VICINITIES
First Regional TV News Show - 3rd Season
This book is a transcript of selected speeches and conversations by distinguished guests on the programmes of Season III, on a variety of themes, from a range of different perspectives and experiences.

EDITOR ZVEZDANA KOVAČ

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INTRODUCTION

Encouraged by the huge support of our viewers, guests and TV partners, we embarked on Season III of Vicinities, aware that it had to be even richer in content, even better, more diverse, more dynamic and more entertaining.

We knew we could not turn back, because Vicinities’ messages and mission – as it transpired – are not just local or regional, but universal as well. That is why our Season III offered another opportunity for engaging in understanding, respect and reconciliation – the three values that have been taken to pieces and side-lined in the Balkans for twenty years.

We kept the same concept for this 2014/15 Season, in which we broadcast 14 shows, assembling over 60 guests, renowned for their wisdom in their communities, who openly, directly and honestly discussed the topical issues, to help the people in the countries of the region improve their mutual understanding and respect. Needless to say, our goal has not been to turn back time or resuscitate historically exhausted ideas.

We considerably refreshed and improved our TV production this year, which also contributed to the overall impression and assessment that Vicinities is truly a professional, original and, I dare say, unique TV project in the Balkans.

We ended Season III with a Vicinities promotional event in Belgrade and a round-table dialogue at which eminent journalists and editors from the countries broadcasting Vicinities discussed cooperation. We received many compliments, as well as a series of useful observations and suggestions on what we can improve and tidy up in Season IV, and, I hope, subsequent seasons of
Vicinities. We then came up with the idea of holding a number of public debates in various cities of the region in the coming year in addition to our regular shows. Such events, focusing on particular topics, will be both relevant to the local communities and help reaffirm the main mission of Vicinities and, of course, popularise the project.

Furthermore, it is already certain that Vicinities will again be supported by the European Fund for the Balkans and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, which will also be joined by the Regional Cooperation Council. All eight TV stations that aired Season III will be with us again in the autumn, and it is with great pleasure that we announce that the Albanian public broadcaster (TVSH) will join our team in Season IV.

As you can see, our enthusiasm is not faltering—on the contrary. We are aware that the expectations are great and that everything is in our hands. We are prepared to produce the next season of Vicinities professionally and responsibly as well. We will not disappoint you. We are not entitled to, either, because Vicinities is a mature, well-established and smoothly running endeavour. I will end my introduction like I did last year: promises should not be flaunted, we’ll keep in touch.

Zvezdana Kovač
CDRSEE Executive Director and Vicinities Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Erhard Busek  
Chairman Of The Board Of The CDRSEE  
What three years ago was thought impossible by so many is now not only a reality, but an integral part of reconciliation in the region. 

The CDRSEE did not heed to the naysayers when we proposed a TV programme that would bring diverse guests from a conflictive region together to talk about issues that still pierce the hearts of many in the Balkans. But that is because we did not go with the aim of hurting, but rather of reconciling. Not with the aim of dividing, but rather of understanding. And that is just what Season III did. It brought together people from all walks of life and of different opinions and experience, and the impact was profound. Real issues were discussed, argued about in some cases, but the outcome was always the same - a deeper understanding of the other. 

We look ahead to Season IV and even Season V, with innovative ideas, additional shows planned and, most importantly, a willingness to listen and understand those in our vicinity. 

Hedvig Morvai  
European Fund for the Balkans Executive Director  
Vicinities, as we have already learned - and the way we see it at the European Fund for the Balkans - represents a unique initiative, both in its idea, realisation and scope as well as in its way of thinking. It is profoundly different from what we see and have in the region. The programme completely promotes the goals of the European Fund for the Balkans and this is why we firmly support the project; the Fund’s goals are aimed at reaching reconciliation in the region, as well as democratisation, so that all the nations, as fast as possible, but also in a qualitative manner, come closer to European Union (EU) membership. 

I believe that Vicinities represents an example for others; an example of what the possibilities provided to us by media are; this serious and interesting facet of daily life that enters our homes, that is spreading and developing and covering all the communication areas, not only the traditional ones we knew about. 

This is why I believe that civil society deserves its place in the media and that we should insist upon this. If we have already found the way to get our foot into the big door, we should promote the possibilities, bring some fresh air to the arena– as we come from a different sphere – with some different ideas, different ways of communication. We should promote these ways of influencing public opinion and events in our region, both now and in the future as well. (Vicinities promotional event - October 2014.)
Heinz Wilhelm
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Serbia

We support, we have supported and we hope to be able to continue to support this project because it brings people together from across the whole region of SE Europe. It’s important to bring together citizens and to achieve reconciliation in a region where many wounds are still open, maybe even bleeding. This is why we, in general terms, have been keen on encouraging and supporting this initiative. I hope that the new series will bring together more people and that the talk show Okruzenje reaches even more people than it has done in the past. Once again I’m glad that Germany is supporting this project and we will certainly continue to do that.

(Vicinities promotional event – October 2014.)

Goran Svilanović
Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) joined the club of Vicinities supporters primarily because it is a quintessential regional project. From the region, by the region and for the region. And this is also the job of the RCC - to nurture all kinds of cooperation which promote better mutual understanding in Southeast Europe, a healing of yesterday’s wounds and laying the foundations for a better tomorrow. In this, we share the goals set by the programme and its producers. Each and every episode of Vicinities in 2014 was topical, regional and constructive. It was about building bridges and maintaining a dialogue between societies. The RCC is primarily involved in the economic recovery of SEE, but in order to be successful with that endeavour, we need that dialogue and we need those bridges.

Even though this is the third successful season in which the show is aired, it is still hard to comprehend that a project and a programme of this kind could be broadcast by the main television stations in Belgrade, Bijeljina, Ljubljana, Podgorica, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje and Zagreb. On its own, this would be a remarkable success but as this book goes to print, I hear that in 2015, Vicinities will also be aired in Tirana by the national broadcaster RTSH and I want to congratulate the Vicinities team. This is no longer what it started off as - a programme using languages similar enough to be understood by all viewers but it is now a genuine current affairs talk show which deals with crucial problems of the whole region and finds a way to incorporate all views. That, in the current media climate, is more than a major success, it is a genuine accomplishment and a sign that it has found its ways to the hearts and minds of broadcasters and viewers in our part of the world.
Following the 2012 and 2013 seasons of *Vicinities* that were widely viewed in the countries of region, the editors of this original current affairs TV talk show embarked on producing Season III with even greater commitment and self-confidence, with the unreserved support and assistance of the European Fund for the Balkans (EFB), the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany. Eminent figures in the countries of the region were again the guests of the shows. *Vicinities* was broadcast on Radio Television of Slovenia, Radio Television Serbia, Croatian Radio Television, Radio Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Podgorica Vijesti Television, Skopje Alsat-M Television, Radio Television of Kosovo and Bijeljina BN Television.

Season III shows were edited and hosted by CDRSEE Director Zvezdana Kovač, an experienced radio and television journalist, and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Spokesperson Nenad Šebek, a former Radio Belgrade and BBC journalist.

Thirteen *Vicinities* shows were aired from mid-September to late December 2014. European Fund for the Balkans Alumni again took an active part in them and themselves produced the 14th show that dealt with potential EU enlargement scenarios (broadcast in May 2014). Dra- gan Elčić was entrusted with directing *Vicinities*.
Center For Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe

www.cdsee.org

The CDRSEE is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation based in Thessaloniki that seeks to foster democratic, pluralist, and peaceful societies embracing European values, market economy adhering to the principles of rule of law and social responsibility and reconciliation among peoples. The CDRSEE Board, chaired by Dr. Erhard Busek, comprises eminent figures in the region and Europe.

European Fund for the Balkans

balkanfund.org

The European Fund for the Balkans is designed to create and support initiatives aimed at strengthening democracy and fostering European integration by enabling inclusive policy making, supporting capacity development and creating a platform for exchange and co-operation in the Western Balkans.

German Ministry of Foreign Affairs

www.auswaertiges-amt.de

This Ministry has been charged with Germany’s foreign affairs since it was established in the German Empire in 1870 and is now also tasked with EU affairs. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who holds a PhD in law, has headed the Ministry since December 2013. Germany has 153 embassies, 61 consular offices and 13 missions abroad.
**ZVEZDANA KOVAČ**  
CDRSEE Executive Director

She has over 20 years of experience in journalism and served as editor of various TV stations across the region. After moving to Greece, she worked as a project manager in a number of NGOs. She holds a degree from the University of Montenegro in Serbo-Croatian Language and Yugoslav Literature. Her mother tongue is Montenegrin, which allows her to communicate in all of the languages spoken in the region. She is also fluent in English and Greek.

**NENAD ŠEBEK**  
Regional Cooperation Council Spokesperson

He held the office of CDRSEE Executive Director until June 2014. He previously worked in the BBC World Service for 16 years, reporting on the wars in this region and Chechnya and as BBC’s Balkans and Moscow correspondent. He spent his first 10 years working as a journalist at Radio Belgrade. He has written for print media, worked on television and taught journalism at the American College of Thessaloniki. He has moderated many events for the European Union.

**PREDRAG KAJGANIĆ**  
Executive Producer

Mr. Kajganić earned his Bachelor’s Degree in film and TV production at the Belgrade College of Dramatic Arts in 1989 and his Master’s Degree in 2008. He was executive producer and production director on scores of TV projects at nearly all of the major television stations in Serbia. He has taught television production at the Belgrade Academy of Fine Arts Department of Art and Media Production, as an associate professor.

**DRAGAN ELČIĆ**  
Director

Mr. Elčić was born in Sarajevo in 1959. He is a full professor and Head of the Belgrade Academy of Fine Arts Department of Television Directing. He has directed over 250 documentaries and short films and around 600 documentary shows, television reports and video spots, two television dramas, four television films and seven television series. He has also directed around 1,500 live performances - music, entertainment, sports and other events....
chapter 1

SOLIDARITY

Do we notice the people in need of help around us, or do we just pass them by with indifference? Why do we show solidarity only when a misfortune befalls us? Do non-governmental organisations spend less money on their successes than governments do on their failures? Should solidarity be institutionalised and how much room is there for abuse?

These are some of the issues discussed in the first episode of Season III by: Ymer Ismaili, Bisera Fabrio, Admir Lješčanin and Aleksandra Bubera, after a word of introduction by Renato Baretić.
WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF WE HAD BEEN FLOODED IN THE 1990S?

I don’t think I’m saying anything wise or new by remarking that a new-born human being, that small, pink, cute baby, is the most selfish creature on Earth. That small, cute being has absolutely no feelings of empathy, solidarity or compassion. That is why we, the older and more grown-up ones are here, to guide it through the whole system, from the family, kindergarten, school, the entire social system and, ultimately, religion, since there is no religion that preaches: be selfish, do not be compassionate or show solidarity, to help it become someone as close as possible to an ideal grown-up human. The spring floods of 2014, which affected all of us in one way or another, best illustrate whether or not we have succeeded in that. You had, on the one hand, borderless and cross-border solidarity of the people and, on the other, we can call them river pirates, who toured the flooded settlements in their boats, robbing the deserted homes – a concern that no-one has to respond to now, but a good one for both you and the audience to consider, which may give you some food for thought. A number of issues arose during those floods, but the one I find most interesting is to ask, what would have happened if they had swept over Serbia and Bosnia and Croatia in the spring of 1991 or 1992? Or at least in 1992? Would have we been better, would have we expressed as much solidarity, would the events that occurred at the time have happened anyway? Would the floods have made a difference? That’s a question to take home.

I just wanted to say one thing: people I happen to know in France get together and deliberate on a new paradigm of the world order. Socialism has collapsed, everything under the Sun has collapsed and they are calling it New Solidarity for now (they still haven’t come up with a name). The last time I heard that, I said – “yes, but we first need a huge cataclysm of global proportions before it can actually be applied”. Unfortunately!
I’M NOT SURPRISED BY THE REACTIONS

People in our region have known each other for a long time and well. We all have either relatives or friends who were affected by the floods, so we can easily identify with each other. What I found extremely interesting during these floods was that the people were not only sending aid, taking food and clothes and everything else that was needed, but that they were offering to put people up in their own homes as well. So, they were willing to take in absolute strangers. This is something we see less and less of, letting someone into your home and wanting to help them. Although they are strangers, not someone important to you at the moment, what is important is that you help them, that you want to help them.

SOLIDARITY SHOULD BE INSTITUTIONALISED

One mode of institutional solidarity was launched by the EU and its Solidarity Funds to help struggling European economies, but that idea was endorsed only on the political plane, it was hardly embraced on the human, civil plane. A German thought there was no reason why he should be funding a Greek... Solidarity should definitely be institutionalised, but I think it is, as it were, in contradiction with human selfishness, the system in which an individual indulges himself in every way he can. So, what can force him to show solidarity with people he does not even know, whom he does even want to get to know, ever, whom he wants to disassociate from? Should it be stipulated by law - yes, but we in the region know that some laws were written to be ignored.

I BELIEVE TEXT MESSAGES

Money was raised for a sick little girl, Nora Šitum, to go to America for treatment, but unfortunately, she died in the end. It was precisely thanks to the amounts raised via text messages and the social networks, donations worth millions, that this little girl could get adequate treatment at the time. Solidarity at work.

There are, of course, always doubting Thomases. People are distrustful and the raised money, like the huge amounts raised to help Haiti after the earthquake, has often ended up God knows where, but I think that the thought - I’ll help, with two, three five Kunas or another currency, it’s not something I can’t spare - at one point nevertheless prevails in people.

HUMAN HYPOCRISY

We’ve had it in the EU, which has the Schengen and non-Schengen areas - the Brits were expecting hordes of Romanians to move to the UK, once the work restrictions were lifted in early January. The problem is that the EU, as a system based on solidarity, as one of its chief values, actually cannot embed that solidarity in its citizens. People refuse to show solidarity with others, they do not want to accept them inside their borders, into their cultures, or they want to accept them only to the
degree that suits them. I think that human hypocrisy finds full play here.

**ADMIR LJESČANIN**

Director of the Centre for Children without Parental Care, KulenVakuf

LAW GRADUATE, MANAGER IN THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR FOR NEARLY 20 YEARS. CO-FOUNDER OF THE CENTRE FOR CHILDREN DUGA [RAINBOW] AND THE DUGA CENTRE ART COLONY FOR CHILDREN.

**THEY HELPED EACH OTHER ALTHOUGH THEY HAD WARRED AGAINST EACH OTHER**

Neighbouring cities, which had fought against each other during the recent war demonstrated solidarity in a time of crisis. The very first aid that arrived in Doboj during the recent floods came from Tešanj and Gradačac, i.e. cities it had been at war with. People from Bihać came to Doboj to rescue flood victims by boat. The first food, the first provisions came to Doboj from Tešanj, which merely illustrates that solidarity between those people has not disappeared, has not died, that all that had to be done was to revitalise it and it reappeared.

**GREATER SOLIDARITY IN SMALLER PLACES**

We have an example from 2007, when a fire broke out in our Centre. The residents of KulenVakuf, from the youngest to the oldest, were there in record time, helping to put the fire out. The people next door let us use their house, they moved in with their relatives. Solidarity is greater in places where the people know each other better, but that solidarity does not suffice. We need the solidarity of the broader community.

**INSTITUTIONALLY AND INDIVIDUALLY**

We have examples of various institutionalised forms of solidarity, such as solidarity in the health sector, which is in shambles. People are forced to ask others for help to fund major surgeries and implement various projects to raise enough money for the operations. This institutionalised solidarity, at least where I come from, spends much more money on its failures than the grass-roots solidarity-the solidarity of individuals-manages to raise.

**DUGA EXISTS THANKS TO OTHERS**

The Duga Centre for Children is a product of solidarity. We have been working for 15 years now and that solidarity first started in Germany, and then we enjoyed strong support from our local community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have been organising an Art Colony over the past few years, to which we have been inviting artists from the countries of the region and other European countries. The response rate is extremely good, we have artists from Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Kosovo coming ... they donate their works to us, which we then sell and use the proceeds to fund the Centre for Children.
NARCISSISM IS THE GREATEST OBSTACLE

Socialisation has, in the past twenty years or so, turned more towards individualism – everyone focuses on themselves; people seem to be concerned with their own survival and well-being and they mind their own business. This is why everything that was happening during the floods comes as somewhat of a surprise. At first glance. As a species, we function best when we are interconnected and cooperate; we simply wouldn’t be able to survive otherwise. Narcissism is actually the greatest obstacle to solidarity. Narcissists have no empathy. They need lots of room for themselves and there is no room for others. Egoists are unable to look after others until they have provided for themselves and extremely well at that.

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE VICTIMS IS IMPORTANT

Identification with the victims is really very important. Identification means that I recognise myself in what is happening to someone else and that is the basis of empathy. Empathy is not just compassion, it entails a precise understanding of what someone else is going through, what it is like to be in his shoes. So, it’s not only about “how I would feel if I were in his position?” – that is mere identification. If we do not instil this in our children from the start, our society will have not achieved anything.

DIFFERENT MANIFESTATIONS OF SOLIDARITY

Whether solidarity is greater in smaller countries than in bigger ones depends on the culture of individualism in those countries. Some cultures, like the Mediterranean ones, are simply much more close-knit than some northern or western cultures, which focus more on the individual. That actually leads to different manifestations of solidarity. In more close-knit cultures, everyone immediately springs to help, while, elsewhere, they organise themselves better and, perhaps, extend that help in a more systematic way. So there are differences, maybe not in quantity, but definitely in the kind of help and in how it is offered.

WE’RE NOT GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

We should start from the bottom up and from the top down, we should have both of these components. By ’bottom up’, I mean individual solidarity which is linked to responsibility. What are we responsible for? For the things that are within our power, but also, if I look at my responsibility a little bit more broadly, I will act in one way and show solidarity, perhaps even with the coming generations, maybe with some people I don’t know. That is something we pick up in the family. Whereas, if the system is operational and all this is organised and formalised in a way, we may achieve the results that might get us, humans, moving, since, in my opinion, humankind has not really been going in the right direction over the past few decades.
MISFORTUNES WE CAUSE OURSELVES

If we engage in war with someone, then they’re the ‘bad guys’ and we’re the ‘good guys’. We have this starting point – “I’m OK, you’re OK” – which should exist in all religions and all philosophies. If that starting point does not exist, if I evaluate myself as better and you as worse, then I’m entitled to humiliate and insult you, beat you up and so on… And there can actually be no solidarity. Of course, nonetheless, there have been instances of people helping each other, even in war.

DR YMER ISMAILI
Publicist, Skopje

POLITICAL SYSTEMS PROFESSOR AT SKOPJE UNIVERSITY, FORMER SKOPJE CORRESPONDENT OF ALBANIAN RADIO TELEVISION AND OF THE PRIŞTINA DAILY NEWSPAPER ‘KOHA DITORE’ AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE MACEDONIAN RADIO TELEVISION.

THE WARS RUINED EVERYTHING

Of course I was surprised by such a surge of solidarity during the recent floods given how we as a region haven’t talked to each other for years. I’m not talking about the states, whether or not they have good relations. Inter-personal relationships were ruined by the horrors of the 1990s. What happened recently is a good illustration of the people’s will and ability to communicate despite what had happened previously. People have always had needs and those needs should not hinge only on the will of man. Nowadays, people are becoming greater and greater egoists, focusing on themselves. This is why I would like to remind you of Habermas’ theory that people need solidarity and that solidarity begins in the family, but, ultimately the state, the institutions are the ones extending solidarity to people in trouble. Because, I reiterate, solidarity is an ethical issue and it has always existed among people, but it is not enough.

THE STATE’S ROLE IS IRREPLACEABLE

Let me mention the example of the tsunami in Japan – from what I could gather from the media reports, there was more institutional than human solidarity there. All those people were saved because the state worked perfectly during the disaster. Those people will find solidarity in their families, but the state did what it was supposed to and physically rescued those people from the tsunami. This level of state efficiency does not function in the same way in our region, because our institutions are weak and thus, we have a greater need for interpersonal solidarity.

TWO CATEGORIES

We can divide solidarity into two categories – social and the formal, legal one. So, you have, on the one hand social, human solidarity coming from and existing among people, independently of the institutions, it depends on my ego, on my mental constitution, on my soul and spirit and so on. It’s called ‘interpersonal relationships’. We have that kind of solidarity in this part of the world, even after everything we have done to each other. Institutional assistance is an entirely different matter, in which the importance of interpersonal relationships is not relevant. The state and the institutions should provide it. The European Union operates under this principle and they
call it ‘solidarity of strangers’ in their system. This theory will most probably prevail in Europe in the 21st century.

ADMISSION AND FORGIVENESS ARE THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS SOLIDARITY

Forgiveness is necessary in this part of the world. Many horrors happened and a lot of intolerance was shown, and we need to first forgive each other for what we did, for what we shouldn’t have done. That’s the first step towards reconciliation among the people and man’s first step towards solidarity in society. To sum up, we will feign reconciliation but we will not have actually reconciled until we admit to what we have done, individually and collectively.

ADNAN OVČINA, Sarajevo – There is a very strong feeling of solidarity in the countries of the region and it was evident during the latest floods. Most of us volunteered and contributed in some way, so that I think it was an adequate indicator of the feelings of solidarity in the countries of the region.

VLADICA JOVANOVIĆ, Belgrade – The main question is whether solidarity should be institutionalised and how. The organisation monitoring donations in our region, which are, indeed, frequently practical examples of solidarity, has shown that people will give when they are encouraged to give, when giving and aid are facilitated and when society appreciates them. The law, that is institutionalisation, can help by creating a climate in society encouraging you to give through tax relief, rather than stipulating that you have to give. The people in our region are quite suspicious about where that aid will go and whether it will reach those who really need it.

BOŽANA BEŠLIĆ, Zagreb – People use different methods, tools, as it were, to help. I personally don’t use text messages, I prefer helping with the skills and knowledge I have and providing help directly.

IVAN JOVANOV, Skopje – Should abuse of solidarity be treated as a criminal offence? I think it should, especially now in the Internet era, because you can donate to a good cause just as you can ‘donate’ to a bad cause. Those raising money or collecting other kinds of assistance and then abusing it should be punished.
VIDEO 1

REVIVAL OF SOLIDARITY
The huge floods that struck Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia revived numerous examples of solidarity in the region. The three countries cooperated in defending themselves against the floods and evacuating the affected population, even working together on the mosquito spraying and disease control campaigns. Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Russia and EU countries were among the first to send rescuers and humanitarian assistance. Volunteers looked after the evacuees in the reception centres and people brought them food and clothes. Humanitarian aid came from all over the world. Not only numerous states, but companies, athletes and other well-known figures showed their solidarity as well.

VIDEO 2

NON-BINDING LAW
The Tuzla Canton Assembly passed a law on employment incentives envisaging the establishment of a solidarity fund. The law, which is not binding on anyone, sets out that 82,000 employed workers in the Tuzla Canton shall voluntarily give up five percent of their salaries. The law allows for the establishment of a monthly fund of at least two million Convertible Marks, which would suffice to refund the contributions for 5,000 newly-employed workers, the Tuzla Canton officials claim. Some Assembly deputies criticised the law, claiming it had to be imperative, not voluntary. The law was also criticised for not defining any deadlines and for reducing the Tuzla Canton to a charity organisation.

VIDEO 3

SPONTANEOUS SOLIDARITY
Turkish Ambassador Galip Balkar was assassinated in the centre of Belgrade on 9 March 1983. It was a classic assassination carried out by two Armenians, similar to most assassinations. But it was also unusual because the passers-by started chasing the fleeing assassins. The assassins opened fire at them, killing a student, Željko Milivojević, and wounding two other people. That event was subsequently quoted in the then-Yugoslav and world press as an example of spontaneous solidarity and civil courage.

VIDEO 4

AID VIA FACEBOOK
A poor disabled man posted an appeal for help on social networks at the beginning of the year. He asked for someone to give him a pair of shoes, size 46. Over 20,000 people responded to his appeal. No-one could have dreamed that so many clothes and so much footwear, in addition to size 46 shoes, would be collected. The poor man’s appeal led to the opening of a community page on Facebook “Size 46 Shoes”, rallying people willing to provide help to those who need it the most.

VIDEO 5

SKOPJE CAN SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE
Skopje was hit by a devastating earthquake half a century ago. Its toll: 1,070 people dead, 4,000 injured, 16,000 houses and apartments destroyed and another 28,000 damaged. Two hundred thousand residents of Skopje were left without roofs over their heads. The then-Yugoslavia and another 87 nations across the world sent aid and Skopje was rebuilt as a city of solidarity in one of the largest and fastest humanitarian campaigns to date. The 1979 earthquake in Montenegro left 101 people dead, 1,700 people injured and 60,000 buildings destroyed. The rebuilding took ten years, with humanitarian aid arriving from all over the world and solidarity assistance of all working people in the then-Yugoslavia.
Do politicians have to start with themselves if they are to fight against organised crime and corruption seriously, successfully and efficiently? Why have all the Balkan countries legalised many forms of crime? How warranted are the claims that the political elites are directly or indirectly funded by sources created in the spheres of organised crime and how dangerous is the appearance of organised crime as the sector capable of offering jobs and at least some kind of social security in countries with highest poverty rates and weak economies? Why do we have to wait for verdicts against people charged with organised crime and corruption for years and does that indicate lack of political will to investigate and prosecute these crimes efficiently?

Ivana Korajlić, Zlatko Nikolić, Igor Peternel and Stevo Muk discussed these and other dilemmas in the episode devoted to organised crime and corruption, which opened with an introduction by Renato Baretić.
CRIMINALS COOPERATE PERFECTLY

I look at these wonderful young people here in the audience and the ones where I come from and I realise most of them have never learned about the concept of brotherhood and unity in school. I don’t know whether that’s good or bad, I don’t want to go into that. But this concept you haven’t learned about, which died in the meantime, in the 1990s, lives on in only one dimension of all our countries, in crime. It hasn’t even diminished, let alone died in that dimension of our societies. Those guys organise joint work actions in other republics, in other areas, they’ve gotten along splendidly all this time, despite the wars, despite all the perturbations that ensued. They operate perfectly, you’d even think everything that happened, happened because of them, that they’re better off because of it…
DR IGOR PETERNEL

Deputy Chairman of the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Zagreb

FOCUSES ON VARIOUS TOPICS, INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, HEALTH AND MEDIA FREEDOMS. LEADING UN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION AUDITOR. RESEARCHES CHEMICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING.

BETTER THAN IN THE 1990S

The situation in Croatia now is much better than it was in the 1990s, as the fact that we have been constantly joining various clubs corroborates. When you keep on joining specific European and global associations, they impose rules on you which you have to adhere to….

I won’t claim that criminals are stronger than the state, at least not in Croatia. I think that they are simply in collusion with the government and that they cooperate extremely well.

What kind of crime are we talking about when you set up a company or a fund at a government session, which is used to funnel money from the budget and bags of money are simply arriving in your office?

SIMILAR INVESTORS AND SIMILAR PROBLEMS

We, in the region, have similar investors and similar problems with some investors. In Croatia, we have a problem with MOL, the judgment in that case is final, but we also have a problem with Merkator and a problem with Hypo Bank. All these problems definitely affect our relations with the neighbouring countries.

ANTI-CORRUPTION HYSTERIA

I doubt that only 13% of the Croats said they had bribed someone and I can hardly believe that this is true. I think that percentage is drastically higher. In the past year or two, we in Croatia, had the Sanader corruption scandal and Vidošević and his bears … The current anti-corruption hysteria in Croatia is quite dangerous. We have a decision-making crisis today, a crisis in which everyone is afraid to sign anything … I work at a college where no travel order may be signed off before everything is checked six times. You get a headache every time you have to sign an ordinary travel order, which used to be signed by the Chief Accountant only. Whenever you start working on something, you are suspected of involvement in corruption from the very start. How do you prove that you aren’t?

COOPERATION IS A MUST

Regional cooperation is essential, because crime knows no borders. The judiciary is crucial, it’s extremely important we don’t have to wait five, six or seven years for the verdicts. All of this must be faster. So, the judiciary must do its job properly and the state has to show good will and give a free hand to the police and prosecutors to prosecute, to work, to investigate. There is no other way.
IVANA KORAJLIĆ
Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina Spokesperson, Banja Luka

COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST, AUTHOR OF NUMEROUS PROJECTS. FOR SIX YEARS NOW, HAS FOCUSED INTENSIVELY ON ANALYSING THE PREVENTION OF AND FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION, ESPECIALLY POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN THE LEAD
Bosnia and Herzegovina is a representative example of how it works. So, you had war, you had war profiteers during that period when you had absolutely no system in place, and now you have this period of transition, during which we are getting used to some new procedures and new institutions, but we don’t know how they should operate in the future and enforce the law. This period is simply used to draw people in, create interest groups, which see it as an opportunity to impose their interests, by rendering decisions at the topmost level, who have captured the entire state with their individual or group interests. Thus, we’ve ended up in a situation that may be similar to the one in which the criminals have actually taken over the state. One illustration of this, is that many of our politicians literally competed over who would have their pictures taken with some people who were later arrested, convicted and are now in jail. The criminals need the politicians’ support, but the politicians also need the support of those criminals in order to survive on the stage.

COOPERATION WITH REGION BETTER THAN COOPERATION WITHIN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
Bosnia and Herzegovina has better cooperation with the countries in the region than the Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions have among themselves. The structure is so complex that even the law enforcers in Bosnia and Herzegovina very often don’t know who’s in charge, their remits overlap, which, of course, suits the criminals because their prosecution takes much longer. There’s often no exchange of information among the agencies, from the highest to the lowest levels, or you have entity authorities even disputing the jurisdiction of the state prosecution service. You have attempts to move the investigations launched by the topmost authorities to lower levels, because the judiciary at those levels is under greater control.

THE JUDICIARY MUST BE INDEPENDENT
I’d start by emphasising the importance of an independent judiciary. This is something our countries lack, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina. We still have huge pressures on members of the judiciary, a lot of what I’d call self-censorship when it comes to selecting which cases will be prosecuted, lack of capacity in institutions, which, even when they want to implement a complex activity, lack the resources to carry it out properly. All this together, results in a very inefficient judiciary.

MEDIA BEARING THE BRUNT
Our media arena is absolutely divided along political lines and the authorities have absolute control over the sphere of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If you don’t fit into this rigidly drawn ‘box’, and say something that someone doesn’t want published, you will be the target of verbal attacks by the President, the Prime Minister and so
on. Politicians have subtly threatened journalists, even physically assaulted them. The same befalls all non-governmental organisations trying to publish information. We, too, had to shut down our office because of the threats at one point, and we’ve now, again found ourselves in a situation in which black-lists of people working against the state, as they like to call them, are being published. These people are alerting the public about crime and corruption in government, and these black-lists are simply attempts to stigmatise all those speaking out freely about the problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**STEVO MUK**
Chairman of the NGO Institute Alternativa, Podgorica

HAS A DEGREE IN LAW AND HAS BEEN ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE NGO SECTOR FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS. WORKED AT THE CENTRE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS. KEY WORDS: ALTERNATIVE, ANALYSIS, RECOMMENDATIONS, POLICY, ACTIVISM, CHANGES...

**DENYING THAT CRIME EXISTS**
We in Montenegro are going through labour pains in our fight against organised crime. The government first refused to admit that organised crime and corruption even existed in Montenegro. We’re now still at the stage when there’s much more on paper than in practice, we’re adopting strategies and plans, amendments to numerous laws, but, essentially, there are no changes on the ground. There are no changes where they are the most needed, the critical points where organised crime and corruption fuse, genuinely threatening the foundations of the state and society.

**CRIME FUNDING THE STATE**
There are serious, numerous indications that the ruling party and state are directly and indirectly funded by sources within the world of organised crime. On the other hand, you have to bear in mind that, in a country with a very high poverty rate and weak economic activity, organised crime appears to be the one sector capable of conducting efficient business, capable of offering jobs, and then the politicians linked with it perceive them as friends, as someone enabling them to create a public image of themselves as successful politicians.

**GOVERNMENT WILL NOT SAW OFF THE BRANCH IT IS SITTING ON**
The regime in Montenegro hasn’t changed the past 25 years and, in my opinion, that’s a big problem, maybe even the greatest problem for the overall reforms in the country, especially for combating organised crime and corruption. It’s impossible to expect of a government, which has been ruling Montenegro for 25 years and which has merged with many negative phenomena to a great extent, to initiate the fight against organised crime and corruption, and, as ordinary people would say, saw off the branch it is sitting on.

**STATE REACTIONS TO EU PRESSURES**
One of the chief police inspectors in Montenegro was killed by an organised crime group. That happened ten or more years ago. We still don’t have a final verdict against the killers and, to make things worse, the government rejected the civil initiative
to name the Police Academy in Montenegro after the assassinated inspector, with only a bizarre explanation to justify this decision.

Rule of law and the fight against organised crime and corruption have been set as the top priority, if Montenegro is to fulfil the terms of the EU accession process. And, in my opinion, this process has greatly, greatly contributed to the state and entire society’s different, qualitatively better attitude toward those issues.

**DR ZLATKO NIKOЉIĆ**
Criminologist and penologist, Belgrade
Holds a PhD in Sociology.
Devoted his whole career to the rehabilitation of criminals. (Penology is a branch of criminology that specialises in penalties, punishment and the treatment of prisoners).

**SANCTIONS CRIMINALISED SERBIA**
Organised crime is the same everywhere and it comprises five activities. Trafficking in weapons, cigarettes and alcohol (if it is banned), gambling, and prostitution - it depends on the market and on the demand. There was a huge demand for drugs and weapons during the wars in the region. The dirty drug money was used to buy weapons and political influence, that is, political office. So, the introduction of the economic sanctions (by NATO and the UN, during the 1990s) was what specifically criminalised Serbia the most.

**THERE CAN BE NO TRAFFICKING WITHOUT SECRET SERVICES**
What we call ‘drug routes’ and ‘trafficking’ cannot exist without secret services. No normal parliament would approve funds for the secret services’ dirty jobs, so they can only use dirty money. When you hear reports that a shipment of 600 or 250 kilograms (of a drug) was seized, that means that the leak came from a rival group or gang, whatever you call them, not because the policemen have suddenly become more proficient or come to their senses.

**COOPERATION AGREEMENTS**
We have signed bilateral agreements on fighting crime with Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Some resisted them more, some less, because of their own interests, but mostly because of distrust. The toll of the 1990s, the bloodshed and warring, is precisely what created the resistance in the public opinion in those states and in Serbia. Then the European Union pressured us and this is why we had to sign them, not because we love each other passionately. Then some of their services sent our Zemun clan across the border. With guns pointing both at their chests and their backs, they came back to give themselves up. Yes, we signed the agreements, but that’s how we narrowed down the grey zones and the black zones in which they can hide.

**JUSTICE MUST BE QUICK AND DEFINITE**
Crime can be suppressed, but it can’t be eliminated. It can be suppressed only if justice is quick and definite. The harshness of the penalty is not everything. On the contrary, harsh penalties do not prevent crime. Remember public executions?
- Pickpockets were working the audience. Killing the perpetrator doesn’t resolve the problem, he no longer has a chance to prove whether or not he’s mended his ways. Our court proceedings last five or six years and we ultimately forget about them.

**ALUMNI OF THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS**

**SRĐAN HERCigonja, Belgrade** - One can hardly claim that organised crime is always in collusion with the state structures. But, in my opinion, the strength and resilience of organised crime in our region should be viewed within the framework of its links with politics, and even with the political elites, and it’s up to the citizens to recognise whether those links were created in the 1990s.

**Božana Bešlić, Zagreb** - The fact is that crime and corruption know no boundaries, that they network, interlink and interact very quickly because they have a single, common motive – money, and then the Balkan route becomes the European route and vice versa.

**Adnan Ovčina, Sarajevo** - The region is not cooperating enough on fighting crime because that isn’t in the interest of the local authorities. Organised crime groups often constitute the very foundations of power of the political factions. For instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, after a specific political faction wins the elections, there is a lot of speculation about which criminal might end up in jail, now that the political party he had supported has stepped down.

**Ivan Jovanov, Skopje** - I doubt whether EU membership can resolve the problems of organised crime and corruption per se, because I doubt there’s enough political will for something like that. Romania and Bulgaria, even Greece, are EU members and they still have grave problems with corruption.
DRUGS FUNDING TERRORISM

Around 90% of the heroin that arrives in Europe goes through the Balkans, by the so-called ‘Balkan Route’, from Afghanistan and Pakistan via Iran to Europe. A United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime survey says that heroin traffickers earn 15 billion Euros a year. The new drug trafficking model involves close cooperation between crime and terrorism. The proceeds from trafficking heroin are used to fund terrorist groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Al Qaeda. The drug traffickers also use the roads in Albania and Kosovo, which then lead to Belgrade and Sarajevo… The main players in the Balkans are people identified as ‘businessmen’, closely cooperating with corrupt political and security structures. They invest the proceeds from drugs into business.

GREEKS AT THE TOP, FINNS AT THE BOTTOM

Greeks top the list of nations that believe corruption is a problem in their country. As many as 98% of Greeks share this perception. Next come Portugal and Cyprus, where 97% of the respondents said that the degree of corruption in their countries was high. Romania and Hungary were a little better, with 96%. Respondents in Slovenia and Bulgaria, 95% of them, also perceive very high corruption levels in their countries. This view is shared by 71% of citizens in France and Britain and by 57% of the Germans. The following countries are at the bottom of the list – Denmark, where 19% of the respondents said there was corruption in their country, Luxembourg and the Netherlands with 34% each and Finland with 36%.

MOST BRIBES PAID TO THE POLICE AND IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

According to a survey Transparency International conducted in the countries in the region, most bribes are paid to the police and in the health sector. Only 4% of the respondents in Croatia said they had bribed a health professional; that percentage stood at 13% in Macedonia, 21% in Serbia and 32% in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 3% of the respondents in Croatia admitted to having bribed a policeman as opposed to 16% in Serbia, 19% in Macedonia and 32% in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to this survey, bribes in the education and judicial sectors have tripled since 2007, while the number of bribes given to civil servants in departments issuing licences has increased eightfold in seven years.

INVESTIGATIONS WITHOUT RESULTS

The investigation into the 1994 murder of Belgrade journalist Dada Vujasinović, who wrote about the collusion of crime and politics, is still ongoing. The police identified the people suspected of killing Telegraf editor, Slavko Ćuruvija, after 15 years. The investigation into the murder of Jagođina journalist, Milan Pantić, has not moved an inch in 13 years. Then came the assassination of the owner of Nacional, Ivo Pukanić, in Zagreb. This chronicle of threats and attacks on the media since 1990 includes another 70 cases of journalists, including photographers and cameramen in Croatia who were beaten up, had their fingers broken and received death threats. The Chief Editor of the Podgorica daily, Dan Duško Jovanović, was killed in Podgorica. Criminals have hurled bombs at journalists Uroš Radulović, Tufik Softić and Mihailo Jovović. Journalist Lidija Nikčević was beaten up. The investigations have not yielded any results.
chapter 3

OUR LANGUAGE

Should we insist on the similarities or on the differences in ‘our language?’ Are Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian four languages or one language? Is the truth about language politically and ideologically tainted and why hasn’t ‘our language’ ever been called by a name acceptable to everyone? Who lays down the new linguistic norms and why can’t linguistics apply an absolutely precise criterion?

These are some of the questions answered by our guests: Midhat Ridanović, Tatjana Bečanović, Maja Milošević and Veljko Brborić. The discussion on the topic ‘Our Language’ opened with an introduction by writer and columnist Balša Brković.
LANGUAGE IS UNGRASPABLE LIKE SAND

Are different languages spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia? My reply: One language is spoken, from the linguistic point of view. It is, therefore, indisputably one language but we simply have the reality of different nomenclature. The problem arises when someone wants to turn the reality of different designations into the reality of different linguistic substances. That is something that leads to that zone of linguistic engineering, something, which, in my opinion, is extremely dangerous and, ultimately, senseless, notwithstanding the strength with which such actions are supported and conducted. Another fascinating thing is that there are only a few other topic, besides language, that actually push people into a kind of fascism so easily and so blithely. It seems to me that there is a layer, which I call a mythological view of language, at least in the zone of this single language of ours with four names. Like when someone starts explaining to you that he suckled his language with his mother’s milk, and so on. I’m extremely reserved about such versions and combinations. Another approach, which is also un-modern and wrong, is the one that disregards and fails to recognise the power of language to transform, to change. There is nothing as inconstant and ungraspable as language, apart from sand perhaps. Which is why all discussions of language must somehow take these considerations into account.

The simple fact is that all of us here, no matter what we call our language, understand each other perfectly, which brings to mind one of my favourite verses by Hölderlin, my favourite poet, which can be loosely rephrased as: “We are people since we have existed and since we have been able to hear each other.” I think that this is the essence we should glean from in this discussion as well. We need to be aware that this language, our language, has never in its history had a name that was acceptable to everyone. Its names were always the consequence of political agreements – Serbo-Croatian, Serbo-Croato-Slovenian. Some authors of books on travel, such as Wilhelm Ebel, called it ‘Illyrian’ in the 1830s, which was absolutely groundless. The fact that that the language never had a name acceptable to everyone allowed for this reality – one language with four different names.
DR MIDHAT RİŞANOVIĆ
Emeritus English Language and Linguistics Professor, Sarajevo
FORMER VISITING FULBRIGHT PROFESSOR OF OUR LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS AT OHIO UNIVERSITY. ONE OF THE PIONEERS OF SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA. INTERPRETED AT THE DAYTON PEACE TALKS AND ICTY TRIALS.

ALL A BALKANER WANTS IS TO DIFFER FROM ANOTHER BALKANER

Bosnians, Croats, Montenegrins and Serbs, listed in alphabetical order, are one people speaking one language. I studied which human groups spoke the same languages and found four possibilities: first, language has been passed down from one's ancestors, all of us here inherited it. Second, one people imposed their language on other peoples. Third, other peoples preserved their own, for instance in the British Isles. Fourth, a colonial government imposed its language. You know that former British colonies mostly use English in public life, while, in India for instance, they speak 70 or so languages at home. Therefore, if our language was not imposed on us, if it didn't come with a colonial government (unfortunately, we haven't been anyone's colony, maybe we would've been better off if we had been), then we must be one people - absolutely. I invite everyone on this planet to try and refute this. One language, one people – Bosnians, Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins are one people. In addition to salt and bread, all a Balkaner wants is to differ from another Balkaner.

LANGUAGE ISN'T A SACK OF POTATOES

I have to say a few words about something, which is often publicly launched as a linguistic scientific truth but which is absolutely nonsensical - this measurement of differences in percentages. I commented this briefly, in plain language: language isn't a sack of potatoes, you can't throw it on a scale. The English word 'get' has around 300 meanings, while the word 'apologise' has only one. How do you weigh 'ge" and how do you weigh 'apologise'? People bearing the title of 'linguist' they've acquired somehow, God knows how, are considered authorities here, they are telling you and preaching to you about language. They talk of a linguistics that doesn't exist. Linguistics has absolutely no precise criterion, there's no metre stick for measuring languages allowing you to conclude to what extent languages differ among themselves. That's ridiculous. I subscribe to the layman's understanding of one language – the one in which we understand each other. Suffice to confirm that we are talking about one language.

IF THE CROATIAN WORD FOR MUSIC IS GLAZBA, WHY DO THEY STILL CALL A BEAT A BEAT?

I recently asked my colleagues, linguists, in Zagreb, that is, in Croatia: music is glazba, but you kept all the other terms: 'tone, beat, harmony, counter-point'… So what are you waiting for, for God's sake, change that one as well. Everything or nothing. I perceive this as an inconsistency - if I were there, following that policy, I'd go out of my way to translate every single word. I believe that there are no borrowings, no foreign words in languages. A word enters a language the second it starts circulating, passing through the mouth, the second it is felt – chip, chip, chipovi. If 'chip' is an English word, why don't we use its plural 'chips'
but *chipovi?* Chip is a wonderful Bosnian, Montenegrin, Serbian, Croatian word.... Simply, whatever we feel is ours in our linguistic gut – is ours. If I say “prestigious” and start putting on airs in English, you know I’ve gone to England. But if I say “prestižan”, “prestižan” (prestigious) is the same as *hljeb, kruh* (bread), *mlijeko, kiselo mlijeko* (milk, curdled milk) and so on.

**SUBTITLING IS SHEER NONSENSE**

As soon as this subtitling of movies made in the neighbouring states began, a crew from Federal Television came to see me to ask me what I thought about it. I told them it was ridiculous since we all understood each other perfectly, but I said at the end, that those subtitling the movies were sending the following message: Bosnians and Serbs are smart and understand Croatian, but Croats are stupid and they don’t understand Serbian. Of course, they edited that out of my sound bite. The reporter did not want to antagonise anyone so it was edited out. We in Sarajevo call it the ‘playing it safe policy.’ She’s playing it safe, God forbid she risk anything.

**SERBO-CROATIAN DOESN’T EXIST ANY LONGER**

Language is matter that sways, grows, burgeons, becomes richer and, in some respects, becomes poorer. So, language is fluctuating, ever-changing matter and that is why I claim that what was once called Serbo-Croatian doesn’t exist any longer. I won’t go into the other languages, I’m only talking about Croatian, although I may be perceived as the ‘bad guy’ here if I speak pure Croatian. We began cleaning up Croatian some twenty years ago, for various reasons, and we’re trying to bring it to the level at which it will be fairlypurified from all loanwords. I’m not talking only about the Serbian words, which are extremely, extremely difficult for the Croatian people, for well-known reasons, I’m talking in general, about all the possible loanwords interfering in Croatian. You have to understand the historical circumstances that prompted the Croats to look for new words. New words are standardised, they have been coined and let out among the people. Some haven’t taken root, others have. Everyone laughed and ridiculed the word *zrakomlat* which replaced ‘helicopter’ and didn’t take root, but some other words, such as,
for instance, *pismohrana*, which means archives, or *zakulisje*, which means backstage, are slowly entering our vocabulary, and if they already haven’t, I’m sure they will. The people are demonstrating the courage and the will to accept them. Cleansing the language from all loanwords is burdensome to an extent, but, when I’m faced with a choice between Croatian and foreign synonymic words, I tend to opt for the Croatian ones.

**WHY WAS ‘THE HEDGEHOG’S HOUSE’ STRUCK OFF THE READING LIST**

We had MihailoLalić and Oskar Davičo on our required reading lists when I went to school, but they haven’t been on them for a long time now, they had been struck off already in the late 1980s. I feel sorry for BrankoĆopić, whose ‘The Hedgehog’s House’ was struck off the reading lists for the lower grades. That’s really a tragedy, because ‘The Hedgehog’s House’ never did any harm to anyone. Moreover, this story has a wonderful moral …

**CHILDREN NEED THE TRANSLATIONS**

The children in Croatia today don’t know Serbian as well as you think they do. I have a son, he’s 24, at home. He likes watching Serbian movies, but he calls out to me often, asking me to translate something for him. So, he doesn’t understand. Your children probably don’t understand something Croats are saying either, because that’s the way it is since we introduced these changes. You have to assume that we might need to have something translated at one point, maybe not everything, but specific words occasionally. We have these national high school graduation exams, where the students are given a text by Marin Držić, in the Dubrovnik dialect that is the warp and woof of Croatian, and they have absolutely no idea what it says.

But what do those selecting these texts do - they publish their translations alongside. We who’ve lived in the former state don’t need translations, but these kids nowadays do. They’re only assuming what a word means, but they don’t know what it means exactly.

**ONE LANGUAGE, FOUR NATIONS**

Native language is a huge playground for the ‘patriots.’The one where they start clamping down on the ‘local traitors’ and ‘enemies of the state’ and you can’t tell where you’ll end up. Someone ends up on a see-saw, someone else on the swings. In any case, they sweep the ground from under our feet.

Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian are one language that has four different names. Those names are actually identity signals, which were simply indispensable after Yugoslavia fell apart. As far as the thesis that one and the same nation is at issue, nations are a construct and we already have enough of all those codes and narrations supporting the four different nations: the Montenegrin…
nation, the Serbian nation, the Bosnian and Croatian nations. It’s absolutely clear to me that this stratification of the nations has already taken place. Yugoslavia, a very large socio-political structure, disintegrated and now you have its segments building their identities again and using language for that purpose.

**CULTURAL AUTISM LOOMING OVER US**

The name of the language is not a problem in Montenegro. The Constitution defines Montenegrin as the official language. The only problem we have is with introducing linguistic norms, that is, with standardising that language, because we have two variances, the iotated-nationalist and the non-iotated one, which is much more similar to this common language, the one I’ve been advocating as the more reasonable one for Montenegrin culture in the longer term in all respects. I definitely don’t want to find myself tomorrow in the situation the Croats are in, that Montenegrin has to be translated. That terrifies me, that’s ‘cultural autism.’ How can you coolly prepare yourself for a situation in which you’ll need subtitles for a Serbian, Montenegrin or Bosnian movie? Such a situation is horrific.

I hope we won’t live to see that in our region, because that’s precisely the goal of this basest nationalism, to make us so different that we can’t communicate with each other. All of us will have suffered huge damages if the language is disarticulated to the point of becoming incomprehensible. You’re extremely rich if you use two scripts, the Cyrillic script and the Latin alphabet. You’re very wealthy if you can understand a text produced in Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo or Podgorica. We must not deprive ourselves of that wealth.

Europe isn’t depriving us of it, we are. That’s what I perceive as our linguistic tragedy.

**WE’VE BEEN FLIPPANTLY STRIKING OFF THE GREAT WRITERS**

The first change in the required reading lists was definitely geared at preserving aesthetic quality, they tried to preserve all the Yugoslav legacy that deserved to be on the secondary school reading lists and to be studied. The second reform, implemented by the Montenegrin Language Institute, was a bit more radical and more aimed at including Montenegrin authors, who definitely don’t deserve to be included in the reading lists because of their aesthetic quality. They were probably thinking that they were strengthening national identity with their texts, but I think they’ve only been undermining it, because aesthetic quality is a very specific category and doesn’t tolerate force. I think that, too, will fall into place in time because what the Croats did with their reading lists isn’t good. Although I don’t like to criticise others, it seems to me that the Croatian curricula have gone too far in that elimination of the Yugoslav past. The wonderful literary works written at the time – Lalić, for instance – should be kept on the lists. The fact that the Croats don’t have Lalić in the curricula is, in my opinion, preposterous. Imagine if we in Montenegro struck Krleža off the curriculum; that, too, would be preposterous.
The four languages we’re talking about are and aren’t one language. It really is one language in linguistic terms, but if that’s the case, why do we call it by different names? But that phenomenon isn’t unique to us. There are such cases around us, of languages that are similar but have different names. We can find such cases also in Europe and beyond Europe. From a linguistic perspective, we can actually talk about one language, but at the same time, no-one can deny anyone the right to call a language whatever they want to or whatever they’re already calling it. So, it’s an extremely complex issue and it’s simply not easy to give a categorical answer to it. As I’ve already said: they are four languages politically and one language linguistically, this is why I said we can talk both about four languages and about one language.

THE LATIN ALPHABET IS NOT UNDER THREAT IN SERBIA, AS OPPOSED TO THE CYRILLIC SCRIPT IN THE FORMER REPUBLICS

As far as the Cyrillic script and the Latin alphabet in Serbia are concerned, I don’t think the Latin alphabet is under any threat. Rather, it was the Cyrillic script that had been under threat in Serbia. That threat doesn’t exist any longer, but we need to see what’s happening with the Cyrillic script as the second script in the other former republics speaking the same language. There is no Cyrillic script in Croatia. They invented a special weapon for destroying the Cyrillic road and town signs. The Cyrillic script has almost disappeared among Moslems in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and appears sporadically in Montenegro, where it has a specific status. So, I see no problem with the Cyrillic script and the Latin alphabet in Serbia; the Cyrillic script is the first, primary alphabet and it should definitely be fostered and respected. Newspapers and books are published equally in the Latin alphabet and the Cyrillic script and I think that equality should be insisted on.

LET LANGUAGE DEVELOP NATURALLY

When a new term comes from abroad, you can’t translate it. Even if you find an equivalent in your language, it’s hardly likely that the people will start using it. Such attempts were at one point made both in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, but it seems to me that those passions have cooled and that language should be allowed to develop naturally. Language will accept the ordinary, the acceptable words and reject those that aren’t. Those attempts simply can’t succeed in the long run.
REASONABLE CHANGES IN THE CURRICULA

Serbian high school curricula, at the moment, include the works of Marin Držić, ŠiškoMenčetić, Ivan Gundulić, Ivan Mažuranić, FrancePrešern, Antun Gustav Matoša, Ivan Cankar, Tin Ujević, IsakSamokovlija, MiroslavKrleža, Ivan Goran KovačićandBlažoKoneski. So, the Serbian curricula have been changed, but these changes are absolutely reasonable and all the arguments in their defence are perfectly valid.

ALUMNI OF THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS

DEJAN BURSAĆ, Belgrade - This entire situation was splendidly illustrated by the Sarajevo Surrealists’ Hit Parade. I don’t know if anyone remembers their fantastic sketch in the late 1980s, in which people were talking six languages: Serbian and Croatian, Bosnian and ‘Herzegovian’, ‘Montean’ and ‘Negrin’ and were unable to communicate among themselves without interpreters. Fortunately, we don’t need interpreters yet, and I’d say this whole situation resembles a large sketch, rather than a serious political or scientific issue.

RUŽICA JURIČEVIĆ, Zagreb - The one question that has kept on coming back to me throughout this show was what the Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian Language actually was. Although very similar, those two languages can never fuse into one macro language. Croatian is a very distinct language because it comprises three sub-languages, that is, dialects - Shtokavian, Kajkavian and Chakavian. I think that denying those dialects and merging standard Croatian with Serbian or Bosnian would be a non-starter. Subtitling is
unnecessary, because we all understand each other. But, as far as official documents are concerned, I think that they should be grammatically adjusted, that is, translated. Official documents require official forms of communication.

BOJANA BULATOVIC, Podgorica - I’m not surprised by the fact that the states created in the region of the former Yugoslavia called the language after themselves in order to strengthen their national identities. We had one language in ex-Yugoslavia, Serbo-Croatian, because we were, perhaps, less susceptible to identity issues.

DEJAN RADIĆ, Banja Luka - The issue of how different our languages are, definitely ranked higher on the agenda in the 1990s than it does now. As someone working in the public administration, I’d say that it’s today absolutely normal to exercise your legitimate rights in your own language either when you’re directly communicating with an institution or when you’re filling forms or applications, which are now offered in all three language variants in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To sum up, the members of the public are more interested in the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the services than in which language they want to exercise their rights or receive services.
WHAT LINGUISTIC EXPERTS SAY

Numerous linguistic experts claim that two areas or two states speak the same language if they share at least 81% of their core vocabulary. Linguists maintain that the differences in the standard core Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian vocabularies do not exceed 5% and thus, that a same language is spoken. They are of the view that Serbo-Croatian is a polycentric language that now has four variants and four official names, but that it cannot be treated as anything but a standard language in strictly linguistic terms, because the differences between the variants are insufficient to uphold the thesis that they are different languages. On the other hand, there are linguists who think that there is also the structural concept, under which linguistic identity is one of the main features of standard languages. Therefore, there is no standard language without identity and it differs in name and content. Serbian is different from Croatian, Croatian is different from Serbian, and so on...

FOREIGNERS DO NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN OUR LANGUAGES

Some international institutions, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, officially use the term 'BCS', which stands for Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian Language and is the language spoken by Bosnians, Croats, Montenegrins and Serbs. Two European Parliament MPs in early 2010 called for the reintroduction of Serbo-Croatian, which has been divided into various official languages, to cut administrative costs and with a view to concluding a comprehensive agreement on languages with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia once these countries join the EU.

ONE PAGE OF TRANSLATION - 12 EURO

Belgrade and Zagreb translators charge up to 12 Euros per page of translation from Serbian into Croatian and vice versa. They charge as much for translations into Bosnian or Bosniak and Montenegrin. Online translators offer Serbian-Bosnian-Croatian translation services. Translations of administrative and legal documents are particularly in demand. The languages in the region can give rise to legal problems as well. Numerous cases have been pending before the Novi Pazar and Prijepolje courts for years because the parties are insisting on being assisted by Bosnian-Serbian court-sworn interpreters - 310 cases are languishing in the Prijepolje court. The language barrier has led to the discontinuation of numerous trials due to statutory bars. There were cases of the defendants asking for Serbian-Montenegrin interpreters, officials at the Serbian Supreme Court of Cassation say. The Bosnia and Herzegovina High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council holds its sessions in all three languages, one in Serbian, the next in Croatian, the next in Bosnian...

OUR POLEMICS ARE FAR FROM THE EU

The European Union earmarks around one billion Euros for around 3,000 translators and interpreters every year. Our linguistic polemics are quite far away from the European Union. Every future member state decides which language it wants to use in the EU as its official language before accession. The decision on this issue has to be adopted unanimously by the EU Council of Ministers and it becomes an integral part of the EU accession agreement, says Dennis Abbott, Spokesperson for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.
chapter 4

SOCIAL NETWORKS

To what extent have social networks led us to change the way we communicate and how we spend our free time? To what extent have they democratised expression and how much scope do they provide for dangerous manipulation? Is virtual reality becoming the most important part of our reality?

These are some of the issues discussed by our guests: Nataša Barac, Vladimir Vulić, Imer Mushkolaj and Jože Ramovš after an introduction by columnist and writer Balša Brković.
INTRODUCTION

BALŠA BRKOVIĆ
Writer, Podgorica

CHANGES IN THE COMMUNICATION CODE

I don’t use social networks, because I simply can’t find enough time in my day to devote myself to them, and, on the other hand, because I have some reservations about specific aspects of social networks. In my opinion, those social networks testify to an ecstasy of communication, a feature of our times. On the other hand, they are indisputably the social idiosyncrasy of our era. But I keep on asking myself a question, which is anthropological in nature: how will these social networks change human communication? That is, I’m aware that social networks wouldn’t have been possible without the technological revolutions that have taken place in the modern era, but other technological revolutions had occurred in the past centuries and millennia as well. Of course, those old revolutions happened much too long ago to allow for their comparison with the new revolutions. But the essence, at least to a certain extent, is that there is a need to conceal, a need to go beyond traditional communication, the communication of dialogue, the communication of touch, and I believe that this kind of change in the communication code will inevitably change our morality in the long term. But I don’t know how it will change it.

There is no doubt that manipulation is not an issue of old or new media, but of human nature. Power always feels the need to manipulate. Through the old media in the past, and, nowadays, through the new media as well. But it seems to me that social networks have also made an important step forward, as they’ve actually given a new impulse to communication among people. That can’t be bad. And then there is that important mobilisation aspect, which has been highlighted, especially when you live in a society like ours, where you frequently have some forms of censorship, subtle ways to censor something. But social networks are also more than all this, they’re a way to find some things out.
NATAŠA BARAC
Journalist, editor and desk editor, Croatia
WORKED ON THE FOREIGN DESK OF THE CROATIAN NEWS AGENCY ‘HINA.’ TRAVELLED 70 COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD. SPEAKS FRENCH, ENGLISH AND GERMAN.

SOCIAL NETWORKS SPEED COMMUNICATION UP
Social networks have totally changed the manner of communication and significantly affected our lives and how we spend our free time in just ten years. I’m on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and I use many other applications because I think they greatly facilitate, simplify and speed up communication, which is important for all of us.

(MIS)INFORMATION
I’m not sure I’d trust all journalists, newspapers or portals publishing various pieces of news. You ultimately have to know who posted a specific piece of news or status on Facebook to ascertain whether you’ll believe them. You always have the option of Googling what you read. Facebook is extremely useful in some cases, especially in journalism. I’d worked in a news agency for years and I have to tell you that we found out that Pope Benedict XVI resigned on Facebook. Facebook broke the news before any world agency.

NETWORKS AFFECT REAL LIFE
Social networks have many points of contact with our reality. Or the line between those two realities is very thin. It’s common knowledge that people’s real lives have been affected significantly by their statuses on Facebook or Twitter. Some lost their jobs, some ended up divorced, various things have happened because of injudicious statuses or posts. But that’s something we have to reckon with. When you’re on a social network, you can pretend you’re someone you’re not, but you can do that in real life, too. To my mind, all of that is revealed over time, in both worlds.

We can present ourselves as rich, beautiful, smart, but what we really are will ultimately be brought out into the open. On the other hand, I think social networks also provide us with huge opportunities to communicate with a great many more people, to create our own networks that can be extremely useful to us, both in our working and our private lives.

VOICE OF ‘THE MAN IN THE STREET’
A protest on Facebook was organised in Croatia two years ago. People got together on Facebook, planned their actions and then protested in Zagreb. It’s interesting how ordinary people, ‘the man in the street,’ are given a voice on social networks. Not only about the floods, although everyone in the world can see them on the major TV networks. In Croatia, we had that example of a little girl that fell sick and her parents launched a fund-raising campaign on Facebook. So, those social networks give ‘the man in the street’ a voice he otherwise wouldn’t have.
MR VLADIMIR VULIĆ
Teaching Assistant at the College of Economics, Podgorica


AN OPERATING SYSTEM FOR THE CITIZENS’ LIVES
Social media have become the operating system for the lives of today’s citizens. I don’t think there are separate virtual and real, physical worlds, I think that those two worlds permeate each other to a great extent. I can hardly imagine a situation in which I could abandon one of those two worlds.

In the ten years I’ve taught at college, I’ve never received more relevant information or gotten to know my students better than in the past three years. You combine what you see in life and what you see on the social networks and you can arrive at the real truth by contrasting those sets of information.

VALUES CHANGE
We can’t analyse the present on the basis of morality, on the basis of the rules of conduct or on the basis of the customs that applied in the past. The generation that came of age 30-40 years ago can’t use that value system to analyse the present. Put simply, times change, values change and the way a generation behaves and its values differ, from those in the past. I don’t feel the need to sign out of the living world and move to the virtual one, but neither do I feel the need to sign out of the virtual world on weekends and not even touch my smartphone until Monday.

NETWORKS HAVE DEMOCRATISED EXPRESSION
Social networks have democratised expression, just as the media revolution, Gutenberg’s printing press, democratised publishing. Social networks caused a genuine revolution by enabling every single one of us to communicate with the rest of the world. Now, whether that leads to egoism is not the problem of social networks, in my opinion. A network is a platform in general. A platform is neither good nor bad per-se. A platform is agnostic. The way we express ourselves depends on how we use the platform, that is, what kind of people we are. I don’t think that human morality has drastically changed in the past couple of thousand years. Socrates at the time criticised young people for acting irresponsibly, etc.

IMER MUSHKOLAJ
Columnist and civil society activist, Pristina

EXPERIENCED JOURNALIST, UNIVERSITY LECTURER, ACTIVIST, ANTI-CONFORMIST, ANALYST. CHAMPION OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND FREEDOM OF ACTION.

PARALLEL REALITY
I think that there’s actually a parallel world on the social networks and that most young people think that that world is real. They have friends, they have a life in that world. We, who’re a bit older, don’t see
it that way. We no longer feel the urge to call up a friend to ask him how he is, because, as soon as we log on to Facebook, we find out whether he’s in a bad or good mood, whether or not he’s depressed. Therefore, we also have information about people’s emotions. Why ask our friends where they’d been on holiday, when they will always post their photos and comment on how they’re feeling wherever they are, and so on. I’m trying to avoid using a smartphone, having Internet access and spending all day on the social networks. We can have quality communication without smartphones as well, that’s the crux of the matter.

EXAMS VIA FACEBOOK
I have Facebook and Twitter profiles, but I’m not on Instagram, I guess you have to have nice photos. I’m trying not to overdo it, I use them in my work, especially to obtain information and for some surveys we do. We conducted part of an exam, the part on social networks, over Facebook this year. That turned out extremely well and we plan on doing it again. As for the way we present ourselves on the social networks, it’s natural for us to want people to perceive us as we are at the moment. We’ll probably prefer to present ourselves in a different light at some other point in time. So that it all depends on the people. I sometimes even share on my status, texts that are to my disadvantage – ; critiques of me.

MANIPULATION IS FASTER THAN ON OTHER MEDIA
What’s good about social media is that we disclose information we want to disclose. It’s up to the people to decide what kind of information they want to disclose and what they want to post on social networks. Manipulation is faster than in the mainstream media, but so is the possibility to check whether someone lied. People use social networks also to organise rallies supporting a cause, etc. We organised protests in Pristina, we had a major problem in trying to force the dismissal of the University Rector, but we nevertheless succeeded after protesting for around two weeks. We did everything through the social networks, created events and invited people to them, posted things on our status, etc. So for this particular issue, they were really useful.

JOŽE RAMOVŠ
Gerontology Institute Chairperson, Ljubljana
SCIENTIST, SOCIAL WORKER WITH A PHD IN ANTHROPOLOGY, ONE OF THE LEADING EXPERTS ON SOCIAL NETWORKS IN SLOVENIA, AUTHOR OF 20 OR SO BOOKS. HE HAS SPENT THE PAST FOUR DECADES DEVELOPING PROGRAMMES ON INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS AND QUALITY AGING.

SUPPORT TO LIVE NETWORKS
I use the direct contemporary social networks only on the margins, I follow them, but I’m not on them. I’m so involved in live networks, particularly in creating contemporary live networks, those for the aging population and for promoting intergenerational relations, that I simply haven’t even begun to use the virtual ones. I might, someday. In my view, live dialogue among people is still indispensable. The social networks I create are live networks, especially for the inception of life. You can’t use the Internet to conceive and give birth to a
baby; nor can you use the Internet to raise it to become an independent human being. And, when he or she grows up, you can’t use the Internet to follow him or her till he or she dies as a decent human being; nor can you interlink generations only by using the Internet. You need live networks for that, and the live networks need the support of contemporary communication, on Twitter, on Facebook, etc.

‘FROM ONE MAN TO ANOTHER’ DEMOCRACY
Information on social networks reflects what we’re like as people. People have always deluded themselves, they have always deluded others. Facebook and Twitter are merely a good reflection of the quality of information people have. That’s very good, that’s democracy.

I think it essentially boils down to whether we’re moving in the direction in which we as humans have developed over the past three million years, since the beginning, or at least over the past ten thousand years, since the last Ice Age, or whether we’re moving towards matrixes. If contemporary social networks are the supreme law, our grandchildren will live in a matrix. If this is only one of the tools, 10 or 20% of the way we learn how to communicate, then it’s very good and a big step towards democracy. That’s one of the best opportunities social networks provide, from one man to another democracy.

CONTEMPORARY TOOL
The main misunderstanding arises when we identify with a tool. Nine thousand years ago, people living in LepenskiVirat Irongate communicated by shouting to each other, from one hilltop to another. People started writing a long time ago and using the phone 150 years ago. And, now, 10 or 15 years ago, we got a new instrument, a new tool. Contemporary imaginary communication networks. They are equally important, as long as we remain human. They are our tool. It will be the end of man when we start identifying with a tool, or a tank, or anything. That’s why I think we should treat these contemporary networks as good tools that will help us become humans and treat each other more and more humanely.

LANGUAGE IS NOT UNDER THREAT
In a word, language is not under threat, neither more or less than it ever was in history. Language is the main tool of human and cultural
development and there have always been groups and sub-groups with a meagre, sparse, impoverished, deficient vocabulary. Take the army, for instance, I first came to Serbia to perform my army service, for a year and a half. Do you know what military parlance is like? For killing, for forcing. Very sparse, sparser than the Twitter lingo. Yet, culture hasn’t collapsed. If someone is only using the impoverished language spoken by particular groups, then he is impoverishing himself, while culture moves on.

ALUMNI OF THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS

RUŽICA JURČEVIĆ, Zagreb - I’m in the minority that isn’t on any social network. As far as alienation is concerned, I’d put it philosophically, that we aren’t alienating ourselves from each other but from ourselves. Why? Because social networks allow us to present ourselves in one way, present the better parts of us. We relegate those ugly parts of us to the sidelines. But those ugly parts are part of us, too. It seems to me that social networks have given us a legitimate go-ahead to hyper-produce ourselves, to manifest that innate human narcissism, egoism, without any moral consequences.

DEJAN RADIĆ, Banja Luka - Moderate and selective use of social networks and more privacy for its users would definitely be desirable. No matter how critical we are of social networks, claiming that they are the climax of alienation, of superficial communication and superficial relations between people, we cannot deny the fact that it has become part of everyday communication between people and that it may be a useful tool for creative and intellectual growth of every individual in everyday life, as long as we use it in moderation and abide by some rules.
VANJA DUMELJIĆ, Belgrade - I try to turn on all options to protect some data, but, if you are on a social network, you are definitely literally handing your life over on a plate. These networks, however, do not provide enough security to users who want to preserve their privacy. I try to be cautious but the question is how realistic that is. As far as their effects on our literacy are concerned, our literacy is generally damaged by external influences, how literate a person is depends on that person, I don’t think Facebook affects it much.

BOJANA BULATOVIĆ, Podgorica - It seems to me that I have the possibility to choose whether or not to use a social network. In my opinion, the younger generations are pressured by their peers to join these networks and they simply haven’t managed to find a way, that is, to learn how to behave in the real world, and this may impede their behaviour in that so-called virtual world later.

VIDEO 1
SOCIAL NETWORKS - PROS
They improve people’s social life and cooperation. You can find your former hearthrob or the future love of your life or friends you’ve lost track of. You can find a job or a job can find you. You can chat with people you know and people you don’t know. You can send messages and play online games. You can earn money and advertise yourself, they can help you win elections.

VIDEO 2
SOCIAL NETWORKS - CONS
Privacy concerns. Waste of free time. They distract you from your everyday work and chores. They cause alienation. You fear your kids may get in trouble. You may lose your job, the love of your life, your friends. They expose you to people you don’t know whose intentions aren’t necessarily good. They can help you lose elections.
Environmental vulnerabilities, the absence of a strategy for building new capacities – thermal and hydroelectric power plants, inadequate waste management procedures and ‘wild’ garbage dumps are only some of the environmental problems all of the countries in the region share. How can we preserve the existing resources for the future generations, how responsible for the problems are the political elites as opposed to individuals, what are the laws like and how has the ‘green mafia’ come into existence?

These are some of the issues addressed by our guests – Lovro Rumor, Branko Lukovac, Rijad Tikveš and Siniša Mitrović. This discussion was opened by Enver Kazaz, who tried to answer the following question: can we save the planet at all?
NATURE IS A SPIRITUAL FACT

Whether we have to preserve the environment or not, is no longer the issue, contemporary environmentalists say. The following question, however, screams out for an answer: Can we save the planet at all? Some media claimed this spring, that the huge concentrations of smog and the carbon dioxide looming over China were so unprecedented and significant that they threatened the process of photosynthesis itself. Which means that man can destroy life merely by releasing into the air, the by-products of what he manufactures. Man has so far defined nature as resources he can use to obtain maximum wealth, while present-day environmental science asks the following question: is such a man the killer of nature? Can nature be a spiritual fact? If the chemical composition of a plant is identical to the chemical composition of a human organism, regardless of the different compounds, then humans and plants are related by blood. The hitherto idea of progress, of headway, of technological development, is turning out to be the idea in which man can actually be the ‘killer of Mother Earth,’ together with the climate changes and all that industry. Anthropocentric ethics is a thing of the past, philosophers say. It has to be replaced by bio-ethics. The latter teaches us that we humans bear responsibility not only towards other humans, but the entire living world as well - yes, the forest is my sister and the river is a close relative, yes, plants and grass are the ones that make my life possible. The idea of progress, the idea of development, the idea of industry, the idea of profit; is it the end of man and humanity as we know it? Can we actually use bio-ethics to change ourselves in order to save the living world?
LOVRO RUMORA
Environmentalist, Split

MEMBER OF THE ‘GREENS OF DALMATIA’ MANAGEMENT BOARD. CO-FOUNDER OF A CIVIC ASSOCIATION FOR RAISING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN THE MID-1990S. POLITICALLY ACTIVE IN THE GREEN PARTY THE LAST FEW YEARS.

GAIA WILL MAKE SURE WE’RE WIPE OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH

Environmental protection will ultimately prevail and it will bring a kind of optimism because the political and economic forces that are now developing do not leave the impression that they are the people capable or willing to get this country out of its problems. If they don’t, Lovelock’s words - that Gaia will one day make sure we’re wiped off the face of the Earth - will have come true.

Politics is the sector that has to set the rules of the game, because it has so far only set numbers. We can’t address the preservation of the world with numbers. We can only address it by safeguarding and looking after the environment, by looking after ourselves.

It’s crucial that we have a government, political group or approach that will really address the problem. You don’t need a lot of money for that. For buying pieces of land in every town that will be identified for primary waste separation, likewise at home, for constructing all the landfills, at which only the waste that can later be turned into useful matter would be separated - those are the basics and they really aren’t very expensive. But delaying them will be.

INVESTMENTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CREATED THE ‘GREEN MAFIA’

The area I come from, Croatia, or, to be more precise, Dalmatia, is staggering under numerous environmental problems. From Istria, where Plomin 2, the thermal power plant running on coal, is situated, to Split, Dalmatia, where there is untreated radioactive waste, asbestos, mercury in the sea, non-operational landfills… and various other problems. From Dubrovnik, with its golf course, to the hydroelectric power plant Omblo - a controversial project - there’s so much work to do all over the place. Croatia has, indeed, invested huge amounts of money into environmental protection but, unfortunately, it uncontrollably created a ‘green mafia’ through these initiatives and investments; a group of people who took on these jobs. They are being cracked-down on, at the moment and large-scale investigations are being conducted against them.

I think no one is richer than the former manager of the Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund - Mr. Mladineo, who had huge amounts of money at his disposal and gave it away, like Santa Claus, to his friends and acquaintances to open up various recycling facilities. And entered into deals …

MINISTER PROHIBITED SOLAR ENERGY

Croatia has fantastic resources of renewable energy. The sun, the sea, gas and wind. But the use of solar energy was prohibited by our minister, who is now in jail again. He prohibited solar energy, so we actually can’t use this huge resource, nor the gas under the sea floor, (according to the law), allegedly because it’s expensive.
BRANKO LUKOVAC
Career diplomat, Podgorica

CAREER DIPLOMAT, SFRY, FRY AND MONTENEGRIN AMBASSADOR AND FORMER MONTENEGRIN FOREIGN MINISTER. INITIATED AND FOUNDED THE NGO ‘GREENS OF MONTENEGRO’ AND THE ‘SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE.’

PHILOSOPHY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Resource depletion really constitutes a threat to mankind today and I think countries are increasingly subscribing to what the United Nations defined as the philosophy of sustainable development. So, there is hope that we’ll be able to halt this ongoing negative trend if more and more countries in the world are supporting it.

I’m convinced that this knowledge – that our future depends on our awareness and on what we’re doing to preserve planet Earth and its resources – will prevail.

ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITIES AND POOR WASTE MANAGEMENT

Environmental vulnerabilities are the greatest problem. Over the past two decades, the state allowed violations of the South Adriatic Spatial Plan adopted after the earthquake in Montenegro, primarily due to isolation and sanctions and under these pretexts. Waste and poor waste management are another major problem, which have acquired almost catastrophic proportions. Estimates are that there are several hundred illegal landfills or dumps across Montenegro.

The construction of sanitary landfills has so far been considered the best way to manage waste. I think the EU countries are increasingly abandoning this approach and focusing on treating waste as raw material instead.

CIVIL SOCIETY’S VOICE

We have also adopted strategies on education for sustainable development and environmental protection, but that’s not enough. Numerous green NGOs have, however, been set up in the past twenty or so years and they’ve been pressuring the authorities to abandon some unsustainable projects and, at the same time, raising public awareness. For instance, the citizens have, over the past few years, halted the construction of a hydroelectric power plant on the Tara River, because Tara is a national environmental symbol, and on the Morača River, and the construction of landfills at water sources, such as Vasove vode or at the Morinj Springs in Boka Kotorska. The citizens are increasingly becoming the factors of environmental protection.

IGMAN INITIATIVE - CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Regional cooperation has, over the past decade, been encouraged by international factors, especially the EU, particularly through the Stability Pact and other programmes. I’d like to mention the so-called ‘Igman Initiative’ that brings together four neighbouring states, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. It has been working on a model based on the experiences of the Nordic countries, which are among the best in the world in environmental protection and we hope we’ll be able to apply some of their experiences. We created a cross-border cooperation triangle around Dubrovnik, Herceg Novi and Trebinje and
that will be one of the first projects we’ll be working on, together with our international partners. It would be good if we, as a region, adopted our own sustainable development and environmental protection strategies like, for instance, the Mediterranean Strategy, because that’s what other regions do.

RIJAD TIKVEŠ
President of ‘Ekotim,’ Sarajevo

ADVOCATE OF ACTIVE AND PRACTICAL WORK AND BEHAVIOUR FOR PROTECTING AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT, NATURE AND HEALTH. PRESIDENT OF THE SARAJEVO ASSOCIATION ‘EKOTIM.’ MEMBER OF THE BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA FEDERATION WATER COUNCIL.

GREEN ECONOMY
We need urgent action, from the individual level, starting with changing our very personality, to the level of states and the entire world. If we manage to steer that linear movement in another direction, at least a little bit, we’ll probably be able to attain a circular economy, in which economic growth would be maintained at some level via so-called green economies, and preserve the existing resources for the future generations. That is the basis of sustainable development.

SLOW IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES
Problems include, lack of environmental protection, construction of new non-environmentally sound facilities, such as thermal power plants, hydroelectric power plants and similar power stations, without a strategy, and the absence of waste management procedures in line with the strategies.

‘Wild’ dumps are a problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have more of them than Montenegro, maybe even three times as many, around one thousand. Another problem is the very slow implementation of those strategies based on the legal framework – the regional landfills are not built at the planned pace. That’s one of the chief problems.

CHEAP SOLUTIONS EXACT A HIGH PRICE ON HEALTH
Let’s go beyond European laws and take a look at the situation at the global level. There are international treaties like the Kyoto Agreement and its mechanisms facilitating so-called funds for green development, that is, for renewable sources of energy. However, energy obtained from coal is still the cheapest energy around here, precisely because its price doesn’t include the costs of dealing with the residue dust; this dust, created in the thermal power plants, is radioactive and spreads over large areas of land and it isn’t properly treated. Coal is relatively cheap, but as I said, this price of energy production does not include the expenses of the subsequent medical treatment of the people who have to live in the polluted areas.
FEAR AS THE MOTIVATING FACTOR

Maybe man is the cul de sac of evolution, maybe man is imprudent and selfish enough to saw off the branch he’s sitting on. Man is definitely living in a digital future, which has already begun, in which the world is so integrally interlinked, in which he’s left to fend for himself, so apocalyptic. Amid such developments, the political elites across the world have a major responsibility to choose how to organise life and organise it properly, but I don’t see many taking on this responsibility at the moment. We literally can’t predict what will happen even twenty years from now. I don’t believe in awareness, I believe in fear as the motivating factor. Fear of losing one’s existence and life is something that can get everyone moving.

YOU GET WHAT YOU PAID FOR

You have to understand what standards are. You can’t raise waste management costs to 4-5% of the budget when the average wage is 400 Euros. It’s a process. Maybe the citizens could be involved if their bills were reduced if they separated their waste, but those processes are extremely complex and they’ll take a long time.

The countries in the region earmark only 0.25 or 0.3% of their GDPs for environmental protection, as opposed to EU states, including the new members, which set aside over 2.5%, up to 3%. So, how can you look like Switzerland if you set aside a pit- tance? You can’t!

PACT WITH THE CITIZENS

New social networks have created room for a new synergy in the region and they are that driving force, they are that factor of resistance, the fist of resistance waved against projects endangering the environment, we saw it happen in Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia. So, once it sets up a model, the state must make a serious pact with the citizens if it wants that initiative to succeed.

I like to talk about the so-called bridge ecology. I’m convinced environmental protection is the shortest road to interlinking the peoples in the region - the models used in waste management, in managing water resources, in infrastructure.
IVA SELER, Zagreb - I myself started separating waste in my household only once such a system was actually put in place in my hometown. I think that standards have to exist. Croatia, for instance, doesn't have a choice now. We must comply with EU provisions, but I think they need to be communicated better to the people, the public at large, businesses, that they need to be implemented gradually and that everyone really understands what those words on paper entail. Misunderstandings occur all the time. Croatia, for instance, has committed itself to extremely large ventures in the forthcoming decade, ventures that will cost us lots and lots of money, from what I hear. We'll pay if we don't fulfil them as well. So, I support those standards and I think they should exist, but, in my opinion, they should be introduced and implemented very cautiously.

MILOŠ ĐINĐIĆ, Belgrade - From the perspective of EU accession, because all our countries are going in that direction, some have already gotten there, the fact is that you have to accept a third of all EU legislation, you have to achieve those standards. Let me go back to Serbia, to a specific example. The environmental protection law says that everyone is entitled to a healthy environment. So, what does that mean? It means you first need to attain such an environment. Green NGOs in Serbia tell me that there is only one lawyer in Serbia capable of representing parties in environmental cases before Serbian courts and that he has one assistant. So, we have one and a half men in all. This is where the question of the strict enforcement of standards we talked about comes in. I disagree that awareness-raising is immaterial. There should be some kind of synergy of all the elements we mentioned; awareness-raising, systemic provisions and media campaigns, they should all definitely go hand in hand.

JELENA MILJANIĆ, Podgorica - I somehow can’t move away from a more global perspective, maybe ‘wild’ dumps aren’t as great a problem as, for example, the fact that whole families in Africa eat at dumps and get their food from dumps. On the other hand, as far as the individual level is concerned, you don’t need to teach children and young people and the citizens not to throw bits of paper and cigarette butts on the sidewalks, you need to teach them to be in touch with themselves, with their environment, to realise that they are actually a microcosm and a mirror of this macro-cosmos, both by their existence, their deeds, their actions and their reactions. I’m trying to believe that action on both of these levels is possible, but a longer period of time is needed for that, time which, I fear, we don’t have, because we have to react urgently.
THERMAL POWER PLANTS ARE THE WORST POLLUTERS

Thermal power plants are the worst polluters in this part of the world. The following areas in the region are threatened by them: Tuzla, Kakanj, Zenica, Pljevlja, Obrenovac, Lazarevac, Kostolac, Bor, Pančevo, Obilić. Use of dirty coal causes environmental and health problems; the economy suffers as well. All thermal power plants were built over a quarter of a century ago, apart from Plomin in Croatia, which was built in 2000. All of them burn poor quality coal. Major investments need to be made in these thermal power plants in the upcoming decade, to upgrade them. Or they should be shut down. Estimates are that the so-called hidden health costs amounting to 6.5 billion Euro can be avoided by abandoning the exploitation of dirty coal in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

AIR POLLUTION KILLS PEOPLE

The World Health Organisation has qualified air pollution as the main environmental problem affecting human health. Ambient air pollution has been linked to 1.2 million premature deaths in China in 2010 alone. Household air pollution kills 1.6 million people across the world every year. One death every 20 seconds. In the view of the World Health Organisation, this problem increased the burden of disease rate and ranks 8th on the list of all risk factors – 1.6 million deaths – pneumonia, respiratory diseases, lung cancer. Every year, 47,000 people die as a result of acute poisoning from hazardous chemicals. It’s impossible to even presume the number of chronic effects exposure to chemicals has on the nervous, immune and reproductive systems.

UNTAPPED WATERS UNDER PROTECTION

The countries of the region abound with water, but this water is difficult to preserve. The European Commission’s Water Framework Directive prohibits any use of unexploited rivers, including for electricity production. Croatia and Montenegro have abandoned the ideas of building hydroelectric power plants on the Drava and Tara Rivers, in order to avoid environmental problems. The residents of a settlement on Stara Mountain fear they’ll be left without the Toplodolska River water, which is used by the Pirot hydroelectric power plant. European environmental organisations think that it’s better to utilise energy efficiently than build dams on the few remaining rivers.
Who’s to blame for our unemployment – our governments, the global economic crisis or the transition-era tycoons? Why aren’t the job creation dynamics more intensive than the unemployment dynamics and are the government measures to combat it merely ‘cosmetic measures’ covering up the ugly face of reality? Why do 70% of young people want to leave the countries of the region in search of jobs?

These are just some of the issues that were discussed by “Vicinities” guests: Vasilije Kostić, Goran Lukić, Ranka Mišić, Čedomir Ćupić, following an introduction by writer Enver Kazaz.
UNEMPLOYMENT DATA ARE HORRIFIC

A country with youths like these doesn’t need to worry about its future, Josip Broz Tito used to say. Those youths have been trampled by history and they then abandoned socialism, because there were some things about it they thought they didn’t like, and then they embarked on the road to capitalism, the great social dream they were promised. But capitalism turned out to be the initial accumulation of capital and the erstwhile socially-owned companies were taken over by the tycoons overnight. The unemployment data are horrific and hearing them would probably lead us to the conclusion that a social apocalypse has befallen us. But the government measures to combat unemployment are merely ‘make up’ on the ugly face of reality. Young people, exposed to the Bologna education process, enter society without prospects; as many as 70% want to leave the countries of the region. And, what’s worse, in order to find jobs, these youths have to be entrepreneurial, as entrepreneurs would say. Being entrepreneurial is easy if you’re a tycoon, but, if you’re young, you’re expected to work for two people, if someone hires you at all, that is. And what’s even worse, young people and the unemployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina have recently launched violent demonstrations; one, and then two, and then three government buildings and the Bosnia and Herzegovinapresidencybuildingwere burned down. With that lesson learned, we can paraphrase Tito: Governments looking after their youths in this way need to worry about their future.
UNEMPLOYMENT RESULTS IN ENDURING POVERTY

Unemployment is one of the critical socio-economic problems of post-modern societies. Mostly because it results in enduring poverty. As for its causes, we need to mention the dynamics of the economy, the dynamics of economic activity, the inherited structural economic disharmony etc. and to focus our attention on demography and demographic features, to look at the development policy and prospects for development. We need to bear in mind the state of the institutions and the institutional structures.

In EU countries, unemployment is the consequence of the global economic crisis. Here, employment, that is, unemployment is a structural problem. Unemployment is something we inherited, it isn’t a recent phenomenon, and I fear it will be a lasting feature for many years to come.

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

Appeals do not help much in economy if you don’t have an economic rationale. It’s unrealistic to expect and request of people without jobs, to stay and look for a job the next two, three or five years. Statistical and other scientific research has demonstrated that people registered with the employment bureau or unemployed for one, two or three years have already lost their business skills and knowledge and these losses have significantly undermined their ability to find a job and fulfil the requirements of the post applied for. So, economic and social incentives, not appeals, are needed. New jobs need to be created.

Young people are entitled to take the initiative, they’re entitled to decide whether they should stay or go, they’re entitled to live their lives. If they asked me, I’d tell them to follow their feelings, wherever they may lead them and whatever that may entail. Every one of us has the opportunity to choose, but we also have to be prepared to suffer the consequences of the choices we make.

UNEMPLOYMENT CAN’T BE RESOLVED IN THE SHORT TERM

Over 10,000 university graduates in Montenegro are looking for a job. I want to emphasise again that unemployment is the reflection of the overall situation in a country, not only of the current situation, but of the country’s history and cultural patterns as well. Therefore, the resolution of the unemployment problem is extremely complex, but, to put it in the Spartan spirit of laconicabrevitas, you have to create a business environment that will attract foreign investments, you have to reform the education system.....It’s thus impossible to resolve the problem of unemployment of these proportions in the short term. We also have to fight against that mental attitude that it is the state’s duty to provide us with jobs. I have two kids and I try to raise them, and I think I’ve largely succeeded in that, they’re finishing state schools, but I try to tell them that they have to find a job by themselves. That there’s something called entrepreneurship.
LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS ARE A MUST

Long-term solutions for addressing unemployment issues must be based on a strategy, the strategy of development, the dynamics of the economy, and include investment incentives, institutional reforms in the labour market, self-employment incentives, etc. Yes, the answers are stereotypical, but economic practice doesn’t have any other answers.

NOT EVERYONE CAN BE A YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR

Everyone wants to be an entrepreneur, but not everyone can be a young entrepreneur, they simply can’t. That’s how unemployment is addressed in Slovenia, give each job-seeker two thousand Euros, strike them off the unemployment register, they work as entrepreneurs for several years and end up on welfare. What about the elderly? Where are they? They don’t have as much social capital as young people and, unfortunately, I’ll give you an example from Croatia, the young have already won the battle against the old in commercials. VIP cell phone packages are offered to young people with an attitude that implies “we’re not old, we’re more flexible than you, you old people, off you go.” The unemployment rate is higher among the older categories but 80% of the media talk about the young ones.

WE NEED SMART INVESTMENTS

Foreign investments are a striking example of state interventionism in capitalism. What’s the greatest social problem in capitalism? Capital. How much money was turned into capital by foreign investments? We have 13 free economic zones in Serbia, offering huge relief. Profit tax is zero, all taxes are zero, you don’t have to pay specific export duties in these zones. What has this resulted in, when hundreds of thousands of people are still unemployed? We have economic zones in Macedonia as well, where employers are exempted from paying profit tax for ten years. That means that, first, there’s no money for the pensions; second, once they are charged the taxes in ten years’ time, they’ll pack up and go. No investments, no jobs. We don’t need foreign investments that flee when the exemptions are gone. We need smart investments, which will be long-term and create permanent, quality jobs, no matter how stereotypical that may sound.
POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT GO HAND IN HAND

A high unemployment rate jeopardises the functioning of a society, it brings into question some normal relations and has a devastating effect on individuals and the development of the entire society.

Its causes can primarily be linked to the change of system that occurred: we transitioned from one system to another, but some people weren’t sufficiently capable of creating a transition strategy. We entered the new system unprepared and, perhaps, the greatest tragedy was, that we ventured into this wild privatisation, without any criteria, this privatisation which, among other things, led to a total breakdown, creating a big problem, that is, two problems that go hand in hand: poverty and unemployment.

GRADUATES WITH STELLARGRADE POINT AVERAGES DON’T HAVE JOBS

In addition to poverty and unemployment, our societies, especially in Serbia, are plagued by crime and corruption. Every act of corruption is a crime. Corruption has led to negative selection, corruption has put people in office, corruption has led to the situation in which workers can be treated in any which way. Not giving the best people a chance because corruption doesn’t give them a chance, doesn’t allow it, that’s a crime against those people.

I’ve written over 400 letters of recommendation for the best Belgrade University students, since I teach at two colleges, but I also wrote them at the Belgrade Open School, where I chair the Management Board. I tell them: if you can’t find a job over the next two years, stop counting on this society and being prisoners or hostages of the idea that you shouldn’t leave this place, that you should wither away here. Leave this place, you are our shining lights, you’ll perhaps come back here tomorrow if the situation is normal, if this becomes a normal society, you’ll perhaps open some new prospects here.

Brain-drain is a fictitious issue. From the economic perspective, it devastates the state, you invest huge funds into people but then you don’t use them. From the individual perspective, I tell everyone, if you can’t find a job, go. My students, with stellargrade point averages, haven’t been able to find a job the past three years. That tells you what kind of society we’re living in and what kind of a state we are.

MOST VITAL CATEGORY OF THE POPULATION IS THE WORST OFF

Each of our countries has different problems. The unemployment rate in Serbia officially stands at 26.8%, that’s the total unemployment rate. Young people account for 52% of those 26.8%. In Serbia, those between 18 and 30 years of age fall into the category of young people. That’s not
the European standard, where the category of young people covers those aged between 15 and 24. So, the most vital category of the population, on which the strength and development of society should rest, is the worst off. Who’s unemployed here? The people who’ve lost their jobs. And these desperate people now have children, who’re unemployed, too. Double problem and double misery.

Serbia has another problem: around 2,120,000 people are working, both in the public and private sectors. There are another 1,750,000 pensioners. Around 3.5–4 million people live off the pensions. If Serbia didn’t pay the pensions for three months, we’d have an all-out social war, hungry people who’d show their real nature. They’d turn into ravenous animals, tearing everything down, destroying everything. The world is thankfully aware of that and we’re keeping afloat thanks to the money we’re getting. Otherwise…

CREATE JOBS THROUGH TAX RELIEF
I’ll say a few words about how I think the economy in Serbia can be revived, by a tactic, a longer-term strategy. I think we should have a totally different tax system for businesses. Stimulate businesses to employ people by offering them tax relief. Furthermore, small and medium sized companies, not giant ones, should be the mainstay of Serbia’s economy. Not these large companies owned by the so-called tycoons, let them go on doing what they’re doing until their time of reckoning comes. But the state could offer incentives, for instance, whoever hires 100 people in the next five years is exempt from tax. That will revive the economy…

RANKA MIŠIĆ
Chair of the Republika Srpska Trade Union Association, Banja Luka

CHAIR OF THE REPUBLIKA SRPSKA TRADE UNION ASSOCIATION FOR THE THIRD TIME RUNNING: HER MOTTO: "JUSTICE, FAIRNESS AND MAN." CHAMPION OF WORKERS’ RIGHTS IN POST-DAYTON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.

LET’S MAKE OUR POLITICIANS MORE ACCOUNTABLE
The grey economy is a major problem here, since it grossly and crassly exploits people, especially young people. When we talk of the 550,000 unemployed people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we need to be aware that some estimate that shadow economy accounts for around a third of the country’s Gross Domestic Product.

Government ‘bad news letters’ and party membership cards may be a step in the wrong direction or, perhaps, excellent motivation for the young and educated people to leave the country in search of their fortune. I’d be selfish, I wouldn’t suggest to my students to leave, or to support their decisions to emigrate so easily. No one is entitled to relinquish the country’s and citizens’ money spent on education so easily. I’m sorry that energy and knowledge haven’t been harnessed. So these people go off to other countries, where they’re better off, and then those countries harness that energy and knowledge. Let’s make our politicians more accountable, let’s launch that kind of a revolution, let’s change things.
WE NEED A CRIME-FREE STATE

Let’s start with the question about whether we even have a labour force market. What does that market entail? We had responses in this poll, that the education system was to blame, I’m simplifying. If we view things from that perspective, we can ask ourselves whether people need to even finish primary school. Because we don’t have the facilities in which to employ those people. We don’t have jobs. Let’s not end up in a situation where creating jobs means cheapening the price of the existing workforce.

I won’t accept that we have bad workers, I won’t accept that unemployed people turn down jobs guaranteeing their existence and the livelihoods of their families. At this point in time, it’s crucial that we have a state in which justice and fairness reign, in which there’s no crime, and we should all be working on that at the moment. That’s one of the ways I’ve gone back to several times, there are no solutions, either in theory or practice. I’m talking about real life, what real life is. I represent those who struggle to make ends meet every day, and they work.

GO BACK TO WORKING THE LAND?

Well, that’s a strategic issue. Some countries can’t, because they don’t have the resources for farming. The country I come from, I’m absolutely sure we don’t have strategic agricultural development goals, absolutely sure. So what does it do, it takes ad hoc decisions. It accepts what’s offered. And, of course, it has problems then.

And to top it all, this idyll, as you call the idea of young people working the land, that idyll, that dream is now in the focus of developed European countries, the young people and the citizens of those countries. And one more thing, an education system doesn’t prepare quality people who’ll be able to live and manage their lives by working the land. Which doesn’t mean that there aren’t any educated people working the land.

ALUMNI OF THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS

EVICA KUÇ, Belgrade - As the poll, too, showed, the gap between labour market demand and the supply provided by the education system is actually one of the chief causes of such a high unemployment rate, which is, to an extent a problem that all the countries in the region inherited. Part of the solution definitely lies in changing the education policies, but career guidance and counselling and lifelong learning can also help address the problem. A survey conducted by the Belgrade Open School showed that the employability of young people who’d availed themselves of career guidance and counselling services was much greater than of those who hadn’t.

DEJAN BUHA, Sarajevo - The situation was exacerbated by that entire transition period and the governments that were in office at the time. Governments should be the ones creating an enabling economic environment, primarily for employment. I’d just use this opportunity to say a few words, because I, too, raised my hand when you asked who of us wanted to emigrate. Although I have a great job – I work in a state agency – and I love my country, in my view, you don’t prove your love for your country by staying in it or leaving it. I’d like to contribute to my country by going away to continue my studies, to develop my competences even more, to become the Director of the World Bank.
or someone important, and then attract investments to my country, and at the same time, show those foreign experts visiting us that we’re not sheep and cheap labour, that we’re at the same level, maybe even at a higher level than they are, although our education system is the way it is.

**IVA Seler, Zagreb** - I deal with EU funds, strategic planning and investments, and I think about this a lot, I participate in various debates all the time and I think about this the whole time. To the best of my knowledge, extremely successful world economies actually invest heavily in their education systems and in research and development. They don’t encourage people to go back to working the land. I don’t think going back to farming is as simple as it may appear at first glance, especially in the EU context. It’s good, in the sense that people own their own piece of land, have a garden. They don’t go hungry if the weather is good, if there are no floods or droughts, but, in the long term, that is not something that can raise an economy to a new level, especially in the present circumstances, which is why I think we must focus much more on investments in education and in research and development.

**VIDEO 1**

**BiH LEADING IN UNEMPLOYMENT**

Unemployment currently at record-breaking levels in the region. Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the lead, with 550,000 people without a job, according to the Labour and Employment Agency; 785,000 people in Serbia, a quarter of them under 30, are unemployed, the National Employment Service claims. The Croatian Employment Bureau says 380,000 people are registered as unemployed. According to official statistics, nearly 35,000 citizens of Montenegro are looking for a job. The Macedonian Employment Bureau warns that there are 220,000 job-seekers and only 5,000 vacancies in the country. Nearly half of Kosovo’s working age population is unemployed. Albania has the lowest unemployment rate - 17% of the working age population. These data, of course, cover only those who are looking for jobs via the so-called employment bureaus. The actual number of unemployed people is considerably higher.

**VIDEO 2**

**Goran Svilanović, RCC Secretary General:**

***INCREASE THE NUMBER OF HIGHLY-QUALIFIED WORKERS IN THE REGION AND CREATE OPPORTUNITIES***

The Ministers of Economy have for two years now, been meeting and discussing various development goals together with us and with our support. At their meeting in Tirana in November 2013, they agreed on 11 goals the region is to achieve by 2020, which they based on the 2010 statistical data. And, to my great satisfaction, one of the goals they agreed on was to raise the number of highly qualified people in the region’s workforce. There were around one million highly qualified workers in 2010 and the goal is to increase their number to 1.3 million by 2020, to have highly qualified young people with real employment opportunities. Now, each country has a lot of work to do if we’re to reach that 1.3 million target.
Why do our children score poorly on international tests of knowledge and is this the only assessment criteria? Who assesses teachers? Is our education system an act of revenge taken by bad students? Why do we lack mechanisms to assess educational quality, what is a PISA test and is it a useful way of assessing our educational quality, is it an instrument for implementing education policy, could it detect weak spots and promote education? How much do countries in the region invest in education, has the nature of learning changed, should we strengthen public education or leave it to market competition?

These are some of the questions discussed by Damir Marjanović, Jovan Mirković, Vilim Ribić, and Dragica Pavlović Babić. Introduction by writer Voja Žanetić.
EXPERT ON ‘WANNABES’

A person can learn a lot of things in today’s world because knowledge is everywhere and without it, without knowledge, a person cannot survive in these modern times. We need to know that we cannot wash clothes without washing them in three dimensions, that we have no hair without volume, nor skin and mouths without a pH factor. That it can all be done in cold water as well, with minimal repayment installments and low interest. The times we live in require that we cannot live a day without differentiating between brand, trend, and friend, just as important as hate and like, Adidas or Nike, Ronaldo or his good-looking girlfriend Irina Shayk. You know nothing, if you are not up to date with where a ‘wannabe’ spent last summer, that she met a nice guy there and if porn photos are available somewhere. Knowledge must also include such information as how often famous buttocks have cellulite, how much horsepower a man has to drive, to not be a sissy. It will take some time to learn not to stutter when we say we have ‘unfollowed’ someone. The purpose of education is to learn things one does not know. Today education must help us forget all the things we learned but neither wanted nor sought. Learning – how do we get less from the surplus; that is the only sensible education today.
VILIM RIBIĆ
Independent Higher Education Union, Zagreb

RIBIĆ HAS A DEGREE IN ECONOMICS AND ALSO STUDIED COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY. HE LEFT TELEVISION JOURNALISM BECAUSE HIS REPORTS WERE CENSORED. HE IS THE FOUNDER AND HEAD OF THE CROATIAN INDEPENDENT HIGHER EDUCATION UNION, A STRONG OPPONENT TO VARIOUS POLITICAL FACTIONS THAT THEY REGARD AS INTERFERING IN HIGHER EDUCATION WHICH TIRELESSLY OPPOSES MINISTERS WHEN THEY SEE THE RIGHTS OF TEACHERS BEING CURTAILED.

BELOW AVERAGE IN CROATIA

In Croatia, about 6,800 students were selected randomly and tested by the PISA method. According to this study, Croatia ranks 35th in the world in reading, and 34th in science, which is more or less below average. Croatia’s place is not disastrous but it is far from what we should aspire to in our country. PISA tests are a system of assessment that does not put emphasis on encyclopedic knowledge but rather on students being able to apply what they learn in school and on managing real problems. That is quite relevant and today it is widely recognised throughout the world.

FINNS THE BEST

Speaking of the PISA test and results, the Finnish education system proved to be by far the best in Europe and they have been in the lead for the past four or five tests, since 2002 when the PISA cycles were carried out every three years. The Finnish system has managed to combine two principles of education; learning how to study and critical thinking / problem solving. They have found the right balance between studying in order to gain knowledge, and preparing for real life.

WITHOUT MOTIVATION AND WILLPOWER

Croatia has between 60,000 and 70,000 teachers and they all have the same salary. So, there are no monetary incentives to work harder and no incentives for career prospects either. The difference between a beginner’s salary and one ready to retire is only 20 to 30%, in Croatia at least. So you see, then it just boils down to routine among people who lost motivation and lost willpower.

PRIVATE EDUCATION AIMS FOR PROFIT

I have strong reservations about private education. Education is a human right, a public good, and the government has a responsibility to ensure that all our students receive a universal view of the world, not a partial one as some private trends might offer, from various economic views, religious views, and so on. So, in my opinion, the right approach is to strengthen the quality of public education. Here in Croatia, public education is actually stronger than private education in some areas, in many places really. The primary drive of every private establishment, if not initially so, is that eventually is aims for profit and income. Profit does not go well together with the public good and human rights.
MIRKOVIĆ IS A PHYSICIST WHO EARNED HIS PHD AT LOMONO-SOV MOSCOW UNIVERSITY, SPECIALIZING IN NANOTECHNOLOGY. HE IS A REGULAR LECTURER AT PODGORICA UNIVERSITY AND CHAIRMAN OF THE PRONA NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION THAT PROMOTES SCIENCE AMONG STUDENTS. HE REGULARLY ENGAGES IN PUBLIC SPEAKING AND DISCOURSE AND HE TAKES PART IN PUBLIC DEBATES ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MONTENEGRIN SOCIETY WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY. HE WAS RECENTLY APPOINTED MONTENEGRO’S NON-RESIDENTIAL AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN.

INSTRUMENTS FOR BETTER EDUCATION

The first PISA testing in Montenegro was done in 2006. It is interesting to note that the results are worse today than they were in 2006, but better than in 2009. However, as far as I know, the government adopted an action plan to fund and revive the whole education sector. However, we must bear in mind that education is in focus not only in our region, but also on a wider European and global scale; I believe that one of the reasons for the unification of Europe was to boost economic competition with regard to Japan, the United States, and others. I believe it should not be regarded as a competition as to which nation is smarter, but as an instrument to improve the system of education.

CONFRONTING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

I will relate some of the experiences we acquired through informal education carried out in our camps, where we tried to motivate kids to study by themselves. In addition to the camps for kids, we have also developed recommendations for about 30 doctoral and master studies across Europe and the world. It is a testament to the quality of work that all of these recommendations were all accepted. The competition was very strong in proposing changes and recommendations, (on average, only 3 out of 800 are selected to be implemented), so that is telling. However we must be aware of something else; that schools, parents, and social influences are not the only factors. We are seeing real tsunamis in higher education. The best universities in the United States have opened their doors, we have moved to online studying where you can have 10,000 students instead of 100 in the amphitheatre. Many classes by the best lecturers are available to all. The universities of Montenegro and of the regionsimply must change and adapt to new technologies and open new channels.

TEACHERS SHOULD BE ENABLED TO DEVELOP

We need more financial resources, schools must have laboratories where interactive teaching will be more effectively used. Teachers should have the opportunity for development, training, specialisation, research and so on, and then some kind of distinction can be made among them and thus possibilities for career development can emerge, such as to become a research teacher, a
teacher-mentor, or something that would reflect the quality of their work.

As for bringing education onto the market, I believe in setting rigorous criteria for standard accreditation. Healthy competition could help education become less costly and offer better quality.

**THE WORLD CHANGES, SO MUST EDUCATION**

We still need to discuss education reform, as education is a living organism and must always change. There is no single solution that you define only once, and can then brag about an education system that is traditional, well-grounded, and does not change. The world around us changes and education must respond to the challenge. For educational systems such as ours, in which we have little information on how to assess the quality of education, the results from the PISA tests are the most valuable standard for our system because they provide commentary and criticism on the course we have taken, whether we are headed in the right direction, as we have no other sign to give us direction.

**THE GREY ECONOMY IN EDUCATION**

Real investment in education development has been reduced to a few percent and an important question is, what is the money spent on? If we have so little of it for development, where is it being invested? Another important point is the ‘grey’ economy in education. Where is the money that is being put into education by parents paying for private tuition? It is so widespread, you have random investments in education yet you cannot even estimate how much this amounts to, and yet it is no pittance, but you cannot monitor its quality.

**SCHOOLS ARE NO LONGER TEMPLES OF LEARNING**

The nature of learning has changed, but not our awareness of it. The widespread belief is that schools are a temple of learning. Google is a temple of learning, schools are increasingly less so. You can Google any kind of information you want in a few seconds. You no longer expect schools to deliver all sorts of facts packed in textbooks and teachers’ notes, but rather, we expect schools to assist students in learning how to figure out what to do with all these facts and knowledge. But, how do you trust them? What method is behind those facts, how do you integrate them when Google offers thousands of websites, how do you choose? How do you know which source is the right one for you? How do you select facts based on their importance? That is the kind of knowledge that schools should provide today.
TRAPPED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

We do not train people to become teachers. People get an education for a certain profession and then for one reason or another, mostly due to an unfortunate turn in circumstance, they become trapped in the education system. They study to become physicists or chemists, not to become teachers of physics or chemistry. So, that needs to be changed; we need to train people from the start for the teaching profession instead of training them for something that has nothing to do with teaching.

DAMIR MARJANOVIĆ
PhD, university lecturer, Sarajevo

MARJANOVIĆ IS A DISTINGUISHED EXPERT IN GENETICS, A LECTURER, A COURT EXPERT FOR FORENSIC MEDICINE AND A SCIENTIFIC ADVISER. HE IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY PARTY AND IT WAS HIS SUCCESSFUL CAREER WHICH LED TO HIS RECOMMENDATION FOR THE POSITION OF MINISTER OF EDUCATION IN THE SARAJEVO CANTONAL GOVERNMENT, A POST FROM WHICH HE LATER RESIGNED, CITING HIS REGRET FOR “FAILING TO FULFILL HIS EXPECTATIONS.”

INVESTING IN EDUCATION, NOT ALLOCATING FOR EDUCATION

The important thing is for people to understand that education is the key to success in any society. Every society that aspires to make progress must invest in education continuously. And it is important to know that we make investments in education, not allocations. However much you invest, it can always be more. Many countries that had economic crises and needed to make budget cuts never made cuts in education and science. It is not that investments should be higher, they must be higher.

GENERATIONS OF PARROTS

Education is a rather unpopular narrative, especially unpopular politically because the results of reform cannot be delivered in one term. So many politicians shy away from real education policy and opt for short-term intervention. Unfortunately, the question, ‘what do we really expect from a boy or girl once they finish elementary school?’ has rarely been posed in the strategies that we have seen to date. We need to specify what we expect. Curriculum plans and programmes are created based on the issues around this question and a good textbook policy is created on the basis of modern plans and programmes. Today, in this region, we are producing a generation of ‘parrots’ where a teacher is very happy when the student reproduces his words, his facts, both at elementary and secondary school, and at university.

EDUCATION IS THE BASIS OF EVERY NATION

In order for a country to develop and progress, the first thing you must change is education, and in order for this to change, the concept of thinking must be altered. So, the concept of thinking says plainly: If you want to put a country in motion you must change the basis on which it stands. The basis of every nation is a young or middle-aged, educated, man who knows what he knows and
knows how to make use of what he knows. So, the first step is to change education, the second is investment in education.

**THERE IS A LOT MISSING**

Many things are missing from what is called ‘continuous education’ for teachers, which the government should ensure. Many things are missing from what is called ‘motivating teachers’ and things that are called ‘financial resources’ for conducting class. In such circumstances, regardless of who the teacher is, it is hard to do what you envisioned and set out to do.

**ALUMNI OF THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS**

**ARMIN ŠEPIĆ, Sarajevo** - Our system of education requires learning things by heart. A typical question is ‘How many cattle does Argentina have?’ because the question is so important for our future education, but not ‘Why are cattle raised in Argentina?’

**BILJANA VOLČESKA, Skopje** - The teachers most dear to me are those that are inspiring and creative, those who were inventive in passing on knowledge. The most important thing for a student acquiring new skills and knowledge is to develop his or her potential and talent. This can only be done by a teacher that recognises talent and inspires the student.

**NATAŠA TADIĆ, Zagreb** - Both teachers and parents should play a crucial role in education, but of the two educational arenas (home and school) I would suggest that we give priority to school because research has shown that socio-economic background, the education of parents and their attitude toward the importance of learning, influences the child’s learning, whereas schools should
give everyone an equal opportunity regardless of socio-economic background. I believe both parents and schools should teach children to develop critical thinking toward information received from informal sources, such as social situations, the family, the media, Internet, books, etc. as well as from teaching materials. In addition, both parents and teachers should encourage students to learn how to think for themselves and to work with other students as a team.

MARINA RADULOVIĆ, Belgrade - Are teachers properly rewarded for their work? Money is an incentive, but the whole system of education and learning is important for teachers, I mean the implementation of modern technologies in education.

VIDEO 1

Slovenian Students Best in Central Europe

The PISA survey in 2012 conducted in countries in the vicinity ranked Slovenia 12th, and Slovenian students were the best in Central Europe (according to this survey). Croatia was 26th and Croatian students were the best in Southeastern Europe. Montenegro was behind Serbia, ranking 48th with 412 points. Students from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia did not take part of the survey.

VIDEO 2

Serbia Has Best Education

The international recommendation for countries in the region to allocate about 6% of their gross domestic product on education is not observed. Slovenia allocates 5.7%, Croatia 3%, Serbia 4.5%, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, 3.8%. According to the UNDP, Serbia has the best education in elementary and secondary schools in the region, which is above average for countries in transition. Croatia is next, then Bosnia and Herzegovina but it does not meet the average of transition states. Following these, are Macedonia, Montenegro and then Albania where education in secondary schools was found to be poor, according to the UNDP survey.

VIDEO 3

Functional Education Key ISSUE

The aim of education systems in Southeastern Europe is functional education, according to an analysis by the World Bank. Information by the World Bank shows that in Serbia, 33% of 15-year-olds are functionally illiterate which means that they are not capable of finding information in an ordinary text or able to connect information from the text to everyday experience. In Montenegro 50% of 15-year-olds are functionally illiterate and in Albania, this figure is 57%. Every fifth 15-year-old in Europe has a problem with reading and writing on the level required for employment. In EU countries, the percentage of 15-year-olds who are not functionally literate is not higher than 24 percent, according to the analysis by the World Bank.

VIDEO 4

Half the European Average

In the countries in the region, a workforce of nearly 500,000 is engaged in education. In Croatia, 106,000 people work in the education sector, in Serbia nearly 140,000 people work in schools and universities, in Slovenia, the figure is 63,900, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 62,250, in Macedonia, 43,110, and in Montenegro, 13,520. Nevertheless, the number of those employed in the education sector in relation to the population figure is nearly half that of the European average in almost all countries in the region.
Chapter 8

CARE OF THE ELDERLY

Episode 8 of Vicinities discussed senior citizens, their lifestyle and why they more frequently care for younger generations in our region, rather than vice versa. Generally they are misunderstood, often neglected, quite lonely, and at an age when their knowledge is at its peak, hardly anyone wants to listen to what they have to say. Their biggest fear is to become dependent.

The status of the elderly was discussed by Lukša Lucianović, Milena Zupančič, Nadežda Satarić and Dragi Argirovski. Introduction by writer and columnist Balša Brković.
A SERIOUS TEST FOR ANY COMMUNITY

The old and wise: Confucius said that old age was the high price we paid for growing up. That could be so. Ancient sages should be believed but beyond the biological givens there are many phenomena concerning old age that are be interesting. Why am I saying this? The attitude towards elders is the only real and serious test for a community and society, about empathy in a given society. I believe that it is simply a rule that higher levels of empathy means a better society. On the other hand, it is strikingly conspicuous that we are living in a very visual culture and living in a visual culture leads to a kind of totalitarianism. In what way? A totalitarianism of youth, and though it might sound paradoxical, it is not. It means that whoever does not fulfill the main condition is disqualified. Whether youth is real or imaginary, it exists in a way, a weary obsession with youth that is typical of society today and a consequence of the logic of a visual culture. In a way, the space for empathy gets smaller and smaller. Victor Hugo said something I found very interesting. He said that one became old only after one stopped learning, whether at 20 or 80. I find myself agreeing with this and the best possible definition of old age as such, but it would be more interesting to arrive at a definition that concerned a community’s attitude toward the population.
LUKŠA LUCIANOVIĆ
Chair of the Pensioners Association, Dubrovnik

LUCIANOVIC ISTHE CHAIR OF THE PENSIONERS UNION THAT HAS 800 MEMBERS. HE WAS A HOTELIER FOR A LONG TIME, A TOURISM RESEARCHER IN DUBROVNIK, AND A RETIRED LECTURER AT DUBROVNIK UNIVERSITY. HE EDITS A TOURIST PORTAL AND WROTE THE BOOK ‘HISTORY OF THE HOTELIER BUSINESS IN DUBROVNIK.’

RETIREMENT PREPARATIONS
Old age should be divided into two. It is hard to say from which year to which, though. But let us say that there are first and second parts; firstly that of being a retired person, and secondly that of being elderly. Speaking of the first part, the comparatively young pensioner, I believe that he is largely to blameno being independent, useful and active in early retirement. A man should prepare for retirement at least five years prior to retiring and plan for the future. And yet 95% do not do so, and when they retire they have no idea what to do. When the comparatively normal retirement period is over and real old age sets in and sickness comes, then perhaps, or certainly, that is when society should become much more involved.

COSTS NOTHING, MEANS A LOT
I was a hotel manager for 20 years. We would host parties whenever one of our employees retired, and they were quite grand. We would prepare gifts, bid farewell, and whenever we had celebrations we would invite our pensioners as well. It cost us nothing and yet it meant a lot to them. I was the manager of the Excelsior Hotel that celebrated its centennial last year. 100 years, imagine that, and yet they did not invite their 50 pensioners, myself included, for a cup of tea and biscuits! To tell us, “thank you for your service.” So think, you young people, because you could be guests in this show in 50 years.

AID DEPENDS ON WHO IS IN GOVERNMENT
In Dubrovnik where I live, for instance, the city pays an additional 200 Kuna per month for those with minimal pensions. Those who have low pensions receive one-off payments for Christmas, Easter, and so on, and free transportation is provided as well. The city also reimburses part of the travel expenses for trips to Zagreb, and to those that go by car it reimburses 50%. However, this is temporary; it depends on the government, on which party is in power so it could all be cancelled tomorrow. Therefore it is not the best solution, but it is certainly of help to pensioners for the moment. Though I believe pensioners are not satisfied anywhere.

MORE MONEY, LOWER DISSATISFACTION
I help my family as much as I can, it is all a matter of ability. However, speaking of Croatia, there is a big difference between people who live on the coast and those inland, solely because of tourism. Everyone on the coast either rents apartments, sells wine or some such product, and they are all better off than people in other places in Croatia. So it follows that if there is more money, more financial resources, then the family is happier and pensioners are happier. As far as I can tell, judging from pensioners in our association, everyone is happy. We are always travelling, going places, and it is a pleasure to work with them.
I am absolutely in favour of people living together, not only in the family but in the theatre as well, because I come from the theatre. Because one generation cannot be interesting on its own. Obviously the youth trend is more powerful than ever before, which is okay. Youth must be in the foreground, youth must have new ideas, be self-confident, but it is necessary to hear some wisdom occasionally. I am doing a play called ‘Macbeth After Shakespeare.’ I am the only woman, Lady Macbeth, and Macbeth is 30 years my junior. And everyone else is more than 30 years younger.

NOT ENOUGH TIME FOR EVERYTHING I WANT TO DO
Throughout my life I’ve always felt that I did not have enough time to do the things I was interested in. There are still so many books to read. Everyone told me that once you retire you have no more time, and it is true. I have no time. I have always loved travelling. Though I have travelled extensively, there are still places I wish to see. And things are not as I had imagined they would be because I had thought then, that when I will have retired and have more time, I should be travelling all the time. I will not complain about low pensions and my pension is not in the lowest category, but it is still too small for these things that I would like.

PENSIONERS HAVE REPRESENTATION IN ASSEMBLY
As far as pensioners’ associations are concerned, I noticed when I visited some friends in one, that there was only one generation present; perhaps this is only a problem for me, and perhaps it is obvious that an association of pensioners has only elderly people in it. The club might be new and elegant, it might have gardens and what not, but I find it terrible that there is only one generation there. If it could somehow be arranged to have
pensioners as well as some youth in these associations, that they meet at least once a day, that would be hugely beneficial to both groups. The fact that we Slovenes rank 20th in the world for society’s care of the elderly is a natural consequence of our having a pensioners’ party in the assembly for years. The party has been in the assembly for three or four terms. Why? Because we have many pensioners.

NADEŽDA SATARIĆ
‘AMITY – Power of Friendship’ non-governmental organisation, Belgrade

SATAŘIĆWORKED IN SOCIAL WELFARE FORMORE THAN 33 YEARS AND SINCE 1999 SHE HAS PUT HER EXPERIENCE TO USE, WORKING WITH THE MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION CALLED ‘AMITY’ WHICH SHE CO-FOUNDED. SHE HAS HELPED IMPROVE THE STATUS OF THE AGED AND POOR THROUGH VARIOUS PROJECTS WITH HER TEAM, AND HELPED MAKE SOCIETY MORE OPEN TO HELP THE NEEDY.

AGE IMPORTANT FOR STATISTICS
Today it is believed that elders are people who are over 65. Of course, the definition of ‘elder’ or ‘old’ has been stretched. Only 10 or 20 years ago, the retirement age for women in the former Yugoslavia was 55, for instance. For men it was 60, but then the retirement age was extended and today we are moving toward equal retirement ages for both men and women, because life expectancy is longer and thus, this affects how we define these limits and definitions. It is important for statistics. But on an individual level, a person is as old as he or she feels.

TOGETHER BY FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCE
Today, the average pension in Serbia is 57% of the median salary. This means that the average pension is 200 Euros and the median salary is 400 Euros. Both are inadequate. Even with an average pension of only 200 Euros, many pensioners help their families. And often they live together, for financial and other reasons. In Serbia more than 30% of pensioners help younger generations. They help their children who are jobless and grandchildren by paying for school. This is the case not only financially, but in terms of other less tangible contributions as well. We neither measure them nor record them. That when their children are at work, the grandparents look after the grandchildren, they cook food or they go to their cottages in the country and prepare food there, or help in other ways. And that is good.

CENTRES FOR PENSIONERS LACKING
We have had day centres for senior citizens since the early 1970s, but not as many as we need. In Serbia only 1% of the population over 65 is covered and able to use these day centres. In Serbia we need centres to take care of people who suffer from dementia. The percentage of elderly people with dementia is between 6 and 10%. So, for many families, the only option is to place them in institutions and special homes for pensioners which often have inadequate facilities and capacities as well. We only have the capacity to house 0.7% of the people with dementia in state-run
homes. As far as homes are concerned, some of them are in buildings that were previously hostels, others are modern houses, both technically and architecturally. But the amenities, the services, the care and everything else an elderly needs to live with dignity, are very often lacking. Very, very few of these homes meet these standards. It is a big business.

**ENCOURAGE INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY**

I do not support the current opinion that 65 years is the age limit for retirement. I am not in favour of age limits but of work ability. I promote the view that a person should work as long as possible and that working conditions be adapted to senior citizens. Other countries in Europe do it. Elders are not to blame for younger generations being out of work. We often hear the stereotype that old people work and take up jobs that young people should get. We should create working conditions and possibilities so that both groups can work and create; to build a society for all generations and to encourage intergenerational solidarity. It should be said that in Serbia pensioners are politically organised in the Party of United Pensioners of Serbia (PUPS), which was founded six years ago and is currently in power. I am in favour of political organisation in addition to pensioner associations, in every way. Who else will work in the best interests of senior citizens in the assembly if not pensioners themselves?

**DRAGI AGIROVSKI**

Journalist and publicist, Skopje


**TRANSITION TOOK AWAY MANY PRIVILEGES**

Speaking of the Balkans, though it is probably the same elsewhere, transition was a collapse for pensioners. It was for others as well, but benefits once enjoyed by pensioners were been cancelled. For instance, they had free hospital care and that has been canceled in Macedonia. Pension clubs have been taken from them; they had summer resorts and that too, was taken. The Ka 15 discount they enjoyed has long since been canceled. So the fight of those of us who are active today in this area should be to restore the old rights that pensioners enjoyed and to promote them. Then all will be well.

**GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN**

The happiest children in Macedonia are those that live with their grandparents and they are the most well-behaved. What is the best college? The well-bred at home. We are going back to it these days and it used to be a tradition. People were forced
back to it through destitution, but these days, even when they have money, many choose to still remain together.

**BETTER THAN BEFORE**

In recent years the status of pensioners has changed considerably, and for the better. In 2006 the average pension was 100 Euros, today it is 202 Euros. That is much better than in Serbia because the cost of living is lower. And compared with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Bulgaria – this is a far better pension. Recently, senior citizens received some new benefits. For instance, free bus transportation, which they did not have before, and train tickets for one weekend free of charge was recently introduced as well. It helps improve the standard of living for pensioners.

**ALLIANCE OF PENSIONERS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN POLITICAL PARTIES**

The question of organisation is important as well. In Macedonia, we are moving toward an alliance of pensioners because these are real organisations, social organisations, associations of citizens, because they are the best at fighting for one’s rights. This model of organisation has proved to be better and more effective than in Serbia where they have a pensioners’ party. Being in power is no guarantee that pensioners will be looked after. They need more than that.

**ALUMNI OF THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS**

**ARMIN ŠEPIĆ, Sarajevo** - Society in general, needs to care for senior citizens more. Young people believe that only the state’s social institutions need to care for elders. I believe that a value of our mindset is that young people still care for elders and that family and family cohesion is very important.

**BILJANA VOLČESKA, Skopje** - I help older people when they stand in the street and hope for some money so that they can have the minimum they need to survive, so there is no point in discussing active fulfillment in the lives of old people before this minimum is satisfied in a dignified way.

**NATAŠA TADIĆ, Zagreb** - I believe old people need financial and well as emotional help. Financial assistance is necessary for a dignified old age. I have often noticed in Croatia that due to small pensions, old people in Croatia are forced to rummage through garbage bins to collect bottles, in order to supplement to their income, which is not a dignified old age.
VIDEO 1

Facts Refute Stereotypes
The most frequent stereotypes about elders are that they are ill and that their time has past. They are helpless, they become senile, and mentally ill. Older women are not as hardworking as younger women. Older people do not deserve healthcare. But the facts speak otherwise, which is that 85% of people over 65 are healthy enough to perform regular everyday activities. Fewer household injuries were reported among people aged 65 plus than those under 65. Only 3% of elders above 65 are committed to mental institutions.

VIDEO 2

Increasing Number of Senior Citizens
In Europe more than 60 million people are over 60. Estimates are that life expectancy in the EU will increase by 8.5 years for men and 6.9 years for women over the coming decades. The average life expectancy in the EU was 76 for men and 82.1 for women in 2008. Estimates say that in 50 years, average life expectancy for men will be 84.5 and 89 for women. In 2008 there were 22 million people in the EU older than 80. In 50 years the number is expected to triple.

VIDEO 3

The Help Age International organisation conducted a survey in 91 countries on how the older population was cared for and protected. In our region, Slovenia fared the best, ranking 20th in the world. Albania was 39th, Croatia 41st, Serbia 64th, Montenegro 83rd. States are ranked by income security, health care, gross domestic product per capita, environment, and education, as well as social surroundings - everything that affects the status of old people. According to the survey, old people have the best living standards in Norway, Sweden, and Germany. Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nigeria are at the bottom of the list.
The wars in the 1990s severed the ties between us and between ourselves and the rest of the world. The region was set back decades – its economy and infrastructure, then socially, culturally, and civilisation-wise. Hundreds of thousands of people died or were wounded. We do not know who started the war, who committed the atrocities, who won and who lost. How do we renew confidence, since there cannot be reconciliation without it? Is the solution for our space, a common EU family with its standards, are new generations more aware or more inflamed, why is talk scarce about the aftermath of the war, though we all suffer from it?

These are some of the questions discussed by our guests Đurđa Adlešić, Zdravko Grebo, Žarko Rakčević and Zoran Ilić. Introduction by Enver Kazaz.
WAR DESOLATES THE FUTURE

Ideologues, politicians, a random general and historian in their service are the only people who concern themselves with the results of the war and sum them up. No one discusses the aftermath, yet all of us suffer from it. The results of the war are used to conceal the aftermath. For instance, a result of the war is a change in state borders and an aftermath is that you now have border control at the border crossings. An aftermath is that you must have an identification paper and assume a place with others, with foreigners. But the worst borders are those in the mind as they remain for a long time; they are immeasurable and with some people they are so big, that the Himalayas would fit in them. For instance, the borders between Banja Luka and Sarajevo are so big that the two cities are figuratively farther apart than Sarajevo and New York or Mostar. The result of the war is social privatisation. We had common ownership of the state and society and then we got controversial businessmen and a new Glembay family, a new baroness Kasteli from Krleza’s drama. The aftermath is that we are all poor, and some are hungry. The result of the war is military conquest, the aftermath is that we have got national criminals as heroes and countless invalid veterans. Veterans are a result of the war, casualties are an aftermath. We are still gathering their bones. A result of the war is emotional and psychological desolation. The aftermath is that we have become aggressive communities who regard one another as demons. The result of the war is that we have created new states. The aftermath is that the past is more important than the present and future. War is a large-scale ideological, cultural, and social event, said one philosopher, but no one talks about the desolation of the future it creates. One war creates another. One war conceals the reasons for the next one. Alas, had we discussed the cause for the war, perhaps we would have avoided the consequences. The numbers are horrific but let us not get into that. We have centuries of experience, it is impressed in our language with the proverb that “war is a foe to some and a friend to others.” Writer Laza Lazarevic described it a long time ago in his short story ‘People Will Gild It.’ The story is about an invalid veteran forced to beg in front of a church. But people no longer have gold for gilding. We know where it is – tycoons have got it, and the military and political elites that brought on the war. The consequences are immeasurable.
I find it very hard to single out the most devastating aftermath of the 1990s. The war wrought extensive material havoc, it left bills that will have to be paid, it disrupted relationships, and produced controversial businessmen - some people fighting in the war while others were growing rich. So, each of us would be right, whatever was singled out, but I will say that the war is over after all, although we cannot say that it is over in our minds. It is time to move on to the future. Let us see what we can do so that younger generations have a future together but this time in the EU. Apparently we always need someone to set the standards, when we do it, we obviously have problems.

FATED TO COOPERATION

I agree that until we clear up some historical facts we will hardly be able to take a real and proper step ahead. But perhaps at this stage we need to wait for a calm, for time to pass and new generations to come that will be able to assess what happened. To us in Croatia it seems clear. When I listen to you, it seems clear to you as well. And the fact is, Serbian pop singer Bajaga is giving a concert in Zagreb today, the second or third I think it is, and I too, attended one of these concerts. So, the bridges of culture are being rebuilt and they will be followed by bridges in economy. Actually we all live from the economy, so the best policy, both social and pragmatic, is the policy of living standards. We are a small market, the lot of us. So we are fated to economic cooperation.

HANDOUTS TO KEEP THE POLITICAL PEACE

Every government claims it is doing the most it can for its victims of war, yet those who receive the aid complain that it is too small. The most dangerous practice that is going on in Croatia as well as other places in the region, and I keep abreast with developments because of the similarity in these relations, is that political peace is always being bought with handouts. Prior to elections, the rights of certain groups of people are prioritised and wooed in order to win their votes. There is a huge amount of pressure on governments to address the needs of refugees and displaced persons, and there have been considerable budget allocations in all of the countries for these populations. However, while care has been taken to not offend them, and despite the budgeted funds, governments have been slow to actually address the problem, they are still slow. Now that we have dialogue, when we have commissions between countries, they should be made to finish that task and meet more often.

VISIBLE PRESENCE OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

In Croatia, we believe that the Serb minority is well-represented in government; they have their
deputies in the assembly and their seats are secure, they had a deputy prime minister in the previous government when I was part of it, fellow minister Uzelac. Then, there is one set of statistics that is said to be observed and a rule that is being upheld, though opinions vary, and those are the quotas of minority representatives in certain government institutions. We are convinced that it is not so in Serbia. So that is an area that needs to be reformed.

WE NEED TO DEFINE THE VICTIMS OF WAR

I would not know how to define the victims of war in Serbia, with the exception of men who went off and got killed, with the exception of the NATO bombing if you want to include that. Does Serbia care about the wave of refugees it caused in Krajina? I do not know. And we did not include the narrative about Kosovo. What about Kosovo, there was a war there as well. How are we to define the victims of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina when we had three parties that fought one another. Bosnia and Herzegovina does not exist as a state, that is my personal opinion. The country is a virtual one, it cannot look after the victims of war, because it does not know who the victims are and who the perpetrators are. It is a hard question.

NEW GENERATIONS MORE INFLAMED

I got through the war in the most direct way but I am not so sure about reports of new generations being the guarantors of happier circumstances, more organised and civilised, in our countries. Why am I doubtful and why should new questions be posed? Because they have become more inflamed. And the question is, why? The school
system, media, and so on - who is turning these people into fighters of nationalism? Today Marin Cilic celebrates his victory at US Open, good for him, and he is at Medjugorje and then he invites Tompson. Now what kind of signal is that and what does it mean? What kind of reconciliation are you talking about and what for? Okay, so I will invite Wahhabis to sing Sufi songs...

**GOAL OF WAR WAS ETHNIC CLEANSING**

The countries were ethnically cleansed as much as it was possible and that was the goal of the war. I cannot say whether people in other places moved out as they did in the former Yugoslavia so as to leave ethnically clean territories, and no-one being held responsible for it. And the governments that committed atrocities contributed to Croatia being purged of Serbs, that Serb Republic is purged of Croats and Bosniaks, and the Federation and Sarajevo, they are purged of Serbs as well as Croats. So apparently that was the goal of the war. And when you talk about aftermath, how is the problem to be addressed? How do we return, say, Serbs, to Sarajevo? Let us all join Europe, even those that publicly hate Europe. They have got a whip therewith a note on a wall that says how to behave, and that is that. There is no other solution, not for my generation.

**NO SOLUTION FOR THE AFTERMATH OF WAR**

The government cannot care about everything because it never faced the perpetrator nor the victim. The real victims as far as I am concerned are 100,000 or 140,000 people, a mother weeping to find a rib of a missing person, women raped, concentration camps. The government does not care about these because it must not, such is the political constellation that you must not take care of victims of a different ethnic group. Aid is more than welcome, of course. In these cases Bosnia and Herzegovina is a wobbly tripod, but I call attention to the imperial, the never ending imperial claims of Croatia and Serbia.

**ŽARKO RAKČEVIĆ**

‘Forum 2010’, Podgorica


**SHARP DECLINE IN CIVILISATION DECLINE**

Hundreds of thousands of people are simply gone. Many are in unknown and unmarked graves, no one knows where their bones are, and many were left without homes. This is the biggest aftermath, in my opinion. A terrible drop in population and thus civilisation for all these new states, a big relapse for us all, the fact that we plunged deeply backwards into the situation of the previous quarter of a century compared to the position that we had, our international reputation,
economic parameters, and quality of life in the former Yugoslavia. Almost all, and even without the ‘almost,’ the newly created states in the former Yugoslavia suffered a harsh fall in our levels of civilisation.

In order to move on we must pull down the big walls within us. Another important fact is that the newly created states have EU and European values as a landmark.

DE-NAZIFICATION NOT CARRIED OUT

Montenegro did not take part in the war – ‘did not’ in quotation marks - that is the official truth of the Montenegrin Government, which has had the same political elite in power throughout, with some minor changes. There were elements of fascism in a large part of the political elite in our wars. De-nazification was not carried out and it is unlikely ever to be, the way matters are today. So, it was said figuratively that the generals of ethnic cleansing or the instigators of ethnic cleansing were heroes in their fortresses, newly built in the former Yugoslavia. If we aspire to adopt European values, we have a parallel and an example, Germany went through de-nazification, so there is a difference.

WE MUST TURN TO PRODUCTION

Adenauer and De Gaulle took a historic step when they created a community for coal and steel 13 years after the Second World War, recognising the economic interests behind it. If they were able to recognise it 13 years after the war, the leaders of Germany and France, countries that had hundreds of thousands of casualties before that, I believe that the political elites today have not taken an honest step in that direction, working only to please those watching from Brussels and Washington.

There is no progress without economic progress. We must start cooperation between one another first, using the same language, to reconnect with our former acquaintances, and start exporting without customs. For us in Montenegro, and for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU is at our borders with Croatia’s accession. Unless these countries of the former Yugoslavia join the EU, unless the rules and procedures we talked about are imposed, and a single economic system built, unless we learn to swim in the market, we can hardly hope for renewal. Therefore, we must turn to production.

THE ONLY REGIONAL TELEVISION PROGRAMME

Montenegro managed to preserve itself despite some very ugly things, and perhaps the only state in the area of our wars, also managed to preserve its multi-ethnic quality, not to allow large-scale ethnic cleansing in Montenegro. It is important to talk. I think this is the only television programme in the region of this kind, with the exception of entertainment shows, which are broadcast in many countries of the region, but are nonetheless, also connected to a national space.

So, we really need dialogue in order to understand the person on the other side of the wall. We understand Brussels from our fortresses and we watch out for what Washington has to say, which is justified because those are power centres. But we no longer talk directly to the people who are closest to us. I encourage that form of communication.
NO RECONCILIATION WITHOUT CONFIDENCE
Justice will not be served until the wounds heal. Confidence is the basis for reconciliation, because we cannot reconcile until we renew trust. Confidence can be established at different levels and it is part of a model that leads toward reconciliation. Without confidence there is no reconciliation. One more thing; it has become a fashion among politicians to apologise. Thus Serbian politicians apologised repeatedly and there was no resonation, except for internal political circumstances in the country. Apologies can be received and accepted only when emotions are calm. While emotions are strong - and they are still strong and they are being heated up all the time - apologies are accepted by declaration but there is no trust.

VICTIMS OF WAR A BURDEN ON THE STATE
Victims of war are not a popular topic for any government to address. They are a marginal population and not worth the effort. But they exist and we must not stick our heads in the sand. After the war in Vietnam, there were hospitals in the United States that worked with veterans. The Mental Health Institute was opened in Belgrade in the 1960s to deal specifically with victims of war 15 or 20 years after the war. We set up a few centres that provided psychiatric, psychological, and social aid to refugees and victims of war, but they have all since been closed. The war is over, but the war is in our heads, it is inside families, it is in the economy - an economy exhausted by international sanctions that it cannot just ignore and victims whose needs a depleted economy cannot meet.

LET US STOP ACCUSING ONE ANOTHER
I do not believe that there is a willingness in Croatia for the refugees to return. Because it is a burden for the Croatian Government and it virtually annuls the effects and results of the war. So, those people are never likely to return. There is a commission that has been working on it for years and nothing is happening, those people have not returned. So, the commissions are just there for the sake of formality, set up by someone outside. Let us stop accusing one another, asking who started the war, and begin to address the aftermath, see what we can do about it and see in which direction we are headed. If we have a common course, the EU that was mentioned previously, then let us help one another.

COMMON ASSOCIATIONS OF VICTIMS
There is an association of former concentration camp prisoners of Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia. Those are real victims and it does not matter who tortured them. They were brought together by their common misery. They are slaves of the
past and have no future, but the association heals them. The situation is similar with refugees. If they had some such association, an international body with representatives of all refugees from Croatia, Bosnia, etc. People with a common plight come together. Let us do the same on a cultural level.

**DEJAN BURSAĆ, Belgrade** - I believe that the biggest consequence of the wars from the 1990s is the devastation of human capital, because factories, roads, and bridges can be built, realistically or in people’s minds, but the people who are gone and those who left on account of the war and its consequences, will never come back.

**DARKO SOLDAT, Sarajevo** - The best way to overcome the situation behind us and turn toward the situation we have in front of us, is to consider the modalities for associating. If associating is in the form of European integration or joining a current military alliance or insisting on regional relations, I see no reason why we should not try that method to overcome the current situation.

**TARA TEPAVAC, Belgrade** - The aftermath of the war in 1990s is immeasurable in the region, hundreds of thousands of people killed and gone missing, societies whose system of values has been destroyed, societies with a large number of people who are mentally ill as a consequence, and societies that are stigmatised. That is what we face today, 20 years later and therefore it is very important that countries, their societies, actively participate in addressing the consequences and problems, not separately with independent strategies, but through mutual dialogue.
LEARNING DEMOCRACY

Although democracy is important for establishing order, many politicians use it as an excuse for anarchy and chaos. Are we on the right path, how much effort do we put into democracy and in what way? Why have countries in the region failed the key test in democracy, how can a government be disciplined not to exercise excessive power and is the process of acceding to the EU one of the remedies that will definitely work, or is it a system for learning democracy? Why are civilsociety and the media not fuel for democracy but an extended arm of the government?

These are some of the questions discussed by our guests: Tvrtko Jakovina, Baša Brković, Enver Kazaz and Voja Žanetić. Introduction by writer Renato Baretić.
BEST UTOPIA THE WORLD INVENTED

We agreed that we would discuss learning democracy. As in every school, in the school of democracy there are two kinds of students. The good ones and those that do poorly in most subjects, those requiring knowledge, effort, and discipline. In regular schools, students from the latter category have to take the same course again; in the school of democracy, they must learn the same thing all over again. In the countries in the region, it is precisely those in the latter category that have set the criteria for promotion, through their effort and know-how. Little by little, they have taken over the ‘school’ and then they started running it and throwing out most of the good ‘students,’ banning entry to some of them. They threw ‘teachers’ out as well, the ones that still had the energy to do something, leaving only the resigned, who adjust to a curricula based on the values of the bad ‘students.’ I wish the narrative could progress in at least one sector, like, what do we do about the teacher’s assembly room? Who will teach? Who can teach us all democracy?
POOR EDUCATORS OF DEMOCRACY

We learn democracy from politicians, educators, the media and so on. However, I am not so sure that we have politicians that are good enough, nor religious communities that are good enough, nor educators who know how to do so, but that does not mean that we should steer clear of democracy and not build democracy.

Croatia had a multi-party system in the 19th century. It is a different matter that only between 2.2% and 13% of citizens were eligible to vote before the beginning of World War One. So, there was contact with some forms of democracy in other regimes when the monarchy was in power and during Tito’s era when women acquired the right to vote, even though voting was a formality in some elements. Take a look at other societies, for instance Spain and Portugal, they were not perfect democracies themselves. Think also about Germany. How long did Germany have democracy for in the 20th century?

ACCESSION TO THE EU IS BENEFICIAL

Some countries, comparatively new countries but not those that joined the EU about 10 years before Croatia, had the same path in the past so it would seem that the process of learning and acceding to the EU is actually beneficial. It might not be fair, but privately, I sometimes wish that it would be good if the process could have lasted longer than people wanted. I was very angry that Croatia’s accession took so long, but perhaps the process of learning and acceding was beneficial for society in some respects, and yet the point of accession did not make us happier in every aspect, though personally, I am satisfied with it.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

If you take a look at the number of diverse civic associations that exist in Croatia, you would think we were doing very well in terms of a flourishing civil society. But over time many of the associations hardened and became rigid and self-serving. As far as the media are concerned, with the abundance of private and public studies in journalism in all the former Yugoslavia, you would think the situation should be better than ever, though I believe it is far worse. It makes us, it makes me think whether we understand what democracy means after all, and whether we ever make much progress after finishing our formal education. Graduating....

CRITIQUE IS TOO SOFT

I have no fears when I write and what I write about, even though I know it could sometimes provoke uncomfortable reactions and it perhaps it is not very pleasant to read vilification against oneself, but I believe it to be important. It is important for everyone to do their best at whatever they
do. So, in my line of work, that is to be as widely published as possible and to be published internationally, and to be as visible as possible. That makes for a healthier society, I think.

We were educated in a faulty way for too long, and we faultily educated those who educate, so our critique is too soft, there is little sharp critical opinion and hardly any motivation to educate youth in that manner, unfortunately. Perhaps we have hopes of creating oases and that in time these oases will become greener and bigger, but the process will be a long one.

**BALŠA BRKOVIĆ**

Writer and columnist of Vijesti, Podgorica

A WRITER AND COLUMNIST IN THE MONTENEGRIN VIJESTI DAILY, A HARSH CRITIC OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS, A COMMITTED ANARCHIST. HE HAS WRITTEN FIVE BOOKS OF POETRY AND TWO NOVELS. HE PUBLISHES ESSAYS, WRITES DRAMA REVIEWS, ARTICLES ON HISTORY AND THEORIES ON ANARCHISM.

**A PARODY OF DEMOCRACY**

Obviously we know that democracy is one of the most significant concepts created in history or the political history of mankind, but I find it very interesting, interesting for these parts, to see a great idea turned into a parody. In the region of the former Yugoslavia, democracy is a parody rather than a true political concept, the kind we all hope for. There is a problem with democracy from its outset, which is that democracy developed as a concept during slavery, quite an interesting gener-

**CRUCIAL TEST IN DEMOCRACY YET TO BE PASSED IN MONTENEGRO**

Take Montenegro, for instance. It has had a multi-party system of democracy since 1991, but a change of government has yet to take place. So what kind of government are we talking about when the essential experience of democracy has not been experienced? We have a state in which the same people have been in power for 23 years. The crucial test in democracy has yet to be passed. We have elections organised by the ruling parties, along with manipulation of the media, you know it all, you remember it from some previous times. This is an element that suggests a deficiency in democracy in these parts.

**CHURCH, AN ENEMY OF DEMOCRACY**

I believe that the established church is an arch enemy of democracy in these parts, of true democracy. The position and role of the church, in Europe is a far more balanced approach and I believe, I hope, that the path towards a democracy here, as a political ideal or political goal will change the role of the church. In every survey that has been taken in Montenegro in the past 10 or 15
years, the church has been the most highly trusted institution.

**CYNICISM OF POWER**

One of the large enemies of democracy is the cynicism of those in power, and of power itself. You only have to look at the media and what they did to activist Vanja Calovic and some other critics of the regime to understand this.

This part of the world has always quivered, was always afraid of critical opinion. That is the problem with the reception of democracy. Our problem is that we are actually far from democratic. We are in the zone of democratisation, and whenever I hear that word I always remember a professor who said in the 1990s, that the difference between democracy and democratisation was the same as the difference between a canal and a sewer. I am afraid he was right.

**ENVER KAZAZ**

PhD, professor at the School of Philosophy, Sarajevo

**ASSOCIATE LECTURER AT THE SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY IN SARAJEVO. A LEFTIST BY AFFILIATION, KAZAZ WAS A CHIEF EDITOR OF SEVERAL PUBLISHING HOUSES. HE HAS PUBLISHED DOZENS OF BOOKS, ESSAYS, STUDIES, AND ANTHOLOGIES.**

**OUR REGIMES ARE AUTOCRATIC**

Instead of democracy in our parts we have ‘leaderocracy,’ ‘partyocracy’ and even autocracy. In order to reach true democracy, the public must become the controllers of government. People are crucial for the future democratic outlook of a society.

People have an imaginary ideal of democracy, and there are some highly developed democracies and so we measure ourselves by them. Take, for instance Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have autocratic regimes, but they are three tiny autocratic regimes and then naturally it is impossible for the entire country to be under one leader, so it has three little leaders. To make matters worse, the parties that put them forward are also organised on the same principle, they are autocratic par excellence, so there is no way that we could discuss notions remotely close to democracy in this situation. We could discuss pre-democracy, party-cracy, and leaderocracy, and lastly I would hardly agree with the assessment that they are so supreme. We are talking about highly skillful political oligarchies.

The people sent a clear message about their evaluation of democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the February protests. The protests were violent, and if this stemmed from social anger, then it is obvious that this phony democracy has been assessed and found lacking.

**PROCESS OF APPROACHING THE EU, DISCIPLINING POWER**

What happened to us is that narratives from the recent past were the main ideological market for the parties in power, and then media mentally occupied the voter body with their interpretations of reality, of the academic community, of the religious elite, and so on. So people were unable to perceive an alternative, a different system of values, to conceive of a different social system. The prisoners of these mental images and societal system of values are really your role model leaders.
These are perfect conditions for leaderocracy and autocracy.

The process of acceding to the EU is through learning democracy. Why? Because we have to adopt procedures, standards, we have to discipline the government not to wield excessive power. But the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina is something of an exception here. What is the idea? The view is that countries of the region, with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, have concluded their internal narratives on the war. But in Bosnia and Herzegovina the narrative is still ongoing. Perhaps proximity to the EU, or an EU-accession path could save the country and perhaps it would happen, since the country is a special case. But, accession to the EU means just opening democracy, but not long-term disciplining as that keeps a country in a status quo, and status quo destroys the country.

NGOS AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER

There are 12,000 non-governmental organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The government itself directly controls the biggest ones. It controls the sector in a way that they become an instrument of the government. Then you get a new picture of a terribly developed society that is nothing but an instrument in the hands of the government. Here is something that shocked me. The amount of crime in those places. And then you realise that the supposed critics of a certain government or certain political party are involved in crime and corruption much more heavily than the government. With the exception of a few, though, there are some (very few) who work properly and take risks to boot. But a large number of them are part of the clan.

VOJA ŽANETIĆ
Communication expert, Belgrade

Screenwriter, columnist, and writer. He has written scripts for the Index Radio Theatre, columns for the Dnevni Telegraf Daily, the Evropljanin and Nin weeklies. He has published a book of stories for children and received rewards for literature and for advertising, his other profession.

THE TERM ‘DEMOCRACY’ IS FLAWED

To me democracy is basically a lay amusement of government by the people, generally speaking, and it sounds like a male pregnancy. I mean, people cannot govern themselves. Representatives of the people yes, but then that is decision-making about those who make decisions instead of us. So, viewed as an ideal, the term ‘democracy’ is flawed. Of course there is a way to evaluate it, to index what is generally viewed as democracy. The Economist has something it calls the ‘index of democracy’ that it publishes every year. In 2013 I was due to pay a subscription fee but I was short of cash, however in 2012 the newspaper was available online for free so that year, if we view the region, Slovenia ranks at 29, Croatia at 50, Serbia at 66, Macedonia at 73, Montenegro at 76, and poor Bosnia and Herzegovina is in 98th place.

DEMOCRACY REQUIRES SPIRITUAL AND ECONOMIC WEALTH

Democracy needs money to fund its complicated system so that it can work. You need money
for education, then for unbiased media, for instance, in the event of media coming under influence from outside, from private cartels and so on. Therefore, a country must possess wealth. On the one hand it can have economic wealth, but not necessarily democracy, as Saudi Arabia is enormously rich but not one of the most democratic countries in the world, and on the other hand, a country can have spiritual wealth, but not necessarily the economic wealth to sustain a democracy. Democracy requires both a mature elite as well as a readiness of important national systems and institutions to back them.

DEMOCRACY NOT JUST A MATTER OF ELECTIONS

It is a thing that is built. It is not a place where you go to, not a means by which one goes to that place. It is not a bicycle. It is a dwelling, something you live in. For instance, if the allocation of funds from the budget of any country in the region had been democratically controlled and directed, if the process had been carried out properly, we would not have had so many people suffering due to the floods. You have got water up to ‘here’ because you have only got democracy up to ‘there’. You are flooded because money was not used to build your embankment, but rather went to some guy from the clan, political group or cartel. People believe that democracy is only a matter of elections. It is not. It a matter of the water in your garden if the waters start rising, and if embankments are built, and they are built with a struggle, and what kind of struggle do we have? Well, a corrupt one. In these times you have to be very corrupt to do good things. You must use the same means to fight as they do.

NGO CLANS

These guys have a simple task which is not to get bigger, not to change their members drastically, although they need to be changed for internal discipline. These clans keep their paws on the main channels of money, the clans have their paw on government, on security, and on the media. It is the clans’ interactivity and of those that depend on it, that is really what makes up the political system, a mixture of kleptocracy, autocracy, of all and sundry. And of course they have learned, they are not stupid. They have managed to veil themselves with the cloak of democracy and say, “what are you complaining about, you have freedom of speech, you have elections, you have this, you have that.”

But basically, everything that existed fundamentally has been cancelled through their intervention, because the media are not media that inform the public but media that are told what to write. Money is not spent as set out in the budget, or as produced through the economy; it is channelled by diktat. Security is run from the same centre more or less, and that is the current state of affairs in society on the whole, where civil society and the media and everyone else are playing in a kind of theatre designed for that. Certain parts of society have managed to obtain some level of independence by playing for foreign theatres.
ALUMNI OF THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS

TARA TEPAVAC, Belgrade - If we ask what is most important for the development of democracy in the region, it is everything that we talked about today. First we should separate two things that are formally of utmost importance for the development of democracy, and that is to have institutions, to have independent justice, independent media, an active civil society and other things that we discussed here. But fundamentally, we need to change the team. We need a team that has the political willpower, the willpower in general to change the system, and to do so in reality. To implement all the formal presuppositions that we have developed over the years. Accession to the EU can therefore be understood as a process of implementing all these preconditions, as something that is very important for the development of democracy.

DEJAN BURSAČ, Belgrade - The three factors that were proposed actually overlap, they are inseparable because we have a kind of election democracy with basically undemocratic political parties competing against one another. We heard it, parties with charismatic leaders where no opposing opinions or criticism are heard, there are no factions, and so on. And yet those parties have a monopoly on the economy. In our countries, political parties are a starting point for employment, for subsidies, management posts in state-owned companies, and so on. So these undemocratic parties wield influence this way as well, and it is substantially corrosive. These three factors are connected, but I would say that political parties are the main reason behind it.

DARKO SOLDAT, Sarajevo - Democracy in our countries in 2014 is democracy in training. People are still learning how to achieve the political rights they are entitled to in a democratic society, in the best possible way. Elites in power are still developing institutional mechanisms to safeguard their interests from their people, for people to exercise their rights in the best way, and all of them are seeking the ideal model of social and economic development that is normal for our societies this year.

VIDEO 1

BERTELSMANN FOUNDATION RESEARCH:
DEFECTIVE DEMOCRACY IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Freedom House has an evaluation scale from 1 to 7, with 1 representing the most highly developed democracy, and 7 as an authoritarian regime. Countries in the region received the following grades in the latest report: Serbia 3.64, Montenegro 3.86, Macedonia 4, Bosnia and Herzegovina 4.43, and Kosovo 5.14. In a recent study conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation, analysts concluded that democracy is defective in southeastern Europe, that governments abuse power, and popular dissatisfaction is mounting. Dissatisfaction is growing in many countries in central and southeastern Europe and disappointment in the performance of government institutions, but the good news is that none of the countries in the region are under threat from autocracy, says an analysis conducted by the foundation.
What could be said about cooperation in the region and is there any other cooperation apart from political, as a prerequisite for other kinds of cooperation; is there cooperation in culture, investments, trade, and employment? What are the goals of the South East Europe Development Strategy for 2020 and will its implementation create better socio-economic circumstances in the region?

Our guests from the Council for Regional Cooperation addressed these questions: Dragana Đurica, Sanjin Arifagić, Milena Filipović, and Erhan Turbedar. Introduction by writer and columnist Voja Žanetić.
INTRODUCTION
VOJA ŽANETIĆ
Communication expert, Belgrade

COOPERATION
I have a dog. Sometimes when he fidgets as we put a collar and leash on him, my wife tells him – sometimes she tells me, too – she says firmly and resolutely – “cooperate!” So, what one infers from this is that cooperation can also take place when one party wants something while the other is reluctant. Cooperation, cooperating, and cooperator – these words and terms do not necessarily have a favorable meaning. In World War Two, Quislings were called Nazi ‘cooperators’; those with a penchant for Latin called them collaborationists. A witness who cooperates is not some nice and honorable guy, he is someone who wants to compensate for a lot of previous evil done by doing a little good. Speaking of evil, we did cooperate in that respect in the region and our environs. Shooting, looting, shady dealings, privatisation, and destitution – we excelled at ‘good cooperation,’ it was fantastic, and the political crisis and wars, we eventually crowned those who had engaged in the most ‘mutual cooperation.’ The joke about that cooperation is obviously that none of us should be the aggressor, nor the collaborator, nor bully, nor criminal, nor anyone issuing orders. The joke on cooperation is to change the adverse meaning into a favourable one and to try, as much as possible, to be as successful in that, in what is good, as we had been successful in committing evil. And when some time passes as we thus cooperate, we will be able to establish the difference, qualitative and quantitative, we will learn that good cooperation is better than the other, bad kind. Now that is worth cooperating for.
DRAGANA ĐURICA
Expert for integrated development

ĐURICA JOINED THE COUNCIL FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION IN 2012 AS AN EXPERT ON INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATOR FOR THE PROJECT ENTITLED ‘WOMEN AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE.’ PREVIOUSLY, SHE WORKED IN DIPLOMACY AS AN ECONOMIC ADVISER IN THE SERBIAN EMBASSY IN SLOVENIA. SHE HAS EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT IN THE REGION.

COOPERATION INSTEAD OF COMPETITION

Economic cooperation in the region is a highly promising way to bring the Western Balkans out of the economic crisis, as our markets are limited and face many problems, and with economy naturally being a necessity.

Not only because of incentives from the West or an imposed obligation for regional cooperation, but the fact that countries in the region are aware of their economic circumstances, which are not as highly developed, renowned or creative as those of the culture and arts sectors in our region. They came to the realistic conclusion that their markets were comparatively small compared to our wealthy surroundings, that they were fragmented and that they depended on each other, in trade as well as investments. The countries launched a narrative on their own and began to cooperate in trade and investments in areas where until yesterday they were the arch rivals of one another.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMPLEMENTARINESS

Most of our exports are intermediate goods or raw materials, there is little added value, so profits are lower. Therefore, a sector by sector approach is required, to focus on specific industries where economies in the region could complement one other and be partners, find niches where they could work together to create a regional product that they could market with some added value.

And they have a lot to offer if they work together, so for us it will be a return to basic values. Thus we have an energy community and we are working on reaching agreement in certain economic sectors; thus starting to build cooperation in a similar manner to that of the EU’s formation. As we know, the EU was born from a community of steel and coal. The situation is a little different in our region, but we work with what we have got. What we are doing is really focusing on these basic values, a pragmatic and essential integration in the region that will enable us to be viewed by the EU in the near future, as a stable and responsible partner on the whole.

A MILLION NEW JOBS

The target figure of 1 million new jobs was fixed after lengthy economic analyses carried out by experts and government institutions of the region. Hundreds of people worked on the process with us, in drafting strategies, setting goals, and proposing measures that will accompany the realisation of these goals. The strategy on paper will not create a million new jobs, but the measures that are in it should lead to improvements in our socioeconomic circumstances, if they are implemented
The Council for Regional Cooperation was given a mandate from our countries last year to put together a joint development strategy until the end of the decade, called the South East Europe Development Strategy 2020. For the first time, the countries defined 11 common goals that we aim to achieve by the end of the decade.

We had several stages in the process. We always try to find the lowest common denominator among our members, our countries, in this case these seven countries collectively referred to as the Western Balkans, that are involved in the strategy. Arriving at a consensus on the priorities was an arduous process indeed; involving identifying and setting out the activities that need to be implemented and the measures that need to be set in place in order to achieve the goals of the priorities. Let me mention some of the goals; for instance, the region aims to raise its economic outputs in order to reach 36% percent of the European GDP per capita. This figure currently stands at something below one third of Europe’s GDP per capita. So in our dire situation try to put yourselves in the shoes of people in the EU, with us knocking on their doors and in our pockets we have got less than a third of what they have got.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM BRUSSELS**

The EU has something called the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance that helps all the countries in the Balkans. A large part of the instrument, somewhere around 2 billion euros, has been earmarked to back regional development. And it is encouraging to see that in addition to the political support we receive from Brussels, there is financial support as well. So, that is an important signal for us. In the future we will focus on joint projects, not just in infrastructure, though this is important and definitely a precondition for every other kind of cooperation, especially in economy, but on other forms of cooperation as well. So, we are talking about trade, discussing investments, programmes for culture, education, research, and development. Actually, we have 16 areas that we are working on, drafting plans and programmes to request funds for their implementation.
TRADE LIBERALISATION

About 10 years ago we had a series, a network of bilateral trade relations between countries that was very complex for our businessmen, for exporters and investors. Now we have an agreement, the CEFTA, between the countries in the region that is the only organisation, the only one apart from another agreement on free trade in the world, that has liberalised commodity trade, including agricultural products, which is quite revolutionary. We must talk about it. In some other sectors, for instance energy, all of the countries signed an agreement on energy that is moving them along a path toward forming a common energy market. That will directly impact people’s pockets. Not only their pockets, it will provide security for energy supplies to the region. In any event, our negotiating powers are enhanced if we negotiate as seven countries instead of one.

MILENA FILIPOVIĆ

Project manager for culture

She joined the Council for Regional Cooperation as a project manager focusing on renewing cultural heritage in Southeastern Europe. She worked in the US Embassy in Podgorica until 2013. She now works in the Montenegrin Ministry of Culture as an adviser for international cultural relations, coordinating bilateral and multilateral projects and programmes. Filipovich has also worked for the UN World Food Programme.

CULTURE AS THE FIRST SIGN OF RECONCILIATION

Culture was one of the first areas where reconciliation first started to evolve in the region. First it was an individual exchange of artists, followed by other creators as it was easier for them to cross borders and present their work and to perform in the region. After that, moving on to cultural heritage, where the situation is a little more challenging and complex because of the nature of cultural heritage and legacy. Many things were destroyed in the war, a lot of our architectural heritage was destroyed.

Cooperation in culture has noticeably increased over the past 10 years. For instance, the whole region, all of the countries in the Western Balkans, have been working together over the past 10 years on a project now called the ‘Ljubljana Process,’ a project for the integrated rehabilitation of
cultural heritage. Since 2003, each country has used the same methodology in technically assessing cultural monuments, drafting feasibility studies, business plans, and so on.

HERITAGE IS A LIVING PROCESS
Heritage is not a dead artefact or a lost civilisation. The trend today, and that includes us, is to perceive heritage in a completely different way, as a necessity really, as a living process and that the centre of preserving cultural heritage is not only an object, or item, or piece of architecture, but the use or repurposing of a cultural object or monument.

If a monument of culture has no purpose it shrivels over time as it is not self-sustainable. That is a difficulty that all countries in the region face and we have recognised it as an important point for action.

CULTURE AS PART OF A DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
I think it is very important that culture has at last been given a place in the development strategy because we all know that culture is not listed in many development strategies, it is not high on the list of priorities for development and attracting investments, so this time one of the 16 priorities is culture, specifically cultural creative sectors that will be developed through three particular programmes and actions. It is very important for the countries to understand how vital it is to present the potential, to present the best possible visions for cultural development as they might succeed in attracting investments.

ERHAN TURBEDAR
Political adviser

REGION MOVING IN A GOOD DIRECTION
Some nations succeeded because they were meant to succeed, others because they made the effort. We in the region must work for a better future. If we want to see and understand the state we are in today, we must view the past and our actions. Our future will be what we make of it today. Regional cooperation is vital for the prosperity of future generations.

What we had in the region left widespread consequences and it will take years yet for the region to recover. But if we view the situation we had 20 years ago and then compare it to today, whatever aspect we take a look at, I see the region moving in the right direction.

VISION FOR THE REGION
I teach Balkan history, political history as well as economic history, and what I have learned through my lessons with students and what I see repeatedly in our books on the subject is that in our region we are always blaming one another for our problems. We somehow always expect others to get us out of these problems. But, addressing
them is feasible if we really apply ourselves and work on it. No-one is going to come to our rescue with a magic wand. Thank goodness we have some strategic friends who are ready to help, but the rest is in our hands and I see the strategy for Southeastern Europe 20–20 as a really serious platform, a vision for the region on how to move on and how to arrive at those goals.

OVER 50 REGIONAL INITIATIVES
We always expect far more from these meetings and debates on regional cooperation than it is realistically possible to carry out. I thought so too, before I started working for the Council for Regional Cooperation and then I realised, here we are, advocating the best interests of 13 countries and it is hard to get the machinery of one country moving, let alone 13 countries simultaneously. So, it is a serious process and not easy at all, a process that is sometimes excessively politically burdened. On the other hand, I am not sure if the public knows what we have in regional cooperation today. The fact is, when you compare the process today with that of 10 years ago, then what we have today is a considerable amount of progress. We have more than 50 regional initiatives that address regional cooperation in various sectors, developing different projects and insisting on narratives at all levels. And although things are moving, the media are not providing sufficient coverage.

NEWS OF GOOD COOPERATION IS NOT NEWS
National media reporting on regional cooperation has been scarce. We just do not talk about our neighbours very much, about neighbouring states. I did an analysis for a meeting in which I compared a newspaper from Croatia, from Serbia, and from Bosnia and Herzegovina and they each mention their neighbour mainly in a negative context, about a problem between them and the debate about it. The important thing for reporters is that a newspaper sells and in order to sell, presumably readers want to read something unfavourable. I live by the slogan that positive things happen in the region and that the media should provide space for stories about the good things that take place.
ALUMNI OF THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS

RUŽICA JURČEVIĆ, Zagreb - I would say that cooperation is certainly important especially today with the crisis and overall alienation, we need to work together. The worst thing a nation can do is to close itself in some borders and not make use of opportunities offered by cooperation. However, speaking of cooperation, most people first think of economic cooperation but I believe that there are other forms of cooperation that should be encouraged as well.

MARKO SOŠIĆ, Podgorica - In my opinion, this cooperation is positive because all the countries in the region aspiring to join the EU are faced with the same challenges, they have the same tasks before them, but most of all they have strong outside pressure on the part of the European Commission that insists on cooperation and has allocated concrete funds for its achievement.

VLADICA JOVANOVIĆ, Belgrade - I believe that influence from the EU is twofold, speaking of countries and their officials. The EU is there to sort of steer the countries in the right direction when they show a reluctance to move toward some forms of cooperation. It gives wind to the considerable efforts in the economy, and there is civil society that encompasses other sectors such as education, culture, media, and human rights. We just need to return to building a better future, all of us together.
AN ACTOR IS AN ACTOR

They changed genres with ease and played a wide range of characters, went through hundreds of parts, received many awards and are rightly considered to be ‘our’ legends. In the 12th show of Vicinities they discuss talent, success, politics, and their roles in ‘voluntary exile. ‘Where do they belong, do they commit to feeling they belong anywhere, are reconciliation and forgiveness possible, how much did the war change them, how did it force them to move, why did they have to go, have they changed, what is an artist’s duty in society?

These are some of the questions discussed by actors Mirjana Karanović, Zijah Sokolović, and Rade Serbedžija.
RADE ŠERBEDŽIJA

HE HAS ACTED IN FILM, THEATRE, AND TELEVISION, AND HE IS A POET. SERBEDŽIJA DEBUTED IN THE FILM ‘ILLUSION’ IN THE 1960S AND HAS SINCE PLAYED MORE THAN 100 PARTS, CHANGING GENRES EFFORTLESSLY AND EMBODYING DIFFERENT CHARACTERS. HE HAS WORKED WITH THE BEST DIRECTORS IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND GLOBALLY CELEBRATED DIRECTORS SUCH AS STANLEY KUBRICK. HE HAS BEEN A TRAVELLER ALL HIS LIFE, LIVING IN CROATIA, SERBIA, BRITAIN, AND THE UNITED STATES. HE IS A RECIPIENT OF NUMEROUS AWARDS, HE LAUNCHED THE ULYSSES THEATRE IN PULA AND POST-GRADUATE STUDIES IN RIJEKA. HE HAS PUBLISHED TWO COLLECTIONS OF POETRY AND AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY ‘TO THE LAST BREATH.’

WHOSE ACTOR AM I?

If you are asking me whose actor I am, then I am probably mostly a Croatian actor because I graduated from the academy there and worked my entire life in Croatia. Although I have done films and theatre productions all over the country, and recently perhaps I have worked in Serbian theatre more than in Croatia, with Ljubisa Risticat the PGT. So, whose actor am I? Well, I am really a Yugoslav actor, but do not get me wrong because we said we would not talk about that, but I really am and that is how I feel.

For instance, if Serbs and Croats were to squabble again over some trivial matter, I would choose to be Roma, from the pureness of my heart and sheer love.

As soon as the trumpets of war subsided we became ‘their’ actors again as we were their actors during the war. While the trumpets of war blasted, people who had names and surnames as actors and made films and were loved by audiences before that, they still remain their actors even though
they are of a different ethnic group. Do you understand?

**OPPOSING EVIL**

People who are in a public profession must try to express their opinions and to stand up to evil. In that sense, each of us paid a price and we gained something as well, I believe, because we know that we did something that had to be done and that there should have been more people doing so out there, and then perhaps... I do not think that we could have ended the war, but perhaps there would have been fewer atrocities.

**I WILL NOT RECONCILE BECAUSE I NEVER QUARRELED**

Some people suffered so terribly that they cannot get over it. Others who have been through terrible suffering find a way to overcome it. These people are rare. People are different so we should not, we cannot insist on reconciliation.

Once I said something and I know I was attacked for it quite a lot and I will be again, but when there was talk of reconciliation in Zagreb, in Croatia, between the Ustashas and Partisans, I said I did not believe it was possible and that there should be no such reconciliation. It is something that belonged to the past, something on which history has an opinion and everyone knows who did what and how. I am not talking about problems in either of these ideological camps where all sorts of things went on, that is a different matter and to me it seems quite clear historically, who was what and where they were.

I come from a family background of Partisans but that never stopped me from becoming best friends with someone whose father was a Chetnik or Ustasha or Balija. That never bothered me and I never gave it a thought, and we never have to think about it that way at all. Why do we have to think about reconciliation, as you asked? Lo, what reconciliation?! I am not reconciling because I never quarreled.

**EVERY PART SEIZES A PART OF YOU**

During my exile and plight in the big world, I nevertheless got to act and work with some big directors and big movie stars. Actually, there is no big or small part, we know that, and I also got to work on some low-budget art films. Even though I acted in a foreign language I still had the same feeling as I did when I worked with Zika Pavlovic.

Every part you put yourself into invariably seriously seizes a part of you. Sometimes you have a problem with the part, if you go into it too deeply. For instance, I noticed, playing King Lear for 14 years, that I went through various stages. At the beginning I laboured to learn those magnificent lines and the magnificent character, then the next stage was when I started to enjoy it, and after many years I discovered nuances that I probably never would have found, had I not played the part for so long. And you always find something new in that brilliant text, in that brilliant character.

So what did I just reveal? Well, nothing really, but an experience from delving into Lear and his madness the most, with my concentration.
FILM CRITICS HAVE HAILED HER AS THE BEST BALKAN ACTRESS OF ALL TIMES. SHE HAS WON ALMOST EVERY AWARD THERE IS, IN FILM AND THEATRE IN THE REGION FOR HER BODY OF WORK, PLAYING STRONG WOMEN OF CHARACTER. FROM HER DEBUT ‘PETRIJA’S WREATH,’ AND GLOBAL FAME FOR HER ROLE OF THE MOTHER IN ‘WHEN FATHER WAS AWAY ON BUSINESS,’ TO HER PART IN ‘GRBAVICA,’ KARANOVIĆ HAS WORKED WITH THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED DIRECTORS IN THE BALKANS. SHE HAS PLAYED MORE THAN 70 ROLES IN THEATRE. SHE IS A LECTURER IN ACTING AT THE ART ACADEMY AND RECEIVED THE CONQUERING FREEDOM AWARD FOR HER WORK IN DEFENDING AND PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS.

RECONCILIATION AND FORGIVENESS

The memories and hatred that linger from World War Two for instance, these are emotions that people have passed on to their children and they to theirs, so we have this continuation of either good or bad, because it is something that cannot be controlled. You cannot order somebody to love or to hate something. It is probably impossible for some people ever to get over certain things. I believe that people who are in art, in film and theatre, can and should support those who speak of forgiveness and reconciliation.

I THOUGHT THE AUDIENCE WAS THE WHOLE WORLD

I have come a long way, from a time during which I sincerely thought that what I do could change the world I live in absolutely. One of the most memorable events in my life, one in which I believed that our actions were so powerful that they would stop the war from starting, was when we performed ‘Mother Courage and Her Children’ in Sarajevo and when I thought that the few hundred people in the audience were actually the whole world. When the public applauded fervently, I felt, I remember it, I felt so proud thinking, good, everything is going to be alright now, they have all realised how meaningless it is, how meaningless war is. And then a couple of weeks later the shooting started in Sarajevo. I was shocked. Since then I have suffered enormously for not being able to do something, for being helpless, to change the world. I was unhappy with the lack of power I had to change things.

IT IS MOST IMPORTANT HOW AUDIENCES CLASSIFY YOU

I tried very hard to do something beyond the stage and I had an inferiority complex of being just an actress, that that was not enough. But today I avoid becoming involved in politics actively, or in any institution for that matter, because I believe that the most I can give people is that which I do best, and that is acting, and everything that follows from that. You always get classified, but I know that to us actors, the way our audiences perceive us, is the utmost for us. Audiences have perceived me as their ‘own’in every place I have been.

CONQUERING SPACES THROUGH ACTING

I am very happy that I am able to connect my personal ambition, a very private acting ambition to get to work with quality parts, with a higher goal other than just adding items to my own acting career. It is immensely gratifying. I know I am not doing something that fulfills a selfish goal, so the spaces I conquer with my acting are very important for me because my presence on the so-called
other side is not linked with any horrible intransi-
gence among fellow actors and other people, but
quite the contrary. It is a space where people are
welcomed.

The last space I have begun conquering and tour-
ing is Kosovo. I believe it is very important for Ser-
bia to establish ties with Kosovo in spite of the
political situation and harsh past, experiences that
are certainly painful. People can take these first
steps thanks to art.

ZIJAH SOKOLOVIĆ

HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED ACTOR
FROM SARAJEVO, ONE OF THE
MOST RENOWNED ARTISTS
IN THE REGION WHO LIVES
AND ACTS BETWEEN VIENNA,
LJUBLJANA, SARAJEVO, AND
BELGRADE. HE IS WELL KNOWN
FOR THE MONODRAMA

‘AN ACTOR IS AN ACTOR’ AS WELL AS 30 FILMS AND 10
TELEVISION SERIES HE HAS PERFORMED IN. HE IS THE HEAD
OF THEATERLANDCHILDREN’S THEATRE IN SALZBURG, A
LECTURER IN ACTING AT THE BRUCKNER CONSERVATORY
OF LINZ, ART DIRECTOR OF THE DEZELAGLEDALISCE
FESTIVAL IN LJUBLJANA AND ART DIRECTOR OF DRAMATIC
SOCIETY PROJECT.

ACTING TRANSCENDS CLASSIFICATIONS

I was born in Sarajevo and thus naturally I would
like to belong to Sarajevo as such. If anyone
should define Sarajevo in this manner or that, then
I belong to it in that way. In these times it is ex-
pected that we have two determinations. One is
the political and religious determination that puts
you in one camp, putting you thus in opposition
to something else, and the other determination is
that people want to keep you in their memory, in
the times they were part of. And it is pure, it is well-
meaning, but the boundaries of our profession,
of acting, must transcend that. Althoughthere is a
beauty in getting classified, you attempt to defend
yourself from it, to oppose it. The struggle is a pos-
itive one, it makes you persevere in what you be-
lieve in. And that is good. Remember the movie, ‘I
am the master of my body’.... Incidentally, we are
all past 50 so we are the masters of our lives.
TAKES A LOT OF ENERGY TO LEAVE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Looking at it as a cabaret, I went to Vienna when I was 40 to begin, to continue my life there. And if it began 10 years earlier, I would have learned the language properly and done better. There is a bit of irony in this, a man moving from his foundations, from places where he feels secure, and setting off into the unknown. For that he needs this huge energy, the biggest energy to leave his comfort zone and move onto new things. I believe that we actors are lucky in our profession because we keep moving onto new things.

When we play a part, we leave one world and enter another. It is a joy for us, learning something hitherto unknown and adopting it as our own. So, the actual departure to another part of the world, the literal and banal departure, is fascinating if a person wants the change, wants to get to know the world in a different way, as a character in a play.

FASCINATING CHANGE GOING INTO THE WORLD

My show 'An Actor Is an Actor' has been running in Vienna since 1982, and in Paris, Warsaw, London, and New York. I would go to those places and then return to those same places and would always leave a part of me behind - in New York, and in Sydney, and Berlin. Wherever the show took place. But once I moved to that world, I went through a fascinating change. It was hard, of course, and it is a matter of being lucky, and so on. However, there were hardships and struggles too. I would get up in the night and study a part in German for five months, so that I could get into that space and into that world. But I believe it is an immensely positive experience because otherwise I never would have gotten to know the world in that way. I can only imagine what Rade Serbedzija has got in his mind, having had these endless experiences, a huge wealth. He is like a museum, with all of his experiences. As I am in a way, living and working in a place with people that I mostly do not understand.

FUNCTIONAL SHOWS

When I came to Austria, I was asked to do a project in Salzburg, at a theatre in the Mirabell Place, a project for children, to study the character traits of children through acting, theatrical forms and shows. We created a major European project thanks to which I was awarded honorary Austrian citizenship and the title of ‘UNDP Ambassador,’ which is very good. Then I pursued these studies on my own, studying the way actors and acting influence society through the form of theatrical shows, for instance as professional theatres and shows. I concluded that theatre was imperative for growing up to become normal people. Children need not actually participate in it, but they have to know about it. Then we started to put on shows that were functional, if I can call them that. We made drugs and violence our topic and the shows were performed 500, 600, and 700 times. I am doing a similar project with the UNDP here in Serbia. We performed in Bor, and then Sombor, Prokuplje, and Novi Pazar, where we tried to start a narrative on violence in the family, against women and girls. These are educational shows, informative shows where actors get to portray 120 examples of violence in 45 minutes. And we also work on issues of drug addictions and their influence on young people with 200 examples where they learn in a way that is different from television, it is not a lecture either, it is man in the flesh.
The last show of the third season of Vicinitiesorganised a round table with journalists from six countries to discuss regional cooperation in the media, whether there was any, to what extent and at what level. They looked at why cooperation has been reduced to a personal level, whereas organised and institutional cooperation was lacking although it was necessary and though public interest in cooperation is high as topics were similar. The fact that Vicinities had been successful in all of the countries in the region with all the participants extending support to the project in recognition that it is authentic and necessary, bears proves and underpins the need for exchange and cooperation.

The debate on cooperation in regional media brought together directors, editors, and journalists - Dževdet Tuzlić (TV B-H - Sarajevo), Vladan Mićunović and Slavoljub Šćekić (TV Vijesti - Podgorica), Žarko Joksimović (TVK2 - Pristina), Vanja Vardjan (TV Slovenija - Ljubljana), Đorde Vlajić (RTS Belgrade), as well as journalists and editors of weekly newspapers: Dragoljub Žarković (Vreme - Belgrade), Vuk Baćanović (BH Dani - Sarajevo), and Drago Hedl (Jutarnji list - Zagreb).
COOPERATION HARDER ON LOCAL LEVEL

It is superfluous to ask whether cooperation is necessary, whether it should remain the same or decrease. It is entirely natural that we cooperate as much as possible, that is innate in the profession. We at TV Vijesti have experience with regional projects, some have been more demanding, others less so, and Vicinities has been a considerable challenge for us and an important project that we were happy to join right away. I believe that we gave it our full support right from the start.

We have an absurd situation in Montenegro, which is that we work much more easily with regional television stations than amongst each other in Montenegro. As in every cooperation, we must know the goals, the interests, and principles, in order for the aims to be realised. When we discuss cooperation and such projects as Vicinities, or talk about essential, real journalism, then presumably we are discussing the standards and principles of journalism that are valid all over the world and should be valid in this profession. This is precisely where the problem lies in Montenegro, as we do not concur on basic standards in journalism.

TOPICS WE ARE ALL SENSITIVE ABOUT

We know one another very well because we are quite similar. Sometimes we trivialise things, we speak of remnants of the former common state and call it ‘Yugo-nostalgia,’ and so on. I think we know each other well and that we communicate
very well, we understand one another and share a similar culture, therefore these topics are close to our hearts and thus Vicinities was accepted in all areas, to great success. There is something essential that I would like to draw attention to, which is that Vicinities has a subtle approach, a fine way of bringing out topics that we are all sensitive to. If we were to move on and sharpen things a little, and bring these common controversial topics down to local level, what would we encounter? Would these topics be acceptable to local televisions for broadcast? I am sure that we would face major problems if we were to sharpen things and set out to tackle vital questions in an open and direct way, the way BIRN is doing for print media. If we were to undertake a similar project for television, would we meet with the success that BIRN enjoys with print media? I think not. Because of the strong influence televisions wield on all communities, on all societies and all countries in the region.

ĐORĐE VLAJIĆ
Serbian Radio-television RTS, Belgrade

LESS THAN POSSIBILITIES
Speaking of media cooperation in the region, I would say that it is currently lower than possibilities allow for and that this is an opportunity to discuss why the media are not cooperating in the region, what are the reasons, rather than discussing ways in which they manage to establish some channels of cooperation. As far as I know, there are a few channels of exchange between the media, some are connected to the European Broadcasting Union mostly on programmes for ethnic minorities and some digital matters, then programmes in culture and so on. What ails us most is newscasts in which there is no cooperation, in which everyone aspires to exclusivity, their own method of coverage and everyone relies on their own editorial policies and professional standards that a particular newsroom fosters and that, I would say, is one of the possibilities exploited the least. As far as I know, cooperation is established mostly on a technical level, the use of possibilities in logistics, for television mostly. I suppose we could say that there is more space and possibility for cooperation than we make use of.

COOPERATION HARDEST IN NEWSCASTS
Is there a possibility for creating an institutional framework for cooperation? We already have something that is not the result of an arrangement between publishing houses, radio and television. For instance, a morning programme on Radio Beograd that reviews the regional press, a fellow journalist from the region joins in almost every day, but that is part of our relationship as fellow journalists. So, can any of us imagine public broadcasters in the region reaching agreement on exchanging newscasts between them? Now this infringes on relations between sovereign nations and public broadcasters in these countries. So in the matter of logistics, yes, we can help. We could also work on some joint programmes, so I believe the problem is daily reporting, the news content. As for the institutional framework for cooperation especially among big televisions, public broadcasters, well I think it will be hardest on the news level.
WE SEPARATE NATURALLY
The media in the region have not established good regional cooperation for two reasons. One reason as far as I can tell, is that most of the media in all the countries are in the service of the same politicians who play two games, one to the international public and another to their own public, so they lack incentive. The other reason is lack of commercial interest. When Vreme was founded 24 years ago we sold 35 percent of our circulation beyond Serbia’s borders, and today sales are on the level of a statistical error, from 3 to 5%. We separate naturally, topics are not the same and insisting on regional cooperation can be done only by a media that is backed by an international or European institution, and then incorporates that into the budget.

SERIOUS CONTENT HARD TO SELL
There is a difference between television, electronic media, and print media and the difference is quite evident. Television programmes are sold in advance, whereas for a printed copy of a newspaper or magazine we need to put together one issue and hope to sell the entire circulation.

Speaking of print media, I would look for possibilities for cooperation in so-called infrastructural projects rather than individual media efforts. The whole lot of us, even the most influential print media, are weak. Serious political content, or cultural content, something that addresses societal problems, is hard to sell. But we have an emergence of two or three organisations who provide some counterbalance to this lack of serious content, for instance BIRN is set up very well, they have got a network of regional correspondents and we often cooperate with them. We are currently working on a topic of the prospects of start-up loans, loans for young entrepreneurs in the region. If I were to do that project with Vreme I would need to engage the whole newsroom. But, BIRN has the staff and we will be glad to publish their report so as to compare experiences in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. That is our interest and we support that, we publish their articles, and they provide us with a bigger picture without hopes of selling more papers than those who write about who beat up the prime minister’s brother.

COOPERATION THROUGH PERSONAL INITIATIVE
I come from one of the youngest television stations in the region. We have been functioning and broadcasting for a year and a half and if anyone needs cooperation, it is us. With a small budget, limited capacities and no funds to pay for external correspondents, we cannot emphasise enough the urgency for cooperation in the region. Furthermore, the issue isn’t simply about funds; we are very much interested in topics and subjects that are going on in the region, and thus cooperation is essential from a content, not only budgetary, perspective. In this year and a half we have made contact and established cooperation on local level.
and I believe it was rather an individual initiative. When the two worlds were separated in Kosovo in 1999, except for mafiosi who continued to operate, we journalists worked together, Serbs and Albanians. So we contacted old colleagues and did things on our own to institutionalise things at the television station that I currently work at. A very important thing is that topics from Kosovo and our coverage are still interesting, not just to Serbia, but to the entire region. That is our advantage and because of that we get calls and we have made contact with other television companies in the region.

**IT IS OUT DUTY TO PROVIDE STORIES FROM THE REGION**
When we began broadcasting and airing programmes a year and a half ago, we had a somewhat crazy philosophy, it was my own, and that was not to create programmes that would be a window onto the world but rather a window into our neighbourhood. And something happened that surprised me. I had wanted to show the Serb population that lived in remote rural areas what was going on in their environment, because no programmes reported on the assembly sessions, and we did not know what went on in the Kosovo government, nor ordinary matters unrelated to politics. And then after a few months we received reports about high viewing figures not only among Serbs, but among Albanians as well. So that shows that we were correct in our approach and it obliges us to expand the views of our public who turn our channel on, not to stop at the local level but to offer stories from the region as well.

**DŽEVDET TUZLIĆ**
Radio television Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo

**WE ARE WAITING FOR OTHERS TO SHOW THE WAY**
When we mention regional cooperation we always wait for someone from outside to be the driving force. I remember about 10 years ago, here in Belgrade at the French Cultural Centre, we had a discussion about an idea launched by Arte from Belgrade and the French Embassy, and I said, when asked whether regional cooperation was possible, that France and Germany created the joint programme Arte from two diametrically opposed words such as art and war. So presumably we too, can create something to help heal our wounds after the war in which we all suffered in some way, and where cooperation would be the thing we were interested in. Another attempt from outside was a festival of television shows in Bar, so the festival directorate tried to create something through the ZDF, an attempt at regional cooperation expanding beyond this linguistic area, with 12 television stations from Romania to Albania and Slovenia each producing one programme and we would then all exchange and use all 12 of them. So, there are possibilities for cooperation and they are necessary, but somehow it is very slow in becoming a natural state within us, we keep waiting for someone else to show us the way.

**VICINITIES SHOWS OTHER SIDE OF COIN**
I believe that the current confinement and self-sufficiency is what is creating the feeling that we need nothing from other people’s back yard and
that views from others will not suffice to explain our emotions and our situation.

*Vicinities* shows the other side of the coin, it shows that we can see and hear in one place, many of these important ideas and points of view held by people from all over the region, and that this richness of diversity is invaluable.

**VANJA VARDJAN**
Radio television Slovenia, Ljubljana

**WE ALL HAVE THE SAME PROBLEMS**
I find that cooperation is better than isolationism in the media. The Slovenian television public broadcaster works with *RTL* in Croatia, a private company. We exchange material every day, free of charge, and in a way that has helped increase reporting from Slovenia in Croatia and vice versa. Another thing is that there must be public interest in the content. And there is. Why? Well, even *Vicinities* has shown that we all have similar problems, those of us who are in the EU, perhaps those of you who are not but aspire to join, we are all going through the same problems so our reports recently focused on how Croats were dealing with problems after joining the EU, how they were drafting bills, areas where we made mistakes and where they were making mistakes. The possibilities are increasing because technology facilitates exchange and cost has become irrelevant and there is no financial interest. By acceding to the EU, we virtually have the same problems and sharing our experiences is quite interesting, in a way.

**DRAGO HEDL**
Jutarnji List daily, Zagreb

**GOOD COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS**
Speaking of official cooperation in the print media which are gradually dying, there is none, not officially. But we have good cooperation between individuals, people who know each other, who have been in the profession a long time and who remain in touch even though today we have borders between us that once did not exist. So, that kind of cooperation where print media are concerned is reduced to individual contacts and the technical part of the job, when we need to exchange photographs or some information, but as far as I know we have had no official contacts between big newsrooms in the sense of doing some kind joint project. It is a little absurd because there are so many topics that require that kind of cooperation, a lot of topics that are very similar and at the same time very important in certain countries in the region, such as the problems of organised crime and mafiosi who have established good ties. In addition, the issues of people trafficking, environmental problems, for instance the floods that hit three countries in the region last spring – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia, further proved that there are many common topics that we could build on much more and create far more cooperation around.

I know that circumstances are dire in newsrooms and everyone shares the same plight of how to get by in these hard times, and I am talking mostly about the print media. It would be highly
beneficial for the newspapers to work together in digging deeper and investigating certain topics. It would be difficult for one publication alone to allocate staff and funds, but the job could be distributed among publications so that every newsroom assigns one or two people to work on a topic and they would surely do a better and more interesting job than if each worked separately, when we try to get something by simply adding things up instead of producing quality through cooperation.

SLAVOLJUB ŠĆEKIĆ
Vijesti TV, Podgorica

GENTLEMENLY AGREEMENT INSTEAD OF PROTOCOL
We have this cooperation now, it is on a daily basis with television stations within the region, we cooperate with two channels in Croatia, with three in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Serbia with the public broadcaster and with B92, and in Kosovo we work with some television stations and exchange programmes quite extensively. We have gentlemanly agreements instead of the former protocols on cooperation. Every journalist from any channel or station who comes to us has access to all our resources. Our work focuses mostly on producing newscasts and political programmes, but there are other commercial reasons that I will mention, such as joint purchase of programmes in the region. We have done so with some television stations from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, for instance translations of foreign programmes, and we saved on that considerably, paying once instead of three times. So certain things force us to act rationally in times of scarcity.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SINGLE CULTURAL CIRCLE
Cooperation will eventually emerge as an agenda because none of us can do it on our own, and on the other hand it is a pity not to use the common cultural circle of peoples who do not need subtitles and who can understand one another. So, I believe time will show that whoever wants to survive must move toward cooperation and find cooperation. I would like to mention production, simply because I see a lack of initiative and I am sorry about that and I have no proposal on who should take the initiative or responsibility, because I believe that this should be formed on behalf of everyone, not only coordination, but independent production as well, from several factors from the region, making preparations for good productions that are of interest, to be financed from funds for cross-border cooperation, IPA funds, funds of the European Commission, and others.

VUK BAČANOVIĆ
Dani weekly, Sarajevo

PROBLEMS OF LOCALISMS
Cooperation on an individual level is high, but non-existent at higher levels because there is obviously no need for it, especially as we in Bosnia and Herzegovina have a problem, speaking of daily and weekly print media, we have a problem of localism. Bosnia and Herzegovina is fragmented enough as it is, with two entities and then
formally and informally into areas where people are sensitive about this or that ethnic group, and there is a division between urban and rural areas and then the commercial viewpoints well, where to sell more newspapers and what subjects would the public be most interested in. And then localism unfortunately imposes itself. We are trying to tackle it gradually through a new editorial policy, to try to cover as many issues throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina as possible in order to overcome these localisms on a micro-level.
IMPRESSIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

VELJKO BRBORIĆ
Cooperation possible even when we think differently
Regardless of where we live today and what we know, we must know our history and our ‘geography.’ In our not so distant past, we depended on one another, and quite directly, so. Today the dependency is lesser but we still have many common topics and clearly people before us wanted us to live together, and then came times when those who wanted to split us apart prevailed. As time goes by we will realise more and more what the split brought and what we lost. We have yet to talk about it.
In these new circumstances we will continue to depend upon each other, whether we like it or not. Therefore I believe in Vicinities, I believe in dialogue and that cooperation is possible even when we have differing opinions.

DAMIR MARJANOVIĆ
Opportunity for meetings
Thank you for the opportunity that was offered, sharing the challenges we face through direct communication and exchanging thoughts on different models and concepts with colleagues from the region.

BRANKO LUKOVAC
Renewing mutual trust
Although I was a guest on only one show, on ecological awareness, I believe that the whole project of Vicinities is very useful and a necessary medium in which to discuss topics that are important to all of us, whether we discuss our legacy from the days of our lives together which was not so long ago, or the aftermath of the wars and outstanding problems, or tasks for development and integration to which we all aspire. I believe that Vicinities helps build mutual understanding and restoring and building confidence.

DRAGI ARGIROVSKI
Topics in Vicinities are relevant
The programme is very sober and very useful for the Balkans for several reasons. Firstly, the topics that are treated are very current and relevant, especially as the public actively participates in the programme. This way, the particular topic on senior citizens had substantive content with inter-generational cooperation where the hosts and guests from Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia all gave their contribution. We learned that life and the problems faced by elderly people were similar in all parts in the region. Solutions and guidelines were proposed for current problems and for life in the future, for senior citizens throughout the region.
I learned from conversations with viewers in Macedonia that they liked the show very much, particularly because of its excellent content, the seriousness of the topics and professional editorial policy. Vicinities must stay on the air for many years.

VASILJE KOSTIĆ
Vicinities helps us better understand today, and the reality yesterday
Vicinities addresses substantive socio-economic, cultural, societal, political, and other topics through direct exchange of opinion between guests from various parts of the former common
state, contributing to a better understanding of living today and of yesterday’s reality, and thus increases tolerance—always scarce in these parts (and today to a considerable extent). By addressing topics of universal importance and putting them in different contexts of contemporary practice—each country’s experience and the region’s—Vicinities helps move the boundaries of freedom, relaxing the pressure on historical memory, allowing for expression and validation, as well as being practically useful in providing possible answers to problems related to contemporary development. Without a release for our suppressed memories, without seeking answers to our prejudices and intransigence, without challenging our truths (however they are), we will not have harmony in our regional coexistence, and harmony and tolerance are needed more than ever before, I think. In that sense, the importance of Vicinities transcends the media aspect and confirms the holistic principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For all the above reasons, we need more programmes like this.

LOVRO RUMOR

Good spirit of togetherness and tolerance

I would like to thank the team of Vicinities on behalf of Dalmacija Greens from Split, for doing an excellent job, bringing in representatives from neighbouring countries, developing discussions on topics as well as creating a good spirit of togetherness and tolerance. We depend on one another in a common wish for security and prosperity that we all miss in these times.

ZLATKO NIKOLIĆ

We do not have to get along

The mere thought of people from the former republics meeting was a good idea and only natural, in my opinion. We do not have to agree on everything, not on anything, but it is valuable that we talk. Personally, I enjoyed the discussion. I only regret not knowing that the audience was youth brought in from the countries that the guests were from; I thought they were an agency audience so I took no interest in them. The reason for my regret is that I could have paid more attention to them in a more ‘educational’ way, because that was the purpose of the programme, after all.

ALEKSANDRA BUBERA

An offset to toxic information

It was a pleasure taking part in the show and meeting new, interesting, clever and well-informed people with whom it was a pleasure to debate and discuss, and to remain in touch, exchanging information and ‘good energy.’ I believe we should have more of these shows to offset the ocean of toxic information around us, because the show fosters a spirit of respect for differences and reminds us that we are basically all just people, though quite different and yet very similar.

NATAŠA BARAC

Opening important topics for the whole region

I took part in the Vicinities episode that was dedicated to social networks. From the very beginning, in all the arrangements, preparations, and travel organisation, I was more than pleasantly surprised by the professional handling and kindness of everyone involved in the process. It was an
opportunity to meet some new people and make some interesting contacts. I hope the show will continue for as long as possible, because it no doubt helps improve understanding in our region. In addition, it is important to emphasise that it is probably the only platform of its kind in the region; one in which interesting topics of importance for the whole region are discussed.

TVRTKO JAKOVINA

There is nothing to lose in creating better connections

Though it might sound strange, I met people whose opinions I share and people who I find important and interesting, thanks to my appearance in *Vicinities*.

Vucic showed me how many shared topics, books, and articles we all read and know; how much we listen to each other, that what happens in Croatia is heard beyond Croatia. I mention Croatia because it is probably more isolated than the other former-Yugoslav republics, so broadcasting *Vicinities* is enormously important in that sense. It is important to talk, to understand that there is nothing to lose, but plenty to gain from creating better connections, even though the region is still regarded as a monster by many of the countries around us.

ZORAN ILIĆ

How is the success of a show measured? How is the success of a show measured? By the number of viewers? Approach to the subject? Possibility of hearing differing opinions on the same subject? The ability of the host to find a similarity in the opinions and steer the talks toward common interests and goals? We got all of that in *Vicinities*. A diversity of topics, making use of a positive past and joint challenges in the present, to create a future. A good organisation, good selection of guests and topics have helped *Vicinities* go on for many seasons.
The *Vicinities* website lent support to the series in the last season, a place where information was posted on the topics to be covered by a particular show, along with the names of the participants, and some ‘teasers’ with interesting points, announcing the next show. All of the shows are available in the online video archive. The website also hosts a comprehensive set of information about the programmes, along with the biographies of the participants, their comments, and the introductory texts. These are posted in the ‘From My Viewpoint’ section. This section also features a feedback mechanism which comprises an open communication channel for accepting suggestions from online visitors, as well as an online survey that is consistently open and available for use. The number of online visits tripled in 2014 in comparison to the previous season, and information on *Vicinities* is also available on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/Okruzenje.

**MEDIA SUPPORT**

*Vicinities* hosted 14 shows in 2014 and they were broadcast by
- TV Alsat M, Skopje
- BHRT (Radio-television Bosnia-Herzegovina), Sarajevo
- HRT (Croatian radio-television), Zagreb
- RTK (Radio, television Kosovo), Priština
- RTS (Radio-television Serbia), Belgrade
- RTV BN (Radio-television Bijeljina), Bijeljina
- Radio television Slovenia, Ljubljana
- TV Vijesti, Podgorica.

In addition, *Monitor* from Podgorica and *Dani* from Sarajevo were our media partners.