

ANCHORING MULTICULTURAL YOUTH WORK IN UNIVERSITY CURRICULA FOR FUTURE TEACHERS



LOJA



Supported by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

From Non-formal to Formal Education – Overview



The project developed as a need to face the difficult circumstances and conflicting multi-narratives, thus offering involvement of youngsters in creative spare-time activities without ever mentioning the ethnic divisions directly. Informal personal contacts were meant to break the ice and overcome mutual distrust and stereotypes of culturally diverse young people. At CBC LOJA, they often meet for the first time in their lives, even today, just like many of their parents and teachers. Strategies of informal education were later extended to the formal educational sector.
(Annedore Smith)

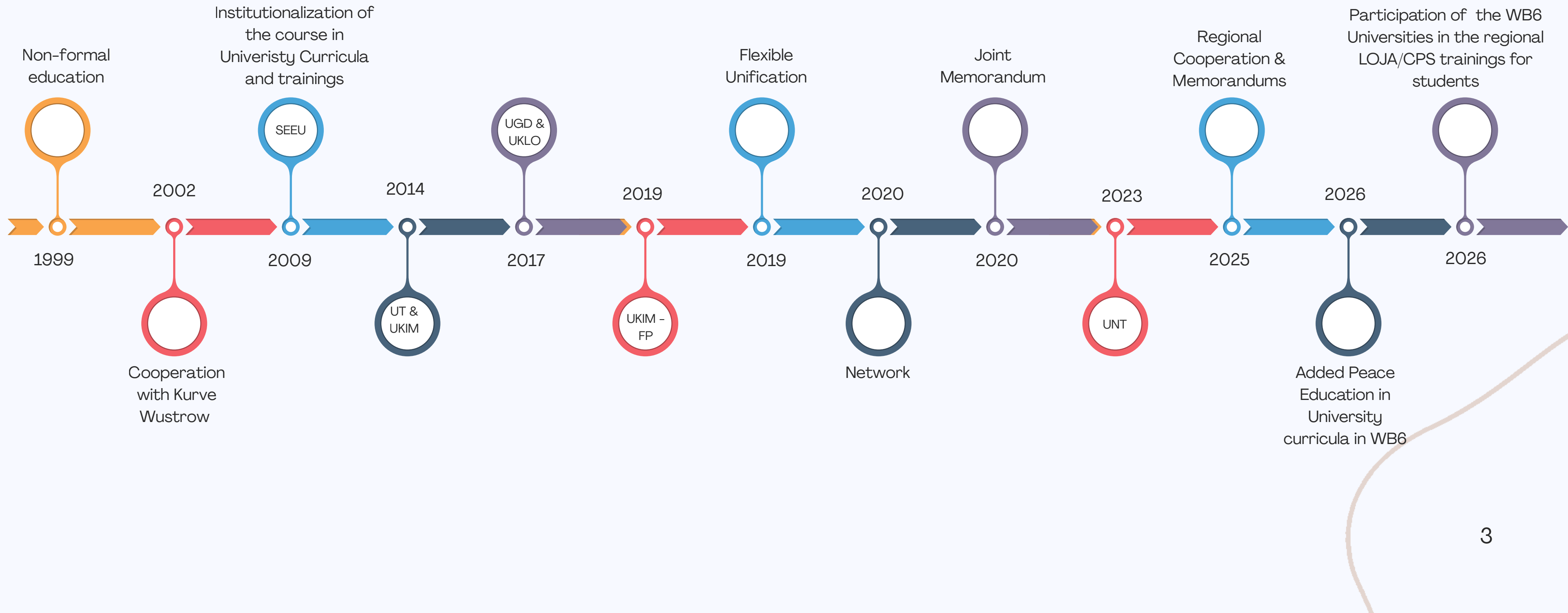


At the turn of the millennium, a group of dedicated activists in Macedonia (now North Macedonia) came together with a shared vision to bridge divisions left by the Balkan conflicts. This vision gave rise to LOJA – Center for Balkan Cooperation (CBC), a non-governmental organisation based in Tetovo, committed to fostering peace through creativity, dialogue, and education. LOJA began as an informal initiative bringing together young people from different cultural backgrounds through theatre performances and creative workshops for refugee children. Alongside this work, LOJA conducted research to understand why divisions in society persist. The study found that many of these divisions were deeply embedded in the structures and institutions of the country.

With this knowledge in mind, LOJA, together with its long-term partner, the German organization KURVE Wustrow, in 2007 approached the Ministry of Education with their plan to introduce Multicultural Education as a subject at the national level. The proposal was disregarded as too early to address. Despite the government's doubts, LOJA approached the universities of the country, and together they developed a university curriculum for intercultural youth work to be incorporated into the syllabus for future teachers. Today, this special course is taught in seven universities across North Macedonia.

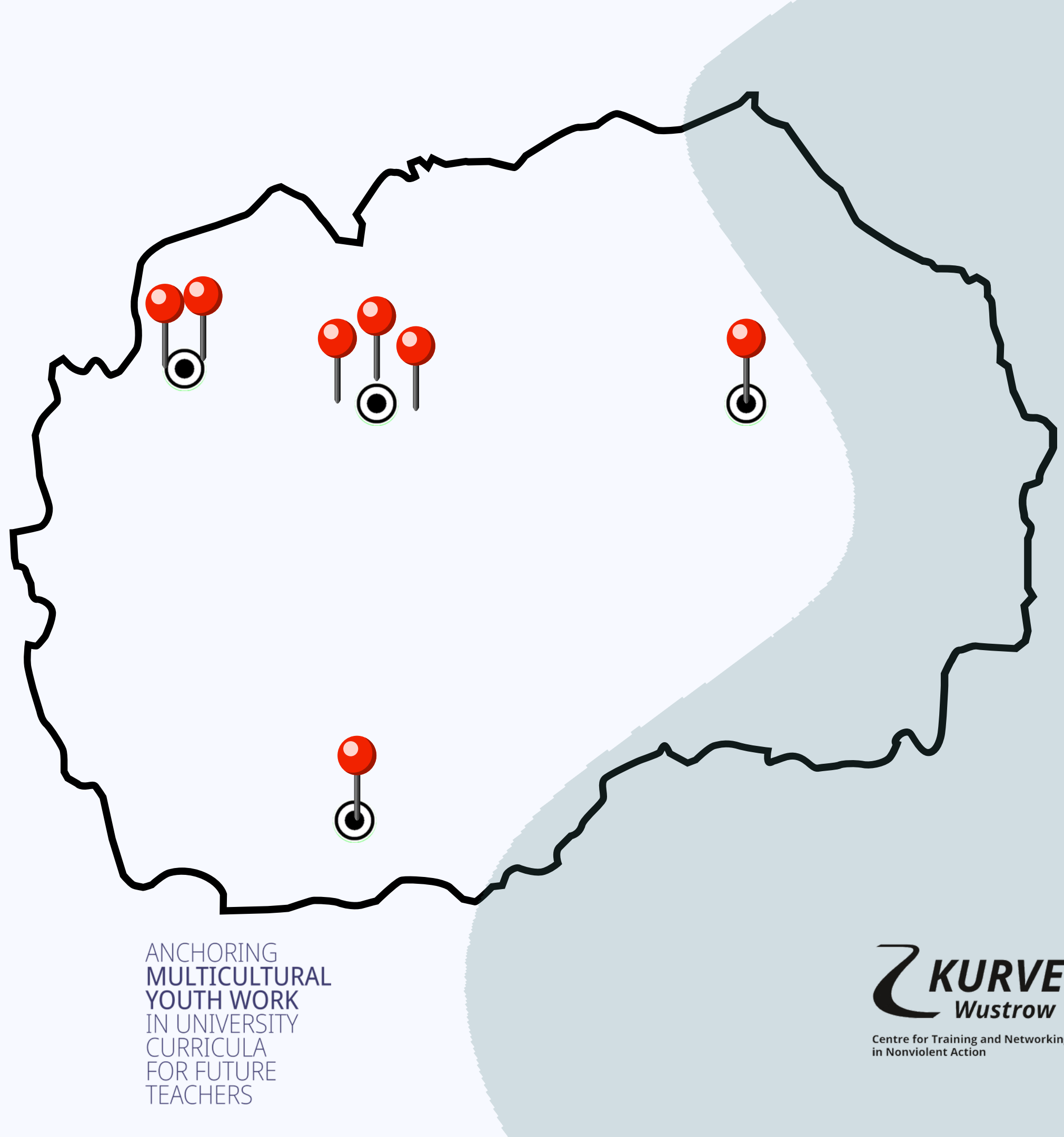
15 years and a number of successful classes & trainings later, LOJA decided to expand the project further in the region. With the support and determination of professors from all partner universities a plan of action leads us to today. Representatives from twelve universities from North Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro are officially on board laying the foundation for a new chapter in multicultural education in the whole Western Balkans.

Project's Milestones



The project "Anchoring Multicultural Youth Work in University Curricula for Future Teachers" has started in 2008. The first university to get involved in the project was South East European University (SEEU) – Tetovo, followed by University of Tetovo (UT), Ss. Cyril and Methodius University Skopje (UKIM)-FF, University St. Kliment Ohridski in Bitola (UKLO), Goce Delčev University Štip (UGD), UKIM-FP and later on Mother Teresa University Skopje (UNT) also joined. The idea behind the project is that the students are taught a course on Multicultural Education.

The essence of the course "Multicultural Education" is the combination of theoretical studies of multiculturalism with practical implementation, including teaching internships in schools. It took quite some time to convince educational authorities and institutions of the usefulness, if not societal necessity, to embrace such a concept.



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KURVE
Wustrow
Centre for Training and Networking
in Nonviolent Action

In 2024 CBC LOJA started talks with additional universities from the Balkan region to join the project "Anchoring Multicultural Youth Work in University Curricula for Future Teachers". In the end of 2024, after visiting the universities, a regional coordination meeting with universities from Podgorica, Tirana, Nish, Sarajevo and Pristina together with all universities from N. Macedonia was initiated. Following the meetings over 2025 Memorandums of Understanding and agreements for collaboration have been signed.



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Project's Activities



Trainings & Course on Multicultural Education

Some of the topics covered with flexible unification



Flexible Unification is a concept used to describe the commonalities that are shared within the course.



1. Team Building and Trust Building
2. Communication
3. Perception
4. Stereotypes and Prejudices
5. Differences
6. Discrimination
7. Identity
8. Conflicts and Transformation of Conflicts
9. Violence
10. Leadership
11. Decision-Making
12. Power
13. Gender and Gender Theories

Project's main activities



Multicultural Education Course

Implementing a university curriculum on intercultural education that equips students with the skills and perspectives necessary for conflict transformation – supporting a democratic process towards peaceful coexistence, cooperation and dialogue among all ethnic groups.

- 6 Regional Trainings a year



Trainings

Exploring social norms and practices to encourage critical reflection among students and activists – strengthening their capacities and fostering confidence, openness and mutual understanding.

- 2 Peace Building and Civic Activism Academy a year
- 1 Volunteer Training a year
- Implementation of small local initiatives (by training participants and volunteers)



Study Visits

Sharing experiences of other countries educational and social systems with the students of the partner universities to inspire their future work as teachers.

- Germany
- Austria
- Sweden
- Greece
- Western Balkan and more



Mobility

Mobility for teaching professors and students, fostering knowledge-sharing experiences on national level.

Professors and students :

- UGD and UKLO and UGD – 2019
- UKIM and UKLO – 2020 (online)
- UT and UKLO– 2021 (online)
- UKLO and UT – 2021
- UT and UKIM (FP), UKLO – 2022
- UT and UKLO – 2023
- UKIM and UT – 2024
- SEEU and UGD – 2025

Project's main activities



Academic Exchanges

Fostering academic exchange between university professors and gaining experience through shared knowledge of various teaching and learning methodologies.

- Poland
- Austria
- Greece
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Germany and more



International Scientific Conference

Offering a space for a scientific exchange of ideas and experiences. Bringing together academics and practitioners to work together on the future of teacher education.

- International Conference on Multicultural Education 2014
- Scientific Conference on Peace Education 2020
- International Conference on Peace Education 2025



Watch Through Festival

Encouraging discussion on topics of regional and international significance through the lens of politics, environment, culture and society. Celebrate and share our long standing and growing network of like-minded agents of change.

- Watch Through 2023. 2024,2025
- Literature and Civic Engagement
- Environment and Cultural Transformation



University Network

Connecting universities from all over the country and region while offering opportunities for exchange and a common path ahead. Regular meetings lead to mutual agreed outcomes and further strengthen the network of committed academics.

- Regular Meetings with all professors and deans involved

The project/training with numbers

Peace Building
Academies

21

117

Creative Conflict
transformation trainings

Participants

2950

14

Study Visits

Academic exchanges

8

A few impressions from participants of the trainings:

“These trainings provide skills not just for teaching, but also for life. We learnt a lot about freedom of expression and that one should value every person’s point of view—rather than upholding the idea that only one opinion is right and all others are wrong.”

“The topics, the activities, the management of the discussion and also the fact that everything that was said was translated, was very positive for me.”

“I liked the way how we learned: through activities, by being active and without prejudices.”

LOJA made us all aware of the crucial interdependence of education and culture and has combined both elements in its effort to promote multicultural education. This is the utmost importance in a multi-ethnic environment like Western balkans

“Students are transformed by this course. It provides them with skills which benefit them forever. I remember a rather timid young girl who came back from the LOJA trainings as a much more confident person”

“The trainers were wonderful, they represented an example for me how a teacher should be like: with the aim to keep students attention and transfer knowledge!”

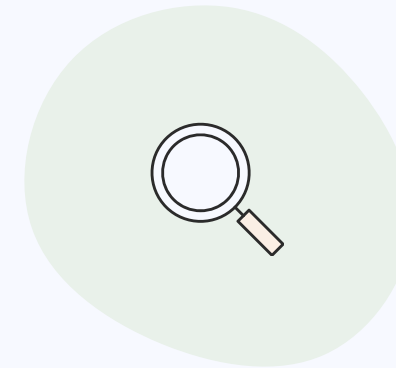
Future Steps?



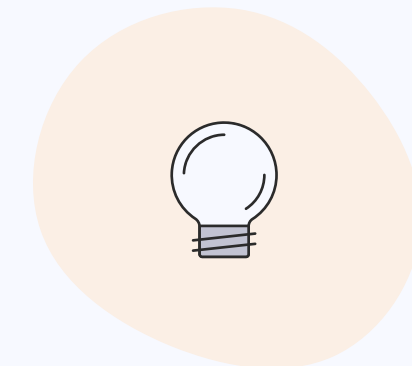
Enhancing regional
cooperation of WB6
Universities through regular
meetings, joint activities and
formalization of network



Supporting curricular
updates and
harmonization
across WB6



Exploring further
opportunities of
cooperation



Establishing a Peace
Building Academy
within the WB6



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