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#### WRITE US

Did our newsletter make you think? Or do you have a different opinion regarding some of the topics? We would be delighted to hear from you and would like to invite you to send us your comments, opinions and questions. We will publish a selection of the entries in the next issues.

Write us at [fokus.westbalkan@forumzfd.de](mailto:fokus.westbalkan@forumzfd.de)

## FOKUS

### Interview: “Stop applying conflicts from the past to visions for the future”

The conflict over Kosovo is time and again nourished by a complicated interaction of political and economic interests of actors from both sides. These opposing interests are often further substantiated by historical arguments intended to politically and historically legitimize one's own standpoint, and to ensure public support. This is achieved by making selective use of the region's history and by adapting the political context of certain historical events so that they serve one's own purpose. Such an exploitation of history, however, is only possible when a public discourse on the past that meets both trans-

parent and scientific standards is not taking place. Through its work, *forumZFD* intends to promote a pragmatic dealing with the past and thereby contribute to sustainably and peacefully overcoming the conflicts of the present.

In this interview, *Arbër Salihu*, historian und curriculum developer at the Education Ministry in Pristina, and *Nikola Samardžić*, professor of history at Belgrade University, describe the diverging perception and interpretation of Kosovo's history, the role of violence – and what is needed to ensure a peaceful future of Kosovo.

*Different understandings of history are considered one source of the conflict in Kosovo. Which historical event, in your opinion, is of most relevance to the present? And why?*

**Salihu:** It is not the different understanding but rather the manipulation of history by politicians that has been one of the main sources of the conflict in Kosovo. By interpreting history, the aim of warmongering politicians was to legitimize their own projects and hegemonic actions as valid, just and 'historically correct'. In doing so, they (the politicians) were calling for 'historic rights' of their own nation and then took on the role of the guardians who will make sure to 'fulfil' the historic right 'denied' to their nation.

Personally, I believe there are four very important historic moments to be explored, talked over and discussed amongst Kosovo-Albanian and Serbian historians. This primarily needs to be done for the sake of the truth as well as the future. A friendly relationship can only be built based on the truth.

Firstly, the Kosovo Battle (1389) needs to be explored in its whole complexity. This needs to take into account the context of the time when it happened as well as the realistic effects it had on the Serbian people and all other peoples in the Balkans that took part in the battle. This overly discussed event has been turned into a myth and finally used as the basis for a warmongering ideol-

ogy. It is the genesis of the abuse of history for political aims as regards Kosovo.

The second moment is the start of the First Balkan War in 1912. This event has been interpreted from two diametrically opposing viewpoints: Kosovo-Albanians judge it as an occupation by Serbia (following the one by the Ottoman Empire), while Serbs see it as the liberation of the land from the Ottomans.

The third important historical event is the end of the Second World War. During the Bujan Conference (1943-44), Kosovo expressed its free will to join Albania by calling on the declarations of the Communist partisans that "after the war, the right of each nation for self-determination will be respected". However, the Yugoslav state, in which Serbia had the biggest influence, denied this option.

And the fourth historic moment is the Kosovo conflict of the 1990s culminating in 1998-1999 in an open war and an intervention by the international community. This event is very important for the two nations, concerning both the relationship between them, which then reached the lowest point possible, and their relationship with international community, which needed to intervene in order to find a solution.

**Samardžić:** The current Kosovo crisis is the latest stage of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. It was initiated in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century, both by the Albanian Nationalistic movement which expressed dissatisfaction regarding Kosovo's status within the Yugoslav federation, and by the violent and brutal response of Serbian Communist Nationalists.

These are people who at that time understood neither the fall of the Berlin Wall nor the European Unification, but afterwards would not dare to admit it to themselves. Nowadays, these people cannot, whichever side they might be on, argue convincingly about events from the recent past.

Furthermore, after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, borders started to be perceived as war prey and not as a temporary framework to be gradually rendered obsolete. The exclusive understanding of statehood is the truly essential source of the conflict between Belgrade and Pristina. All other phenomena, including historical experiences, are secondary.

***In view of the ongoing conflict regarding the independence of Kosovo: How does the Kosovo-Albanian/Serbian side legitimise its claim to Kosovo historically?***

**Salihu:** The Kosovo-Albanian side has legitimized its claim to Kosovo as an indigenous population and successor of ancient Illyrians. Historically, Albanians have been the majority population in these territories, and gradually won their rights, legitimized by the Yugoslav constitution of 1974 which recognized Kosovo as a constitutional unit within the Yugoslav Federation. The denial and violent abolition of the constitution and Kosovo's autonomy by Serbia, in 1989, was seen as a juridical and human injustice. Another historical argument that the Kosovo-Albanian side has used to legitimize its claims to Kosovo is the people's right for self-determination. This right, according to the Kosovo-Albanian side, became more legitimate after the breakdown of ex-Yugoslavia and the attempted ethnic cleansing by the Milošević regime which reached the levels of genocide.

The Serbian side is calling on the historic right that Kosovo is the core of the Serbian state, referring to medieval times when Kosovo's territory was part of Tsar Dušan's country. They have also justified their claims with the fact that this is where the residency of the Serb



„For Serbia both fatal and heroic“: This monument reminds of the Kosovo Battle in 1389.

Orthodox Church was, as well as the place where Serbs fought Ottoman Turks, protecting Christianity; the place where the Kosovo Battle of 1389 took place, which for Serbs has been both fatal and heroic. Another reasoning used by Serbian side is that, with the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974, Serbia had lost its unity, and that the abolition of this constitution in 1989 meant correcting a historical mistake done to Serbia. Its actions of ethnic cleansing in 1999 were then justified with the right to protect its sovereignty from 'irre-dentist, separatist and terrorist' groups which 'break the peace and order'.

**Samardžić:** There is no such a thing as a historical legitimization. Belgrade is not able to exercise its

power in Kosovo. This, however, is wanted neither by Serbs nor by Albanians, as can be seen from their unreadiness to share joint governmental institutions.

We live in a time when the rule of law, individualism and economic liberalization are prioritized. We should stop applying conflicts from the past to visions of the future.

***For a few months now, violence has escalated again in Kosovo. This time it was sparked by a conflict over border posts. What role does violence play in shaping the social and political situation in Kosovo from a historical perspective until today?***

**Samardžić:** This is one of the crucial questions. From its first founding (1918) to its first disintegration (1941), and especially continuing from its second unification till its second disintegration (1945-1991), Yugoslavia as a state had been at the same time a product of political violence and a fulfilment of noble ideals of supranational unity.

Political and economic violence was interwoven into the anti-democratic and anti-market Constitution of 1974. In Kosovo, ethnic relations were disturbed by a type of endemic, neighbouring

violence. This violence was applied after the communist Milošević government came into power. Through the technology of its rule and its instruments, namely the federal army and the Serbian police, Milošević exploited renewed dissatisfaction in Kosovo (in 1989) so as to postpone the fall of communism by means of violently disintegrating Yugoslavia.

**Salihu:** The current violence originates completely from daily politics, and not from historic reminiscences. History has once again been used as a trump to camouflage and justify political actions.

In 1980, when Yugoslav leader Tito died, developments took a new course. In fact, the national problems started

already earlier but had been counter-vailed by the balancing leader. Between 1981 and 1999, the socio-political situation in Kosovo was characterized by objections, tensions and disagreements, which escalated in violence and abuse by the Yugoslav and Serbian regime. This has left its mark on the social and political formation of the Kosovar society. It can be reflected in different ways, sometimes with irrational behaviour toward Serbs, especially after 1999, when the Serbian regime left Kosovo. However, one can imagine the effects on a society, whose right of employment, education and medical care had been denied for over a decade, followed by various physical and psychological abuses, including the killing of family members.

On the other hand, Kosovo Serbs also found themselves in a difficult situation after 1999. The rapid transformation from power-holders to a national minority (albeit treated as equal before the law) has been traumatic for them. They found themselves between their recent past, when they were misused by Milošević's regime towards their Albanian neighbours, and the dilemmas of accepting the new reality, while being urged by Belgrade not to do so. This has made the socio-political climate in Kosovo even more difficult. It is understandable that their perception of their 'historic right' over Kosovo, which has been taught by the Ser-

bian side, cannot easily be broken by the Albanian 'out-laws'. Specific cases of violence by Albanians toward Serbs have also influenced the inter-ethnic relations, as well as a general climate of mistrust.

### ***What is necessary for ensuring a peaceful future for Kosovo?***

**Samardžić:** This is a long-term democratic process demanding time, prudent behaviour and, above all, patience. The European Union is the only actor capable of resolving the Kosovo crisis, namely by promoting negotiations on economic liberalization, deregulation, as well as the realization of rule of law and human equality. Berlin and Brussels should sanction those political and

institutional factors on both sides that are driven by corruption and by monopolistic as well as racist incentives. They are obstructing any peaceful solution to the Kosovo crisis. And they are responsible for promoting renewed ethnic violence and international isolation.

Belgrade claims it cannot control the Serbian gangs in Northern Kosovo. This

newest 'Kosovo myth' needs to be dispelled. However, the recognition of Kosovo's independence by Belgrade right now would not solve the crisis either. It is rather necessary to improve social relations between Serbia and Kosovo. A very important first step would be to open Serbian institutions to Kosovo Albanians: allowing them to be medically treated, educated and to start businesses in Serbia. At the same time, Serbian companies should be allowed to invest more in Kosovo. Thus, cultural and artistic heritage in Kosovo could provide a mutual opportunity for improving tourism, education and the free exchange of people, ideas and capital.

Especially in view of the current European crisis, I have never believed more in the power of open economy and free markets. When economists fail, when there is no political vision, and when history offers no answers, it would be best to relax all regulations, to dismantle the borders, to abolish existing customs and to decrease taxes.



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*Europeanization as a chance – The way to a peaceful future will require prudent behaviour. The EU can play a helpful role.*

**Salihu:** I think that history and historians can significantly contribute to a peaceful future for Kosovo. Primarily, the role of the historians is to avoid their own manipulation by politics. Their task is to present the

truth in an impartial and argued manner. Understanding and mutual trust are crucial for a peaceful future for Kosovo, but they can only be established

based on the truth and respect for the other.

In today's world, inter-dependence, respect and tolerance towards cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, have become a necessity. Therefore the subject of history can and should, play an important role. Conveying not only knowledge, but also skills, behaviours, atti-

tudes and values, needs to be the main aim of teaching history. Skills to live together with others, to judge and take decisions on various issues critically and independently, are necessary for youths regardless of their ethnic, religious or racial belonging. Understanding history as an opportunity to learn from mistakes and not repeat them is probably the best way of approaching history.

Europeanization, meaning the prevalence of genuine European values throughout the Western Balkans, including Kosovo, is a decisive chance to ensure a peaceful future. The historic load, which Winston Churchill explained very well by saying "the Balkans produces more history than it is capable of consuming", has been an overload. The peoples in the Western Balkans have been carrying the consequences of this overload ever since – and they need to discard them wisely.

*We'd like to thank Mr. Salihu and Mr. Samardžić for this interview.*

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Visiting the Others – Youths explore Places of Worship in Derventa and Doboj

**Visit to a church, mosque and synagogue:** In cooperation with the Regional Peace Initiative ReMI, pax christi and forumZFD invited a group of students from Derventa's secondary schools to an open day at several places of worship on October 18, 2011. This gave many of the participating students and teachers for the very first time the opportunity to learn about the religions they were unfamiliar with, their histories and customs. During controversial conversations, the differences and similarities between the different faiths were discussed with religious representatives.

Accompanied by four teachers, sixty young people of different religions from the two secondary schools in Derventa visited the Bet Shalom synagogue in Doboj and the Orthodox and Catholic churches as well as the mosque in Derventa. They followed the tours led by representatives from the four religious communities with great interest. What is now the third visit to places of worship in Derventa and Doboj within the scope of the interfaith dialogue was organised with the support of the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale



*The youths were particularly interested in visiting the synagogue in Doboj (picture) and the mosque in Derventa.*

Zusammenarbeit | German Agency for International Cooperation).

For many of the young participants, this was the first opportunity to learn more about the history, particularities and traditions of the other religions. The visits allowed them to discern and compare the differences and similarities between the

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

**Christian Pfeifer**

Regional Manager Western Balkans

forumZFD

[pfeifer@forumzfd.de](mailto:pfeifer@forumzfd.de)

**Links**

[forumZFD in Kosovo](#)

monotheistic religions. Above all, they were able to learn of the potential for peace and reconciliation that each religion harbours. The barrage of questions in the mosque and synagogue were a clear indication that the young people were most curious about Islam and Judaism.

During the visits, the young visitors also learned that the path to interfaith dialogue is by no means always an easy one. During the visit to the Catholic Church in Derventa, the local priest spoke of the controversial beatified Croatian cardinal, Aloysius Stepinac, whose relics are housed in the altar there. An interesting discussion ensued during which various opinions were voiced. Unfortunately this also ultimately led several students and teachers, who were unhappy with the priest's responses, to

leave the church. A teacher subsequently asked the priest: "Do you think that the fact that relics from Aloysius Stepinac are housed here in Derventa has contributed to constructive interfaith dialogue?" The priest's stiff response: "I do not believe those who are bothered by this to be true believers."

At the same time, this unfortunate difference of opinions allowed for reflection on stumbling blocks that must still be overcome on the path to mutual respect, tolerance and willingness for dialogue. It made clear to all participants just how necessary cooperation on all levels is for interfaith dialogue to be a success in the region and to thus promote a peaceful coexistence.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

**Michele Parente**

*pax christi Derventa*

([pc.derventa@teol.net](mailto:pc.derventa@teol.net))

**Links**

[forumZFD | pax christi Aachen - Bosnia-Herzegovina](#)



## Kosovo

### Thinker's Forum: Social Wounds from War and Violence

**War and violence have left their mark on Kosovo – on an individual level but also on a broader societal level. These social consequences of the conflict are publicly less visible or acknowledged, yet they shape attitude and behaviour of people. In the Thinker's Forum, forumZFD brings together professionals from various social fields to promote discussions on these 'social wounds'. How can they be recognized? Who should deal with them? What is the purpose? A newly published book now sheds light on this neglected topic.**

The main field of work of *forumZFD* in Kosovo is Dealing with the Past (DwP). We focus on linking, promoting and initiating local DwP processes in Kosovo. The Thinkers' Forum is a component of the DwP processes.

In Kosovo, existing DwP initiatives largely focus on the human and economic consequences of violent conflict. However, only few initiatives look at society in its entirety as a victim of Kosovo's violent and complicated past. In view of this, *forumZFD* began in May 2009 to bring together a multidisciplinary group of Kosovars including historians, journalists, artists, psychologists,



*Together members of the Thinker's Forum assess the 'social wounds' of war and violence in Kosovo.*

and architects who, from their specific fields of interest, were tackling these social wounds in innovative ways. This led to the creation of the 'Thinker's Forum' which has met regularly over the course of the past two years. The Thinkers' Forum intends to reflect on the past while not necessarily answering to, or for, the past. It aims to identify and discuss the social wounds of violent conflict as well as ways in which they might be explored.

As a result of the meetings, several members of the Thinkers' Forum have now written articles about dealing with these social wounds from their respective fields. These have now been published in the book *Considering the Future: Perspectives on Dealing with the Past in Kosovo*. It includes an article by Ferid Agani, a psychiatrist, about the psychosocial effects of Kosovo's recent violent past on

today's society, focusing on family structure and youth. As an architect, Valon Gërmizaj examines the role of monuments and

memorials, their intent and messages in contemporary Kosovo society. The dynamic changes taking place in theatre in Kosovo today provide ample material for Jeton Neziraj, playwright and director. Globalisation and

popular culture share common denominators in a reflective piece by musician Petrit Çarkaxhiu. As an historian, Arber Salihu raises important questions about teaching of history and its goals, as well as the values and challenges inherent in the methodology and philosophy of multi-perspective historical narration. Sali Shoshi looks at cultural heritage and appeals to us to heed the state of cultural preservation in Kosovo today, and challenges us to reflect on 'past' in the face of globalisation.

The book will also be used by *forumZFD* to further initiate constructive and critical discussions on the past in Kosovo within a wide group of people, especially those whose voices are less heard.

*The book is available in Albanian, Serbian and English. For ordering a print version, please contact Abdullah Ferizi ([ferizi@forumzfd.de](mailto:ferizi@forumzfd.de)). The book is also available to download from [www.dwp-kosovo.info](http://www.dwp-kosovo.info).*

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

**Abdullah Ferizi**

*forumZFD Kosovo*

([ferizi@forumzfd.de](mailto:ferizi@forumzfd.de))

**Links**

[forumZFD - Kosovo](http://forumZFD-Kosovo)

## Macedonia

### Way into a Common Future: Interethnic Understanding at Schools

**"The concepts of mediation, and particularly of empathy and non-violent communication have changed me personally," says Vasil Maksimoski, Director of the Niko Nestor secondary school in Struga. Inspired by a *forumZFD* training seminar, the Macedonian Maksimoski and his Albanian fellow directors, Urim Kreka and Agni Nexhepi, have joined forces to form 'Multikultura Struga'. Together they wish to encourage school projects that cross ethnic boundaries and to actively promote inter-ethnic co-operation.**

Such an initiative would have been unthinkable in Struga as little as two years ago when the situation between Macedonian and Albanian students escalated. Disputes and fights broke out between Macedonians and Albanians during the 2008 local elections. There also were clashes in Kičevo, *forumZFD*'s second project centre in the Southwest of Macedonia besides Struga, when the local secondary school appointed an Albanian as director in 2010. The Macedonian-dominated local government refused to accept the director, which led to ethnic segregation at the school. This shows just how much of an influence politics have on the schools. Above all, though, it provides an indication of how im-



*Building up contacts, promoting peace: Albanian and Macedonian children participate together in workshops.*

portant the step of the school directors is towards inter-ethnic, and at the same time impartial, cooperation.

In cooperation with UNICEF, *forumZFD* has been campaigning since 2010 for inter-ethnic communication between students in an education system in which buildings are shared yet ethnically-segregated lessons take place and therefore offer Albanian and Macedonian students few opportunities for contact. The local *forumZFD* employees help students in the reinforcement of a democratic culture and

development of their conflict resolution skills. Therefore multicultural workshops allowing students to learn about the other culture are organised. Moreover, teachers and students are advised on the development of democratically-elected student councils and offered training in mediation and non-violent communication. Through its work, *forumZFD* promotes a 'culture of peace' and thus also supports the local peace and reconciliation process.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

##### Kirsten Schönefeld

Project Director | *forumZFD* Struga  
([schoenefeld@forumzfd.de](mailto:schoenefeld@forumzfd.de))

##### Links

[forumZFD - Macedonia](#)

In November and December 2011, the schools in Struga and Kičevo presented their multicultural activities to the general public, actively promoting

cross-ethnic cooperation. Teachers from both of the communities to participate in *forumZFD*'s training sessions are currently developing project activities on the subject of mediation via which they wish to impart their

knowledge to the students. *forumZFD* is supporting the schools in this, and specifically in the exchange with schools in Skopje that have already successfully integrated mediation into their school programme.

Structural changes to the school system enabling joint lessons for Albanians and Macedonians are also urgently required. This calls for commitment and a political willingness to negotiate on the government level – and that even more so in light of the recent riots. In mid-November 2011, a dispute in Struga over seats in a school bus led to a fight (this time between Macedonian and Turkish youths), which resulted in serious injuries. Multikultura Struga's directors reacted promptly: they publicly announced that they would work together to clarify the incident to prevent a renewed escalation of ethnic and political conflict. "Such an inter-ethnic cooperation represents a huge step for Macedonia," said Igor Serafimoski, the *forumZFD* consultant in Struga and Kičevo. "I hope that the example of Struga will help encourage others and set a positive precedent."

## Western Balkans - Regional

### Cooperation on a New Level: *forumZFD* and pax christi Aachen in the Western Balkans

**pax christi in the diocese of Aachen and *forumZFD* have reached a strategic agreement for the Western Balkans. An interview with Gerold König (Member of the Board | pax christi Aachen) and Carsten Montag (Head of the Projects and Programmes Department | *forumZFD*).**

***pax christi in the diocese of Aachen has implemented civil peace service projects in cooperation with *forumZFD* since 1999. Mr König, Mr Montag, on February 16, 2011, both cooperation partners signed an "Agreement on Strategic Cooperation within the Civil Peace Service (ZFD)". What are the key points of this agreement?***

**König:** In the agreement, we determine that pax christi Aachen and *forumZFD* shall share responsibility for strategic development of ZFD's commitment in the Western Balkans. pax christi Aachen's commitment will focus on what we can do particularly well after years of experience:



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*Gerold König (left) is Member of the Board of pax christi in the diocese of Aachen. Carsten Montag (right) is Head of the Projects and Programmes Department of *forumZFD*.*

- Contribute our expertise in helping to deal with the past
- Organise international youth encounters
- Establish September 21 as the International Day of Peace in the region

- Promote peace runs as a peace education, community-promoting measure in the region
- Deploy volunteers to partner projects in the region within the scope of the German *weltwärts* programme

Up until now, we contributed this expertise to one joint project (in Derventa). In the future, we wish to make this available for all ZFD projects in the Western Balkans and also share responsibility for these.

**Montag:** Within the scope of the new cooperation, we also want to promote the Civil Peace Service (ZFD) within German society, in the European context and to partners around the globe more intensively than in the past so as to raise awareness of ZFD as an effective tool for alternative conflict transformation. Ultimately we want to make an impact on the political levels in Berlin and Brussels so that the different perspectives of our partners in the field and our experiences in practical conflict transformation can become part of civil German foreign policy.

#### *How does implementation of the agreement look in practice?*

**König:** This summer an international youth encounter was held in Kosovo with young people from Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Germany. Together with two artists, they reflected on the subject of identities and created street art, which has been displayed on houses and walls in Prizren. This international youth encounter was a joint *forumZFD* and

pax christi Aachen project.

Next year, we plan to deploy five young people for 14 months to volunteer in ZFD projects or partner organisations in the Western

Balkans. We have already been doing this for several years in Bosnia and Herzegovina; now it is to also take place in Kosovo and Macedonia.



pax christi members have gained extensive experience in work on dealing with the past. This was and remains a core task of the pax christi move-

ment. We wish to use this expertise in the joint project work in the Western Balkans.

And, last but not least, there is pax christi's experience with the peace runs. We have already successfully set up a peace run in Derventa in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It would be great to expand this so that more young people in different places around the Western Balkans can "run" for peace.

**Montag:** In autumn 2012, for example, on the occasion of Croatia's accession to the European Union, we want to discuss within the scope of a major event how civil society and state institutions can make a sustainable contribution to the entire region and contribute our expertise and position to the debate.

The *forumZFD* expert committee (Fachrat) for the Western Balkans confirmed our assumption that particularly as German actors with our past and years of experience, we can make a decisive contribution with our external perspective. The ZFD evaluation commissioned by the BMZ and for which the final report has been available since mid-2011 also showed that the ZFD's long-term deployment of specialists to projects in the field has helped promote a local people's peace.

#### *Where do you see the advantages of the new cooperation?*

**König:** With the new cooperation, we can involve members in the ZFD more than was possible in our own projects. In the past, this was more or less a matter for the board. Now each individual member is more involved through a knowledge transfer. And we can now also concentrate our work far more on the content.

**Montag:** Over the past few years, we have built up a great deal of know-how about how we develop, realise and process concrete conflict transformation projects. The programme content in the Western Balkans will benefit from the specific cooperation with pax christi on two fronts: on the one hand through their experience in work on dealing with the past and, on the other hand, through national and international contacts in the social and political spheres.

#### *What is your vision for peace work in the Western Balkans for 2015?*

**König:** Peace! There is not a shorter, more concise word to express the wish for a peaceful coexistence. Mark Twain once said "Don't part with your illusions. When they are gone you may still



exist, but you have ceased to live." This is why I really can only describe my vision with one word. Peace. For what is more wonderful than simply being able to 'live'?

**Montag:** My vision for the Western Balkans is a self-supporting, peaceful development and the sustainable establishment of a culture of non-violent conflict resolution. To achieve this, all facts concerning war crimes have to be accepted by all sides and the whole chapter needs also be closed legally. The prevalence of future-oriented, regionally accepted memory cultures will strengthen both the solidarity with the victims and the

condemnation of the perpetrators, regardless of their ethnic belonging.

Furthermore, I wish for a (nearly) completed EU rapprochement of all countries in the Western Balkans. This will entail a change of values reaching the whole of society while, at the same time, leading to a far-reaching modernisation. Political communities based on values will become more important than alleged communities based on origins. My vision is that all this will finally help to overcome ethnic separation of society and establish a sustainable peace.

## Step towards Sustainability: Local Partners take over Organization of the Peace Day

**In 2001, the United Nations declared September 21 the International Day of Peace. The idea is for people around the world to devote this day to non-violence and to peace within and between nations. These very same values also form the focus of forumZFD and pax christi Aachen's work. For this reason, we have celebrated the Day of Peace in the Western Balkans since 2008 and actively campaigned for tolerance and a peaceful coexistence with a peace festival (Derventa/Bosnia and Herzegovina) and peace run (Skopje/Macedonia). Since then, a great deal has been achieved in both countries.**

Within just a few years, what began as unknown events regarded by some with scepticism has developed into an event that participants, organisers and supporters – be they young people, NGOs or local government representatives from all religious and ethnic groups – look forward to, and that (most importantly!) together.

The best indicator of a ZFD project's success is its continuation by local actors. Sustainability is at the same time one of the biggest challenges in our work. Hence we are extremely pleased that the organisation of the peace days in Derventa and Skopje was assigned to local actors this year. This once again shows that the peace day and its impact are not only recognised and desired locally, but also that the wish to establish it as a regular occurrence exists. For us, this is a fantastic success, as it brings us a big step closer to achieving sustainability of our commitment in the Western Balkans.

In these two reports, Silke Maier-Witt, Programme Manager for Macedonia, and Lučiano Kaluža, co-worker in the project office in Derventa | Bosnia-Herzegovina,

share personal accounts of the developments and challenges in organising the peace day and handing responsibility over to local actors.

### **"Celebrating the Peace Day has become a tradition"**

The idea to celebrate the International Day of Peace in Derventa first came up in 2008, shortly after the local office of pax christi Aachen and forumZFD opened its doors. We were sure that such an event could engage the public in promoting peacebuilding, reconciliation and mutual tolerance among the people living in the region.



*Sustainability: The Regional Peace Initiative ReMI organized the Peace Day in Derventa alone for the first time.*

At that time, no similar activity either by NGOs or the local community existed. Hence, the first celebration of the International Day of Peace in September 2008 passed as somewhat of a surprise for the community. The date and its meaning were unknown to the people. Organized at the city's central square, this first celebration brought together fifteen NGOs from the region as well as about a hundred,

mostly young people from Derventa. During the program, the NGOs presented themselves, followed by cultural performances and the 'Run for peace' in which local children and teenagers participated.

The following year, many people had already a general idea of what the International Day of Peace meant. This time, it also drew the support from the local government and officials from the municipality held opening speeches. Besides the participation of more than fifteen regional NGOs, for the first time, organizations from Croatia took part, which broadened the scope of the whole event. Cultural and entertainment programs, as well as NGO presentations appeared to be somewhat 'richer' than a year earlier.

By the time the third Peace Day was celebrated in 2010, an important development had taken place: people began to look forward to the event! That year, the largest number yet of children and schools participated in the 'Run for peace', which motivated everyone involved even more to establish the Peace Day as a tradition and to make it bigger and better in the following years. The overwhelmingly positive response from the citizens showed us that the local community had not only accepted the event, but that it was aware of the necessity and positive impact of working together for tolerance and peace.

The latest celebration of the Peace Day in 2011 marked a special moment: For the first time, the event was partially organized by the regional peace initiative ReMI (Regionalna Mirna Inicijativa) in cooperation with the Network of Peace (Mreža Mira) from Sarajevo. ReMI – a network of local and regional organizations – will in the future be solely responsible for the organization of the Peace Day. This sends out an important message: It demonstrates the commitment to promote values such as cooperation, solidarity as well as mutual respect and appreciation. During this year's celebration in Derventa, more than 25 organizations participated, regional as

well as national from Sarajevo or Tuzla. Thus, for the first time, the event has achieved not only an interethnic but also a country-wide character, in-

cluding NGOs from throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"Celebrating the Peace Day has become a tradition and must remain as such. It will remind us and help us all to

cherish values that are very important for Bosnia-Herzegovina", says Michele Parente, project manager at the pax christi office in Derventa. "We should work together to extend this initiative to other communities so that the peace-building process can reach every house, community and the whole state."



▪ *Lučiano Kaluža | Bosnia and Herzegovina*

### When the children spread their wings ...

... the parents remain behind with mixed feelings.

This was the case for us in 2011 when we were invited to participate in the latest Peace Run in the Gazi Baba municipality in Skopje. What had happened?



*"The Peace Run will be even bigger": The municipality of Gazi Baba (in Skopje) values and organizes the Peace Day as a sign for peaceful coexistence.*

Some three years ago, the chairman of Gazi Baba's Union of Sports Teachers asked *forumZFD* for support in financing their multi-ethnic sports league. As a joint project between all eleven primary schools in the municipality, the sports league helps combat violent confrontations in schools. We suggested they organise a peace run and acquire sponsors in this way. The municipality liked the idea and *forumZFD* has supported them in organisation of the event ever since.

At the first Peace Run in 2008, the municipal mayor of the time, Koce Trajanovski, announced that he wanted to make the Peace Run a tradition. The very next year, funds were already allocated to the Peace Run in the municipality's budget. In the second year, the new mayor, Toni Trajkovski, continued the tradition and invited the Albanian mayor of the neighbouring municipality of Aracinovo to participate. A further municipality got involved in the third year.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

**Lučiano Kaluža**

*pax christi Derventa*

[kaluzal@gmail.com](mailto:kaluzal@gmail.com)

**Links**

[pax christi Derventa](#)

Organisation of the latest Peace Run in 2011 also began 'as usual'. As always, we began organising the usual preparatory meeting with the Union of Sports Teachers, the Inspector for Education and the mayor's office at the eleventh hour. Given that the Konrad Adenauer Foundation was no longer supporting the event and to save money for the children's transport, the inspector suggested a new venue for the event beside the River Vardar. Although the quayside had recently been re-tarmacked, the area served as a dumping ground for bushes and trees. After attempting in vain to find new partners to finance the Peace Run, things initially went quiet for a while: holiday season; no communication.

The date in September 2011 set for the event was drawing closer when the proud news came from the municipality: Gazi Baba would organise the run itself this year –

on the quay beside the Vardar. The mayor promised that the space would be cleared. However, in the weeks that followed, the date was

repeatedly postponed. First the clear-up had not taken place, then a census was announced in Macedonia. The date was then set for Saturday, October 15, 2011, but

then the message came on the Friday before that it would definitely rain, so a new date was set.

October 22, 2011, was agreed as the new date. On that Saturday morning, our eyes went to the sky: thick clouds. Shortly before the start, it began to drizzle... Then everything went quite differently: on approaching the quay, we saw that part of the access route had indeed been re-tarmacked. The square had also been cleared of all rubbish. Despite the rain, the 500 students of different ethnic backgrounds and their teachers were in high spirits. Drinks, tents to shelter in and a cultural programme: everything had been organised.

The pride in this achievement was tangible everywhere. The mayors of the neighbouring municipalities were guests at the event. Even the rain stopped. In his opening speech, mayor Trajkovski spoke of a peaceful coexistence, tolerance and mutual respect, but above all that the Peace Run would be even bigger the next year, with more children from the schools in other city districts.

The event was a resounding success. And *forumZFD*? We were merely observers. It was the municipality of Gazi Baba's event. Although we could imagine the Peace Run somewhat differently, it is good as it is and, after all, also a success for *forumZFD*.

■ *Silke Maier-Witt* | Macedonia

## FURTHER INFORMATION

**Silke Maier-Witt**

Programme Director | *forumZFD* Macedonia  
([maier-witt@forumzfd.de](mailto:maier-witt@forumzfd.de))

**Links**

[forumZFD - Macedonia](#)

## News & Events

### News in brief

#### Pristina's Past on the Radio

Kosovo-Albanian counterculture in the 1980s/90s, changing city architecture and the school system during the time of Milošević – a multi-faceted radio programme covering the past of Pristina was broadcasted by the Kosovar radio station *Urban FM* on December 21, 2011.

The broadcast is the result of a workshop with local journalists which *forumZFD* organized early December in Pristina. It is part of the new *forumZFD* project for promoting a conflict sensitive journalism in Kosovo, focusing on topics about Dealing with the Past (DwP).

The workshop was preceded by a conference in September which assembled journalists as well as representatives from Kosovar radio stations and civil society. To-

gether they discussed how radio can take on and convey topics surrounding DwP.

In spring 2012, the next workshop will take place during which a new radio programme will be created. Furthermore the radio reports will then also be available on an interactive website.

Contact: Charly Loufrani ([loufrani@forumzfd.de](mailto:loufrani@forumzfd.de))

#### Human Rights – New Issue of *Made in KS* Newsletter

In December 2011, the seventh issue of the *Made in KS* was released. The newsletter is published by the online portal *DWP-Kosovo* which informs about projects and projects related to dealing with the past. It is maintained by the *forumZFD* office in Pristina/Kosovo.

The latest issue focuses on the topic human rights. It includes articles about the



potential of oral history for transitional justice and dealing with the past, the perception of human rights by citizens of Mitrovica/Kosovo (repeatedly scene of inter-ethnic clashes) as well as interviews about the investigation of war crimes and how theatre plays can promote dealing with the past.

The *Made in KS* newsletter can be downloaded from [www.dwp-kosovo.info](http://www.dwp-kosovo.info).

### Official Opening of the *forumZFD* office in Struga | Macedonia

"The work of *forumZFD* is wanted, needed and it contributes to the promotion of interethnic relations", said the mayor of Struga about the cooperation with *forumZFD* in his greeting remarks regarding the official opening of the project office in Struga.



The opening took place in late October 2011 in the presence of the BMZ desk officer for the Civil Peace Service (ZFD), Eckhard Volkmann, as well as the German deputy ambassa-

dor. It was well-attended with about 60 guests from the municipal administration, schools and civil society.

The project office in Struga coordinates the activities of *forumZFD* in Struga and Kičevo in the Southwest of Macedonia. After Struga had been the scene of violent clashes between Macedonian and Albanian students in 2008, *forumZFD* – in cooperation with UNICEF – set-up interethnic youth centres, trained teachers and students in mediation as well as offered numerous multicultural trainings.

The office opening clearly showed that we are on the right track. Ensuring sustainability is now on top of our agenda: In the next two years, we will focus on expanding the cooperation with municipalities and schools in Struga and Kičevo, on further strengthening our local partners and on ensuring the running of the youth centres.

**Contact:** Kirsten Schönefeld ([schoenefeld@forumzfd.de](mailto:schoenefeld@forumzfd.de))

### Desk Officer for the ZFD in the German Development Ministry visits the Western Balkans



During his first official visit to the region, Eckhard Volkmann, desk officer for the Civil Peace Service (ZFD) at the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, visited projects of the two ZFD actors in the Western Balkans, *forumZFD* and Kurve Wustrow, from October 24-28, 2011.

In Serbia (Belgrade), Bosnia-Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Prilep and Tuzla) and Macedonia (Skopje and Struga), Volkmann met with ZFD peace consultants as well as representative from civil society and the respective German embassies.

Thematically, two points were at the centre of the visit: firstly the discussion of the conflicts in the Western Balkans and their background; and secondly, strategic talks regarding the future commitment of the ZFD in the region.

Volkmann's visit marks the starting point for updating the common ZFD strategy in the Western Balkans between *forumZFD*, Kurve Wustrow and the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development.

**Contact:** Christian Pfeifer ([pfeifer@forumzfd.de](mailto:pfeifer@forumzfd.de))

## Upcoming Public Events

### Macedonia

#### 25.01.12 | Open Days of Schools | Struga

After having been postponed various times, the 'Open Days' in Struga are finally taking place. For one whole day, the vocational, secondary and elementary schools in Struga will open their doors with a full program. They will, among other things, present the activities which have been carried out in cooperation with *forumZFD* and UNICEF. These include workshops on mediation and democratic participation.

**Contact:** Kirsten Schönefeld ([schoenefeld@forumzfd.de](mailto:schoenefeld@forumzfd.de))

# Imprint

## Fokus.Westbalkan – News from the Forum Civil Peace Service

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The Fokus.Westbalkan is published three times yearly – in May, September and December. To subscribe or unsubscribe, simply send an e-mail to [fokus.westbalkan@forumzfd.de](mailto:fokus.westbalkan@forumzfd.de). The contents of Fokus.Westbalkan reflect the opinion of the *forumZFD* or the authors. While the links to external website mentioned in this issue have been carefully checked, the *forumZFD* cannot be held responsible for any external contents.

Throughout the issue, the male form has been used so as to ensure a better readability of the text. This, of course, encompasses the female form of the words.

### Publisher

Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst (*forumZFD*) e.V.

Regional Office Western Balkans

Kralja Milutina 11/9

11000 Belgrade – Serbia

Phone/Fax: +381-11-32-43-258

[www.forumzfd.de](http://www.forumzfd.de)

### Contributing Authors

Daniel Brumund | Abdullah Ferizi | Sebastian Heidenthal  
Luciano Kaluža | Charly Loufrani | Silke Maier-Witt  
Michele Parente | Christian Pfeifer | Kirsten Schönefeld

### Design & Layout

Daniel Brumund

### Editorial Team

Daniel Brumund | Christian Pfeifer

#### Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst (*forumZFD*) e.V.

The *forumZFD* is an umbrella organization of 38 member organizations and recognized by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development as a sending organization. It is committed to develop civil methods for conflict management and for the Civil Peace Service. Peace consultants by *forumZFD* work in projects in the Western Balkans, the Middle East and the Philippines. In its Academy for Conflict Transformation, *forumZFD* trains peace consultants who work worldwide for the prevention of violence and the promotion of peace.



[www.forumzfd.de](http://www.forumzfd.de)  
[Westbalkan@forumzfd.de](mailto:Westbalkan@forumzfd.de)

#### pax christi im Bistum Aachen

The peace of Christ was a sign of hope for many people in the destroyed Europe at the end of the Second World War. Out of this hope people of formerly hostile nations, mainly Germans, French and Polish, reconciled with each other. This was the beginning of the pax christi movement which by now is active for peace and justice in more than 60 countries. pax christi in the diocese of Aachen is part of the world wide pax christi movement. As founding-member of Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst pax christi Aachen carries out projects of the Civil Peace Service in the Western Balkans in cooperation with *forumZFD*.



[www.paxchristi-aachen.de](http://www.paxchristi-aachen.de)  
[info@pax-christi-aachen.de](mailto:info@pax-christi-aachen.de)