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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 issue.

Write us at fokus.westbalkan@forumzfd.de

FOKUS

100 Years of Statehood – The Dream of a Greater Albania

In November of 2012, Albanians all over the Balkans celebrated the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Albanian state. The idea of a greater Albania, which is, according to a survey by Gallup, supported by about 70% of all Albanians, were brought forward by several politicians. This sparked fears of anew ethnic tensions (mind the map, published by Tanjug), amongst Serbs and Macedonians. Idro Seferi, an Albanian journalist, living and working in Belgrade/Serbia explains, in an interview with forumZFD, why the idea of a greater Albania is unrealistic, but none the less dangerous for the stability of the region.

■ Interviewer: Johannes Rueger

Many times people speak of an “ethnic” or “natural” Albania, as opposed to a “greater” Albania. What does this expression actually mean?

Serefi: Before 1912, Albania was, according to Albanian historiography, much bigger then it is now. The modern borders were set by the London Peace Conference of 1912, which excluded many territories where Albanians lived, such as Kosovo and parts of south Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece. The term “natural Albania” is nowadays used by people who want to see all these territories united in one Albanian state, but this is impossible, because it would mean conflicts with all the neighboring countries. For the time being, people who advocate for this project focus on a unification of Albania and Kosovo. This is a project which is mostly pushed by new political parties. In Albania proper, nationalism has been rising during the last couple of years. It is fake nationalism, which is not based on any threat from the outside, but rather a fashion. In Albania, nationalism had never really existed, because it was suppressed by the communist government. The same is actually true for religion. Because the country is not making any progress in terms of economy or European integration though, there is a need among the people to feel that they are of some importance and that need is satisfied by nationalism.

Is there a difference between the nationalism in Albania and the one in Kosovo and Macedonia?

Serefi: Yes, there is a big difference. In Albania it is a longing for national pride, but most people don't really know what nationalism means and what catastrophic consequences it can have. In Kosovo meanwhile, people feel threatened by the Serbian state, which blocks the integration of Kosovo into regional and international structures. Their nationalism is rather defensive; it is a plan B – in case Kosovo cannot integrate with the EU, it might still be able to join Albania. In Macedonia the situation is different again. Because the country is not making any progress in any way and the rights of minorities are not respected, nationalism serves the Alba-



The map of a greater Albania, including territories of modern Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, Serbia and Kosovo.

nians as an “opt-out”, in case the state doesn't grant them their rights. None of these types of nationalism is realistic, since it is too late for nationalism in the Balkans anyhow. After 20 years of war, there is no need for nationalism or to raise tensions in any way. Unfortunately, people in Albania proper

are not aware of that. After the war in Kosovo, only nine percent of the Albanians favored unification with Albania. These numbers have gone up though, mainly because of parties like Vetevendosje (Self-determination), who have a populist agenda. What most people tend to forget though is that the Albanians in Albania, in Kosovo and Macedonia have very different ways of thinking, of making politics etc.

Where is the difference between Albanians in Albania and the ones in the other countries?

Serefi: Well, Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia lived in Yugoslavia, so their patterns of thinking are similar. Also, they experienced the consequences of nationalism, so they know about its dangers. Meanwhile, Albanians in Albania were cut off from all this, so for them nationalism is more acceptable. Besides from that, the societies in Albania and Kosovo function very differently. People had very little contact with each other for half a century, so in everyday life, they are quite different. Also, Albania was never involved with its neighboring countries, as opposed to Kosovo and Macedonia. Another important aspect is that Albania is a highly corrupted state. Of course there is also corruption in Kosovo, but when it comes to certain institutions, such as the police (which, among the citizens enjoys the highest trust of all state institutions in Kosovo), the level of corruption is much lower than in Albania. The same is true for politics, education, healthcare etc. Therefore, Albanians from Kosovo would not want to live in a state which is even less functional. Personally, I do not believe that the political system of Kosovo and Albania could ever integrate with each other and every attempt to do so forcefully would lead to civil tensions.

Suppose all Albanians would unite in one state – how would this work?

Serefi: Well, it is not clear how such a unification would work practically. Pristina, as the capital of Kosovo, has always been more developed than Tirana (the capital of Albania), in all aspects of life. Universities, arts, culture, media etc. were always more advanced there. Of course Tirana has made progress, but still, one could never de-

cide which of these two cities would be the capital of a greater Albania, or if an entirely new capital would have to be founded. You would have to decide on the seat of the government, the military etc. and neither Kosovo nor Albania has the capacities to pull such a project through.

So, do people really think that the founding of a greater Albania is possible?

Serefi: Yes, they do, Albanians just as much as Serbs, Bulgarians or others. It is those nationalists who believe that in, say 20 years, all these Albanian territories will unite, but they are very shortsighted and have little idea about what is actually going on in the world. They like this idea because it is trendy to talk about a greater state. In fact, they confuse nationalism with patriotism, as many other people in the Balkans do. A big problem is that civil society in none of these states function well. The concept of a citizen state is practically unknown. Therefore, there is little public opposition to nationalist or even fascist statements, which again leads to such ideas being broadly accepted.

Do things like the conflict about the monument in Preševo or the negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo contribute to pan-albanian tendencies?

Seferi: In fact, conflicts like the one about the monument in Preševo are intentionally initiated by political organizations in Kosovo, in order to raise tensions and provoke harsh reactions by Serbia, which unfortunately worked. The result of this is that Albanians in Preševo can publicly advocate for a separation of Preševo valley from Serbia and joining Kosovo. This is not what v needs though, but rather schools, jobs, healthcare etc. The problems in Preševo are not dealt with as they should be, but the attention is distracted through issues like the monument.

Would you say that good relations between Serbia and Kosovo are the cornerstone of peace and stability in the western Balkans?

Serefi: I think that Serbia is the biggest problem in the region, because it never dealt with its past. Without solving the problems between Kosovo and Serbia, you can't solve the problems in Bosnia either. As long as that issue is unsolved, nationalists on all sides will always be able to play on the feelings of the people and suggest concepts like a greater Serbia, a grater Albania or something the like. With this level of tensions though, neither Kosovo nor Serbia will ever enter the EU. In the end, all the countries, especially Serbia, have to start to deal with their past, in order to have a future.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Idro Seferi, interviewed by forumZFD

Idro Seferi, born in Peja/Kosovo, is a journalist based in Belgrade/Serbia and works as a correspondent for the Albanian TV Top Channel. For more than ten years he writes regularly in different Newspapers in the Balkan Region.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

forumZFD/pax christi Aachen: Seven years together in Derventa

Following seven years of peace work, pax Christi Aachen's Derventa office closed for good at the end of last year. A good yet intense time, full of passionate discussions, successful and less successful activities, euphoria and disappointments, mistrust and the forging of new friendships came to an end.

Following two difficult preliminary years in an extremely complex environment severely marked by war and violence, the project team struck a path that successfully brought extremely different actors together and implemented effective reconciliation measures.

The stricken "mine field" of Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the "Building and strengthening of cooperation and dialogue structures" project conducted in cooperation with *forumZFD* (2006-2012), a noticeable lack of

institutional and civil tools in the process to deal with the past was perceived on all levels of Bosnian society. Establishment of just these tools seemed indispensable for lasting peace in the country. In light of a non-functioning state and political manipulation of the past, the process

of reconciliation between Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina

is of utmost

importance. *forumZFD* and *pax christi* Aachen encountered a multitude of challenges during their work. Restoration of a culture of dia-

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logue and cooperation between the ethnic groups, solidarity and impartiality – all these aspects had to be approached with great care.

The project

The project was determined by the question of how the different ethnic and religious groups can coexist. How do the people view their past, and what do they wish for their country's future? How is civil society involved in the development of non-violent solutions for conflicts? The project comprised four pillars: Reinforcement of civil society, non-formal education, dealing with the past and inter-religious dialogue. All activities served the creation of spaces for encounters, dialogue and co-operation. To ensure sustainability of the achieved results and in order to contribute to the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation structures between actors from civil society and state institutions, pax christi Aachen was committed to the founding of a regional peace initiative. ReMI (*Regionalna Mirovna Inicijativa*) is a formal network comprising nine non-governmental organisations active in the fields of reconciliation and intercultural dialogue as well as social and humanitarian work.

Focus: dealing with the past



forumZFD and pax christi Aachen understand 'dealing with the past' to be the process of individual and collective memory work. To address the topic of the "constructive transfer of war veterans' experiences" (*Konstruktivna upotreba veteranskog iskustva – KUVI*), seminars were held to qualify veterans and facilitators from civil society to lead dialogues with youth groups. Dialogue events have since been offered in schools and to youth organisations. "The most powerful impressions from this dialogue are the stories from war veterans. I found the idea of drawing young people's attention to the real consequences of war to be an important one. I see that there are people, who have experienced trau-

ma in their lives and are not yet healthy again. But I see that they have a strong will to continue living. What particularly impressed me were the statements from veterans in which they explained that they did not enter into war willingly but had no choice and hoped that such a thing would never ever happen to anyone ever again," commented a participating student after one of the seminars.

Internal and external sustainability

The ZFD project in Derventa was concluded on 31 December 2012 as a chapter in a wonderful story, which was written together. pax christi Aachen is withdrawing operations from Bosnia and Herzegovina and is now forumZFD's strategic partner in Germany for the West-



The Run for Peace in Derventa, 2012

ern Balkans. ReMI will continue the peace work on the local and national levels. forumZFD will continue its work in Bosnia and Herzegovina on this basis from its new offices in Sarajevo. Within this, it remains committed to a close cooperation with local partners as well as with the forumZFD offices in Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia.

Kosovo

Frequencies of the past

In Kosovo, local radio stations are a very important transmitter of public opinion. Initiated in 2011, the

project 'Frequencies of the Past' (FoP) aims to support conflict sensitive radio journalism as a contribution to constructive work on Dealing with the Past (DwP).

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Links

<http://dwp-kosovo.info/>

Over the last two years of intensive work, *forumZFD* initiated through its FoP project a series of

36 five-minute reports (30 journalistic and 6 students reports) on DwP-related topics. Altogether 68 participants (49 journalists and 19 students of journalism) from Pristina, Čaglavica and Mitrovica worked on realizing the reports. The reports were then broadcasted in local radio stations in Kosovo, and were uploaded on the Frequencies of the Past website, accompanied by a slide show of pictures taken by photographers who were part of the journalists teams.

Isak Vorgučić (Radio Kim), one of the two main trainers of FoP, stressed the point that, when he was first introduced to the idea of DwP-reporting, he thought it was a



A forumZFD project

frightening venture, referring to the controversial and violent past of Kosovo. However, after training in two workshops with Serbian and Roma journalists in the Serbian radio station "Radio Kim" in Čaglavica, his opinion changed. 'Journalists should connect topics to the past, but the approach should be sensitive! This is something that needs more work in the future'. Muhamet Hajrullahu (BIRN), the second main trainer who led the workshops in Pristina and Mitrovica, emphasized that the project made it possible to report on different topics than daily politics news. 'Our aim with this project was to choose topics that are not aimed at the political elite. There are many good experiences even before the 90s in Kosovo, and we tried to include these experiences in the stories we've covered. What matters most, however, is that all reports in these workshops were professional and that - above other things - we managed to do responsible journalism' Hajrullahu

added. Charly Loufrani, the project manager of FoP explains how one of the biggest challenges of this project was to convince the media and the journalists that the



Charly Loufrani, FoP project manager, speaking to kosovarian journalists

project was an opportunity for them, and not an unnecessary risk. 'During the first phase of the project, our initial encounters with managers of local media were often tainted with caution, sometime mistrust. We had to change our initial goal of working with larger networks of local radios, and target local media one by one, in order to find partners. We are grateful to the first journalists and radios that took part in the project and helped us, through their experience, to convince others to participate.' On the other hand, the FoP participants claim that among the new experience that they got from the project, they highly value the fact that they learned new technical skills, such as working with text, audio and video at the same time. The opportunity to learn stories about their own cities, which they didn't know before, was also highly appreciated. 'It [FoP] gave me the opportunity to know my city better' said one of the participants.

Good prospects for future workshops

FoP will continue its activities in 2013, with topic-focused trainings that were suggested by the participants of a round table, and which cover areas which are most sensitive in the Kosovo society, and rarely part of public discussions about the past, such as: Missing persons, war rape and destruction of cultural heritage. *ForumZFD* in Kosovo has been working with the issue of missing persons intensively, especially with the family associations of the missing, whereas the topic of war rape has only recently been explored in one of the artistic ateliers which are part of the art-based action research 'Recollecting the Past in Kosovo: Cultural Memory between Fact and Fiction'.

Macedonia

Creative Youngsters

How can inter-ethnic youth work reach the so-called “hard-to-reach”? How must offers for young people, who have been more deeply affected by inter-ethnic violence or run the risk of becoming violent themselves, be organised?

After two years of inter-ethnic education work at the youth centre in Struga, the *forumZFD* team considered just these questions in Struga together with partner organisations, “Youth Educational Forum” and “Alternativa”.



Creative Youngsters – A project with potential

Following discussions with teachers and school psychologists, it emerged that the “hard-to-reach” group primarily comprises young people from rural areas. For these young people, it is the transition from primary school in the predominantly mono-ethnic rural areas to middle school in the multi-ethnic city of Struga that is proving particularly tough. Friction develops and violent disputes arise time and time again. What’s more, their families are severely affected by the social change resulting from migration – conventional social structures are often no longer effective.

Interethnic activities for marginalized youths

Training such a group of young people in non-violent conflict resolution and establishing an inter-ethnic leisure group could help reduce violence and boost inter-

ethnic understanding – at least that is the idea. In cooperation with the schools, 18 young people of different ethnic backgrounds were selected. During a seminar at the end of November, the young people were then taught the basics of mediation and non-violent communication, and reflected on the different stereotypes. The degree of success was surprisingly high: the group grew together almost effortlessly, prejudices were dispelled, and plans for joint sporting and creative activities were developed.

From theory to performance

Since the start of the year, the young people have implemented these ideas in two ethnically-mixed leisure groups. One group considers the subject of identity through painting and drawing in weekly meetings; the other participates in sporting activities together. Thus the young people’s creativity is fostered and team spirit reinforced. The groups are also part of the debating programme of partner organisation, “Youth Educational Forum”, and learn how to argue convincingly and to advocate their opinion – resolutely yet without violence. The conclusion and highlight of activity is an event at which the young people present their artistic work and athletic skills to the general public. Preliminary successes are already visible in the schools. Following the training in November, several students from the “Creative Youngsters” group approached their teacher with a written request for improvements in the classroom. The students stated that the poor equipment had a negative impact on their willingness to learn and learning successes.

“In the past, this would have been unthinkable,” one of the class teachers tells in amazement. This just goes to show: special education offers for “hard-to-reach” groups can contribute to inter-ethnic understanding and non-violence, and encourage young people to actively campaign for issues that concern them.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Western Balkans - Regional

Regionalisation of the forumZFD in the Western Balkans

In future, *forumZFD* will implement its projects in the Western Balkans regionally. The work in the region will thus be adjusted to the conflict situation and prepared for the coming years. The conflicts in Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina are linked with and influenced by one another via various different channels. The peace work undertaken by *forumZFD* will therefore be more effective if these links are taken advantage of. The preparations for regionalisation of the project work are now in their final stages, with the cross-border work to become a reality from the middle of the year.

The conflicts in the countries of the Western Balkans are interlinked and influence one another in the most varied of ways. Removal of a monument commemorating an Albanian "hero" in Prešovo/Serbia leads to the desecration of Serb Orthodox cemeteries in Kosovo. Political developments in Serbia, such as the ongoing rapprochement with the EU, have an impact on the behavior of Bosnian Serb politicians in the Republika Srpska towards the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tensions in Sandžak not only influence the situation in Serbia but also that in Montenegro. Nationalistic movements in Albania have a direct impact on the relationship between Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia, and so on and so forth. *forumZFD* is adjusting to the task in hand by consistently giving its peace work in the Western Balkans a regional orientation in the future. The *forumZFD* regional programme in the Western Balkans was previously primarily committed to various national projects in Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. "From the middle of this year, there will be a regional programme, which will live up to the term 'regional'," says Sven Reuter, consultant for the Western Balkans at *forumZFD*'s head office in Cologne. *forumZFD* projects will be allocated to one of three regional fields

of action: dealing with the past, establishing mediation in schools, or municipal conflict consultancy. The projects will be implemented by regional working groups, which either cover an entire field of action or – as in the case of the work in dealing with the past – sub-areas of a field of action. Where appropriate, co-operations will be established between the working groups. On the national level, there will be monitoring to prevent regional projects from causing any damage nationally or locally.

This regionalisation will allow the peace work by *forumZFD* to take advantage of cross-border communication channels within the region and to thus boost the effectiveness of measures. Some of the measures planned will be based on experience already gained in a country. In the field of dealing with the past, for example, there will be a regional homepage on "Dealing with the Past" linked to the *dwp* magazine. Both will be based on the positive experiences from the "Made in KS" magazine and "dwp-Kosovo" homepage. Given that the significance and challenges of dealing with the past are very similar in the different countries in the region and the cross-border influences on the subject of the past are extremely strong, regional communication on this topic also makes a great deal of sense. Overall, *forumZFD* and its employees in the region are facing a major change, which harbors both considerable opportunities and a great many risks. The regional management team will be responsible for monitoring the regionalisation and adjusting this as required.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Western Balkans – Regional II

International Conference on Mediation in Schools in Ohrid / Macedonia

“Mediation isn’t a sprint – it’s a marathon.” This statement from a participant at the end of the event perhaps best describes the situation. A regional conference on the subjects of conflict prevention and mediation in schools in the Western Balkans has been held for the first time ever. From 17th to the 20th of October 2012, 75 experts from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Kosovo met beside Lake Ohrid in Macedonia.

The participants came from ministries, non-governmental organisations, universities and schools, and the event was organised by the OSCE Mission to Skopje in cooperation with Forum Civil Peace Service.

“This regional conference is a sign that the countries in the region are prepared to find an appropriate solution for a safe environment in schools,” Ambassador of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, Ralf Breth said. Mediation in schools is actually valued differently in the individual countries in the region. While the method is already embedded in legislation in Serbia and in Montenegro, various efforts are being made to implement mediation in schools in other countries. It is often non-state actors as opposed to state actors, who are active

in the field of mediation and perform lobby work. In Macedonia, for example *forumZFD* has been training teachers from pilot schools in mediation since 2009, and campaigns for the implementation of school mediation on the national level. One key aim of the conference

was to provide an overview of whether and to what extent mediation is used or implemented in schools. Institutionalisation processes, legal framework conditions and the role of the individual state and non-state actors were considered in working groups and discussion rounds. It rapidly became clear that different standards exist with regard to the training of teachers, who should then pass the mediation-approach on to their students. It also ultimately became clear that successful implementation was closely related to the willingness of the state institutions to support mediation at schools. “We are all facing the same problems,” several participants later said. It is exactly for this reason that the exchange with colleagues from other countries is so very crucial.

Besides the exchange of experiences and information, there also wasn’t a shortage of specialist discussions. Stefan Rech, an experienced school mediator from Germany, emphasized in his presentation, that mediation should not merely be seen as a measure to end violence but also as a means to resolve conflicts. More-

over, the principles of mediation cannot be viewed in a vacuum, but are linked to aspects such as human and minority rights as well as participation.

At the event’s conclusion, all participants agreed that the conference marked a start and

that a great many challenges still have

to be overcome. The suggestion was made to establish a network for the field of school mediation and to hold regular conferences on the subject.



Participants from six countries, addressing the conference audience

The current State of the Art

Six months later, it can be said that the conference has already borne its first fruits – at least in terms of networking. In November 2012, a group of mediators from Macedonia visited schools and mediation facilities in Albania to obtain further training and exchange experiences. An excursion by Macedonian mediators to Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo is planned for summer 2013, and a follow-up conference will be held in autumn of 2013.

As far as further funding of school mediation in Macedonia is concerned, Pance Krlev (Minister for Education

and Science) assured that “[t]he ministry will continue to fund all initiatives that contribute to a society in which a safe environment in schools is safeguarded”. We should hold him to his word. Either way though, the marathon continues ...

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Out of the Box

Nansen Dialogue Network – Why do we celebrate the International Day of Peace?

Public activities organized by schools raise awareness within the school and local community by trying to involve citizens to participate actively in the events celebrating peace.



Schools in Bujanovac municipality, in the South of Serbia are separated in such a way that Serbian students attend classes in a building in one part of town, while Albanian students go to school in another part of town. Villages are usually settlements of a particular ethnic group, which means that primary school students do not have the opportunity to meet peers from other ethnic groups, nor to learn each other's language.

Over the years, Nansen Dialogue Centre Serbia developed an approach for the long-term presence in local communities with the aim to support stakeholders, in order to work on the positive changes leading to improved relationships and reestablishing cooperation between ethnic groups. Capacity building trainings for schools and municipalities are the focus of our work. In 2006, we started with professional trainings for teachers, principals and students. Teachers realized that dialogue and constructive con-



© Mustafa Lumnije

Art-picknick in Bujanovac, Serbia

flict resolution skills are very useful for their daily work, therefore we created

programs to respond to their needs and started preparing the ground for the implementation of school mediation. Multi-ethnic groups of teachers, pedagogues, principals and students from Bujanovac municipality were equipped with mediation skills. They started using them in practice and gradually, mediators' clubs became operational in three primary and one secondary school, as well as in two village schools. Llukman Limani, Naim Frasheri School, during the meeting with Bujanovac municipality major said that "Nansen seminars broadened our knowledge and views during the seminars, but also provided the opportunities to meet teachers from other schools and towns. School mediation develops students' self-confidence".

During the school year, peer mediators gathered regularly in order to present the activities in their schools and practice mediation skills, or to have joint sports activities. One of these occasions was the celebration of the International Day of Peace, on September 21st. NDC Serbia coordinators and teachers gathered students from four primary schools for an outdoor activity. Ethnically mixed small groups of students were asked to make a joint drawing or painting.

"My contribution to Peace" was the topic of the Arts Competition for the school year 2012/2013. In the beginning, students discussed their understanding of the theme, talked about their ideas and ways to present them. In some cases the drawing was a group work, while other groups chose a representative with artistic skills. The final products were creative draw-

ings which were sent to the selection committee, to be chosen for the Nansen Peace Calendar 2013. The joint presentation of their creative work was the students' contribution to peace and an important step in building good relationships among them. Brankica, a teacher from Branko Radičević School commented that "joint trainings for Serbian and Albanian children are events where they get to know each other and develop relationships for future".

The competition will be organized annually with the goal to raise awareness about the importance of building

peace jointly within the school environment and in the society.

Teachers' role is especially important during

the preparation-processes, as they inform their students about peace initiatives taking places all over the globe, discuss their capacities to contribute both individually and as members of a school collective. In this way they motivate students to play an active role and develop responsibility.

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Links

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News & Events

News in brief

Public discussion "Where is Kosovo today?"

On February 18th 2013, *forumZFD* and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia jointly hosted a public discussion on the current state of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo (which Serbia, until today, does not recognize), the participants evaluated the situation on

the ground. A consensus was found that, despite great improvement concerning technical aspects in the relation between the two countries, a normalization of relations is necessary with a view on the European integration, but also on the stability of the entire region. Amongst the participants of the discussion where Sonja Biserko, director of the Helsinki Committee, Ognjen Pribičević, former ambassador of Serbia to the Federal Republic of Germany, Henri-Giscard Bohnet, director of the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation in Belgrade, as well as Adriatik Kelmendi, editor

in chief of Kohavision/KTV in Pristina. Members of the diplomatic body also attended the discussion, as well as media representatives and the heads of various local NGO's, such as Natasha Kandić, director of the Humanitarian Law Center in Serbia. With more than 65 guests and media reports in Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania and Turkey, the expectations of the organizers were more than met.

International conference on memory culture

From the 14th until the 16th of March, the international conference „Perspectives in (post) conflict academia and society: Opening spaces for critically assessing and rethinking history and memory“ took place in Sarajevo. The event, jointly organized by the universities of Sarajevo and Zurich, provided space for critical dialogue about the recent past of the Western Balkans. Academics from the entire region, other parts of Europe and Canada gave lectures on and debated inter alia about narratives of violence as well as the role of legal proceedings and monuments for the culture of memory within post-conflict societies. The presence of numerous NGO members in the audience also enriched the debate. The scientific presentations confirmed the practical experience of *forumZFD*. Creating a common culture of remembrance within the Western Balkans is difficult, due to nationalistic ideologies, but at the same time essential for reconciliation and the pacification of the region. Therefore, it requires initiatives which reveal objective facts about war crimes, but at the same time avoid patterns of thinking in perpetrator-victim categories. Simple truths do not exist and individual destinies must be taken seriously – a finding that is also considered in the daily work of our peace workers.

For the *forumZFD* our new office manager in Sarajevo, Ljubinka Petrović-Ziemer and the by the time intern of the regional office in Belgrade, Andreas Löpsinger, joined the conference.

Local seminar in Montenegro

In March this year, the Regional Management office of *forumZFD* organized the annual “Regional seminar for Reflexion and Recreation” in Bar/Montenegro. This seminar is designed for the local members of staff of *forumZFD* in the Western Balkans in order to reflect in a relaxed atmosphere on the difficult work they do. This year, a special emphasis was put on the questions, how do the colleagues evaluate the impact of their work per-

sonally, and to which extend does the fact that they descent from the conflict region influences their work.

Upcoming Public Events

Bosnia and Herzegovina

15.06.2013 | Opening of MONUMENTI | Sarajevo

From the 15th of June on, “MONUMENTI – The changing face of Remembrance” will be shown in the National Gallery of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The exhibition is open until the 30th of June.

The exhibition will afterwards travel to Mostar, where it can be seen from the 1st until the 7th of July and to Banja Luka, where it will be hosted from the 21st of September onwards. By July of this year, MONUMENTI will finally reach the Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies in Liverpool/UK.

Macedonia

23.08.2013 – 02.09.2013 | International Youthcamp | Struga

This year, pax christi Aachen and *forumZFD* will once again organize a youthcamp by lake Ohrid in Macedonia. Following the motto “Don’t be a deaf, blind, speechless monkey – Make Art against Discrimination”, teenagers will explore the possibilities to use film, street-art, HipHop, graffiti and blacklight-theater as a means of fighting discrimination and social exclusion.

Staff News

In March, **Ljubinka Petrović-Ziemer** has joined Forum ZFD as programmer manager for our office in Sarajevo.

Ljubinka has started with her peace engagement in the early ninties with the Center for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek (Croatia). After the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ljubinka moved to Sarajevo where she co-founded and headed an association for interreligious peace work called “Abraham”. From 2005 on, she conducted courses in Peace and Conflict Studies at Studienforum Berlin e. V. for studying abroad students from the U.S.A. Her main area of teaching was: peacebuilding, conflict transfor-

mation, the philosophy of nonviolence, dealing with the past / transitional justice and cultures of remembrance. At the same time, she worked as researcher at Berghof Conflict Research, investigating on dealing with the past issues and peacebuilding in the post-yugoslav countries. While staying in Germany, she gained her PhD in Contemporary German Literature from the University of Trier.

In April of 2013, **Jane Felber** and **Dragana Milutinović** left our offices in Kosovo. Jane will return to Germany,

while Dragana is going to work for UNDP in Mitrovic/Northern Kosovo. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their excellent work and wish them all the best for the future.

Kevin Borchers from the office in Skopje/Macedonia is no longer working for *forumZFD*. We want to thank him as well for the excellent work he has done and wish him well for his professional and private life.

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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.

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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.



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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*.



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