

# SEE YOUTH!

Magazine for the YOUTH programme about co-operation with South East Europe

**CONTACT POINTS** for the YOUTH programme  
in South East Europe

**SALTO-YOUTH**  
SOUTH EAST EUROPE  
RESOURCE CENTRE



Education and Culture

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## Dear readers, Welcome to the 4th issue of SEE YOUTH!

In this issue we have given the space to the 17 organisations that have been working with the SALTO SEE Resource Centre as Contact Points for the YOUTH programme in the Programme's different Partner countries in South East Europe since 2005 or 2006 to present their organisation and work to a larger public. High time, we think, after a good year of work of most of them.

SALTO SEE nominated NGOs as YOUTH Contact Points in order to increase the visibility of and access to the YOUTH programme in the Western Balkan countries by establishing a direct presence of the Programme there. The Contact Points' main tasks are to promote and inform about the Programme and to give advice to potential applicants about how to use it as a tool for youth work in their region. SALTO SEE will continue its policy of working with Contact Points in SEE under the Youth in Action programme.

Feedback and evaluation so far have indicated that the Contact Points are responding to a clearly identifiable need for more information and support regarding the use of the YOUTH programme in all the countries of the SEE region. Not surprisingly, this need is particularly acute in the more remote areas and among smaller and less well established youth organisations.

Over the course of the past year, the Contact Points held various information and promotion activities, distributed materials and answered requests for individual advice and support. Nevertheless, those efforts were only a first step in the process of raising awareness about the opportunities offered by the Programme and of providing the support necessary to potential applicants to successfully develop projects and partnerships in this framework.

### **2006 – a year of new opportunities and challenges**

New opportunities were created this year with the opening of the possibility for organisations from South East European Partner countries to submit applications for projects at the centralised selection rounds in February and June, a possibility that will continue to exist under the Youth in Action programme. This possibility now gives the more experienced organisations the chance to take more initiatives to look for partners for their own project ideas and to present them for funding (and was therefore eagerly awaited by them). On the other hand, it also increases the challenge of providing assistance to organisations that are less experienced in handling the requirements of an international program to enable them to develop appli-

cations and projects, in order to increase the accessibility of the Programme also at a broader level.

Equally, the enlargement of accreditation of host organisations to the Partner countries of South East Europe has proven the existence of a number of organisations in this region that are well motivated and qualified for hosting volunteers within the EVS programme, and that are now able to use the received accreditation to valorise and render more visible their work with volunteers and benefit from tools such as the database for accredited EVS host organisations in Europe on the European Commission website. At the same time, our past experiences with accreditation also signal the need for support to organisations that do not yet fulfil the basic requirements to get involved in this part of the Programme.

### **Perspectives for 2007**

Tools to be implemented under the new Youth in Action programme (such as enlarged accreditation or Youth-pass) will increase the general positive trend of aligning the opportunities and requirements for participation in the Programme in South East Europe with those existing in the Programme's member countries. On the other hand, they will also increase the need for support to organisations. The Contact Points will have an important role to play in this process. To give them support and further training in their work will therefore remain one of SALTO SEE's priorities in the coming year.

Reading the different articles will certainly give you a picture of the work of these different organisations. Through their eyes, you will also gain an impression of the reality of working with young people in the countries of South East Europe and feel the excitement of being part of a huge group of diverse, active and talented young people with lots of new ideas, but often working in rather difficult environments and circumstances. The Youth in Action programme will provide new and further opportunities for youth to explore new horizons, meet new friends and conquer new tops.

For more information about the Contact Points' work, please have a look at our website under [www.salto-youth.net/SEEstrategy](http://www.salto-youth.net/SEEstrategy).

*Sonja Mitter*  
Coordinator, SALTO SEE Resource Centre

# Albania

“...Youth in Albania, as elsewhere in the world, are a part of society: the most valuable and vulnerable at the same time. They represent the future, and the big challenge of the present is therefore to take care, look after and channel their energies, their talent and passion.

Unfortunately, Albania is still looming in the uncertainty of the post communist period, in an ever-lasting chaotic situation, which is partially due to the political instability that most of all affects young people. In the given situation they feel confused and excluded. They need to be guided in the right direction; they need to feel useful and being part of a family. This is why our organisation chooses to give its contribution to this group of society. The help of foreign organisations and especially of the YOUTH programme has been and is paramount...”

Dori Lika, Albanian Society in Development

“...Young people in Albania suffer from apathy, and they complain and nag about the lack of opportunities in Albania. For the majority, the only solution is moving abroad. The numbers of applications for foreign universities as well as the long queues for visa in front of the embassies are more than enough of a proof for this claim.

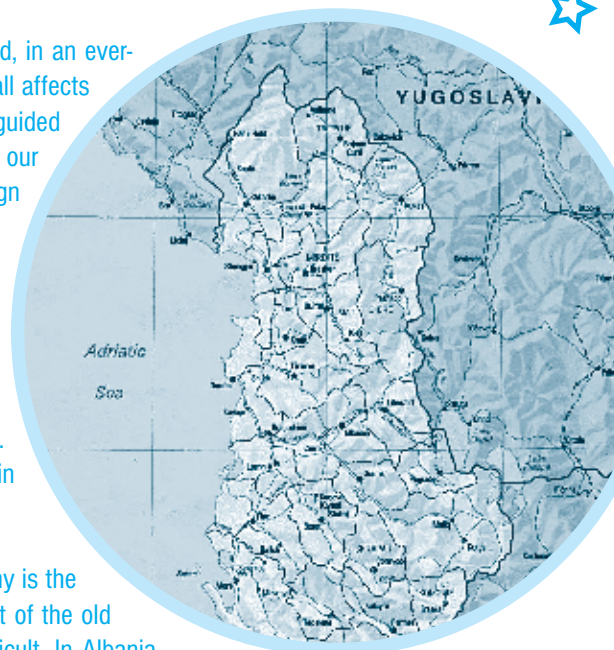
The solutions can be found next to the problem. A lot of young people think that apathy is the root of their problems. Living constantly under the pressure of that apathy, a remnant of the old system where people did not have rights but only obligations, makes all change difficult. In Albania, there are many youth organisations that invest a lot of efforts into moving things ahead, but only few of them are really active and accepted by the respective local communities.

In spite of good efforts in the field of employment, such as improved access to information through internet sites ([www.punesimi.info](http://www.punesimi.info)), lobbying with government ministries and other institutions to open their doors to young people, and efforts in the process of EU integration, the economic problems seem to have prevailed. Politicians take it for granted that youth is, somehow, obliged to work for them, no matter if it actually supports quite the opposite positions. Youth problems are put aside, shelved in the institutions to wait for more suitable times. Therefore, it comes as a small surprise that young people have lost confidence in the institutions that represent them. Another identity crisis is caused by conflicts between well established youth NGOs.

The last parliamentary elections could mark the rising of a new day for youth. A lot of people with a background in youth activism and involvement in youth NGOs have entered parliament. IRSH, through the implementation of the Albanian Youth Parliament, is taking initiatives for the education of the young generation in democratic culture, and also is inviting young people to actively participate in the governance. UNICEF is one of the main supporters of IRSH during the implementation of the Albanian Youth Parliament Programme and in the promotion of different initiatives and the development of youth policy.

Now, the good image that young people have created of Albania through numerous youth exchange programmes and initiatives and the energy they have invested in certain political situations results in politicians approaching youth with offers of additional action space and decision-making power. One such action was the monitoring of the elections, with 1,000 young volunteers providing the necessary transparency to the balloting. In this process, IRSH invited for the first time international students to monitor the process and to exchange their experience with young Albanians. Thanks to the cooperation with the European Students Forum (AEGEE), this activity was a step forward into integration processes of Albania towards the EU...”

Blendi Dibra, IRSH



# ASD (ALBANIAN SOCIETY IN DEVELOPMENT)

ASD (Albanian Society in Development) was established in 2000 by the vision and initiative of a handful of young people to contribute to what we call our device: "The youth is the future, the future it is made in the present and the present is our responsibility". We aim to contribute to the development of Albanian society; to promote human rights giving special emphasis to youth and children; to cooperate and coordinate the activity with international organisations.

## Main Fields of activity:

- YOUTH
- Capacity building & vocational training
- HIV/AIDS
- Gender issues / participation
- Environment

In particular, the questions of minority groups, social inclusion, and equal rights are issues that we are keenly aware of, and seek to promote in our work.

## Past activities:

- Round table with local authorities, religious, political and NGO representatives on the risk of trafficking of human beings
- Social activities with high school students

- Training course on HIV/AIDS
- National workshop on the promotion of the YOUTH programme 2004
- SSV: "South Balkan YOUTH Dialogue" in collaboration with ICYE International. Participants from Germany, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania (September 2005)
- Workshop "The European YOUTH programme: Possibilities for participation and future perspectives" (12 November 2005 in Tirana, Albania) in cooperation with SALTO SEE RC.
- On arrival training for EVS in SEE Region, 21-24 September 2006, Durrës, Albania.
- Information day on YOUTH Programme, 30 September 2006.

From this August we have been hosting our first volunteers, two from Spain, two from Finland, one from Italy and one from the U.K.. They work in our organisation (ASD) but also in Aksion Plus, BSFA and Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Tourism. We have also sent volunteers to Ireland, the U.K., Finland, Lithuania and Italy. In January we will be hosting another volunteer from Spain, and two more volunteers are expected to arrive in March (project is approved but volunteers have not been selected yet).

Since we have been appointed YOUTH Contact Point, but also since long before, we have strongly felt the responsibility and importance of such a duty and engagement. We have been working to promote the YOUTH programme through different means: organising workshops, but also informing and giving advice in smaller and informal meetings with the most serious Albanian NGOs. Our aim is to rise awareness of the crucial importance of collaboration and exchanges between our young people and those of the region and the wider Europe

We truly and deeply believe that one of the most important means for having a harmonious and peaceful future together in the European family is to build strong and sincere relations between young people, wherever they are; it means to forgive and forget the past which often hurts, and try to think not nationally, but internationally, in the best meaning this word bears. We believe in the universal values of love, friendship and forgiveness, and coexistence as brothers and sisters, and we give such aims to our efforts to promote the YOUTH/Youth in



- SSV (Short Study Visit) "Inclusion of Minorities in Society" SEE – EU countries
- SSV: "Raising awareness on gender balance amongst youngsters in Europe" in collaboration with youth organisations from France, Portugal, Macedonia and Albania
- Vocational training course for unemployed youth in rural areas

## Planned activities:

- Joint mid-term meeting and seminar titled "Young people as agents of change in civil society", 14-17 December 2006, Albania
- Training Course on EVS Management 2007, Tirana, Albania
- Youth exchange, 2007 Saranda, Albania
- Seminar "Participation in the "Youth in Action" Program, 2007, Tirana, Albania.

Action programme, which is the bearer of such values.

To assist Albanian Youth organizations in participating and benefiting from the YOUTH Programme, has not been only a duty for us, but also a pleasure. We were very happy to know, for instance, that a girl from Albania, whom we assisted during her application process, Ms Kodjana Malushaj from the organisation Avenir, received a positive answer: Six months ago she had no information at all about YOUTH programme, and she did not believe that such possibilities exist, but at the end of this year she is going to do EVS in Belgium.

We have developed several activities and projects within the YOUTH programme. Here we want to share with you the experience of one of our volunteers, Enisa Gaxho, who has gone to Ireland as an EVS volunteer:

“When my coordinator asked me if I wanted to write something about my EVS experience, I was delighted, flying. I had decided to do this at the end of my program, but I have so much to say that I think is better to start now.

When I got the answer that my application was selected, I had a strange feeling inside of me that I can't describe. It was joy

mixed with fear, because at that moment I saw my dream become reality, but for a moment I didn't feel ready... I still couldn't believe that it was me, and when the days passed by and the date of departure was coming closer and closer, I realised that I wasn't ready. Maybe I wasn't ready to go away for so long time... I don't know... but the days were going so fast that I found myself in Ireland because I thought that is better to leave this in destiny hand.

In Albania I was working for ASD. I like very much working with young people and this is what I am doing here as well. Working in another country, you realise that youth problems are international ones rather than national or regional.

I'm very happy I am here, having the possibility to meet not only Irish youngsters but also many other young people coming from all over Europe. Besides a great experience, this project is a bridge between our countries; it helps to build the future citizenship. That's why this programme should be reachable for all young people.

I think doing this kind of service makes you feel more self-confident and teaches you how to manage your life in the future. Living together for such a long and short

period of time in the same time (because time flies when you are doing your EVS) with different people from all over Europe in the same house or organization and sharing experiences with each other you find that you have so many common things with all this young people and you have always something to share which thing that makes you feel proud of being a future European citizen

I still have some time left here, but I don't feel like going home, even though I already miss it so much. Every day I have lived here has been a great experience for me, so I am sure that the next two last months will be the same: full of surprises, new friends and new experiences.

I am thankful to ASD, my sending organisation, and to my host organisation Youthreach Centre Drogheda, and especially to my mentor, Mrs. Vivienne Branigan for making me feel so much at home during stay in Ireland.”

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Group discussing before going to visit another youth organisation in Albania during the "South Balkan Youth Dialogue - EU SEE Study Visit to Macedonia and Albania", 19 to 25 September 2005, organised by ICYE International in cooperation with ASD.

# YOUNG INTELLECTUALS, HOPE - IRSH

The organization "IRSH" is a socio-cultural, independent, non-political and non-profit organisation licensed by the Albanian Youth, Culture and Sports Ministry. "IRSH" works on the development of civil society and the promotion of peace and stability in the Balkans. IRSH represents people which hope to be intellectuals like teachers, university professors, students, engineers, advocates, doctors, economists and different other groups or NGOs.

The name of the NGO "Young Intellectuals, Hope" means that there are people that:

- HOPE to become good intellectuals,
- HOPE to change the Albanian reality
- Believe in a progressed Albanian civil society.

Our organisation offers its partnership in developing different projects mainly in these fields: juridical and human rights, socio-economic, protection of women's rights, education, free and independent development of information, youth exchanges, art, culture and sports.

Our future goal is based on our relations and collaboration with foreign and local organisations and different institutions for a better fulfilment of our mission.

IRSH became one of the most active Albanian NGOs in the YOUTH programme especially after participating in a long-term training course on project development organised by SALTO-YOUTH in Slovenia in the first half of 2002. Following the training course, IRSH became a partner in a number of projects.

One of them was the »Youth Mobility Development« seminar, held in Forli, Italy with around 50 participants from all over Europe. In 2003, IRSH sent an EVS volunteer from its organisation for 6 months to the organisation Vicenza Commune in Italy. Another EVS volunteer sent by IRSH spent 1 year with Circola Africa Ancona in Italy in 2005.

#### Further activities include:

- January 2005, IRSH became a partner of UNICEF in the implementation of

the Albanian Youth Parliament in the Shkodra district

- February 2005, IRSH organised an awareness raising campaign in secondary schools in rural areas about HIV/AIDS
- April 2005, IRSH in cooperation with the European Student Forum hosted a feasibility visit in Shkodra of about 10 European students
- April 2005, IRSH in cooperation with the movement MJAFT organised a forum with the deputies of Shkodra
- May 2005, IRSH organised "mock elections" in secondary schools and trainings of first time voters
- June-July 2005, IRSH implemented "Youth in Motion", a project which intended to raise the awareness of young people regarding their participation in electoral processes
- July 2005, IRSH coordinated the observation of electoral process in the Shkodra Prefecture by a group of 100 domestic and 15 international observes
- July 2005, IRSH organised a workcamp at the Ohrid Lake in the frame of the European YOUTH programme
- August 2005, IRSH co-organised a workcamp for young people in the frame of European YOUTH programme in Kavadarci, Macedonia
- September 2005, IRSH organised a training seminar in Kune Lezhe for 20 young people
- November 2005, a group of three young people from IRSH participated in a YOUTH programme information workshop organised in Tirana by the SALTO SEE Resource Centre in cooperation with ASD
- December 2005, on youth day IRSH





organised in the city cinema "Millenium" a debate forum with deputy Mr.Spartak Ngjela and well known writer Ms.Mimoza Ahmetaj

- December 28th, IRSH organised a New Year party for orphan children of Shkodra city
- December 30th, IRSH organised a big party for New Year 2005/2006 with the participation of young people from Shkodra city.

#### **Motivation for becoming a YOUTH contact point**

IRSH has been active in youth and youth policy issues in Albania for 12 years. It has also been a partner of several international NGOs and institutions, such as UNICEF and other NGOs in SEE and has been actively using and promoting the YOUTH programme for several years. It seemed therefore only logical to us to be interested in becoming a Contact Point for the YOUTH programme and to assist the

SALTO SEE Resource Centre in enhancing the visibility of the YOUTH programme and the access to it in Albania.

The priorities which we follow as YOUTH contact point include:

- Exchanging information regarding the Programme and offering also trainings/ assistance/advice for all NGOs, groups and individuals interested.
- Encouraging Albanian NGOs to participate actively in the Programme
- Encouraging Albanian NGOs to apply for projects in the frame of the Programme
- Offering Albanian NGOs possible partnerships in SEE and Europe and trying to network them.
- IRSH also will continue to be an active user of the YOUTH/Youth in Action programme by participating directly in activities supported by the Programme.

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# Bosnia and Herzegovina

“...It is well known that the war and multiethnic conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina left behind a lot of damage to all levels of civil society, especially in the socio-economic field. Although the war finished ten years ago, its negative influence is still present in the citizens’ daily life. We have a huge unemployment rate, corruption and slow integration processes in various areas (social welfare, education, youth and politics), to mention just some of the current problems.

According to different surveys made on the territory of B&H, young people are the group that is the most affected by the present situation. The majority would like to leave the country for good as they are frustrated because of the current situation and the lack of initiatives taken by the state and its various institutions to solve their problems. The multiethnic conflicts are still not overcome and contribute to fostering a negative atmosphere among youth. Last but not least, young people do not travel to other countries because of the strict visa regimes, or they travel to neighbourhood countries for which they do not need a visa. Taking into consideration these above-mentioned points, it is not strange to note that youth in B&H do not share even the basic opportunities that youth in more developed European countries have.



Youth in the city of Banja Luka share the same problems as other young people all over B&H. Of course, being the second biggest city in B&H, Banja Luka offers more opportunities than smaller places, but the situation of youth is nevertheless similar everywhere. I would like to stress, however, that the development and work of the non-governmental sector over the last ten years has contributed to making the present situation of youth better than it might otherwise be. Different NGOs offer to youth various types of engagement in civil society development according to their fields of interest (such as social welfare, economy, education, ecology, democratic development, etc.)...”

Jugoslav Jevđić, OKC Banja Luka

“...After 1995, many houses of culture and youth houses worked according to different faiths: some continued to work as before, some are now just shells without any content, some rent their space to different purposes, and some were destroyed. At the same time, the vast majority of the around 300 youth NGOs existing in Bosnia-Herzegovina have a similar problem: no space for their activities, and no space for youth culture. Although there are no physical borders between entities or territories of the national groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina, mental borders certainly exist.

In post-war Mostar, the consequences of isolation are especially evident, since Mostar suffered physical, and is still suffering political divisions. Life in mono-ethnic environments (promoted for instance by segregation in the educational system) which are hostile to all differences does not leave much space for individuality and different life styles. As a product of war ideologies and ethnic cleansing, these environments have created and imposed a strict, uniform system of values...”

Meri Musa & Armel Suković, Youth Cultural Centre Abrašević

# YOUTH COMMUNICATION CENTRE BANJA LUKA

The Youth Communication Centre (YCC) was established with the aim to promote positive values of civil society. Through activities in the fields of education, voluntarism, media, psychosocial work, peace building and the development of a democracy programme we contribute to increasing of quality of young people's lives and the development of equal opportunities in society.

According to this mission, we identified following aims:

- To work on reconciliation and civil society development through peace building activities and the development of democracy,
- To support the development and capacity building of NGOs through organising seminars and training courses,
- To promote youth issues and activities of the NGO sector on our radio "Balkan",
- To develop programs which increase youth participation in decision-making processes in school and community,
- To promote and develop volunteerism and youth mobility through voluntary and partnership programs,
- To develop non-formal educational programs and to provide psychosocial support in the community.

YCC implements its projects and activities in the frame of the following areas of work:

- Radio Balkan
- Education programme
- Programme of peace building and democracy development
- Psychosocial programme
- Voluntary programme and global partnerships

Our main target group is youth, but in the frame of specific projects and activities we also cover other target groups, such as vulnerable social groups, governmental bodies, institutions and media.

The main focus in our work is on development of voluntarism and promoting its important role in the development of civil society. Based on that focus, the majority of our projects and activities are related

to achieving a positive recognition of voluntarism in society and advocating the establishment of a law on voluntarism, as well as the active voluntary participation of our citizens. This process is supported through different projects/programmes that we developed, such as the development of secondary school student

actively involved in the YOUTH programme through different projects such as the European Voluntary Service (EVS - Action 2); Youth for Europe (Action 1) and Support measures (Action 5).

The biggest challenge we encountered in implementing the YOUTH programme was



Info day in Dobo, presentation of the YOUTH programme

councils, long and short term exchanges of volunteers, advocacy campaigns on different law adoption processes, a radio programme and, more recently, local voluntary service.

YCC recognises the YOUTH programme as an important possibility to involve youth into running programmes and projects. For us, the YOUTH programme also has an important and close link to the development of voluntarism and its legislative establishment. Since 2002, YCC has been

the "Info project", which took place in the framework of Action 5 (project coordinated by ICYE International in 2004). Through this project we worked on the promotion of the YOUTH programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina together with Youth Centre Livno, as well as with other youth organisations in other countries of South East Europe. The "Info project" helped us to receive an overview of how many NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina were using the opportunities of the YOUTH programme in their work. Unfortunately, we found



Students Council Conference, October 2006

out that the YOUTH programme is barely used, and that there is a need for more intensive work for the promotion and capacity building of NGOs in the country. Because of that, some generations of youth in our country have already lost the possibility to use the Programme, which could have contributed to their professional and personal development. But this situation can also motivate different NGOs now to start with different projects and activities in the frame of the Programme and

thus offer youth a different perspective of life and opportunities for their personal development.

The above-described situation created the motives of YCC to apply for becoming one of the Contact Points for the YOUTH programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and luckily we were elected, besides other organisations in the countries of South East Europe. We want to share our knowledge and experience gained

through the implementation of different project in frame of YOUTH Programme with others. This approach is also part of our strategic goal related to the assistance and capacity building of other organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in other countries.

The YOUTH programme with its philosophy and methodology is very important for youth in our country, since it provides them with the possibility to act as active citizens in frame of different democratic processes. Furthermore, the Programme offers opportunities for personal and professional development. We therefore hope to see the YOUTH or now Youth in Action programme accepted by numerous NGOs and youth as their beneficiaries. We believe that this vision is achievable and we will give our contribution to this process.

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Workshop to select long term volunteers

# YOUTH CULTURAL CENTRE ABRAŠEVIĆ

The Youth Cultural Centre “Abrašević” is an open network of non-governmental organisations, informal groups and individuals that was created in July 2003 to ensure an adequate role of youth in the social and cultural processes in Mostar. Offering them space, support and connection strengthens and encourages young people to work on the improvement and diversity of the cultural offer, as well as on finding efficient ways of solving social issues that are important for their future in Mostar and its region. The idea of the YCC “Abrašević” is to create an open society where youth, with their own efforts, take an active influence towards creating positive changes in the social and cultural life of their community.

#### We aim to support the development of:

- a dynamic and ethical state of spirit of young people in Mostar
- a vivid cultural production and youth scene
- politically aware young people and
- a policy in function of all citizens.

#### Our objectives are:

- Democratisation: launching and strengthening the civil society sector and citizens’ initiatives which participate in the construction of the cultural, artistic, social and political life of the city and the country, in order to raise public awareness about the important issues of society, such as culture, human rights, ecology and politics.
- Interaction: increasing contact between different cultures and communities in order to raise intercultural awareness and consciousness, while preserving an individual identity that favours the building of self-esteem and the process of auto-identification.
- Confidence building: affirming the young population, increasing their knowledge and promoting new initiatives and cultural and artistic trends, in order to build self-confidence among youth and to confirm their capacity to act within their society.
- Education: offering formal and informal learning opportunities that support the creative and productive personal development of youth and help them acquire learning and working habits and skills an improve youth mobility.

- Cooperation: Association of non-governmental organizations with the aim of reinforcing their recognition and impact in society and building sustainability.
- Cultural development: strengthening the artistic and cultural fields in Mostar and the region by offering structure, space, time, technique

Kolaps Magazine Production; Kolaps Music Diffusion, Club Alternativni Institut (organising of cultural events, especially concerts); Seminars “Litkon” ([www.litkon.org](http://www.litkon.org)), organised by a literature network of young publishers of the ex-Yugoslavia region) and the web site [www.kolaps.org](http://www.kolaps.org).



and logistics to a quality program, for artists as well as for the public, on the local and international levels.

#### Short description of partner NGOs constituting the Youth Cultural Centre Abrašević:

- Alternativni Institut, is an association for artistic and multi-media projects and publishing. Its most important projects include Kolaps Book Production;

- Mladi Most is an open youth space for culture and reconciliation, offering educational, social and cultural activities through courses, seminars, workshops, events, happenings and partnerships ([www.mladi-most.org](http://www.mladi-most.org), [www.film-klub.org](http://www.film-klub.org)).
- MIFOC is a youth citizens’ association working on support for cultural and civic processes in Mostar and its region ([www.mifoc.org](http://www.mifoc.org)).



- Sunčana Strana is an association offering media promotion and campaign services for non-governmental organisations and youth activities.

To the youth of Mostar, the Youth Cultural Centre "Abrašević" offers:

- a space for creative work and education through workshops while respecting their needs and interests,
- the possibility for different ways of artistic production and presentation in our space,
- high-quality cultural events with performers from the whole world, and
- a platform for initiating successful common initiatives and individual projects in

a way that offer young people the possibility for solving important issues.

Some examples of YOUTH projects developed:

- Preparation for an exchange in Mostar (Strengthening human bridges, Action 1), applied through our partner in Spain RAI.
- The Art Of Active Citizenship (Applied by partner organisation ARCI Milan)
- Des dix ans des accords de Dayton aux dix ans du Festival Interculturel de Mostar : la promotion des créations artistiques et des initiatives civiques des Balkans au sein de l'Europe (From ten years of the Dayton Agree-

ment to ten years of the Intercultural Festival of Mostar: promoting artistic creations and civic initiatives of the Balkans in Europe), applied for by partner organisation Drugi Most, Grenoble, France)

Becoming a Contact Point for the YOUTH programme gave us another tool for accomplishing our goals and it seemed therefore only natural for YCC Abrašević to undertake this responsibility.

As YOUTH Contact Point, we follow these priorities:

- Informing youth NGOs in our area about the possibilities for applying to the YOUTH programme,
- Giving advice to potential beneficiaries about the practical aspects related to using the YOUTH programme,
- Connecting NGOs from our region with partners in Europe,
- Promoting the visibility of the YOUTH programme, and
- Incorporating the YOUTH programme in the activities of our centre, where possible

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# YOUTH CENTRE JAJCE

Jajce is a small town situated in the central part of Bosnia. Because of the citizens' migration during the war (1992 - 1995), today the town of Jajce faces a very difficult social, economic and political situation. From the 45.000 citizens who lived in Jajce before the war, only about 30.000 people back. This situation has the strongest consequences for the youngsters of Jajce.

Today in Jajce, as well as in other similar towns of the region, the offers aimed at the young people are very limited. The cinema has not been working for years, sport clubs can accept only a limited number of the young people, and there are almost no cultural events that could provide a better social life for the youngsters. And because unemployment is high, the young people do not have the means to travel to other countries and meet other cultures. All of these above-mentioned elements limit the young people's opportunities for social development and provoke, or enhance their isolation from society.



Dancing program for girls: Currently the Centre runs 3 groups with a total of 45 participants.

The citizen's association «Omladinski Centar - Jajce» (Youth Centre - Jajce), is a non-governmental, non-partisan, non-religious and multiethnic youth organisation. Youth Centre - Jajce works in an organised way to bring to life programmatic aims by organising seminars, workshops, daily schools, training and founding clubs and sections for children and youth,. We have 4 workers and 12 volunteers (program leaders) and offer our services to 60 persons daily.

#### Motivation for becoming a YOUTH Contact Point

In line with the main aim of our organisation, we would like to give information to young people from the Jajce region and to assist them in realising their ideas and initiatives. By providing them with information about the YOUTH programme and its offers, we want to help the young people in this Bosnian region integrate into the European family, and we also hope to engage youngsters to take part in our own projects.

Youth organisations are the best way to reach the youth in our region and to bring

them to participate in an organised way in European projects. To achieve this, we must inform and educate the youth organisations in how to prepare a project, find European partners, arrange tasks and, finally, apply with the project proposal for a grant from the YOUTH programme.

Considering that our country has a very complicated state system and that we are a society that is very »closed« to other cultures, participating in an activity under the YOUTH programme gives our young people an opportunity to raise their awareness about intercultural understanding and to improve their tolerance of other cultures, and opens our society towards integration into a multicultural society with a higher level of human rights.

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#### Example of a YOUTH project

In August 2006, OC-Jajce participated in a youth exchange called "INSIDE OUTSIDE", which was organised in the German town of Weimar. The project involved 19 participants aged between 17 and 25, coming from Germany, Italy, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The youth exchange covered several topics, such as majorities-minorities, intercultural learning, prejudices, discrimination, human rights and immigration. All participants took part in workshops and shared their opinions and experiences related to these topics. The most interesting topic was intercultural learning, aimed to improve tolerance and prevent bigger problems, such as racism or nationalism.

"When I was invited to take part in this project, I knew immediately that I wanted to go, because I like to travel, and traveling + new people + new experience = great fun! The experience I got will remain a part of me for all my life. The topics and discussions we shared relate to my interest in society as well as to my personal life (migration, identity, intercultural understanding). But the best was having fun with other participants of the exchange. I am taking this new experience and knowledge with me to my future life."  
Jelena Ladan, participant from OC Jajce

# Croatia

“...Our community is in a stage of transition from one system to another. Preparations for entering the EU are undertaken by the State, but on the local level people are confused and have the burden of adapting to something they do not understand. Also, unemployment is very high, due to the development of the private business sector. Because of all that, problems like drug abuse, alcoholism, violence and others are appearing mostly among youth. Education is needed in various fields, such as drug prevention and substance abuse or positive affirmation through activities, but is rare and not represented strongly enough in our community...”

Danijela Lovric, Youth Centre for Non-formal Education – CNC

“...Young people in contemporary Croatia face the same problems as their counterparts in most of the European countries: as the generations continuously diminish, today’s youth has to deal with the problem of supporting an ever-increasing percentage of non-active and retired people. Simultaneously, the problems caused by the structural crisis in the economy in the near past, as well as insufficient policies for solving them, young people are particularly vulnerable in terms of leading independent and productive lives -finding employment, obtaining housing and upholding an adequate standard of living.

Young people are also characterised by having only minimal social and political influence, even regarding problems that primarily concern their own generation. Also youth participation in public life has been considerably low. However, although no official data exists, reality has recently shown more optimistic signs, which is proven by an increasing number of initiatives in the field of youth policy implementation at national and local level – a trend that hopefully leads to the wider empowerment of Croatian youth...”

Ana Zucic – ZUM (taken from Country Profile: Croatia, SALTO SEE, revised version, Dec. 2006)



# CENTRE FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION - **CnC**

*It is time to let our youth create a new future, for it **IS** their future.*

Through our different contents, workshops and programs, we at the CnC offer children and youth the possibility to positively reaffirm and to find out more about themselves. We guide them not by solving their problems, but by teaching them how to solve those problems themselves and to gain the respect of others.

“To empower and develop creators, not consumers”, this is our mission.

Our work is oriented towards creating opportunities for youth to grow and adapt to upcoming changes. Guided this goal, we have developed a program of active participation of youth which aims to raise their awareness, individualism and personal freedom, i.e. to prepare them to become youth of Europe with all the benefits and responsibilities. In order to achieve this goal, we co-operate with other associations and the local community, standing up for human rights and the equality of all mankind and promoting activism and youth work.

Besides our competent personnel, who with their experience achieve results, we have a large number of youth that can contribute to our goals. We have 30 volunteers that have been conducting

workshops and field work with other youth in our community.

### **Our centre has the following sections:**

- Youth club – in function
- Education house – in function
- Alternative theatre
- Foundation
- Employment service
- Family support
- Info-centre – in function
- General work section – in function
- Hostel

Our reasons for offering this kind of program are obvious: just take a look around and you will see the faces of young people that are filled with questions and wishes. We need to show them that they are really the future of our world. They have simply got to get a chance to prove their importance for the further development of our country.

### **A brief look at our accomplishments In the past three and a half years of work, we:**

#### **a) have been active within the following workshops:**

CnC conducted

- around 500 dancing workshops
- around 300 creative workshops
- around 250 music workshops
- around 200 concerts of demo bands from Croatia and EU countries
- around 120 movie workshops
- around 80 non-formal education workshops
- around 170 drama and literature workshops
- around 60 debates and round tables

#### **participated in**

- international trainings
- youth exchanges

#### **co-organised 5 international festivals for youth**

#### **established a network of over 40 NGOs from SEE and EU countries**

#### **helped to**

- develop several youth NGOs
- temporarily employ over 150 young people during the summers of 2005 and 2006

#### **initiated the idea for the development of the Regional Youth Council.**

#### **b) have worked within the following partnerships:**

Interkulturelles Zentrum Austria (project “youthNET”)  
Balkan Children and Youth Foundation (entrepreneurship programs)



Karaoke night for members



Teambuilding workshop for »peer to peer volunteers«; task : building a tree out of nothing, or what we have at our disposal at the moment :)

European Platform for Youth Development (regional coordinator).

Since April 2006 we have been a Contact Point for the YOUTH programme for Eastern Croatia.

Intercultural learning and awareness of the importance of EU citizenship is something that has to be worked on and acknowl-

edged by youth. This is why we believe that it is very important to be a part of the EU YOUTH programme. By now, we have taken part in projects, mostly youth exchanges and support activities, with partners coming from 22 countries. At the moment we are hosting for the first time two French girls as EVS volunteers. In view of the general development of our country and the ongoing preparations for

entering the European Union, we think it is important to promote the YOUTH programme in our region. There is next to no knowledge about the Programme in our community, and a lack of knowledge about the possibilities that it offers to young people. Our target group are youth aged between 14 and 29. Most of them have never travelled and visited other countries or been introduced to different cultures.

We believe that the youth of our community needs to grow and develop, but in order to be able to do that, they need relevant information and the chance to involve themselves in different programs according to their affinities. By becoming a Contact Point for the YOUTH programme, we have the possibility to offer to the youth of our community and region something they need for their further development, while the SALTO SEE Resource Centre has gained a valuable partner in enhancing the visibility of and access to the YOUTH programme.

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Written by: Ana Zužić

# ORGANISATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF EMPLOYMENT AND PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT OF YOUTH – ZUM

ZUM operates on regional level (Istria), but it is situated in Pula. Pula has 60 000 inhabitants, including 11 548 young people aged between 15 and 29. There are 10 high schools with 4 400 pupils and 5 universities with 2 200 students. In Pula, we have one cinema, one theatre, no students' centre or dormitory, only a cafeteria and students' discounts.

Our organisation was founded in June 2001 with the **mission** to promote and motivate youth to recognise their own possibilities, capabilities and skills through education, information and involvement in decision making processes. By activating youth, we also promote the cooperation between the public, civil and private sectors. Through our activities we aim to increase the standard and quality of life. Our target group is youth aged between 15 and 29 – high-school students, university students, unemployed young people, and young people who are looking for further personal and professional improvement.

ZUM's **activities** are divided along four areas of interest that are put into practice through different projects:

- Developing cooperation between employers and employees (project: Signed agreement about cooperation regarding extracurricular activities at the university)
- Educational workshops and seminars (projects: Improvement of communication among youth and institutions of the local community, With knowledge into the future, Small school of entrepreneurs, On the way of growing up - workshops for high school and university students, With education toward activism).
- Active involvement of youth in local community work and cooperation with representatives of the authorities (projects: Establishment of youth city councils in every city in Istria aiming at

the establishment of a youth county assembly of the Istrian county).

- International cooperation (ZUM has been selected to act as YOUTH programme Contact Point in Croatia. Thus, we became a partner of the SALTO SEE Resource Centre to promote the advantages of the YOUTH programme aiming at enhancing cooperation between EU countries and SEE countries. We also established a partnership with different organisations in the frame of the YOUTH programme – projects: Welcome neighbour, Youth and the media – unavoidable encounter).

## • **Getting involved in the YOUTH programme**

In November 2004, I participated in a national conference about the "YOUTH Programme in Croatia", where I and my organisation first heard about the YOUTH programme. At the conference we talked about the possibilities offered by the Programme. I participated in a workshop dealing with details regarding applications, finding partners, obligations, fundraising, reports and defining organisational needs for the implementation of projects. After the workshop, I received an e-mail from the organisers announcing the possibility to take part in a contact making seminar in Luxembourg where I could find partners and develop a project at the same time. So, I filled in an application form, sent it and got the reply that I was selected as a participant.

So, from 28th February till 6th March 2005, I participated in the "Extended



"Extended contact making seminar for cooperation between Benelux and SEE countries", Larochette, Luxembourg



Establishment of Youth Youncil in Pula, Croatia

Contact Making Seminar for Co-operation between Benelux and SEE Countries” that took place in Larochette, Luxembourg. The aim of the seminar was to help contact making between youth workers and youth leaders coming from Benelux and SEE countries and to initiate projects in the YOUTH programme. According to these objectives, partners from Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Belgium and the Netherlands (plus Slovakia and Italy that had not participated in the seminar) developed a study visit called “Welcome Neighbour”. The project aimed at the exchange of experience and know how between different NGOs, at discovering realities of youth work and the youth sector in Western Europe, and at improving youth work in SEE. This would be achieved through discussion, workshops, field visits and meetings with resource people. This study visit should also ensure a follow up consisting of one or more activities to be developed in the frame of the YOUTH programme. The study visit took place in Brussels from 27th November till 4th December 2005.

In Luxemburg, we also made good contacts with an organisation from Serbia, and we agreed to be their partner in another study visit named “Youth and Media – Unavoidable Encounter”, which took place from 08th till 15th September 2006 in Šabac (Serbia). This study visit focused on

the “discovery” of 2 sectors in 3 cities of Serbia, namely the youth sector and the media sector. The idea was to study how these two can interact so that young people will be empowered in the use of media as a way of participation and inclusion.

ZUM was interested in becoming a **YOUTH programme Contact Point** because we wanted to be a support for other organisations in our region. We think that we can do a lot concerning this issue, because of our experience in the youth sector, high quality communication with representatives of the local and regional community and also with other organisations in this and other regions of Croatia. We can share our experience and knowledge that we gained through participation in different training courses and seminars with other organisations and help them in realizing their projects in the frame of the YOUTH programme.

Because we have very good communication with other organisations in this region and with representatives of the local and regional government, we can easily disseminate relevant information about the Programme. We also invest in project cooperation and we are well known in our region. ZUM is a member of the Croatian Youth Network, so we can promote our role as a Contact Point through the Network. The president of ZUM is a member of the County Assembly of the Istrian

County, in charge of the development of the civil sector. These contacts help us to ensure and promote the visibility of our role as a Contact Point and of the YOUTH programme, not just to organisations and the public but also to the regional government. We cooperate with high schools and universities and they allow us to make contacts with their students. They support our activities and encourage our work with different advices. ZUM also works with other cities in our region, such as Rovinj, Vodnjan, Poreč, or Pazin. These contacts can be further channels for the dissemination of information about the Programme.

ZUM wants to be a support to organisations in this region, because we are aware of the benefits of the YOUTH programme and want to contribute to the construction of a “Europe of knowledge”. We want to bring the Programme closer to youth from this region by pointing out possibilities of mobility and activation, knowledge of other cultures, contributing to the development and reinforcement of values like tolerance and anti-discrimination, and the fight against prejudices.

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Written by: Tomislav Paulečić

# VOLUNTEERS' CENTRE ZAGREB

## Volunteering and non-formal learning: kitsch or new age ideal?

We all want to make a difference. It is always hard to take the first step, but if we do not try we will never know how everything might have turned out. So, all you have to do is whip up some strength, good will and positive energy and take the plunge. Then there is no doubt that you will succeed. The universe is made of small things.

These tiny grains are not visible to the naked eye but they are everywhere and make our world as we know it. Volunteering is one such little grain that makes our world bigger. Small steps, good will, strength, knowledge and energy make all the difference.

Could you imagine a world where people do not help each other and do not turn to each other in the time of need? Aristotle said that people are condemned to a life of work. This sounds bleak, doesn't it? Thus people have always looked for means of escape from conventional working styles, and volunteering has proved to be a good one. All throughout history, people have employed their altruistic faculties to help others without compensation.

Back in 1099, a group of religious knights formed the Order of St. John. Members of the Order had all trained in medicine, and they were the first to introduce the concept of medical care in battlefields across Europe. The concept further developed in the 18th and 19th century wars when organisations like the Red Cross emerged. So, the first volunteer movements arose in times of war: in the times when people need help the most.

The organisation in which I work also arose from the aftermaths of a war. Founded in 1998, Volunteers' Centre Zagreb (VCZ) was a continuation of the Anti-War Campaign in Croatia. This project started as an initiative of Service Civil International (SCI) when the first foreign volunteers came to the town of Pakrac to help rebuild war-devastated areas. VCZ became a Service Civil International group member in late 2001.

VCZ is also a member of the South East European Youth Network, the Croatian Youth Network, the Western Balkans Youth and Students Democracy Initiative, UNITED and Eastlinks; the coordinator for the European Youth, School & Community Network and International Cultural Youth Exchange; the national implementing partner for the UNV RIV-

ERSEE programme; a partner with Youth Action for Peace and the Co-ordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service; and it is a Contact Point for the YOUTH programme in Croatia.

VCZ aims to solve problems and satisfy needs of individuals, communities and society in general by promoting vol-



An EVS volunteer feeding bears in Kutero, Croatia

untarism and its values and by making voluntary work possible for everybody. Our vision is a society in which voluntary work is a daily means of contributing to individual progress and raising of social consciousness; a society in which voluntary work is an opportunity for solving problems and satisfying needs of communities and societies in general; a society in which basic values are peace and love, solidarity, tolerance, equality of sexes/genders, non-violent communication, inter-cultural dialogue and environmental protection. The aims of our organisation are promoting human rights, peace, community awareness, environmental protection, solidarity and civil society, stimulating individual development and strengthening youth initiatives through voluntary work.

#### **Our activities include:**

- Coordinating volunteer exchanges on local and international levels
- Organising workshops, training courses, seminars and lectures about the values we promote
- Organising international work and study camps in Croatia
- Informing the public about voluntary projects and activities in Croatia
- Promoting our goals and activities to the public
- Cooperation with the other similar organisations in Croatia and worldwide

Our main activity in the past seven years has been the coordination of international volunteer exchanges. We have organised 50 international voluntary work camps with 600 incoming and 400 outgoing volunteers. We have also exchanged some 50 long-term volunteers. Moreover, VCZ has organised a number of different training courses, conferences and seminars including five international training courses for work camp leaders.

VCZ has already participated in a number of the **YOUTH programme** activities and has recognised the values of the Programme and its possibilities for young people in Croatia. Therefore, it is one of our tasks to involve many more young people and youth organisations from Croatia in the YOUTH programme. VCZ is now recognised as a national information point for the YOUTH pro-

gramme by the Croatian Government and as a source of information about the Programme by other organisations in Croatia. As VCZ already had experience in promoting and informing about the Programme, becoming a Contact Point was a continuation of our work in this field and a step towards making our activities more systematic and visible. It is crucial that young people recognise the potential of the YOUTH programme and know how to use it in fulfilling their needs and realising their ideas.

#### **Learning in the street, a pub or hostel ...**

We speak a lot about non-formal education but only few young people know what it actually is. It involves not only organised, but also spontaneous educational activities which are established outside the framework of the formal education system. Non-formal learning can fulfil interests and needs of users who are looking for ways of acquiring different sorts of life skills and specific pieces of knowledge and of knowing the values and aims of democratic and civil society. The level of development and diversity of non-formal education in a society is also an indication of the level of development of the society as a whole. Non-formal education emerged as a response to new conditions of modern society and the labour market and is not only based on acquiring new knowledge but also developing new skills.

The system of non-formal education understood in this sense relies on different educational programmes which are quite large and comprehensive but not widely known and used as a resource in education, especially in the context of youth work. Programs of non-formal education are not sufficiently affirmed although modern trends in our societies require users of such programs in increasing numbers. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the **YOUTH programme**, as a vital element in the new European establishment, takes a greater role in youth work in Croatia and elsewhere.

Young people are sometimes regarded as a "pain in the ass", dependent on their parents' financial assistance and breaking the rules of socially accepted patterns of behaviour. But young people need the space and support to work, to learn, to travel, and to explore. They need to find a proper way, with experience, knowledge and skills, to make their own stairway to heaven. Non-formal education is one very important step in their endeavours.

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International training course for camp leaders

# Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

With an average pocket money of 1 EUR / 60 Denars per day, or enough for one sandwich in an average snack bar in Macedonia, the small, but fortunately growing number of presented opportunities for a better life seems appalling. Young people in Macedonia are swiftly driven to the breaks that youth based NGOs offer to them. The number of young people that are joining the new “citizens’ associations” – the legally correct but unpopular term for NGOs – is growing because they offer them the opportunity to spend some time abroad in work camps or some other kind of voluntary activity.

Jovan Poposki, Country Profile, FYRO Macedonia, 2004

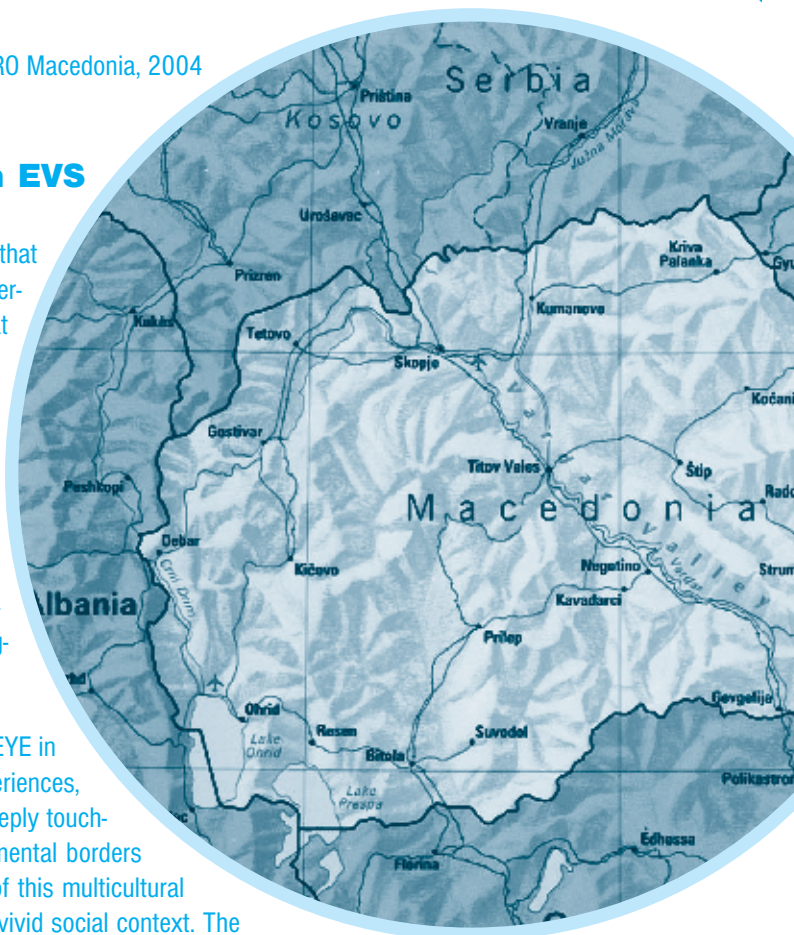
## Macedonia seen through the eyes of an EVS volunteer:

When I took the first look out of the small window of the plane that brought me to Macedonia, I saw a country that was so totally different from everything I had ever seen so far. I saw a piece of land that was beyond any perception of culture and social structures I had ever established in my mind up to then. And as I noticed all these differences, I suddenly couldn't see the reason anymore that had prompted me to come here. All of a sudden I found myself on a journey with a destination that was unknown or at least unclear to me at that point.

With this realization in my heart I took the first step into this completely different world, this new life of mine, and I could hardly recognize myself amidst all these undefined new surroundings ...

Now I already spent one month here as a volunteer in Youth Forum EYE in Struga. This month sums up to me as a stunning amount of new experiences, a refreshing encounter of different people from all over Europe, a deeply touching discovery of human similarities that help us to overcome our mental borders of prejudices. Everyday I come across another fascinating aspect of this multicultural community and I can almost feel myself shaping constantly in this vivid social context. The language that is still exotic to my ear starts to reveal its charm as I get deeper into it. My tasks as an editor of the magazine force me to unfold my potential and enable me to discover the motivations and aspirations of the young people in the local community. And all of these factors make it clear to me: It's not always essential to have an exact destination, but it is important to take the first step. As I look at all these amazing people around me and as I feel this new realization of cultural understanding awaken in me, I ask myself how all this happened to me.

Eva-Maria Bellinger, Austrian volunteer in Youth Forum EYE. Eva is in Macedonia from September 2006 till February 2007.  
Source: [http://www.youthforumeye.org.mk/vol\\_evs\\_en.htm](http://www.youthforumeye.org.mk/vol_evs_en.htm)



Written by: *Petre Mirkev*

# COUNCIL FOR PREVENTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY - SPPMD

The Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (SPPMD) was founded in May 1996 by community members, professors, social workers, medical professionals and members of the law enforcement community in Kavadarci, Macedonia. The SPPMD is a non-governmental, non-profit, and non-religious organisation.

## Main goals of the organisation are:

- To prevent juvenile delinquency, asocial and inappropriate behaviour in young people through organising their spare time and creating an environment to involve them in social activities and community development processes;
- To advocate and create a legal structure for the treatment of juvenile offenders;
- To improve the relation between governing structures and civic associations, for the benefit of all citizens;

national frame - an action plan for Macedonia. Through the cooperation with local NGOs, municipalities and schools, over 4100 surveys were conducted in 23 cities throughout the country and 18 months of activities were concluded with the development of eight priorities for dealing with the problem of juvenile delinquency in Macedonia. In February 2000, SPPMD published The Preventive Action Plan for the Republic of Macedonia. Since then, SPPMD has been working on the implementation of strategic activities derived from this plan.

Action Plan, which is organised spare time of youngsters. With UNICEF assistance, the Children and Youth Centre Babylon was established in May 2000, aimed to provide children and youngsters aged 7 to 25 with an opportunity to participate in alternative activities, such as: computer courses, English lessons, life skills, and being involved in artistic and civic activities. Evaluating extraordinary results in the city of Kavadarci, the SPPMD made additional efforts and expanded the work of the Babylon Centre to seven neighbouring villages in the rural areas, providing a process of social inclusion to socially disabled primary school children from these villages by offering to them the same activities that are offered to their 'city colleagues'. Today, being a part of a national network of 30 Babylon Centres, the Babylon Centre in Kavadarci involves about 800 children and youngsters.



A stand of SPPMD at the first NGO Fair organised in Macedonia in 2003

- To promote and develop voluntarism and mobility of youth through voluntary programs and projects.

The NGO's first activity was to hold tribunes with the mayor and city council of Kavadarci, in order to discuss the issue of juvenile delinquency in Kavadarci. While developing this first experience, this project sought to expand the findings of the tribunes and develop a wider

The very next effort to implement the highest priority from the Preventive Action Plan was to establish a separate justice system for juvenile offenders. The SPPMD worked on developing the "Juvenile Penal Code", using comparative analysis of existing laws from Europe and the United States.

The SPPMD also has worked a lot on another high priority from the Preventive

The members of SPPMD have started to build this NGO on a volunteering basis. The promotion of volunteerism in Macedonia was enforced by involving international volunteers in our activities. They came through a variety of programs, starting with a US Peace Corps volunteer in 2000, a VSO volunteer in 2002/3 and then especially with EVS volunteers. SPPMD organised the first EVS exchange in Macedonia during 2002/3 and has since then been regularly hosting of EVS volunteers. This wide experience was rewarded by the introduction of SPPMD as Implementing Partner Organisation of the UNV/UNDP RIVER SEE Program for Macedonia in 2005, as well as the nomination by the SALTO SEE Resource Centre as a Contact Point for the YOUTH Programme in Macedonia.

Briefly, since 1996, the SPPMD has developed a reputation for the quality of its programs and grant management, being widely recognised as a leader among NGOs in Macedonia for its ability to organise, network, and link people and organisations around issues that involve young people.

Participating in the **YOUTH programme** so far we have experienced that it is an excellent tool for intercultural learning, for the integration of youth in the European community, and for sharing and exchanging different ideas, cultures, knowledge, skills and customs between young people from different countries. Being related to the implementation of the mission of our NGO, we have already benefited a lot from our participation in projects carried out within Actions 1, 2 and 5, both as individuals and as an organisation.

By sharing these benefits and promoting the Programme throughout our region, we are really looking forward to contributing to the capacity building of our organisation, its image and position among our national and international partners, and also to the strengthening of the youth NGOs in Macedonia through their active involvement into the YOUTH programme activities.

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Speaking about the benefits and experiences let me share with you the notes by one of our volunteers, Valentina Joševska, in an Action 1 YOUTH project in 2004:

“The project idea was born in November 2003 in Belgrade when a contact-making seminar was organised by the Norwegian National Agency. The seminar brought together 25 people, who came from different realities and backgrounds, but the same field of interest..... Thus, the idea of our project, a youth exchange named “Music without borders” developed. The youth exchange allowed young people from very different countries, such as Macedonia and Serbia & Montenegro, Norway and Sweden, to meet each other. We took final decisions regarding the activities during the prep-meeting on 8-9 July in Mosjoen (Norway), and the actual program began on 11 August in the small, nice and quiet place surrounded with green nature. The youngsters practiced together for at least six hours per day, in order to achieve the final result – the creation of an original composition which represented a mix of Macedonian, Serbian, Norwegian and Swedish music pieces. This piece in the end became our common hymn during the concert tour, which took us through four towns in Norway and two towns in Sweden, and finished in Mosjoen Gille’s coffee bar (Norway).

Everybody returned home with positive energy and the great experiences that they had gained during that exchange. Cultural diversity was promoted throughout the music as a common language project, here cultural barriers were broken and in their place a lasting friendship among these young people was built through their music. “



Drama section of Babylon Centre, during a performance for the opening of an exhibition against racism, on the International Day against Racism, 21.03.2005, prepared together with two EVS volunteers from France



Written by: Andre Soares and Jovan Poposki

# YOUTH FORUM EYE

Youth Forum EYE is a youth NGO and through our everyday work we can see that young people are interested in connecting with other young people from different countries. But there are a series of social and political borders that stand in their way.

## Why do we use and promote the YOUTH programme?

YOUTH projects are only one way in which they can fulfil their aspirations: they can get in touch with other youngsters, and through this initiative a very important process of intercultural learning is being initiated. In the best case, they can confront their stand points and shape their opinions on these topics while developing

a country? Why is dancing a colourful way of bringing people together? This is what "Let's Meet in Balkans" was about.

After a long tradition of youth exchanges, Youth Forum EYE became part of a new adventure: "Let's meet in the Balkans" was an opportunity to find out how folklore dancing can help to change our

"Let's meet in the Balkans" took place from 3 to 13 May 2006 in Struga. The dances differed in their specific regional character in terms of the rhythm, steps, tempo and singing, but the participants of this youth exchange tried to learn the dances of every country.

Considered from an ethnographic approach, folklore is a part of cultural behaviour, understood as the social, spiritual and economic life of a given group, and including elements of the material culture. Folklore perceived in this manner consists of family, professional, and environmental rites and customs, as well as parties, music, dance and oral creativity such as songs, ballads, fairy-tales, legends, magic and beliefs. It also includes such elements as folk costumes and art, and musical instruments.

During these ten days, music and dancing created a new fragrance of unity. The atmosphere was great, because the dancing helped people to destroy the walls of separation and solitude.

One of the Macedonian participants was 17-year-old Aleksander, who for the first time participated in a youth exchange. For him the most important outcome was making new friends with people from abroad and improving his English. In a little interview with Youth Forum EYE he said: "Folklore is a mirror of culture, without folklore it is more difficult, dancing and singing are the best ways to get to know others. I'm a more open person after this meeting with Polish, Montenegrin and Lithuanian people. I'm a richer person and can better understand the others".

This was the intention of the exchange project in Struga: create possible connections between different dances, languages, and people.



Participants from Poland dressed in national costumes

a good picture of what their counterparts from other countries think.

"Let's meet in the Balkans" – Example of a youth exchange with a focus on folklore. Why is dancing an important instrument to crossing frontiers? Why is folklore more than a typical dance from

approach to other cultures. The names of the dances sound funny: "Paidusko" from Macedonia, "Versuta" from Montenegro, "Polka" from Poland and "Shi-adu" from Lithuania. Forty young people from different folklore dance groups spent ten days together to make dancing an instrument for crossing frontiers.



Participants from Lithuania on a hill outside of Struga

Struga has been a town of folklore and tradition for a long time. "Let's meet in Balkans" tried to keep intact this tradition, but also to come to a new understanding of folklore dancing by young people.

Well, this example of a youth exchange illustrates what we think a YOUTH project is all about. In addition, importantly, such projects teach young people many relevant things, help them to gain independence and boost their self-confidence.

Unfortunately, the great potential of the YOUTH programme is not being used as much as it could. This was the motivation of Youth Forum EYE when it applied to become a Contact Point. The potential of the organisations in Macedonia is quite high. But organisations are often unwilling to share access to information, maybe due to the unclear structure of the NGO sector here. The YOUTH programme is an opportunity for every young person and it is a very important resource for organisations in SEE. The Contact Points are there to help to bring it closer and make it more accessible for everyone.

#### Who are we?

Youth Forum EYE was founded in June 2001. It is a dynamic organisation of young people, who have bright ideas about improving multiethnic and open

society in Macedonia. The organisation supports international youth exchange programs, which it believes will improve the integration with European values. Youth Forum EYE aims to inspire and help bring about positive social and economic changes. The organisation works mainly with young people aged between 16 and 28, most of whom are students.

Youth Forum EYE has been acting as one of the three Macedonian YOUTH programme Contact Points since September 2005.

The majority of the activities promoted by Youth Forum EYE refer to three main areas:

- Non-formal education for young people through intercultural learning and international youth mobility activities
- Youth exchanges and national European and international voluntary youth service
- The development of a consciousness of European citizenship and dimension through programs and projects developed for the empowerment of young people

Source: [http://www.youthforumeye.org.mk/about\\_yfe\\_en.htm](http://www.youthforumeye.org.mk/about_yfe_en.htm)

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Polish and Montenegrin participants at St. Jovan Kaneo Church in Ohrid

Written by:

# YCS YMCA Macedonia

YCS YMCA Macedonia – Skopje is part of the international YMCA movement that was born in the U.K. in the 1840s and subsequently spread all over Europe and other continents. The idea to create a Macedonian branch was born in 1999, in a time of big crises in the Balkans and new challenges and insecurity for the citizens of Macedonia, and it was officially established in 2000.

Today, the organisation sees itself looking back to many challenges, expectations, successes, friendship and shared joy. The continuous support from YMCA branches in other countries, other partners and supporters, contributions from various agencies, foundations and companies and the trust given from many institutions and many young people has enabled YCS YMCA Macedonia

to stabilize over the past years, to strengthen its capacities and expand its fields of work. The organisation's mission is to unite diversity, creativity, work, fun and faith of young people to build a common future for all. That is why, YCS YMCA Macedonia works with great enthusiasm to reach and help young people, wherever they are – in schools, companies, clubs,

youth centres, or on the streets. Its members want to help the children and young people of Macedonia and their families and communities to face problems together, give stability and dare to experiment taking alternative paths, and most of all, to give hope, love and support.



Information day about the YOUTH programme organised by YCA YMCA Macedonia in Skopje, June 2006

## The program and project work of YCS YMCA involves:

- sports
- culture
- ecology
- camps
- trainings and seminars
- initiatives and campaigns
- international exchange and volunteering
- YMCA scouting and outdoor activities

## Special points of interest include:

- possibilities for healthy and holistic development
- awareness for the cultural differences
- atmosphere of belonging to a community
- active citizenship
- youth cooperation in the region and worldwide

The information is taken from:  
<http://www.ymca-macedonia.org.mk/index.htm>

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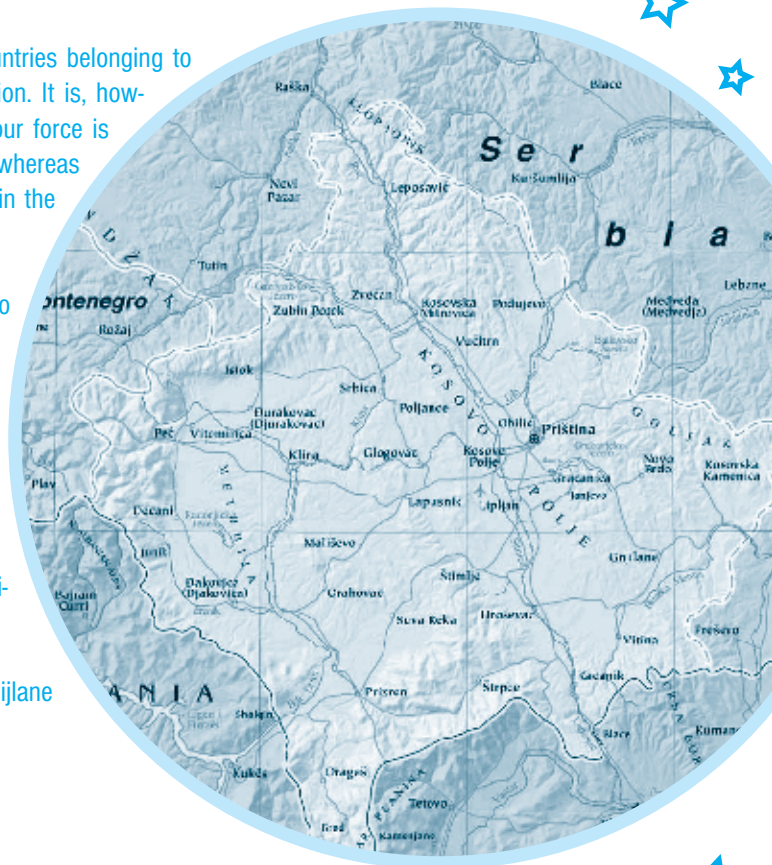
# Kosovo

*(as defined by the resolution 1244 of the United Nations)*

With an average age of 28 years (against 38 on average in the countries belonging to the European Union), Kosovo represents the youngest European region. It is, however, the poorest, too. Almost 80% of the less than 25-year-old labour force is unemployed. The average wage rarely exceeds 200 Euro per month whereas the cost of living remains, with Bosnia and Herzegovina, the highest in the Western Balkans.

Weakened by the underdevelopment that characterised the 1950s to 1970s, ruined by the 1998/99 conflict and blocked by the lack of a clear status, Kosovo finds itself in a very delicate situation. Young people have only one dream: going abroad. And obviously, among those who succeed are the most qualified, a fact that restrains any possible improvement of the situation. Yet, this young population is full of energy. The very high rate of company creation is an illustration of it. But this touch of optimism is quickly darkened by the lack of perspective even more visible that characterises the Roma and Serbian communities, who form together 10% of the population.

Steve Duchene, LDA Gjilan/Gnjilane



*Written by: Steve Duchêne, delegate of the Local Democracy Agency of Kosovo*

## Local Democracy Embassy **of Kosovo**

Since its opening in 2003, the Local Democracy Agency of Kosovo, a programme created by the Council of Europe, which includes 12 offices in the Balkans and in Georgia, strives to contribute to an improvement of the situation in Kosovo. The Agency's projects are those of its partners.

For 2006, it deals essentially with activities in the fields of cross-border cooperation, information and training on Europe, support for economic exchanges and, naturally, youth cooperation. Youth and European integration are the two transversal issues of the Agency's work. Hence, thus, our natural application for becoming a Contact Point of the YOUTH/ Youth in Action programme for Kosovo. By the way, we did not wait to become Contact Point to do this promotion job.

The Kosovo LDA has first and foremost developed hosting projects for young people doing a European Voluntary Service and is preparing a European meeting of youth councils, which could be supported by the Youth in Action programme. The preparation group of this project was formed within the framework of a meeting organised in September 2006 in Gjilan/Gnjilane with the support of the Youth European Foundation. The group, composed of Spanish, Moldovan, Serbian, Macedonian, French, British, Slovene and Kosovo participants, has shown great motivation and determination, that haven't been weakened by now, to work on a new promotion project of youth participation in the enlarged European area.

### **First experiences as a Contact Point for the YOUTH programme**

In 2006, as a Contact Point for YOUTH, the LDA was in the position to discover how poorly youth organisations in Kosovo are informed about cooperation opportunities offered within the Programme. The seven months of information work could only represent a period of awareness-raising for this Programme. The information work must be continued in 2007 to see organisations of Kosovo foster

their interest for the Programme and get integrated to it.

Our hopes are promising for there is great initiative potential in Kosovo among young people from all the communities, which are largely pro-European. LDA takes much care in not presenting the Programme only as a program about youth but also as a program for European integration. While participating in European projects the youth of Kosovo will give a new image of the region as it won't appear through conflicts, and the young people of today who will be the leaders of tomorrow will be those who will have

to guide Kosovo on the way to European integration. Only their good knowledge of Europe, of its diversities and of its unity will give them the competences and motivation to put this integration project into practice.

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A group of representatives of youth councils (from France, Kosovo, Spain, Great Britain, Slovenia, Macedonia, Moldavia and Serbia) meeting in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kosovo, in September 2006, to prepare a new project for 2007, which will be presented for funding from the Youth in Action programme.

# Montenegro

...”The history and roots of voluntarism in Montenegro, like in most of the former Yugoslav countries, are connected to the tradition of solidarity as a recognizable characteristic of the culture of these peoples. The tradition and nature of this solidarity is closest to the family and neighbour relationships that developed on the principle of reciprocal support, which has become the moral codex of the culture of Montenegrin people....

After World War II and the establishment of the Communist regime in the region of former Yugoslavia, voluntarism in Montenegro gained additional force. “Youth work actions” became a matter of reputation in society and “the outstanding worker badge” a measure of value....

In the beginning of the conflict and with the break-up of SFR Yugoslavia, interest in voluntarism was in rapid decline..../This/ can be related to a few reasons. Primarily, it is a drastic decline of the life standard which, for most citizens, meant naked survival. Besides the low standard, examples of corruption, sudden accumulation of wealth in the case of individuals, economic collapse, provoked great suspicion of citizens towards the state and public institutions. ...

The connection between a democratic system, the development of civic society and voluntarism is a concept which is still very far from the average citizen. Some contribution to this is also given by the fact that most non-governmental organisations do not have a clear vision or the necessary knowledge in work with volunteers....”

Project Albert Einstein, pp. 55-56, SEEYN 2005



Written by: Aleksandra Zeković

# ASSOCIATION FOR DEMOCRATIC PROSPERITY – Zid

The Association for Democratic Prosperity – Zid (hereafter ADP - Zid) is a non-governmental organisation based in Podgorica, Montenegro, which was founded in 1996.

ADP – Zid started its work as a small organisation of students that were interested in solving problems of students at the University of Montenegro. Since then, the organisation has been gradually developing further and changing its range of interest and area of work while implementing numerous projects and different activities. Currently, ADP – Zid is one of the strongest non-governmental organisations in Montenegro. However, the focus of the organisation's work was

and still is on youth and their position in society.

ADP - Zid promotes and strengthens the participation of individuals and organisations in the transition process through the implementation of innovative programs that foster democratic processes and contribute to community development. ADP – Zid works on various kinds of projects and activities in the frame of the following three programs:

- Volunteers' Centre Programme
- Community Development Programme
- Programme on Information and Culture

The most dynamic of these three programs is the **Volunteers' Centre Programme**. In the frame of this program, the organisation made significant improvement especially in the field of long-term volunteer exchange and extended its activities within the YOUTH programme (European Voluntary Service) of the European Commission. In addition, ADP – Zid



Press conference for the project: "Look across the southern border - Europe for Youth"

improved its cooperation with the SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre through joint activities in promoting the Programme in Montenegro. Finally, ADP – Zid itself hosted several volunteers coming from different EU countries and also sent several volunteers abroad. The aim of the organisation is to extend this kind of long-term volunteer exchange by supporting other civil organisations in Montenegro in hosting volunteers who come to the country through ADP – Zid but work other organisations and projects.

In addition, ADP – Zid continues to organise short-term volunteer exchanges (international work camps). Thus, in 2004 ADP – Zid ran two work camps in Montenegro (Kolasin and Ulcinj) and assisted our partner organisation YC Postpesimists of Montenegro in implementing a work camp in Bijela. Following successful negotiations with the CHF International, the USAID-funded international organisation working in the northern part of Montenegro, in 2005 ADP – Zid organised 14 international work camps in the local communities where the CHF International was active. In December 2005, as the result of cooperation with the Canadian organisation CESO, ADP – Zid hosted for the first time a senior volunteer/consultant from abroad for two weeks.

Non-formal education on voluntarism and volunteer management is another important set of the organisation's activities. Through implementation of a series of workshops for the members of non-governmental organisations and individuals all around the country, ADP – Zid is continuing its engagement in promoting and developing voluntarism in Montenegro. In addition, the organisation has extended its services for volunteers by organising English and Italian language and computer courses.

Regional and international cooperation is very important for us. Many projects that ADP-Zid is organising are mainly of a regional dimension. In particular, the cooperation in the frame of SEEYN (the South East European Youth Network) is intensive and fruitful, in particular the 'Albert Einstein' regional project on promotion and development of voluntarism in the region (<http://www.zid.cg.yu/adpzid-english/adp-zid-e/adp-zid-e.htm>); the project

'voluntarism and public institutions' and others. Moreover, the cooperation within SEEYN is the most important for us especially in the field of voluntarism.

On the occasion of the World Environmental Day on 6 June 2004, ADP – Zid launched the initiative to protect the river Tara, which turned out to be one of the biggest and most successful public awareness and advocacy initiatives in Montenegro ever. The initiative was aimed to protect the canyon of the river Tara, which is partly situated in the national park of 'Durmitor' and under UNESCO protection. The canyon is endangered by the plan of the government to build a dam for a hydropower plant, in cooperation with partners from Bosnia & Herzegovina. The activities of ADP – Zid on the above-mentioned occasion (petition, distribution of leaflets and protest on the spot) marked the beginning of the initiative and then, gradually, a broad coalition of civil sector organisations, individuals and media exerted a big public pressure on the government which won the wide support of citizens of Montenegro. ADP - Zid as the initiator supported the initiative during the whole year but the leadership was left to other mainly environmental organisations involved in the coalition. Then, after several months of continuous pressure and publicity, this initiative resulted in the Declaration on the River Tara adopted by the National Parliament. This declaration supported this citizens' initiative to

protect the river Tara and recommended to the government to reconsider its plans and give up the idea of building the dam. Eventually, in March 2005, the Montenegrin government finally announced its decision to terminate any further activities in this respect and abandoned the idea of the dam on the river Tara.

Since ADP - Zid had been working in the frame of the **YOUTH programme** for several years and had a good experience in that field, we were very interested in helping with the promotion of the Programme in Montenegro, and in sharing our knowledge as a YOUTH Contact Point. Montenegro is a small country and information can be delivered easily, if you have developed plan how to do that. Since the autumn of 2005, we have been presenting the Programme to many individuals and organisations, and have supported them when needed in application writing and with specific advice. A lot of information can be found by those interested on one of our web sites: [www.evropazamlade.cg.yu](http://www.evropazamlade.cg.yu).

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International exhibition of caricatures in the frame of the project: "EU is not a member of your party"

# Serbia

“...The transition period in Serbia has a significant influence on young people, their values, attitudes and plans for the future. Young people in our country are motivated to participate in society and to take decisions concerning their present and future, but they do not know how and where to express their opinions. Because of that, they tend not to participate in social life and think that their opinions are irrelevant, so they search to find a solution in passive behaviour or, for others, in emigration...”

Srdjan Mitrović, Group Let's...

“...During and following the years of wars, characterized by a difficult economic situation and the collapse of the whole system in Serbia, youth became a marginalised social group. Youth organisations that still existed as a heritage of the previous communistic regime crashed down and also the large “systems”, which had experience in managing and organising programs for youth came to a dead end. Youth councils, scouts organisations, and departments of local and national authorities in charge of youth ceased to exist and their role in the communities was taken up by non-governmental organisations. Since the 1990s, more than 9000 NGOs have been registered but only few of them are youth organisations with clear and long-term programs that involve youth and act as a “substitute” for the lacking “official” programs for youth and a place where youth can easily develop their potentials, express their knowledge and interests and become an equal and active part of society...”

Aleksandar Gavrilović, Youth House Niš

“...Our struggle has not always been easy: If you take a look at the situation that young people are facing in the region, you will realise that this is an understatement. The poor economic situation, strict visa regimes implying limited mobility, complicated interethnic relations, old and rigid education systems and the absence of youth

policies and consideration for youth in general are just a few of the obstacles that young people are facing in this region, which is usually referred to as South Eastern Europe. However, the great will of young people to fight against these unfavourable conditions has given BalkanIDEA Novi Sad and other youth and non-governmental organisations the spirit and motivation to persist in a common effort to change the reality of today for a better tomorrow. And that is what has kept us going for the past six years...”

Snežana Baclija, BalkanIDEA Novi Sad



## GROUP “LET’S...”

Grupa “Hajde da...” (“Let’s...” Group) took up its work in April 1999, as an initiative of a group of psychology students in Belgrade, Serbia, and was officially registered as an NGO in November 1999. The Group was formed and operates out of the strong need of its members to be proactive in the society and time they live in.

Although during the first six years most of the organisation’s goals were achieved, there is still a lot to be done to reach our organisation’s **vision**: a society that fully respects human dignity and supports the development of free, responsible and active individuals.

**Mission:** The “Hajde da...” Group seeks to facilitate the empowerment of individuals for the full development of their personal capacities, to contribute to harmonious relations with others, to learn from diversity and to encourage active participation in the creation of a more humane society.

In the area of **youth work** the “Hajde da...” Group is mainly focused on empowering young people to become more (pro)active in their own lives and also in the social and economic life

of their communities and society in general. Several projects have been realised in this field, so far:

- “Learning to learn” (2006) - Training course, organised in the framework of the YOUTH programme, with the aim to train youth leaders from 6 EU and SEE countries on how to use mentoring, coaching, and facilitating skills as tools to stimulate intercultural learning
- “Youth in Action” (2005), democratic citizenship education programme and advocacy to support youth participation at decisions made on local level
- “Because it is different” (2005) – intercultural learning programme
- “What next?” National meeting in relation with the future of the European Commission’s YOUTH Programme in Serbia (2004) - organised in partner-

ship with several NGOs from Serbia

- “Because it counts” (2004) - Program for empowerment and support of youth participation on local level
- Intercultural youth camp “Tools for action” (2004) with partners from Croatia
- Program of youth exchange “Cuckoo eggs” (2002) in cooperation with Youth Aid Centre (CPM), Ljubljana
- Refugee inclusion Summer Camp on mountain Goč (2001)

In the area of **youth policy development**, the “Hajde da...” Group participated in several initiatives and also independently organised projects, such as an international seminar on “Youth Policy, Peace Education and Participation in FR Yugoslavia” (2002), led by eminent European experts in the field of youth policy, youth work and action



“Hajde da...” Group at an NGO fair, Belgrade centre, 2002

The best way to present our experience with the YOUTH programme might be the quote by our friend from Slovenia, Mateja Pavletič, who in 2004 spent 6 months as an EVS volunteer in our organisation:

"Any person involved in EVS has the opportunity to become stronger on a personal level, and to become more self-confident and independent. As an EVS volunteer you also learn that is important to take personal initiative, to understand the values of solidarity, volunteerism and respect of intercultural differences and to actively contribute, with your own knowledge and skills, to making changes on local, national or international level.

Besides all the professional experiences that I made, like learning from each other and sharing experiences in working with youth, the intercultural component of EVS had a great impact on me. The openness of the people from the "Let's..." Group to let me inside their "circle" and to even enable me to share very personal experiences in the lives of their families, like being invited to a family celebration of one of the family members' name-day ("Slava"), or to the christening of a child in a church, were for me more than magnificent."

research. Moreover, in 2004, the "Hajde da..." Group conducted an action research that showed the current state of youth policy development in Serbia and presented young people's expectations – both on local and national level – from state institutions and policy makers. You can draw your own conclusions about the results from the name of the research, "Where is (missing) youth policy in Serbia?"

#### STRATEGIC AIMS 2004-2007

1. Support of young people in becoming active citizens through non-formal education, advocacy, networking and engagement in European youth programs
2. Active and on-going contribution to peace-building and the creation of a more humane society through peace education, intercultural learning and the promotion of human rights
3. Empowerment of individuals to develop their personal potentials and productive human relations through psychosocial support and counselling
4. Affirmation of non-formal education through the implementation of training programs and promotion at national, regional and European level
5. Promotion of civil society values through multimedia production and publishing
6. Development of a strategy and programs for self-sustainability and human resources of the "Hajde da..." Group".

One of the main difficulties with the current implementation of the YOUTH

programme in Serbia is its lack of visibility. We believe that besides the regular information channels through media, we need to find a way of more successfully promoting the Programme directly to youth NGOs who are currently unaware of its existence. Furthermore, and regarding the fact that young people from smaller communities do not have access to the internet, we will need to produce and distribute, in direct contact with beneficiaries, all the necessary materials about WHAT is the YOUTH programme, HOW can you use it and WHEN is the right time do to it.

"Let's..." Group has since the very beginning of YOUTH programme activities in Serbia understood the potential of the YOUTH programme in supporting the rising quality of life of young people

in the areas of mobility, participation, intercultural learning and non-formal education. Furthermore, by participating in YOUTH programme activities young people have the opportunity to present Serbia abroad and help to step up the process of the European integration of Serbia.

Besides the above-mentioned reasons, we also follow our strategic reasons for participating in the development of the YOUTH programme in Serbia. Firstly, the YOUTH programme is in line with our endeavours and strategic aims (supporting young people in becoming active citizens through non-formal education, advocacy, networking and engagement in European youth programs). Secondly, numerous people in our organisation have the competence and experience to work on different aspects of the YOUTH programme, and we are therefore already visible as an "informal" source of information and support to youth NGOs participating in the Programme. So we wondered, why don't do it, with an official fancy YOUTH Contact Point nomination on our wall. So, here we are!

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"Cuckoo eggs", 2002

Written by: *Aleksandar Gavrilović*

## YOUTH HOUSE NIŠ

Our “Youth House” is a relatively young organisation, officially founded in 2003, but its roots reach further into the past. The area in which we live and work is one of the economically most underdeveloped and most rural areas in Serbia, with over 2 million inhabitants.

The city of Niš is situated at a distance of some 250 km south of the capital and represents the beginning of the border area and the crossroads to Bulgaria (and towards Turkey), Macedonia (and towards Greece) and Kosovo (and towards Albania). Niš is the administrative, cultural and university centre of this part of the country with 27.000 students. According to a pool conducted by the Students Union of Serbia in 2005, more than 70% of the students in Serbia have never left the country.

The NGO Youth House was established by the group of youth activists who had significant experience in working with youth, especially in Southern Serbia. Following the needs of the young people and their possibilities to act in the community, Youth House defines its main aim as increasing the visibility of youth and their promotion in society through various activities that are exclusively led by and for young people. Our mission is to promote human dignity, the universality of human ideas and democracy without prejudices and stereotypes regardless of sex, race, religion or any other kind of discrimination and division among people. All of our programs are created considering the needs and possibilities of youth and they are also led by youth. We like to say that Youth House is an open group for those who have the motivation to work and a place for anyone who would like to share their own ideas.

Members of Youth House were among the first few people in Serbia dealing with youth policy. Since 2001, our members have been active, through Youth House (and other previous engagements), in governmental attempts to gather youth

workers and to begin with the long-term process of creating a national youth policy. We are for sure pioneers in this process in the territories south of Belgrade, which is reflected by our constant activities in promoting and lobbying for youth policy on all levels.

Youth House is a part of the SEE Conscientious Objection Network and a centre for information and counselling for this part of Serbia. Together with the participation in a campaign for the reduction of small arms, this work led us to become the first and probably only organisation in the wider area of Southern and Eastern Serbia that openly stands up against arms, militarism and xenophobia. Through these activities we became one of the leading organisations dealing with the past through open dialogue on all levels and emphasising a strong commitment to peace and non-violent conflict resolution.

As a member of Conscientious Objection Network, Youth House was an equal and active participant in harmonising the EU legislative and the domestic law on conscientious objection. Our engagement in this area should also serve as a starting point in the future shaping of volunteerism in Serbia.

Since 2005, Youth house is a member of the SALTO SEE Resource Centre's support network of YOUTH Contact Points, responsible for southern Serbia. The YOUTH programme is recognised by Youth House as a powerful and useful tool for working with youth and the communities where they live. During the last few years, the Republic of Serbia has not shown any serious interest in dealing with matters that concern young people. Except for the periods before elections, young people are invisible in the eyes of the state legislative of national



Street action, exhibition of anti-war pictures and open air party, Youth House, May 2005

or local/regional authorities. Living in this kind of environment young people are becoming "ethnocentric" and closed to all that comes from abroad, often left in the hands of state and low-quality local media, which show them mostly unrealistic pictures of the world in which they live.

As seen from the Youth House's perspective, the YOUTH programme should be a tool for overcoming barriers. Our strategy recommends the Programme as a tool in the long-term process of creating a sustainable development of youth policies on local and national level, increasing youth mobility and improving the quality of youth work. Also, the YOUTH programme is used by Youth House as a tool for breaking the ethnocentrism that characterises the areas in which we are working, for creating more openness to new ideas and raising the awareness of the common European space.

Having in mind the advantages that the YOUTH programme offers to its beneficiaries (such as facilitating young people's social integration, increasing their mobility, helping them to acquire knowledge and skills, promoting a common European cultural and historical heritage, influencing youth work on local level) we can conclude that we are sharing the same objectives:

empowering young people to develop their knowledge, skills and capacities and involving them in the development of their society as active citizens.

Until now, members of Youth House have participated in several seminars, training courses and contact making seminars and have established contacts and friendships all around Europe. Our members have been very active in counselling and sharing information about the YOUTH programme and our experience with it with other organisations from the Southern, Eastern and partially also the Western parts of Serbia. We sent out over 600 mails and replied to hundreds of other mails with concrete answers to concrete questions about the Programme and - what is the most important to us - held meetings with members of more than 40 youth organisations willing to take a part in and be more actively involved in the Programme. Several organisations let us know that they applied for a project(s) and some also sent volunteers within the EVS to another country. For sure the most important result so far is that we have raised awareness of the Programme's existence and the possibilities for participating in it. Through a number of articles and shows in local and regional TV programs we have ensured that youth organisations are more

aware of the relevance of the Programme and its importance for young people.

As I am writing this article, our EVS volunteer from Germany is on vacation at the Adriatic Sea, and I cannot wait to see the present she will bring for me. Another volunteer is preparing for a six-month EVS stay in Niš. In the autumn, our members will participate in two contact making seminars in the region, and we will organise an information day about the YOUTH programme for youth NGOs from this part of Serbia for SALTO SEE.

This is for sure going to be a very interesting end of the year.

As an old song says:  
When you walk through a storm  
hold your head up high  
And don't be afraid of the dark.  
At the end of a storm is a golden sky...

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Presentation of the Youth House activities, May 2005

Written by: *Snezana Baclija*

# BalkanIDEA Novi Sad

On 13th November this year BalkanIDEA Novi Sad celebrated its 6th birthday. Just the fact that we have survived for these six years in very turbulent times, with pure enthusiasm and good will is cause enough for the celebration. In addition, we dedicated the past six years to the fight for a better life of young people in Balkans, and we hope that we were able to contribute at least a little bit to changing the overall situation.

The BalkanIDEA network was founded with the very help of the European Youth Foundation, Directorate for Youth and Sports, Council of Europe, in the year 2000, when it received funding as a pilot project. Today, the international non-governmental organisation/network BalkanIDEA operates in most countries of South Eastern Europe. It is coordinated by two main local offices, BalkanIDEA Novi Sad and BalkanIDEA Skopje.

The mission of BalkanIDEA Novi Sad is to support the initiative of intra-regional cooperation between the students and the youth of South Eastern Europe.

Our two main goals are:

- Promotion of democratic values, civil society, personal and civic rights

and active participation in social and political life;

- Achieving greater mobility between students and youth, a more suitable regime for visas and open borders.

Following these two goals, BalkanIDEA Novi Sad has participated in a number of projects so far, ranging from workshops, training courses and seminars to debates and internet presentations. Some of our most relevant projects are:

- “My house – is your house” – Promotion of Tolerant Inter-Ethnic Relations between Youth of Different Ethnic Origins from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and FR Yugoslavia, based on respect of human and

minority rights” (training course and series of open-public platforms),

- “Challenges to the Balkans in the process of globalization” (series of open-public platforms),
- BINET – Virtual office of Youth NGOs from South East Europe,
- Cooperation with the Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth in the promotion of Youth Policy Action Plan in Vojvodina (“It is Time for Youth” – series of training courses for young political leaders in Vojvodina),
- Various projects in cooperation with ELSA Serbia and BIRD from Pristina under the common title: “Civil Dialogue Kosovo-Serbia, the Dialogue for the Future, for Co-existence,



Participants of youth exchange “Co-existence and Co-understanding III” (hosted by BalkanIDEA Novi Sad), at Petrovaradin Fortress near Novi Sad.



Group of participants of Youth exchange "Co-existence and Co-understanding II", hosted by AURORA from Macedonia, in front of the Orthodox Church during the celebration of Orthodox and Catholic Easter

Cooperation between Youth",

- Partnership with Council of Europe's Democratic Leadership Programme,
- Numerous projects in the frame of the YOUTH programme.

Our engagement has given us membership in the Advisory Council of the Council of Europe Directorate for Youth and Sport, Partnership status with the Council of Europe, and the position of Contact Point for the YOUTH programme.

BalkanIDEA has been involved in projects under the [YOUTH programme](#) since 2001. Since then, we have participated in many events as beneficiaries, as well as coordinators and co-organisers of YOUTH projects and we have discovered the Programme as one of the most important and useful tools in today's youth work on the European, but also on local, national and regional level. Step by step, we have moved our focus towards its Actions, and today

the Programme represents one of the bases for fulfilling our aims and our purpose.

During the five years of involvement in the Programme, BalkanIDEA has taken part in a great number of projects, established partnerships with organisations in almost all European countries, given the opportunity to a number of young people from our country to experience mobility by going abroad and the chance to some volunteers coming from EU countries to get to know our country and region. While starting with a small group of young people expressing interest in YOUTH programme activities, we have by now reached a significant number of young people that have become beneficiaries of the Programme. Finally, many young people that are coming back from their EVS experience cannot wait to implement their newfound enthusiasm in further promotion of the Programme, wanting

to give other young people the opportunity to live through such an unforgettable experience. Some of them have by now become an irreplaceable force in our organisation.

One of our most significant projects in the frame of the YOUTH Programmes is a series of youth exchanges named "Co-existence and co-understanding". The idea for this project was developed during a contact making seminar, which was organised in Radovljica, Slovenia, by the National Agencies for YOUTH of Slovenia and Portugal in cooperation with SALTO SEE in 2001. Some of the youth leaders present at the seminar noticed, within the youth groups they locally worked with, the expression of a need and wish for an exchange of experiences, ideas and views between youngsters and came to a common ground for the project. It involved seven partner organisations, from Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Mac-

edonia, Portugal, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovenia.

The purpose of the project is to allow youth from different countries to exchange their experiences, realities and opinions on 'new' forms of racism, xenophobia abroad and xenophobia at home. The activities are based on the creativity and maximum involvement of young people in the process of intercultural dialogue, through workshops, debates and similar activities promoting the construction of a European puzzle and providing them with the opportunity to question the mentioned phenomena.

Four youth exchanges have been realised so far, starting in Portugal, then Macedonia, Serbia and Finland. Throughout the project the core of participants has remained the same, with the idea of giving them the experience of discovering all the countries involved as well as their cultural heritage. Furthermore, the participants have been growing and developing throughout the process, giving a more valuable meaning to the intercultural communication. On the other hand, there is always a new group of participants that is joining the 'dinosaurs' (the name that the participants involved in all exchanges so far invented for themselves). One of the most valuable outcomes of the exchanges is the strong friendships developed over time, and those are the best possible tools in the difficult struggle against racism and xenophobia.

Ivana's and other similar testimonies ensured us that the YOUTH programme has a lot to offer, and that it is not yet used to its full potential in Serbia and in the whole region. On the other hand, some parts of the Programme are unclear and/or could be improved, especially when it comes to the cooperation with Partner Countries. This was the main reason why BalkanIDEA Novi Sad took part in the process organised by the SALTO SEE RC and named »Towards a Strategy for YOUTH in SEE" in 2004. As an outcome, we became a Contact Point for the Programme in 2005, which gives us the opportunity to become a direct link between youth organisations and young people as beneficiaries of

Our main focus is EVS sending activities, and the words of Ivana Volf, former EVS volunteer in Peniche, Portugal, and now president of BalkanIDEA Novi Sad, about her time as a volunteer, are enough to explain why we keep on using the path of the YOUTH programme:

"All in all, that was the most beautiful summer of my life, a summer full of spirit. It was a valuable experience to get to know another country, its culture and language, and most importantly, the people. All of this changed me in a way that is really difficult to explain. The way you get accustomed to a situation when you are completely alone in an unknown place teaches you a lot about yourself. And when you succeed in adapting to the new environment and in having an independent life in a country where you didn't even know the language at the beginning, you start to feel much stronger and self-confident."

the Programme, SALTO SEE and the YOUTH programme itself.

Our main goal as **Contact Point** is to promote the possibilities of the YOUTH programme, in order to attract organisations working in our area to use it as a tool in their everyday work. We strongly believe that there are many organisations that would benefit from using the Programme. Once their number is growing, it would be much easier to reach young people that are just waiting for the opportunity to live an intercultural experience. As a next step, we would try to improve the quality of projects organised in the frame of the YOUTH programme, by offering tools to other organisations to use all the possibilities given in the best possible way. Last but not the least, by cooperating with the other Contact Points in our country and region we

would try to put some pressure on the relevant institutions and bodies to recognise the value and importance of the YOUTH programme, and to become one of our strategic partners in strengthening the implementation of the Programme.

Many things are to be done, many organisations are just waiting to be informed and young people are waiting to get involved and active, so we better keep moving :).

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Ivana Volf during her European Voluntary Service in Peniche, Portugal

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## NEW PROGRAMME – YOUTH IN ACTION

The Youth in Action programme starts with the beginning of 2007 and will cover the period until 2013. It builds on the experiences of the previous programme “Youth for Europe” (1989 – 1999), the European Voluntary Service and the YOUTH programme (2000 – 2006).

The Youth in Action programme contributes to the acquisition of competences and is therefore a key instrument in providing young people with opportunities for non-formal and informal learning with a European dimension. The Programme contributes to the fulfilment of the aims set out in the revised Lisbon Strategy, the European Youth Pact, the framework of European Cooperation in the youth field and the Commission's Plan D for democracy, dialogue and debate.

## New Actions

Youth in Action contains some new Actions and regulations in comparison with the former YOUTH programme. The Programme gives financial support to projects under 5 Actions.

Action 1 – Youth for Europe - includes youth exchanges, youth initiatives and other mobility projects reinforcing the active civic participation of young people (youth democracy projects).

Action 2 – European Voluntary Service

Action 3 – Youth of the world – contains the co-operation with partner countries.

Action 4 – Youth workers and support systems - supports the development of exchange, training and information projects for youth workers and projects to promote innovation and quality.

Action 5 – Support for policy cooperation in the field of youth – aims to promote cooperation among decision makers on youth policy and at preparing the participation of young people in democratic life by supporting policy-focused events and structured dialogue with policy makers.

## Possibility for project organisers from South East Europe to submit applications to the European Commission

The possibility for organisations from the partner countries in South East Europe to apply directly for project grants to the European Commission continues under the new Programme. One organisation submits the application on behalf of all the partners involved in one project, so partners from SEE will be able to initiate, coordinate and manage European projects.

For all projects selected at European level, there will be three application deadlines a year:

Projects starting between	Application deadline
1 July and 30 November	1 February
1 November and 30 March	1 June
1 January and 31 July	1 September

For projects that are selected at national level, there are five application deadlines a year:

Projects starting between	Application deadline
1 May and 30 September	1 February
1 July and 30 November	1 April
1 September and 31 January	1 June
1 December and 30 April	1 September
1 February and 31 July	1 November

Organisations from Partner countries can be partners in projects submitted at all of these 5 deadlines; however, they cannot submit applications themselves to National Agencies.

## New possibilities for cooperation with partner countries within the European Neighbourhood Policy

Action 3 focuses on the co-operation with the neighbouring regions of the EU (South East Europe, Eastern Europe and Caucasus and Euro-Med countries) within the European Neighbourhood Policy. It also opens up possibilities for co-operation with other countries of the world. Action 3 supports exchanges as well as training and networking projects in the field of youth. While focussing on promoting the co-operation between countries of the EU and one region of neighbouring partner countries within one project, it also gives the possibility for co-operation between different regions of neighbouring partner countries.

## New European Voluntary Service (EVS)

The new European Voluntary Service programme is accessible for young people from Programme countries as well as from partner countries. EVS activities can cover a period of 2 to 12 months. Accreditation will be extended to all organisations involved in EVS projects (host, sending and coordinating organisations) based in Programme or SEE countries.

## New age limits

Youth in Action is accessible for young people aged between 13 and 30, the main target group being youth aged between 15 and 28. The age limits differ from Action to Action.

## Recognition of key learning competences

To promote better recognition and validation of key learning competences acquired through participation in projects implemented within the Programme, Youth in Action introduces a new instrument, called “Youthpass”.

## Further information

More information and the new application forms are available on the websites of the Executive Agency [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/static/en/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/static/en/youth/index_en.htm), the European Commission [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/yia/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/yia/index_en.html) and SALTO SEE <http://www.salto-youth.net/see/>.

# Creating links between the EU and South East Europe

[www.salto-youth.net/see](http://www.salto-youth.net/see)



[see@salto-youth.net](mailto:see@salto-youth.net)

The SALTO-SEE Resource Centre is one of eight SALTO Resource Centres which have been established by the European Commission to support the implementation of the YOUTH programme in different priority areas. SALTO stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training possibilities.

The SALTO-SEE Resource Centre aims to facilitate and increase the participation of the programme partner countries of South East Europe in the YOUTH / Youth in Action programme.

We offer support and training for YOUTH National Agencies and project organisers to promote co-operation and improve the quality of YOUTH projects between Programme countries and the region of SEE.



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MINISTRSTVO ZA ŠOLSTVO IN ŠPORT  
URAD ZA MLADINO

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