



THE HEART OF THE MATTER: What Future for the Balkans in the EU?

The role of arts and cultural cooperation in their
European integration

REPORT

of the ECF-Hivos Conference
Peace Palace – The Hague (NL) – 1 December 2005

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DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this report are those of the speakers at the conference and the writers of the various essays, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Cultural Foundation or Hivos. This report is not a literal transcription of the words said. It summarizes the main points made. The ECF cannot be held accountable for stated views.

FOREWORD

by Isabelle Schwarz

Cultural Policy Development Manager, ECF

Ten years after the Paris-Dayton Accord of November-December 1995, and at a moment when the European destiny of the Western Balkans is again being heavily discussed by politicians from the region and in Brussels, as well as by citizens, the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos) offered a platform to share analysis and views on the role of the arts and culture in the integration process.

The conference “The Heart of the Matter: What future for the Balkans in the EU?” that was held on 1 December 2005 at the Peace Palace in The Hague, made the case for culture and cultural cooperation to be included in the integration road map. At a time of “enlargement fatigue”, cultural engagement can reinvigorate political dialogue, break prejudices and contribute to stability in the region.

Based on the report of the International Commission on the Balkans and the work of the ECF’s Balkan Reflection Group, the conference discussed concrete and complementary political and cultural measures to facilitate the region’s inclusion in the EU.

The key arguments and demands made by politicians, civil society representatives, cultural operators and artists are summarized in this report. Based on these findings, we will continue our advocacy and awareness-raising among European citizens.

Among the most urgent next steps are the following:

- Ø *On EU level:* Within the financial framework for the years 2007-2014 (European Council decision in December 2005), adequate and financially feasible provision for the participation of the Western Balkans in the future Culture 2007 programme must be secured. Cultural cooperation must be included as a transversal action in other community programmes, e. g. CARDS should be opened up to culture.
- Ø *On the level of the Stability Pact:* The lobby for the inclusion of culture, cultural capacity building measures and mobility in the Pact should be pushed further.
- Ø *On Member state level:* The Austrian presidency of the EU (January-June 2006) can be of great support.
- Ø *On the level of various stakeholders:* Contributions to the flexible Incentive Fund for regional cultural cooperation, launched in the Hague, are required to bridge the gap between the current lack of funds and the full recognition of culture in future EU programmes.
- Ø *On national/regional/local levels:* Continued awareness-raising regarding the role of the arts and culture for an inclusive Europe is needed.

The ECF and Hivos – supported by other civil society organisations - will continue to advocate along the above points of direction.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Peace Palace, The Hague (NL) – 1 December 2005

BACKGROUND

The task of the ECF Reflection Group on the Balkans is twofold: to examine the role played by the arts and culture in the conflicts which led to the fall of the old regimes in Yugoslavia and Albania; and to explore the potential of the arts and culture to foster reconciliation, development, and European integration. The conference will add a much-needed cultural analysis to the current political debates concerning the Balkans and the EU. Members of the ECF Reflection Group and the International Commission on the Balkans will discuss their findings along with European policymakers, diplomats, ministry officials, foundation representatives, cultural organisations, artists and the media.

PROGRAMME

14:00 Opening by Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh, Chair of the Board of the ECF

14:15 Video: the arts before, during and after the crises – inspiring and infamous moments

14:25 Dutch writer Ronald Giphart interviews Bosnian artist Šejla Kamerić about her work

14:40 Part I: The Balkans and their European future: cultural and political perspectives.
Moderated by Chris Keulemans, journalist.

Objective:

To present the conclusions of the ECF's Balkan Reflection Group regarding "The cultural dimension of the (Western) Balkans' European integration process", in the light of the recent political analysis by the International Commission on the Balkans.

Panel discussion with:

- International Commission on the Balkans: Goran Svilanović, Chair of the Working Table I of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro; Vessela Tcherneva, Project Director, International Balkan Commission
- Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe: Marijana Grandits, Director, Working Table I: Democracy
- ECF Reflection group: Sreten Ugričić, writer and director of the National Library of Serbia, Belgrade; Goran Sergej Pristaš, dramaturge and choreographer, Zagreb; Aida Kalender, journalist and arts manager, Sarajevo

Issues of contention:

Why speak of integration now, after Europe's 'No' to an EU Constitution, and at a time when the Balkans remain a zone of instability and even a hotbed of organised crime?

Why support art when there are more immediately pressing political and economic needs, and when governments in the region do not take their own cultural responsibilities seriously?

Debate with the audience

16:15 Break

16:45 Dutch writer Manon Uphoff interviews the Kosovar artist Erzen Shkololli about his work

17:00 Part II: The prospects for an integrated cultural and political integration strategy for the Balkans. What practical measures need to be taken at the various levels of cooperation? Moderated by Wolfgang Petritsch, Austrian Ambassador to the UN in Geneva and former High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Objective:

To discuss the shared responsibilities of European decision-makers and civil society actors at a time of 'enlargement fatigue'.

Panel discussion with:

- Joost Lagendijk, Group of the Greens, European Parliament
- Ben Bot, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands
- Emil Brix, Director General for Cultural Policies, Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Allert van den Ham, Director Programmes and Projects, Hivos
- Goran Sergej Pristaš, Member of the Balkan Reflection Group
- Gottfried Wagner, Director, European Cultural Foundation

Issues of contention:

What can the European Commission, the EU member states and civil society actors actually do?

What are the obstacles, the levels of responsibility and the timetable?

Debate with the audience

18:45 Personal reflections by Macedonian playwright Goran Stefanovski

19:00 Reception

20:00 End of the conference

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

by Hanneloes Weeda, Senior Development Officer, ECF

'If we have learned one lesson from 30-40 years of global development processes, it is that sustainable development presupposes a mutual understanding between people, a mutual trust... Arts and culture are essential elements in fostering social capital. We have not invested enough in this in the past. Arts and Culture provide a platform for further cooperation in other fields. The economy for example is helped by cultural cooperation.'
Allert van den Ham, Director Programmes and Projects, Hivos

INTRODUCTION

If one thing became clear during the half day conference in The Hague on December 1st 2005, it was that, despite various advocacy campaigns and lobbying initiatives on European level over the past few years, the lobby for the recognition of artistic and cultural cooperation as a major force in the European integration process of the Western Balkan countries is still not as concentrated as it should be. In a very intense working atmosphere, representatives from the European and national policy making levels, foundations, cultural organisations along with diplomats, ministry officials, artists and journalists, each highlighted this opinion from their very own perspective, leaving behind a collage of different positions, and an action list of very concrete pointers to the direction that an enhanced and concerted advocacy effort should take.

Some examples:

- Ø The EU needs now to actively *engage* the countries of the Western Balkans in a process of *member state building*¹.
- Ø Culture should be included in the *capacity building* programmes of the EU and the Stability Pact².
- Ø A new *arts and culture fund for regional cooperation* should be created, with a substantial budget for support to organic changes in the Western Balkans³.
- Ø EU technical assistance programmes such as *CARDS*, should be opened up to culture⁴.
- Ø *Concrete proposals* should be formulated on paper and laid before the politicians, accompanied by a serious lobbying effort⁵.

¹ Goran Svilanović, Chair of the Working Table I of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro

² Aida Kalender, journalist and arts manager, Sarajevo

³ Sreten Ugričić, writer and director of the National Library of Serbia, Belgrade

⁴ Gottfried Wagner, Director ECF

⁵ Ben Bot, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands

And very concretely:

- Ø The lobby for culture should be directed towards the highest political levels⁶:
 - approach the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, not only the Commissioner for Education and Culture;
 - break through the barriers of the small cultural community;
 - approach the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs with respect to the Austrian EU presidency in 2006.
- Ø Pressure politicians on the local level⁷:
 - lobby local politicians during their election campaigns;
 - use key priorities, such as youth policy in one's arguments;
 - work collaboratively, combining different levels and sectors in the lobby;
 - think about public/private/civic partnerships;
 - open up to the business sector, as their lobby is powerful when finding the economic value for one's arguments.
- Ø The European Parliament needs to be lobbied for culture as it is for education. Pressure groups from the cultural sector in the Western Balkans should visit the European Parliament⁸.
- Ø The EU's CARDS programme could be opened for capacity building. Or it could be used to assist WB countries to pay their entry fee for participating in the EU programmes⁹.
- Ø For civil society organizations, three tools are needed for cultural cooperation and infrastructure development¹⁰:
 - mobility;
 - capacity building;
 - a flexible fund for regional cooperation.

This report does not constitute an exact minutes of the proceedings of the conference, but highlights only some of the main points made, concentrating mainly on practical recommendations, arguments and context settings that can serve to assist those who will embark upon follow up actions to this event. Therefore, not all the words or comments of all speakers will have found their way into this document. Background and illustrative descriptions in particular have not been recorded here. Neither do we provide space in this document to once again exhibit the artistic work that was presented and discussed in the interviews with artists at the conference. For further information about the video "the arts before, during and after the crises – inspiring and infamous moments", or about the work of the artists Šejla Kamerić and Erzen Shkololli please contact the ECF in Amsterdam.

⁶ Marijana Grandits, Director, Working Table I: Democracy of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

⁷ Goran Sergej Pristaš, dramaturge and choreographer, Zagreb

⁸ Joost Lagendijk, Group of the Greens, European Parliament

⁹ Gottfried Wagner, Director ECF

¹⁰ Gottfried Wagner, Director ECF

THE PROCEEDINGS

After opening words by Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh, Chair of the Board of the ECF, the conference moderator, Chris Keulemans gears the attention to the main aim of the afternoon, namely how to raise support on a political level for more assistance for artists and the arts in the Western Balkans. A short video film entitled “the arts before, during and after the crises – inspiring and infamous moments”, complemented by an interview with the Bosnian visual artist Šejla Kamerić serves to remind the audience of the role that the arts can play in times of war and the comment art made on society in post-war Balkan society.

‘Artists are always engaged. They always reflect what is around them. They therefore have the power to heal, change and comment and they have to be aware of this role.’
Šejla Kamerić

PART 1:

THE BALKANS AND THEIR EUROPEAN FUTURE: CULTURAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES.

Moderated by Chris Keulemans, journalist.

The panel discussion begins with a report on the findings of the International Commission on the Balkans, presented by Goran Svilanović, Chair of Working Table I of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro. Svilanović highlights the Commission’s final goal, which has been formulated as the celebration of the Western Balkan’s integration in the EU in the year 2014. This date, early for some, too late for others, is intended to stimulate some positive energy in the process of preparation for EU integration. The EU should not take in a number of corrupt and weak administrations. The status quo has outlived its usefulness. Reformers can start from the status quo and from the current agreements and accords for the individual countries that are in place, but they do not constitute a solid enough base to bring these states into the EU. The only way to integrate this region, says Svilanović, is to embark on a process akin to Stabilisation and Association Programme (SAP), but enriched with an element called *member state building*, engaging each individual state and helping it overcome the problems it is in. To accomplish this leadership is required, leadership that is able to explain to the people what the idea behind the Big United Europe is, and how this will translate into their everyday lives. Communicating the idea of Europe in the Western

Balkans urgently requires a major effort.¹¹ This leadership, and the ability to explain to people what really happened in their recent history and why, has been lacking to date.

Vessela Tcherneva, Project Director of the International Balkan Commission backs these arguments by quoting from the results of the Commission's survey carried out in the region.¹² One overriding conclusion to counteract the high level of pessimism in the region, caused by the crisis of the systems in the individual states and the defensive attitude of many of its people who tend to prefer to stick to the status quo, is that the only common platform in the Western Balkans is the European Union. The EU constitutes the only ground where expectations meet and where optimism exists. Not only for the individual states themselves, but also for the future of their neighbours.

In general the report has been very well received in the countries of the region, as well as outside and a lobbying process has been started to advocate for the implementation of its recommendations. Chris Keulemans reminds the panellists of the fact that there is not a mention of arts and culture in the whole report.

And why are cultural questions avoided in the discourse of the Stability Pact?

Marijana Grandits, Director of Working Table I: Democracy, of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe proceeds to explain that culture is always hidden away in a corner somewhere because the highest political levels, i.e. the Prime Ministers and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs are never challenged to take a position on culture, or argument its relevance. This is the reason why culture was left off the agenda of the Stability Pact. Maybe some politicians are also afraid of the confrontation with arts and culture. There has not been a strong lobby for culture as there has been for gender issues for example. Women's organizations from across the Balkans organized themselves and marched to Sarajevo. Artists were unfortunately not well enough organised at the time the priorities of the Stability Pact were set. Neither do they yet master the art of using culture and the arts as a tool for communication in their lobbying effort. Such communication is necessary for civil society groups to show how they would like to see their Europe.

To the question as to whom in the Stability Pact a lobby should target Grandits answers: the Commissioner for Enlargement, not the Commissioner for Education and Culture, as well as the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the member states (and especially the Austrian Foreign Minister in preparation of Austria's presidency of the EU). The sector should break through the small group of cultural operators it currently constitutes, put its lobby on paper and present it at the highest political levels.

¹¹ See the report of the International Commission on the Balkans: "The Balkans in Europe's Future"

¹² All findings can be found in the above-mentioned report.

Svilanović adds that, in parallel to this, it is equally necessary to lobby politicians on the level of their own national, political interests.

The discussions now turn to the voice of the independent sector, and in particular to the group of small civil sector organizations that replaced the mainstream larger institutions in picking up cultural life during and after the war [Aida Kalender, journalist and arts manager, Sarajevo]. This small, often innovative, dynamic and flexible group of cultural organisations made up the core of civil society. In the beginning they were primarily supported by international funds and now that foreign donors are tending to withdraw from the region, these NGOs are being left alone to fend for themselves. They are faced by new challenges – to make links with their own local governments, and to undergo a process of capacity building and organizational strengthening so that they can become sustainable, self-sufficient organizations. It is in this context that Kalender advocates for the inclusion of culture in the capacity building programmes of the European Union and the Stability Pact. Furthermore, pressure must be made on all Ministers of Culture to include culture and the arts more substantially than is currently the case into the accession criteria of the EU.

Goran Sergej Pristaš, dramaturge and choreographer from Zagreb supports Kalender's opinion that everything that happens on the local level is connected to the regional level and vice versa. One cannot think about regional collaboration without solving one's problems on the local level. A major problem remains the institutional framework in each country, which is very solid and stuck in the vertical processes of administration. The time has not yet come for easy regional collaboration between the large cultural institutions. It was cultural civil society that kept the communication between the countries going during the war, and this was in particular due to the *transversal logic* of culture and civil society. Now there is another major force at play, namely the private business sector, which is adding a new dimension to this logic. The new platforms of debate and cooperation that have been appearing¹³ and that thrive on the transversal effort of combining different sectors and levels, should now be recognized as highly valuable lobbying platforms on the local and regional level.

Keulemans asks Pristaš which mechanisms such a platform as *Clubture* employs to convince local politicians of its message. Clubture targets politicians during their election campaigns and uses arguments that weigh heavily on the local politician's electoral agenda, such as youth policy. Moreover, Clubture is a collaboration project combining the different private, public and civic sectors, which reinforces its lobbying potential on all fronts. Such initiatives display the potential of the independent civil sector to organize itself. And since politics is also a matter of organization, this new civil society engine in society can serve as a model for the political process in general.

¹³ In Croatia for example - Clubture, see www.clubture.org

'Europe is a post-Balkan phenomenon.'
Sreten Ugricic

Sreten Ugričić, writer and director of the National Library of Serbia in Belgrade remarks that many of the required answers to the problems of the region are cultural answers, because the bad elements in politics and society, such as corruption and war are all cultural elements. In order for the societies of the Balkans to reach the standard of being truly “knowledge-based”, citizens should be stimulated not to *imitate* European standards and democracy, but to *participate* in them. Simultaneously, the Balkan states should move from representing *identity* culture, to a culture of *responsibility*. In order to support this and to remove the prejudices that are still very strong vis-à-vis the Western Balkans, certain new tools such as a clearing house to promote Balkan arts and culture, a book centre dealing with promotion of Balkan literature abroad, and the constitution of a new arts and culture fund for Western Balkan-EU cooperation could be envisaged.

The theme of prejudice and changing identity are further remarked upon by and visualized in the work of Kosovar artist Erzen Shkololli.

'The treatment Europe gives to places outside the EU is very different to what you get from Europe when you live in EU.'
Erzen Shkololli

PART 2:

THE PROSPECTS FOR AN INTEGRATED CULTURAL AND POLITICAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY FOR THE BALKANS.
WHAT PRACTICAL MEASURES NEED TO BE TAKEN AT THE VARIOUS LEVELS OF COOPERATION?

Moderated by Wolfgang Petritsch, Austrian Ambassador to the UN in Geneva and former High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina

The aim of the second panel is to discuss the shared responsibilities of European decision makers and civil society actors at a time of enlargement fatigue. Petritsch starts by recapitulating some of the main comments made in the first part of the conference. He reminds the audience of the overriding opinion that the only uniting factor for the Balkans can be their joining the EU, but warns that this could create an illusion in the Balkans that the EU is the saving grace for all problems. The task ahead is a more practical one. What are the prospects for a comprehensive EU strategy for the Balkans? How to integrate the political side with the cultural side? Where are the shared responsibilities and what are the practical measures that need to be taken at various levels (local/country, regional, EU)?

Ben Bot, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands opens the floor by stating that the main preoccupation of EU-Western Balkan relations in the EU General Affairs Council is political and that culture is only mentioned occasionally. Culture is discussed as one means of realising the main objective – which is to bring peace, stability and prosperity to the region. And the main way to attain peace in the Balkans is through rapprochement to the EU. Closer economic ties will stimulate economic progress and commerce among the WB countries themselves and between the Western Balkans and the EU. In this context, cultural ties and relations have an important role to play. This can be illustrated by a number of internationally financed cultural projects (e.g. the restoration of the Mostar bridge). The fact that the international community finances certain important cultural projects in the Western Balkans is an important political statement. The EU does not only issue political statements, but tries to draw the people into the process, by making *visible* what it is trying to attain. The international community is trying to connect people, regions and countries that have undergone enormous changes and have undergone terrible wars and that are looking for a new future. Culture is a binding element here, if understood in a wider context, encompassing education, exchange of students, the restoration of heritage, lectures about political issues, exchange of artists. This will make the Balkans more visible and understandable in the EU also.

Integration is not only a political issue. It can only be made understandable and can involve people, if it includes a cultural element.

How can we introduce a smart visa system, so that we do not have to wait until the Western Balkan states are perfect European states, before its people are allowed to cross our borders?

To the question as to whether there is in the EU a willingness to open up borders for young people to travel (smart visa), since some 70% of students from the Western Balkan countries have never travelled abroad or seen a foreign capital [Svilanović], Bot remarks: Whilst the EU is grappling with migration and integration policy, the whole issue of visa remains very complex. One can only introduce a liberal visa policy if one can be sure that the data and information one is getting from the other side is correct. And that those who are applying for a visa, for whatever reason, are really coming for the purpose envisaged. In the EU we are currently trying to harmonise our policies. And we see that certain processes in the Balkans have led to a restrictive policy.

In the context of such a conference as this, it is suggested, we should together try to better identify *which* people should qualify for visa and how we should handle this issue. Eventual proposals could be submitted to the Justice and Home Affairs Council.

Is the Council of Ministers in Brussels aware that for the WB, integration and EU membership is such a *crucial* issue for the future of the region?

Minister Bot asserts that the EU has realised for a long time that, if we want to bring stability to the region and raise the level of prosperity in the Western Balkans to that as we enjoy ourselves, the only way forward is to incorporate the region in the EU. But it is a question of willingness on both sides. There are several means to prepare the WB countries for membership, through the SAP, through the status of candidate country to the EU. This includes financing. Investing in cultural exchanges would be a good tool to bring the two sides closer together, so that the two sides can get to know each other better and get rid of certain wrong perceptions.

As far as the European Parliament is concerned, Joost Lagendijk from the Group of the Greens identifies three roles:

- 1) The EP is a platform on which to debate what the EU should do for the Western Balkans. In general one should not underestimate that the general climate in the EU towards enlargement and inclusion of the Balkans is not that favourable. The EP should listen to the EU population's views on enlargement, but at the same time stick to its (the EU's) commitment to the Balkans. This is a debate and euro-parliamentarians have an important role to play here.
- 2) The EP has a procedural role in the debate on enlargement. At the end of the day, the EP has to take the hard decision about which country joins and which does not. The EP is heavily involved in the run up to accession of any member state. It looks at how countries are performing and the issues at stake, such as rule of law, human rights, judicial reform etc.

- 3) The EP monitors how money of the EU budget is spent and assesses whether the money could be better spent, or should be spent on other issues. The question why so little money is spent on culture, Lagendijk would answer with the following plea: The European Parliament needs to be more actively lobbied for culture. Rarely does a group from the cultural sector of the Balkans visit the EP to lobby. Yet the Parliament needs to see the added value of cultural projects. Lagendijk issues a warning. To be able to spend money on culture, the EU in the first place needs some money to spend. And the Balkans are not highly rewarded in the EU budget. There will be a tendency to spend less on the budget for foreign policy in general in the coming years.

Emil Brix, Director General for Cultural Policies of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asserts that it is not only necessary to support the integration process from the point of the *acquis communautaire*, but that some countries, of which Austria is one, support the Western Balkans from a more emotional/cultural angle. The Austrian presidency of the EU will put forward some of the practical issues that need to be faced vis-à-vis the Western Balkans. Some of them may seem to have nothing to do with culture, but many do, such as minority rights - which is a cultural issue (for example, how to secure the collaboration of religious communities?). The Austrian presidency will not advocate isolated solutions. Finally, the integration of the WB has to be part of a coordinated strategy.

It is important to keep in mind, when one talks about integration, mentions Brix, that nationalistic views, even those hinting at genetic differences between nations, still exist in the Balkan region, and that accession to the EU will not automatically ban such opinions from these societies. This is one of the reasons why the Austrian government invests in cultural issues.

During the Austrian presidency, there will be certain specific cultural projects. Discussion on the Western Balkans will be included in all discussions of the Council of Ministers, whenever possible. Education ministers, for example, will have a special meeting on how to integrate WB educational issues in EU programmes. Ministers of Interior and all the other ministers will do the same. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs will meet in a special session in Salzburg to try and come up with an analysis of the given situation.

'We can export stability or import instability.' Emil Brix

Why do so few development agencies have culture as one of their priorities? If we have learned one lesson from 30-40 years of global development processes, says Allert van den Ham, the Director of Programmes and Projects at Hivos, it is that sustainable development presupposes a mutual understanding between people, and mutual trust. This is the social capital that is needed to bring a sustainable development force into being. There is a lack of trust in the EU towards the Balkans.

There is a lack of the bridging social capital between these two parts of Europe. Art, as a reflection of the ideas, concerns and aspirations of people can help the bridging process. Arts and Culture are essential elements in fostering social capital (which is needed for economic cooperation). We have not invested enough in this in the past. Arts and Culture provide a platform for further cooperation in other fields. Political cooperation presupposes some common ground, which can be fostered by culture.

Gottfried Wagner, Director of the European Cultural Foundation, continues in the same line of thought, calling for an end of the stigmatisation of the Balkans and confidence into the future. Culture is a prior means for creating confidence, even though it is known also to divide. It is the genuine independence of artists, their critical voice, their autonomy, their power of imagination, which civil societies need to flourish. In a way it is un-understandable why EU Balkan policy, knowing the role that culture has played in the war, has not so far paid any attention to culture.

Some practical steps to intensify action ahead would include:

- Ø Opening up the Balkan assistance programme CARDS to culture.
- Ø Increasing the Culture 2007 budget to allow for the inclusion of the Western Balkan countries.

We have been lobbying for a reasonably increased budget for Culture 2007 (70 cents per citizen for culture campaign); we have succeeded insofar as the EP has decided to vote for an almost doubled budget (600 Mio for 7 years), and we have failed, since this only means 17 cents per citizen; however, even the increase proposed by the EP is not yet secured. If the Western Balkans are included into Culture 2007, the amount of funds available will be disproportionately low per capita. On top, countries of the region cannot pay the entry fee to participate in the Culture programme. A concrete proposal is that CARDS be used to assist WB countries to pay their entry fee to participating in the EU programmes. Furthermore: The 5% operating fee for partner organizations in Culture 2000 is a major hindrance. Can this stipulation be removed?

Good will is needed on both sides, the EU, and national governments, to put culture on the agenda.

But it is not only about money. It is also about the ability of local decision makers and organisations to contribute to making democratic cultural policies. We need to give incentives for participatory cultural policy making in the Balkan countries.

What is needed now is a bridge between today, 2005, and the time when there will hopefully be sufficient EU instruments (2007/2008?) in place and fully in use (2008/09/10?). This bridge can be formed by counting upon civil society organisations. But the EU – and the member states - must provide a real signal to support this.

A flexible fund is needed to respond to what the cultural sector in the WB has been calling for:

- Mobility possibilities for artists and teachers;
- Capacity building for the independent sector;
- Regional cooperation, through which artists can work across borders.

The ECF will continue to invest in the above in the coming years. Hivos will consider very seriously continuing joining the ECF in this effort. The Open Society Institute (OSI) has also announced its participation in a fund as the above-mentioned.

In response, Minister Bot invites the audience to put all such proposals on paper and to submit this to the Minister, and the Ministers in the other 25 EU countries, as well as to the European Commission, in concrete terms, supported by a major lobbying effort. Legendijk adds that CARDS in its current form will be ending in one year and that it would still be possible to include some softer issues such as education, culture and research.

Finally Pristaš refers to the pessimism that has been growing as a result of the many rules imposed and the vertical methods of communication between the EU and the institutions in the WB, which are blocking the dynamics of local development. New methods and models of communication are needed and also those that are a reflection of the actual situation and which can respond to this in a flexible way. We also have to recognise the local know-how, which is already very strong. This must be transferred to the regional level.

Art is a place where new models of communication are developed. New systems of decision making, about how we present ourselves. If we can use this tool of creativity and reflect it on a wider social level, we might put the whole frame of the cultural field into discussion, in the process of integration of the cultural institutions for example.

Some reactions from the floor include:

- Ø a reminder that the European movement was initially developed in 1948 in three commissions, the political, the economic and the cultural. The cultural commission stood on an equal level to the others [Sneska Quadvlieg-Mihailovic, Secretary General, Europa Nostra].
- Ø OSI's exit strategy from the region was geared at empowering the independent NGOs which it had been supporting. What is needed now is a fund for regional cooperation, not local actions, concentrating on intercultural dialogue. OSI wants to support real collaborative art projects. The know-how in the region is great, but the region is not yet ready to make this visible. The Western Balkans is not yet on the intellectual production map of Europe and we should therefore invest in

supporting and sustaining know-how in the coming years [Milena Dragicevic-Sesic, University of Arts, Belgrade].

- Ø some issues require technical clarification [Krzysztof Kania, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission]:
 - Culture is part of the *acquis communautaire* – chapter 16.40
 - The Western Balkans are not part of the neighbourhood policy of EU, because they have a European destiny.
 - All WB countries are entitled to participate in EU programmes of the third generation as of 2007. There is already an application from Croatia.
- Ø in the spirit of international dialogue, Greece has many cooperation projects with the countries of the Western Balkans. There are currently negotiations underway, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the United Nations, concerning the issue of the name for FYROM [Vassilios Kraniotis, representative of the Greek embassy in NL].
- Ø Cultural collaboration within the Western Balkan region does exist already in the form of long-term platforms, which include the business sector. [Emina Visnic, Association Clubture, Croatia]
- Ø There will be a first Balkan performing arts market in Thessalonica from 19-21 May 2006, which is open (via free access) to artists from the Western Balkans. This initiative will stimulate the mobility of Balkan artists [Giorgia Iliopoulou, Hellenic Cultural Organisation in Greece]. Cooperation is sought with the European Cultural Foundation to grant the participating artists.

Chris Keulemans wraps up the proceedings by drawing the attention back to the fact that this conference has brought a few new entrances for the lobby ahead of the cultural sector. Networking has already started. The beginnings of a new fund are materialising with 3 committed partners already in place. And the overriding conclusion of the conference is that it is high time to change the stereotypes about the Balkans.

Personal reflections by Macedonian playwright Goran Stefanovski bring the whole to a close. Please see annex VI for the literal text of this wonderful concluder.

Hanneloes Weeda

Amsterdam, 16 December 2005

ANNEXES

I INTRODUCTORY CONFERENCE PAPER

THE BALKANS – THE HEART OF THE MATTER

A European Cultural Foundation (ECF) - Hivos initiative analyzing:

Why and how the arts and artists in the Balkans were crucial before, during and after the crises; what their place and role is today; and why and how the EU should include culture in European cooperation frameworks with South Eastern Europe.

‘I’ve spent half of my life reading nice verse, good plays, watching nice paintings, and you can’t tell me that I don’t understand how great the historical value of the Old Bridge was.’

Slobodan Praljak, theatre director and general of the Croatian Army who ordered the destruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar (Vreme, 1995)

Context

The year 2005 will be crucial for the European destiny of South East Europe. It will commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the massacre at Srebrenica and will also mark 10 years of the Dayton Accord. In autumn, the Kosovo negotiations are expected to start, with consequences for the whole region. Croatia will most possibly enter accession negotiations with the EU. Macedonia hopes to be given the status of EU candidate country. EU members will make their final decision on the EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania. This, at least, was the perspective before the negative outcome of the referenda in France and the Netherlands on the EU Constitution and the subsequent “crisis” of the EU which has become overt. While before the massive NO vote on the constitutional treaty, the region had already slipped from public and political attention in Western Europe, with some far-sighted exceptions like the reports of the International Commission on the Balkans or the International Crisis Group on Kosovo, now much seems to have changed. “Enlargement fatigue” has been named as one of the reasons of the crisis, the speed of enlargement is quoted to be a major reason for civil rejection of the project Europe. Well informed analysts have depicted an integration perspective for the “Western Balkans” as the only solution for lasting peace, reconciliation and some prosperity. This view will face even more policy obstacles than before, and the sharply-disputed EU budget for 2007-2013 – whenever it will be established – will neither provide much space for a strategic Neighbourhood Policy worth its name, nor for enhanced integration policies vis-à-vis the Balkans. The troubled countries of the Balkans, whose economic, social and societal improvements are so relevant for the continent as a whole, will, most probably, have to be patient.

In the 1990s culture was “used” and mis-used when the hostilities in the Balkans started, as a weapon for stimulating hatred and nationalism. It was intellectuals, artists and cultural organisations who kept civil society alive and nurtured civil disobedience against the war-lords.

The costs of the wars, and of reconstruction, have been enormous. The international community spent billions on the region, yet, still there are weak states and weak civil societies, and the auspices for improvement are as probable as for gloomy scenarios.

We have to realise that preparing “integration” of the region will not succeed without substantial investment in civil society, education and culture.

And we have to advocate for awareness-raising within the “old” and “new” EU member states, that the destiny of the peoples in the Balkans is our destiny. “Enlargement of Minds” needs cultural encounters, cooperation and shared visions.

It is therefore that the ECF lobbies, with friends and partners, for the Balkans to fully participate in community programmes and cooperation mechanisms, in spite of the overall scarcity of funds for an enlarged EU.

Culture is at the heart of the matter.

Goals

Acknowledging the tremendous role, also politically, the arts and artists have played in the past, and will continue to play in the development of societies in the region and their participation in European dynamics, the ECF wishes to highlight through the provision of thoroughly reflected and elaborated arguments the importance of a sustained structural support and cooperation in and within this region.

The ECF wishes to complement existing regional and international initiatives in this direction, like the work of the International Commission on the Balkans (“The Balkans in Europe’s Future”, 2005) by adding a cultural analysis of the past and current political context. It will explore the Balkan situation essentially from a cultural point of view assessing the challenges and potentialities that art and culture encompass in terms of European integration, citizenship and community-building.

Initiative

The European Cultural Foundation launched a Reflection Group process with artists, curators and art critics from the region, as well as cultural operators and Balkan experts to reflect upon the role the arts and artists have played after the fall of the ruling systems in Yugoslavia and Albania, during the wars in former Yugoslavia, and in the period of post-war rehabilitation attempts following the political crisis in Albania and the agreements which brought an end to the conflicts in: Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia and Croatia.

How fundamental are the arts and what role artists have in developing these new states, both in content and on a structural level? And why and how should they be supported on their way to European integration? These questions will be explored through two Reflection Group meetings, a public event in the city of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, The Hague, and a series of commissioned interviews and articles.

The *first Reflection Group* met in July 2005 in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. It discussed the role of the arts, namely the contemporary arts, before, and during the crises in the Balkans.

The *second Reflection Group* met in October 2005 in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro. It analysed the current translation of the value of the arts into EU policies and programmes, as well as in broader European cooperation schemes.

The *final event* in The Hague on 1 December 2005 will be discussing the conclusions of the two reflection groups and ‘translating’ the artistic/intellectual discourse to policy advocacy. It will debate the results with leading European and Dutch politicians, journalists and young people.

Collected and commissioned background material will support the process and a *publication* with the conclusions and outcomes of the initiative will be released in spring 2006.

I. Reflection Group 1: The role of the arts, their content, their effects

‘The time has come to pay for blood with blood.’

Rajko Petrov Nogo, Serbian poet and member of the Serbian PEN, greeting the destruction of Vukovar, in a speech at a cultural festival in Budva, Montenegro (Politika, 1991)

On 8-10 July, a group of six artists, curators and critics met for two days in Sarajevo. Presenting both notorious and brave examples, they discussed the role of the arts before, during and after the crises in their countries. Specifically about the arts, not about culture in general. And within the arts, specifically about ‘contemporary’ arts or ‘the creation of’ arts, including literature, performing arts and visual arts.

In the years before the war destroyed Yugoslavia, the already huge gap between the urban-cosmopolitan intellectuals/artists and the official structure of state-run cultural institutions widened. While many contemporary artists revelled in their growing liberty, international contacts and a post-modern disengagement from social reality (‘I’m standing on the balcony’, the avant-garde pop group Idoli sang, ‘looking down on the streets’), the ‘official’ artists and academicians hitched onto the nationalist frustrations growing both among political elites and rural populations. The infamous ‘Memorandum’ that the Serb Academy of Sciences and Arts produced in 1986 – ‘a self-pitying and self-indulgent squeamish complaint about the alleged economic and political decline of Serbia in the Yugoslav state’,

according to journalist Miloš Vasić – cemented the fatal relationship between nationalist artists and politicians.

In 1991, the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare saw euphoric masses pulling down statues of communist leaders. What they didn't notice, he wrote, was the gleam in the statues' eyes: 'You think you have toppled me, but it is me who has toppled you! The cruelty I have taught you is inside of yourselves.' In Yugoslavia, war broke out. Some artists fled the country, some withdrew into their libraries, some resisted the furor of nationalism, some joined the army and started killing former countrymen. In the new nation-states, history was rewritten. Suddenly, each of the Balkan peoples appeared to have the most ancient and noble claims to the land.

'Paint It Black has lots of elements of our folk music. The harmonic structure is very close to our own. Therefore, one might say that the Stones have plagiarized the Serbs.'

Dragan Kojić-Keba, Serbian folk singer (BH Dani, 1995)

The new discourses were often self-obsessive. To many, the outside world was the enemy. In Serbia, conspiracy theories abounded about 'the fundamentalists of the worldwide catholic multinational and the militant petro-dollar Islamic international', also known as Chrislam. In besieged Sarajevo, newspapers 'uncovered' plots of groups like Vatican mercenaries, Komintern agents, Croatian traitors, Serbian assassins and Masonic conspirators. In Croatia, everything had to be new and pure: the language, the street signs, the social codes. When she saw people in the street selling cans of Pure Croatian Air, the writer Dubravka Ugrešić decided 'to cleanse the country of myself', and left. As was the case for many artists who refused to obey the one and only national truth, she was infuriated by the stupidity and banality that Danilo Kiš had once called 'unbreakable as a plastic bottle.'

Resistance came in many forms, often based on an invincible sense of humour and a stubborn denial of reality. In Belgrade, independent radio B92 ironically prevented their fans from becoming yet another sect with their slogan 'Trust no one, not even us.' And the city that was isolated most severely from the rest of the world, Sarajevo, somehow became a beehive of cultural activity, with foreign guests shuttling in and out, thus making it into Europe's informal capital of culture.

Important, though very mixed in quality and effect, was the art produced in diaspora. Among the artists scattered across the world, there was a tendency to hold on to the concept of Yugoslavia – at least to the non-ethnic and non-nationalist atmosphere in which the arts had flourished – for a longer time than among those who stayed. Slowly but surely, though, most of the exiled artists gave in to the new reality.

As the Bosnian war came to an end in 1995, artists both inside and outside the young states faced bewildering dilemmas, not to speak of the terrible social, emotional and economic circumstances.

Those who had rode to power on the nationalist wave clung to their positions in the crumbling but inextinguishable institutions – unless they were chased as war criminals or committed suicide, like Nikola Koljević, the Shakespeare professor who had been Karadžić' right hand. Those who had opposed nationalism now had to deal with its less violent but equally demanding counterpart: the loyalty to the victims and their survivors. And amidst the frenzy of reconstruction after the damage on all levels, a prerequisite for any work of art was scarce: the ability to concentrate. For years, Bosnia didn't produce a serious novel about the war. 'Bosnia', said the young writer, bookseller and ex-soldier Damir Uzunović in 1999, 'is now a short-story country.' In a chaos that some artists had helped create, those who had kept their senses throughout the war were now at a loss for words and images. How to create after Srebrenica?

As a result, many living in countries not directly involved turned away from the Kosovo crisis. But in Serbia and Macedonia, many artists found it almost impossible to keep a cool mind amidst the bombardments and the streams of refugees that also spilled into Albania, a country recently ravaged by a complete financial collapse. Still, invigorating talent stepped forward from this mess, like playwright Biljana Srbijanović in Belgrade, artist/curator Edi Muka in Tirana and the very young group of Prishtina artists calling themselves the Post-Pessimists.

Everywhere in the region, a parallel structure appeared in the organization of the arts: the remnants of the old state institutions, now serving the new nations and struggling to survive on diminishing government funding with the old staff clinging to their jobs, and new initiatives providing space for the younger generation, funded by international sponsors.

But the international community is gradually moving away to new hot spots, just while artists throughout the region are rediscovering their potential. Resisting the stereotypes that are ready to engulf their work – the pathos of patriotism, the restrictions of religion, the self-pity of victimization, the exotic labelling of the western art market – there are now numerous examples of artists and art spaces proving their value to a fledgling new society, exactly by wrestling themselves free from group codes. The exploration of net culture and theory, the renovation of mummified theatres and galleries, the ironic play with cultural codes imported by the international community, the bittersweet reconstruction of communist icons, the search for non-patriotic signs and even monuments for societies still insecure of their identity, and maybe most important of all, the confrontation with the violence, the loss and the guilt

of the years of war – throughout the Balkans, artists are showing the intelligence that might be the most positive force emerging from their shambling, traumatized and disillusioned societies.

‘Do you know the difference between an optimist and a pessimist?’

‘Well?’

‘A pessimist believes that things can’t get any worse than they are. An optimist will say: Sure they can!’

Danis Tanović, *No Man’s Land* (2001)

II. Reflection Group 2: The value of the arts translated into EU cultural policy

‘To counter a certain *Balkan fatigue* of the international community, multilateral organizations and NGO’s,’ theatre scholar Dragan Klaić wrote in a recent ECF publication called ‘Europe as a Cultural Project’, ‘one needs to remember that the cultural realm generated much of the intolerance and hatred of the 1990s and thus needs to be encouraged to continue in a cooperative mode, locally, on the regional level and Europe-wide. And yet, paradoxically, culture is not even mentioned in the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe!’

How to convince politicians and decision-makers in the European Union that arts and culture should be high on the priority list to include in European cooperation frameworks? That was the issue for the second Reflection Group meeting that took place on 17-18 October in Belgrade.

This time, the company was joined by two or three policy experts on the region. Over the summer, the ECF commissioned a number of essays and interviews by/with members of the first Reflection Group, focusing on the issues discussed during the first meeting. These texts served as the basis for this second meeting, and will be used for a final publication to be released in spring 2006.

‘If the EU does not devise a bold strategy for accession that could encompass all Balkan countries as new members within the next decade, then it will become mired instead, as a neo-colonial power in places like Kosovo, Bosnia, and even Macedonia. Such an anachronism would be hard to manage and would be in contradiction with the very nature of the European Union. The real choice the EU is facing in the Balkans is: Enlargement or Empire.’

The Balkans in Europe’s Future, by the International Commission on the Balkans (2005)

Very recently, the International Commission on the Balkans – consisting of experienced politicians like Richard von Weizsäcker, Giulano Amato, Carl Bildt, Zlatko Lagumdžija, Kiro Gligorov, Goran Svilanović, Ilir Meta and executive director Ivan Krastev – came forth with a report that might turn out to be the most influential independent statement on the Balkan in recent years. The status quo in the Western Balkans, they claim, will lead to further unrest, poverty and possibly new wars, unless the EU commits itself now to the process of welcoming these countries as new member states in 2014.

The report focuses mainly on political and economic issues. The ECF aims to complete the analysis from a cultural point of view emphasizing the need to include a sound cultural policy into this 'bold strategy'.

Basing itself on the analysis developed in the two meetings of the Reflection Group, this policy should aim to break the status quo in matters of arts and culture in the Western Balkans. As it is, the scattering of international support provides incidental opportunities. But the structural flaws still glare, as Dragan Klaić describes: 'Increasingly, artists operate in an interdisciplinary mode against the discipline-driven profile of most cultural institutions. Artists develop a nomadic existence against the static habits of institutions. The sense of *creative time* of the artists and the sense of *programming / budgeting / production time* of the institutions do not overlap.'

The second Reflection Group translated the content produced by the first into a cultural policy that will correct current weaknesses on all sides.

The budget of the EU culture programme should be raised from the expected 70 million euro to 340 per year – as the ECF and EFAH campaign '70 Cents for Culture' proposes. Following this budget rise, the agents of EU programs should be recognizable, approachable and responsive to the artists and cultural organizations in the field. The multilateral programs should concentrate on: core funding for cultural initiatives that have proven their value but cannot survive in the market without sacrificing their principles; assistance in replacing outdated national cultural policy by one that is compatible to the changes in cultural practice; promoting the capacity building, cross-border cooperation and mobility of cultural operators in the region. (For further recommendations, see the ECF publication 'Europe as a Cultural Project'.

Bi-lateral support from EU countries should concentrate rather on partnership-building rather than on promotional purposes. While the presentation of Western arts and artists can be a valuable addition to the regional scene, the national agenda on either side is irrelevant and contrary to the artistic agenda of the persons and organizations involved.

However, financial perspectives are gloomy for multilateral cultural cooperation. Culture budgets have decreased in 14 of the 25 member states in the recent years. The proposed increase of the EU culture budget for 2007 – 2013 is meagre (500 Mio for 7 years!). It is therefore among the key priorities of the European Cultural Foundation to strive for, and initiate new private-public partnerships for innovative cross-border projects, especially for designing a policy vis-à-vis the neighbours of the Union, belonging to the shared European cultural space. Foundations have a key role to play in this, and therefore the ECF invites foundations, and other stakeholders, to join in some shared projects to establish standards of “cultural inclusion” beyond cultural diplomacy.

One of the weaknesses of cultural organizations in the Western Balkans is the discontinuity of their work, due to their instable financial situation and the regular emigration of staff members seeking the space to develop and educate themselves elsewhere. Core funding and mobility aid – which makes it easier to travel on a temporary basis – would counter this weakness, which often hampers international cooperation.

Incessant energy should be devoted to the developing or restructuring of national cultural policy in the region. Currently, local governments are either non-players or even obstacles in the dynamics of the art scene. The danger of a vacuum where governments have neither money nor capacity to support the local arts while international funding withdraws is imminent.

‘The reconstruction of the Belgrade scene did not happen so much in the ‘centres of resistance’ against the regime but rather through activating loose networks of contacts that young artists have established. These artists understand how to work out ideas with powerful images (which openly expose the constructed nature of identities) to counter the politics of national identity.’
Stevan Vuković, curator, in Report, Magazine for Arts and Civil Society in Central Europe (2004)

Chris Keulemans
Moderator

II RECOMMENDATIONS

(handed out at the conference)

AVOID FAILURE

The European Cultural Foundation, Hivos (the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries) and the members of the ECF Reflection Group on arts and culture in the Western Balkans believe that the step-by-step integration of the Western Balkans into the EU will fail if it does not recognize the role of arts and culture as part of the solution.

END STIGMATIZATION

We believe that any convincing political perspective needs to end the stigmatization of the Balkans, and to pave the way for an inclusive European citizenship, based on shared values, a shared political culture, and shared cultures.

STIMULATE DIALOGUE

We believe that the dialogue of civil societies – as a prerequisite for the integration of the region into the EU – can best be promoted through cultural, educational, youth and media cooperation. Through the freedom of their imaginations, artists can help to create the space for such dialogue. Cooperation, encounter, the experience of enrichment through cultural diversity will help the citizens of the EU to understand and support the integration strategy.

PROMOTE INCLUSION

At this crucial moment, we urge EU policymakers to include – in a real and substantial way – cultural cooperation in the integration road map, and to provide adequate means. We seek democratic and innovative cultural policies within the countries of the Western Balkans. And we ask for support for cultural capacity-building in the region as well as for regional cooperation, assisting artists and cultural operators to work together across borders and boundaries. We urge the European institutions and the member states to add a cultural chapter and financial substance to all Western Balkans policies in the years to come. By so doing, they will be preparing for the emergence of an inclusive community of European citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ECF BALKAN REFLECTION GROUP ON CULTURE

The Reflection Group consists of artists and cultural workers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo/a, Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro. Its members clearly recognize that there are many differences and different degrees of urgency within the region. Their reflections start from a belief in the value of the production of art at the highest level and the political recognition of the cultural sector's independence.

COUNTRY LEVEL

The INFRASTRUCTURE of the independent arts scene as a part of civil society, as well as its visibility and will to cooperate across borders, need to be actively strengthened, e.g. through creating and sustaining cultural centres for the performance, production, research and incubation of innovative, often multidisciplinary arts (CAPACITY BUILDING). The surprising energy and scope of the INDEPENDENT CULTURAL INITIATIVES that have been taking place ever since the beginning of the war ought to be documented.

The Reflection Group also emphasizes the demand for DEMOCRATIC CULTURAL POLICIES. PARTNERSHIPS are needed between the independent scene and the existing state-funded public institutions, both locally and nationally. Without entering into party politics, cultural workers should find a way to include the traditional public institutions and politicians in a DIALOGUE about developing a strategically planned, open-minded cultural policy.

Mechanisms to support the cultural industries in the region should be developed. Such a measure would recognize the economic impact of the cultural industries and their EMPOWERING capacity in societies exposed to market-driven populist culture.

Local recognition will be strengthened by recognition within the region and within Europe.

For this reason, support should be offered for COOPERATION between national and international advocacy initiatives and networks for the independent cultural scene. This support should be accompanied by INNOVATIVE ART EDUCATION and LOCAL MEDIA TRAINING so that serious cultural criticism can be developed and reach a wider audience.

At European level, recognition of and support for a strong independent cultural scene in the region could help to counterbalance the unpredictable effects of shifts in government power.

REGIONAL LEVEL

The Reflection Group advocates a genuinely CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF REGIONAL COOPERATION as opposed to artificial donor-driven gestures. Artistic cooperation has a logic and an urgency that makes it distinct from political cooperation. Artistic cooperation within the region can prove to be a model for other forms of cooperation. MOBILITY is the essence of regional cooperation. That is why smart visa should be introduced and why travel should be supported.

Real cooperation and CO-PRODUCTION are more interesting and have longer-lasting effects than mere co-presentations. The regional networks developed from this type of cooperation prove to be more flexible and effective than bilateral networks. SUSTAINABLE NETWORKS are essential for a new common cultural market in the region which would help to lower the number of artists leaving the Balkans in despair over their personal and professional circumstances.

Artistic cooperation between people and organisations in the Balkans, and the presentation of the results of this cooperation on the European scene, will help create a new, sophisticated and more vital IMAGE OF THE BALKANS IN EUROPE, in contrast to the stubborn PREJUDICES that currently prevail.

Artists in two particular countries will especially profit from cooperation: those in KOSOVO, which is often underrepresented in regional networks and where art has been strongly politicised; and in BOSNIA, where the cultural infrastructure is especially weak due to the absence of a cultural policy.

EU LEVEL

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES for the development of 'participative' cultural policymaking and infrastructure building as part of the EU accession process would stimulate governments to step up their support for the arts in their own countries.

The Reflection Group emphasizes the crucial role of the arts and culture in reinvigorating the EU integration process. They are pillars of the KNOWLEDGE-BASED, INNOVATIVE, INCLUSIVE AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES for which the EU strives. Supporting them means improving the *software* of the process. Consequently, the Reflection Group underlines the need for fully OPENING UP CURRENT AND FUTURE EU PROGRAMMES and for increasing the possibilities of FUNDING. Such future programmes as Culture 2007 should be easily accessible and avoid being unnecessarily complicated and expensive for Balkan partners. The ECF and the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH) will continue their '70 CENTS FOR CULTURE' advocacy campaign in order to further these budgetary and administrative demands. In conclusion, the Reflection Group maintains that 2006 will prove to be a historic year for the integration process.

CRUCIAL NEGOTIATIONS concerning most of the Balkan countries will take place then.

The arts and culture should be recognized as a positive force for cooperation and the representation of a new European Balkan IDENTITY on the way to full integration. The Austrian EU presidency, with its commitment to the Balkans, will provide an excellent platform for the launch of an innovative, sophisticated campaign to promote contemporary Balkan arts and cultural cooperation within both the region and Europe.

REFLECTION GROUP MEMBERS

Mehmet Behluli (artist and university professor, Prishtina) – Aida Kalender (arts manager and journalist, Sarajevo) – Šejla Kamerić (visual artist, Sarajevo) – Edi Muka (curator, Tirana) – Wolfgang Petritsch (Austrian ambassador to UN, Geneva) – Marijetica Potrč (architect and art critic, Ljubljana) - Goran Sergej Pristaš (dramaturge and choreographer, Zagreb) – Erzen Shkololli (visual artist and curator, Prishtina) – Violeta Simjanovska (cultural manager, Skopje) – Sreten Ugričić (writer and director of the national library, Belgrade) – Edin Zubčević (artistic director jazz festival, Sarajevo) – Chris Keulemans, writer and journalist, Moderator of the Reflection Group.

III BIOGRAPHIES OF THE SPEAKERS

BOT, Bernard Rudolf

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Since December 2003, Bernard Bot – a member of the Christian Democratic Alliance – is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. He studied law at Leiden University, the Hague Academy of International Law and Harvard Law School in Cambridge, where he obtained a Master of Laws degree. In 1968, he was awarded a doctorate in law by Leiden University. He worked for the Foreign Service of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1963 to 2002, with postings at the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the European Communities (1964-1970), the embassy in Buenos Aires, and the embassy in East Berlin (DDR). In 1976 he returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, where he remained until 1982. He then became Deputy Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to NATO in Brussels, a post he held until 1986 when he became ambassador to Turkey. From 1989 to 1992, he was Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and rounded off his civil service career as Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the European Union in Brussels.

BRIX, Emil

Director General for Cultural Policies, Ministry of Culture of Austria

Born in Vienna, Emil Brix is a historian and a diplomat. At present, he is Director General for Cultural Policies at the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretary General of the Austrian Research Association and Vice Chairman of the Institute for Danubian and Central European Affairs. He is the former Austrian Consul General in Krakow and Director of the Austrian Cultural Institute in London. From 1999 to 2002, he worked as Director of 'General Programming' at the Culture Department of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Brix has published many articles on Austrian and Central European history.

DITTRICH VAN WERINGH, Kathinka

Chair of the Board of the European Cultural Foundation

Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh studied history, political science and English. From 1994 to 1998, she was Head of Department for Cultural Affairs of the City of Cologne. Since 1998, she works as freelance cultural adviser. Since 2003, she chairs the executive committee of the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam. From 1975 to 1994, she worked as a correspondent for the *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel*. She is co-author and editor of various books on German-Dutch relations in the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. One of her areas of expertise is film. She is the author of *Der niederländische Spielfilm der dreißiger Jahre und die deutsche Filmemigration* (1987) and *Abenteuer Moskau* (1994/95). She published numerous articles on the history of film, on the role of culture, on German, foreign and European cultural policy and on German-Russian relations.

GIPHART, Ronald

Writer

While at university studying Dutch literature, Ronald Giphart worked as a hospital night porter. During these night hours he wrote his first novel, *Ik ook van jou* (I Do Too, 1992), which won the Gouden Elzesoort prize for the best-sold debut and which was made into a movie in 2001. *Phileine zegt sorry* (1996) was also made into a movie. He also published *Giph* (1993), *Feest der liefde* (The Feast of Love, 1995) and *De voorzitter* (The Soccer President, 1999). Since 1994, he has been a fulltime writer. He is a columnist for *Het Parool* and also contributes to *HP/De Tijd*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *De Groene Amsterdammer*, *Hard Gras* and others. Some of these contributions have been published in his third work, *Het feest der liefde* (1995). Giphart's combination of humour and melancholy can also be found in his last book *Troost* (Conciliation, 2005).

GRANDITS, Marijana

Director of the Working Table I “Democracy”, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Marijana Grandits is a founding member of the Austrian Green Party and the women's coalition in the Austrian Parliament. She was a member of the Austrian Parliament between 1990 and 1994. Throughout the 1990s, she was active in projects related to reconciliation and democratisation in the former Yugoslavia. She is also a leading voice in the Verona Forum – a group of intellectuals working towards peace and reconciliation in South Eastern Europe – and has been active in the Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights and other leading Austrian NGOs. She has been a member of the Human Rights Commission of the Austrian Ministry of Interior since 2000. Grandits is a regular lecturer at the European masters programme in human rights and democratisation. She holds a masters degree in international relations from Johns Hopkins University in Bologna.

KALENDER, Aida

Journalist and arts manager

Aida Kalender produced the wartime radio show ‘Rock Under Siege’ at the Radio ZID Sarajevo and published many articles on cultural subjects in magazines and newspapers in Sarajevo, Zagreb and Ljubljana. She has been professionally active in the Obala Arts Centre in Sarajevo, and for a number of years was the manager of the cultural NGO Akcija in Sarajevo that founded the annual International Advanced Music Festival Futura in 1998. Recently, she worked at *Mediacentar* Sarajevo where she started the regular cultural programme (cinema, music, debates, lectures, etc.) with the aim to establish a centre for culture and communication based on the model of Amsterdam’s *De Balie*, centre for culture and politics. In September 2005, Aida Kalender obtained an MA degree with honours in Art and Media Management in the European Context at the Utrecht School of Arts (HKU). Her research interests include various topics concerning the cross-sections of culture and politics, advocacy and networking for changes in cultural policy development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

KAMERIC, Sejla

Artist

Bosnian artist Sejla Kameric was born in Sarajevo. She is one out of the young Balkan artists who reflect in their work the dramatic processes of the disintegration of the local communist regimes and the subsequent painful search for a new national and social identity. Characteristic of this generation of post-war artists, who have been gradually making a name in the international scene since the mid 1990s, is the accentuation of the conflict between local cultural traditions and elements of the global lifestyle. In 1999 she completed her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo, Department of Graphic Design. Since 2003 she is member of the European Cultural Parliament. Kameric has shown her work in Sarajevo, Prague, Berlin, Vienna, Milan, Tokyo, etc. Her most popular works include, the *Bosnian Girl*, *Imagine*, *Frei*, *Others and Dreams*, *Dream House*, and *The American Dreams*.

KEULEMANS, Chris

Writer and journalist

Chris Keulemans (NL) is a writer of prose, essays and plays, as well as a journalist. In 1993, he co-founded Press Now, an NGO in support of independent media in the Balkans. From 1995 to 1999, he was Director of *De Balie*, centre for culture and politics in Amsterdam. Since then, he has travelled extensively in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Poland, the USA as well as in Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia, and Bosnia Herzegovina during and after the war. His travel stories appeared in the leading Dutch newspapers *de Volkskrant*, and *Vrij Nederland*. He was on the editing board of *Erewhon*, the literary magazine of the ex-Yu PEN Centre. His essay book on the war and the refugees, 'Van de zomer naar de werkelijkheid' (From summer to reality), was published in 1999, under the title 'Od zapada prema istoku' by Dani, Sarajevo. His latest novel, 'De Amerikaan die ik nooit geweest ben' ('The American I never was'), partly plays in Belgrade at the eve of the war. In 2003, he was jury member of the

MESS International Theatre Festival Sarajevo. He was actively involved in presenting Bosnian documentaries, theatre, literature and photography on Srebrenica in the Netherlands and is now back as Director of De Balie.

LAGENDIJK, Joost

Member of the European Parliament

Joost Lagendijk is a politician and member of the European Parliament. He joined *Groen Links*, a left wing party, which is part of the European Greens, and he actively participates in the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs. He is standing rapporteur for Kosovo and also a member of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, and a substitute for the Committee on Transport and Tourism. He is Chairman of the delegation of the EU–Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, and a member of the delegation for relations with the Gulf States, including Yemen. Lagendijk obtained his degree in History at the University of Utrecht in 1985 and worked as book salesman and publisher before he joined the Dutch house of Parliament and became Campaign Manager of *Groen Links*. Lagendijk is member of the European Parliament since 1998.

PETRITSCH, Wolfgang

Austrian Ambassador to the UN

Wolfgang Petritsch is currently Austria's ambassador to the United Nations, the WTO and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Prior to this assignment he served as his country's ambassador to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, followed by various European and international posts. Special envoy of the EU for Kosovo (1998-99) and later EU chief negotiator at the Kosovo peace talks in Rambouillet and Paris (1999). High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina in charge of the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords (1999-2002). Petritsch has published extensively on foreign and domestic policy issues. He co-authored the book *Kosovo-Kosova. Mythen, Daten, Fakten*. His latest book is *Bosnien und Herzegowina fünf Jahre nach Dayton - Hat der Friede eine Chance?*

PRISTAS, Goran Sergej

Dramaturge and choreographer

Pristas is choreographer, dramaturge, and assistant professor at the Drama Department of the Academy of Drama Art in Zagreb, Croatia. He is also editor-in-chief of the magazine *Frakcija* (Fraction). Pristas and Ivana Sajko founded the theatre group *BADco.* and the 'Nameless Authors Company' in 2000 while working with playwrights and artists (Pravdan Devlahovic and Nikolina Bujas-Pristas) on the project *Confessions* in Theatre & TD. Goran Sergej Pristas is involved in the productions of *BADco.* as director, choreographer, dramaturge and producer. *BADco.* is based in Zagreb.

SHKOLOLLI, Erzen

Artist

Shkololli is a Kosovan fine artist born in Peje. He completed his university studies at the Faculty of Arts in Prishtina. Erzen's works have been selected by famous art curators in Europe, among them Rene Blok and Harald Szeemann. His works have been exhibited at the well-known *Kunsthalle Art Gallery* in Kassel and at the prestigious European Biennial *Manifesta*. Breaking religious structures and cultural traditions as well as the presence of subversive issues are some of the elements that art historians and critics find in Erzen's work. Some would like to say that post conflict environments create special conditions for an artist and its creation. Erzen sees it as a reaction to the constant problems everybody has to face in such societies. He is a conceptual artist using different types of media.

STEFANOVSKI, Goran

Playwright

Goran Stefanovski is a Macedonian playwright and screenwriter. He was one of the leading playwrights of ex-Yugoslavia. He is also a teacher of scriptwriting. In 1986, he founded the playwriting course at the Faculty of Drama Arts in Skopje, Macedonia where he was a professor until 1998. Between 1998 and 2000, he was a visiting professor at the *Dramatiska Institutet* in Stockholm. He is now a free-lance writer, living in Canterbury, U.K. He teaches at Christ Church University.

SVILANOVIC, Goran

Chair of the Working Table I "Democracy", Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Goran Svilanovic was born in Gjilane, Kosovo. Since 2004, he is member of the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia. He is also member of the International Commission on the Balkans.

Svilanovic was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro from 2000 to 2004. Earlier, he was member of the Upper Chamber of the Federal Parliament and president of the Civic Alliance of Serbia. From 1989 to 1998, he has been a lecturer at the Faculty of Law at the University of Belgrade.

TCHERNEVA, Vessela

Project director of the International Commission on the Balkans

Vessela Tcherneva recently became managing editor of the Bulgarian Foreign Policy magazine. Since 2003, she is the project director of the International Commission on the Balkans and programme director at the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia, Bulgaria. Before, she was political officer at the Bulgarian embassy in Washington, DC. Her responsibilities included: bilateral US-Bulgarian relations; political-military and security issues including NATO enlargement; liaison with the US administration and NGOs. From 1998 to 2000, Tcherneva was foreign service officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria. Earlier, she was research assistant in the German Bundestag. Tcherneva holds a master degree in political science. She graduated in 1998 at the *Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universitaet* in Bonn.

UGRICIC, Sreten

Writer and philosopher

Sreten Ugricic was born in 1961 in Herceg-Novi, Yugoslavia. With a background in philosophy, he publishes prose, theoretical texts, art critics and socio-critical essays.

From 1989-1996 he was editor of the magazine *Pismo* and from 1989-1991 editor of *Univerzitetska misao*. He has been awarded numerous awards for his literary achievements. From 1992-1997 he was an assistant Professor at the department of Philosophy at the University of Pristina, teaching aesthetics and ethics. Before the conflict in Kosovo he was Programme Coordinator at the Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundation in Pristina, Kosovo.

Since 2001, Sreten Ugricic is the Director of the National Library of Serbia, heading the institutional reforms of the institution. He is also member of the Unesco committee of Serbia-Montenegro.

UPHOFF, Manon

Writer

Her stories have been published in various important Dutch periodicals and she writes regularly for newspapers and magazines. In 2002, Manon Uphoff was the first award winner of the C.C.S. Crone Prize, a prestigious literary prize awarded by the city of Utrecht. In 1995, she published a collection of short stories, *Begeerte* (Desire) that won the 1996 Rabobank Lenteprijs. Her first novel, published in 1997, named *Gemis* (Lack), portrays the world of a young girl in puberty and was translated into German (*Schlafkind*). Uphoff's second and third collection of short stories, *De fluwelen machine* (The Velvet Machine, 1998) and *Hij zegt dat ik niet dansen kan* (He Says I Can't Dance, 2000) won her many new admirers. *De vanger* (The Catcher) was published in 2002. This short novel is the first of a trilogy of short novels complemented in March 2004 with *De bastaard* (The Bastard).

VAN DEN HAM, Allert

Director of programmes and projects, Hivos

Allert van de Ham joined Hivos (the Dutch Humanist Institute for Cooperation with developing countries) in 2003. Prior to this employment, he worked for ten years at Novib (Oxfam Netherlands) in several functions, including Head of Financial Services, Head of General Project Bureau and Head of Middle-East, South and Central Asia. After completing his masters degree in social geography of developing countries at the University of Nijmegen (NL), van den Ham started his career as freelance publicist, working amongst others in Indonesia for eight years. In 2000, he graduated at the University of Wageningen (NL) with the dissertation *Think Big, Start Small*.

WAGNER, Gottfried

Director of the European Cultural Foundation

Gottfried Wagner is the Director of the ECF and the former Director of *KulturKontakt* Austria, a non-profit organisation for educational and cultural co-operation with Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. He has also worked for the Austrian Ministry of Education and the Arts and was responsible for educational co-operation with Central and Eastern Europe.

IV LIST OF COMMISSIONED ESSAYS

Report of the First ECF Balkan Reflection Group (RG) meeting by its moderator, Chris Keulemans [read more>>](#)

Report of the Second ECF Balkan Reflection Group meeting by its moderator, Chris Keulemans. [read more>>](#)

‘The Future is in the Balkans’ by Marjetica Potrc, Architect and Art Critic, Ljubljana - November 2005 [read more>>](#)

A post-Balkan symbolic infrastructure by Sreten Ugricic, Writer and Director of the National Library, Belgrade - November 2005 [read more>>](#)

The Cultural Education System in Kosovo - Searching for Alternatives by Mehmet Behluli, Artist and University Professor, Prishtina - November 2005 [read more>>](#)

The Model of the New Centre and Foundation in Zagreb, Croatia by Goran Sergej Pristas, Dramaturge and Choreographer, Zagreb - November 2005 [read more>>](#)

The path of Turning an Enemy into a Partner by Violeta Simjanovska, Cultural Manager, Skopje - November 2005 [read more>>](#)

‘Funding opportunities for international cultural cooperation in and with South East Europe’ - October 2005 [read more>>](#)

All papers are available on http://www.eurocult.org/chapter10/policy_detail.asp?policyID=17

V PERSONAL REFLECTIONS BY MACEDONIAN PLAYWRIGHT GORAN STEFANOVSKI

The Heart of The Matter, a speech Commissioned by the ECF for the conference

I am a playwright. I was born in the Republic of Macedonia where I lived most of my life. For 18 years my English wife Patricia lived there with me. Then, in 1992, with the collapse of Yugoslavia, she moved back to England. I started flying to and fro, between Skopje in Macedonia and Canterbury in England.

In the early years of my living in two worlds, I was lucky enough to work on a number of European projects. Most of them were in some way connected with the issues of civil society, “Enlargement of Minds”, cultural encounters, cooperation and shared visions.

I worked with a friend, a partner, a producer, an Italian American living in Sweden, called Chris Torch. Our projects included collaboration with various Eastern European artists, but were primarily co-financed by Western European countries and aimed at Western European audiences.

This packaging caused confusion and consternation in some quarters. I witnessed a series of misunderstandings and dramatic ironies, traps and pitfalls, hits and misses. Chris Torch believed he was championing the cause of sharing cultures, crossing borders, re-mapping, making sense of the new European challenges. He believed he was a mobile cultural operator, a pioneer of European integration, citizenship and community-building.

But on the ground, I heard libels, loud and hushed, aimed against him, but which reflected against me as well. Some folks saw him as a cigar-smoking slave driver. I heard the terms “cultural imperialist”, “multinational trickster”, “globalisation shark”. Both sides of the fence suspected him as someone who buys cheap artistic labour in the East and sells it for profit to the West. Many people didn’t care what the performances or the actual artistic articulation were like. They hated the idea on principle.

I was bewildered. Suspecting my friend, Chris, of all people? The actor from the Living Theatre, the ultimate anarchic wild bunch of the Sixties? The man who founded a theatre commune in Stockholm? I thought he was cool. But other writers didn’t, they told me to be careful. Especially as he was working with me and not them.

One day there was a meeting between some Macedonian actors and Chris in Skopje. They asked how much money they would be paid for their work. He answered it would be standard European wages. One of the actors sniped, between his teeth: “I can find that kind of money in the street.” He was lying. There

was no money to be found in the streets of Macedonia. Chris said: “I thought you wanted to make theatre and not look for money in the streets”.

This conversation has stuck with me over the years. To this day I wonder about the mindset of my actor friend, his manoeuvre, his mental calculation. He probably thought something like this: “I know I am worth little in market terms and I am quite resigned to that fact. But now here is this guy who comes *from* the market place and is showing interest in me. Why? What's in it for him? Maybe I am worth something after all. What if I am priceless and don't know it? This is a conspiracy. I won't sell. I'll wait for better offers.”

One day in 1995 Chris and I went from one Macedonian theatre to another trying to garner interest for our multi-ethnic project. We were working on a remake of Euripides' Bacchae where the Bacchantes were all male. We wanted actors of Macedonian, Turkish and Albanian ethnic origin to dramatise the reality on the ground. We went from door to door, from the Macedonian National Theatre to the Drama Theatre to the Theatre of Turkish and Albanian Nationalities, inviting them to collaborate.

This turned out to be an explosive proposition. “Collaborate! We've never collaborated before. We are suspicious of each other, we protect our interests, we are almost enemies. What do you mean, collaborate? We are trying hard to rid of those socialist-realist ideas and you want to sell them back to us? Are you trying to sell rope to the family of a hanged man?” Incidentally, that was the very day when there was the assassination attempt on the life of the President of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov.

It became obvious to me that one humble producer like Chris Torch can shake the very centre of a small, national, macho, patriarchal cultural mindset. That one person can become a screen for every passion and fear, desire and paranoia which happens to be flying around. Like a lightning rod, that one person attracts whatever energies and anxieties people have about the world and themselves. With best intentions of soft-core integration you can go straight to hard-core nationalist hell.

This mindset is a maze of contradictions, half real and half virtual, half genuine and half artificial. It is so convoluted that it is difficult for outsiders to understand it or probe into it. It's a mindset of bi-polar divisions, a melodramatic world of black and white. You're either my bosom friend and I love you to death or else you are my arch enemy and I am at war with you. The changes from one pole to another are swift and volatile and you never see them coming. It's slippery ground. Mercurial stuff.

Let me try to dramatise this acid mindset in a little imaginary and ironic soliloquy. I hope it might throw some light on the heart of the Heart of the Matter:

“Hello. My name is Zoran. I am a poet. Many years ago I used to live in a country called Yugoslavia. I loved my fatherland and our leader Tito. I used to say: if you cut my heart in two you’d find the Yugoslav red star there.

I worked as a kind of a journalist in a factory paper. I was an artist. I felt that my place and role in society were crucial. I felt I was a part of Europe. I wrote a long poem called “The Heart of The Matter”. It was a patriotic poem which said we should all be prepared to die for our fatherland. Here’s a little excerpt:

“When it comes to the last battle
I’ll give my life for you, oh Fatherland!
Knowing what I give
and why I’m giving it”.

Important men of letters have told me that it is a great poem as it makes very good use of metaphor, simile and other poetic things. It was published in numerous publications. I got a prize for it.

Now some say that it was a Yugo-nostalgic poem. That the Communist regime paid for it. What an ugly phrase: the Communist regime? Those were my people. My generals, my comrades, my teachers. You have to trust somebody. But I say, hey, that was then and this is now. We’ve moved on. It’s progress. Let us not look back.

Things changed. The regime died. I was a poet. I couldn’t publish anymore. I had to start again. Reinvent myself.

I got a job as a kind of a journalist in a front-line military bulletin. I redrafted my poem Heart of The Matter. Only this time it was dedicated to my new fatherland, the ex Yugoslav Republic which became a state of its own. I was an artist again, I felt my place and role were crucial again. But Europe was now my enemy. I loved my newly found old religion. I used to say: if you cut my heart in two you’d find a little cross in there.

My poem was printed in numerous publications. I got a prize for it. Now some say it was a nationalist poem. That the masters of war paid for it. What an ugly phrase: Masters of war? Those were my people. My generals, my priests, my teachers. You have to trust somebody. But I say, hey, that was then and this is now. We’ve moved on. It’s progress. Let us not look back.

Things changed. The regime faltered. I was a poet. I couldn't publish anymore. I had to start again. Reinvent myself.

I met an English girl. She said they're hungry for Balkan writers in London. She said I had sexy Balkan style, just what they were looking for in the European publishing circles. I said my English is not very good. She said, that's what they like, they *loove* broken English, an authentic voice. I decided to try my luck. I emigrated.

I arrived at Heathrow, my heart in my mouth. I looked around. No one there. No Europe waiting. I joined a long queue, some immigration officials wanted to know my name and the purpose of my visit.

Months passed. I was waiting for a sign, a call. Nothing. I became depressed. Every day was like salt in my wounds. I planned to kill myself. A spectacular suicide, blaming it all on Europe. I spent my weekends imagining Europe coming to my funeral, swollen with grief, all sexy in black.

The English are strange. I find work in a hardware store and work like a dog – most of them live off benefits. I speak proper English - they speak with an accent. I have read Shakespeare, they haven't. I go to evening school, they don't. Now that's not right. *They* should go to evening school. "English language and culture for beginners."

One day this amateur English theatre director appears, invites me to work with him on a community project for hyperactive immigrant children. I said that's insulting, I've come here for literature, a Literary Prize, signing at a major bookshop chain, a bestseller. He said I was wrong, he started telling me about schemes, funds and initiatives. "There's a whole game out there", he said, "quick money." He told me I would be ideal as The Face of Cultural Inclusion. That sounded like a venereal disease.

He takes me to meet this woman in an office. She sits me down. She says she wants to empower me, draw me into the public arena, give me access to the debate and the political process, make me voice my interests, get a concept of my cultural affinities. It felt like I was at the dentist's, but it gave me a brilliant idea. Why work for them when I can work for myself. It was time for a change. England sucked. I was a poet. I had to move on. Start again. Reinvent myself.

I went back home. Franchised my own NGO. I learned how to walk the walk and talk the talk and siphon funds, domestic and international! Now I know how to demand substantial investment in civil society, education and culture. I swear by the cooperation framework and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern

Europe! Do I support the campaign for 70 cents for Culture? Unreservedly! Wholeheartedly! More money for them, more money for me.

I have a new draft of my Heart of The Matter. Only this time it's not dedicated to my motherland, it's dedicated to Europe. My place and role are crucial again. I feel I'm a part of Europe again. Now I say: if you cut my heart in two you'd find a little European flag in there. My poem was published in an NGO magazine. I got a prize for it.

Now some say it is a neo-colonialist poem. That the neo-colonialists paid for it. What an ugly phrase: Neo-Colonialists? These are my people. My NATO generals, my priests of multiculturalism, my teachers of the latest trends in democracy. You have to trust somebody. Let's look to the future.

I hear that they are having a conference at The Hague in Holland one of these days. You'll never guess what it's called. "The Heart of the Matter". Coincidence or what? They're discussing stuff I know a thing or two about. I haven't been invited. It's all right, I don't mind, I hope they have a good conference.

Had they invited me I would have told them a few things. I would have told them to be careful with their mechanisms of political correctness. For years before it collapsed, Yugoslavia believed it had all the necessary tools for lasting peace, reconciliation and prosperity and brotherhood and unity. Everyone pretended they loved everyone else. And then one day a strongman came and banged his fist on the table and said: "Gentlemen, the game is over. Fuck off." And that was all it took for the whole house of cards to slip into civil wars.

Oh well! Wars. So what? Let's think positive. Some redistribution of wealth, Smart Offshore Outsourcing, Cross-cultural conflict management.

The worse it is for the common people, the better it is for us poets. I mean for our inspiration. Things change. Regimes die. New ones are born.

If things don't work again, I'll start all over again. Reinvent myself. I keep all of the versions of my poem. Whatever happens, however history turns, I'll have a suitable version to go with it. And I'll be able to say again, with a smile on my face, hey, that was then and this is now. We've moved on. It's progress. Let us not look back."

Well, that is the end of the soliloquy of my imaginary character. And here I come back to my own voice. Well. Where do I go from here and what do I say now? You might ask me to what extent I agree with my character? To what extent I *am* my character? How much is his mindset also mine? It's hard for me really

know this or talk about it, but I do know that a part of him resides within me. He is someone I have daily arguments with, someone I try to tame, negotiate with, bring to his senses, wrestle with and agonize over.

Which brings us to moral of the story: did I hear us say we were in the business of Enlargement of Minds? Well then, that is the kind of mind which needs enlarging and demands our attention.

Good luck to us all.

And let's not give up without a fight!

© Goran Stefanovski, 2005

VI LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Family name		First name	Ms / Mr	Organisation	Position / Occupation
Adler		Jill	Ms	East-West Parliamentary Practice Project	Director
Alderse Baas		Willem J.H.	Mr	Alderse Baas en Budwilowitz	Partner cultural architect
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Leibbrandt		Gottfried J.	Mr	European Cultural Foundation	
Lier	van	Pieter	Mr	Musicians without Borders	Project leader
Linder		Toni	Mr	Swiss Agency Development & Cooperation (SDC)	Advisor / culture
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