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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

Between politicking and the desire for serious politics

On October 7th, local elections were held in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 56% of the electorate voted predominantly for ethnically oriented parties. Voters were called to decide on 78 local governments in the Federation and 58 in the Republika Srpska, with more than 338 parties and 550 independent candidates running for office. Meanwhile, the turnout of young voters was at a historical low.

After the publication of the election results, some commentators said that this is a sign of BH going back to the nineties, due to the number of votes received by nationalist parties. This statement is simply not true. They are not any more the same parties, especially the nationalist parties dulled blade simply because they got serious competition from parties which call themselves social democratic or even citizens parties. Specifically, in the Republika Srpska nationalist rhetoric of the Serb Democratic Party and the Serbian Radical Party since 2006 the line has been taken by the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, just as their president explained: "I go to a pre-election rally, say in Teslić, and there is the entire town. I'm talking about the rule of law, law of the Euro-Atlantic integration, human rights, economy - they look at me like calves. No reaction. And then I throw the slogan: "Do not give up the Serbian Republic" - and finish the job. Ovations, but neither I nor they do know what it is, who is to hijacking, but so far the theater audience boil and there is a large part of my recruited voters" (DANI, interview 23.11. 2007).

In the Federation, much was expected of the Social Democratic Party of BH. However, after the 2010 general elections, first the unconstitutional coalition was formed at the entity level (for the constitutionality a Croatian voice lacked in the House of Federation), having entered into a coalition with parties of the right

wing position. At the state level, it took 15 months to establish a Council of Ministers because of the Social Democratic Party of BH. Their comment was: "We are not interested in mathematics, we are interested in political logic. SDP is a political party that does not allow itself to be a party of only one nation." (Lagumdžija, 19.12.2011, Fena). However, its president at the end accepted "Bosniac options" in the negotiations. Prior to the municipal elections held in October 2012, the Social Democratic Party broke the coalition with the Party of Democratic Action and signed an agreement with the relatively new Party for the Better Future for BH, thus creating a crisis in the Federal Government and the Council of Ministers. Then they started to spill over some reason or other requirements for the dismissal of the SDA ministers from the Council of Ministers while the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats requested a change of the Minister of Foreign Affairs (President of the SDP), which led to an extremely confusing situation in the Federal Government.

Meanwhile, the economic situation is getting worse by the day. Unemployed is on the historical highest level with a dramatic increase in debt at all levels of the state, while corruption is increasing daily. How do voters deal with such a situation? After the municipal elections, the biggest loss was faced by the two main

social democratic parties. Most voters, by their own testimony, declared themselves more against ruling parties than in favor of their opponents. While the average voters standard of living has been getting worst, comments about how the political elite is better and better off have been heard frequently. In fact, the less impact there has been on the protection of a national interest in the Republika Srpska, in the Federation BH it is the imposition of stories about who are the true protectors of the state and who fought in its defense. But, major electoral campaign is not between the elite that is aspiring to represent the Bosnian block and the counter elite



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Svetlana Cenić, author of the fokus-article.

which is aspiring to be a Serbian block. No, it is a competition within the Serbian elites. For instance, Dodik and Dodik's Block (President of the Republika Srpska and President and the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats) versus the Serbian Democratic Party, and Dragan Čavić, president of Serbian Democratic Party. Thus, we have intra-ethnic elections where the competitive elites within an ethnic group are fighting for the mandate of presenting the ethnic group in the next four years. It is due to the election law that is not encouraging inter-ethnic vote. Therefore, it is not surprising that, for example, the Social Democratic Party finally realize that the rhetoric that implies multi-ethnicity is not working for them. In the current political situation and within the current electoral system, one part of the young people joined the ruling parties out of economic interests, saying they could not get a job otherwise. A large number of young people does not vote at all, on the grounds that there is no one to vote for and that all political parties are the same - "they are all crooks."

Young people are disillusioned about politics

Also, a number of young people does not vote because they will not vote for nationalist parties. At the same time, they do not raise their voice publicly against such politics. A large number of young people does not want to participate in the creation of the political leadership, because of disappointment and dissatisfaction with the previous actions of politicians. A very small percentage of young people is opting for activism as a way of creating change in society. The apathy or the motion path of least resistance is prevailing. Initiatives and projects that would connect young people from the Republika Srpska and the Federation are very rare, the main problem being a lack of knowledge. Also, the political elite and the media often do not contribute to bonding and reconciliation, and the elimination of prejudice. Where such projects are supported, projects connecting young people in a political academy or through seminars, have proven to produce excellent results. Young people in the Republika Srpska are exposed daily to statements of BH being the enemy, threat or obstacle to a better life.

There is no political party that does not pander to such thinking, backed by the media that almost never presents anything positive when the state of BH is in question. Children born in 1990, now in their early twenties, do not remember living together, nor do they have grown up with these values. The problem is to demonstrate a new approach, but very few people dare to contradict the opinion of the official policy. For young people in the Federation, the situation is similar. Here the difference is in whether someone is Croat or Bosniac. A "good Croatian" will stand out Croatian features, while the "good Bosniac" will defend Bosnia and talk about the victims lost in its defense. Of course, exceptions are rarely publicly seen in the prevailing political thinking. Common to all young people in BH is the desire to get out of BH, as almost all polls have shown. Although since 1991 there has been no census in BH, it is estimated that the number of young people in BH is 777. 000 (which is 315,000 fewer than in 1991, when it was 1,091,775). Today, about 607,100 people under the age of 15 live in the country. All figures show that unemployment is the number one problem of youth in BH. The percentage of unemployed is over 60% of the total number among young people of working-age! Out of these, 13.4% have been without employment for more than 12 months. Half of the unemployed have been unemployed for over two years, and one-fifth for more than five years. Many young people work illegally, which should be alarming for trade unions. Unfortunately, trade unions are hardly dealing with these issues. Last year (2011), judging by the number of un-

employed young people in Europe, Bosnia was ahead of Serbia and Montenegro, and since the trend continues this year, BH is worse off than Spain, Greece, Croatia or Slovenia. The young population is a vulnerable group and much closer to the poverty line than adults. Young people who did not maintain their education after primary school have the largest share in the poor



Though cheering for their national colors, young people tend to leave Bosnia.

population - 57%. Young returnees in certain parts of the country account for 10% of the poor. Besides the young returnees, "vulnerable" categories are young people with disabilities and health problems, Roma and other minorities, as well as young, single parents. Only

5% of young people are members of youth organizations; 6% are members of political parties. Only 1% of young people are members of the representative bodies of the youth. However, the weak mobility of the labor force in Bosnia, as well as inherited family habits, contribute to only a small percentage of young people who are willing to look for a job in another part of Bosnia. Yet many of them are prepared to go abroad. Contributed to this, as has already been pointed out, has the policy of division. There are also expectations by the young people that someone else will solve their problems – be it their parents, official policy or a miracle. This creates a "lost" or "captive generation" pressed from one side by the official policy of division, where young people are expected to be faithful and obedient blind members and voters, and from the other side by the economic situation, which has resulted in a lack of trust that anything can lead to a change, not even activism. In a society that punishes dissents harshly, whether by labeling them publically as traitors or by segregation,

young people are in the state of apathy and resignation, and they refrain from going to vote, whether as an act of protest or as an expression of high indifference, given that BH does not give the impression of a society in which voting may change anything significantly. Young people do not remember the authoritarian order, but they have been exposed to a consumerist culture, a postmodern culture that suspects and rejects policies the chance of serious ideals, which are worth to be considered. In a consumerist surroundings and extensive pluralism of values, young people are turning to social networks, whether as a valve or a false belief that this is some kind of activism. Simply, politicking, not serious politics is being served daily to the young people in BH.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dialogue in Action

In October of 2012, ReMI network , together with its partners Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Sarajevo, held a project-workshop on the question "Does religion really help?"

Core topics were inter-religious dialogue and its contribution to peace and reconciliation. Young people were especially encouraged to find new ways to overcome ethnic boundaries and to develop - with respect to cultural and religious diversity - a new shared vision of pluralism, as a form of democratic co-existence in the future. The project was being implemented in two phases. The first phase included a visit of 30 young people from secondary economics schools from Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Gymnasium of Derventa, and organization "Altruist" from Mostar, who are also involved in student councils in Mostar. They went to Sarajevo, visited the Ashkenazi synagogue, the Roman Catholic cathedral "Srca Isusova", the Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque, the Church of "Sv. Arhandela Mihaila i Gavrila", and the Inter-Religious Council. Through lectures, the youngsters learned about the history of religious objects and the basic ele-

ments of each of the three religions. In a second phase, young people were called to explore the overall question through different corresponding dimensions of interreligious dialogue. These dimensions, developed by Guenther Neumann, Bavarian commissioner for e-learning and religious education teacher, are designed to improve communication

and exchange between social and religious groups, within a society. The dimension **Dialogue and everyday life** is related to intercultural exchange and

living together peacefully. Whether at school, in the family or inside the society in BH, it is necessary to develop a positive attitude, respect and an open mind towards others. The goal is to deconstruct prejudice and fear, while at the same time fostering trust and friendship. The dimension **Dialogue and cooperation** aims to bring young people of different religious backgrounds together and prepare them to work jointly, in order to promote and share common values of freedom, independence and critical thinking. In this way, they can contribute to an open and pluralistic society in



BH. The dimension **Dialogue and religion** finally aims to open social spaces for exploring other religions in practice and theory. It suggests that differences should



Young people from all three religious groups in Bosnia, standing in front of Gazi Husrev-Beg mosque in Sarajevo.

be respected and also highlights the need to build a deeper understanding of others and their religion. In order to broaden their perspective, the same young-

sters who came to Sarajevo will pay a visit to Banja Luka in 2013, presenting creative initiatives and proposals for further joint activities, practicing different the forms of dialogue they learned about in Sarajevo. In a society with different ethnic and religious groups, dialogue should be understood as an instrument of social communication and sharing, of civil peace and conflict resolution, in order to improve community life. As Lučiano Kaluža, executive director of ReMI, put it: "In a divided country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, dialogue is the only solution. Interreligious dialogue between young people must be basis for overcoming prejudice and stereotypes, because they already once been a part of the cause of the war in Bosnia."

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Kosovo

The young Europeans and their Heavy Past

The Young Europeans (the naming used for Kosovars in a campaign promoting independent Kosovo) have no alternative to Dealing with the Past in order to help building a peaceful future. Article 2.5 of Ahtisaari Plan, serving as basis for Kosovo constitution, states that: "...Kosovo shall establish a comprehensive and gender-sensitive approach for dealing with its past, which shall include a broad range of transitional justice initiatives". But, what is happening in the ground?



Despite the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, societies, both in Kosovo and Serbia, live with the understanding that 'it is not over yet', hence '*prolonging the past*'. The success of internal Kosovo DwP processes, engaging with the wider population, will therefore determine the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia. Such processes have widely started and *forumZFD* Kosovo is playing an important part in those processes. Hence, recent *forumZFD* activities in Kosovo focused on the initiation of public debates concerning DwP, amongst them an exhibition and training for journalists. In the month of November, *forumZFD* Kosovo is hosting the travelling exhibition 'MONuMENTI – The Changing Face of Memory'. Photos of monuments from various periods and ideologies, from all regions of ex-Yugoslavia, are presented both in Pristina and Gračanica. "Monuments are erected to remember events and individuals from the past, but also to serve the people today, to make a consensus for the brave and heroic moments that are worth of including in the collective memory", said Dr. Peter Blomeyer, German Ambassador in Pristina, in the opening of the exhibition. Following the opening of MONuMENTI in Pristina, five local part-

ners of *forumZFD* took part in the live TV debate *Rubikon*, hosted by Adriatik Kelmendi and broadcasted on KTV, one of the most prominent channels in Kosovo. Titled *'Monuments, memorials, remembrance, the past and the future'*, the debate brought together historian Arber Salihu, sociologist Eli Gashi, artist Fisnik Ismajli (NEWBORN), sociologist Vjollca Krasniqi and architect Valon Germizaj, raising a wide range of issues, from the role of the international community in DwP in Kosovo to the argument that DwP is not only necessary concerning the Serb-Albanian relationship. Sociologist Eli Gashi argued that the lack of memorials about woman as victims of the war in 1998/1999 is showing a lack of initiative to really deal with the past. Commenting on the *MONUMENTI* exhibition, artist Fisnik Ismajli was certain that by destroying a monument, you force people to forget a part of their history, but people cannot pretend that one part of their past doesn't exist. Architect Valon Germizaj focused more on (the lack of) commemorating civilian victims of the violent past: *"We built monuments for Adem Jashari, but not everybody knows about his wife, his children, the rest of the family, all civilian victims of the war. They are not (properly) commemorated. Reconciliation is achieved when the truth is told, and – our monuments are failing to tell the truth"*, Mr. Germizaj concluded.

In order to deal with ones past, it is crucial to face the facts. People who have to handle such facts on a daily basis are journalists, who also frame and shape the perception of the wider public, concerning topics such as the recent past. Having worked previously with Albani-

an journalists, during July and September *forumZFD* Kosovo organized two journalism workshops, in partnership with Radio KiM in Caglavica, involving Serb and Roma journalists in the project.

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Trainings on DwP and Conflict Sensitive journalism were provided, with the aim of initiating reflection among the participants about the role of journalists in a constructive DwP media discourse. During the workshop, 13 radio reports were produced, covering topics such as the consequences of the war on the non-Albanian communities in Kosovo, the survival of Serbian and Roma tradition in modern times, consequences of the industrial development from the Yugoslav era, or the evolution of the Croatian minority in Kosovo. The reports were broadcasted by Radio Kim on four occasions (31st and 23rd of July, and 11th and 12th of October), hopefully raising awareness amongst a wider audience that DwP is an issue concerning everyone in Kosovo and throughout the Western Balkans.

ForumZFD believes that dialogue is necessary not only between government officials, but also within and between societies. Tackling both opinion leaders and the general public at once, we hope to contribute to an open and broad discussion of recent history, leading ultimately to a constructive way of Dealing with the past.

Macedonia

Multi-ethnic coexistence on the local level

The coexistence of ethnic groups in Macedonia harbours major challenges and raises important questions. What leeway do local actors have to shape the multi-ethnic coexistence? How is the multi-ethnic coexistence shaped in schools, kindergartens and city districts? These issues were discussed in Struga / Macedonia on 1 October 2012 within the scope of the conference entitled "Multi-ethnic coexistence on the local level".

Not only former member of the Bundestag, Lale Akgün, but also 40 representatives from schools, public admin-



Conference participant Lale Akgün (4th from the right)

istration, local politics and civil society including the mayor of Struga, Ramiz Merko, the education advisor for the municipality of Struga, Xhemi Haredini, and the Managing Director of the Center for Community Development in Kičevo, Ismet Ballazhi, accepted the invitation from *forumZFD* and the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation.

It is clear that the coexistence of ethnic groups primarily plays out on the local level. Cultural, religious and linguistic differences are also highly relevant in schools and city districts. Conflicts must be tackled and solved for, according to Lale Akgün, the “proverbial cake is distributed – or eaten together – here”. In light of the local elections coming up in 2013, it is particularly important to encourage an exchange between the multi-ethnic communities of Struga and Kičevo. In the past, ethnically charged disputes have often arisen in the run-up to local elections, among other occasions. Particularly the shift in the ethnic majority ratios due to the territorial consolidation reform, which has already taken place in Struga and is due to be performed in Kičevo in the near future, is decisive in this context. Several factors must be

taken into account with regard to the conflicts in Struga and Kičevo, and for one, the

powerful influence of national politics on the local level,

which is considered excessive. National discourses such as debates on dealing with the past in Macedonia have an impact on the local context and influence the inter-ethnic relations – often negatively. While it is clear from examples from schools and the field of culture that the local level often finds good solutions for the multi-ethnic coexistence, the financial leeway is limited. Thus both Xhemi Haredini and Ismet Ballazhi reported that efforts to implement multicultural education in the schools failed due to insufficient funding and a lack of authority on the local level. Issues such as trust and justice are often behind practical questions such as the allocation of Kičevo’s cultural budget. In Macedonia – and Xhemi Haredini made this clear – it is experiences of injustice suffered by the Albanian population during the Yugoslav period, which remain present in the collective consciousness to this very day. “Particularly in the field of education, hate was sown a long time ago,” tells Haredini. The trust in state structures is accordingly weak and the sense of justice destroyed. Local institutions such as municipal councils, inter-ethnic commissions and local prevention committees therefore play an important role when it comes to defusing inter-ethnic tension. Hence the prevention committee in Struga helped to find a non-violent solution to the conflict that arose in the wake of the carnival in Vevčani. Stojce Smileski, the chairman of Kičevo’s inter-ethnic commission said: “Only when the democratic mechanisms function and all ethnic groups are socially integrated can the coexistence be peaceful.”

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Western Balkans - Regional

Youth Event ‚Peace 2.0‘

What are the advantages and disadvantages of social media? And how can meaningful use be made of their potential in peace work? These were just two of the central questions at the youth encounter, which has since become something of a tradition, held by *forumZFD* and pax christi Aachen beside Lake Ohrid in Struga for ten days in July. While the focus was on drama or street art in previous years, this year’s youth encounter considered three topics in combination: social media, peace work and film. Besides participants from the Western Balkans and Germany, young people from Poland also participated for the first time. The event was supported financially

by the European Commission’s “Youth in Action” programme.

“For me personally, the youth encounter marked a turning point in my training. In future, I will specialise in the field of film production.” Monica Pap from Novi Sad, who produced a documentary on a youth centre in Temerin / Serbia shortly after the youth encounter and promptly won a short film competition, tells with enthusiasm of the skills she acquired during the workshop. But how did the idea for this workshop come about? The way in which people take information in and communicate within one another has changed dramatically in recent years. Traditional media such as

radio and TV have been replaced with social media. For young people, social media are even decisive to the development of identity. What's more though, they also offer a platform for peace work. Social networks, blogs and video portals create a global space in which the opportunity exists to share information, campaign for change and organise civil society. This can form the basis for social change or also contribute to the reinforcement and maintenance of peace and democratic structures. The aim of the youth encounter was therefore to provide participants with the basic skills to be able to propagate peace and social justice via social media.

Think digital, act real!

The youth encounter began with a discussion on the dangers and potential of social media. It became clear that no general statement can be made on how to deal with social media. Rather, it is far more important to question their usage and to be aware of one's responsibility. It is ultimately an opportunity to not merely remain in the digital world but to also represent one's concerns in real life. Social media can help in this, though nothing can replace the personal interaction between people. Jane Felber, *forumZFD* project manager in Kosovo, introduced the participants to the subject of peace work. She discussed the theories behind this and which tools and actors are relevant for effective conflict transformation with the group. The field of film constituted the third aspect covered during the youth

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encounter. A team of trainers outlined the basics of film production and storytelling to the participants and gave an introduction to camera technology. The participants then developed their own scripts for short films on the subject of peace.

"And ... action!"

... was then the order of the day in the second part of the youth encounter. Regardless of whether at six

o'clock in the morning beside Lake Ohrid or late at night in the seminar room, the budding directors and filmmakers worked meticulously on realization of their concepts. The four groups filmed the raw material for their short film in just one day. They then had to cut it and add music and sounds. However, doubts arose here and there. How would the cut version of the film look? Would the intended message be correctly portrayed? Would certain aspects have to be filmed again? However when the first group presented its short [film](#), all doubts evaporated. The results were outstanding – and at the same time motivation for the other groups. On the final evening, the bridge to the local level was then created by showing all of the short films on a large



Young filmmakers in action.

screen in Struga's lively centre.

Not only digital, but also personal!

When the youth encounter came to an end after ten days, nine new friendships had been forged. Thus "the most important thing we showed is that we can achieve a great deal with good will and cooperation," tells Danijela Radovanović, for "we learned a lot about other countries and cultures through the shared activities".

Outside the Box

Mreža Mira – Network for Building Peace

One member in Network for Building Peace said: For the first time we have in our hands what is most important: PEACE! True or not? Hard to say, especially in the currently difficult socio-political situation. The successor states of Yugoslavia, and BH in particular, are still struggling with the legacies of war. Political, economic and social progresses are hindered by a structural status quo which is based on ethnic divisions.



©Goran Bubalo

Participants of the Day of Peace on the 21st of September 2012 in Sarajevo.

Most of the current political leadership is neither willing nor able to address the legacies of the past (particularly war crimes), to support reconciliation and develop cooperative strategies with the other sides. In turn, large parts of Bosnias' society are either following antagonistic rhetoric and action or are withdrawing into the private sphere as they do not see alternatives. At all levels, those actors which promote dialogue, cooperation and issues of general public interest, are overshadowed by dividing discourse and the inabilities to constructively deal with diversity and to transform conflicts in a peaceful manner. In an effort to change the current situation, peace organizations from all over the country established the "Network for Building Peace" which aims at a comprehensive renewal of social and economic life in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for long-term enhancement of the society as a whole, in order to deal with differences and conflicts in a constructive and non-violent manner. This is done through creating a frame-

work for joint coordinated activities of a number of civil society organizations, local authorities, business sector, media and governmental institutions. Today the "Network for Building Peace" has 107 members with the goal to influence and contribute to concrete actions related to the following areas of the public policy which are recognized as crucial for building long-term peace in BH: Education, security, regional development, the protection and promotion of human and minority rights, dealing with the past and transitional justice, gender equality, culture of public dialogue and democracy, strengthening civil society and building true peace, building trust between people and nations within Bosnia, constructive influence towards political structures in Bosnia, and improving coexistence. This year the Network coordinated the celebration of the International Peace Day in 12 towns throughout BH. For the second time, we are preparing a "Human Rights Day" celebra-

tion in the National Parliament, followed by a literary competition open for pupils from primary and secondary schools. The Network has published a monthly Peace Newsletter (Mirovne novosti) for almost two years now, as well as six editions of Directory of Donors. Currently the Network is preparing the third issue of the Peace Calendar followed by an exhibition of selected photos. Also, our webpage is updated on a daily basis. Additionally, we are working at the policy level to prepare a "National Strategy for Development of Positive Environment for Civil Society". We will continue to share information about the planning for the Sarajevo Peace Event for 2014 in cooperation with a number of international partners and several hundred participants from all over the world. We hope to lobby the BH government to declare 2014 as Year of Peace and Nonviolence, and have a number of activities linked to this. After all, it is true that for the first time, we have in our hands what is most important:

Peace!



network for
building peace

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News & Events

News in brief

The 2012 Run for Peace in Skopje

"When the children spread their wings ..." was the headline in the September 2011-edition of Fokus.Westbalkan. Together with the Union of Sports Teachers, the community of Gazi Baba (Skopje) organized the peace run launched by *forumZFD* in 2008 largely alone for the first time. *forumZFD* merely assumed an advisory role behind the scenes and also acted as a sponsor. So the children have finally well and truly spread their wings for this year, the community assumed full responsibility for the "Run for Peace". 500 schoolchildren in years 7 and 8 of different ethnic backgrounds from the Gazi Baba and Petrovec communities ran for peace with their teachers on 13 October. The mayors of both communities emphasized the importance of tolerance and mutual respect in their speeches. The peace run is not only a success because it has become a permanent fixture. Assumption of the organization by local partners means that the values mediated by the peace run have additionally been firmly embedded in the heads of all participants and are also passed on.

"Most monuments are hollow!"

German ambassador Gudrun Steinacker ended her speech marking the opening of the MONUMENTI exhibition in Skopje on 30 June 2012 with these words from Stanislaw Jerzy Lec. Before this, she expressed her hope that in the 21st century, monuments would be understood as objects and places of remembrance and reconciliation rather than of provocation and exclusion. Besides the ambassador, Albanian and Macedonian historians also discussed the significance of monuments in times past and present in their speeches. The exhibition is particularly relevant in Skopje where a sharp increase in the number of monuments is currently being experienced. The presentation by a group of students of photographs of their favourite motifs according to the motto of "Not only history – what I like to remember" therefore provided a welcome contrast. A poetry slam was subsequently hosted within the scope of the exhibition. Artists from Macedonia performed poems and also showed short films on social and political issues. On 10

July, the MONUMENTI exhibition moved on to Tetovo where it was put on display at the premises of partner organization LOJA.

Handover of the youth centre to the Kičevo community

Following two and a half years of successful work within the scope of the UNICEF project "Enhancing Inter-Ethnic Dialogue and Collaboration between Communities", the youth centre in Kičevo was handed over to the community of Kičevo and the local partner organization, the "Center for Community Development" (CRZ), on 20 September. In a celebratory atmosphere, the mayors of Kičevo and Blagoja Despotoski and the UNICEF representative in Macedonia, Sheldon Yett, signed the contract for handover of the youth centre to the community. "In the past few years, the youth centre has played a decisive role in the breaking down of barriers and stereotypes between the ethnic groups in Kičevo," tells UNICEF ambassador Yett of the significance and impact of the inter-ethnic youth work. The handover not only marked an end though but also a new beginning: the community of Kičevo will provide financial support to ensure that creative courses such as art, drama and dance for primary school children can continue to be held. Handover of the youth centre in Struga, which also arose through a co-operation with UNICEF, is set for 19 November 2012. As in Kičevo, the community of Struga will also make a permanent commitment to the continued existence of the youth centre and support inter-ethnic understanding between children and young people. Within the scope of the UNICEF project, *forumZFD* held over 1,200 different multi-ethnic workshops at schools between 2010 and 2012, and supported the democratic participation of schoolchildren in Struga and Kičevo. A total of over 7,000 children and young people were involved in the youth centre activities. *forumZFD* has therefore made a key contribution to enhancing the inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation between the ethnic groups in Struga and Kičevo.

"Open Cities of Peace" in Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 21 September, the 2012 International Day of Peace, 12 cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina set a powerful example of their united support for peace and non-violence. Less than two years ago, pax christi and

forumZFD in Derventa in cooperation with the ReMI regional peace initiative were still the sole initiators of events marking the International Day of Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thanks to the cooperation with the Peace and Collaborative Development Network in Sarajevo, a further 11 different events could be organized across the country in 2012. In Derventa, the city in which it all began and home to the original initiative to mark the International Day of Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a broad educational and cultural programme was offered for the fifth time under the leadership of ReMI. From the information stands of numerous NGOs to the “Run and Play for Peace”, activities to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities, an open-air theatre performance, and the traditional peace run with 700 schoolchildren from Derventa and the surrounding area to the “MONUMENTI. The changing face of remembrance” exhibition, there was something to suit every taste. The programme was completed with reading out of the greetings from the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Valentin Incko, and the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the United Nations in New York, Mirsada Čolaković.

International conference on mediation in schools

From 17 to 20 October, *forumZFD* organized a conference in Ohrid on the subject of mediation in schools in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Skopje. More than 70 experts from Albania, Kosovo, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia attended the event, with participants coming from ministries, NGOs and schools. This was the first time for the region that a conference of this kind on the subject of mediation in schools has been held. Varying degrees of importance are attributed to mediation in schools by the individual countries in the region. While it has already been incorporated into the laws in Serbia and Montenegro, various efforts are being made in other countries to implement mediation in schools. This work is mostly performed by NGOs. Moreover, no uniform standards exist in the individual countries with regard to the training of teachers, who pass the approach on to students. The aim of the event was therefore to exchange experiences and discuss strategies for implementation. At the conference’s conclusion, the participants were all extremely satisfied. For many, the exchange with colleagues from other countries provided motivation to remain committed to implementing mediation in school. All agreed that this event merely rep-

resented a beginning though. The suggestion was made to establish a network for school mediation and to hold regular conferences on the subject.

Peace-Award for Ana and Otto Raffai

Peace activists and former pax Christi Aachen / *forumZFD* peace consultants Ana and Otto Raffai have been awarded the „Krunoslav Sukić“ peace-price 2012 in Osijek/Croatia. Mr. and Mrs. Raffai have thereby been honored for years of promoting a “deepened understanding of non-violence, empowerment of the individual as well as the community towards a non-violent and value-orientated behavior, the encouragement of non-violence as an attitude as well as the facilitation of dialogue and inter-religious cooperation” in the Western Balkans. Since 2003, Mr. and Mrs. Raffai have been carrying out their work in the field of education and dialogue through their organization RAND (“Regional Address for non-violent Action”). The *forumZFD* would like to congratulate Ana and Otto Raffai and wishes them all the best, success and strength for the years to come.

Staff News

Headquarter / Germany

With effect from November 1st, Sven Reuter has taken over the responsibilities as advisor for the Western Balkans region within the head office of forumZFD in Cologne. Before, he worked 10 years with former German Development Service (DED) and later Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in various capacities related to the Civil Peace Service.

Derventa Project / Bosnia-Herzegovina

After six years of successful cooperation, the joint project of pax Christi Aachen and forumZFD in Derventa has been terminated in late 2012. From next year on, the program in B-H will be run by our office in Sarajevo. Peace consultant and project manager Annett Werner will return to Germany. forumZFD would like to thank

her for her high motivation and the excellent cooperation during the past years. We wish her all the best for her future plans. From 2013 on, peace consultant and assistant project manager Michele Parente is going to implement the new program of forumZFD in B-H, together with his local colleagues Lučiano Kaluža and Spasoje Kulaga. While Parente will mainly support the team in Sarajevo, Kaluža and Kulaga are going to broaden the KUVI-program (constructive usage of war-time experiences) closely coordinating with the regional peace initiative REMI.

Regional management Western Balkans / Serbia

Since October 1st, Johannes Rueger is in charge of the public relations department in the regional management office in Belgrade. Prior to joining the forumZFD, he has been working as a freelance journalist in Serbia, Bosnia and Kosovo, with a focus on civil society issues, minority rights and youth culture.

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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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