

Situation in Croatia – from 2012-2014

We, the leaders of the *Teen STAR Organization* (Kristina Pavlović and Ladislav Ilčić) are at the same time leaders of the organization *Parent's Voice for Children (GROZD)* which has about 45000 supporters. Kristina, together with dr.sc. Marija Ćurlin are in charge of the *Natural Family Planning Centre* in Zagreb. Ladislav is also leading a new political party called *Hrast* which is trying to promote authentic family values in politics. All these organizations have the same goals: protection of family, pleading for parent's rights, promotion of NFP values, fighting against the imposed liberal pro-homosexual programs in schools, and, of course, pleading for and carrying out the quality value-based sex and health education programs.

Liberal health education program in Croatian schools

In the autumn 2012 the Ministry of Education imposed the liberal health education program to all school children in Croatia, promoting gender ideology and homosexuality. Since the parents were mostly uninformed, indifferent and unconcerned, GROZD and some other organizations tried and succeeded through media, e-mail initiatives and public lectures, to inform and help them to oppose the program in schools and to insist on their legal right to choose the education programs for their children. Some Croatian bishops were also actively engaged in spreading the information.

In April 2013 the organization GROZD, with help of a lawyers team, wrote a constitutional complaint, demanding the evaluation of accordance of the program with the law. Already in May the Constitutional Court canceled the program! It was a great success. Still, after formal "public debate" about the program, although hundreds of parents and experts sent their comments and wanted choice, the Ministry accepted almost no changes and in September 2013 introduced again the same program into schools. Again most of parents were influenced by media where it was said that this time the program is OK. In December 2013 GROZD filed a new constitutional complaint, but this time there are still no results from the Court.

The liberal program is formally still in schools, but mostly in theory. Teachers don't do it, especially not the sexual part for which they know from media is the most "controversial". Now in June the previous education minister Jovanović was replaced, since in many situations his intention to impose his liberal ideology was more and more obvious. The new minister is much more reasonable and we hope he would allow choice between two programs in schools. In that case we can offer GROZD program.

Just to remind you, the GROZD Health Education program was created for the tender of the Ministry of Education in 2006, where it was evaluated as the best one. In the experimental implementation in 2008 almost 90% of parents chose the GROZD program. The liberal civil and political lobby knows it, and that's the reason why they don't allow choice.

Civic education program in schools

Beside the health education, in the last schoolyear we have also been engaged in fight about the gender-oriented civic education program. The past minister invited liberal human rights- and homosexual organizations to introduce civic education in schools. Again they want to re-educate our children for their world view, but our side insists on parent's rights to choice. Those civil groups and the ruling liberal politicians have extremely big political and financial strength, so we don't know how the story is going to continue.

Referendum about marriage

The referendum about marriage was held in Croatia on December 1, 2013. The proposed amendment was the constitutional definition of marriage as a bond between a man and a woman. About 38% of voters voted, and almost 66% of them voted YES! It was really a miracle and we have all celebrated.

The referendum was initiated by the civil initiative called *In the Name of the Family*, made of different organizations and activists, many of them from GROZD. In spite of the big campagne against the referendum organized by media, ruling left-wing politicians and NGO's, presenting the initiative as the intolerant and conservative movement against gay people, it gathered more than 700,000 signatures in May 2013, which was necessary to hold the referendum. The signatures were collected in two weeks in about 2000 locations in Croatia by about 5000 volunteers. The signatures were delivered to the Croatian Parliament in June 2013.

Although the ruling politicians now try to ignore the result of the referendum in creating new laws, it is for them much harder now when we have the definition of marriage in our Constitution.

Teen STAR Teacher Training Courses

After a couple of years break, in the spring 2012 we started again to organize Teen STAR Teacher Training Courses. In five workshops (four of them in Zagreb and one in Rijeka) altogether 135 new Teen STAR teachers were trained. In the moment the Teen STAR program in Croatia is held mostly in parishes.

We usually organize teacher courses in 5 whole-day meetings, on Saturdays. The first part of the course, and the most demanding one, is about fertility awareness, so it is at the same time education of NFP promoters. The Teen STAR Course participants are mostly young people or young married couples who are delighted with the new approach they get there. Some of them are ready to teach the program, some of them are not.

The next courses we plan to hold in some other parts of Croatia (Dalmatia, Slavonia...), so we hope to expand the program in Croatia in the next period.

GROZD Health Education Courses for schools

After we had the first GROZD Health Education Course for all catholic schools in Bosnia and Hercegovina in 2010 in Sarajevo, in the spring 2013 we have educated next group of 30 teachers from the same schools. So, in the last few years the GROZD health education program is being carried out in all of the 14 primary and secondary catholic schools in B&H, including the part of the human sexuality.

In Croatia this spring we have organized GROZD education for all the school teachers from the Catholic Gymnasium for girls in Zagreb. They are going to offer the program to the girls now in the next schoolyear.

Natural Family Planning Centre

We are also active in promoting NFP through the NFP Centre in Zagreb, the authorised organization connected to WOOMB, Australia. Already in 2009 and 2010 we have trained about 30 certified Billings Teachers from all over Croatia who can now teach women and couples who continuously contact us by e-mail.

Many of the NFP promoters, for whom we organize shorter education than for the certified NFP teachers, are holding lectures for students, married people or fiancees at the marriage preparation courses.

We also inform future priests about the Teen STAR and NFP within their deacon formation.

Kristina Pavlović, Teen STAR Croatia