

Education towards Positive Peace



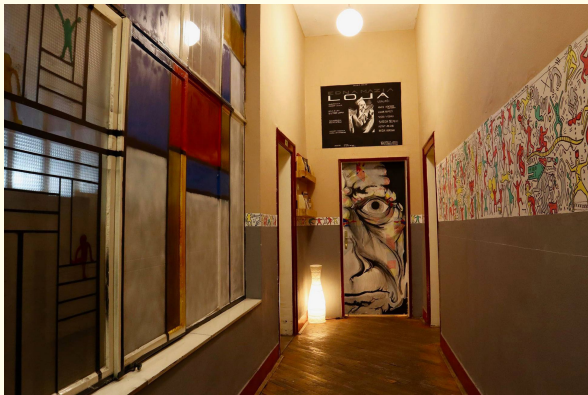
Center for Balkan Cooperation LOJA

Center for Balkan Cooperation LOJA is a nongovernmental, not-for-profit organization with no political affiliation, based in the city of Tetovo, North Macedonia. It was registered in 2000 within the framework of the Law for Citizens Associations in the Republic of North Macedonia and its main activities are in the field of Education and Culture.

From a purely grassroots organization it has built itself into a hybrid organization that, on one hand, maintains close links with its original grassroots and, on the other, attempts to influence policy decisions. From a relatively small organization it has now emerged as a leading player in the country and the region. Today, initiatives launched by LOJA in ethnically challenged environments have become orientation models for other organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia and the wider Balkan region.

Center LOJA has been active for more than 20 years in the field of education with its non-formal methodologies of learning and artistic and socio-cultural activities and has become one of most important societal catalyzers and a game changing actor. The integration of the programs of civic activism, modern art techniques and new media aims to engage effectively an intercultural dialogue between communities and aims to transform public space with its discourses and narratives.

Center LOJA has been recognized during the past 20 years for its active role towards cultural diversity, understood as enrichment. LOJA's soft power impact and its effectiveness are recognized as changes in the attitudes on relevant political issues and influences on political outcomes.



Course on Peace Education

Project: Anchoring Multicultural Youth Work in University Curricula for Future Teachers

Peace Education in University Curricula

The peace education project is based on cooperation between the Center for Balkan Cooperation LOJA, based in Tetovo, and the German organization K. Wustrow within the framework of the German Civil Peace Service, founded by the German Ministry for Economic Development (BMZ). The project has established a university curriculum on inter-ethnic and multicultural youth work as an integral part of future teachers training in 6 faculties, mainly pedagogical faculties of the 5 universities in North Macedonia, through this we aim at implementing a non-violent approach to conflict transformation in formal and non-formal trainings of future teachers. The project team strives for a sustainable change by anchoring multicultural youth work in the universities as well as through support of the democratic processes and contribution towards a peaceful coexistence, cooperation and dialogue between all ethnic groups, thus strengthening the educational system in North Macedonia.

University course on Peace Education

Having a curriculum with a multicultural/intercultural educational perspective represents a normative orientation to curricula, which in its authentic and critical form both includes the support of cultural pluralism and social justice and is rooted in principles such as equality, equity, solidarity, democracy and human rights. The curriculum represents the ideal positions about the type of education required in diverse cultural contexts and encapsulates the discursive changes in the education for the understanding of diversity, connected to our context.

Considering the fact that the direct target group of this project are the students – future teachers, which in our educational systems usually means those studying pedagogical sciences - these courses are offered in all public faculties and one private faculty that are preparing professional – teachers for pre-school period and also first grades of primary school education. The project cooperates with the following faculties: Institute for Pedagogy on the Philosophical Faculty in Skopje, Faculty of Pedagogy “St. Clement of Ohrid” but in the frames of University “St. Cyril and Methodius” – Skopje, Faculty of Educational Sciences in University “Goce Delcev” from Shtip, Pedagogical Faculty, in University of Tetovo, Pedagogical Faculty in University of “St. Clement of Ohrid”- Bitola and the Faculty of Culture, Communication and Languages - South East European University, Tetovo/Skopje. In cooperation with these educational institutions first we developed curricula on peace education which is taught as theory; and then courses which are all implemented according to a legal agreement with the faculties for the needs of the project. The project has achieved a common curricula on multicultural education that has been developed by teaching university professors as part of the *flexible unification*¹ of the course program for all faculties. In the frames of the course except for the unification of curricula, the project also started the process of the mobility of professors on national level among the cooperating faculties. Since 2019, the university professors’ have had the chance to participate in exchanges and mobilities. Mobility on a national level is a completely new procedure and process that gives the professors the opportunity for exchange and professional development on the multi/intercultural education. The process of unification of the courses was also accompanied by the publication of the brochure on “Multicultural Education – concepts and methods”, learning material that is included in the course literature in each faculty. One very important event that was organized in the frames of the project was the International Scientific Conference on Multicultural Education through which the project reached another milestone, the signing of a Joint Memorandum of Understanding. This Joint MoU was signed by the deans of the cooperating faculties, by Bujar Luma, executive director of CBC LOJA, Benjamin Blaenkner, Regional Coordinator Western Balkan

¹ 80 % of the topics are unified

(KURVE Wustrow), and Ms. Anke Holstein, the German Ambassador to North Macedonia.

The signing of the MoU marks a great step in the project, which does not only stand for the trust built between these institutions and LOJA but also cements their commitment for further cooperation and to increasingly take ownership of LOJA's model approach to Multicultural Education.

Training in Creative Conflict Transformation

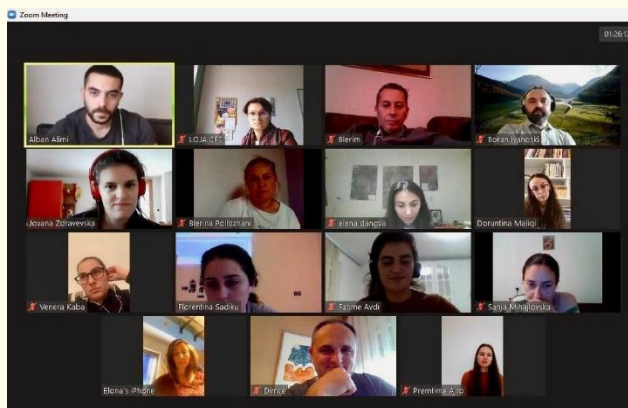


In order to sensitize students for intercultural education and a non-violent approach to conflict transformation participants of the Multicultural Education course are taken out of their culturally stable surrounding, so that they are able to reflect upon themselves in regard to attitudes, prejudices and behaviors and

are given skills and knowledge by professional trainers that deal with the above-mentioned phenomena/topics. As a result, the team promotes future teachers to become multipliers for mutual understanding in this culturally diverse environment and active citizens for change in the society. This year we realized 6 trainings on Nonviolent Conflict Transformation dedicated to the students of the cooperating faculties and 2 open trainings for interested participants in the topics, all in all encompassing 100 participants. 22 of them participated in an Advanced Training for creative conflict transformation this year, to deepen their competencies on the topic. Because of the pandemic and different restrictive measures that we needed to follow in order to stay safe, this year we had less participants during the trainings. However, we noticed that smaller groups led to higher engagement of those present and a more

trustful atmosphere. This year also, the increased interest in our training programs confirms the relevance of providing spaces for learning and interaction. Hence, we realized 3 additional trainings for current teachers in schools that concentrated on the Challenges in workspaces and education brought by the pandemic, which were attended by 35 very engaged participants.

One additional value to the trainings and to the development of a more sustainable network of facilitators was our very first Training of Trainers that was organized in 3 blocks. 11 interested and highly motivated participants went



through the whole process and after finishing the training they were offered to co-facilitate trainings with experienced facilitators in order to be actively involved in the whole process.

Online Peace Academy (December 2020 – March 2021)

The idea of organizing an Online Peace Academy emerged this year, since organizing the regular study trip to Germany or another country in the region was not possible due to COVID-19. The concept encompassed a series of online workshops and presentations (1-2 per week) by civil society organizations and trainers from Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, Palestine, Nepal, Myanmar and North Macedonia (e.g. Lovestorm, IKM, Berghof Foundation, Tirana Express, Human Library, Eine Welt Forum, COCAP, Crossing Borders, Center for Nonviolent Communication, etc.) The aims of offering an online alternative were to provide the participants the chance to get to know or-

ganizations and activists around the world that work on peace education and/or civic activism; keeping in touch with training alumni of the last two years, and expanding their knowledge and practice/develop skills in these areas. We especially aimed at providing a space for reflection, discussion, practical and interactive exercises and critical thinking about topics such as hate-speech, gender, discrimination, Roma issues, peace education, etc. We were positively surprised by the interest and commitment of a group of around 40 participants to voluntarily and actively participate in the series of the online sessions.

Academic Exchange

This year’s Academic Exchange for the university professors that are part of the project was organized in Tirana, Albania. 14 professors/deans from 6 faculties participated in this event. The choice to visit a neighboring country and agree that intra-regional academic exchange was further promoted instead of risking to present Western countries only as “perfect examples” and as the only way of learning about different approaches to peace education in different context.



The objectives of the Academic Exchange were connected with the creation of the platform for exchange and trust-building among professors and deans from our cooperating universities as well as with the LOJA team, promoting (mutual) inspiration and learning on how to deal with the challenges that COVID-19 poses for university education, learning from Albanian scholars about the integration of the communist past in education, media, art, etc., thereby encouraging dialogue on multicultural education

in different contexts as well as cross-border academic networking. The Academic Exchange provoked inputs on innovation of learning and on different perspectives regarding dealing with the communist past that Albania is experiencing. The new inputs were well-received and served to spark lively discussions during the sessions and beyond. The internationalization of higher education has been a reality now. Academics are one of the most visible and important element of this process, because they are not only recipients of knowledge, but also producers of it with an aim to form a network to make the knowledge more integrated for the particular topic of peace education.

International Scientific Conference on Multicultural Education

The world today is brimming with different, surprising occurrences emerging in dynamic changes and collisions of phenomena which are usually opposing.



The human becomes a participant in the game of reason and belief that impedes dialogue and may be a source of conflicts. In this perspective, the key question is the role of education in preparing people for living in a multicultural world, marked by

both opportunities and challenges. The appropriate response requires a more extensive view, which is conceivable by taking an interdisciplinary viewpoint. In this direction we organized the International Scientific Conference on Multicultural Education. The aim of the conference was to explore the ways in which multicultural education works in other contexts, to create a platform where recent developments among scholars can be discussed and to give a push to academics, researchers, practitioners, and

students to share their best practices and lessons learned on the topic. The International Scientific Conference on Multicultural Education was organized from 2nd - 4th of December. This Conference was organized in a hybrid format due to the restriction measures for Covid-19 (on-site at SEEU University, online via Zoom). We had approximately 100 on-line participants, with 8 key note speakers, 18 panelists and 5 moderators. The conference was successfully opened by prominent speakers: Bujar Luma (LOJA), Mr. Bexheti (Rector of SEEU), Mrs. Holstein (Ambassador of Germany to North Macedonia), Mrs. Petz (Director of KURVE Wustrow), Mrs. Steinacker (German Diplomat) and Mr. Shabani (Deputy Minister of Education) - who shared their own experiences, work, and future visions regarding multicultural education. This is a sign of the reputation LOJA has built over time. During the six panels, 18 scholars and practitioners presented their research covering a diverse range of topics such as promoting multicultural attitudes, language and multiculturalism, promotion of multiculturalism through religious education, teacher trainings and exchange programs, etc. Most sessions were followed by questions and lively discussions with the attendees, confirming the need for a platform for exchange, discussions and learning on multiculturalism and especially for unpacking the meaning of this concept in this region. The predominantly positive feedback is a sign of success in promoting the crossing of national, ethnic, linguistic, and disciplinary borders in academia through Scientific Conference.

Collection of essays: Gender Equality and the Norms Brought by Multiculturalism and Multicultural Policies

This year we decided to do an activity for addressing gender issues and multiculturalism, a topic which is relevant for our work as well as for the world in general. We placed an open-call giving people the chance to write about their own experiences, or about topics that made them feel closer with gender issues and how that influences their lives in different cultures, since culture and gender policies are always intertwined and seeing that from different perspectives at times only makes our prejudices and stereotypes stronger, without having the chance to see things from close and from others' perspective. The activity was organized in the form of a contest where people sent their writings/essays and the three best ones were awarded. As a result, this year the book on Gender Equality and the Norms Brought by Multiculturalism and Multicultural Policies was published. The book is translated in three languages English, Macedonian and Albanian language.

“A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems; have the skills to resolve conflict constructively; know and live by international standards of human rights, gender and racial equality; appreciate cultural diversity; and respect the integrity of the Earth. Such learning can't be achieved without international, sustained and systematic education for peace”

Global Campaign for peace education, campaign statement

Transformers - Art for Social Change

Civic Activism is an activity that aims to encourage active civic involvement of citizens using artistic, cultural and educational techniques for building creative and tolerant public spaces and giving contribution to the life in the local communities. The idea laying behind these activities is to enable people from different local communities to reflect on issues of relevance and to foster a culture of addressing “their own” social space, exchanging between themselves in an intercultural and creative process. By strengthening the role of art and creative and nonviolent approaches, through working together, getting trained, debating and dealing with socio-political issues in our society, we want to bridge the division and to create synergies between different regions of Republic of North Macedonia and the Balkans; at the same time bridging the division between civic organizations and state actors. This year, three regional trainings on civic activism were realized encompassing 66 participants from across the region. These trainings resulted into the realization of small initiatives for social change that were organized by students and civic activist and address different issues as: gender, environmental issues, infrastructural issues etc.

- ❖ **Raise your voice** - was a public speaking competition for young people in Albania and the region, where the youngsters had the opportunity to express their opinions on the topic “My rights and freedoms”, during the pandemic. This was done through videos shot during the isolation time, and later on the videos were published on online platforms. The best videos were awarded. This initiative aimed to raise awareness of human rights and freedoms during the pandemic situation and the impact that the youngsters should have on society through public speaking, as well as to promote the work of participating youth.
- ❖ **Sport without Borders** - was an initiative that aimed to show the impact of the pandemic for youngsters that do sport and outdoor activities. One of the most difficult things that we all had to adapt was / is the isolation and restriction of movement outside our homes. Therefore, a webinar/workshop with young people from three coun-

tries was organized for 3 days, where the participants had to prepare presentations and share about sport practices during the pandemic.

- ❖ **Bike On** - was a Civic Activism initiative that took place in Struga, on March 9th. The activity aimed to raise awareness on the positive effects of using bikes, make drivers more responsible and more careful. Accent was given to the necessity to create a traffic culture that respects all participants in traffic, and make institutions respond to requirements for mobility with bikes!
- ❖ **8th of March** - action was taken in order to raise awareness for the importance that this date has, and to remind citizens, especially women that celebrate, that we should raise our voices and fight against gender inequality instead of celebrating. Therefore, we put a banner in the square stating: the flower and the perfume will not diminish the disgusting smell of gender inequality.

The second half of December proved to be one of the most active periods for Center LOJA for 2020. At the same time, we did manage to gather a regional group of Transformers / Civic Activists from several generations, organized the ActOut / PaintOut Festival and successfully finished the Artist in Residence program (A.R-T). On one side, the Transformers and ActOut / PaintOut participants got introduced to the context of Tetovo and North Macedonia, shared and reflected on the different forms of art activism and focused on those that were applied within the ActOut / PainOut festival. On the other hand, since the dates of the festival corresponded with the last week of the A.R-T program this mix created synergies among the participants. While the Artist in Residence Basil Trasch treated the topic of division and isolation and built on that topic through the example of the Berlin Wall and circumstances created by Covid-19, the Transformers and ActOut / PaintOut participants in small groups observed, captured and presented their initiatives through colors and creative guerilla art installations.



Besides very creative and provocative actions-installations that focused on the environmental issues, traffic safety and management of the city, we also managed to produce several artworks (paintings) in the city. Two of those, one realized by Artist in Residence Basil Trasch and the other realized by the engaged street artist Arian Xhaferi. Those outstanding artworks, together with the other mural (inside LOJA’s entrance) previously realized by Basil, Victoria Pietrak, Alice Routhier, Fiona Stutzer and some Basil’s Individual creative transformations show the Tetovo and North Macedonia what they experienced and project the city they imagined! The emptiness and the transfiguration of the city, the Berlin Wall as a symbol of division, and the isolation that 2020 brought with Covid-19, filled with human characters inspired and expressed by Keith Haring figures, all that together will be the long-lasting visual memory and the creative spirit of young committed creative activism.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
— Margaret Mead

Photos from activities:







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