



swiss cultural programme  
in the western balkans

# Network for Participative Cultures of Remembrance

**One of the pressing issues in the countries of former Yugoslavia is coming to terms with their violent past. As long as there is no dialogue between the different countries and societies of the region about what happened during the wars in the nineties it will be hardly possible to live together in peace and in good neighbourly relations. What's more, how societies address crimes committed in and on behalf their country can be perceived as an indicator of how societies interiorise democratic values. In that sense, accountability as a basic democratic principle is clearly linked to coming to terms with the past.**

In the process of reconciliation in the countries of former Yugoslavia a lot of work has been invested in the establishment of facts and some of the perpetrators have been prosecuted. What is yet lacking is a significant dialogue in the societies of the former Yugoslavia about the past and one's own responsibility. A comprehensive, inclusive and innovative approach to come to terms with the past is thus needed. A new form of reflecting history, in which the citizens can be involved, is imperative. Arts can be of crucial importance in this process as arts create a special sense of sensitivity.

The project partners initiated the project *Network for Participative Cultures of Remembrance* with the overall goal to contribute to the democratisation of the societies in the Western Balkans and to overcome the repercussions of the conflicts by creating participative and tolerant cultures of remembrance. Arts and culture are seen as a key element for this social development process.

Methods that will be further refined artistically and used in dealing with the past are oral history, mapping spaces, theatre of the oppressed.

The project targets both CSOs and citizens to get actively involved in exploring and interpreting crucial historical issues for their societies by the means of the arts. The main approach to achieve the project's goals is to overcome the prevailing division between art-centered and organisations working in the field of education, history and human rights, and to further create synergies between CSOs of different countries of the region and the EU engaged in culturally dealing with the past. Ideally, the network will foster a stronger sense for the Balkans in Europe and for European values in the Balkans.

Country / region or city:

**Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kosovo**

Name of Cooperation Project:

**Network for Participative Cultures of Remembrance**

Partner organizations:

**CBS LOJA** (Tetovo)  
**Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR)** (Belgrade),  
**MESS – International Theatre Festival** (Sarajevo),  
**Multimedia Centre** (Prishtina)

Duration of project:

**January 2011 – December 2012**

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(Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC)

Specific objectives in working towards this goal are the following:

- To improve the capacities and the involvement of CSOs working in the field of arts, education and history in the WBs in building participative and tolerant cultures of remembrance in their societies.
- To enable young people in the WBs to reflect their past and the culture of remembrance in their societies and to exchange views with other young people in an intercultural dialogue.
- To strengthen the role of arts, artists and artistic organisation in the WBs in debating and dealing with important historical and political issues in their societies.
- To bridge the division and create synergies between artistic and civic CSOs in the WBs.

To fulfill these objectives following actions shall be taken:

Taking stock: In a first step, artistic methods to involve young people in dealing with the past are collected, discussed and further developed between the network partners. In order to guarantee quality and impact, this step of “stock taking” involves experts in arts, history education and in conflict resolution. Taking stock will not only serve the development of this project, but the collected knowledge about different methods will be made accessible to other organisations on the website of the network as a method databank and in a published manual.

Training the multipliers and building capacities: In a second step, four selected and adopted methods are conveyed to staff members of the network organisations. Through this it is insured that these methods will be sustainable, by passing on this knowledge to the local organisations as a form of capacity that stays with these organisations above the time of the project duration. The project follows the conviction that those who are closer to the problem are those who can best deal with it. This knowledge on local particularities and needs should be connected with the knowledge of good methods from others.

Involving the societies: In a third step the accumulated know-how is used to actively involve young people in creatively dealing with their past and exchange views in an intercultural dialogue with young people from other countries or communities. The artistic results of this exchange will be presented to a wider public. Thereby the project reaches out to larger parts of the societies in the region, including other generations as well.

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**The Swiss Cultural Programme in the Western Balkans (SCP) is run by Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council, upon mandate of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The SCP encompasses Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo. It supports local partners, which emphasize the variety, independence and performance of cultural life. The SCP regional cooperation projects focus on the capacity building and institutional development processes of cultural organizations with a regional orientation. ■**