



Tempus



## **PUBLIC DEBATE**

Support and inclusion of students with disabilities  
into higher education institutions in Montenegro



University of Donja Gorica

Friday, 12/10/2012, 12pm

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The second public debate within SINC@HE was organized at the University of Donja Gorica, on Friday 12th of October 2012, at 12pm.

**Speakers:**

- Enes Banda, UDG
- Marina Vujačić, AYDM
- Viktorija Mihović, IERK
- Vidna Matović, IERK

**Moderator:** Sandra Tinja, UDG

**Report by:** Nela Milošević, UDG

**Participants:** Association of youth with disabilities of Montenegro, Institute for education and rehabilitation of persons with hearing and speech disorders Kotor, and professors and students of University of Donja Gorica. Approximate number of participants: around 60.



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After Ms. Sandra Tinaj welcomed the participants and introduced the speakers, Mr. Enes Banda introduced the concept of the project, its partners, aims and objectives. He described the activities that were completed during the first year of the project, and spoke about institutional framework that will be developed by the project. With emphasis on the importance of project outcomes and active involvement of students, he invited the audience to take part at the conference in December.

Next, Ms. Marina Vujacic, executive director of AYDM, spoke about her perception of rights and needs of persons with disabilities. Firstly, she spoke about terminology and stressed out that in Montenegro, the government bodies and general public uses the term "special needs" which is degradable, and she educated the audience on the correct terminology. In accordance with this she spoke about the importance of raising awareness in general public, and particularly with HEIs. She complimented the effort of UDG and the fact that most of the facilities at the university are wheelchair-accessible, but also gave some suggestions where there is obvious room for improvement (e.g. the slope of the wheelchair ramp too high). Ms. Vujacic also spoke about the Association of youth with disabilities, and the services of support they offer. She emphasized the importance of the Student Advisory Center that will be developed through the SINC@HE project, and spoke about general systems of support such as legal support, program and training for guide dogs, Braille printer and literature etc.



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Mrs. Viktorija Mihovic spoke about the rehabilitation center in Kotor, which has a tradition of over 65 years in educating pre-school children, as well as experience with primary and secondary education for persons with hearing and speech disorders. She spoke about the specifics of such disability, different levels, and problems that such persons face in the society. She emphasized that since there is no systematic support at HEIs for this disability, that the secondary school students are trained to work as artisans in industries in order to find employment. In this regard, she spoke about the importance of motivating these students to continue their education at tertiary level, and the importance of the support that will be given through this project.

Mrs. Vidna Matovic spoke about her personal experience as a person with hearing disorder, and the importance of the support from families and the society. She gave a very personal touch to the entire event, and this part of the presentation left a significant and very visible impact with the audience.



Ms. Sandra Tinaj thanked all of the speakers, and opened the floor for questions. The students were very stimulated by the engaging presentations, and asked the speakers about the problems they face in the Montenegrin society. The questions asked were about problems with the employment (both in the private and public sector), and Ms. Vujacic replied that in spite of some recent initiatives on this topic, there is a higher level of unemployment for people with disabilities because

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employers are not keen on giving a job and providing adequate conditions for work for persons with disabilities. Other questions asked were about the level of the awareness in general public (Marina once again emphasized the use of adequate terminology) as well as unsatisfactory resources that the government invests (for example, a lot of streets do not have adequate sidewalk leveling for crossings, thus persons with wheelchair must use the roads in stead of sidewalks).

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