

## **In the wake of the white cane day - are we human society only on paper**

In some destinations where I go more often, I can move on my own, at others I ask for help.

It depends on my needs that I have and depends on how much I have invested myself to learn these routes.

Kristijan Lazarev is a third year student at the Faculty of Philology in Skopje.

In his free time he dedicates himself to music and sports.

After finishing his daily activities, Kristijan goes to the premises of the Association of Blind People every day.

With the help of the white cane Kristijan has no problem moving in the most frequent places around the city.

- We hear the movements of cars. We know when the cars will start moving when it's green light and when it's red for pedestrians. It's not something that he cannot get used to. The biggest problem for us when moving, is I do not know, some things like, there might be islets in the street that are just drawn and not marked, so one cannot know where he is, on the street or not.

Some of these things are more problematic.

Kiko with the help of the stick has no problem to arrive in the Association of the Blind

- Here we practice regularly, sometimes for events, sometimes they are routine rehearsals, because this association functions, that is, it operates within the association for the blind, regularly 12 months, with the exception on summer holidays or so when we pause. Otherwise we are currently preparing for a concert on the occasion of the White Cane Day, so this is why we have gathered and practice a little.

Shpetim Latifi, who has been working on a project for children with visual impairment for several years, said that education and early detection of problems were of great importance

- We have twenty ophthalmologists engaged in the project and they are making visits to all kindergartens in Macedonia, where all children aged 3-6 years are examined by an ophthalmologist with the most modern appliances that have not been available in Macedonia so far.
- With this project we have purchased them, so we scan the eyes of all children. Since 2014, when the project started, we scanned 13,900 children and by 2020, about 30,000 children will be scanned.

Within the project in Stip, a happening was organized, where many children, including those with visual impairments, were brought together to entertain themselves through various traditional games.

- It turned out that in certain games in certain segments they are the same. There is no difference. And this for us and for the entire project is a huge progress. Through these traditional games, we learn swimming, where we want to keep them healthy as well.

For Baira Salifovska, a third year student at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation at the Institute of Special Education and Rehabilitation, the greatest wish since she was young was to learn to swim.

- At first, it was really hard, because you know, we the people with special needs, first need to learn to trust the person who is working with us in order to get things going. So I was lucky I had good instructor, a good mentor.
- We noticed that some of these people are athletes, they only need proper development, to properly find the path they are supposed to go through.

The paths for people with visual impairments were built a few years ago, initially they were made of plastic material, but because of poor quality, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy replaced them with concrete ones.

From this institution they say that the establishment of these paths aims to increase the awareness of the municipalities.

That the goal is partially achieved, is proven by the fact that such paths are only available in several locations.

Even some of the citizens do not know the purpose of these paths.

- Do you know what is the purpose of these paths?
- I have no idea.
- For pedestrian crossings
- For bikes
- For those who are visually impaired
- They are for blind people with a stick when they go to have an orientation

The only light in the eyes of Kristijan and Beira are these paths and special rooms for their free movement and for other blind people.

Everyone in life is struggling to fulfill the dream.

Kristijan and Beira are the best example for the authorities and society that if you have the will and enough courage, the sun's rays will warm your eyes.

- It's good that media started to get interested in us. Thank you, you are among the first, and people are great at least in Macedonia, at least I did not have any problems so far. They are very humane, they want to help very much. But they are not sufficiently educated, unfortunately, these are shortcomings in the system, perhaps in education.

- I know it's hard not only for people with disabilities, it's hard for anyone to live in Macedonia in general, but on the one hand, you should be positive to be optimistic, and ultimately, and in the end it is not the end of the world if you have some disability. So you need to work hard, you need to make friends so that you can continue to succeed.