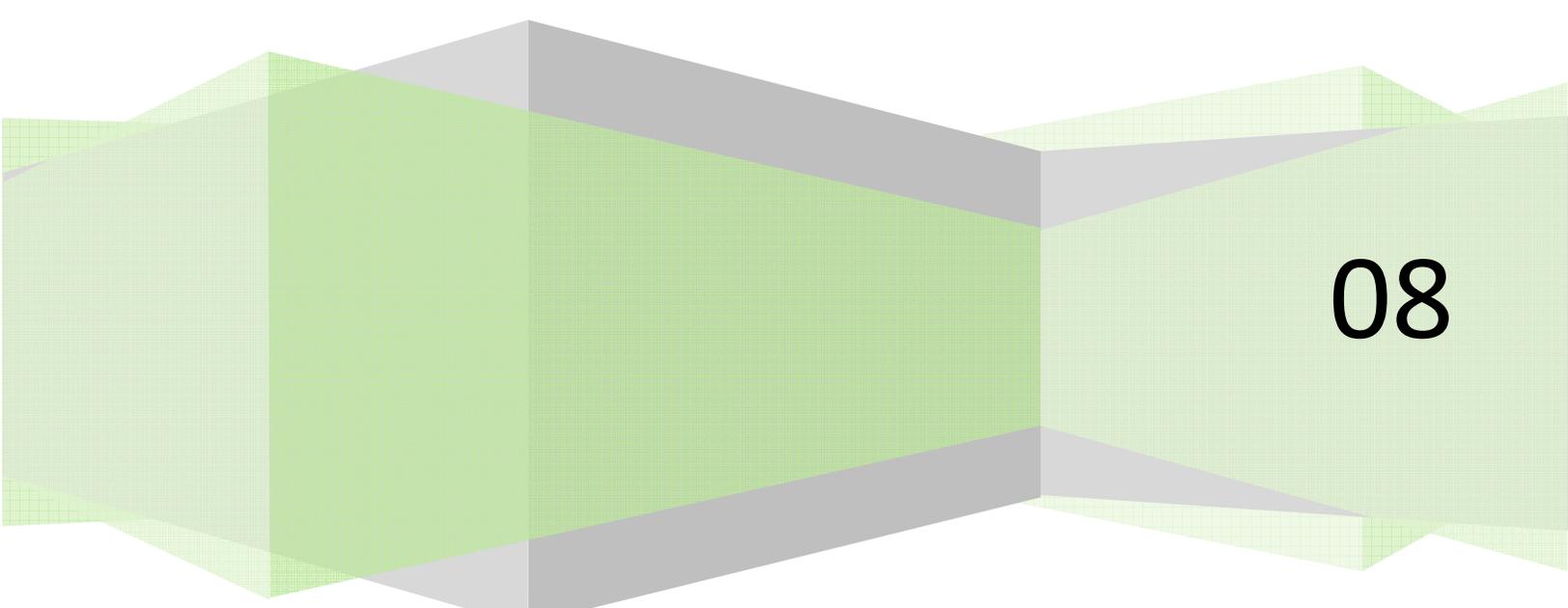


The Center for Regionalism

2008 YEAR IN REVIEW

Annual Report

The Center for Regionalism



08

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Introduction

2008 was a year of great challenges for Serbia. Its beginning was marked by a self-declaration of independence of Kosovo, which caused great political turbulences, both in Serbia and in the region as a whole. It was followed by political tensions in and outbursts of discontent, giving space to open appearance of extremist nationalistic forces against the full support of the people's block in the Government of Serbia. That resulted in unrests in the streets of Belgrade and other towns, attacks on embassies of the countries which recognized Kosovo's independence, setting the American embassy on fire, open calls to fight non-governmental organizations calling for reason and thoughtfulness. Soon, the Prime Minister resigned, the government was dismissed and new elections called for, at which, against the full mobilization of civic-society organizations and other democratic forces, the democratic block won. In spite of that, Kosovo remained the dominant issue on the political scene of Serbia, the process of meeting requirements for faster EU accession was not implemented at a promised and desired pace, there was still a great resistance to decentralization of Serbia (being, among other things, reflected, in contesting the new Statute of Vojvodina), nationalistic incidents in the Parliament of Serbia and other public places were not adequately condemned by the public and competent bodies. Thus, 2008 was not a rosy year, but the state of affairs was far better than it would have been had the populist block won the elections. Non-governmental organizations, within their relatively modest resources, gave their contribution in improving the overall situation in the country, focusing on speeding up its heading towards Europe, faster democratization and decentralization of the country, overcoming xenophobia and intolerance toward minority groups and placing the issue of Kosovo in the actual political context.

When the region is concerned, not only did a negative trend in interpersonal relations that began by the end of 2007 continue, but after the recognition of Kosovo independence by Croatia, Montenegro and Macedonia, there was a dramatic deterioration in relations between Serbia and those countries, and, according to a generally accepted assessment, the situation in the region was the worst since the end of war conflicts in the previous decade. Thus, the Igman Initiative, instead of being gradually transformed into a society of Croatian-Bosnian-Serbian-Montenegrin friendship, needed to fully engage in the current political flows as it did at the time of its setting up. To that end, the members at its 19th session held in Zagreb in November 2008, launched an initiative to have, as soon as possible, a regional summit which would end a trend of poor relations and deal with issues opening a better perspective, i. e. a common way of the countries of the region toward the EU. The Association of Multiethnic Towns of South-Eastern Europe, PHILIA, also made efforts aimed at that by pursuing a so called diplomacy of towns, being a basis of its activities and existence.

This is a rough outline of 2008, in which the Centre for Regionalism marked its 10th anniversary. A more detailed account of all mentioned will be given on the pages to follow.

Best regards

**Aleksandar Popov, Director
Centre for Regionalism**

Decentralization of Serbia in the Context of the New Constitution and the EU Integrations

The new Constitution of the Republic of Serbia was enacted in October 2006 on the basis of the agreement of key parliamentary parties. This supreme act was adopted without organizing any form of public discussion; the referendum voting, in which it was ratified, lasted for two days and was accompanied by a very strong media pressure imposed on voters to be in favor of adopting the new Constitution. Since the consensus had to be reached among the parties which participated in its adoption, the Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia renounced their previous positions to meet the requests of the Serbian Radical party in the section pertaining to the territorial organization that is decentralization.



Bearing in mind that such resolutions in the new Constitution do not comply with the European standards and that they will hinder the future accession of Serbia to the European Union, the Centre for Regionalism established an expert group whose task was to make the expertise of the section of the Constitution concerning the territorial organization of authority and propose amendments that would be in compliance with the demands of Serbia to be decentralized and democratized. Positions of experts were reviewed in several round tables held in Novi Sad and Belgrade. The conclusions of the Centre for Regionalism's experts pertaining to the shortcomings in the new Constitution concerning the territorial organization were later confirmed by the Venice Commission.

The experts' positions were also presented to the broad public through a number of open for a and other public performances held in 22 towns in Serbia in the second half of 2007 and the first half of 2008.



The purpose of this open fore was to explain to citizens the importance of decentralization for a further development of Serbia. The concluding positions of experts were presented to the public at the conference held in Belgrade in October 2008. These positions recommend that the section of the new Constitution of Serbia pertaining to the territorial organization be replaced by the provisions of the concept drawn up by the expert team of the President of Serbia from 2005 concerning this field.

Civil Dialogue in the South of Serbia

The aim of the Civil Dialogue in the South of Serbia project is to facilitate the strengthening of capacities of non-governmental organizations in the south of Serbia and improve their connecting with the local authorities, on the basis if experiences of the Civil Dialogue in Kosovo. Namely, this part of Serbia is characterized by a very low living standard and a high unemployment rate, so the chances for development of the civil sector have been very slim. The only opportunity for that arouse after the conflicts in the Preševo Valley in late 2000 and early 2001, when a significant number of donors provided the initial support needed to stimulate the development of civil society organizations.

However, this trend was rather short-lived, so the small numbers of the existing civil society organizations were left on their own. Bearing this fact in mind, the Centre for Regionalism, with the support of the Fund for an Open Society in Serbia, launched a two-year project in 2007, focused on the direct working with non-governmental organizations and provision of local government support to their activities. At the beginning of the project implementation, the situation was analyzed so up the future activities within the project could be drawn up in the best possible manner. There was also a meeting between representatives of non-governmental organizations from Bujanovac, Preševo and Medveđa

and presidents of these municipalities, to assess the situation together and work out the possibilities of local self-government support to non-governmental organizations.

First of all, it was agreed to provide the adequate premises and establish centre's for development of the non-profit sector in all three municipalities, whose equipping and operations would be jointly supported by local authorities and the Fund for an Open Society. Special attention within this project was paid to issues of gender equality, youth policies at the local level and the Roma inclusion. The small grant fund was provided within the project, in order to give a chance to the non-governmental organizations on this territory, to develop their capacities through the implementation of small projects.

Participation in the campaign – Serbia in EU – “What’s in it for me, what’s in it for my town?”

Campaign *Serbia in EU – what’s in it for me, what’s in it for my town* jointly organized by local non-governmental organizations was launched across fifty two towns in Serbia, just before general elections held on May 11th 2008. Purpose of this campaign was to explain the citizens the importance of Serbia’s faster accession to EU and to provide indirect support to the political forces fighting for realization of this goal.



Center for Regionalism took part in this campaign and organized public panel discussions in five towns in Vojvodina and in three municipalities in South Serbia (Medvedja, Presevo and Bujanovac), where experts from various fields had the opportunity to explain the need for a quick accession of Serbia to the great family of European peoples. Concluding event of this campaign was the grand celebration of the Europe Day on the plateau in front of the Serbian National Theater, which took place on May 9th. Curiosity of this celebration was the fact that city government (ruled by the majority consisted of Serbian Radical Party members) had put a ban on the whole gathering, on the account of protection of pre-election silence. Having in mind that this ban would have made Novi Sad the only town in Europe

not celebrating Europe Day (which is also a Victory over Fascism Day), Center for Regionalism deemed this explanation entirely meaningless and resorted to civil disobedience. The whole celebration of Europe Day was carried out according to the program. Around the large sign post FOR NOVI SAD, EUROPE NOW! – EUROPE, HERE WE COME!



That was put up above the plateau in front of the Serbian National Theater; citizens were entertained by the Brass Orchestra who played jazz and film music, while young volunteers passed around leaflets about the importance of Serbia's fast accession to European Union. At the end of the celebration, several hundred colorful balloons were released to air, accompanied by Beethoven's Ode to Joy, while airplane towing the banner **"EUROPE, HERE WE COME!"** flew above the town.

Civic Vojvodina

The Centre for Regionalism is one of the founders of the Vojvodinian NGO network called Civic Vojvodina which includes seven non-governmental organizations from this province (Independent Journalists Association of Vojvodina, Helsinki Committee in Serbia – Office in Novi Sad, Youth Initiative – Office in Novi Sad, NGO Panonija, Open Lycee from Sombor, Centre for Development of Civil Society from Zrenjanin and Centre for Regionalism). Civic Vojvodina was established in a joint action of the specified non-governmental organizations aimed at boycotting the referendum on the new Constitution of Serbia. The anti-referendum campaign was fruitful, resulting in the failure of the referendum in Vojvodina, despite the strong media pressure. The success of this campaign encouraged the representatives of the seven NGOs to continue with their programme and action-related cooperation, which subsequently resulted in a number of successfully implemented joint actions and activities.

The Burek of Solidarity

The period after the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo was characterized by a range of demonstrations and antagonism towards Albanians and attacks of bakeries owned by them. A similar thing happened to an Albanian, owner of the bakery called Two Brothers in Sombor, when representatives of extreme nationalist groups wanted more than just smashing the shop windows - they started giving bread baked in another bakery for free, in front of this bakery, calling upon the citizens of Sombor to boycott all bakeries owned by Albanians. This boycott was partially successful, because the students of the Grammar School in Sombor, situated across the street from the bakery, who were its regular customers, stopped buying bakery products for breakfast in this bakery.



As the competent authorities failed to respond to this incident for days, representatives of Civic Vojvodina visited this bakery to have the so called “Burek of Solidarity” (***Burek – traditional cheese or meat pie, many people’s favorite breakfast***) and were accompanied by the president of the municipality and local Ombudsman. Considering the fact that this action was covered by a large number of electronic and printed media, it was followed by involvement of the competent bodies who prevented the further distribution of bread for free, as a result of which the boycott of this bakery was terminated and students, as well as other citizens, started purchasing bread in this bakery again. The essential message of Aleksandar Popov, representative of Civic Vojvodina, communicated through the media, was that as long as every single citizen of this country is not safe, no one will be safe.

Anti- fascist encounters

The day of the Centre for Regionalism is 9th May – the day of victory over fascism and the Day of Europe. On this date every year, the Centre organizes a gathering of all its associates and friends from the entire

region. These are quite informal encounters, as they take place at the cottage in the Fruska Gora that belongs to the President of the Centre. This kind of getting together has become traditional, contributing to fostering and strengthening the friendly relations being the key requirement for effectiveness of joint activities within the regional networks, whose establishment was initiated by the Centre for Regionalism.



The Igman Initiative itself was established on the basis of a common idea of its holders, aware of the need to confront the nationalist and war madness and engage in the reestablishment of relations broken during the war, as well as on the basis of absolute mutual trust. This is why these informal encounters and getting together are significant for fostering and strengthening this friendship as the pillar of the efficient joint activities in the future.

The media presence

Considering the importance of visibility in the public for achieving a successful implementation of particular projects, the Centre for Regionalism paid special attention to its presence in the public through the media. Even more so because the public representation is one of the significant segments of actions performed by the Centre for Regionalism, as well as the greater part of expert projects implemented under its auspices. At the very beginning, which is logical, the Centre's presence in the public was not substantial. In time, however, with the involvement of certain journalists in its activities (who supported the ideas advocated by the Centre), the Centre's recognition in the media was on the increase.

Visibility in public has been accomplished by the very methodology of work within particular projects. In this respect, each expert project was accompanied by presentation of its results in round tables or at press conferences, most frequently held at the Media Centre in Belgrade. The broad public, particularly

that in local communities, had the opportunity to learn about the results of particular projects in open fora and other public performances organised on several occasions in all larger towns in Serbia. Particular issues, current at that time, pertaining to the problems dealt with by the Centre for Regionalism, were discussed at press conferences held at the Centre's premises, or the related public announcements were issued.

Activities of the Centre were particularly present in the public owing to the Igman Initiative, because of the fact that its sessions were at the centre of media attention as they frequently included the participation of the heads of states (e.g. the tenth session was directly broadcast by the public service Radio Television of Serbia). Consequently, this regional network of non-governmental organisations, as well as the Centre for Regionalism as one of its initiators and founder, became quite recognisable in the public. There are very few citizens in Serbia who have not heard of the Igman Initiative, so, whoever is a bit more informed is aware of what it represents. Considering the fact that other topics covered by the Centre, such as decentralisation of Serbia, have been actualised due to current political activities, such as enactment of a new Statute of AP Vojvodina, a number of domestic and foreign media have often addressed the Centre's Director and his associates to comment certain issues pertaining to these problems.

In addition, they have been asked to give statements regarding the current situation in the region, that is, regarding the deterioration in relations between particular countries of the region, first of all the signatory countries of the Dayton Agreement. Presence in the public is also ensured through the website of the Centre, as well as other sites covering particular fields of activities - the web-sites of the Igman Initiative, Association of Multiethnic Cities of the South Eastern Europe Philia and Civil Dialogue.

In addition, publications are published occasionally, presenting the Centre's activities, along with expert publications containing the papers of experts and associates of the

IGMAN INITIATIVE IN 2008

XVIII Session of Igman Initiative, Igman Initiative for Regional Summit Meeting

TUZLA (Bosnia and Herzegovina), February 29th 2008. – XVIII Session of Igman Initiative took place in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Igman Initiative has appealed to the Presidents of countries in the region to organize a summit meeting, together with representatives of this movement of NGOs, in order to overcome the crisis in the region.



During the Igman Initiative session in Tuzla, this kind of summit meeting was seen as a “real impetus to the continuation of cooperation process and reinforcement of security and peace in the region” Igman Initiative hopes that “answer to the Kosovo crisis will not be sought with violent methods or with measures that may lead this country toward permanent isolation”. Members of this movement of NGOs also concluded that crisis in the region has begun late last year within Bosnia and Herzegovina and that it was additionally deepened by the situation created after the one-sided proclamation of independence by Kosovo. Members of Igman Initiative have requested countries in the region to “help Serbia to come out of present situation by maintaining restrained attitude and carefully weighed behavior”. Igman Initiative, a movement of over a hundred NGOs in this region, organized its 18th session in Tuzla, yesterday and today, dedicated to the process of transition in the region. During this session, there were presentations of researches about transition in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia and Serbia, as well as talks about political, economic and social aspects of transition. Igman Initiative is a movement that advocates complete normalization of relations between these four countries of this region.

XIX Session of Igman Initiative

SUMMIT MEETING OF WEST BALKAN COUNTRIES

PROPOSED AT THE IGMAN INITIATIVE CONFERENCE

November 7-8th, 2008. Zagreb, Republic of Croatia - At the 19th session of Igman Initiative held in Zagreb, November 7-8th, under the title “Problems faced by countries in this region on their path to European Union”, a proposal to organize a summit meeting of West Balkan countries was raised. For all countries of this region and for the bodies of European Union, this summit meeting will be a strong signal that triggers faster region’s advancement towards fully fledged EU membership.



President of the Republic of Croatia, Mr. Stjepan Mesic, offered his support for this proposal to organize a summit meeting of West Balkan countries as soon as possible. According to Mr. Zivorad Kovacevic, Board member of Igman Initiative and a president of the European Movement in Serbia, this summit will be an opportunity to “evaluate the progress of our countries on their European path. In this sense, 19th session of Igman Initiative in Zagreb was the first step in this direction, which is going to be followed by the next step – the summit itself. Meeting of representatives of the EU and representatives of this region’s countries at the highest level will be the final step. Igman Initiative desires to have this summit organized during the term of the Check Republic’s EU presidency. There are strong signals coming from the officials in Rome that indicate the interest of this city to host the summit meeting.

President Mesic has gladly accepted the proposition to be the host of this regional summit. In his speech, he pointed out that truth remains crucial for building good relations in the region, especially now when – according to his perception – general climate in the region is worsening and in some aspects beginning to resemble the 90’s of the past century. “I am not a pessimist and I do not wish to exadurate things, but I cannot look away from the situation in the neighborhood. What I see and hear is not good for Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the whole region. Staying silent in such situation would be a repetition of a mistake done not too long ago, and neither we nor the international community can afford to repeat it.” – Mr. Mesic said alluding to the issue of Republic of Srpska. He also pointed out his concerns about the stagnation of relations between Croatia and Serbia, where communication channels are open but “nothing runs through”.

Host of this meeting, Mr. Zoran Pusic, president of the Citizens' Board for Human Rights and a co-president of the Igman Initiative, believes that greatest stumbling blocks on Croatia's path to the EU are inefficiency of the justice system and political extremism, lately diminished to some extent.



President of the Croatian National Board for monitoring EU accession, Ms Vesna Pusic, said that it was no secret that some of the countries have not even negotiated their accession to EU, while other countries negotiated only formally. However, after Romania and Bulgaria's EU accession, Croatia is faced with very strict criteria, while other countries that haven't even negotiated their accession yet, will face even stricter criteria. "To us, EU's criteria should not suffice; for our own sake, it should be even stricter." - Ms Pusic said. She also added that justice system remains a crucial issue for Croatia, having in mind that before the disturbing events in Zagreb and personnel changes within the Government, almost nothing was being done. Similar experiences were described by participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, who concurred on the fact that corruption, organized criminal and still present nationalism manifested by violence are the main problems that trouble their countries and hold them back on their path to the fully fledged EU membership.

THE MOST EUROPEAN AWARD - Igman Initiative - "most European" and most successful project in 2007

On the occasion of "European evening in Belgrade", the First European House Cukarica organized the award-giving ceremony on February 14th 2008 for "Najevropljanin 2007" (Most European in 2007) award, which took place in the grand hall of the Assembly of Belgrade. Upon the proposition given by the European Movement in Serbia, the award for the most European and most successful project in 2007 was given to the "Igman Initiative".



On behalf of Igman Initiative, co presidents Aleksandar Popov, Vehid Sehic i Zoran Pusic have received this award and expressed their thanks to all guests present at this ceremony.

Winners of the “Najevropljanin 2007” award are: Mr. Vojin Dimitrijevic for politics, OSCE ambassador in Serbia Mr. Hans Ola Urstad for greatest contributions in making connections between Serbia and Europe, Mr. Nenad Popovic for economy, Mr. Mica Jovanovic for culture and education and Mr. Dusan Antonic for industry.

Proud of Novi Sad, other cities follow the example.

October 17th 2008. - With great pleasure, coalitions of NGOs Gradjanska Vojvodina and Igman Initiative have welcomed the good news from the City’s Naming Committee for parts of settlements and public services. Our proposition to name a passageway in the city of Novi Sad after one of the very rare true heroes of past wars in ex-Yugoslavia- Srdjan Aleksic, was adopted.



We are proud because Novi Sad is the first city on ex-Yugoslav territory that recognizes the heroism of Srdjan Aleksic, which must not be forgotten and which continues to stand both as a symbol and a path

to the cathartic enlightenment of one society, as well as a path to the normalization of relations and the renewal of friendship between countries and peoples of the region.

Srdjan Aleksic's name is also a powerful symbol of the fight for values of living together, a symbol which is very important for Novi Sad as a city that was founded upon values of diversity, tolerance and coexistence. Naming this passageway after Srdjan Aleksic's name is a strong message to the citizens of not only Novi Sad, but whole Vojvodina and Serbia, saying that no one can be exiled or discriminated in any way because of confessional, racial, national or any other affiliation.

We are convinced that the example of Novi Sad will be followed by other cities of ex Yugoslavia.

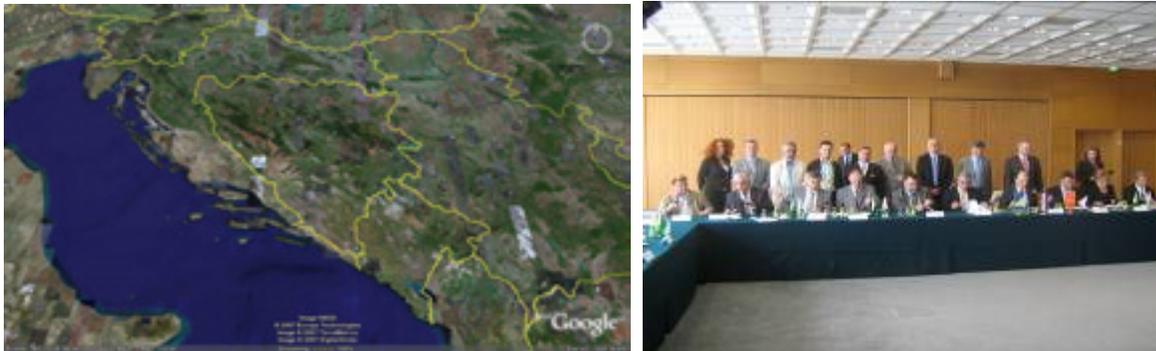
Let us remember that Srdjan Aleksic was murdered by four uniformed members of the Army of Republic of Srpska, because he stood up against their intention to kill a Bosniac national Alen Glavovic. They assaulted him and beat him up with their gunstocks. Injuries lead to a coma and six days later, Srdjan Aleksic died on January 27th 1993. One of the four assailants was killed few months later, while other three were sentenced to two years and four months of imprisonment (!?). Today, Alen Glavovic lives in Sweden and regularly visits Srdjan Aleksic's final resting place, each year. Srdjan Aleksic was also a junior record holder in swimming sports and a member of the amateur theater. He was one of the most favorite citizens of Trebinje.

This year's January 27th marks fifteen years after the brutal murder of Srdjan Aleksic.

Revive the cooperation on the tripartite border between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Croatia

Igman Initiative, together with the East West Institute, has been trying to revive the cooperation on the tripartite border between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Croatia, ever since their second session held in October 2001 in Dubrovnik. During their work toward this goal, representatives of NGOs and various interest groups from this area were teamed up on several occasions and in 2005 Mayors of Dubrovnik, Herceg Novi and Trebinje, had joined them as well. On that particular occasion, they signed the Letter of Intent. However, there was no progress made since. The biggest obstacles against reestablishment of cooperation were psychological barriers induced by war and destruction in Dubrovnik region during the last decade. People of Dubrovnik were unable to forgive their neighbors from Trebinje and Herceg Novi for the attacks launched from that direction. In spite of numerous problems demanding joint solutions – wildfires ravaging coastline, water supply problems, pollution of waterways and sea, etc, Dubrovnik continuously resisted all attempts to establish and formalize this cooperation. Because of this resistance on the local level, Igman Initiative came to a conclusion that the issue must be raised to the national level.

During 2006, the Igman Initiative was persistently lobbying, with the support of the OSCE and the *EastWest* Institute, to hold the meeting of foreign affairs ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro, with the aim to stimulate cooperation in the South Adriatic area. The meeting was, at last, organised in Neum on 27th April 2007. Ministers Mr. Sven Alkalaj (BH), Mr. Milan Roćen (Montenegro) and Ms. Kolinda Grabar Kitarović (Croatia) signed a joint statement, agreeing, among others, on the following: “The cross-border cooperation is one of the prerequisites of regional development, just like the regional cooperation is a stimulus to development of our countries and is an integral part of the European process in which our counties take part.



We encourage the improvement of the cross-border cooperation, support joint projects aimed at improving and developing this cooperation, as this is all an integral part of our mutual good neighborly relations and European visions that we share“. It was agreed that the three respective countries, each for the period of one year, would coordinate the activities of public and local authorities in the process of implementing the tri-border cooperation. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro is the first chairman for the year 2008.

After that, representatives of local authorities were supposed to sign a memorandum, which would be the basis for operationalisation of that cooperation. Unfortunately, the memorandum was not signed, as its text had not been fully harmonised among the signatories, and partly due to the fact that this meeting was not attended by certain number of representatives of the tri-border local authorities.

In order to provide a new incentive to continuation of the initiated cooperation process, a preparatory meeting was held on 14th April 2008 in Zagreb, including the participation of assistant ministers of foreign affairs of the three countries responsible for bilateral relations, as coordinators of this process for the country they represented, along with mayors and representatives of municipalities of Dubrovnik, Konavle, Neum, Trebinje, Kotor, Tivat and Herceg Novi, ambassadors of Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, representatives of the Igman initiative, the *EastWest* Institute and the UNDP Mission to Montenegro.

At the meeting in Zagreb it was agreed to hold another meeting of foreign affairs ministers in Dubrovnik on 5th May 2008. The Igman Initiative and the *EastWest* Institute agreed to make all the necessary arrangements and hand out a revised text of the Memorandum of Establishment of a joint commission for natural resources management and cooperation in the field of natural and other types of disasters.

Meanwhile, the Igman Initiative came up with the idea to organise a meeting of *religious leaders*, who would provide support to the process of reestablishment of trust and reconciliation in this area. The initiative was accepted by Bishop Grigorije of the Serbian Orthodox Church, who invited the Catholic bishop and the Imam of the Islamic religious community to attend the meeting in Trebinje and called for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation.

At the proposal of the Igman Initiative, the Municipal Assembly of Trebinje adopted the statement which underlines that Trebinje and Dubrovnik were connected in many ways throughout the history: These extensive quite might go to boxes „Trebinje was a natural hinterland to Dubrovnik, whereas Dubrovnik was Trebinje’s ‘window to the world’”. A good economic and trade cooperation has been fostered between these two cities for centuries, as well as strong interpersonal relations, the evidence of which may be seen in numerous God-parenthoods existing until the present day...Evil times that had fallen upon some parts of the former Yugoslavia in the previous decade did not avoid this region. The war brought along horrible crimes committed on people, along with huge devastations and breaking off the connections that had been fostered for centuries. Unfortunately, this happened between Trebinje and Dubrovnik. A part of terror that happened to Dubrovnik came from the side of Trebinje, and we, the councilors of the Municipal Assembly of Trebinje would like to express great regret for what happened. To admit to your mistake is grand, but we also know how magnificent it is to forgive. This is why the language of humans contains these wonderful words like I AM SORRY and FORGIVE ME. Uttering these words is, first of all, in the interest of the citizens of Trebinje and Dubrovnik, as well as in the interest of future generations that will come after us, which is why we need to look at the future. Being the first neighbors’ to each other, we have a range of common interests, whose harmonisation will be to the benefit of our citizens, as well as common problems whose solving will contribute to development and progress in both cities and the wider region that we belong to.“ President of the Municipal Assembly of Trebinje, Mr Nikola Sekulović, who has been an activist of the Igman Initiative since its establishment, conveyed this apology at the meeting in Dubrovnik, and stated, with regret, that a part of the terror that happened to Dubrovnik did come from the side of Trebinje. „We express deep regret for what happened. To make mistakes is human, as is to commit a sin against someone else, but it is even more human to admit to your mistake and try to fix them“, Mr. Sekulović stated.

At the same meeting, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Mr. Milan Roćen said that his country “would like to express regret for all the pain, all atrocities and all material losses” suffered by the citizens of Croatia, specially Konavle and Dubrovnik, that were inflicted upon them by particular citizens of Montenegro. „Dubrovnik was a victim of aggression and destruction where the innocent were killed and highly valuable assets were severely damaged. “

These messages conveying apologies were welcomed in Dubrovnik, substantially contributing to making a friendly atmosphere and developing the cooperative spirit.

The meeting in Dubrovnik was for the first time attended by mayors and representatives of all cities and municipalities, as well as of the Dubrovnik-Neretva County, who signed a joint statement. The statement says that it is not a legally binding document and the participation in the work of the commission they established will be based on a volunteering basis and interests.

Goals of the Commission's work include the following: to provide support to joint cross-border projects, to exchange communication and information about the issues in the joint interest, to develop the projects in the interest of all and apply for the EU funds, to plan and agree on the strategy of protection and development of the cross-border area at the sea and the land, to cooperate and provide assistance in the event of natural disasters and environmental incidents and develop the region in compliance with the concepts of the European Union.

Potential fields of activities to be undertaken by the Commission have been established:

1. *natural resources management* (utilisation and protection of water resources, monitoring and protection of the sea, environment and environmental protection, energy and waste management),
2. *cross-border interventions in urgent situations* (protection against fire, other natural disasters and environmental incidents),
3. *enhancement of the economic cooperation* (regional development of tourism, reestablishment of other forms of economic cooperation and establishment of passenger transport lines between the signatory cities/municipalities),
4. *demining*.

The Commission is composed of three groups of representatives: one representative of each local community that will be appointed by the corresponding local authorities, one representative of each of the three governments and the expert working group in identified fields of cooperation. The Commission decisions will be made by consensus. If the Commission needs to meet more frequently for the project purposes, it may operate with a reduced number of representatives of the interested local communities. Representatives of the Igman Initiative and the East West Institute, which agreed to cover the costs of the Commission's meetings, will also be involved in the work of the Commission.

Foreign Affairs Ministers agreed that their assistants in charge of bilateral relations assume the role of coordinators of these activities.

At the Commission's session held on 23rd June 2008, chaired by the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, the Rules of Procedure concerning the Commission's work was to be adopted, whose draft version was prepared by the Igman Initiative. Still, due to a misunderstanding in preparation of the session, representatives of local communities from Croatia did not attend the session, so another meeting had to be scheduled, which was held on 21st July in Herceg Novi.

This time, the Commission was in full force, the Rules of Procedure was adopted and discussion was initiated concerning the possible joint projects. The meeting was characterized by a working atmosphere and constructive discussions. The greatest attention was paid to protection against fire (exchange of information, the system of notifying the fire, video-surveillance, demining, aircrafts used in aerial firefighting entering the territory of another country, establishment of a regional centre for procurement of equipment and the possibility of obtaining the EU support).

The necessity of starting a joint project to regenerate the devastated forests was underlined. Utilisation of water resources and water supply was also the topic of their discussion. In addition to reaching a solution for the disputed water supply between Konavle and Herceg Novi, the project of constructing a new pipeline was proposed. One of the topics that attracted the attention of all participants was cooperation in dealing with the issue of municipal waste. A joint expert group will consider various solutions – from the joint landfill for waste disposal to construction of a waste recycling plant. It was proposed to establish a regional centre to be in charge of solid waste management. Regional development of tourism was the following topic in the agenda.

Several proposals of joint projects were made, including the creation of a common tourist product. It was concluded that a joint proposal should be submitted to establish new small-border crossing points in the Dubrovnik-Herceg Novi-Trebinje triangle. The Igman Initiative proposed the border regime monitoring project, in order to increase the efficiency of crossing the borders. The participants also agreed on the proposal that the international musical and sport event called “Games without Borders”, involving young people from different regions of the world, which has already been organised by the Igman Initiative in Mostar, Priština and Gračanica, be organised in cities of the South Adriatic area.

The participants agreed that joint expert groups prepare the relevant projects, which need to be considered and adopted at the Commission’s session, prior to applying for funds to the European Union and other potential donors at the meeting of foreign affairs ministers which will, at the same time, be the donors’ conference. Particular emphasis was placed on the need to establish a close cooperation with the newly-founded Regional Council for Cooperation (which replaced the Stability Pact for the SE Europe) seated in Sarajevo, whose representatives should be invited to all sessions of the Commission. Active support should also be sought from the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The next meeting of the Commission was held on 2nd November in Tivat. On this occasion, approximately ten projects, jointly prepared by expert groups of the tri-border municipalities, were verified. These projects include the following:

- Regional centre for protection against fire;
- Automatic fire surveillance;
- Promotion of cultural heritage for the purpose of sustainable tourism;
- Water supply – maintenance and increase of regional waterworks capacity;
- Establishing the new small-border crossing points;
- Civil border monitoring at the tri-border between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Croatia;
- Waste water purification plant;
- Transport network;

- Exchange of tourist visits.

At this meeting, the participants agreed to complete all verified projects until December, when the last meeting of the Commission will be held in the period of Montenegro's chairing of cooperation. At this meeting, final versions of projects will be adopted. Presentation of projects to donors will be organised at the Donors' Conference, envisaged to take place as part of the meeting of the three foreign affairs ministers, in the second half of February 2009.

Therefore, after seven years of persistent, but mostly inefficient attempts, the full support of local and central authorities to cooperation in the South Adriatic area was finally achieved. In addition, the institutional mechanism was established for preparation of joint projects and their implementation, which provides, for the first time, a sufficient basis to expect the cooperation in this turbulent region to start developing in full swing.

PRESS CLIPPING MATERIALS

All press materials related to the activities of Igman Initiative can be downloaded by following link <http://www.igman-initiative.org/pages/press.htm>

CIVIC DIALOGUE INITIATIVE IN 2008

Project Campaign for living together in Kosovo

The beginning of 2008 was marked by a non-defined situation and by awaiting political decisions in Kosovo. On February 17, Kosovo proclaimed its independence. This is the reason why Civic Dialogue activities started somewhat later, when the situation stabilized and it became easier to define priorities and create plans for the upcoming period. A new project of Civic Dialogue, titled **Campaign for living together in Kosovo**, started in May.

This project is implemented with the support of BTD (The Balkan Trust for Democracy), as well as the FES (Freidrich Ebert Stiftung) foundation. The idea of the project is to form a team comprised of the most active participants of Civic Dialogue projects from Serbia and from Kosovo. Through two trainings, this team completed an education program in the field of lobbying, public advocacy and campaign management. The continuation of the project includes a campaign to promote the joint life of Serbs, Albanians, Bosnians and other ethnic groups in Kosovo, as well as to lobby, at local, central and international level, for the creation of necessary conditions for the normalization of relations. The return of refugees, reintegration, solution of concrete problems at local level, as well as the respect of human and minority rights, are the priorities of the Civic Dialogue team. This campaign was launched at local level with a dance performance of the Rebel Development group in Pristina and in Gracanica. The performance was extremely well received, especially in Pristina, where spectators greeted the participants from Novi Sad with a loud applause. This event further convinced us of the positive results of our efforts in the normalization of relations between Serbs and Albanians.

The first activity within the project was a **visit to non-governmental organizations in Kosovo**.

The coordinators of the project Campaign for living together in Kosovo, Srdjan Vezmar, Tatjana Tucic and Mirlinda Gojani, visited civil society organizations in Kosovo on May 20 and 21. At these meetings, coordinators presented the project Campaign for living together in Kosovo and invited the participants of the meetings to join the team that would manage this campaign. In addition to this, the coordinators gathered information about the situation in each place visited and about the activities of the host organization.

The coordinators were met with an excellent response of Serbian organizations, which have lost trust in most initiatives in Kosovo launched both by authorities in Serbia and by the civil sector. Civic Dialogue, however, during almost seven years of its activities, has been greatly respected, as it is one of the first organized initiatives for the normalization of relations between Serbs and Albanians that has achieved continuity in its work. The Igman Initiative, on whose experience the work of the Campaign team will be based, and whose results are known to the wider public, is also highly respected by NGOs in Kosovo. The project Campaign for living together is conceived as having an open structure, and all activities would be implemented in accordance with a platform of action, to be adopted by all members at the initial meeting. Furthermore, it was also agreed that the work methodology will be flexible, while

priorities will be decided upon by agreement. Civic Dialogue will continue to apply for funds for this project with other donors, in order to acquire necessary funds for the implementation of planned activities, especially those concerning local communities.

The coordinators visited the following cities and organizations:

Kosovska Mitrovica-northern part

Center for Civil Society Development (meeting with Aleksandar Stojanovic and Momcilo Arlov)

Kosovska Mitrovica-southern part

Community Building Mitrovica (meeting with Valdete Idrizi)

Gracanica

Communication for Social Development (meeting with Igor Artonovic)

Orahovac

Shuler Helfen Leben, (meeting with Jeton Cenka, Rodoljub Grkovic and Enis Durguti)

Konak, (meeting with Marjan Saric)

Prizren

Zenit (meeting with Edis Mustafi)

Urosevac

INPO (meeting with Ramadan Iliazi)

After these visits, the initial meeting was held, during which the campaign team was formed. The meeting was held in the Fruska Gora, and was participated by 21 representatives of NGOs from Kosovo and from Serbia (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, ONO organization, Center for Regionalism and Youth Dialogue Program from Novi Sad, Mother Theresa Society from Pristina, CCSD and CBM from Mitrovica, KOPF and the Zenit NGO from Prizren, Center for the Development of Civil Resources from Nis, Fraktal-Belgrade, Konak organization from Orahovac, CSD-Gracanica, Initiative for Progress (INPO) from Urosevac, as well as Action for Non Violence and Peace Building from Gnjilane). The goal of the meeting was getting the participants acquainted with one another and the creation of the platform of joint action. The following principles of action were agreed upon:

- Criticism of own negative phenomena in society.
- Active fight for the respect of human and minority rights.
- Being apolitical. The team will act in favor of citizens and their needs and not in favor of political parties.

- Individual approach. The different needs of each and every local community will be respected.
- Accepting the reality.
- Encouragement of networking, support to similar initiatives, willingness to cooperate.
- Joint discussion of priorities, solidarity.

Issues and problems faced by the Kosovo society in the new situation (proclamation of independence by Kosovo) were raised and discussed at the meeting.



The seminar **PUBLIC ADVOCACY was held on October 10-12, 2008**, in the Rugova mountains in Kosovo. The seminar was attended by 19 representatives of NGOs from Kosovo and from Serbia (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Center for Regionalism and Youth Dialogue Program from Novi Sad, CCSD and CBM, as well as the organization “Me Dorë Në Zemër” from Mitrovica, the Mother Theresa Society, Ligo lex legis and KIPRED from Pristina, KOPF and NGO Zenit from Prizren, CSD from Gracanica, Action for Non Violence and Peace Building from Gnjilane, Initiative for Progress (INPO) from Urosevac, Reintegration from Novi Pazar). During a three-day training, the participants learnt about the basics of public advocacy through different techniques and methods (lecture, quiz, triangle analysis, group work, presentation of results of work in groups). The participants covered the following topics:

- Public advocacy: definition, conceptual frame
- Public advocacy and related concepts, demystification of politics and power
- Rights-based access, triangle analysis, goals of public advocacy
- Development of public advocacy strategies, base development – significance of the involvement of citizens in the process of public advocacy
- Networks and coalitions, development of plan of networking activities

- Target audience analysis, message and communication channels
- Media relations, message development, placement of message through different communication channels (practical work)
- Placement of message through different communication channels (practical work).

This seminar was marked by a distinctly pleasant atmosphere. The team members achieved great closeness, a sense of togetherness was formed, which positively affected the work atmosphere and the very results of activities. Three joint project outlines were created, to be implemented at local level. In the following period, the Civic Dialogue intends to acquire funds for the implementation of these projects.



Project “Local Politics in Multiethnic Municipalities”

Project is supported by Kosovo Foundation for Open Society and implemented by Mother Teresa Society, Centre for Regionalism and KIPRED as expert partner. This is a two year project which aims to analyse and evaluate legal and local regulations as well as practice on the subject of the minority rights, interethnic relations, and to build capacity of local governments in multiethnic communities. In this context, project seeks to promote human and minority rights and inter ethnic collaboration in order to contribute to normalization of situation in the entire Kosovo. The Conference, which was held on 5-6 July in Brezovica was the first one in the course of debates, meetings and discussions to be held during the implementation of the project. The main goal of the conference was to introduce the project introduction, enable exchange of experience from the region and to create a field of interest for involvement of Representatives of Municipalities together with other relevant actors on local government in accordance with transitional processes, with special emphasize on establishment of the necessary institutions for the law enforcement and inter ethnic relations. The Conference gathered more than 40 participants, representatives of Prime Minister’s Office for Good Governance, representatives of Ministry of Local Administration and Governance, representatives of local communities, president of Association of Kosovo Municipalities, various NGO’s and experts from the

region –Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Hungary .On the second day of the Conference, two assisting bodies were formed.

The first one was establishment of Project Board which included all relevant actors for advising, and overseeing the project. After discussion, it was decided that the pilot project will be implemented in Municipalities of Gjilan, Obiliq and Prizren, as three different locations with diverse specificities. A Focus Group was also formed, which gathered representatives of various NGO's as monitoring team of Municipal work. In addition, these participants were trained by experts from Vojvodina.



After the Brezovica conference, the KIPRED expert organization from Pristina conducted the research in these three municipalities. The research determined the local regulations concerning interethnic relations and minority rights and practice in their implementation. The research also encompassed the analysis of the achievement of rights of minorities in the field of the official use of language and script, as well as culture and informing. The results of this research will be presented at roundtable discussions at the beginning of 2009, in Obilic, Gnjilane and Prizren.

ASSOCIATION PHILIA IN 2008

Professional Exchange on Diversity Management, South East Europe-Central Asia

Philia and MMCP have worked with regional partners Central Asia since 2004/2005. Capacity-building trainings and resource development with regional partners, including the UNDP in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the Soros National Foundation in Kyrgyzstan, and their civil society partners, have helped build an empowered and active community of local practitioners dedicated to promoting democratic governance in multiethnic and cross-border communities through context-specific interventions. Association of Multiethnic Cities of South East Europe-Philia, in late 2006, and LGI organized a 10-day professional exchange, which brought six individuals from Kyrgyzstan (2 representatives of the UNDP-Kyrgyzstan, 2 experts of the Ethnic Development Program of Soros-Kyrgyzstan, the head of the Association of Local Self-government Institutions of the Kyrgyz Republic and the mayor Uzgen city, Kyrgyzstan) to meet counterparts in South East Europe. This exchange created a basic understanding of comparable aspects of the management of multiethnic communities and cross-border cooperation in Central Asia and South East Europe and was an important step in building strong personal and professional connections that would allow for further work.



A second professional exchange was organized from 8-17 November 2008. The purpose of the exchange was to create a practitioner-to-practitioner platform for sharing concrete experiences with, and insights into, local diversity management and identifying opportunities for joint projects and cooperation between actors in South East Europe and Central Asia. Further, by bringing a diverse team of experienced practitioners from a post-conflict context (SEE) to Kyrgyzstan, the exchange was envisioned as a means of emphasizing – to a range of stakeholders – the importance of an inter-sectoral approach to recognizing diversity and the pursuit of good diversity management as intrinsic to peace and stability.

Meetings

Meetings were conducted in Bishkek and Osh cities and the towns of Uzgen and Nookat in southern Kyrgyzstan, and included:

In Bishkek:

- Association of Municipalities of Kyrgyzstan
- Members of the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan
- Head of the Economic and Social Policy Department, Office of the President of Kyrgyzstan
- Peace and Development Program, UNDP-Kyrgyzstan and UNDP Volunteer Program
- Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic and OSCE-High Commissioner on National Minorities Education Liaison Officer to Kyrgyzstan
- Assembly of People of Kyrgyzstan

In Osh Region:

- Governor of Osh Oblast'
- Mayor of Osh city
- Mayor of Uzgen city and Ethnic Development Council
- Head of rayon administration and Mayor of Nookat
- NGO members
- Representatives of the media

In addition to meetings with a range of stakeholders, a thirty-minute televised program was developed with SEE representatives, and press releases on the professional exchange were distributed to local media.

A two-day seminar was also organized from 14-15 November 2008 in Osh, around the exchange of experiences in diversity management in South East Europe and Central Asia. The seminar included local public officials, academics, and representatives from international organizations and civil society from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

General Findings:

1. To date, interregional exchanges have had important personal and professional effects on the individuals and organizations involved, and momentum exists for its continuation;
2. More research and informed analyses research on local practices in diversity management are needed, particularly in Central Asia, to support inclusive policymaking in the region and the efficacy of interregional exchanges;
3. Experiences and methods of work of the Center for Regionalism and Philia with cross-border municipal triangles/circles of cooperation, founded on the basis of an agreement on interethnic tolerance made at high levels of government, are relevant to Central Asia (in fields of resource sharing, border management, and others) and their relevance to contexts in Central Asia should be explored further;
4. Comparable technologies of local diversity management are multiple - like minority councils or ethnic development councils, and youth programs – deserve to be explored further;
5. The relevance of SEE experiences to mono-ethnic communities in Central Asia, where sub-ethnic or religious issues are prevalent and divisive, deserve attention;
6. The existence of regionally specific configurations of ethnic and linguistic diversity, as in Vojvodina, Serbia and the Ferghana Valley of Kyrgyzstan (and neighboring countries), are comparable. The sharing of experiences on region-specific policies and mechanisms for managing diversity should be pursued;
7. Grassroots initiatives of local community groups in Kyrgyzstan are relevant to contexts in South East Europe and should be developed further (namely: in terms of methodologies used and documentation) and shared; and
8. While local self-governance and community organizing for better management of diverse communities is robust in Kyrgyzstan, initiatives are often stifled by the centralized system of public administration and limited cooperation between civil society actors and authoritative decision-makers. Beyond knowledge- and experience-sharing, interregional professional exchanges can serve as means of attracting a range of stakeholders to often-sidelined issues of diversity and placing them in the center of public attention.

Based on these findings, several ideas for future activities emerged:

- Policies and Practices in Multiethnic Experiences, SEE-CA: Case Studies of Local Diversity Management
- Mediators in Kosovo
- South-East Europe-Central Asia Exchange: Workshops on Cross-Border Local Government Cooperation

- Effective Language Policies in Central Asia
- Diversity and Public Administration Education
- “Empowering the Vulnerable Communities of Kazakhstan through Promoting Economic and Social Integration of Oralman,” UNDP-Kazakhstan:
 - Conference on Cross-Border Cooperation: Experience of the Center for Regional and the Igman Initiative as a Tool for Improved Regional Relations
 - Trainings on Diversity Proposed by UNDP-KG:



Southeast Europe and Central Asia Interregional Collaboration-Handbook

Within the project of establishing cooperation and exchange of best practices between region of Southeast Europe and Central Asia, as a one of the activities Center for regionalism issued handbook for NGO personnel and municipal leaders in post conflict areas or regions dealing with new borders. The guidebook with methodological insights contains practical lessons on how to re-establish contact and reconcile relationships in order to build trust, foster development, increase understanding and embrace the concept of diversity. This guidebook is catalog of the experiences of the Philia and Center for Regionalism in its role in numerous cross border, inter-ethnic initiatives such as the Igman Initiative, Civic Dialogue, and various minority programs.

Aim of the guidebook is to link CA and SEE throughout the case studies particularly in the triangle of cities case studies and making it relevant to Central Asia.

Six documents is created – Preface - The Practitioner’s Guidebook, Case Study – Igman Initiative, Case Study – Philia, Case Study – Triangles of Cooperation, and Case Study – Local Policies in Interethnic Communities.

General Secretariat of Philia ensured that handbook contains all the information necessary for the work of international experts who also gave experience and knowledge, and integrated all the documents into one whole. On the basis of questionnaires, interviews and field work with the officials, community leaders and experts from local areas, PHILIA Secretariat acquired valuable information that are integrated in the case studies on triangle of cities.

Aim of the first meeting was to define the methodology and framework for the future work on the guidebook. Following activities were arranged:

- Work on Introduction.
 - brief overview of the Balkan conflicts since early 1990s
 - Evolution of the institutional framework: Center for Regionalism, Igman Initiative, Philia
 - Work on Case studies on the Triangles of cities
The base model: Novi Sad (Ser), Osijek (Cro), Tuzla (BaH)
 - Joint development: Bajina Basta (Ser) and Srebrenica (BaH)
 - European neighborhood programmes: Baja (Hu), Osijek (Cro), Sombor (Ser)
 - Evolving cooperation: Dubrovnik (Cro), Herceg Novi (Mn), Trebinje (BaH)
 -
 - Guidance and support by the international expert
 - Questionnaire and outline for case study writing
 - Review, comments and quality control of reports and case studies
 - Fieldwork in two Triangles of cities
 - Summary of case studies for the guidebook
1. Work on Case study - Improving the management of multiethnic communities provided by the Philia local experts and officials
 - Experiences of the OSF project on local policies in communities with ethnic minorities during the past three years;
 2. Issuing of Handbook on methods of managing cooperation at local level in multiethnic states of SEE, Development of Philia, Igman Initiative and Center for Regionalism

Methodology of project implementation was following:

1. Experts of Philia were source of experiences and models that were already used on the post conflict area of the former Yugoslavia, and the expert of LGI created methodology which is applicable on other similar regions. Valuable assistance from Gabor Peteri, expert on decentralization and local governments was used in order to transfer the experiences of Philia into a model which will be possible to implement in other post conflict regions, like Ferghana Valley.

2. Meeting of experts who are participating in the project is organized in order to give the experts opportunity to share their experience between each other in order to harmonize their methodology before starting to write the handbook.

3. Creating the handbook in which the experiences of Triangles of Cooperation, Igman initiative, Association of Multiethnic Cities of Southeast Europe – PHILIA and Local Policies in Multiethnic Communities that is written by experts that were participating in the above mentioned programmes: Živorad Kovačević, Aleksandar Popov, Jovan Komšić, Tomislav Žigmanov, Gojko Mišković and Boban Tomić.

Handbook was introduced and promoted within the study visit to Kyrgyzstan and between intellectuals, experts, partners and NGOs of SEE.

New Euro region - Europanon

On the annual Conference of Association of Multiethnic Cities in Southeast Europe-PHILIA “Euro regionalization in Southeast Europe and PHILIA” that took place in Novi Sad, on December 1st 2007, idea to establish a new euroregion – *Europanon* was launched. New euroregion which covers territories of Vojvodina, Vukovarsko-Sremska County, Osijecko-Baranjska County, Tuzla Kanton, Brcko District and six municipalities in Serbian and Bosnian parts of Podrinje area was presented on the first day of this conference and adopted by the members of the Association.

Cities and regions (municipalities, cantons, counties and province) that share the borders of the Panonian plain, part that used to fit within ex-Yugoslav territory and which nowadays belongs to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia.

These are territorial units on the tripartite border between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia that used to have excellent cooperation because of similar economic, cultural, geographical and other background, which were afterwards tragically separated by the war. Compared with other existing Euro-regions, this Euro-region has a number of advantages and arguments favorable to its set-up:

- economically, they are closely oriented one to another,
- there are no language barriers between them,
- they experience similar problems that come as a result of the break-up of former Yugoslavia (free movement of people and commodities across shared borders, refugees, environment, etc.)

During of two day conference experiences of European regions related with models of newly established regional connections in Southeast Europe and best practice examples in fields of economy, tourism, minority rights and culture were presented to the representatives of the Association of European Regions, Stability Pact, OSCE, respective Ministries of the Government of Serbia, European Agency for Reconstruction and many other participants in this conference.

Members of PHILIA have positively evaluated this initiative and they have expressed their willingness to participate in the process of establishing new euroregion. It was agreed that all participants in creation of this new euroregion should make a written confirmation of their decision to become members of *Europanon* in the following period. General Secretariat of the Association of Multiethnic Cities of

Southeast Europe PHILIA made detailed project, collected documentation necessary to establish a new euroregion and made two of the meetings between future members in order to create condition for promotion of Europanon.

Parallel with the activities concerning the establishment of Europanon, the General Secretariat of PHILIA is working on securing funds necessary for the functioning of the new euroregion. Since the Council of Europe and European Commission have expressed interest in and will to support the formation of the new euroregion at the very presentation of this initiative, a detailed project has been sent to these institutions.

Promotion of the Jovan Komsic's book "Principles of European Regionalism"

Professor Jovan Komsic's book "Principles of European Regionalism", issued by the Association of Multiethnic Cities of Southeast Europe, was presented at the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, on February 5th 2008. Beside the author himself, Bojan Pajtic - President of the Assembly of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Nadia Skenderovic Cuk - Director of the Belgrade Office of the Council of Europe, Zivorad Kovacevic - Director of the European Movement in Serbia, Aleksandar Popov - Director of the Center for Regionalism and professor Fuada Stankovic - Faculty of Law, University of Novi Sad, spoke about this book.

The book treats of subjects of decentralization of countries and models of cross border cooperation between local and regional governments and describes in detail all standards and principles that support the system of regionalism in Europe. This book can also be seen as a practical guide. In addition to the analysis of the phenomenon of European regionalism, most relevant European conventions and agreements which constitute a framework for treatise on this subject are included in this book. Factual reviews of Vojvodina's autonomy and other processes taking place on the territory of Central and Southeast Europe can also be found within this publication.

Examples of good practice

In September 2008 General Secretariat of PHILIA has open the call for good practice examples from its members. Both local governments and non-governmental organisations were involved in this call, but with slightly different themes. For the local governments the theme was „Good practice examples of local self government's work with its citizens" and for the NGOs "Good practice examples of cooperation between the civil sector and local self government". The call is open until before the next annual assembly of the Association that is planned for the end of February 2009. All the members will have the chance to exchange their good practice examples on the annual assembly and the best ideas will be also

published in a brochure and presented on other relevant public meetings organized by PHILIA or attended by PHILIA in this country and abroad.

Improving communication and dissemination of information with PHILIA members

General Secretariat of PHILIA is continually making efforts to improve communication and flow of information with its members and also to serve as mediator through which the members can communicate among themselves. During the year 2008 several issues of PHILIA newsletter were published and distributed to its members. The web site of the Association (<http://www.amcsee.org>) is regularly updated and filled with new information. The creation of one joint database of contacts and general information about all the members, both local governments and NGOs is currently in progress.

Celebration of a decade of Center of Regionalism's activities.

Novi Sad, November 20th 2008

In the shadow of another decline of relations between Serbia and Croatia, Center for Regionalism has marked a decade of work on normalization of relations and reconciliation among countries of former Yugoslavia and democratization of our society. Celebration took place at the Town Hall of Novi Sad in November 2008. Many officials from the social and diplomatic core have attended this event.



Mr. Aleksandar Popov – Director of the Center for Regionalism Officials from the social, political and diplomatic core

Beside Igman Initiative's co- presidents, Mr. Zoran Pusic (Croatia), Mr. Vehid Sehic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Mr. Zivorad Kovacevic (Serbia), President of the Assembly of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Mr. Sandor Egeresi, President of the City Assembly of Novi Sad, Mr. Aleksandar Jovanovic, Chief of OSCE Mission in Serbia, Mr. Hans Ola Urstad, Director of the Balkan Fund for Democracy, Mr. Ivan Vejvoda and Director of the Fund for an Open Society in Serbia, Ms Jadranka Jelincic have also addressed the guests of this celebration.



Mr. Ivan Vejvoda, The Balkan Trust for Democracy

Mr. Zoran Pusic, Mr. Zivorad Kovacevic and Mr. Popov



H.E. Hans Ola Urstad – OSCE Mission to Serbia



Ms. Jadranka Jelincic, Executive director of the Fund for an Open

Societies

Most recent situation in the region slowly begins to resemble the nineties of the past century. Instead of turning into a society of Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian-Herzegovian-Montenegrin friendship, Igman Initiative has to continue the work on normalization, renewal of communication and appeasing of tensions in many more years to come. This is the reality we're living in and those are the future tasks of the Center for Regionalism and networks launched by the Center for Regionalism.



Staff of the Center for Regionalism



Mr. Aleksandar Popov and Mr. Vehid Sehic

Alongside the group of eminent people from the whole region, gathered around the Center for Regionalism and the idea of neighborly relations, regional networks such as "Igman Initiative", "Civil Dialog Kosovo-Serbia" and "Association of Multiethnic Cities of Southeast Europe – PHILIA" were also created during the past ten years.

USEFULL LINKS:

www.centarzaregionalizam.org.rs

www.igman-initiative.org

www.civic-dialogue.org

www.amcsee.org