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"The Region I Love"

Youth and intercultural learning in the Balkans

Voices of young people from the Balkans



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гражданское общество
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Introduction

Young people can be, indeed are a factor of social change in the development and strengthening of democracy in Europe. They are the ones who perhaps feel more acutely the inner contradictions of each society, the hidden tensions, and who have the strength and the will to change the situation for the better. Through group work and associations, young people participate in democracy. At European level, this also means that they are actors in the construction of Europe, a Europe of diversity in which intercultural dialogue plays a role, in which all human beings are respected. In the Balkans, as in the rest of Europe, they have an important role to play in building and rebuilding peace and trust, through their meetings, their dialogue and their joint projects.

“From Sarajevo to Sarajevo”¹ could be a general title for 20th century European history, from the downfall of one empire to another, from the Ottoman Empire, the German Reich, to the Austro-Hungarian Empires, to the disintegration of the Communist Block, from the rise of one strain of nationalism to another. Could the downfall of the Communist regime have been peaceful? A bloodless revolution in which the oligarchies lost their power without resistance, as was the case with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Velvet Revolution? The illusions we may have had were lost, from Timisoara to Sarajevo, from Srebrenica to Pristina. In the 1990s, Europe rediscovered the “Balkans” and, all of a sudden, this name evoked negative images, “ethnic cleansing”, mass massacres, bloody nationalism... The (western?) Europe of the end of the 20th century refused to see itself. It forgot that this was the century of Auschwitz, of the Nuremberg Laws and of Gulags, of colonisation. Europe forgot that religion was a factor of barbarism, from the Wars of Religion, to the 30 Years War. For some, the term “Balkans” itself was considered too “heavy”, too “negative”. It was, indeed still is more politically correct to speak about “Southeastern Europe” (disregarding the fact that the Caucasus are really the Southeast of Europe!). That is why both terms are used in this booklet, depending on the authors. But it must be stressed that the Balkans are not outside of Europe. The Balkans are not something odd or strange. To reflect upon the Balkans and its diversity is also to reflect upon European diversity and indeed Europe itself. Due to its past, its history, its cultural diversity and richness, many young people will refer to it as “the Region I love”.

During all of these years, people, young people have tried to overcome the conflicts, to live in post conflict times not with bitterness and hate but with hope, with the will to construct a new future. During this time, institutions have tried to guarantee the sustainable development of peace in the Region. From the Stability Pact to the work of so many NGOs, the issue has been, and still is, to find safe and solid pillars on which to build and develop peace. The Council of Europe in

1. It was in Sarajevo that Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the event which marked the start of the World War I.



general and the Youth Sector in particular have played a significant role in trying to bring together youth leaders from the Region, in trying to support the development of youth policies there, in making “Southeastern Europe” one of its work priorities from 1999 to 2002. The idea of this publication was born from this process.

The idea was to gather together, in an open-minded and safe environment, a number of youth leaders/actors from and/or working in the Region, as well as civil servants, all of whom were prepared to put on the table all of these difficult issues, the recent past, the image each has of the other, the conflicts and historical and religious prejudices, and to discuss them openly with the aim of writing a booklet on intercultural learning in Southeastern Europe. The text of this booklet was to be drafted using their own experience in this process as its foundation. The main aim of the project was formulated as followed: “To contribute to the stability and peaceful development of Southeastern Europe, reflecting the experience and knowledge of young people of Intercultural Learning in the Region, and dealing with issues like prejudices, stereotypes, recent history, memories”. The idea was also to launch a pilot project, to see if it would be possible for young people and youth leaders from the Region to create a publication together.

In June 2002, nineteen young people from the Region started to work on the publication you have now in your hands. They tried to create a group which could work within a climate of trust and of mutual understanding. One team was set up for each chapter and between June and December, each team met somewhere in the Region, from Istanbul to Ljubljana, from Tirana to Sarajevo, to write its chapter. A final meeting of the whole group was held in December during which a first impression of the final product was gained, and which provided a space to discuss and evaluate the whole process. All participants worked on a voluntary basis, in their free time, without any compensation, motivated only by their will to develop this project together. The result is this publication with its different chapters, chosen by the participants, its different styles, its different tones, all of which mirror the diversity of the authors, the diversity of young people in the Region. It is the result of a group process even if each chapter does not necessarily represent the opinion of the whole group, which is why the authors’ names are mentioned at the beginning of each chapter.

This publication is first and foremost for all of those people who live and work in the Region, and who are interested in the Balkans, whether they be youth leaders, or representatives of public authorities or institutions. It is for those people who are interested in hearing and listening to the voice of young people from the Region. As such, this booklet is not an educational manual, it will not provide answers to the challenges it presents. It does not represent any institutions’ official stance, nor that of the Council of Europe. It will not offer any conclusions other than those the reader draws for her/himself. If the reader wants to share these conclusions with the authors of this booklet, we should be most grateful! This booklet aims to be a tool to contribute to a better understanding within the Region, of the Region, for all youth leaders, youth workers who would like to further develop activities in the Balkans. It is one tool among many for all those people who think of the Balkans as “a Region they love”, a sentiment shared by all of the authors, and, we hope, by all who read it.



→ Youth

by Gokhan Ayturk, Taulant Hoxha and Vesna Kajis

Dear reader!

You are just about to embark on the “Balkan tour”, the story of the Youth Chapter. All events and characters are fictional, but they nevertheless reflect the reality of young people’s lives, their diverse perspectives, and different views in the Balkans.

→ Balkan tour

“A famous Balkan-wide live TV and radio programme for young people, broadcast in every Balkan state, organised a contest. This contest put several questions concerning the features and characteristics of Balkan countries. Participation was by phone, and there were only four winners. The prize was an 80% reduction on a railway ticket for a Balkan Tour. Let’s go back to the final night.”

SPEAKER: Finally, we have the winners. Congratulations, could you please introduce yourselves once again.

ZANA

I am 17 years old and go to high school. I am willing to change the future of my country. I listen to rock music, and am a keen follower of fashion.

MARIA

I am 26 years old, I work as a local government officer. I graduated in administrative science, play piano and adore listening to classical music. I have been living on my own for a long time.

IVAN

I am 20 years old, I dropped out of high school in my last year. Recently, I started playing basketball in a professional team in the premier league, and I listen to hip-hop music.

TARIK

I am 23 years old, studying social sciences at university, and work on a voluntary basis for a youth NGO. I have concrete ideas on how to change the future of my country. I listen to traditional music.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much dear friends, I hope you will enjoy your trip round the Balkans, meet a lot of people, and discover daily life in the region...



-----> **Haide forest**

Maria, Zana, Ivan and Tarik decided their first stop should be Haide Forest in which a large open air music festival called “Crossing bridges” was being held.

TARIK: It looks like something is going on here. All of the young people are heading in the same direction.

IVAN: Did you watch MTV last night?

ZANA: Yes, of course. I cannot go to bed until I get my dose of music and what a better way to do it than watching MTV.

IVAN: I think I saw some announcement about a big open air music festival being held in this town. Do you know anything about it? I heard there would be many bands playing all sorts of stuff.

ZANA: No, I have no idea but if it was announced on MTV it will probably be cool!

MARIA: What’s cool about MTV? They play that horrible commercial music 24 hours a day. You never hear any classical music. It’s as if classical music didn’t exist.

IVAN: Never mind, lets just go and see. I hope the tickets are not expensive and that there is good beer. I like to try foreign beers.

They buy their tickets and enter the festival.

MARIA: Oh my God, look at those two guys. Look at their long dirty hair. And their horrible clothes. They look like rugs. They are probably on drugs and looking for trouble. Lets get out of here!

IVAN: That hair-style is called “dread-locks”. I don’t think they look like bad guys.

ZANA: You cannot tell who’s on drugs just like that. Look at that group of young people over on the right in fancy clothes, they are “coolers”.

TARIK: Who do you call “coolers”? I don’t know who they are.

ZANA: They listen to pop, techno or folk music, they follow all the trends and some of them drink a lot of alcohol and use drugs. If you go to Kosovo, you can see them all over the place, with Walkmans on their ears and wearing dark sunglasses at midnight. It’s easy to spot them because they spend most of their time in bars and discotheques, dancing and smoking in corners.

IVAN: Oh, from the way you describe them, they are the same as what we call “Sminker” in Croatia. I guess that they are the same group but with different names.

ZANA: Oh yes. I know, in Bulgaria they call them “Gazari” and in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” “Semadii”. There are similar people in Turkey called “Ciks-JobJob”, but as far as I know they don’t use drugs.

IVAN: Please lower your voice. Those four guys are probably skinheads and if they hear you speaking with some strange eastern accent you could be in trouble. They hate everybody who belongs to a different nationality or religion, and homosexuals...



MARIA: How do you know so much about them? Do you have them in your country?

IVAN: No, but I have spent summer holidays in Croatia and Slovenia and I had the opportunity to see them acting violently. They hate punks too. I know there are also some skinheads in Bulgaria as well and they often beat up gypsies.

TARIK: Wow, I didn't know all this!!! So it seems that all over the region there are this kind of people, aren't there?

IVAN: No. There are no skinheads in Kosovo, Romania or Turkey. But they are great sports fans. Everyone goes crazy after every single basketball match in Kosovo, or football match in Turkey. Plisat and Torcida have a lot of problems with each other when Pristina plays against Trepca. But it's even worse in Istanbul when Galatasaray plays Fenerbahce.

TARIK: I believe every country has its own football or basketball fans. In "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" there are Komiti (Vardar team) and Cremlari (Pelister team). There are Green Dragons and Viole in Slovenia, the competitive teams in Bulgaria are CSKA and Levski, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Velez and Zrinjski.

ZANA: Yeah. I can believe you because when I was visiting Croatia, I was in a stadium when a fight broke out between Torcida (Hajduk fans) and Bad Blue Boys (Dinamo fans). My friend who was with me was injured in a similar experience in Belgrade, where Partizan was playing against Crvena Zvezda, and Delije and Grobari started throwing hundreds of stones at each other, then the police intervened and the situation became really dangerous, even for people passing by.

TARIK: Do you know that many people from Croatia believe that never-ending football game between Dinamo from Croatia and Crvena Zvezda from Serbia marked the beginning of the conflict? After that game, many football fans were amongst the first to go to the front line in the war to defend their country.

IVAN: Ok, let's stop this conversation. We have had too many conflicts in the recent past. I don't want to hear about it all over again. We came here to enjoy the music.

MARIA: So you think we should enjoy this music! Maybe Zana can, but I don't think I can handle all this noise. Maybe I listen to too much classical music and my ears are just not used to this stuff. The only thing I like in this festival is that somebody did a good job with the organisation: the sound is great, the scenery is very interesting, as is the light-show. I wonder how much money they spent on all this. They also have some guest bands from other countries.

ZANA: Sorry Maria, but I really need to dance. Who will join me?

TARIK: All of us, for sure. So let's have fun! Hayde, Hayde, Hayde...

-----> **Burek town**

Our friends had a fun night in Haide Forest and they have just arrived at the second stop of their Balkan Tour. They are now in *Burek* town.

IVAN: Hey, look at that restaurant, we can eat *Bureks* there, this town is very famous for its *Bureks*. I am not sure that they are as good as in my country.



TARIK: So what are we waiting for? Let's go and eat!

MARIA: I am just wondering how are we going to order *Burek* here! Will the waiter understand what we are asking for?

ZANA: Oh, I think everybody knows what *Burek* is. I don't know why, but these old things are so common in our region.

IVAN: Hello. Can we have four *Bureks*, please? And four yoghurts, also.



ZANA: Just a minute, I don't eat *Burek*. But I can't see anything else here in this old-fashioned restaurant. I will have to find a McDonald's if I want to eat something.

IVAN: Ok, Zana. But wait for us while we eat, and then we can find a good place for you.

MARIA: Ohhh, it is delicious, it tastes just like those my grandmother makes!

TARIK: Yes, the taste is exactly the same but the shape is quite different.

ZANA: Guys, I have been so excited these past few days, my application for a university in the States has been accepted, I have won a scholarship but haven't decided what to do yet.

IVAN: If I were you, I would go because that way you can help your country by getting a better and higher level of education.

ZANA: Well, I don't know!!! You know that my country has just been established and is evolving rapidly. If I go to the States for 4 years I won't be able to see the rapid changes. Nothing would be the same.

IVAN: Somehow you are right, the world is changing, but as far as my country is



concerned, if I were to go abroad and then come back, I would be able to make a better contribution.

TARIK: I understand your point of view but the young people in societies are the most dynamic actors and they have the ability to adapt easily to rapid changes. National and international developments inevitably affect and change countries and cultures, and it is young people who have the strongest links with the rapid change and the culture of a country.

MARIA: I think that young people should be given the opportunity to stay in their home countries. Brain drain is one of the most significant problems for developing and newly established countries. The point is that countries should try to keep their values; different fields of employment should be developed so that young people have the means to build their lives. Moreover, scientific approaches should be supported. It's a fact that many young people who go to study abroad don't come back because the country which has accepted these young people also wants to benefit from them as much possible.

TARIK: I have been listening to you guys and if you'll excuse me, I should like to say something on the issue... When young people go abroad for formal education, they are not only getting the chance to learn about the courses but they also learn by doing. They also experience the non-formal way of learning. Actually, in the Balkans, pre-accession countries could apply for youth projects under the Youth Programme of the European Commission. They could also benefit from the SOCRATES Programme, which focuses on formal education, and the LEONARDO Programme which focuses on vocational education. You can also apply for projects to be carried out in the Council of Europe's European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, and for project funding from the European Youth Foundation. These programmes offer funding possibilities to youth organisations in the region. (You can find more detailed information on these and other programmes from: www.coe.int/youth; http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html).

Whether young people stay in their countries or not, it should be emphasized that they are very dynamic and effective multistake holders, and that they have a very significant role to play in their societies.

IVAN: Besides those young people who go to university, there is a huge population of young people who belong to the labour market. And there are other young people who are trying to get rich quick by becoming a singer or athlete. All these different approaches of young people to life should be tolerated and their needs understood.

→ Rakia city

After, our friends visit the beautiful city of Rakia. In this blue and green environment, they decide to go to a basketball match. There is a big queue for the entrance to the match in front of the hall.

IVAN: Balkan countries are so successful in sports. Do you know how many times Balkan countries have won world basketball championships?

ZANA: I am the captain of the high school girls' basketball team and I like reading books on sports. As far as I know, Balkan countries have been world champions more than 4 times, and they have won nearly all European championships. But they have also had a lot of success in football. We were in third place for many years, as well as champions at club level.



TARIK: We are one of the most successful regions in all collective sports. We have so many world titles in handball, volleyball and water polo.

IVAN: Don't forget there were some great individuals in different sports from this area. Tennis, skiing, athletics, weightlifting, boxing and many other sports had world champions from Balkan countries. Even though the conditions for practicing sports are bad, our love for sports is in our spirit and mentality. There are also a lot of cases whereby great players have gone away because of the bad conditions and are now successfully representing western countries.

MARIA: I am looking forward to getting into the hall to see the fans in their natural environment, yelling and shouting for their team. Hey Zana take care, there is a car just behind you, you had better come up here.

ZANA: Thank you, Maria. The driver was not looking where he was going. But why are there so many cars and what is the problem with the parking here?

BOY: Hello, you don't seem to be from here. Well, this is usual, it has been like this since the hall was built. Firstly, they made a mistake when choosing the location. The place is very far away from the city and from the places where young people hang out. It is impossible to come on foot. But this would be not a problem if there were buses which ran this way. The problem is that there is not even a bus to this hall, so everybody has to come here by car or taxi. And as you can see, many drivers are so young, and they don't even have a driving license. It is not unusual to be hit by a car while waiting to get into the hall.

TARIK: Have you ever tried to explain your point of view to the local authorities or do you just talk without doing anything concrete?

BOY: Yes, of course we tried to explain the situation but we don't have an independent and institutionalised youth structure, such as a local youth council, to make our voices heard. I like using the Internet and I have learnt that independent local youth councils are very efficient participatory mechanisms. I went to the Youth Affairs Bureau myself and had an appointment with the president of the



local authority. They listened to me with a smile then politely responded to my wishes as if I were a child who doesn't understand what is going on, who lives in an imaginary world all for myself. How could they behave to me like that?

ZANA: Yes it is very dramatic, isn't it? Young people represent over 15% of the population but they don't listen to us.

MARIA: Do you know how difficult it is for local authorities to find funds for implementing policies?

BOY: The case here has nothing to do with money. The perception of youth and mentalities should be changed. Youth is not perceived as a partner in most of the Balkan countries, but in reality young people are an important resource and they are the ones who contribute most to their societies. If I, as a young person, can't find the opportunity to integrate into the decision-making processes, how can I take responsibility for today's decisions? I am the direct beneficiary of facilities set up for young people and I am directly influenced by the decisions taken by governmental institutions. It is a paradox that they try to do something for young people but don't even ask us what we want!!

TARIK: Besides these critical points, we as young people could raise our voices within institutionalised youth organisations. Yes, we can have individual initiatives but if we act as a joint pressure group, we can get the results we want. This is based on a relation of trust, they must trust the potential of young people but they should also understand vital concepts, the independence of youth organisations is one of these. They insist on setting up control mechanisms but the only way to work efficiently as a youth organisation is to be independent. They should understand this. Moreover, they should co-operate with youth NGOs because we are the real specialists in the youth field, they should put more effort and time into building national youth policies...

IVAN: I guess I understand what you are saying, when they think about youth they only think sports. Yes, young people are very interested in sports, but social, environmental and also political issues affect our current situation and our future.

TARIK: If I may, I would like to share my knowledge with you, as an experienced youth worker within an NGO. Youth participation in decision-making processes differs from country to country. In general, we can see that in the Balkan region, the countries do not have a system that works and have no tradition of youth policy. Many countries have official governmental bodies dealing with youth issues such as departments within ministries or governmental bodies, agencies or even ministries of youth and sports! But generally speaking, Southeast European countries are still in the process of drafting national youth policies and only a few of them have national youth councils.

ZANA: Let's enjoy the game.

After the game

MARIA: It was so exciting wasn't it, even though I didn't understand anything about the lyrics of the songs. The reactions of the young people and the songs were very familiar to me, indeed some of the songs are exactly the same in my country.

Country	Governmental body dealing with youth issues (Ministry, department...)	National youth council	National youth policy
Albania	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Youth Directorate of Co-ordination of Policies	Albanian National Youth Council	In the process of being adopted by the Albanian Parliament
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Advisor for youth policy, Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cabinet of the Prime Minister	None	No
Bulgaria	Ministry for Youth and Sports – Directorate for Youth	National Youth Council	No
Croatia	Department for Children and Youth, Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity	None	National Programme of Activities for the Young
Romania	National Authority for Youth	National Youth Council	National Action Plan for Youth
Serbia and Montenegro	Youth Section, Ministry of Education and Sports, Serbia International Co-operation Division, Ministry of Education and Science, Montenegro	Youth Council of Serbia and Vojvodina	No Developing a national youth action plan
UN Protectorate of Kosovo	Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Non-Residential Affairs	National Youth Council	Still in the preparatory phase
Slovenia	Youth Department within the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports; Commission for Student Issues in the Government	National Youth Council and several local councils	Only a draft
“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	Agency for Youth and Sport	None	In the process of developing one
Turkey	Directorate of Youth Services Department	None	No



IVAN: What are we going to do now? This city is famous for its night life and bars, I haven't drunk any Rakia for a long while. I would like to see whether it still has the same taste.

Conclusion

The "Youth Chapter" is aimed to reflect the great potential of youth in the Region, common stereotypes and prejudices among young people and the role of young people within their societies. There have been significant developments and changes, especially in the 1990s, in the Balkans. The young people of the Balkan countries have a key role to play in their societies. They would like to find increasingly more platforms to make their voices heard and make their dreams a reality. But, it is a fact that in most of the Balkan countries, there is no tradition of youth policy. Even though young people aged between 15-25 represent over 15% of the population in almost every Balkan country, they are not given the opportunity to express their views on the issues which, directly or indirectly, affect their lives.

The "Youth Chapter" believes that the current problems could be solved easily if young people were perceived as partners and as a resource. Moreover, if the obstacles within the youth field such as standing control mechanisms and lack of facilitation were to be overcome, young people could contribute more efficiently to their societies, and thus societies could be developed faster. Youth participation in decision-making processes should be supported and real tools provided. Youth work is quite a new concept for the Balkan countries, it should be understood that youth participation through institutionalised youth structures such as local youth councils and independent youth platforms would be much more effective and lead to real achievements.

We, as young people, believe in our potential and we are confident in our role in society. We would like governmental institutions and other actors in our communities to trust us as much as we believe in ourselves.

Practical exercise

You can use this story in different intercultural activities with young people.

1. one task could be to find in the text the common elements and also the differences between the characters, and to compare these to yourself. Maybe you can spot similarities or differences between your own situation and that of youth in other Balkan countries.
2. the second task could be to think about sub-cultures in your own countries and discuss.
3. the third task could be to find elements of globalisation and nationalisation in the text and to discuss them from positive and negative perspectives.
4. the fourth could be to think about formal and non-formal youth associations and ways of becoming actors in local community life.
5. the fifth task could be to look at the places where this story is set. Are any of these cities/forests/villages familiar to you? If not, think of visiting other Balkan countries to find the places where the story is set.

And you can also use the story as material for group discussions and/or workshops. Workshops could be on:

- Perception of youth by the different actors within societies.
- Youth sub-cultures as a reality.
- Youth policy making and deficiencies in the country.
- The role and participation of young people in decision-making processes.



Communication

by Mateja Demsic and Zarko Maletin

1. Introduction

Living in a region which has faced so much turmoil, foreign interventions and unfortunate adventures both in the past and present, it is more than necessary at least to communicate with each other, if not interact and co-operate on different levels of everyday life. The least we can do is talk and listen carefully in order to avoid a situation of “*déjà vu*” from recent history.

This chapter does not provide a complete plan for what communication should be. It doesn't give you solutions for everything, but it aims to make you think about how important it is to look around us, to listen and to interact. We hope that readers will find an input strong enough to continue their research, based on their own curiosity.

Let's focus on a level of communication that is so important for this Region: *inter-cultural communication*. The way you nurture a relationship and how you say/transfer your message is, in many cultures, more important than the message itself. Intercultural communication refers to the communication process between people of different cultural backgrounds. It takes place among individuals and/or between social, economic and political entities in different cultures. This includes both verbal and non-verbal communication processes.

Although communication has a simple definition (for instance “*communication is the sending of messages from source to receiver with the least possible loss of meaning*”), it is one of the most pervasive, complex and fallible of human functions. To quote Edward T. Hall (anthropologist): cultural is communication; meaning: everything communicates.

A closer view of intercultural communication proves the extent to which culture pervays what we are, how we act, how we think, how we talk, how we listen. The result that we (hopefully) get from it is intercultural communication. It is a recognition of differences, it affects people in powerful ways and involves building commonality in a world of cultural diversity.



-----> 2. When does "voz" become "vlak"?

(voz-Serbian; vlak Croatian for train)

The events in the Region of the last decade produced a strong need to talk and to listen to each other – to communicate in order to avoid more turbulence than we have already faced.

Of course, it would be too easy to blame lack of communication for the tragic events in former Yugoslavia, disputes between Greece and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, the case of Kosovo.... That would be too easy indeed. But on the other hand, could or would more effective and positive communication between all sides involved have reduced the harm done by extremists?

Historically, the Balkans have been characterised by the exchange of populations, cultures, languages and religions. Borders were subject to change on a daily basis. Massive migrations, not voluntary ones, have produced the image of a region where everybody is fighting everyone else, where diversity is sometimes a privilege and sometimes a cause of war.

But diversity, whether cultural, linguistic or religious, calls for regional co-operation on communication to produce cross-border identities and cultural and religious interaction.

Still, no matter how good and how politically correct intercultural communication and learning sound, is that really the reality of the Region? We could find examples of good practises, which often arose out of need, we could observe negotiations between states, read about different, well meant agreements, but nevertheless, can we say for sure that interculturalism and communication are a daily practise?

After a decade's absence, I was in Belgrade again. Excited, curious but also a bit uncomfortable. Meeting old friends in their homes was the best thing and I decided to prolong my stay in this city, a city I had visited so often before the conflict. When it came to going back home to Zagreb, I called the railway station for the train schedule. I asked for the times of the vlak (train in Croatian) to Zagreb. An angry voice said that they didn't know vlak, they only knew voz (train in Serbian), then threw the phone down. That person heard me, but refused to understand me. My friends felt uncomfortable but I couldn't deny that sort of thing would not happen in Zagreb.

(Petar, 28 years)

After the last ten years, you are more likely to be uncomfortable when dealing with others than before. It is also much more difficult. We could stop here and ask ourselves when does voz become vlak? Where is the linguistic wall that suddenly makes Serbs unable to understand Croatian or Croatians to understand Bosnian? As before in history, does that call for a *lingua franca* as it used to be for French, Russian or German (to a lesser extent)? In the “pre-democracy” period, the people of the former Yugoslavia mostly used the Serbo-Croat/Croato-Serb language as the *lingua franca*. Today, that language has produced several languages. And some are starting to use English as a tool for communication.

Does that mean we have missed the opportunity to communicate? To listen without prejudices?



Where different societies, cultures and languages meet, a certain level of misunderstanding in communication is to be expected. When translation is involved, bits of a message may be “cut”. But, ironically, communication between distant cultures is often more effective than between societies that are somehow related (linguistically, historically, regionally). Many such examples can be seen in the Region. For example, what used to be known as “Serbo-Croat” and “Croato-Serb” languages in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro are now transformed into Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian and Montenegrin languages.

We cannot avoid quoting R. Lakoff (Professor of Linguistics at the University of California-Berkeley) who says, that *“language is politics, politics possesses power, power controls the way people speak and how they are understood....today, that’s an art surviving....”* *“Politics is a language”*.

Just a simple observation is needed to see that politics and language manage to separate as well as nations and languages. Perhaps it is just fine to have made different languages out of one. We should hope that those who communicate in these languages will also be able to communicate peacefully and with respect.

As long as voz and vlak are going in the same direction.

3. Dictionary

Since we as young people believe in the positive power of communication, of words spoken, we’ll try to make you think about the positive aspect of learning a language, at least some phrases of your neighbours’ language. In this restless Region, adopting such an attitude would mean bridging a gap instead of making it wider.

Here is some basic information before you start to discover the other languages of the Region.

The dictionary includes basic words and phrases related to everyday life, politics and youth in Macedonian, Greek, Serb, Croatian, Albanian, Slovenian, Romanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Turkish and Romany languages.



Besides these languages, more are spoken within the Region: Hungarian, Russian, Czech, German, Ukrainian, Polish, Judezmo and Yiddish, Kurdish, Arabic, Georgian, Armenian, Caucasian, Laz and Abaza.

-----> 4. Language is a virus (Lauri Anderson)

Language as a main tool of communication can bridge differences.

When you are in an intercultural communication situation:

Listen: listening is a skill and failure to listen carefully contributes significantly to human miscommunication. You should hear the meaning instead of the words;

Check your perception: our perceptions about others and about what is being said are pictured in our own values and expectations;

Seek feedback: ask if you have been understood. Giving and receiving feedback is itself a culturally influenced process.

Resist judgemental reactions: avoid giving the impression that you judge what other people say, ie it's good, it's bad. First try to actively listen to what the other is saying.

Take risks: cross cultural learning and intercultural communication are most successful when people have established enough trust to permit some exposure of themselves.

Communication is a creative and highly intuitive act of discovery. What we wish is that you discover the diversity of communication and languages around the Region. To come back to the title of this last part of the chapter, if language is a virus, get infected!

-----> References:

- Multicultural Education in Cross-Cultured Training Approach, ed. D.S. Hoopes and M.D. Pusch, Intercultural Press, 2000
- Talking Power by Lakoff R., Basic Books, 1990
- Atlas of Languages: the origin and development of language throughout the world.





SEE youth dictionary

This dictionary is the result of almost a year long process of gathering translation material over various SEE youth meetings, seminars as well as from a questionnaire that was distributed over the Internet.

The main objective was to make a comparative tool for all people dealing with youth from SEE, as well as the youth of SEE itself in order to have better and more efficient communication.

The research also covered non-verbal communication and planned to have all the SEE languages presented (countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Serbia and Montenegro) as well as many other topics. Unfortunately, both the material and the obvious need for better communication in SEE exceeded the space available in the booklet.

IMPORTANT NOTE: THIS DICTIONARY DOES NOT AIM TO SUBSTITUTE OFFICIAL AND ACADEMIC TOOLS. IN THE QUESTIONNAIRES, WE ASKED FOR BOTH SLANG LANGUAGE AND PHRASES THAT WOULD BE TYPICAL FOR THE SUBCULTURE TO WHICH THE INTERVIEWEE BELONGED. FOR EXAMPLE, THE CROATIAN TRANSLATION PRESENTED HERE IS FAR FROM THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE, BUT THE CROATIAN DIALECT POSTIRSKI (FROM POSTIRA ON THE ISLE OF BRAČ) TOGETHER WITH YOUTH SLANG PHRASES. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO MENTION THAT WE HAVE SELECTED WORDS AND PHRASES THAT ARE USED BY YOUNG PEOPLE AND, IN THAT RESPECT, SHOULD NOT BE THE SUBJECT OF SCRUTINY FOR POLITICAL CORRECTNESS.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- A-** SOUTHERN ALBANIAN
- B-** OFFICIAL BULGARIAN
- GRE** OFFICIAL GREEK
- M-** MACEDONIAN
- S-** OFFICIAL SERBIAN
- SLO** OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN

TRANSLATIONS ARE PRESENTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER.

SPECIFIC LETTERS AND SOUNDS IN SEE

(~ sounds "LIKE")

ALBANIAN

- XH JOHN (E)
- Y OUI (FR)
- SH SHIVERING (E)
- RR BRRRRR
- LL LOVE (E)
- L ~ЛЮБОБ (RUSSIAN)
- ZH JACQUES (FR)
- Ē NURSE (E, an indefinite article)
- TH THUMB (E)
- C CICERON (I)
- Ç CHOKING (E)
- G GHETTO (E)
- Q Ć, Ć (SER) K' (MAC)
- DH THE (E)
- NJ NEW YORK (E)

MACEDONIAN

- K Q (A)
- Ш SHIVERING (E)
- Ж JACQUES (FR)
- Љ ЛЮБОБ (RUSSIAN)
- Љ LJUBICA (SER)
- Њ NEW YORK (E)
- Љ OKE (E)
- Б BETTER (E)
- Г GENIUS (E)
- Д DINNER (E)
- З ZORRO (S)
- Н EAGLE (E)
- Л LOVE (E)
- Ф FICTION (E)
- Х HERITAGE (E)
- Ц CICERON (I)

SERBIAN

- Ć (Ћ) Q (A) K' (MAC)
- Č (Ч) CHOKING (E)
- Đ (Ђ) JEALOUSY (E)
- Š (Ш) SHIVERING (E)
- Ž (Ж) JACQUES (FR)
- Љ (Љ) ЛЮБОБ (RUSSIAN) LJUBICA (SER)
- Њ (Њ) NEW YORK (E)
- ĐŽ (Љ) JOKE (E)
- B (Б) BETTER (E)
- G (Г) GENIUS (E)
- D (Д) DINNER (E)
- Z (З) ZORRO (S)
- I (И) EAGLE (E)
- L (Л) LOVE (E)
- F (Ф) FICTION (E)
- H (Х) HERITAGE (E)
- C (Ц) CICERON (I)

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to more than 100 young people who took part in this process and proved that good and constructive communication could be the answer to most of the problems in our region.

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Social relations

ENGLISH	SOUTHERN ALBANIAN	OFFICIAL BULGARIAN	OFFICIAL GREEK	MACEDONIAN	OFFICIAL SERBIAN	OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN
HELLO	MIRËDITA	ЗДРАВЕЈ ZDRAVEI	ΓΕΙΑ ΣΟΥ GIA SOU	ZDRAVO	ZDRAVO, ČAO	ZDRAVO
GOOD MORNING	MIRËMËNGJES	ДОБРО УТРО DOBRO UTRO	ΚΑΛΗΜΕΡΑ KALIMERA	DOBRO UTRO	DOBRO JUTRO	DOBRO JUTRO
GOOD AFTERNOON	MIRËDITA	ДОБЪР ДЕН DOBAR DEN	ΚΑΛΗΣΠΕΡΑ KALISPERA	DOBAR DEN	DOBAR DAN	DOBER DAN
GOOD EVENING	MIRËMBRËMA	ДОБЪР ВЕЧЕР DOBAR VECHER	ΚΑΛΗΣΠΕΡΑ KALISPERA	DOBROVEČER	DOBRO VEČE	DOBER VEČER
GOOD NIGHT	NATËN E MIRË	ЛЕКА НОЧ LEKA NOST	ΚΑΛΗΝΥΧΤΑ KALINIHTA	DOBRA NOK	LAKU NOĆ	LAHKO NOĆ
GOODBYE	MIRUPAFESHIM	ДОВИЖДАНЕ DOVIJDANE	ΓΕΙΑ ΣΟΥ GIA SOU	PRIJATNO, CAO	ČAO, DOVIDJENJA	NASVIDENJ
FAREWELL	LAMTUMIRË	СБОУВАНЕ SBOGUVANE	ΑΔΙΟ ADIO	ZBOGUM	ZBOGOM	ZBOGOM
HOW ARE YOU?	ÇKEMI? SI JENI?	КАК СИ? KAK SI?	ΤΙ Κ'ΑΝΕΙΣ TI KANIS?	KAKO STE	KAKO SI?	KAKO SI?
WHAT IS YOUR NAME? MY NAME IS...	SI QJHENI? QJHEM ... (SI E KE EMRIN? MË QJAJINË ...	КАК СЕ КАЗВАШ? МОЕТО НМЕ Е ... KAK SE KAZVASH? МОЕТО ИМЕ Е ...	ΠΩΣ ΣΕ Λ'ΕΝΕ ΜΕ Λ'ΕΝΕ... POS SE LENE? ME LENE...	KAKO SE VIKAS? JAS SE VIKAM ...	KAKO SE ZOVEŠ? JA SE ZOVEM ...	KAKO TI JE IME? MOJE IME JE ...
HOW OLD ARE YOU? I AM ... OLD	SA VJEÇ JE? UNE JAM ... VJEÇ	НА КОЛКО ГОДИНИ СИ? NA KOLKO GODINI SI?	ΠΟΣΩΝ ΧΡΟΝΩΝ ΕΊΣΤΑΙ – POSON HRONON ISE? IME ... HRONON	KOLKU GODINI IMAS? JAS IMAM GODINI	KOLIKO IMAŠ GODINA? JA IMAM ...	KOLIKO SI STAR? JAZ SEM STAR ... LET



ENGLISH	SOUTHERN ALBANIAN	OFFICIAL BULGARIAN	OFFICIAL GREEK	MACEDONIAN	OFFICIAL SERBIAN	OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN
WHERE ARE YOU FROM? I AM FROM ...	NGA JENI? UNË JAM NGA ... (SHQIPËRIA)	ОТ КЪДЕ СТЕ? АЗ СЪМ ОТ ... ОТ КАДЕ СТЕ? АЗ САМ ОТ ...	ΑΙΤΟ ΠΟΥ Ε'ΙΣΑΙ: Ε'ΙΜΑΙ ΑΙΤ'Ο ... ΑΡΟ ΡΟΥ ΙΣΕ? ΙΜΕ ΑΡΟ ...	OD KADE SI? JAS SUM OD ...	ODAKLE SI? JA SAM IZ ...	OD KOD PRIHAJAŠ? JAZ SEM IZ ...
DO YOU HAVE A CIGARETTE?	A JENI VETËM?	ИМАШ ЛИ ЦИГАРИ? IMASH LI TZIGARI?	ἜΧΕΙΣ ἕΝΑ ἴσιγ'αρο – EHIS ENA TSIGARO?	IMATE LI CIGARA?	DA LI IMAŠ CIGARETU?	IMAŠ CIGARETO?
DO YOU WANT SOMETHING TO DRINK?	ÇFARË DËSHIRONI TË PINI?	ИСКАШ ЛИ НЕЩО ЗА ПИЕНЕ? ISKASH LI NESTO ZA PIENE?	ἜΛΕΙΣ Κ'ΑΤΙ ΝΑ ΠΙΕΙΣ THELIS KATI NA PHIS?	SAKAS LI NESTO ZA PIENJE?	DA LI ŽELIŠ NEŠTO DA POPIJEŠ?	KAJ ŽELIŠ POPITI?
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO...?	A KENI QENË NDONJËHERË NE ...?	БИЛ ЛИ СИ НЯКОГА В ...? BIL LI SI NIAKOGA V ...?	ἜΧΕΙΣ Π'ΑΕΙ ΠΟΤΕ ΣΤΟ ... EHIS PAI POTE STO ...?	SI BIL LI NEKOGAS VO ...?	DA LI SI IKADA BIO-BILA U ..?	SI KDAJ BIL V ...?
DO YOU WANT TO GO OUT TONIGHT?	A DËSHIRON TË DALIM JASHTË SONTE?	ИСКАШ ЛИ ДА ИЗЛЕЗЕШ ДОВЕЧЕРА? ISKASH LI DA IZLEZESH DOVECHERA?	ἜΛΕΙΣ ΝΑ ΒΥΟΥΜΕ Σ'ΗΜΕΡΑ THELIS NA VGOUME SIMERA?	SAKAS LI DA IZLEZESH VECERVA?	DA LI ŽELIŠ DA IZADJEŠ VEČERAS?	ŽELIŠ ITI VEN ZVEČER?
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF?	ÇFARË MENDON PËR?	КАКВО МИСЛИШ ЗА? KAKVO MISLISH ZA?		STO MISLIS ZA?	ŠTA MISLIŠ O ..?	



ENGLISH	SOUTHERN ALBANIAN	OFFICIAL BULGARIAN	OFFICIAL GREEK	MACEDONIAN	OFFICIAL SERBIAN	OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?	SA KUHË KENI QË JENI KËTU?	ОТКОГА СИ ТУК? ОТКОГА СИ ТУК?		KOLKU DOLGO SI OVDE?	KOLIKO SI VEĆ OVDE?	
WHAT TIME IS IT? IT'S ...	SA ĚSHTE ĚRA ...	КОЛКО Е ЧАСА? ЧАСЪТ Е ... KOLKO E CHASA? CHASAT E ...	ΤΙ ΏΡΑ ΕΊΝΑΙ ΕΊΝΑΙ ... TI ORA INE? INE ...	KOLKU E CASOT? TOCNO E ... CASOT	KOLIKO JE SATI? ... JE	
WHAT IS YOUR OCCUPATION/ PROFESSION? (WHAT DO YOU DO FOR A LIVING?)	ÇFARË PUNE/ PROFESIONI KENI?	КАКВА Е ТВОТА ПРОФЕСИЈА? (С КАКВО СЕ ЗАНИМАВАШ?) КАКВА Е ТВОЈАТА ПРОФЕСИЈА? (S KAKVO SE ZANIMAVASH?)	ΤΙ ΔΟΥΛΕΙΑ Κ'ΑΝΕΙΣ TI DOULIA KANIS?	KOE E TVOETO ZANIMANJE/ PROFESIJA?	ČIME SE BAVIS?	KAJ SI PO POKLICU/ IZOBRAZBI? (S ČIM SE PREŽIVLJAŠ?)

Travel

EXCUSE ME, CAN YOU HELP ME?	ΜΕ ΞΑΛΝΙ, Α ΜΥΝΔ ΤΕ ΜΕ ΝΔΙΗΜΟΝΙ?	ИЗВИНЕТЕ, МОЖЕТЕ ЛИ ДА МИ ПОМОГНЕТЕ? IZVINETE, MOJETE LI DA MI POMOGNETE?	ΣΥΤΤΝ'ΩΜΗ, ΜΠΟΡΕΊΣ ΝΑ ΜΕ ΒΟΗΘΗΣΕΙΣ SYGNOMI, BORIS NA ME VOITHISIS?	IZVINETE, BI MOZELE LI DA MI POMOGNETE?	IZVINI-OPROSTI (IZVINITE-OPROSTITTE) DA LI MOZES (MOZETE) POMOCI?	OPROSTI, MI LAHKO POMAGAS?
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ENGLISH	SOUTHERN ALBANIAN	OFFICIAL BULGARIAN	OFFICIAL GREEK	MACEDONIAN	OFFICIAL SERBIAN	OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN
LEFT	MAJTAS	ЛЯВО – LIAVO	ΑΡΙΣΤΕΡΑ ARISTERA	LEVO	LEVO	LEVO
RIGHT	DJATHAS	ДЯСНО – DIASNO	ΔΕΞΙΑ – DEXIA	DESNO	DESNO	DESNO
AROUND THE CORNER	KTHEHU TEK QOSHJA/CEPI	ЗАДЪГЪЛИА ZAD AGALA	ΣΤΡΙΨΙΒΕΤΕ ΣΤΗ ΓΩΝΙΑ STRIVETE STI GONIA	ZAD AGOLOT	IZA UGLA	ZA VO GALOM
STRAIGHT ON	EC DREJT	НАПРАВО NAPRAVO	ΕΥΘΕΙΑ EFTHIA	PRAVO	SAMO NAPRED	POIDI NARAVNOST
FOLLOW THE SIGN	NDIQ SHENJAT	СЛЕДВАЙ МАРКИРОВКАТА SLEDVAI MARKIROVKATA		SLEDETE GO ZNAKOT	PRATITE OVAJ ZNAK	
ENTER	HYRJE	ВХОД – VHOD	ΕΙΣΟΔΟΣ ISODOS	VLEZ	ULAZ	VSTOP
EXIT	DALJE	ИЗХОД – IZHOD	ΕΞΟΔΟΣ EXODOS	IZLEZ	IZLAZ	IZSTOP
ARRIVAL	MBËRRITJA	ПРИСТИГАНЕ PRISTIGANE	ΆΓΙΣΗ AFIXI	PRISTIGUNVANJE	DOLASCI	PRIHOD
DEPARTURE	NISJA	ЗАМИНАВАНЕ ZAMINDVANE	ΑΝΑΧΩΡΗΣΗ ANAHORISI	ZAMINUVANJE	ODLASCI	ODHOD



ENGLISH	SOUTHERN ALBANIAN	OFFICIAL BULGARIAN	OFFICIAL GREEK	MACEDONIAN	OFFICIAL SERBIAN	OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN
TRAIN	TRENI	ВЛАК – VLAK	ΤΡΕΝΟ – TRENO	VOZ	VOZ	VLAK
PLANE	AEROPLANI	САМОЛЕТ SAMOLET	ΑΕΡΟΠΛΑΝΟ AEROPLANO	AVION	AVION	LETALO
CAR	ΜΑΚΙΝΑ	КОЛА – KOLA	ΑΥΤΟΚΙΝΗΤΟ AFTOKINITO	AVTOMOBIL	AUTO, KOLA	AVTO

Society, politics, economy

STATE	SHIET	ЩАТ – STAT	ΚΡΑΤΟΣ KRATOS	DRZAVA	DRŽAVA	
LAW	LIQJ	ЗАКОН – ZAKON	ΝΌΜΟΣ – NOMOS	ZAKON	ZAKON	
GOVERNMENT	QEVERI	ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО PRAVITELSTVO	ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΗ KIVERNISI	VLADA	VLADA	
CONSTITUTION	KUSHIETUTË	ΚΟΝΣΤΙΤΟΥЦИЯ KONSTITUTSIA	ΣΥΝΤΑΓΜΑ SYNDAGMA	USTAV	USTAV	
DEMOCRACY	DEMOKRACI	ДЕМОКРАЦИЯ DEMIUKRATSIA	ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ DIMOKRATIA	DEMOKRATIJA	DEMOKRATIJA	
TOTALITARISM	TOTALITARIZËM	ТОТАЛИТАРИЗЪМ TOTALITARIZAM	ΟΛΟΚΛΗΡΩΤΙΣΜΌΣ OLOKLIROTISMOS	TOTALITARIZAM	TOTALITARIZAM	
PARLIAMENT	PARLIAMENT	ΠΑΡΛΑΜΕΝΤ PARLIAMENT	ΒΟΥΛΗ VOULI	PARLIAMENT	PARLIAMENT SKUPSTINA	
CRIME	KRIM	ПРЕСТЪПЛЕНИЕ PRESTARLENIE		KRIMINAL	KRIMINAL	



ENGLISH	SOUTHERN ALBANIAN	OFFICIAL BULGARIAN	OFFICIAL GREEK	MACEDONIAN	OFFICIAL SERBIAN	OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN
MINORITY/MAJORITY	MINORITET/ MAZHORANCE (SHUMICE)	МАЛЦИНСТВО/ МНОЗИНСТВО MALCINSTVO/ MNOZINSTVO	ΜΕΙΟΨΗΘΙΑ/ ΠΛΕΙΟΨΗΘΙΑ MIOPSIFIA/ PLIOPSIFIA	MALCINSTVO/ MNOZINSTVO	MANJINA- VECINA (STANOVNIŠTVO)	MANJŠINA/ VECINA
NATION	НАЦИЈА – NATSIA	НАЦИЈА – NAROD	ΝΑЦИЈΑ	NACIJA, NAROD	NARODNOST	
ASYLUM	AZIL	ПРИЮТ/ УБЕЖИЩЕ PRIUT/UBEJESTE	ΆΣΥΛΟ ASILO	AZIL	AZIL	AZIL
REFUGEE	REFUGJAT	ПОДСЛОH PODSLON	ΠΡΟΣΦΥΓΑΣ PROSFIGAS	BEGALEC	IZBEGLICA	BEGUNEC
RESPECT	RESPEKT	УВАЖЕНИЕ UVAJENIE	ΣΕΒΑΣΜΟΣ SEVASMOS	ПОСИТ	ПОШТОВАЊЕ	SPŠTOVANJE
TOLERANCE	TOLERANCÉ	ТОЛЕРАНТНОСТ TOLERANTNOST	ΑΝΟΧΉ – ANOHI	TOLERANCIA	TOLERANCIA	STRPNOST
SOLIDARITY	SOLIDARITET	СОЛИДАРНОСТ SOLIDARNOST	ΑΛΛΗΛΕΓΓΥΗ ALILEGII	SOLIDARNOST	SOLIDARNOST	SOLIDARNOST
CITIZENSHIP	SHTETËSIA	ГРАЖДАНСТВО/ ПОДАЊСТВО GRAJDANSTVO/ PODANSTVO	ΥΠΗΚΟΨΗΤΗ IPIKOΨHTA	DRZAVJANSTVO	DRZAVJANSTVO	DRŽAVLJANSTVO
MIGRATION	MIGRIMI	ΠΡΕΣΕΛΒΑΝΕ/ ΜΙΓΡΑЦИЯ PRESELVANE/ MIGRATSIA	ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΕΥΣΗ METANASTEFSI	MIGRACIJA	MIGRACIJA	PRESELEJEVANJE
HUMAN RIGHTS	TË DREJTAT E NJERIUT	ЧОВЕШКИ ПРАВА CHOVESHKI PRAVA	ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΝΑ ΔΙΚΑΙΩΜΑΤΑ ANTHROPINA DIKEOMATA	COVEKOVI PRAVA	LJUDSKA PRAVA	ČLOVEKOVE PRAVICE

Youth

ENGLISH	SOUTHERN ALBANIAN	OFFICIAL BULGARIAN	OFFICIAL GREEK	MACEDONIAN	OFFICIAL SERBIAN	OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN
YOUTH WORK	PUNË ME TË RINJË	МЛАДЕЖКА РАБОТА MLADEJKA RABOTA	ΕΝΑΣΧ'ΟΛΗΣΗ ΜΕ ΠΡΟΤΓ'ΑΜΜΑΤΑ ΓΙΑ Ν'ΕΟΙΣ ENASHOLISI ME PROGRAMMATA GIA NEOUS	MLADINSKA RABOTA	OMLADINSKI RAD	MLADINSKO DELO
YOUTH WORKER	AKTIVIST	МЛАД РАБОТНИК MLAD RABOTNIK	ΣΤΕΛΕΧΥΣ ΟΡΓ'ΑΝΩΣΗΣ Ν'ΕΩΝ STELEHOS ORGANOSIS NEON	MLADINSKI RABOTNIK	OMLADINSKI RADNIK	MLADINSKI DELAVEC
TRAINING	TRAINIM	ОБУЧЕНИЕ OBUCHENIE	ΕΚΠΑ'ΙΔΕΥΣΗ/ ΚΑΤ'ΑΡΤΙΣΗ EKPEDEFSI/ KATARTISI	ОБУКА	TRENING	URJENJE
EDUCATION	EDUKIM	ОБРАЗУВАНИЕ OBRAZUVANIE	ΕΚΠΑ'ΙΔΕΥΣΗ/ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ EKPEDEFSI/PEDIA	ΟΒΡΑΖΟΒΑΝΙΕ	EDUKACIJA OBRAZOVANJE	IZOBRAZEVANJE
YOUNGSTER	I RI	МЛАДЕЖ – МЛАДЕЖ DETE – DETE	Ν'ΕΟΣ – NEOS	DETE	OMLADINAC	MLADOSTNIK
CHILD	FËMIË	ДЕТЕ – DETE	ΠΑΙΔΑ'Ι – PEDI	DETE	DETE	OTROK
PARTNERSHIP	PARTNERITET	СЪДРУЖИЕ SADRUJIE	ΣΥΝΕΤΑΙΡΙΚ'ΟΤΗΤΑ SYNETAIRIKOTITA	PARTNERSTVO	PARTNERSTVO	PARTNERSTVO
WORKSHOP	МБЛЕДХЈЕ/ SEMINAR	РАБОТИЛНИЦА/ СЕМИНАР RABOTILNITSA/ SEMINAR	ΟΜ'ΑΔΑ ΣΥΖ'ΗΤΗΣΗΣ OMADA SIZITISIS	RABOTILNICA	RADIONICA	DELAVNICA



ENGLISH	SOUTHERN ALBANIAN	OFFICIAL BULGARIAN	OFFICIAL GREEK	MACEDONIAN	OFFICIAL SERBIAN	OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN
WORKGROUP	GRUP PUNE	РАБОТНА ГРУПА RABOTNA GRUPA	ΟΜΑΔΑ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΣ OMADA ERGASIAS	RABOTNA GRUPA	RADNA GRUPA	DELOVNA SKUPINA
PARTICIPATION	PIEŠEMARRJE	УЧАСТИЕ UCHASTIE	ΣΥΜΜΕΤΟΧΗ SIMETOH	UCESTVO	УЧЕШЋЕ, PARTICIPACIJA	PARTICIPACIJA, SODELOVANJE
EMPLOYMENT	PUNËSIM	СЛУЖБА – СЛУЈБА	ΑΠΑΣΧΟΛΗΣΗ APASHOLISI	VRABOTENOST	ΖΑΠΟШЉАВЊАЊЕ	ZAPOSLOVITEV
FAMILY	FAMILJE	СЕМЕЈСТВО SEMEISTVO	ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑ IKOGENIA	FAMILIJA	PORODICA	DRUŽINA
ACTIVISM	AKTIVIZËM	АКТИВИЗЪМ AKTIVIZAM	ΑΚΤΙΒΙΣΜΟΣ AKTIVISMOS	AKTIVIZAM	AKTIVIZAM	DEJAVNOST

Numbers

1	NIË	ЕДНО – EDNO	ΕΝΑ – ENA	EDEN	JEDAN	‘ENA
2	DY	ДВЕ – DVE	ΔΥΟ – DIO	DVA	DVA	DVE
3	TRE	ТРИ – TRI	ΤΡΙΑ – TRIA	TRI	TRI	TRI
4	KATËR	ЧЕТИРИ CHETIRI	ΤΕΣΣΕΡΑ TESSERA	CETIRI	ЇETIRI	ŠTIRI
5	PEŠË	ПЕТ – PET	ΠΕΝΤΕ – PENDE	PET	PET	PET
6	GIASHTË	ШЕСТ – SHEŠT	‘ΕΞΙ – EXI	SHEST	ŠEST	ŠEST
7	SHITATË	СЕДЕМ – SEDEM	ΕΠΤΑ – EPTA	SEDUM	SEDM	SEDEM
8	TETË	ОСЕМ – OSEM	ΟΚΤΩ – OKTO	OSUM	OSAM	OSEM
9	NËNTË	ДЕВЕТ – DEVET	ΕΝΝΙΑ – ENIA	DEVET	DEVET	DEVET
10	DHIJETË	ДЕСЕТ – DESET	ΔΕΚΑ – DEKA	DESET	DESET	DESET

ENGLISH	SOUTHERN ALBANIAN	OFFICIAL BULGARIAN	OFFICIAL GREEK	MACEDONIAN	OFFICIAL SERBIAN	OFFICIAL SLOVENIAN
11	NJËMBËDHJETË	ЕДИНАДЕСЕТ EDINADESET	ἑνδεκά ENDEKAT	EDINAESET	JEDANAEST	ENAJS
12	DYMBËDHJETË	ДВАНАДЕСЕТ DVANADESET	δωδεκά DODEKA	DVANAESET	DVANAEST	DVANAJST
13	TREMBËDHJETË	ТРИНАДЕСЕТ TRINADESET	δεκατρία DEKATRIA	TRINAESET	TRINAEST	TRINAJST
20	NJËZET	ДВАДЕСЕТ DVADESET	εἴκοσι IKOSI	DVAESET	DVAESET	DVAJSET
100	NJËQIND	СТО – STO	εκατό – EKATO	STO	STO	STO
200	DYQIND	ДВЕСТА – DVESTA	διακόσια DIAKOSIA	DVESTA	DVESTA	DVESTO
1000	NJË MIJË	ХИЛЈАДА HILJADA	χίλια – HILIA	ILJADA	HILJADU	TISOČ



Majority/minority relations

by Irena Lengar, Marius Jitea and Alexandra Raykova

"Intercultural learning – the aim, the means, the solution"

When talking about minorities in the Balkans, the first image one has is of ethnic minorities and conflicts. In reality, in the Balkans, minorities are not only ethnic ones, "conflict" has always been a simple description of the relations between majorities and minorities.

We would like to underline that minorities in the Balkans cannot be regarded separately from majorities. Every time one talks about minorities, one also talks about majorities. The reasons for that are:

1. with some exceptions, such as Roma, Vlachs, Russins, etc, the ethnic minorities have their own majority states;
2. some ethnic groups that were minorities in the empires that, in the past, dominated this part of Europe, now have their own states with their own ethnic identity. The same is valid when looking at recent history. Some ethnic minorities from Yugoslavia, since its disintegration, are now forming their own nation states. In other words, throughout history, different minorities have been majorities and vice versa;
3. in the Balkans, the main factor which determines minority situations is the attitude of the majorities towards them due to their differences, be they ethnic, religious, sexual, social or other;
4. there are very strong, traditional stereotypes about what minorities are. Almost no one believes the young people from these minorities can have great potential. However, this potential is based on their solid cultural roots and willingness to be part of the modern world. With this potential, they can be encouraged to change the situation in their own communities.

In their own way, the constitutions of all Balkan countries state that all people should be treated equally, but in reality we have all witnessed discrimination of people on different grounds. Only few countries recognise and name the ethnic minorities which exist and live on their territories.



-----> **Why is it important to look at majority/minority relations in the context of this booklet?**

More than on tolerance towards differences, mutual respect and multiculturalism, the national identities of our societies were historically formed on the basis of genocide, ethnic cleansing and expulsions, and forced changes of names and faith.

Contrary to this argument is the fact that before the last war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo was a city where at least 3 ethnic groups and maybe 4 religions lived peacefully together. A positive example that is worth mentioning here is Timisoara (south west Romania) or Bucovina (north region of Romania). For centuries, Germans, Roma, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs and other ethnic groups have been living there without any dramatic ethnic dispute or armed conflict.

The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights states in its report from the seminar “Minority Rights and the Freedom of Religion in Balkan Countries”:

“Southeastern Europe and its neighbouring countries often face similar challenges with regard to national minorities. Two reoccurring types of difficulties can be identified. In a number of countries, the minorities have received adequate legal protection, but still suffer from the imperfect implementation of these safeguards. In addition, most legal guarantees for minorities are still new and have either not yet been fully implemented, still lack detail, or raise new, yet unanswered, questions. This situation is most commonly found in the Northern Balkans and adjacent countries, while the overall situation tends to be most dire in the Southern Balkans. Although some minorities have been recognised in most countries, many remain legally un- or under-protected and are far from equal to the predominant nation.”

Each national authority, within the framework of its constitution, offers more or less the same treatment to their citizens who declare themselves as belonging to ethnic groups recognised by the states as minorities. Everyone should be treated equally regardless of any differences.

“All persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights” – Art. 6 paragraph 1, Bulgarian Constitution, and “All are equal before the law. No one may be unjustly discriminated against for reasons such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic conditions, education, social status or ancestry” – Art. 18, Albanian Constitution.

But in reality we all witness discrimination against people on different grounds.

Very few Balkan countries have recognised and named in their constitutions the existence of ethnic minorities in their countries. Among those is “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”:

“The Republic of Macedonia in its Referendum of 8 September 1999 as well as the historical fact that Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality of citizens and permanent coexistence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia” – Preamble, Constitution of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

On the other hand, **Article 1** of the **Constitution of BiH** states “Bosniacs and Croats are constituent people, along with others”, where “others” are ethnic minorities.



“Republica Srpska shall be that state of Serb people and of all its citizens” provides even less scope for interpreting who are the other ethnic groups except Serbs living on the territory of this state.

This reflection can be concluded by taking the example of the **Greek Constitution**, which states in **Article 4, paragraph 1** *“All Greeks are equal before the law”*. As there is no mention of the word “citizen”, the question can be raised whether only ethnic Greeks are equal before the law or whether it is valid for all Greek citizens. But the Greek constitution is the only one which states in paragraph 2 in the same article that *“Greek men and women all have equal rights and obligations”*. Only the Montenegrin Constitution has an article about disabled persons *“Disabled people should be guaranteed social protection”*.

If we consider the situation of minorities on a country-by-country basis, we will discover an extremely diverse picture, a variety of legislative and administrative practices that are both unique and controversial.

Some jokes in this chapter are discriminatory. They are not to be taken as jokes but are to help to reflect on prejudices and stereotypes. We, of course, hope that no one will feel offended by them.

-----> Who is a minority in the Balkans?

The most visible minorities in the Balkans are the ethnic minorities, but one can easily be discriminated against as part of any non-dominant group in society on the basis of religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, opinion, etc.

Within one country, we can find minority groups whose ethnic and cultural identity is legislatively protected at a higher level than anywhere else in Europe, as well as groups whose very existence, although clearly observed in the society, is not even recognised officially.

Among the minorities who are not discriminated against in the Balkans are the Jewish. Although there are popular jokes about them as the one below, Jewish communities are well integrated and, generally speaking, do not experience any discrimination on the grounds of their religion or ethnicity, as is the case with other minority groups.

Taking into account the different pasts during World War II, it should be recognised that the “shetl” which existed before 1940 (the rural Jewish communities) have disappeared. It can be noted that in general terms, Jews are not at the top of the list of minorities discriminated against within the Balkans.

Why do Jews have big noses? Because air (breathing) is free!

On the other hand, homosexuality is neither accepted nor tolerated in any of the Balkan countries.

Until recently, Romania was an extreme example of this. The former article in the Romanian Penal Code concerning prohibition of homosexual relations was removed in 2000. But homosexuals in Romania still face severe discrimination and great challenges to be accepted as such by society and even more so to be respected for their identity. Generally speaking, all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual persons in all Balkan countries face these problems.



Testimony of a young gay from Slovenia

Situation: family meeting with relatives

When I tell my story, some of you will easily be able to imagine how I felt in such moments. Too young to have enough self-confidence, and not enough experience to know about everything which is going on around me.

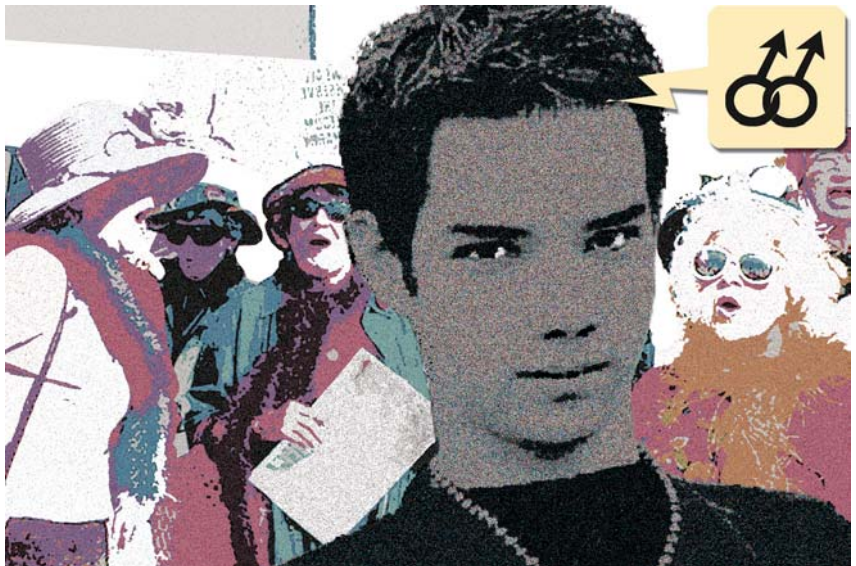
Every year it's the same. Aunt number 1: Do you have a girlfriend? Aunt number 2: How's your love life? Aunt number 3: When will you give us a nephew?

Not many questions but they were really uncomfortable. Each of these questions killed me; it was like they were forcing me to show up the next day with a girlfriend, to explain to them our plans for having children, etc. I simply could not do that.

Now I laugh about it and don't care. I don't need a girlfriend, I have a boyfriend. We will not marry, we cannot. There will be no grandchildren.

Stop annoying me! And they stopped. Or maybe it is just my impression that they have stopped. These were the worst moments of my teenage years. I hide my identity from the rest of the world, I have the feeling that I am the only one to whom this is happening. I curse this damned situation and hope nobody will ever find out I'm gay.

How will they react? I thought they would react very badly. That they would exclude me. Slowly I realised they would not exclude me but still, in many situations, I realise that I am uncomfortable because of my sexual orientation. There are still so many situations in which I feel underprivileged just because I am gay. Just because I am not guilty in any way. And this still hurts me here and there.



As far as different minorities are concerned, in every Balkan country there is an amazingly stable hierarchy of attitudes of sympathy and aversion towards them. Ethnic prejudices and social distances towards minorities in all Balkan countries are significantly stronger than similar attitudes in West European countries. Among those minorities experiencing the strongest prejudices, discrimination and violations of human rights is the Roma minority.

According to a survey conducted in a number of Balkan countries in 1994, the prejudices and social distances towards Roma in most of them were at the same level as those among white Americans from southern US towards the blacks in the late 50's.

Mitko from Bulgaria – 19, Roma

I think it is very difficult to be Roma and to live in Bulgaria, because the Roma are discriminated against everywhere, even in public transport.

Two years ago I got on a bus together with one of my friends.

At the first stop, a strong Bulgarian guy started to bite us for no reason, except obviously because he recognised we were Roma.

He could have been on drugs, I don't know.

None of the other passengers said anything to stop him or to defend us. Some even encouraged him, laughing and saying "They deserve to be bitten. Roma are thieves."

At the next stop, we were able to get off the bus, but we were both injured. We both felt very angry and were swearing, because there were two other Roma in the bus, but even they didn't say anything. Maybe they were also scared...

Such situations are very unjust, because I have never ever stolen anything in my life, but Bulgarians think we are all the same. The reality is that they know nothing about Roma.

No matter how strong the prejudices and negative attitudes different ethnic groups can have about each other, very often together they have the strongest negative attitudes towards Roma. The paradox is that such attitudes can be observed even among ethnic groups who were involved in armed conflicts.

A Gipsy, a Romanian and a Slovenian are having a contest to see which of them can stay longest in a pigsty. First, the Slovenian goes in and he comes out after 15 minutes horrified by the smell. After that the Romanian goes in and comes out after an hour not being able to stand the smell anymore. Then the Gipsy goes in. He stays, and stays, and stays and then after 2 hours the pig comes out saying: "Oh my god, that Gipsy smells so bad!".

The situation of religious minorities in the Balkans also deserves attention (see also the chapter on Religion).

Statistics say that the largest religious minority present in all Balkan countries is the Muslim one, with the exception of Turkey and Albania where they form the majority. That does not mean that other religious minorities face fewer challenges. One example is the Catholic minority in Greece, where the majority religion is Orthodox Christianity.



Lefteris, 22, Greece

My name is Lefteris, I am 22, a Greek citizen and belong to the Roman Catholic Church. My father is Catholic and my mother Orthodox. The Christian Orthodox Church is constitutionally recognised as the official religion of Greece. Therefore, almost 5% of the population who have a different faith (because of historical, political, personal or other reasons) are considered a religious minority. In their daily lives, they have to live under strongly imposed conditions as if they were completely normal.

My first experience of these conditions was as a child in primary school, during the Religious Education class. This subject is part of the Greek education system in the first and second grade. The aim of the course is defined by state legislation as "...to develop religious consciousness in students...". Therefore, the subject's objective is to provide students with information and knowledge about religions in general. In reality, this course (starting from the books used and the teachers' attitude) becomes a catechism class in the Christian Orthodox faith. It is important to mention that students belonging to other denominations or religions have the right not to attend the class, if they desire.

My choice was to follow these courses throughout my schooling. What I faced was different in the three levels of primary and secondary school. In primary school, I can still remember the feeling of rage I felt during the class when listening to the teacher, who was following the book to the letter, and was comparing the "true" and "correct" Orthodox faith and the "heretic", "misled", "papal" Catholic one. How should a child of 10 feel when attacked personally, in front of his friends, about his faith?

Fortunately, in the years that followed, in high school, the professors' attitude was very different. Though the books were still a Christian Orthodox catechesis (with one exception one year when the book developed religious consciousness in accordance with the law), the teaching methods were less aggressive and preaching.

The landmark of this period was when in the 2nd class in high school, at the age of 16 more or less, I was asked to decide whether or not I should accept my duty as a student to say the morning prayer in front of the whole school. I should explain that prayer in schools before students go to class is standard procedure in Greece. The theologist told me that I was not obliged to do it, but I found no reason not to do so. So, one morning, like all the others, I stood up in front of the microphone and said morning prayer like the normal Christian I was.

I still can't say how everybody felt at that time. Not all the students knew, of course, that I was a Christian Catholic and I don't even know if they noticed anything different in this prayer. My classmates and some of the professors who knew my religious identity or had noticed the slight change of hand while forming the sign of the Cross, found a chance afterwards to congratulate me. Suddenly, I felt that my past experience in primary school was an unhappy parenthesis and that from that very moment, I could be, for my friends and schoolmates, a source of true information about the Christian Catholic faith.

What this experience taught me, looking back after almost 6 years, is the great role that education has to play in order to fight ignorance, prejudice and stereotypes. Unfortunately, the Greek education system does not work like that with regard to the religious education of its students.



Unfortunately, around April/May 2001, when the Pope was about to visit Greece, this role of religious training was taken on by the media, which in their usual provocative and aggressive way, with their policy of mis-information, managed to create a very tense atmosphere, speaking out against the Pope's arrival and finally misleading public opinion. Fortunately, the outcome of the Pope's visit was positive for the whole of the Greek population, since everybody saw that there was nothing menacing in the visit of John Paul II. The media changed their stance and opened up dialogue under more favorable conditions for the representatives of the Catholic Church of the country, who provided correct information about what the Catholic faith is, what unites and separates us from our Orthodox brothers, and why we can all gain a lot from this co-existence.

The fact is that the content of Islam as a religion is still not widely known among non-Muslims in the Balkans. This raises a number of fears and concerns among these populations. These feelings and attitudes have been fuelled by the recent terrorist attacks in USA and Russia. Additionally the fact that the Ottoman Empire dominated the Balkans for centuries is still not forgotten. Many people in the Balkans still relate Islam and Muslims to the Ottoman Empire.

Nikolai, 26, Bulgarian

I was about 14 years of age when two Gypsies stole my favourite port key. My dad had given it to me as a present, it was bought abroad. Soon after that, two other Gypsy guys attacked me and stole my watch.

My mother is a person who wants all minorities to be far away from her. She is racist in a way. She cannot stand Turks. When I was about to leave for Turkey to work there for the summer, she said: "My son is going to serve those who once enslaved us".



Do you know any Bulgarian Turks in person?

The first ones I met were journalists at National Television (I was working at Bulgarian National Television at the time when news in the Turkish language went on air). I liked them a lot, we were friends. But I still cannot change my opinion of Turks in general.

How are we learning and interacting with others in the Balkans?

Is there any specificity? How do we get our stereotypes and prejudices about others? What are the roles of family, education, friends and real life experiences?

What is the involvement of the different actors who can promote change? What can youth NGOs or youth work in general do to change these situations?

Do we consider change possible? Will it happen immediately or do generations have to pass before mentalities can change? When will we understand that we have to accept the past as it was?

When will we laugh about the prejudices and stereotypes, which more or less all of us have about the others, instead of feeling anger and hate? When all this happens, we will really be able to value the precious things we have in the Balkans, which represent our cultures and are symbols of the Balkans themselves.

Until then, passionate and proud as we are, in love with our “Balkan” way of life and at the same time somehow blind because we see in our neighbours the attitudes that we don’t want to have, we are still letting “instincts” lead us instead of being rational. We should recognise and accept that actually we don’t want to be anything other than Balkan.

Finally, we also consider that the Balkans are a unique territory, where a variety of cultures have co-existed for centuries. Various political and economic systems exist across borders, Orthodox and Catholics live together with Muslims, Protestants and Jews. Different languages and alphabets can be heard and seen in the same cities as well as different religions, traditions...

Without the diversity of identities, our everyday life would be strange and monotonous, uninteresting and static, uniform and alienated. This is why the recognition and preservation of diversity should be an objective in our societies, even though this diversity is presently exposed to so many challenges.



Gender

by Vesna Kajis, Gordana Pehar and Karolina Vrethem

What is gender?

The concept of gender has not been well defined, is not well understood in Southeastern Europe and the definition of gender has even been the subject of many debates. Gender is often confused with the sex of a human being, however, sex refers to biology and anatomy. By contrast, gender refers to a set of qualities and behaviours expected from a female or male by society.

Gender roles are learned and can be affected by factors such as education or economics. They vary widely and among cultures. While an individual's sex does not change, gender roles are socially determined and can evolve over time. Gender roles and expectations are often identified as factors hindering the equal rights and status of woman with adverse consequences that affect life, family, socio-economic status and health.

The Council of Europe explains it the following way “Gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, not of gender difference” (www.coe.int).

Gender in Southeastern Europe

In Southeast European countries, gender is recognized in every day life as an issue although it is not always or even often discussed or talked about as a concept. It manifests itself more in the traditional division of gender roles which is the most common form of family/society composition. Most males feel pressure from the society in a way that they feel responsibility to provide a secure place for their families without consulting with female members of the family. They have been doing that for ages and now in let's say “the modern world” it is hard for them to accept the fact that females are also capable of doing the same work as they do or that they are able to take a part of the burden and share it with them. That feeling of responsibility is so great that it is hard to influence them to think differently.

The pressure of responsibility is not the only one, they are also pressured by the Defence Department. In some countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, they are not aware that they do not need to do military service, they don't know that they have the option of doing social work. That law exists but the government for some reason doesn't allow or doesn't want to give that option to young people.



The situation is not much different for the female population in Southeastern Europe. They too have a large feeling of responsibility, which is the result of feeling responsible for bringing up the family.

Women were taught to take care of their husbands and children and to do the housework. This custom is passed on to their daughters and now it is very hard to change those feelings of responsibility.

In many cases, women from Southeast European countries feel pressured by their own families, for example so many women when they reach the age of 25 feel pressure from their family to get married. If she is not married she is considered “old”. Some people believe that “old girls”, ie over 25 and who are not married, are not worth much and that is the reason nobody wants them. This also shows that it is the man who chooses and the woman who is chosen and denies the fact that women, and men, might choose not to get married or choose to wait.

These are small examples of the gender picture in Southeast European countries. It is not like this in all parts of these countries but we need to be aware of these problems so we can try to improve the gender situation and so teach the younger generations not to repeat our mistakes or the mistakes of our grandparents.

“The greatest problem for gender equality in Turkey is the internalisation of the division of tasks between the sexes. Even among the well-educated, urban population there is a silent contract that builds on traditional gender roles. This is a general pattern in the whole society and also has an effect on choices made outside the family sphere, such as education. Most women’s movements are small and marginalized and there is no initiative in the society to change things. The men have an advantage with the status quo and women in general are also not eager to change. But this means no gender equality. The women’s movements need to be more widespread among the grassroots, that would lead to change. And although there are not many initiatives from political bodies and no laws to protect minimum participation of each gender group, things are changing with Turkey adapting to EU requirements”.

(Man, 30, Turkey)

“I have never thought about gender issues in my country. The only thing I can think about is that my work place is mainly dominated by women and I would like it to be more balanced. The women I work with are not focused on their work and I don’t think women have the same driving force as men to prove themselves in this kind of job. It seems women are more interested in civil society jobs, men in Romania think jobs in public administration are women’s jobs. In Romania age is more an issue than gender”.

(Man, 28, Romania)

-----> **Changes in the gender scene**

But, at the same time, things are starting to change with the help of different NGOs working on gender issues in spite of these feelings of responsibility. They organise gender seminars and workshops with young women and men to teach/train/explore with them how to share different responsibilities and how to respect each other.



Deep in the past, in the countries of Southeastern Europe, the situation was very different. Men and women were totally separated both at work and all other social responsibilities. Women were not supposed to be educated so men had priority in the educational system. Now things are different but not completely because we can still find these problems in rural areas.

Picture this example: a small rural setting, family with a daughter and a son. Both children want to go to university but they have financial problems so the family needs to decide. The daughter has a strong wish to study and the son just wants to go to the city, if he finishes his studies that is fine, but for him the thing that counts is to go to the city. So, the mother tries to convince the father that it would be better to send the daughter because she is more serious about studying. Who do you think goes to university? The son, because the father still believes that men should come first.

“If you are a young woman from a minority you face multiple discrimination. You are discriminated against because of your ethnicity, sex, age and religion for example. Women in minorities are not able or supposed by the general opinion to take up positions. Minority communities are often very patriarchal with strong traditional roles. Family values are strong, women are there to look after the family and men the financial aspects. To a certain extent, this is probably true for all minorities, they have a stronger tradition to protect themselves. But you cannot generalise, there is no such thing as one minority woman. In Roma communities, girls are expected to be a virgin when they marry which means they marry at an early age. Now life styles are changing but it's difficult to incorporate new values. It is difficult to be a young single woman when you are older than 20. Both men and women perceive traditional life styles as normal and you need a lot of awareness, back-up and resources to make a change”.

(Woman, 29, Bulgaria)

Gender and feminism

When we talk about gender most people, in their minds, equate gender issues with feminists. Automatically people have a negative image and they are no longer interested in the conversation. People often avoid exploring the content of feminism and instead hide behind jokes about feminists and gender issues. It's a very common thing in the countries of Southeastern Europe to use jokes as a defence mechanism and people do this because they are afraid to admit that they may be wrong.

In general, it is difficult to call yourself a feminist in Southeastern Europe whether you are a woman or a man. A woman is very soon questioned and seen as aggressive or negative towards men, and a man who calls himself a feminist is perceived by most as if he is joking.

The role of women in the democratisation of Southeastern Europe/political representation

Women are in general not very visible in public life in Southeastern Europe, nor do they hold positions of power in public administrations or governmental institutions. But there are very few public debates about the lack of gender equality or measures to improve the balance. The promotion of gender equality is mostly

left to the civil society sector and taken up mainly, but not only, by women's groups. This is unfortunate since it leaves the impression that gender equality is an issue only for women, only to be addressed by women, not an issue for the development of society as a whole.

The struggle for greater gender equality goes hand in hand with the process of building democracy for two reasons: firstly, women's rights are human rights; secondly, in democracy, good governance depends on the participation of the people. Participation means sharing power to make decisions in politics, in economic life, in the media and in the home. At present, women are denied a chance to participate fully in most of these spheres.

The challenge now is to ensure that principles like legalisation, case law, police action, public authorities at all levels, employers are taken seriously. In the countries that have already applied for EU membership, including Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia, laws on human and social rights, including gender equality, must be passed and implemented in society. The EU encourages the process of strengthening institutions, to ensure they are capable of enforcing equal opportunities' legalisation.

In all Southeast European countries except Croatia, the proportion of woman in national parliaments is below 20%. No central government has more than 20% woman. Although in many countries all parties should have a minimum of 30% of each sex on their lists of candidates.

Equal opportunities in employment are important for reasons of basic social justice and economic efficiency.

It is not important just to have women in decision-making bodies, their voice needs to be heard. And not just on traditional "woman's issues" like family policies, but they should have an input into all policies, from taxes to foreign policy. They should influence every aspect of the society. In some countries, government or people think that if a woman has a right to vote, that country is democratic and respects human rights. For example, women got the right to vote in 1934 in Turkey, in 1945 in Slovenia, in 1948 in Belgium, and in 1949 in Bosnia and



Herzegovina, but that doesn't mean that the country has resolved all gender problems. Southeastern Europe still has a long way to go to become equal and democratic. Some countries have specific institutions on gender equality, for example Slovenia has a special governmental office for gender equality. Most countries have laws on gender equality or laws waiting to be passed. However in the post-conflict countries in particular, other issues are seen as more important than gender equality. In 2002, all governments with the exception of Kosovo included female ministers, although in very small numbers (2-5).

“There is so much hypocrisy in society. People say that we are all equal because we are equal in law but the reality is different. For example if you are away on maternity leave, it is often considered a problem. Some women are asked to sign agreements to be away only for a month after they have given birth if they want to keep their job. It is illegal but few women would dare to report it. Also in Slovenia many women feel pushed into politics to prove that the parties are gender-sensitive, not invited or encouraged for their own sake or for the sake of equality. To be a young woman in politics is still a disadvantage, you need to fight much more than others to be taken seriously. Many women need to develop a tougher approach than they would like in order to be taken seriously. Women are also afraid of taking initiatives. Men can fail without being called a ‘weak man’ but women who fail are ‘weak’. Also some powerful women are called ‘non-female’ if they are outspoken and have strong opinions. Parties often look for the stereotypical nice, smiling female. Nobody asks why so few women want to participate more in public life or looks at the underlying factors.”

(Woman, 28, Slovenia)

Gender equality in society

In the Council of Europe official homepage one can read:

“Over the last thirty years, the legal status of women in Europe has undoubtedly improved, but effective equality is far from being a reality. Women are still marginalized in political and public life, paid less for work of equal value, find themselves victims of poverty and unemployment more often than men, and are more frequently subjected to violence.”

This is true for the whole of Europe and not least for the Southeastern part.

Most of the countries in Southeastern Europe have gone through a transitional phase and according to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), this transition has frequently had a negative impact on women. Participation of women in government and politics has declined in many countries, while social and economic pressures are considered by many NGOs to have brought increased domestic violence. The post Communist era has seen sexual violence directed at women during conflicts and the emergence of trafficking. Economic transition has often brought discrimination and sexual harassment into the workplace.

Many people, women and men, in Southeast Europe are still unaware of internationally accepted principles of women's rights. They are often unfamiliar with the areas covered by international conventions and treaties as well as recent developments concerning national legislation on gender equality. As a result, many women do not claim their rights, including in the private sphere. At the same time,

law enforcement bodies such as the police or the judicial system also need to build an understanding of contemporary human rights concepts and their implications into their work. Reports from Croatia testify that even though the police has the lawful right to intervene in domestic violence, this is seldom done and that protection and respect for the family overrides protection and respect for the individual. Women's advocacy groups also complain that the courts don't give enough attention and gravity to violence committed against women and a lot of women risk being 'harassed' all over again by the courts (see Budi aktivna, Budi emancipirana annual report 2001).

A report on gender equality in BiH illustrates a situation common to most countries in the Region: "As a consequence of the household and mother stereotype in BiH, women were among the first to lose their jobs (as a result of a new labour market due to transition – and the war). This contributed to their increased poverty and dependence. The most common obstacles facing women are: lack of experience; lack of professional skills in the employment field; inadequate education and training; lack of access to resources; socio-cultural and traditionalist opinions which view women through an unskilled objective.

During the privatisation period in Eastern Europe, studies established that women are routinely marginalized outside training sessions in priority fields, as they were in the central planning system. Women were shut into economic fields that solely targeted women. Most training programmes offered to women were for office related computer skills, although there was less need for this than in the socialist system." (Young liberals in BiH report on gender equality 2001).

"Everyone talks about gender equality and women's rights in the media, especially about the abuse or lack of rights. But I don't share their opinion. Many women in Croatia are in important positions. Sometimes I see girls jumping on each ad in the paper and saying it is sexist. I don't think the ads are sexist, I think they are stupid. I don't see any disadvantage to being a woman in my everyday life. I think basically that we have equal opportunities in our society but I live in the capital and of course it can be different in different parts of the country. The new government that took over after the Tadjman era has included more women in the government, probably because it would make them more popular. But I believe that the women chosen are as skilled as the men".

(Woman, 29, Croatia)

-----> Gender-based violence during armed conflicts

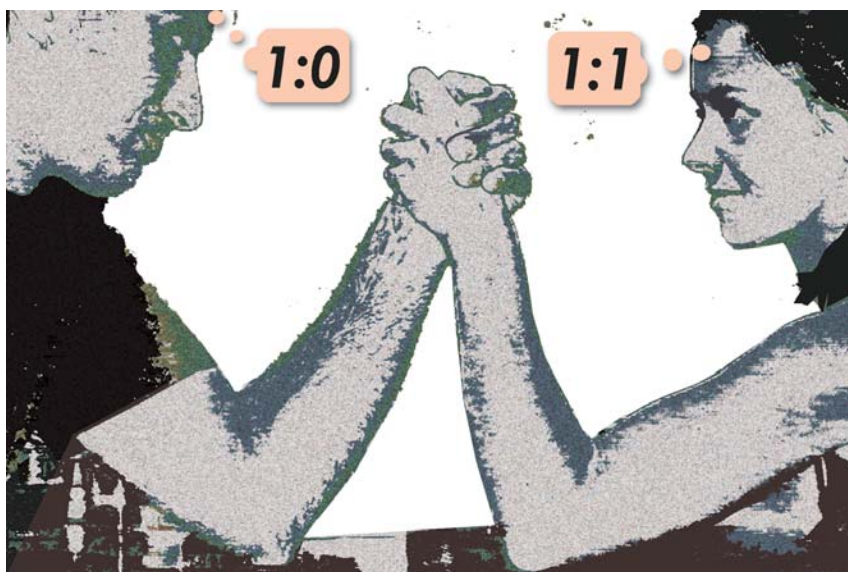
The systematic occurrence of rape during the wars in former Yugoslavia, although this is not a new form of crime tactics during war, made the international community react and adopt laws recognising rape as a crime against humanity.

Annette Lyth, a human rights lawyer and legal adviser at the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe writes the following: "There are many reasons why gender-based violence against women in wartime is widely spread and it can take many forms. Rape can be used in order to terrorise the civilian population and to induce civilians to flee their homes and villages. It can be a means to humiliate the rival army by showing control over "their" women. It can be used as a "perk" for soldiers and as an inducement to courage on the battlefield. Almost half of the persons indicted by the Tribunal (ICTY – International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) are accused of sexual assault or rape as either perpetrators or superiors. The Statute creating ICTY names rape as a crime against



humanity. Rape is, however, not explicitly named in the article on grave breaches of humanitarian law, which is based on the Geneva Conventions. Neither is it named as a violation of the customs and laws of war or as genocide”².

In connection with armed conflicts, rape and sexual abuse has also proven to be a very effective propaganda tool, which can further stigmatise the abused women. In the propaganda, women are portrayed as victims and the abuse is blamed on the enemy and used to instil anger and hate. The Zagreb-based Centre for Women War Victims has expressed its fears as follows: “... we fear that the process of helping raped women is taking a strange direction, being taken over by governmental institutions... and male gynaecologists in particular. We fear that raped women could be used in political propaganda with the aim of spreading hatred and revenge, thus leading to further violence against women and to further victimisation of survivors”.



Annette Lyth who has studied the treatment abused women have received in for example Kosovo, also asks whether developments in international law have been to the advantage of the survivors of these crimes or if they are just re-victimised by journalists who are looking for a story, researchers who are looking for projects or even by women activist’s who can build a career on this issue. There has been very little provision of professional support for women who were abused during conflict.

Domestic violence

Awareness of domestic violence is rising and organisations advertise emergency numbers and shelters in public media. But there is a long way to go. Some people say they hear women being beaten at home regularly in their neighbourhood.

Looking at Croatia as an example, the Croatian Constitution, in articles regulating personal and political freedoms and rights, defines that “No person is to be sub

2. Annette Lyth: The development of legal protection against sexual violence in armed conflicts – advantages and disadvantages. 2001.

jected to any type of abuse...” (Article 23). This constitutional right to life without violence has been included in a number of laws. Violence can be expressed in a number of ways, such as physical, sexual, verbal and emotional. All these types of violence are sanctioned by the Criminal Code, which does not recognise and does not provide for any gender specific violence, although women are more often victims of it than men.

Official government statistics about violence against women do not exist, but nevertheless, police reports and the experience of women’s groups that help female victims of violence, indicate a constant increase of violence. Domestic violence has been gradually recognised as a public and not a private issue. The State is taking on more responsibility to protect victims of domestic violence (see Budi aktivna, Budi emancipirana annual report 2001).

It is impossible to establish the exact number of women exposed to any type of domestic violence, firstly because most women do not report such violence, and secondly because no research is conducted and no data is collected on this matter. Although the experience of women’s support groups or centres in Croatia is that violence against women has increased. The increasing violence against women is thought to have resulted from the militarisation of society due to the war. In many cases during the post-war period, the causes of increasing violence were to be found in psychological traumas of men who fought in the war, and were having difficulties facing unemployment, a decreased standard of living and hard times in general. Such circumstances contributed to frustrations which expressed themselves in verbal and physical abuse of family members, mostly wives and children. The post-war period is also characterised by an increased number of people who have unregistered weapons, which also has an effect on the type of violence exerted (Budi aktivna, Budi emancipirana annual report 2001).

-----> **Trafficking of women**

A huge problem and issue of concern relating to gender in the Balkans is the trafficking of women. Trafficking means that human beings are being sold as commodities/slaves by criminal gangs for the use of the “owner”. Their papers and ID-cards are taken away from them. By beatings and threats they are deterred from running away, in any case, without papers or money it is difficult to go far. Even though different initiatives have been taken by local and international institutions, these only reach a fraction of the women involved. Often the police can’t do much, women, under threat, deny they have been bought, and insist they work in a bar as entertainers. Research conducted on behalf of the EU Balkan Stability Pact in 2002 concluded that trafficking in women is the single largest criminal business in the Balkans in terms of cash turnover, exceeding even heroin trafficking. Each year approximately 200,000 women pass through the Balkan region.

The Balkan traffic in women involves recruitment of women from the more impoverished and chaotic countries of Eastern Europe, trafficking through central Europe, to hub points in the Balkans. From these hub points women either find themselves forced to work as prostitutes in the Balkans, or are trafficked onward to Western Europe or the Middle East, and in some cases Asia and North America³.

An IOM report from 2000 states the ages of the women range from 16 to 33 with an average age of 23. They are often lured into prostitution by an advertisement for bar or dancing jobs in Western Europe. On the route to or through the Balkans the women are often sold many times over from one “bar owner” to another (IOM Bulletin #22, 2000).

3. Jane’s Intelligence Review Nov 2002.



Religion

by Sreten Koceski, Maria Koutatzi and Tarik Potogija

Introduction

Dear reader

This chapter will guide you through the topic of religion and different related issues. While this topic is extremely sensitive, the author will try to remain independent and will give specific points on each of the religions represented in Southeastern Europe. Most of the text is based on either the author's opinion or on relevant information from different sources.

The main aim of this chapter is to provide you with basic knowledge on the different religions represented in Southeastern Europe, their influence, work and statements.

Basic knowledge on different religions

a. Christianity (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism)

Belief in Jesus' resurrection from the dead became the focus of Christianity, the religion that developed around his teachings. Jesus Christ has been the accepted incarnation of God to followers of the Christian faith for nearly 20 centuries. The spirit of Christianity is based on The Ten Commandments (EXODUS 20).

God spoke and these were his words "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery".

- "You shall have no other gods before me."
- "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments."
- "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."
- "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates."



For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

- “Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”
- “You shall not murder.”
- “You shall not commit adultery.”
- “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.”
- “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”

Christian Orthodox holidays in Bulgaria

Easter and Christmas. Easter was celebrated during the Communist times so this is a longer tradition. Christmas has become popular since the changes.

For Easter, we dye eggs and eat them in the morning, and we eat special sweet bread called kozunak. This custom was practiced during Communist times, it was considered a custom for health, not particularly related to Jesus’ resurrection. The new thing since 1989 is that we have started to go to church at midnight the night before Easter. The priest says a prayer at midnight and says “Jesus has resurrected” and the people answer: “He has really resurrected” (people congratulate each other with these words during the days after Easter). Then the priest takes the sacred flame from the church and people light their candles from one another (so that everyone lights up her/his candle with the sacred flame). After that, the people go around the church three times.

On Easter Day, we eat eggs, eat lamb and drink red wine. This is the end of the 40 day Great Fast.

On Christmas Eve we get together with the family and eat special dishes made without animal products. We must have an odd number of dishes on the table – 7, 9 or 11 (these are sacred numbers). This is the last night of the Christmas fast, which usually lasts around 40 days, and you are not allowed to eat meat, eggs, cheese or milk. On Christmas Day, we eat meat, usually pork. We also have Christmas trees like the Catholic tradition, although we used to have them for New Year under Communism so it is not a new practise.

b. Islam

Islam is very similar to Judaism. Both are Semitic religions and share the common ancestry of Abraham. The main points of Islam are included in the following five pillars:

The Five Pillars of Islam:

- First is the confession of faith known as the Shahadah. “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet.” The affirmation of a monotheistic belief and the faith in the authenticity of the Koran that Muhammad transmitted from God.
- The second pillar is the canonical prayer. Muslims must stay constant in prayer and keep their lives in perspective. Submitting one’s will to God as it’s rightful

sovereign. Prayer must be done five times a day (unless there is a reasonable explanation not to), in the morning when you first wake up, when the sun reaches its zenith, when the sun reaches its mid decline, sunset, and before retiring for the evening. The standard prayer consists of praise and gratitude to God, and supplication.

- Charity is the third pillar of Islam. Islam understands that not everyone is financially equal and the Koran states that 2,5% or an annual one-fortieth of middle and upper class income and holdings should be given to the poor.
- The fourth pillar of Islam is the observance of Ramadan, the month on the Islamic calendar that corresponds to Muhammad's initial revelation and his Hijrah from Mecca to Medina ten years later. It is a time for fasting during daylight hours. During evening hours, food may be taken in moderation. The point behind fasting is to make you think, to teach self discipline, it underscores your dependence on God, a reminder of human frailty and dependence and incites compassion by allowing one to share the feeling of hunger.
- The fifth pillar is pilgrimage. Once during her or his lifetime, if financially able, women and men should make the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca where God's revelation was first revealed. The purpose is to heighten one's devotion to God. It is also a reminder of human equality for all pilgrims must dress in a sheet-like garment that does not show rank or social status and allows people from all over the world to worship God without social restrictions.

The two biggest holidays in ISLAM are called eids (Bajram)

The first eid is celebrated at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, it marks the end of the month of fasting, therefore this is Ramadan eid, a holiday that lasts for three days and starts with morning prayer.

The second eid is celebrated two months and ten days after the end of the fifth pillar of Islam, ie the pilgrimage, therefore this is the Kurban bajram. The main characteristic of Kurban Bajram is that every financially stable family has an obligation to sacrifice a ram, and to distribute the meat to their neighbours, friends, family and poor people. They are allowed to keep one fifth of the meat for themselves. Kurban Bajram lasts for four days.

-----> **New religions – new religious groups**

Over the last few centuries, new religious groups have been set up in two different ways, firstly stemming from already existing religions, formed by what we could call dissidents from the official religions, and secondly through the expansion of culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s which has combined different religions (Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and others).

In this booklet, we will mention some of these which have had an impact on Southeastern Europe.

The *Jehovah's Witnesses* were founded by the American Charles Taze Russell at the end of the 19th century. Based on the idea that totalitarian truth is nurtured by a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, the world is in the hands of Satan



and its destruction is nigh, only those who surrender themselves to the Lord Jehovah will be saved.

The *Baha'i Faith* religion was founded at the end of the 19th century. It is based on the idea that "The earth is one country and all humans are its citizens". All religions come from the same divine source. They aim to deepen direct contact between God and one's personal conscience.

The *Devotees of Krishna* (International Association for Conscience of Krishna) was founded in the USA in 1966. It believes that the spiritual road for personal improvement is found thanks to the knowledge and love of Lord Krishna. This can be achieved through asceticism, yoga, devoutness, dancing and community living, which all demand cutting ties with the outside world.

-----> Religions and fanaticism

In the world today, there is a new trend of fanaticism, different religious groups of Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Jews are becoming fanatical with the main characteristics of their beliefs being:

- they take the word of God literally;
- they are strict in their moral codes which leads them to live in closed communities in most cases;
- they use their religions to justify their actions, most of the time these actions are violent and intolerant towards other religious groups.

It is clear that no single religious community has succeeded in defending itself against this phenomenon and this fact is supported by the increased influence of the media in every day life and the increase in religious intolerance that is used by fanatics to recruit ever more members and followers, especially amongst young people all over the region.



-----> Religion and manipulation

Different religions have been created to reflect the society's need to articulate different interests. In many cases, these religions have been misused for different kinds of political interests, coloured by private or state interests in issues.

The use of religion for manipulative purposes was much easier in the past because the majority of the general population was illiterate and received little education. In this kind of environment, it was quite easy to manipulate citizens who trusted representatives of different religions. This trust was reinforced by the fear of a "higher force", of the future, and other aspects which had no logical explanation at that time.

Psychology had explained the nature of humans both as individuals and as people living in society. In one of these theories, the issue of the psychology of the masses was described, which states that people who join different groups connected with certain beliefs, interests or spiritual ideologies will follow the leaders even if this is destructive for them.

This kind of environment, where the philosophy of the masses is implemented by well educated people, can be seen in all societies of the past. Today, the use of religion as a manipulative tool is rare but still exists and extends to societies in development, although this kind of action is also used in well-developed, democratic and tolerant societies.

However, we are witnessing the global political situation of today where, through religion, pressure is made on the general public. Small, radical groups of extremists use religion as justification for their actions.

To conclude, contemporary society has to reject all attempts at manipulation through religion or we will live in dread of religious conflicts and intolerance of others on the basis of their religious beliefs.

-----> Influence of religion on politics

As already mentioned, the influence of religion on politics is present and a reality and it is closely connected to the use of religion for the manipulation of broad masses of people.

Many politicians today are aware of the fact that religious organisations have extremely well organised networks, which reach the majority of the population in one political arena. If these networks, which are extremely efficient, are used for political causes, this will necessarily lead to political success.

A simplification of this theory is when various religious clerks who, with their different motives, misuse their position as shepherd of people's souls and bring politics into their daily work, meaning that they can directly favour certain political groups.

Most of these cases concern groups of people who seek votes in rural areas, inhabited by a population connected mainly to agriculture and farming (population with a low level of education).

The use of religion for political causes in Southeastern Europe reached a high point in the early 1990s with the fall of Communism in the region. Through the experiences of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, we can conclude that religious organisations from these countries put themselves and their work in the service of daily politics.



The Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the Islamic Community have made significant contributions to the success of nationalistic parties, which has led to the strengthening of extremist groups in these parties which advocate religious intolerance and the superiority of one religion.

This is just one of the examples of how religions can effect politics and vice versa, but there are many cases where religious organisations play a significant role in everyday life in some states, and these cases are not only in countries in development but also in countries with developed democracies.



-----> Religion in relation to nationalities

If we use Talkot Parnas' definition of the nation: one nation consists of groups of people who share the same language, history, and roots.

It is difficult to define where religion starts and where nationality begins in Southeastern Europe. We can have different criteria for solving this enigma (religious concept, state concept, family concept, language concept and many others).

In Southeastern Europe, nationality is, in most cases, determined by the religion to which one belongs, eg all Serbs are Orthodox, all Croats are Catholics, all Bosniaks are Muslims, all Greek are Orthodox. In Albania or Turkey, however, it is national identity and language determine the nationality.

However, the question is: should national identification be right if an individual believes in self-determination?

-----> Religion as an individual right

Human rights have an individual character, all human rights are basic preconditions for the development of modern society, in most cases, the extent of development of democracy in a country is measured by the respect of human rights. One of the most important individual rights guaranteed by most modern constitu-



tions is the right to free choice of religious belief. However, there are some examples of developed states where religion plays an extremely important role in society.

But what are the limits of this right? This question is asked many times. According to liberal principles, all rights are limited with regard to the freedom of others, that is to say, our rights should not harm or have negative effects on other human beings living around us. This is the limit of religion as a human right, therefore religion should be part of an individual's place in society, it should be determined by each individual's free will to practice or not any kind of religion.

This raises another question, is religion an individual or a group right?

My opinion strongly advocates for religion as a private (individual) right, this is a way of preventing the misuse of religion for political reasons, and of looking on the individual as a basis for society.

From what is written above, it is easy to conclude that religion should and must remain an individual right which allows any individual to take her/his own decisions with regard to her/his spiritual upgrade. No single individual should be forced to practice, believe or behave according to principles determined by any majority religious group in society.

-----> Religious education

Examples:

- Bulgaria: religious education has just recently been introduced and is not yet available in all schools. Classes only offer education in the country's official religion, ie Orthodox Christianity.
- Kosovo: there are no religious subjects in public schools, however there are some special religious schools set up by the clerics themselves.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: this education system offers religious education as a subject in secondary schools although it is not compulsory.
- Croatia: religious education is an optional subject and classes can be set up if there are more than seven pupils, religious education is offered in all religions.

Education is essential for the growth and welfare of human society and, as such, is the most important part of the life of every individual regardless of her/his origin. Therefore, religious education is an important part of this chapter and provides different perspectives on this issue.

However education can be divided into two parts:

Individual education on certain religions is one of the basic human rights, individuals should be able to learn and to practice whichever religion to which s/he belongs or identifies. This kind of education should be based on self-determination and should be carried out by religious institutions that are interested in this process.



Secondly, in multi-religious societies like Southeastern Europe, citizens' education on different religions is necessary and should be under the responsibility of local authorities. Providing basic knowledge to ordinary citizens in this way would lead to increased tolerance and a better mutual understanding between different communities.

Local authorities are the most important institutions in the protection of human rights and therefore should be involved in different projects that provide education.

Now the question to be raised is whether religious education should be a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools?

This is a very sensitive question to which there is a simple answer: religion should not be part of the official education system because we should always bear in mind the different religious minorities present in schools and their position. Any discrimination towards these children and any negative energy within the majority group must be avoided. This is the first step towards a tolerant society.

JOKE:

A man goes to Church and says a prayer "God, help me to win the lottery!"

God answers: "You have to buy a ticket first!"



Individual versus state

by Emil Kirjas and Anita Sulstarova

Introduction

The communitarian model has dominated in the Region throughout modern history. Whether at the time of the great empires, such as the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian ones, or the period before and after World War II, the citizens of the changing countries in Southeastern Europe have never been able to develop in a free and open society.

Those countries that were under Communist/Socialist systems have further suffered mentally due to the loss of individuality and were subject to constant state imposition of a collective mentality and collective ownership. The systems developed a culture where responsibility towards the society and publicly owned property was not a high moral standard, but was only part of potential financial or political sanctions. The citizens were taught that the state is all powerful and there to solve their problems, even to meet their essential needs.

After the collapse of the Communist/Socialist regimes in the majority of the Region's countries, and the democratisation of Greece and Turkey, the social and political environment started changing.

All the countries in the region of Southeastern Europe have felt the consequences of more than a decade of conflicts. They have been left economically devastated. General economic underdevelopment in the Region has resulted in a slow and faltering transition process. The infrastructure has been seriously damaged, some countries had to go through long and painful nation or state building processes, and many people became refugees or internally displaced.

The high rates of unemployment do not give many perspectives for people's lives and individuals seek a way to survive. Some of them are trying to build the civil society, as they believe it is vital for the development of the country, some of them go abroad to seek their fortune there, but many are just passive.

The peace seems to be fragile, crime rates high, corruption a daily reality, the absence of the rule of law and a lack of transparency very obvious. For the foreign community, this is not a favourable environment in which to invest, therefore the economy is not growing and the level of poverty is high.

Political institutions are insufficient and since the civil society is also weak, there is no critical mass of people to force the institutions to change.



-----> Reflection

The reality in Southeastern Europe of the last ten years is a testimony to economic, social, political and cultural transformation. Southeast European countries have the possibility not only to generate new options for the individual to develop, but also to charge everyone with more responsibilities.

Modern societies all over the Balkans, without exception, adopted new constitutions and are aiming to develop the principles of liberal democracy, a concept radically different from the previous one. But is that really happening in reality? Even if not, it can still serve as a solid foundation for their future prospects for stabilisation and development.

The new democracies are also undergoing reforms in a national/ethnic sense and roles of different cells in the society are being re-defined.

-----> Identity

It is necessary to renew our units of measurement even when it comes to pluralism and the assimilation of newcomers and new settlers. Democracy can be defined as an entity of small and diverse communities (Dewey 1916, Rawls 1971), the unrest in people seeking to bear common values and cultures, but an expression using the old measuring stick. Both extreme pluralism and extreme assimilative practices are dangerous for democratic development. The slogans “Back to identity”, “We want our own countries back” are as dangerous as “Get the foreigners out”! Pluralism is a new value considered so far only from the political optic. In fact, pluralism comes out of the diversity of human nature. It cannot exist in politics alone without having a foundation in the culture of the individual too. Individuals in the Region are the result of an education system of endless propaganda, ideologically permeated school curricula, crash courses on “correct” attitudes, etc. School education grew in a culture of taboos, social shame and exclusion.

Even today the people are in constant search for their identity. There are different layers to this identity and people are very sensitive to the many identities they have. Also they are confused about the rationale of having different identities. Declining state power brought competition for limited state resources. In order to have a better life and in an attempt to achieve control over state resources or other advantages the state service can offer, people are highlighting parts of their identity as superior over others and as proof of their higher value. In that fierce competition, the lack of understanding for others is creating conflicts and misunderstandings, which when translated at a certain level of identity, can be a cause of open, even violent confrontation. Unfortunately, the populist political elites are excellent in manipulating citizens’ feelings of belonging to certain identities, promising them a better life on the basis of the expression of their identity’s “advantages” over others.

Most of the negative prejudices are not based on the person’s individual capacity, but on the collective (ethnic/national/regional) characteristics that have been attributed to them.

-----> Government

People dislike government and the power of authorities. But at the same time they adore being part of it. If one can generalise, people glorify the state as a strong



system that should protect them, and at the same time suffer due to the lack of their states' capacities.

Yet, the weakening of the state, along with distrust for the government are cited by almost all survey reports to be the prevailing cause of the poor performance of Southeast Europeans as individuals. They still expect the state to take care of every aspect of their lives without considering the possible role of the private sector and initiative, of the non-governmental sector and communities.

The establishment of pluralist democracies in Southeast European countries provided opportunities for active participation in the creation of the political environment. The possibility to choose between more parties and other political initiatives offered a chance to influence. But instead of exercising this right, young people are increasingly disinterested in politics, a reflection of the mistrust in institutions and political authorities, and have moved from being those who bring about crucial changes in society to the passive average.

-----> Family

The family in the Southeast of Europe is the sacred cell of society. While the patriarchal mentality dominates in general terms (men are the head of families and the family's strongest part/defenders), the role of the mother in the process of family unity and family building is crucial. In the times of Communism and poverty, young people usually lived together with their parents. This was a natural continuation of the tradition where three or even more different generations lived under the same roof. Usually, the young family went to live in the husband's parents' house.

Today, the picture remains very similar, just the reality is new. Young people in Southeastern Europe live today with their parents because they have no other possibility. In the uncertain times of transition, jobs are not forever and stability cannot be taken for granted. The main problems are certainly unemployment, housing shortages, economic dependence and the extended educational period. This of course also pushes the age limit of marriage closer to 30.



The traditional culture is therefore influenced and bringing more challenges. The question of how to adapt to the new realities and keep traditions is hard to deal with. A wish to gain economic independence is leading to the separation of families and it is not so rare that young couples live apart from each other, each with their own parents.

-----> **Citizenship**

Southeastern Europe is a region of lost citizens – citizens lost in their identity, their attitude towards the community to which they belong. They are lost in society in general, not knowing how to get the most benefit from it, while contributing little, if at all, to its development and prosperity. Still, Southeastern Europe is a region of strong, self-sustainable people – people who are innovative and capable of facing the strongest challenges of life.

Citizenship is a contested term. It can be considered as a status in a political, legal and social community, a set of rights and responsibilities that states grant to individuals in a civic contract. It is a set of legal rules that defines membership of the political community. These rights include legal rights such as freedom of speech, thought, religious belief, the right to ownership of property etc; and political rights, the right to participate and to exercise power.⁴

Civil society's role is becoming increasingly important. More and more people are accepting the positive side of voluntary work and of active citizenship. Not that they are aware that through their activeness they are becoming active elements in society development, but as a method of survival and obtaining work. One can even see the development of “paid” civil society (foreign NGOs or foreign grants to NGOs) as a positive element towards the entire change of the mentality and the initial roots of what is to become, in the future, a society of dynamic and active citizens.

-----> **Society and social change**

Another reason for the tension in Southeastern Europe is the use of the old parameters of judgement. We must use new units of measurement to judge and evaluate. What is actually happening needs to be evaluated with tomorrow's units, not with yesterday's. But it seems that we cannot detach ourselves so easily from yesterday's measuring system. What is good, what is bad, what is necessary, what is superfluous – the old measurements are invalid for new changes.

But certainly people do not detach themselves so easily from yesterday's ways of thinking. We keep them dear in our personal closets. We do not do what the good housekeeper does: open the closet, bring the contents out to air and to get some sun. If we look closer at what is dearest in our closets, we find that the oldest thing is the one with which we measure freedom and rights, values and freedom of expression, freedom of choice and participation in community life. People should give themselves the chance to participate and involve themselves in the daily problems of the community in which they live.

People have another measuring system in their closets. It is the thing we use to measure democracy and democratic processes. Democracy rests with people. Some consider democracy as a result they expect to be given, some consider it

4. Biryca Cesar, Education for Democratic Citizenship: A Lifelong Learning Perspective.



as a process and find the community as the area where they can make democracy. Although there are lots of people who love to participate in processes, the community is not there to give them a chance. The worst side of it is the perception of participation in democratic processes as participation in violent demonstration, civil reactions, social unrest, etc.

→ Tips

When dealing with young people there are 2 or 3 methods that can be applied, one of them being an open discussion on what state and civil society mean to them.

When addressing people from the Region, never assume they have a certain identity or background. If you are not sure about the person's background and you consider it a relevant point to be well accepted, you can say, "I am sure that all people here are as nice as you. This is a very friendly place". People like to be flattered. Then ask nicely "what exactly is your background?".

When people complain about the country or ethnicity/community/nation to which they belong, you should try to avoid joining in the conversation – they do not expect your confirmation, negation or opinions, but are just fulfilling a need to express their feelings to someone. Even if they are extremely critical about their own community, they will find it hostile if you join in the criticism.

Never compare ethnicities. That can create a lot of problems, and people might take advantage of it – repeat your comments proudly in front of the alleged "opponent".

If you are from outside the Region, refrain from giving comments on how the things should be settled in the Region/country. That will hardly be welcomed. Rather explain how things function in your country and how hard that process was to implement even in your place of origin.



-----> Vocabulary used

The terms “nation”, “nationality”, “religion”, “community”, “state”, “identity”, “background”, “ethnicity”, “people” can have different meanings and people are very sensitive to the different approaches each of those terms may have.

-----> Jokes

There are numerous jokes that people tell about their own states, mentioning its weakness and lack of capacity to serve the ever-decreasing demands of the citizens. An example would be:



The presidents of the USA, Russia and XYZ (could be any Balkan state) meet together to solve a problem: to kill a mosquito that has been terrorising the people for a long time and has finally been locked in a dark room. The Presidents get the task to go inside the room with a rifle and to kill the mosquito with a single shot.



The US President proudly accepts the challenge, and goes in first. After a certain time, there is a shot and the US President comes out. Unfortunately, there was no result – the mosquito is still alive.



Then the Russian President decisively enters the room. Some time passes and a shot is heard. When the Russian President comes out, there is renewed disappointment – the mosquito has still not been killed.



Finally, the XYZ President takes the rifle and goes inside. After a few seconds, a shot is heard and the President immediately comes out holding the dead mosquito in his hand! Everyone is amazed and starts wondering about the outstanding achievement. The US and Russian Presidents, obviously sadly, admit defeat and ask the XYZ President how he managed with this paramount task. The XYZ President smiled and answered: Well, I got in the room and spoke loudly: “Hi my name is Aaaa Bbbbbb and I am President of XYZ!”, and the mosquito replied laughing “Where on earth is that and who cares that you are its President” so I shot him!



→ History and education: dealing with the past!

by Adriana Ciobaru, Bujana Hoti, Jean-Philippe Restoueix

→ Introduction

History – a boring subject that we encounter mostly in schools as lectures, and which, without realising it, we internalise as part of our group identity, our nation. History and the ways we deal with it, whether in school or in public spaces in general, has a lot to do with how we approach people and cultures of different origins and how we think differently. Have you ever wondered what is the purpose of learning history? Why it is taught in our schools, or why arguments based on the past and history are used in politics and media? Let's try using an analytical, alternative and critical approach in order to see the different intentions behind these.

→ History and education – Why?

There are roughly three reasons for dealing with and teaching history: 1) developing an historical conscience among citizens; 2) promoting a sense of belonging and identity; 3) capacity building that cannot be achieved by other means⁵.

- 1) **developing an historical conscience** can be explained as leading to a concept of continuity throughout time and space in one's understanding. According to this approach, history is a tool for the perception of the present and for a concept of the future. It may, thus, help to shame the attitudes of individuals towards a more "predictable" and "stable" manner, to provide a medium of "normalisation" and a peaceful society. This is not by itself a desired or undesired function of history, but it's closely related to "how this function is actually implemented". Four alternative approaches to an historical conscience can challenge each other⁶: a) as loyalty to traditional ways (where change is a threat to the pillars of society); b) emphasizing successes and failures in the past to determine prospects for the future (pre-modernist approach); c) dealing with the process of development in its integrity (modernist approach); d) critical approach to the consequences of past traditions to create a demand for change.
- 2) **promoting a sense of belonging and identity** linked to past, this has been the basis for a sense of national identity and national citizenship. In the beginning, this was a direct result of the enlightenment period (transfer of government from divine sources to people themselves) and of the industrial revolu

5. Yaratıcı ve Çağdaş Bir Tarih Eğitimi İçin (For a Creative and Contemporary History Education), Tekeli İlhan, Tarih Vakfı (History Foundation), İstanbul April 2002.

6. What were we looking for and what did we find?, Bodo von Borries, Joke van der Leeuw-Roord (ed.), The State of History Education in Europe, Koerber Stiftung, Hamburg, 1998, p. 19.



tion (requiring the transformation of the individual sense of belonging from smaller scales of space (village/town) and time (lifetime limited) to wider spaces (city and country) and more durable time scales (decades and centuries)). In this sense, history, equipped with the “Golden Ages of the Nation” and many myths differing from country to country, was used mainly as a tool to form this national identity where differences were emphasized as inherent features of peoples and as a basis of superiority over “the Other”. Driven mainly by this purpose, history was taught only as political history. An alternative approach for today’s needs is to deal with the concept of multiple/overlapping identities, involving not only political history, but a somewhat localised history related to the daily lives of people, far from superstitions and prejudices. This would form a direct sense of individual history linked to daily lives with a citizen and human rights perspective.

- 3) **capacity building of individuals** that cannot be provided by other disciplines. History learning in this sense leads to the improvement of the individual by: a) a concept of time and linking it with social change; b) improving the capacity to build “scenarios”; c) empathic understanding using the lives of people from the past; d) developing the capacity to research; e) use of concepts and language for writing.

-----> History and education in the Balkans

According to our experiences and studies of independent organisations, history and its teaching have been used mainly for the first and second purposes, rather than the last one. Still we can see some prospects for change as almost all countries are in a transitional period as far as history teaching is concerned, though



mainly its content not methodology.⁷ An “ethnocentric” approach still draws a picture of the neighbouring Balkan nations as “the Other”. Recent history is not included much in the curricula, and alternative approaches are not welcome, mostly due to potential public reaction. National history is not dealt with as part of the

7. Improvement of Balkan History Textbooks Project Reports, Tarih Vakfı (History Foundation), Istanbul October 2002.



bigger picture of world history, but separately. The history of and concepts about the Balkans are presented only from a self-centred perspective, riddled with prejudices about the other nations. Many reform efforts, eg of textbooks, have been limited to the removal of apparently prejudicial expressions, but the direct approach has remained. In the following sections of this chapter, you'll find more examples from textbooks, banknotes and names given to schools, streets and other public spaces.

Need for a new approach

New developments both in the Balkans, Europe and the world at large force a change in identities and therefore in the function of history education. In a Europe where people are expected to live in peace despite extensive diversity, hatred and its encouragement due to past events are neither useful nor desired for peaceful coexistence. European integration has led to change in this sense as well: Greece, the only member of the European Union in the Region, started its reform for a “humanistic” teaching of history quite early. Bulgaria and Romania's candidate status has also led to reforms in the contents of teaching, and recently, Turkey is preparing to include a course of “20th Century European History” in the curriculum, in addition to increasing individual efforts by Turkish teachers and teachers' unions to use creative learning methods. The European perspective and prospects brought about by globalisation for other Balkan countries are likely to have a similar effect. But what should this new approach towards history take into account?

The third purpose, that of capacity building of individuals through history, is likely to be to the fore. Through a learner centred approach, it brings a human dimension to history. Thus, any other reason for developing an historical conscience and forming a contemporary sense of belonging and identity will provide a more healthy basis for a peaceful society open to changes in the world. A contemporary approach should be able to deal with and even make use of overlapping/multiple identities and individual cases. In this new approach, a teacher's relationship with the student should be more that of guide, leading the student's efforts to an enriching experience.

This new approach has the promise of leading to a “smiling” and attractive, more importantly a “disarmed” concept of history rather than a boring and serious one.

Some activities on history teaching⁸

Since its foundation in 1949, history teaching and textbooks have always been on the Council of Europe's agenda. Recent work has stemmed from Committee of Ministers' Recommendation (2001)¹⁵ on History Teaching in 21st Century Europe, in which the aims of history teaching have been redefined and a European dimension has been proposed together with new methods and content. Departing from this recommendation, Council of Europe programmes focus on regional collaboration with a special emphasis on Southeastern Europe and the teaching of 20th Century European history.

Further information is available at: www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/History_Teaching/.

UNESCO, another post Second World War institution, has also organised many activities on the peaceful content of history teaching. One recent UNESCO conference on history education in Southeastern Europe was entitled “Disarming History: Combating Stereotypes and Prejudices in History Textbooks of

8. Internet Adreslerinde Avrupa' da Tarih Egitimi (History Education in Europe on Internet), Toplumsal Tarih, Tarih Vakfi (History Foundation), 100, April 2002, Istanbul.



Southeastern Europe”, the proceedings of which can be found on the website www.marbalticum.com/disarminghistory.

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UNESCO also supports networks and non-governmental work on this issue. A recent networking and collaboration activity concerning the history textbooks of Turkey, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia was held by the History Foundation of Turkey in co-operation with UNESCO, the Council of Europe, Heinrich Boell Foundation, EuroClio (European Network of History Teachers), Georg Eckert Institute, KulturKontakt Austria and the Dutch Foreign Ministry. The results of the project are published and available from www.historytextbook.org.

The biggest resource for educational co-operation in Southeastern Europe is www.see-educoop.net, set up by the University of Ljubljana and supported by KulturKontakt Austria within the framework of the Southeast European Stability Pact Youth and Education Working Group. The website includes a vast e-library and contains projects not only on history, but also on human rights and citizenship education.

Mechanisms involved in presenting events and different vectors for transmitting memories

The way we perceive our past significantly influences our perspective of our own and other nations. But how do we get this perception and how objective is it? An important role is played by the history education we get in school, but we are also influenced by family, church, the environment in which we live – the names of streets and squares, schools, institutions, faces on banknotes, even the names of drinks and food. Due to limited space, history textbooks cannot be exhaustive, they can offer just a selection of historical events, thus it is possible to manipulate history. Even when there is a free market system for writing and publishing school textbooks, the State can keep an important role for itself. There have been cases where manuals considered to be too radical haven't been authorised.

In writing history textbooks, a State can choose to present facts with maximum objectivity, but it can also use history to instil patriotism, leading even to nationalism. This is also reflected in different history books in the countries concerned. Many textbooks present the history of faraway countries without judgement, labels or classifications, while features such as courage, bravery, abnegation, intelligence, spirit of sacrifice appear in their own history. Many pages are given over to leaders showing these qualities, while whole centuries when this kind of hero didn't exist can be completely overlooked or skimmed over in a few short lines. National history sometimes promotes the “sacred” values represented by the national past. Glorifying some historical figures is sometimes done in parallel with creating a negative image of the “enemy”.

The same fact can be seen differently by two people: resistance to invaders is a heroic act for a people defending its national existence; from the opposite perspective, the attacker's expansion may be a subject of pride for the invading nation, legitimacy being provided by the desire to consolidate territory.



The same event may be presented differently in the same country under different governing systems. One system can over emphasise the aspects conferring legitimacy, while keeping silent about those that are not favourable, sometimes even going so far as to clearly changing the nature of historical facts. A telling example is that of the empowerment of Communists by themselves compared to a post-Communist textbook.

→ **End of World War II and Communist Empowerment (Romanian History textbook edited in the 1970s)**

The historical act accomplished on 23 August 1944 [when Romania broke the alliance with Germany and turned against it] – an expression of the whole people's will – was of ultimate importance to Romania's destiny, opening a new era in our nation's history. It marked the start of the revolution for social and national freedom against fascism and imperialism.

On the basis of the Platform-Programme issued by the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), the National Democratic Front (FND) was created, a political body representing a large coalition of forces, including proletarians, peasants, intellectuals, and the middle class from urban areas. The two bourgeois parties – the Peasants National Party and the National Liberal Party – refused to co-operate with the FND, which reflected their hostile position towards democratic transformations.

...

[after a large meeting] Faced with an impressive manifestation of the masses' will to change forces in favour of democracy, the king could no longer avoid the obvious solution and accepted the government proposed by the FND, led by prominent politician and fervent patriot, Dr Petru Groza. The news about the setting up of the first democratic-revolutionary government in Romanian history was met with great enthusiasm by the whole country. With a strong proletarian peasant character, the democratic-revolutionary government set up on 6 March 1945 was the expression of important co-operation between the forces involved in the deep transformations of our society's whole life.

...

In the elections held on 19 November 1946, the democratic forces won a decisive victory with 79.6% of the votes. The reactionary forces saw themselves isolated from the people and suffered an overwhelming defeat.

...

In these circumstances, the leaders of the bourgeois parties, mainly of the National Peasants Party, left political activity, and started initiating diversions and subversive activities.

...

As King Michael I became more and more isolated from the masses, and as the foreign help he had hoped for did not arrive, he had to accept the PCR's proposal to abdicate.

→ **History manual for the viiiith class (Humanitas Educational, Bucharest 2000)**

As the National Peasants Party (PNT), led by Iuliu Maniu, refused power after Antonescu had been removed, King Michael called upon governments, composed

of military men and technicians, and led in 1944 and 1945 by generals Constantin Sanatescu and Nicolae Radulescu, to prepare free elections. But Romania's return to democracy was halted on 6 March 1945 when Stalin's envoy, Andrei Vishinski, imposed Petru Groza from Moscow as prime minister. His government was dominated by Communists, although the Communist Party had less than 1000 members before 23 August 1944.

...

The first parliamentary elections after the war took place in November 1946. They were far from being free: PNL and PNT's campaign was systematically obstructed; the Soviet occupation army made its presence strongly felt; the forces of police and gendarmes, under the responsibility of the Communist Minister for Domestic Affairs, watched events without intervening. Finally, the results of the elections, which were largely in favour of the historical parties, were falsified in order that the Communist Party and its allies win victory.

The Communists then started to get rid of political enemies. After pretending that some PNT leaders had run away from Romania, PNT was forbidden. The liberals were also removed from the government and parliament, and the PCR – the Romanian Communist Party – remained the unique party. The last obstacle on the Communists' path to full power was the monarchy. On 30 December 1947, King Michael I was forced to abdicate and the Romanian People's Republic was proclaimed.

-----> **Trying to deal with the past**

Due to education systems, to the different vectors of building national identities, to the non-formal transmission of memories such as families, movies, literature, etc, everybody carries as part of her/himself, more or less consciously, the history of the country in which s/he was brought up. The historical narrations proposed by each state, involving great heroes from Skanderberg to King Lazarus, artists and writers from Preseren to Paisij, mythical events including the most symptomatic such as the Battle of Kosovo Poljë, are integrated by each citizen of each given country, assimilated and sometimes perceived as an integral part of her/his own personality, of her/his own memory. The Balkans are probably a meeting place, a crossroads of different narrations, sometimes antagonistic to each other. From the time of the different empires which occupied the region (Roman versus Byzantine, Ottoman versus other Christian kingdoms, Ottoman versus Austro-Hungarian, versus Russian), the histories and memories are antagonistic. The issue therefore is not so much to know whether we should talk of "the Fall of Constantinople" or of "the Great Conquest", but rather to accept that both refer to the same event and, paradoxically, both can be true. To accept the complexity of any historical fact is probably a good antidote to avoid any misuse of history to justify revenge, hate and fury.

"Human beings built history but they don't know what they built". This is particularly true when different people have the feeling they have lived good historical moments (the downfall of dictatorial Communist regimes) or bad (the wars which led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia). In this case, history is firstly memory, narrations from witnesses, the memories of the actors involved, narrations which are contradictory, controversial. It should be noted that some countries in the Region accept a moratorium on their history teaching to avoid having to deal with too recent a past. This situation can lead to the creation of specific commissions dealing with the past, such as the South African example of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission". It could be also a time for legal trials, with all the emotions raised by this approach (the feeling for certain actors that the trial is



not fair but just a sign of the will of the winners to punish the losers). Nevertheless, it should be underlined that crimes against humanity are not an issue of winning or losing but a question of humanity.

Without denying that victims exist, the fact that everybody would like to be recognised as a victim does not mean, cannot mean that nobody is guilty. Some people are and were guilty for what happened in the Balkans. They can be the same nationality as myself, from the same city, from the same neighbourhood, they could once have been my friend. Guilt and innocence do not lie in any nationality, if we really must find where they lie, it is probably in the misuse of history, in bloody nationalism based on the rejection of “the Other” rather than on a positive self image.

Dealing with the past in the Region is to first deal with a shared responsibility: responsibility in terms of Communist dictatorship (the Romanians were members of Securitate...), responsibility of the transition to a capitalist market and its social consequences, responsibility for the wars which occurred in the Region. Even if the international community played a role out of their own interest, the all too famous plot theory which circulates in the Region could also express the difficulty in dealing with this shared responsibility.

Dealing with the past is/can be a painful process. Nobody likes to remember their nightmares but refusing to express them has forced them to come back again and again. Keeping the pain inside, and for a lot of people of the Region the pain is enormous (broken families, houses destroyed, exile, etc) can only gnaw away from inside at the possibility to live as peacefully as possible with each other. Opening the pain box, as with Pandora’s Box, is a painful process but it is the only way to help this pain go away. So many young people in the Balkans have turned in on themselves, hanging on to their pain as if without it their life has no sense. It is only by accepting that “it was” (however enormous the pain may be) that “it will be” can be born.

In this framework, intercultural meetings in the Balkans, as in any other place, are supposed to accept that “the Other” will have another perception of what happened. This should be acknowledged, recognised... Here again, to deny this real-



ity can only bring bitterness, add hate to hate, even behind the politically correct smiles. Listening to what “the Other” has to say, recognising in her/his narration a part of one’s own story, could be the first step to building something together. “The face of the Other is the face of the Future” wrote E. Levinas, a French philosopher. Whatever our heritage is, the space of the meeting is the space for a common freedom which will bring all of the actors involved to a place which is new for all of them. The issue is not so much to “step into the other’s shoes” – as Lacan says: “If I take the place of the Other, where is the Other?” – but to accept to deal jointly with the Region’s history, with my own history, even if it is “full of sound and fury”; with the history of “the Other”, which is as legitimate as mine. This simple meeting is also part of the more general process of peace and reconciliation in the Region, which is not so much an issue of methods and training but much more a true and genuine will from those who want to build together their common future, to transmit a happy memory to new generations.

Some possible exercises:

A. The historical line:

The aim of the exercise is to make participants aware of the role that history plays, and can play in their lives, and that, from an intercultural perspective, they need to accept the complexity of dialogue between different histories and memories.

Each participant is asked to choose 2 or 3 dates which are important for her/himself and her/his own community. All of these dates are collected and put on one line. Each participant should then explain to what the date refers. The participants are then asked to react to this line:

- a. Do they know all of these dates?
- b. Are some of them controversial?
- c. What does it mean for the participants to deal with all of these memories?
- d. How can we collectively support this line? Do we recognise ourselves in it?

B. My city: on names of squares, streets in my city. Ask the participants to draw a map of the centre of the city where they live, to add the names of streets and squares, etc. Then, ask them to explain the meaning of these names (who are the people? To what event does the name refer?). The reflection time afterwards can stress that the mechanisms are the same, from country to country.

C. “Our land”: comparison of different historical atlases from different countries. Look at historical atlases from the participants’ countries and compare their visions of their history, of their countries in the past.



The Balkans & Europe

by Ali Alper Akyuz, Alexandra Raykova and Ilina Slavova

“A ghost hovers about the Western culture – the ghost of Balkanism” (Todorova, Maria, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, 1997). With these words begins one of the most detailed studies of the Balkans that has significantly influenced political thought over the past years. And these words reflect the West’s negative assumption of the Balkans, as well as all the mystery and unclarity associated with the name.

The Balkans, with its complicated history, with its unique mixture of nations, ethnicities and religions, with the hot spirit of its people continue to be one of the most controversial parts of the Old Continent. The Balkans continue to be that part of Europe which, it is often argued, is a crossroads between civilizations, between East and West, between rationality and spirituality. The Balkans are often referred to as a bridge between Western culture and the Orient.

Geographically, historically and culturally, the Balkans have always been part of Europe. In political terms, however, this belonging is still in the process of being proven. Two terms, which gained popularity in the past decade, have come into being to prove this uncertainty regarding the political belonging of the Balkans to Europe: “balkanisation” and “European integration”. The first, which appeared about the time of World War One and was re-introduced during the wars in ex-Yugoslavia in the 1990s, is used as a pejorative term for disintegration, for return to the tribal and the barbaric. The second is used as a synonym of unification, of overcoming the enmities of the past and usually applies to developments in the European Union. It needs to be stressed, however, that this distinction could be regarded as a product of the first post Cold War years, as in the years preceding the fall of the Communist regimes the “division line” passed between Eastern and Western Europe. Nowadays, with the institutions established in Western Europe opening up eastwards, the main political talk is about “re-unification of Europe”.

Some people in Southeastern Europe still say “I am going to Europe” when they head to a West European country. For many, Europe is an ideal, a synonym for order, progress and prosperity. These people however disregard the fact that Europe is something more than the common market, the EURO and a possible political entity in the foreseeable future. Europe is a whole and its beauty is in its diversity. And the Balkans are part of it. The Balkans have a very special place in Europe for in mythology the sacred bull brings Europe to the “Balkan island”. The history of Europe in terms of philosophy and virtues starts with Ancient Greece, with the democratic traditions of Athens. In other words, Europe starts from the Balkans and its history cannot be considered without the history of the Balkans.



Greek Antiquity, the Hellenic period, the Roman period, Byzantine literature and arts, the Ottoman period's culture are all part of Balkan and European heritage. The Balkans are also this tragic piece of European land where the lines dividing the continent have passed: first between empires, then between political blocks. These divisions however did not make less European the countries that were part of the Ottoman Empire or that were later left behind the Iron Curtain.

-----> Who are we?

In different parts of Europe, the 1990s again raised the eternal question: Who are we? In 1993, the Treaty of the European Union introduced a new kind of citizenship – citizen of the European Union. The citizens of the EU member countries became “European citizens” in addition to being citizens of their own countries. Ten years later, the main debate in the EU is tackling the question of whether there could be a European constitution, if there is no European people. This political debate is in fact a debate about identities – for the first time in history, some politicians are arguing that for the sake of a United Europe a new identity should be created⁹.

At the same time, in the Balkans, many people, especially the young, are experiencing an identity crisis. This is a result of the economic crisis, the thorough transition that the countries in the Region are undergoing, the lack of opportunities within the home country, the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the creation of new states. Therefore, the argument for joining the EU in Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania, all of them applicants for membership, was related to the need to reaffirm their status as modern European states. A possible broader European identity was seen by some people as an alternative to nationalism, which had already strongly contributed to the negative image of the Region. After the rejection of all socialist ideals and visions for a “bright future”, a United Europe was considered the “only alternative”.

Leila, 22

I was born in Yugoslavia, now the city where I lived is in Republika Srpska, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For eight years now I have lived in Germany. I have a German passport, and, yes, I am a citizen of the EU. I don't know what I am. I am not really German. I can't say I am European either. I am from Bosnia and Herzegovina but my father is Serb, my mother is Muslim. At home we speak the ex-Yugoslavian language...

When I came to Germany I was given a passport but at first it was only for one year. They kind of told me “You can be German for a year”. Then I had to go back home and there I was told “You have to choose now – do you want to be Serb or Muslim”. So, now I really cannot say whether I am Serb, Bosniak, Bosnian or German, or European... I am a citizen of Germany and that is it. It doesn't really matter to me.

Nothing can be said about a Balkan identity mainly due to the clearly negative connotation attached to the Region. During the Cold War, Yugoslavia denied it belonged to the Balkans, while today the name is associated with the dark side

9. (See Central and East European Views on EU Enlargement in Back to Europe – Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union, UCL Press, 1999.)



of the ex-Yugoslavs. Romania and Turkey traditionally deny they are part of the Balkans, although in Turkey the Balkans do not have a negative meaning. Bulgaria, Albania and Greece do not perceive the name negatively. Greece has established an Institute for Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki and feels responsible for stability in the Region. In Bulgaria, many businesses, including the national career, have “Balkan” in their name. (For details on countries’ attitudes to the name “Balkans” see *Imagining the Balkans*, Todorova, Maria, Oxford University Press, 1997).

Although the countries in the Region have lots in common, especially in terms of shared history, similar customs and traditions, etc, the prospects for developing a Balkan identity are not very bright. Little is done in the sphere of intercultural learning and many people have very limited knowledge about their neighbours. Politically, the states are oriented towards the European institutions rather than towards each other. Both the Council of Europe and the EU however underline the importance of regional co-operation and urge the Balkan countries to establish good economic, political and cultural ties.

-----> **The Balkans and the European idea**

The concept of Europe is based on common values and principles rooted in the ideas of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Yet in 1923, the founder of the Pan-European Union (1922), Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, called for the creation of a United States of Europe. His idea developed in the period between the two World Wars and further after the end of WW2, and it finally led to the creation of the Council of Europe in 1949. Winston Churchill’s Zurich speech in 1946 with the famous call for the creation of “a kind of United States of Europe” is cited as one of the key steps towards peaceful unification of the continent. In 1946, however, the Old Continent was already divided into two conflicting blocks and clearly the Soviet Union and its satellites could not be envisaged as states in an eventual European federation.

Europeanism acknowledges its ancient origins in the empires of Rome, Charles the Great and Napoleon, which left their mark in common elements of law, language, architecture and Christianity. But this self-image ignores the fact that the Roman Empire was both more southern and more eastern than Europe’s present centre of gravity and in its later years took Constantinople as its capital¹⁰. This self image ignores the heritage of the Ottoman Empire that ruled over the eastern part of the continent for centuries. Last but not least, it ignores the fact that Christendom was not especially European and was as often a source of schism as of unity.

To conclude, the European idea was not very clear as it failed to define what Europe was. Nevertheless, it gave a start to a process of integration that still continues today. It provoked a process of unification but left unresolved the question of the borders of Europe for the next five decades.

-----> **The Balkans and the borders of Europe**

In 1989, forty years after its creation, the Council of Europe was given the chance to become Europe’s only pan-European body. With its 46 member states, it covers a geographical area stretching from the Atlantic to beyond the Urals. Apart from the Balkan countries, Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic republics, which are situated within the generally accepted geographical limits of Europe, the Council has

10. A Concise Encyclopedia of the European Union.



accepted Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – countries not considered “European” by the European Union.

Integration of the Region into the EU is the only scenario that offers stability and prosperity, argues the report “Human Security in Southeast Europe”, commissioned by UNDP. EU membership is seen as “an important demonstration of post-Communist societies’ emergence as sovereign states in the international arena, both to the world and to their own populations”.¹¹

The Balkans are a unique geographical area, an in-depth look at which gives a thorough perspective of all levels of relations with the EU. Among the Balkan countries we can distinguish:

- An EU member country (Greece, Slovenia);
- Countries in negotiation (Bulgaria and Romania);
- A country ready to start negotiations (Turkey);
- Countries with Stabilisation and Association Agreements (Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”);
- Countries in Stabilisation and Association process preceding the signature of an Agreement (Albania)¹²;
- Kosovo – a UN protectorate with an unclear future where the EU plays a prominent role in its reconstruction.

All this shows that relations between the Balkan countries and the EU are completely different, but still there is something that all of them share – the desire to become part of a United Europe and to demonstrate their belonging to the European tradition.

For the EU, the process of enlargement is a challenge, which the Union faced when the countries emerging from the post-Soviet era knocked on Brussels’ door. With the Copenhagen membership criteria, a framework defining a United Europe had been created. The candidate countries were given a set of requirements the fulfilment of which could allow them to call themselves “European”. Because to be “European” is not gained by birth, it is acquired; it is something which evolves and is constantly being redefined; and Europe itself develops by accepting and adopting elements from the outside, from non-Europe (Brague, Remi, Europe – Road to Europe). Thus, the enlargement of the EU in the long run will not only unify the continent economically and politically, but, on the way, will redefine the political meaning of “Europe” – a meaning, which for so many years has been limited to the western part of the continent. In this sense, it is not only the Balkan countries which need to change, to develop so as to become fully “European”, the so-called United Europe also needs to undergo some changes if it wants to truly unify the continent.

-----> A roadmap to Europe

As some people from the Balkans continue to perceive the European Union as something distant, there is a clear need to map the “road to Europe”. The roadmap can be for individual use and in this case it is rather simple: it shows

11. Grabbe, Heather and Hughes, Kristy, Central and East European Views on EU Enlargement: political debates and public opinion, in Henderson, Karen, “ Back to Europe”, UCL Press, 1999, pp.185 .

12. The Göteborg European Council, June 2001, invited the Commission to present draft negotiating directives for the negotiation of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro



the emigration way. The second type of roadmap is quite complicated because it needs to show the way not for a person but for a state trying to become “European”.

- **The search for individual welfare – emigration**

Millions have already made it to Europe their own way. Many young people were too pessimistic to hope they would still be young when and if they become “citizens of Europe”. Millions escaped to the prosperity of the West and turned their backs on the Balkan troubles. Those from the war areas in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo made it as refugees who never came back. Those from the other countries chose either education in European universities or well paid jobs in all possible fields. The last 12 years have borne witness to the greatest brain drain from the Balkans ever.

52% of young Bulgarians for example have considered or will consider the possibility of emigration (National Human Development Report, 1999). The number in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which suffered a long war, is even higher – 62% (UNDP). In “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, the number of young people who have left the country in the past ten years is about 100,000 – that is 5% of the whole population. About one third of the Albanians in Albania and one quarter of the Albanians in Kosovo have also left their countries in the past 12 years. Scary as these numbers are, they show the actual crisis in the Balkans. The reasons for the high rates of emigration are both political (in the conflict areas) and economic. It should be mentioned, however, that with the ongoing reform in the education system, a large number of universities in the Region lost credibility, which made the flood to West European universities even bigger. According to some estimations, most people from the Balkans go to Germany and France for their studies and well-paid jobs, as well as to the USA and Canada.

Little is being done to stop the brain drain. In Bulgaria a president’s initiative was developed for three consecutive years aiming to bring young Bulgarian professionals back home from abroad. In “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, some intergovernmental organisations and in Kosovo some NGOs took the initiative to promote the idea of return/staying and to stimulate young people to contribute to the future of their countries. In BiH young people who have graduated abroad are invited for internships in their home country.



• The search for the welfare of the state – reform and integration

While hundreds of thousands of young people go west, the governments keep trying to get their countries “back to Europe”. Accession to the Council of Europe was seen as a big success in all the Balkan states, and Slovenia celebrated the first invitation given to a country from the Region to join the EU. Many people, however, still overestimate the meaning of membership of a European institution. Many people still do not realise that the institutions cannot make the countries prosperous – it is the countries that have to make the transition and learn how to be democratic and politically mature. Moreover, many people forget that the institutions are sometimes incapable even of protecting peace and stability, let alone of guaranteeing welfare.

It is not membership of an institution that will make the Balkan countries “European”. It is the road to it. Both the Council of Europe and the European Union have set criteria for membership. Both of them require democracy, the protection of human rights and the rule of law. And maybe implementation of these three could make a country “European” more than any membership in any organisation.

It is reform that will make the Balkans truly European, it is the establishment of a strong civil society, the protection of and respect for all minorities, the fruitful fight against crime and corruption, the bringing up of tolerant and open-minded young people...

As it was said above, to be European is something which evolves and is constantly being redefined.

-----> **Tips**

If you want to feel more “European”, you may:

- Travel with EUROTicket. It is valid for one month and covers different zones according to the geographic proximity. You will save money and you may meet some really cool people on the way. Ask your travel agency for details.
- Become ERASMUS/SOCRATES students and go for a semester in another university. Experience education abroad: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html.
- Become a member of a European youth organisation. Work for your community and learn from the experience of partner organisations in other countries. www.youthforum.org.
- Just be cool! 😊





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This publication is first and foremost for all of those people who live and work in the Region, and who are interested in the Balkans, whether they be youth leaders, or representatives of public authorities or institutions. It is for those people who are interested in hearing and listening to the voice of young people from the Region. As such, this booklet is not an educational manual, it will not provide answers to the challenges it presents. It does not represent any institutions' official stance, nor that of the Council of Europe. It will not offer any conclusions other than those the reader draws for her/himself. If the reader wants to share these conclusions with the authors of this booklet, we should be most grateful! This booklet aims to be a tool to contribute to a better understanding within the Region, of the Region, for all youth leaders, youth workers who would like to further develop activities in the Balkans. It is one tool among many for all those people who think of the Balkans as "a Region they love", a sentiment shared by all of the authors, and, we hope, by all who read it.