these things. Now I hope that in the future more and more people will be able to attend consultations and I am sure this is the best way to do it – go to smaller communities and offer people to have an opportunity to communicate. (Vlatka Kiš, Local Consultation with Young People on the Initiative for RECOM, Daruvar, Croatia, February 27, 2010).*