



TEACHING FOR PEACE

GUIDING YOUNG PEOPLE TO ETHNIC
RECONCILIATION IN MACEDONIA

„We learnt new strategies on how to analyse a conflict and articulate different views of historical events without getting into a fight. Discussing all this with a peace consultant from Germany gave us a totally new perspective of our own situation and enabled us to see things differently.“

Bujar Lumar, Founder and Director of LOJA

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 **Ziviler Friedensdienst
Civil Peace Service**

We don't turn our backs on conflict!

The Civil Peace Service (CPS) is a programme aimed at preventing violence and promoting peace in crisis zones and conflict regions. It aims to build a world in which conflicts are resolved without resorting to violence. Nine German peace and development organizations run the CPS together with local partners. CPS is funded by the German Government. CPS experts support people on the ground in their commitment for dialogue, human rights and peace on a long-term basis. Currently, more than 300 international CPS experts are active in 39 countries.

INTRODUCTION

Macedonia at the beginning of the Millennium: Activists of an artistically oriented non-governmental organisation (NGO) set out to reconcile a society deeply divided by the legacy of the Balkan Wars. They perform theatre plays for refugee children and organise spare-time activities that bring young people from different ethnic backgrounds together. These peace-building projects reach more and more people, including key people – but the NGO doesn't stop there.

Its officers realise that in order to transform a society, they must tackle the socio-cultural institutions as well. So they develop a university curriculum for inter-ethnic youth work to be incorporated in the syllabus for future teachers. Today – 15 years after the NGO's formation – this special course is taught at all the five universities in the country, and inter-ethnic integration is now a mandatory subject in all Macedonian schools.

The development of LOJA, the Center for Balkan Cooperation (CBC) in Tetovo, can be classed as a success story seldom found within civil society. LOJA means “play” or “game” in the Albanian language, and the name stands for the programme of this NGO: The chosen approach to overcome stereotypes and promote ethnic reconciliation is deliberately a playful one. Yet, or rather because of this, the impact speaks for itself.

CBC LOJA has been a long-standing partner of KURVE Wustrow, the Centre for Training and Networking in Nonviolent Action located in the North German Wendland area. The cooperation was established within the framework of the German Civil Peace Service (CPS) and is thus supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The success story of LOJA can therefore be judged as a success story of the CPS as well.

LOJA's strategies over the past 15 years can be ideally assessed by the so-called Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Matrix which will be explained later. It started with involving an increasing number of “ordinary” young people, and later also key people, in activities to promote peace. In both cases, significant changes were achieved at an individual/personal level. From there, LOJA went on to transform socio-political institutions and involve more and more ordinary as well as key people at that level, too.

CBC LOJA has thus developed from a grassroots organisation to a leading national and regional player whilst maintaining its grassroots connections. Initiatives launched by LOJA in ethnically challenged environments have become orientation models for many other organisations in Macedonia and the wider Balkan region. LOJA is also a respected negotiating partner of national and regional governments when inter-ethnic youth issues are concerned.

“It’s very heart-warming to watch young people from different ethnic backgrounds interacting, and it’s really thrilling to experience this exchange of cultures and the willingness to learn from each other.”

Srgjan Vidoeski, Project Coordinator at LOJA



LOJA's trainings are renowned for their unconventional methods – and the students participate with enthusiasm

MACEDONIA

Macedonia is a landlocked country in the Southern Balkans. Due to a dispute with Greece over its name, it is officially referred to as the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)**.



The national flag and the coat of arms of Macedonia

Independence from former Yugoslavia: 8th September 1991

Neighbouring countries:

Greece in the south

Serbia and Kosovo in the north

Bulgaria in the east

Albania in the west.

Population (according to an official estimate of 2014):

2,07 Millionen

Ethnic groups (according to the last census of 2002):

64,2 % Macedonians

25,2 % Albanians

3,9 % Turks

2,7 % Romani

1,8 % Serbs

2,2 % other

Official Languages:

Macedonian (national language)

at regional level also Albanian, Turkish, Romani, Serbian and Aromanian

Capital: Skopje

Head of State: President Gjorge Ivanov (since May 2009)

Head of Government: Prime Minister Emil Dimitriev (interim since January 2016)



*The Stone Bridge in Skopje,
Capital of Macedonia*

Photo: Gregor Zielke

THE SITUATION IN MACEDONIA

Macedonia, the southernmost state of former Yugoslavia, gained its independence on 8th September 1991. It was admitted to the United Nations two years later as "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)", this official name being insisted upon by Greece. The southern neighbour was worried about possible territorial claims and secessionist tendencies in the parts of ancient Macedonia which belong to Greece nowadays – the more so as the Skopje government stirred up nationalistic emotions by hailing Alexander the Great as the nation's great hero and direct ancestor. The name dispute has not been resolved until today, and Greece has so far prevented a Macedonian membership of NATO and the European Union.

Skopje's contacts to the other adjacent countries have been troubled as well. A language dispute with its eastern neighbour Bulgaria has been officially resolved, but relations remain as reserved as they are with Serbia, Kosovo and Albania bordering to the north and west. What looms largest, however, are internal conflicts within Macedonia.

There has always been a sizeable Albanian population in the north-west, now amounting to about a quarter of all the country's citizens. These ethnic Albanians have frequently been discriminated against. Minority rights which existed in the old Yugoslavia – within the then Socialist Republic of Macedonia – were reduced after independence when the new Skopje government took a nationalistic stance. Ethnic tensions started as early as 1991 and were exacerbated during the Kosovo War of 1999. At that time, about 380,000 Kosovo Albanians sought refuge in Macedonia, but the government had no policies on how to deal with this influx. The charged atmosphere eventually led to an uprising of Albanian nationalists in early 2001. Only severe pressure from the international community could prevent the volatile situation deteriorating to an all-out civil war.

With the help of international mediators, the so-called Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) was drawn up in August 2001. It ended the armed conflict and set out the groundwork for improving the rights of ethnic Albanians and other minorities who have lived on Macedonian territory for centuries. This refers especially to the use of their mother-tongue: Whenever a certain language is spoken by more than 20 % of the local population, it will become co-official with Macedonian in that particular municipality. This means that besides Macedonian and Albanian, in some parts of the country Turkish, Romani, Serbian and Aromanian are now official languages, too.

However, the inclusive approach intended by the Ohrid Agreement was hardly ever followed on the ground. The political institutions missed the chance to build upon the OFA spirit and address the reasons of the conflict that brought the country to the edge



of civil war. Instead, the OFA was just used as a reference point for numbers and percentages which often contributed to additional divisions.

Likewise, the existence of different official languages was never seen as a cultural asset, but was – and still is – often used for measures that manifest the separation of Albanian and Macedonian societies. School children are thus segregated into different language classes or even different buildings, especially in areas with enough Albanian pupils to make separate schools viable, like in north-western Tetovo. Consequently, the two ethnic groups hardly ever mix even in their spare-time – which seems rather detrimental to the process of reconciliation. Mistrust and stereotypes still abound.

It is here where CBC LOJA wants to make a difference.

CENTER FOR BALKAN COOPERATION

LOJA – THE BEGINNINGS

BC LOJA, a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation with no political affiliations, was registered in 2000 within the framework of the Law for Citizens Associations in the Republic of Macedonia. Its main activities lie in the field of education and culture and include, for example, arts festivals, exhibitions, dance, stage performance, cinema, film and video production or computer courses as well as capacity building for staff members and partners.

On its website – www.cbcloja.org.mk – LOJA describes itself as “dedicated to the improvement of the cultural and social life as well as inter-ethnic relationships in Macedonia and the Balkan region”. It wants to provide the facilities for cultural production and involve creative individuals and groups as well as cultural organisations and institutions plus all the ethnic and social communities in the region.



The colourful staircase leading up to LOJA's offices, decorated by Dirk Baumanns, temporary "Artist in Residence" from Germany

It began with theatre performances for refugee children in which highly delicate topics like rape and torture during the Balkan Wars were raised, obviously in a very sensitive and child-oriented manner. This was followed by extra-curricular activities for all interested young people in the greater Tetovo area. After the violent troubles of 2001, any project designed to bring youths from hostile ethnic groups together was a very courageous one.

LOJA founder Bujar Luma faced this challenge by offering involvement in popular activities without ever mentioning the ethnic divisions directly. Until today, incidental personal contacts are supposed to break the ice and overcome mutual distrust and stereotypes of ethnically different young people who at LOJA often meet for the first time in their lives. Reconciliation and peace-building is to be achieved by just getting to know each other and constructively playing together – a programme fully in line with the meaning of LOJA's name.

With projects like making a film or a wall newspaper with the help of up-to-date computer technology, it was quite easy to draw in youths from very different backgrounds. To safeguard the right ethnic balance, LOJA built up contacts with various local schools which recommended their students to take part in these extra-curricular activities.



Shared pastime activities form a bridge between different ethnic groups

Many participants have become a bridge between the usually separated ethnic groups and have even brought their parents together. During many of the still ongoing activities, interpreters translate between Albanian and Macedonian. Often, English is used as the lingua franca. No ethnic group or language is allowed to dominate, and all participants are required to embrace LOJA's prevailing motto: "RESPECT".

CBC LOJA AND KURVE WUSTROW

First contacts between CBC LOJA and KURVE Wustrow took place as early as 2000, and two years later a formal partnership was struck. By that time, Macedonia had become an official partner country of the German Civil Peace Service, which made it possible to deploy civil peace workers there. KURVE took up this opportunity and sent a peace expert to LOJA with the declared aim to “strengthen inter-ethnic youth work in Macedonia by organisational development and international networking”.

The goal of the project was “furthering inter-ethnic tolerance and understanding, strengthening democracy and civil society and improving the conditions of life”. Target groups were the young people reached by LOJA as well as multipliers in youth work and through them, eventually, the wider population of Tetovo and Western Macedonia as a whole.

As described above, LOJA had already developed a number of strategies to engage ethnically mixed groups in spare-time activities. KURVE could supplement these programmes with trainings in peaceful conflict transformation and mediation, mainly directed at the so-called multipliers. These courses focused, amongst other things, on team-building through proven interactive methods which at that time were fairly new to the NGOs in Macedonia.



Team-building games play a very important part in the trainings of LOJA

***“KURVE contributed a lot to LOJA’s development.
They brought in many new ideas which aided our personal and professional growth.
And they opened doors for us by providing international contacts.”***

Dimce Josifovski, Trainer at LOJA

“We learnt new strategies on how to analyse a conflict and articulate different views of historical events without getting into a fight”, recalls LOJA founder and director Bujar Luma. “Discussing all this with a peace consultant from Germany gave us a totally new perspective of our own situation and enabled us to see things differently. We then made sure that multipliers were trained accordingly in order to make more and more people aware of possible new points of view. That’s exactly where the added value of a civil peace worker from abroad comes in.”

At the end of the three-year project, an independent evaluator concluded that “the programme has very much succeeded in achieving its goal of furthering inter-ethnic tolerance by launching some ground-breaking initiatives in an insecure environment”. Furthermore: “It has indeed strengthened the civil society of the target area by identifying, partnering and supporting the work of a truly dedicated organisation as is CBC LOJA, and it has strengthened democracy in the country by achieving the first two components”.

“KURVE contributed a lot to LOJA’s development”, says Dimce Josifovski, the organisation’s administrative officer and one of its trainers. “They brought in many new ideas which aided our personal and professional growth. At the same time, they opened doors for us by providing international contacts. This is of utmost importance in the Balkans: An international connection will automatically give you a higher standing.”

This was particularly useful when LOJA moved its peace-building activities further to the socio-political level. It soon became evident that inter-ethnic youth work could not just stop at the individual/personal level – even if one reached more and more key people there. To be really effective, it must be institutionalised in all Macedonian schools. This, however, requires teachers who have overcome their own stereotypes in the first place. They must be aware of the need for better inter-ethnic relations and confident as well as competent in taking measures to achieve such a goal. Thus, the idea was born for a project of “anchoring multi-ethnic youth work in the university curriculum for future teachers”.

1 Sunoor Verma: “Evaluation of KURVE Wustrow & CBC LOJA Collaborative Program in FYROM: 2002–2005”, page 44

THE UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM FOR MULTI-ETHNIC YOUTH WORK

LOJA's attempts to take its educational activities from the individual to the formal/institutional level started quite early. As mentioned before, local schools were contacted for partnerships in inter-ethnic youth projects in order to support peaceful coexistence and prevent violence between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. These contacts proved invaluable when a corresponding university curriculum was designed – again in cooperation with KURVE Wustrow. The main objective was to equip future teachers with the skills and competencies needed to implement inter-cultural activities in schools. The course would therefore combine studies of theoretical concepts with practical teaching sessions. Such practical internships of students in schools were, so far, unheard of in Macedonian teacher training programmes.

In the middle of the last decade, LOJA started to approach the education authorities at ministerial level to get support for its draft curriculum. The initial response was lukewarm, if not outright negative. Consequently, local institutions of higher education were contacted directly – mainly the State University of Tetovo (SUT) and the South East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo. Initially, scepticism prevailed there as well. Too fresh were the memories of the violent conflict of 2001, and most people in authority were too scared to touch sensitive issues like inter-ethnic relations. This changed when KURVE Wustrow publically threw its weight behind the concept it had helped to develop.

“We needed an outside impetus for such a project”, recalls Arta Toci, then Pro-Dean of the Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communication at SEEU. “KURVE was the ideal neutral partner required for implementing something which was totally new to everybody.”

SEEU was the first university in Macedonia to take up the new curriculum as a pilot project in 2008. Being a private institution, it had a higher degree of freedom to choose courses with its own discretion rather than going solely through the ministerial accreditation process. The contents fitted SEEU's mission of offering a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual education with “equal opportunities for all, based on impartiality and merit”. The course with the title “Post conflict reconciliation and inter-ethnic youth work”² was taught in English. This had the advantage that no national language would dominate – very important in Macedonia. Rather, it gave students the chance to express themselves in a neutral language, and often this made it easier to discuss sensitive inter-ethnic issues, as experience showed.

² SEE University, Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communication & The Human Rights Centre: Post conflict reconciliation and inter-ethnic youth work, Academic Year 2008/2009

*“We needed an outside impetus for such a project.
KURVE was the ideal neutral partner required for implementing something
which was totally new to everybody.”*

Arta Toci, Pro-Dean at SEEU

KURVE Wustrow gained acceptance for this university programme as a project of the German Civil Peace Service. This meant that a civil peace expert could be sent to Tetovo to assist with the process of implementation, including the relevant trainings, as well as monitoring and evaluation. The peace consultant also functioned as a neutral contact person for all the stakeholders in the CPS project. This proved invaluable for students, educators and university authorities alike. As Arta Toci stated before, an outside impetus from a neutral partner can get things really moving.

The SEEU course contained a theoretical section on human rights issues, including non-discrimination and the rights of disadvantaged or minority groups like women and children. This was followed by studies of culture and ethnicity, nationalism and multi-culturalism. Likewise, culturally responsive teaching as well as teaching for peace, democracy and social justice became part of the curriculum, and finally students were given practical teaching assignments.

The course was preceded by an “Interactive Training in Constructive Conflict Resolution” organised by LOJA – a six-day residential seminar outside of Tetovo. The objectives were:

- Raise awareness for the importance of an integrative society
- Facilitate trust-building amongst the participants
- Obtain knowledge about different forms of violence and discrimination and how to counteract them
- Create awareness for the mechanisms and dynamics of conflicts as well as stereotypes and prejudice
- Raise consciousness about “active citizenship” and the participants’ responsibility for the society they live in
- Collect ideas for multi-cultural projects in schools.

SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY (SEEU)



Founded in 2001 on the initiative of the High Commissioner for National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The main campus is located in Tetovo with an outside branch in Skopje.

The original aim: To enhance the education opportunities for Albanians and other ethnic minorities in Macedonia.

Seven faculties attended by about 10,000 students – roughly 70 % of them Albanians plus other ethnic minorities, about 30 % ethnic Macedonians. The language of instruction is mainly Albanian (about two thirds), with many courses also being held in Macedonian and English.

One of its mottos, clearly related to multi-ethnicity, says: “Be a model small community of what the wider society should be like.”

The CPS Project:

SEEU was the first university in Macedonia to incorporate a course on “multi-ethnic youth work” in its curriculum for future teachers, starting in 2008. Since then, about 300 mainly female students have attended this course. Many of them have later become pivotal in introducing its major elements into schools and youth clubs. The course has been revised several times. Multi-cultural studies are now being offered, independently of the LOJA trainings, as a mandatory elective in several faculty departments.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF TETOVO (SUT)



Founded in 1994 by ethnic Albanian academics and NGO activists. Meant to be an institution of higher education for the Albanian minority which in the area of Tetovo forms the majority population. It was not recognised by the Macedonian authorities as a university until January 2004.

It is therefore often said that

“State University of Tetovo has a short history but a long past.”

Eleven faculties attended by about 15,000 students – up to 90 % of them ethnic Albanians. The language of instruction is mainly Albanian but also Macedonian or Turkish on demand.

The CPS Project:

A course on multi-cultural education was established at SUT in 2012, initially as an elective. More than 100 mainly female students have since attended this course. It has now become mandatory for all students of educational sciences and an elective in many other humanities faculties. Even M.A. and PhD students are now required to embrace some elements related to inter-ethnic studies and the philosophy of multi-culturalism.

This seminar with its interactive methods was a revelation to most of the students, as many enthusiastic comments confirmed. Today, similar trainings are being offered at all five universities in Macedonia, and the participants' response is still the same:

“This training was a great experience, I learnt so many new skills – communication with other ethnic groups, team work, role-plays about how to deal with conflicts peacefully and constructively. This was all totally new to me. I’m really glad that I could attend this away-from-base seminar organised by LOJA. It will help me a lot in my future career as a teacher.”

Dragana Marinkova, student at the University of Stip

“The ethnic groups in our country live so closely together and yet they are so far apart, despite so many parallels in their history. This course helped me to become aware of stereotypes – and that’s a precondition for reducing them. With the skills I acquired, I could now become a bridge between our various ethnic groups, and that’s exactly what I hope to be in my future job as a teacher.”

Rihana Aliu, student at State University of Tetovo

When the Civil Peace Service project started at SEEU, Macedonian schools and universities still tended to follow a rather conservative pattern of instruction. Straight-forward lectures were much more common than group work or other interactive methods. That might explain why the unconventional trainings organised by LOJA and supported by KURVE had and continue to have such a tremendous impact.

“Many of the training methods we apply come as quite a shock to the students. They’ve never come across something like that before – being directly confronted with the views of other cultures and having to express their sentiments in a role-play. It usually shakes them up quite a bit. Initially, this can lead to a lot of resistance, but most students welcome this new experience. In the end, they become more and more open to new perspectives, including the willingness to see things through the eyes of another ethnic group.”

Blerim Jashari, Project Coordinator at LOJA

The following experience of an ethnic Albanian seminar participant speaks for itself:

“I always thought I spoke a good Macedonian, as most educated Albanians in our country do. But due to a lack of personal contact with ethnic Macedonians, I didn’t have a clue about their colloquial language – including negative stereotypes which become evident in linguistic terms. This was an eye-opener to me. It was interesting to find out how the Macedonians see us Albanians, for better or for worse.”

Elmedina Shafi, student and later Coordinator of LOJA’s CPS project

Instructors view these trainings with equal enthusiasm:

“My students told me that they had talked about the contents for several days afterwards. This was quite a revelation to me – students getting engrossed in discussions on socio-political concepts rather than being on Facebook or their i-phones. I take this as a clear sign of the enormous impact the course has had on them.”

Maja Muhic, Associate Professor for Languages, Culture and Communication at SEEU

The CPS project at SEEU was integrated into the Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communication which then incorporated pedagogy. Since 2008, about 300 students have attended the university course and the LOJA trainings – most of them young women who have always formed the majority in educational studies. Many of them have later become pivotal in tackling inter-ethnic issues in schools and youth clubs.

The course led the way for introducing multi-cultural studies as a mandatory elective into other SEEU faculties – like making human rights issues an integral part of law studies. Multi-culturalism is now being offered independently of LOJA, but selected SEEU students can still attend the LOJA trainings.





THE EXTENSION OF THE CPS PROJECT TO ALL UNIVERSITIES

The second institution to take on LOJA's curriculum was the State University of Tetovo. The SUT course on multi-cultural education started in 2012, initially as an elective for students of pedagogy, i.e. future teachers in primary schools which in Macedonia comprise the classes one to nine. Again, it took some time to convince the educational authorities of the need for such a course as well as the advantages of unconventional teaching methods, especially during the LOJA trainings. Today, this is seen as beneficial to SUT as a whole.

"This course has not only transformed our students, it transformed our university as well" says Kushtrim Ahmeti, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at SUT. "We started to question our somewhat outdated teaching methods and took up interactive ones instead. This has changed our whole approach to education."

More than 100 students have since attended the CPS sponsored course taught mainly in the Albanian language – the majority again being women. The course has now become mandatory for all students of educational sciences and an elective in other humanities faculties. Even students for a Master's (M.A.) or a Doctorate (PhD) degree are required to embrace some elements of inter-ethnic studies and the philosophy of multi-culturalism.

"The impact of this course speaks for itself", says Ibrahim Neziri, Head of Office in the SUT Education Department and Assistant Professor of Psychology. He refers to a survey done by several Macedonian universities – with striking results: Students who took part in the CPS project had significantly different attitudes to other ethnic groups from those who had never attended such sensitisation trainings. The research included 230 students of educational sciences from Tetovo and Skopje – 130 Albanians and 100 Macedonians who were asked to express their attitudes towards the respective other ethnic group.

Continued on p. 26

3 Education on Multi-Culturalism and Inter-Group Attitudes", in: Reports on the First International Conference – Practicum of Future Pedagogues, Teachers and Kindergarten Teachers in Multicultural Environments – Experiences and Challenges (PPPTKTME) ³ http://fzf.ukim.edu.mk/ddtest21/page/posts/view/conference-proceedings-osce_241



SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS UNIVERSITY (UKIM) IN SKOPJE

Founded in 1949 – the oldest, largest and most prestigious university in Macedonia.

About 30 faculties and institutes, some located in other cities, attended by more than 60,000 students nationwide – about 95 % of them ethnic Macedonians. The language of instruction is therefore mainly Macedonian, unless there is a specific demand for minority languages.

The CPS Project:

The course on inter-ethnic youth work was introduced into the Department of Education in 2012. After three years, about 130 students have attended this course which has become mandatory for all those who wish to obtain a degree in educational studies (pedagogy).



UNIVERSITY GOCE DELCEV (UGD) IN STIP

Founded in 2007 and ranked as the second most prestigious one of Macedonia's state universities.

13 faculties attended by about 16,000 students – roughly 90 % of them ethnic Macedonians. Minorities are mainly Turks, often directly from Turkey, as well as Roma. The language of instruction is Macedonian.

The CPS Project:

Introduced in the winter semester of 2014 as a mandatory course for then about 30 students of educational sciences. The course then went successfully into its second year.

UNIVERSITY ST. CLEMENT OF OHRID (UKLO) IN BITOLA

Founded in 1979 to serve the south-western region of Macedonia.

Ten faculties attended by more than 10,000 students – the great majority of them being ethnic Macedonians. Consequently, the language of instruction is Macedonian.

The CPS Project:

The course on multi-cultural education was introduced as a pilot project on a voluntary basis in 2014 and was then attended by about 25 students. In the winter semester of 2015, it became a mandatory course for students of educational sciences.

“You can feel the benefits of this course immediately when the students come back from their trainings away from base. They seemed to be totally different people with regards to their behaviour and personality – more confident, open-minded, communicative, flexible. Now they have got all what it takes to become good teachers.”

Snezhana Minascieva, Professor for Didactics at the University of Stip

The scientifically complicated survey included 17 questions with regards to sentiments like affection, comfort, kinship, engagement and enthusiasm. On a scale from one to six, the participants were requested to mark how strongly they agreed or disagreed with given answers. At the same time, they were asked whether they had taken part in any multi-cultural trainings during the past twelve months. The result: The more a student had attended such courses, the more likely he/she was to see the other ethnic group in a positive light.

Results like these encouraged more and more universities to take on the LOJA curriculum. “We live in a multi-ethnic society, so we have to prepare our students accordingly and help them to develop multi-cultural competencies”, says Alma Tasevska, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Philosophy at the Saints Cyril and Methodius University (UKIM) in Skopje. At UKIM, inter-ethnic youth work was introduced into the Department of Education in 2012. After three years, about 130 students have attended this course which has become mandatory for all who wish to obtain a degree in educational studies.

Students at Skopje showed themselves particularly impressed with the LOJA trainings which have become even more diverse than in the early days. As a supplement to the academic curriculum, they are attended by a great variety of students, not only from different ethnic backgrounds but also from various universities throughout the country. There are also opportunities for visits abroad – to other countries in the Balkans or even to Germany. A recent group went to Berlin and was confronted with the legacy of the Holocaust, an ultimate reminder of the horror that ethnic hostility can lead to. All this is giving young people – who used to live in totally separated ethnic environments – first-hand experience of the benefits of multi-culturalism and peace-building.

“You can feel the benefits of this course immediately when the students come back from their trainings away from base”, says Snezhana Minascieva, Professor for Didactics at the University of Stip. “We literally wondered what had happened to them. They seemed to be totally different people with regards to their behaviour and personality – more confident, open-minded, communicative, flexible. This course really transformed them in every respect, and now they have got all what it takes to become good teachers.”



Students from Macedonia at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin

The University Goce Delvec (UGD) in Stip, south-east of Skopje, was the fourth university to take on the CPS inspired course. Multi-cultural studies were introduced in the winter semester of 2014 as a mandatory course for then about 30 students of educational sciences. The course was then successfully continued in its second year.

Finally, the University St. Clement of Ohrid (UKLO) in the south-western city of Bitola introduced LOJA's curriculum into its syllabus for future teachers. The course on multi-cultural education started as a pilot project on a voluntary basis in 2014 and was then attended by about 25 students. In the winter semester of 2015, it became mandatory for all students of educational sciences.

“I CAN’T WAIT TO IMPLEMENT WHAT I’VE LEARNT”

BY ANA GESHOVSKA, 4TH YEAR PEDAGOGY STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SKOPJE

This course has been fantastic, I loved every minute of it. I got so much more out of it than I would have ever expected. I met many people from other ethnic backgrounds, got to know them really well and made friends with them. This helped me a lot in my own personal development. I realised that we are all just human beings – no matter where we come from. So there shouldn’t be any preconceived prejudice.

It was also very refreshing to learn about new teaching methods – not just having a teacher standing in front of our class and lecturing us, but applying interactive methods and getting us to communicate with each other. We experienced something like a team cohesion which really transformed us into new people.

I can’t wait now to implement what I’ve learnt once I go into teaching after graduation. I worked as a substitute teacher for a short time, and already then I realised how useful this inter-ethnic training has been. There was a child of African origin in my class of eight-year-olds and also a Roma child. I noticed that these kids were being called nasty names. So I confronted their classmates and tried to make them aware that their behaviour wasn’t very nice.

Due to time restraints, I couldn’t implement enough activities aimed at overcoming stereotypes. If I ever came across a similar situation again, I would involve the children in role-plays where they would be tagged with stickers on their forehead, identifying them as members of an ethnic group different from their own. They would then have to experience what it’s like to be pigeon-holed or even made fun of. Eventually, the whole class would have to find ways how to deal with such a situation constructively.

There are so many useful methods one can apply to raise awareness even amongst very small children. I want to be a pre-school teacher because that’s where it all starts. If you catch kids very young and bring them up properly, you can make them better people to embrace the concept of a multi-ethnic society.



LOJA's prevailing motto – "Respect" towards all other ethnic groups



Working with children of pre-primary age is of utmost importance for future inter-ethnic understanding

CBC LOJA AND THE RPP MATRIX

The success of CBC LOJA's strategies is reflected in each of the boxes making up the Reflecting on Peace Practice Matrix shown below.

<p><i>INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL CHANGE</i></p> <p><i>MORE PEOPLE STRATEGIES</i></p>	<p><i>INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL CHANGE</i></p> <p><i>KEY PEOPLE STRATEGIES</i></p>
<p><i>SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE</i></p> <p><i>MORE PEOPLE STRATEGIES</i></p>	<p><i>SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE</i></p> <p><i>KEY PEOPLE STRATEGIES</i></p>

The four-cell matrix is a useful tool to analyse programme strategies in several dimensions. This is done by looking at the different approaches of peace work as well as who is being engaged and what type of change is being sought. In the beginning, CBC LOJA just set out to involve more and more people in its inter-ethnic youth work – mainly children and young people as the immediate target group, but also their parents and teachers as necessary supporters of LOJA's projects. Contacting teachers, led on to approaching socio-political institutions which later were directly addressed.

The "More People Approach" in the first cell of the matrix is based on the belief that peace can be build if more and more people become involved in the process – even incidentally like the young people who took part in LOJA's spare-time activities. Just getting to know "the other side" personally can help people to overcome mistrust, prejudice and stereotypes and stop them from fighting. So the main goal is to change attitudes on an individual/personal level.

At the same personal level, so-called key people were involved in the early LOJA projects as well – those who exert power or influence and are thus critical for peaceful rela-

⁴ See CDA Practical Learning for effective international action: "Reflecting on Peace Practice – Training of Consultants & Advisers Manual", 2013, [©]<http://www.cdainc.com>



Trusting the “other side” means accepting some guidance even when being blind-folded

tions. Who is “key” usually depends upon the context of a conflict situation, sometimes these key people can’t even be defined as clearly different from the “ordinary” people. LOJA targeted virtually everybody who could have an influence on young people, referred to as the “multipliers in youth work”. Key people could include official as well as unofficial youth group leaders, but also those who might be most likely to perpetrate violence. Likewise, parents were involved – as well as teachers who, as stated above, provided the link to the socio-political level.

When approaching educators, the LOJA officers operated within various cells of the RPP matrix. First, they had to win over more and more teachers as individuals but also as representatives of their educational institutions. Finally, when multi-ethnic youth work was anchored in the university curriculum for future teachers, key people at the socio-political level had to be engaged – university authorities, faculty heads, ministerial offices. Likewise, the beneficiaries of this course, the future teachers, had to be won over at a personal level first, but also bearing in mind that they were key people as future representatives of socio-political institutions – i.e. schools and other educational facilities.

Whilst recognising the interdependencies and linkages between the four cells, the work of LOJA can thus be summarised within the RPP Matrix as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;">INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL CHANGE – MORE PEOPLE STRATEGIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Performing theatre plays on sensitive issues for children in refugee camps</i> • <i>Organising spare-time activities for youths from different ethnic backgrounds</i> • <i>Organising arts events which bring people from different ethnic backgrounds together</i> • <i>Offering facilities to artists and make them familiar with LOJA's inter-ethnic philosophy, incidentally or in a targeted manner</i> • <i>Continuing with grassroots activities to raise people's awareness of issues within their community</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL CHANGE – KEY PEOPLE STRATEGIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Involving official and unofficial youth leaders in spare-time activities</i> • <i>Targeted workshops for youth leaders/multipliers on inter-ethnic relations and conflict transformation</i> • <i>Getting educators interested in LOJA'S work so that they encourage their students to join the activities</i> • <i>Targeted workshops for future teachers whose personal attitudes will be pivotal in the education of future generations (this is linked with the socio-political level)</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE – MORE PEOPLE STRATEGIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Getting more and more teachers and university lecturers interested in inter-ethnic youth work</i> • <i>Getting more and more students of educational sciences interested in this special course</i> • <i>Mobilising citizens to lobby for socio-political change, e.g. with regards to pollution, the rights of children, the integration of the disabled (see activities on page 34/35)</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE – KEY PEOPLE STRATEGIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Working with top university authorities in order to introduce courses on inter-ethnic youth work into the syllabus for future teachers</i> • <i>Working with education authorities at all levels in order to get multi-ethnic youth work anchored in schools and universities throughout the country</i> • <i>Being a pivotal member of RYCO, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office in the Western Balkans (see page 40)</i>

During its move through all the four cells of the RPP matrix, CBC LOJA has developed from a local grassroots organisation to a leading player in educational matters at national level. The grassroots connections have never been lost, on the contrary: Students going through the LOJA trainings are encouraged to engage in grassroots activities to raise awareness about a myriad of issues. This is still being done.

On the other hand, LOJA is now a respected negotiating partner of national and regional governments whenever inter-ethnic youth issues are concerned. The prime example is its leading role in the Regional Youth Cooperation Office in the Western Balkans (RYCO), involving governments and civil society organisations from six Balkan countries. The declared aim is to “promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region”. This is to be done by setting up an exchange structure similar to the Franco-German Youth Office which substantially aided the reconciliation process in Europe after World War II (see p. 40).



RAISING AWARENESS BY CREATIVE ACTION

LOJA often at the forefront of spectacular activities
to lobby for social change

SUPPORT THE GREEN HEROES

LOJA activists build “a house” from wooden slabs in the central square of Tetovo. The interior is “furnished” with rubbish material found along the Pena River – an old settee, a broken television set, worn-out carpets, dumped household goods and other items. Children are given the opportunity to paint creative pictures on the outer panels.

All this is part of a concerted protest against the pollution in the city and the inadequate rubbish disposal services by the local authorities. A short theatre play conveys the story of a child getting very ill after picking up some dumped items whilst playing outside. In the end, the rubbish is taken away by a big tractor. Many citizens take notice of this spectacular event and applaud LOJA for its courageous stance to protect the environment.

The motto of the day: “You don’t have to be a super hero to make a difference. Join us and become a ‘green hero’.”





TAKE A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Glass jars with red roses inside are attached to lamp posts all over Tetovo. A sealed-off hose pipe leads into the jar through a hole in the closing lid. On leaflets, citizens are encouraged to remove the seal temporarily in order to breathe in some fresh air – fresher than what they would normally get in their highly polluted city. Again, LOJA's protest action is directed at the Tetovo authorities who are challenged to improve the air quality, first and foremost by strictly controlling the emissions of a big local factory.

DON'T KEEP DISABLED PEOPLE OUT

Self-produced plaques with a crossed-out wheelchair are placed outside many Tetovo buildings which should be accessible for the disabled – public service offices, the city library, schools, hospitals, banks etc. The message is clear: Disabled people should not be segregated from the rest of society. There should be no structural barriers that deny them access to facilities they should be able to use freely.



The activity is carried out late in the evening, and many officials get quite a surprise the next morning when they find this remarkable plaque outside their door. The local media report extensively about LOJA's campaign. All this turns into an instant success: The library and the central hospital immediately build ramps at their entrances to enable wheelchair drivers unhindered access.

NEW DIMENSIONS OF INTER-ETHNIC INTEGRATION IN SCHOOLS

Anchoring the multi-ethnic youth work curriculum in the syllabus for future teachers has been a great success for CBC LOJA as well as KURVE Wustrow in their joint efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in Macedonia. However, what students learn during this course, eventually needs to be implemented in schools. This, in turn, requires the cooperation of school authorities who could be pivotal in promoting or suppressing new ideas in day-to-day teaching. LOJA has continuously lobbied the relevant authorities to embrace the idea of multi-ethnic education at classroom level – and has been successful here as well: Since 2014, inter-ethnic integration has been a mandatory subject in all Macedonian schools

The relevant efforts are aided by a new project which started in 2011 under the sponsorship of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Seven Macedonian civil society organisations are partnering with educational institutions and authorities from municipal up to ministerial level in order to implement inter-ethnic integration on the widest possible scale. It began with sports and arts activities as well as school outings during which the various ethnicities were brought together in mixed groups. It was continued with science clubs and other curricular as well as extra-curricular initiatives.

The so-called Inter-ethnic Integration in Education Project (IIEP) is meant to “build broad public understanding of the benefits to all citizens that will arise from integrating Macedonia’s education system. IIEP will also create the political, social and economic environment needed for Macedonia to achieve sustained inter-ethnic integration in schools, in other educational institutions and eventually all of society”⁵, states the relevant website. This includes the provision of material resources to impoverished schools.

LOJA’s coordinator for this project, Srgjan Vidoeski, is enthusiastic about the results: “It’s very heart-warming to watch young people from different ethnic backgrounds interacting, and it’s really thrilling to experience this exchange of cultures and the willingness to learn from each other.”

5 ⁵ <http://www.pmio.mk>



Vidoeski admits that the integration process doesn't always run smoothly. Some schools might "just implement any old measures to get it over and done with". With time, however, more and more teachers are becoming convinced of the benefits of inter-ethnic integration, and this should aid the sustainability of the project. It also means that the German CPS project has reached a new dimension: Key people in the IIEP implementation process are young teachers who attended the university course designed by LOJA and KURVE Wustrow.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

It has become clear by now that CBC LOJA and KURVE Wustrow have successfully cooperated in the process of anchoring multi-ethnic youth work in the university curriculum for future teachers in Macedonia. Initially, a German Civil Peace Service expert was sent to Tetovo who, apart from assisting the implementation process, functioned as a neutral point of reference. This was vital to get the CPS project going which has arguably helped to strengthen the education system in Macedonia as a whole.

As things moved on, KURVE appreciated LOJA's growing ability to take ownership of the project by itself. Consequently, when the contract of the peace expert came to an end, no replacement was deployed. However, the exchange of ideas about the project and its extension continues, as does KURVE's financial support. Additionally, KURVE still sends junior CPS workers as well as volunteers to Tetovo who assist LOJA in its day-to-day activities whenever a specific need occurs. So the cooperation is still going strong, and LOJA'S staff members consider this as vital.

Even though the university course is running well, its permanent inclusion into the syllabus for future teachers is not yet secured. Likewise, the project for inter-ethnic integration in schools still needs an impetus from outside. Otherwise the sustainability might be jeopardised. "If our mutual cooperation stopped now, the project would fall apart like a house of cards", fears Srgjan Vidoeski.

LOJA Director Bujar Luma sums up: "KURVE Wustrow assisted us with finances and expertise, and they offered us a status of neutrality in a deeply divided environment. This was invaluable to us. KURVE also opened doors for us by putting us into contact with international networks and institutions like the German Embassy in Skopje. All this helped us to increase our standing at home and abroad. We might be able now to do the CPS trainings ourselves, but we still need a foreign perspective to make a real impact for peace within our society."

According to Luma this is crucial not only in Macedonia but in the wider Balkan region as well: "The Balkan countries have been largely democratic and peaceful for the last 15 years. This is unique in our history. But the process still needs to be consolidated from outside in order to be really sustainable. Speaking for Macedonia, I strongly believe that it must still remain a partner country of the German Civil Peace Service for quite a while."



LOJA Director Bujar Luma addresses a group of students

“The Balkan countries have been largely democratic and peaceful for the last 15 years. This is unique in our history. But the process still needs to be consolidated from outside in order to be really sustainable.”

LOJA Director Bujar Luma

REGIONAL YOUTH COOPERATION OFFICE OF THE WESTERN BALKANS (RYCO)

The aim:

To promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through exchange.

A “Joint Declaration on the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans” was signed on 27th August 2015 in Vienna by the prime ministers of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. They describe RYCO as “a regionally-owned structure that leads and coordinates youth cooperation in our region”.

Amongst the original initiators of such an entity were civil society organisations throughout the Balkans, including LOJA. They lobbied for a structure similar to the renowned Franco-German Youth Office which significantly helped to overcome post-World-War-II hostilities between France and Germany. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel signalled her support for this new initiative which was subsequently taken up by Balkan leaders.

A Working Group was set up to bring the process forward. It comprises of government representatives from youth ministries plus civil society organisations from each of the six participating countries. LOJA's director Bujar Luma is one of the three moderators. The Franco-German Youth Office provides the Working Group with technical assistance.

After a successful start in Berlin in November 2015, the second meeting of the Working Group took place in the Albanian capital Tirana in mid-December. At a reception on 17th December 2015, Bujar Luma reported on the progress with regards to the formulation of a mission statement. Future activities should thus not only be limited to youth exchange programmes, but also deal with job creation prospects through a better linkage of the educational systems throughout the region.

The Working Group then drafted proposals for the mission, structure, activities and financing of RYCO which were incorporated into a formal RYCO Agreement. This document was officially adopted at the Western Balkans Summit in Paris on 4th July 2016 and signed by the prime ministers of the six participating countries in the presence of Chancellor Angela Merkel and the French President François Hollande.



LOJA Director Bujar Luma summarises the progress of the RYCO Working Group at a reception in Tirana on 17th December 2015



Frank Morawietz, Special Commissioner of the Franco-German Youth Office for South Eastern Europe, speaks at the same meeting in the presence of Blendi Klosi, the Albanian Minister of Youth and Social Welfare





SPREADING NONVIOLENCE



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