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Nizhniy Novgorod hosted discussion on ways to encourage proactive approach to social affairs engagement of young people

Representatives of the regional government, businesses, and NGOs discussed the ways to address social problems and summarized the results of the interregional project for promotion of proactive approach to social affairs among students. One of the projects united 1 500 students and 70 NGOs from 5 cities of Russia.

Round table participants have discussed youth-focused policies in the region and the examples of programs that involve students in development and implementation of social projects supported or administered by the foundations and NGOs. The participants also summarized the results of a 3-year project "Involvement of Senior Students in Non-Profit Sector Activity" implemented by Focus-Media Foundation via regional NGOs and supported by Citibank.

Over the past three years 40 micro-projects were released by students from Nizhniy Novgorod, Yekaterinburg, and Saint Petersburg. Over 300 students participated in the educational training on the work at these organizations, and 263 of them interned at 60 regional NGOs.

According to Sergey V. Bocharov, Deputy Minister of Sports and Youth Policy in Nizhniy Novgorod Region, "Currently, there are a number of problems in the social sphere in Russia. Those range from problems faced by broken families to a great need for social integration of people with disabilities. The efforts of volunteers, students, and young people are critical to successful implementation of public actions to solve these social problems."

Anton Koshelev, Manager of Privolzhsky branch of Citibank, noted: "Achievement of sustainable social environment requires holistic efforts of all stakeholders. Youth initiatives are an important component of the process, with the best supported by foundations and nongovernmental organizations. Meanwhile, businesses support social projects since any large company strives to work in a stable and prosperous environment. I hope that the citizens of Nizhniy Novgorod benefited from the 20 projects that were implemented in our city."

Irina Ezhova, Director of Nizhniy Novgorod regional nonprofit organization Socio-Psychological Center 'Doverie' commented: "Over the past years the number of student-led initiatives has increased dramatically. Our project has provided micro-grants to projects dealing with integration of children with vision disabilities into a school group, education to prospective foster parents, projects promoting tolerance, family leisure time, and healthy lifestyle. Ideas generated by young people are increasingly interesting and useful."

The project enabled university students to gain the knowledge and skills in leading nonprofit projects. Having obtained the experience at the local nonprofit organizations, some students have decided to turn it into a profession and stay in the field.

This year the project evolved further. A group of students who have participated in the earlier stages of our project developed and published materials for an information campaign (including video commercials, outdoor advertising template, brochure, and a poster) that was supported by the governmental agencies, partner organizations and welcomed by the citizen.

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