



European Democratic Citizenship Awards

Refugee Aid Miksalište campaign

Description of the nominee:

With the large number of refugees coming to and through Belgrade since August 2015, on Balkan route, as non-governmental organisations and humanitarian initiatives, NGO Mikser and Vlade Divac Foundation started a campaign to help refugees. It was a reaction to growing numbers of people in need and disregarding and slow action from state authorities. They established a welcome point, transforming open air venue, Miksalište, into Refugee Aid Serbia's main support centre. It was the initiative of organizations and volunteers. They offer a welcome point, food, hygienic, clothing, aid. They offer water, tea, coffee, WIFI and charge phones, medical assistance and child-friendly space. They receive and manage donations, which are either distributed directly or transported to the border points. Serbia, as transition country, hosted refugees only for a few days. More than 120,000 passed through Miksalište (August 2015 to march 2016). After closing the borders, refugees stay here a longer time and use illegal routs and smugglers. Lately, there are more families or just mothers with children coming. Ill and hurt people are coming too. Some of them hurt by smugglers. They need a place where can they stay for a few days, until they get informed about future possibilities. Many of them are seeking for their lost families. Meanwhile, some of them joined Refugee Aid Miksalište as volunteers, helping with communication. Refugees became part of everyday life in Belgrade, in Savamala quart (next to main bus and train station). Our local community is starting to absorb them, but without any state strategy. The state even demolished Miksalište Refugee Aid center, but Refugee Aid Miksalište is getting reorganized and it will transform to sustainable Multicultural centre. It will continue to involve local community, regional and international partners and refugees in various collaborations. They are developing sustainable models of integration. With support of creative network they organize different activities that improve some problems in local community and help refugees to become providers not only Aid receivers. This June, Mikser festival is dedicated to the "Sensitive Society" themes. With three special focal points on gender and other aspects of social equality, refugee crisis and the possible directions of integration into European society and common knowledge platforms, they will reinvent fundamental principles of society design.

Impact achieved:

- As of August 8, 2015 Refugee Aid Miksalište works every day from 8 a.m. until 4p.m.
- More than 120,000 passed through Miksalište (August 2015 to March 2016).

- Over 1.300 volunteers from 55 worldwide countries assisted at Miksalište and thus Miksalište managed to help large numbers of refugees and provide them with help.
- Organising Humanitarian Aid receiving point and distribution to other Refugee centres when needed
- Organising Round table: "Safety of Refugees Before and After the Closing of Borders", Participants: H.E Arne Sannes Bjørnstad, Ambassador, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade; H.E Jean-Daniel Ruch – the Ambassador of Switzerland in Republic of Serbia; Hans Friedrich Schodder – UNHCR Representative in Serbia; Marijana Savić – NGO Atina; Mitar Đurašković – Ministry of Interior, Head of Department, Border police directorate, Department for Suppression of Crossborder Crime, Illegal migration and THB; Ana Marie Alves Čurčić – journalist Al Jazeera, Moderator: Ivan Lalić, Executive Director of Mikser and Refugee Aid Miksalište
- Organizing exhibitions, knitting workshops, workshops for children, cooking events and other activities that include refugees and local community.

What makes the initiative innovative?

NGO Mikser established its own Cultural Centre with multiple programs (culture, education, local community participation, kids teens and youth activities, design and city planning, cultural production and event management activities..). Our open stage Miksalište was transformed into Refugee Aid Centre as prompt reaction to avalanches of refugees. With numerous partner we are developing a model that will join these two practices and make a sustainable Multicultural Centre. This integration centre includes local community, refugees and other vulnerable groups. We are including bottom-up and top-down approaches in order to develop successful systems and all level participation of citizens, institutions, organizations, etc. We are providing infrastructure, management skills and wide network of international partners and work together with all of them to organize IT, Arts & Crafts hub, International community radio, café and kitchen, language school, informal education and workshop spaces, nursery, emergency accommodation. Through debates, screenings, exhibitions, workshops, cultural and educational program we are raising awareness about people in need (not only refugees, but all vulnerable groups). By organizing various events, services and by selling hand made products we want to secure self-sustainability. We want to make a place where you will want to spend time and mingle with people, have fun, learn and experience new tastes, different cultures, learn and speak in different languages, buy something or get new hairstyle or new hat.

Contribution to European values:

Empathy, support, understanding, respect for human dignity, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men, freedom, democracy.

Website or promotional materials:

<http://refugeeaidmiksalište.rs/>

<https://www.facebook.com/RefugeeAidMiksalište/>

<http://house.mikser.rs/>

<https://www.facebook.com/mikser.belgrade/>

<http://house.mikser.rs/blog/>