Mikuláš Lakatoš is Young European of the Year: activist and policy maker fights for Roma and other marginalised groups in Slovakia

The Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe awards Mikuláš Lakatoš as Young European of 2023. Mikuláš Lakatoš, 26, from the Slovak Republic is an activist and public policy maker, advocating for the rights of Roma, LGBTQ+ communities and other marginalised groups. Working in governmental and non-governmental sectors, he focuses on Roma inclusion, and policymaking regarding youth, health, and refugees. For his fight against multi-layered discrimination and inequalities in Slovakia and beyond he receives 5000 Euro.

As the country's youngest public servant and policy specialist, Mikuláš Lakatoš is part of the Slovakian government's office for Roma communities. In this role, he is focusing on awareness towards the situation of Roma minorities, on youth policy making and public health policy development. He was one of the co-developers of the new national strategic framework for Roma inclusion. At the same time, Mikuláš is working for the biggest Slovakian humanitarian organization (Clovek v ohrozeni) where he is coordinating support for the most vulnerable groups within the country, including people who had to flee their homes due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Mikuláš would like to use the grant to improve the housing situation for Roma people in the Slovak Republic. "*I am thankful to be awarded because this creates opportunities for the communities I am representing to be heard and visible. I am working for a European society that holds equal opportunities for everybody, enabling marginalised groups to contribute to and shape a common future*", the awardee states.

The jury is impressed by Mikuláš' tireless efforts to strengthen vulnerable groups: Tomáš Sacher, Executive Director of the Schwarzkopf Foundation states "*Mikuláš courageously shapes the world around him and is a vivid and inspiring example for what young Europeans can achieve. His passionate and diverse involvement in the local community, but also in non-profit organizations and at governmental level is admirable.*" Anahita Neghabat, member of the Jury and Young European of 2022, comments: "*I voted for Mikuláš because he is a passionate and dedicated person, whose work revolves around community, care, and bettering the lives of those who are most marginalised and vulnerable.*" Members of the Representation of the European Commission in Germany state "*Mikuláš is highly committed to promoting social inclusion, be it for ethnic or sexual minorities or for refugees. In his fight for the equal treatment and the recognition of marginalised groups in his region he is a role model for the European youth, activists as well as public servants.*"

Each Year the *Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe* awards young people between the ages of 18 and 26 who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to a peaceful, diverse and inclusive Europe. This year's jury consists of Tomáš Sacher (Executive director of Schwarzkopf Foundation), Anahita Neghabat and Alexandru Manda (Young Europeans of 2022 and 2021), and members of the Representation of the European Commission in Germany. More information can be found *here*.

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Press materials
Foto Portrait Mikuláš Lakatoš
Interview with Mikuláš Lakatoš