



PROJEKT GRAĐANSKIH PRAVA Civil Rights Project

Activity Report – June 2011

Office activities

In the reporting period, CRP Sisak received **426** clients, out of which there were **200** new clients, both in the CRP Sisak office and the field offices in Hrvatska Kostajnica, Dvor, Gvozd, Krnjak and Glina.

Target groups:

NEW clients by status:

<i>Status</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Domicile	69
Returnee	105
Settlers	7
Refugee	11
Not defined	8
<u>Total</u>	200

NEW clients by reception mode:

<i>Mode</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Office	71
Field	128
Phone	1
<u>Total</u>	200

TYPE OF CASE	NUMBER OF EVENTS
Citizenship	36
Documents and status	74
Ownership	100
Pension and health and social security	98
Housing care/tenancy rights	32
Labour	9
Free legal aid	42
Crime cases/misdemeanour	15
Other: other legal issues, information, etc.	41
TOTAL	447

During the reporting period, there were **198** successfully solved requests. They mainly relate to documents, establishment of ownership and other cases.

ASSISTANCE

Appeals/complaints	21
Lawsuits	6
Administrative lawsuit	25
Letters	55
Requests/applications/proposals	62
Submissions	101
Legal counselling	203
Quick advises	40
TOTAL	513

Legal issues

The legal issues that CRP has been dealing with remain the same, as it can be seen in the table above (type of case.) Also, despite of some changes in proceedings, the problems related to cases remain generally the same: lengthy proceedings, postponing of court hearings, etc. The courts and administration do not act impartially when the State is involved in the case, but exactly the opposite, being completely on the side of the State. The laws, even when they are good, are not being applied well, etc.

Regarding the new developments related to the **Law on Free Legal Aid and its changes, which are going to limit the work of NGOs and which are not going to extent the scope of beneficiaries and their legal problems**; CRP would like to emphasise the importance of NGOs and their dedication to providing of legal aid to socially vulnerable population.

CRP would like to point out 3 cases, which were on-going for years and even decades, that were successfully solved. The client **K.Š.** had a problem with his right to pension since 1991, as the Croatian Pension Fund was rejecting his requests. After

the client exhausted all the legal instances in Croatia, in 2010 CRP decided to file a request for pension in Serbia, as the client was employed by the former JNA until 1991. With the assistance of colleagues from Praxis Serbia, the request was positively solved in March 2011. **Therefore, the client finally gained his right to pension after 20 years.**

The client M.R. was born on 30 July 1995 in Glina, which was at that time occupied Croatian territory. As it was just few days before the *Storm* operation, the child was not registered properly into the registry books. Furthermore, the registry books were taken from Glina to Serbia, where they had been lost. The client, with his family, was refugee in Serbia from 1995 until 1999. The parents were trying to find the registry books from Glina and register their daughter. However, it was not possible for them. In 1999, the family left for the United States of America, through the UNHCR. They travelled with the UNHCR travelling papers. They have been in America ever since. The family members have received the American citizenship, except for the client M.R., as she did not have her birth certificate. She has been going to school in America, but just based on the statement given by her parents. The grandfather of the client approached CRP in April 2010 regarding his granddaughter's birth certificate. Therefore, since April 2010, CRP Sisak had been trying different administrative procedures to register the client into birth registry books. The administration had been asking for many different additional documents, statements, translations, etc. CRP had been doing all that, and finally in May 2011, the procedure was finished. CRP picked up the birth certificate for the client and sent in to America. **As the birth certificate is the basic and most important personal document, the client will finally, after 16 years, be able to be registered, to gain the citizenship(s), as well as to regulate all other rights.**

The client I.S. was born in 2007 in Belgium. The data in his birth certificate were entered wrongly. The family left Belgium and came back to Croatia in 2007. The parents were trying to register the child in Croatia from 2007 to 2011. They tried all the administrative proceedings, but it was not working. They were getting advices to go to Belgium and engage a lawyer for a court proceeding to last 4 years. CRP thought that it would not be possible and finally, CRP requested the registry office in Sisak to take this case and treat it as an exemption, as predicted by the Law in cases in which original (foreign) birth certificate cannot be obtained. So, in June 2011, **after 4 years, the client received his Croatian birth certificate**, which enabled him to have his rights in Croatia, including the health insurance, as he has needed medical treatment.

The above cases demonstrate how beneficiaries could not solve their problems for years, or perhaps even they would not solve it ever, if there are no free legal aid providers, who dedicate their time, knowledge and put long-lasting efforts, without bureaucracy limitations, into solving of cases.

Other activities

On 1 June 2011, CRP participated at the meeting between the Ministry of Justice and civil society – NGOs – legal aid providers. The Minister, the Head of the Department for EU and International cooperation and the Head of the Free Legal Aid Department were present. The aim of the meeting was to discuss necessary changes to the Law on Free Legal Aid. However, the meeting lasted less than half an hour and it was obvious that it was just a pro forma meeting.

On 9 June 2011 in the Center for Rural Initiatives (CRI) premises in the village of Klinac, CRP organized a workshop on local democracy that was conducted by Munir Podumljak from the Partnership for Social Development Zagreb. The workshop was attended by 18 people from Klinac, members of CRI. Several topics were covered and practiced during the seminar: dialogue skills in private and business conversation, especially in relation to how to approach other side in conversation and how to formulate important requests, how to listen to others and how to make a good plan of activities. All the issues were applied to real local situation and concrete plan of activities of the CRI was made, which included cleaning of the village roads, regular meetings of the CRI members, organization of the village party to which the population from neighboring villages would be invited.

On 13 and 14 June, CRP participated at the conference on free legal aid that was organised by the Centre for Human Rights, Human Rights House, Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights and Centre for Peace Studies in Zagreb. The conference was sponsored by the EU and UNHCR. Around 60 representatives of NGOs were present. The cooperation between the NGO sector and the Ministry of Justice proved to be very bad. It was concluded that the Ministry does not accept any suggestions, proposals from the NGO sector, but they made their own Draft of the Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Free Legal Aid, which are not good for the civil society and population.

On 16 June 2011 CRP Sisak organized a dialogue workshop “Successful communication and good motivation are best way for success”. The workshop was held in the village of Budičina, near Petrinja. 20 people participated at the workshop, coming from the villages of Budičina, which is a Croatian village, and Klinac, being a Serbian village. The participants were mainly people with agricultural background. The workshop covered the following issues: quality of life, communication, exchange of information, motivation, tolerance, friendship, humor and other. At the begging, the participants were quite reserved, but later on they started discussing issues of common interest, such as advantages and disadvantages of living in villages, present situation in their villages, education possibilities, inter-ethnic relations, etc. The participants concluded that such meetings are very important and they need to be done periodically.

On 16 and 17 June, CRP participated at the first workshop of the project “Anti-Corruption Response to Implementation of the Procurement Policies – ACRIP” that was organized by the Partnership for Social Development Zagreb. CRP Sisak is going to be engaged as a support of the project. CRP will be engaged periodically to perform research and analysis procedure related to public procurement in the Sisak-Moslavina County.

On 27 and 28 June 2011 in Sisak, CRP participated at the workshop for potential applicants for the call for applications “Establishment of support to social inclusion and employment of socially vulnerable and marginalized groups”, under the IPA. CRP will consider applying to this call for applications.

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