

Martina Fischer

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No. 1

Youth Development as a Potential and Challenge for the Peace Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Martina Fischer

1. Introduction

There is still little prospect of a stable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The public institutions in the entities and at state level are still weak. In the Bosniak-Croat Federation (FBiH), the competences of the cantonal governments often conflict with the powers vested in the higher decision-making and administrative levels. The country is undergoing a complicated dual transformation. The transition from war to peace is proving extremely difficult, and is taking place against the background of the transformation of the old communist social and economic system to democracy and a market economy. Wolfgang Petritsch, the international community's High Representative in Bosnia until 2002, noted that this process of radical change, which has been set back by the war, is further complicated in Bosnian daily life by the „ethnic“ issue, which is also a „power issue“: „Themes of political, economic, social and cultural relevance are determined by the primacy of ethnicity. The emphasis on linguistic, cultural and religious differences, their elevation to the exclusive political paradigm, is the real ‚Bosnian‘ knot.“¹ The Bosnian population is still beset with fears which are manifested as support for radical nationalists. The most serious and largely unresolved problems at present include refugee return, settlement of property claims, and economic consolidation.

Nine years after the end of the war, there are still numerous intersecting lines of conflict within Bosnian society which – besides the tensions between Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks or between religious groups (Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims, and in some areas, other religious minorities as well) – mainly consist of conflicts between refugees/displaced persons² and the local population, between people returning from abroad and the local communities (or displaced persons), between urban and rural populations, and between the employed and the jobless.

One of the most serious sources of potential conflict is the continued competition for housing and scarce income-generation opportunities between returnees, local population groups and refugees who – due to a fear of renewed threats or discrimination – cannot or will not return to the places from which they were expelled. The situation is further exacerbated by the exchange of urban and rural populations caused by the war. Due to massive migration and remigration processes, the „urban-rural“ conflict, which was historically significant in the society of the former Yugoslavia, has assumed a new dimension and, in some places, has escalated into a cultural conflict.

The parlous state of the economy is also a contributory factor which worsens the potential for conflict. Currently, GNP in Bosnia and Herzegovina stands at around 40% of its pre-war level. The index of economic, political and social security is trailing behind most other South-East European countries, although UNDP has noted a slight rise in the Human Development Index for Bosnia and

¹ Wolfgang Petritsch: *Bosnien und Herzegowina. 5 Jahre nach Dayton: Hat der Friede eine Chance?* Klagenfurt 2001:11.

² According to UNHCR, around 420,000 refugees and 500,000 displaced persons returned between 1996 and 2002. See www.unhcr.ba/return/T5-1102.pdf. See also International Crisis Group: *The Continuing Challenge of Refugee Return in Bosnia Herzegovina*, Balkans Report No. 137, Sarajevo/Brussels, December 2002.

Herzegovina in recent years (from 0.718 in 2000 to 0.744 in 2001 and 0.777 in 2003).³ The war destroyed industrial plant and large parts of the country's infrastructure. Key markets were lost, and many products which were once produced by the country itself now have to be imported. Business start-ups and the existence of small and medium enterprises have been impeded in recent years by structural problems: arbitrary and non-transparent customs regulations have hampered sales and distribution, and the high rate of tax charged to companies has obstructed business start-ups. In short, there is a lack of investors, capital and jobs. Unemployment currently stands at more than 40% in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and actually exceeds 50% in Republika Srpska (RS). The „unofficial“ unemployment rate is higher, with estimates varying between 56% and as much as 75%.⁴ Research by the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues (IBHI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the start of the decade revealed that around one-third of the jobless are younger than 27, and two-thirds are below the age of 35.⁵

Young people offer potential for social innovation and are a promising target group for reconciliation work, especially in war-torn societies. Compared with the victim/perpetrator generations, younger age groups are generally more open to dialogue and more willing to set aside their stereotyped ways of thinking. At the same time, however, young people have a highly destructive potential which can be sparked off by society's neglect of this group. Young people who have no education or employment opportunities may resort to crime. Experience in many post-war societies has shown that if no social integration initiatives are available, male youths in particular form a willing pool of recruits for political leaders with a vested interest in perpetuating violent conflict. A further outcome is the migration of qualified young people to countries which they believe will offer them better opportunities; this results in a brain-drain and the loss of the most vital resources for social development. This trend has been apparent in Bosnia and Herzegovina for many years. The UNDP Human Development Report 2002 reveals an alarming trend: at least 92,000 young people left Bosnia and Herzegovina between January 1996 and the end of March 2001, with tens of thousands currently waiting for emigration visas.

Faced with these facts, High Representative Paddy Ashdown warned: „This haemorrhage of the young and talented poses perhaps the greatest long-term threat to this country.“⁶

2. The training and employment situation for young people

In general, little is being done to integrate young people into the labour market. Moreover, the education system does not meet the requirements of the new market economy. There are very few job opportunities for young people in the formal employment sector, which is still underdeveloped in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a result of the war and is generally limited to smaller service providers or retail. Most opportunities arise in the informal sector (e.g. in street trading or language teaching). 44% of the young people who responded to the IBHI/UNDP survey who were in work reported that they were not employed in the occupation for which they were qualified. In light of this situation, it is

³ UNDP (ed.): Where will we be in 2015? Bosnia and Herzegovina Human Development Report 2003:115, www.undp.ba. BiH thus falls into the group of medium-developed countries, ranking higher than Albania and Turkey but lower than Bulgaria and Macedonia.

⁴ There is a high percentage of hidden unemployment as many people remain on the payrolls (known as waiting lists) of companies which were engaged in production before the war but now only operate with limited capacity. Companies which cannot afford to pay all their staff keep a proportion of them on waiting lists; this is a more cost-effective solution than making the required redundancy payments to the individuals concerned if they are dismissed.

⁵ IBHI/UNDP (eds.): Human Development Report Bosnia and Herzegovina, Youth, Sarajevo 2000:30.

⁶ Balkan Crisis Report No. 385, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, London, January 2003.

no surprise that a significant number of young people are resorting to earning a living (or financing their studies) through illegal activities, such as the black market.⁷

Faced with the threat of unemployment, many school-leavers are entering higher education⁸, with the result that the universities are overstretched (which in turn impacts negatively on the quality of teaching). Furthermore, the large number of university graduates creates intense competition in the labour market, so a university education does not in fact offer most young people the better employment prospects they hope for. There are good career prospects for young people in industries requiring qualifications which older people generally cannot offer (e.g. knowledge of a language or computer skills). Many young people are attracted by the prospect of working for the international organisations, which pay very much more than the average salary. Many of those who manage to secure a post in an international organisation try to use it as a springboard to emigrate abroad.

The exodus is exacerbated by the following factors.⁹ There are still virtually no training opportunities in commerce or technical occupations for young people who have no interest in, or prospect of, a university career. The Bosnian universities do not offer any practical training. Young graduates in Bosnia and Herzegovina have virtually no chance of finding work because they have no practical skills. Disillusionment and the feeling that they are not needed take hold and lead to a lack of motivation and widespread lethargy. Disenchantment with politics (or politicians) and a general view that there is no point in taking part in elections are further outcomes.

In this context, the „dependency syndrome“¹⁰ in some sections of Bosnian politics and society, which is heightened partly as a result of the provision of humanitarian aid, is proving disastrous: many people take it for granted that support from abroad will be provided indefinitely and expect the international community to assume responsibility for improving conditions in Bosnia. Many young people are also conditioned by this expectation. However, some young people, as well as a number of adults involved in youth work, have recognised that major risks are associated with a reliance on external support. They point out that people in the country must take a pro-active role themselves and develop lasting structures in order to bring about social change. These local initiatives must be strengthened and expanded.

3. Youth promotion as a key challenge: a combination of development and peace policy instruments

Over recent years, a wide range of activities by and for youths/young adults has developed in both entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina which can make a contribution to social development and peacebuilding. They include projects aimed at improving life chances and developing individual initiative or a sense of community (involvement in civil society) among young people, and the development of related youth networks.¹¹ Almost all the youth projects work under very difficult conditions. In general, independent youth projects receive negligible support from the state's official youth, cultural or education policy. Support from external sources is therefore still very important, but there is an inherent risk that it will create long-term dependencies unless it aims to create

⁷ In the survey, which was carried out in the Central Bosnian town of Zenica, 12% of the young people interviewed told IBHI that they earn most of their income or fund most of their studies through black market activities.

⁸ When asked about their status, 41% of the young adults surveyed for the IBHI/UNDP report said that they were students.

⁹ See Balkan Crisis Report No. 385, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, January 2003.

¹⁰ Wolfgang Petritsch summed this up as follows: „... every dollar of aid that has flowed [into Bosnia] has prompted some people to assume that the international community will pay for everything – for ever.“ (Petritsch 2001:257).

sustainable structures.

The priorities and strategies of local implementing agencies are based on a variety of approaches. Some offer young people opportunities for transnational or interethnic encounter; others focus on „empowerment“ and training to promote individual peace skills. Some are engaged in community-oriented youth work and are setting up services to provide practical occupational training. As yet, very few have incorporated income-generation or job-creation elements into their programmes.

It is important to boost young people's self-esteem and encourage them to articulate their ideas and needs. But offering them economic and employment prospects is also an urgent necessity. A particular challenge is to combine approaches which can traditionally be classified as development cooperation with peacebuilding measures. The combination of peacebuilding/human rights work with initiatives which provide training and income-generation opportunities is essential for several reasons: if young people earn their own income, this improves their families' financial position and also boosts their self-esteem because they thus secure their place in the community and acquire a degree of respect. But opportunities for young people's self-organisation and individual initiative can also be improved if, for example, a youth centre or encounter project by young people for young people is co-funded with income they have generated themselves, thus reducing the dependency on foreign donors. Moreover, training and income-generation measures can offer incentives for people in highly segregated ethnic communities to develop a willingness to work together, since this benefits them directly.

Motivated by these considerations, the German-Bosnian NGO Ipak (Tuzla) launched a pilot project in 2002 entitled „Young People Build the Future“, which was implemented with support from the German youth organisation „Schüler Helfen Leben“ and the Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

4. „Young People Build the Future“ – a pilot project in Eastern Bosnia

With support from a number of Swiss and German sponsors (including private donations and funding from GTZ and the Federal Foreign Office), the organisation IPAK had acquired many years of experience in youth work in a Tuzla suburb, where it established a youth centre offering leisure activities, education programmes and practical training in carpentry. The centre was mainly used by Bosniak refugees. During this time, the idea of providing ongoing support for young refugees (from the Bosniak community) – many of whom had attended the youth centre for a long time – after their resettlement in Eastern Bosnian villages (on the territory of Republika Srpska) and developing a project for the reintegration of returnees arose. As a result of working in Tuzla for many years, the team was familiar with the fears and problems associated with the return of refugees and displaced persons to their „old“ villages. Firstly, many war crimes remain unexpatiated and those responsible are still at large. Secondly, experience in recent years has shown that many returnees in rural areas face such a dire lack of prospects that they soon remigrate to urban centres. Supporting the return process in Eastern Bosnia therefore appeared to be an urgent necessity.

¹¹ On this topic, see Martina Fischer/Julie Tumler: Möglichkeiten der Förderung einer „Peace Constituency“ in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Schriftenreihe der GTZ, Eschborn 2000 and Fischer/Tumler, Friedensförderung in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ansätze der Jugend-, Bildungs- und Kulturarbeit, Berghof Occasional Paper 5, 2000. See also Martina Fischer/Astrid Fischer, Jugendförderung als Beitrag zum Friedensprozess in Bosnia and Herzegovina – eine Bilanz. Studie zur Auswertung der dreijährigen Förderung von Jugendinitiativen, Schriftenreihe der GTZ, Eschborn 2003:13-26.

The project was conceived by young people who had previously been involved with the youth centre in Simin Han/Tuzla. It was developed in more detail by the Ipak team and the Berghof Research Center and presented at a competition for funding which was run by the German NGO „Schüler Helfen Leben“. Approximately 1 million in donations were generated by schoolchildren undertaking voluntary work during the 2001 „Sozialer Tag“ [Social Day of Action] in North Germany. Ipak was awarded three years of project funding as a result of entering the competition. Volunteers from Germany are involved in project implementation, and the Berghof Research Center supports the process through regular project evaluations.

The project aims to support the integration of young returnees through a combination of young people's community work and income-generation and training measures. To this end, a youth centre and small workshops for craft and agricultural production and training purposes were opened in Krizevici, a village in Zvornik municipality in the Drina valley. There are plans to set up a youth cooperative in the near future. Through training- and employment-oriented community work, the project is intended to improve young people's lives and contribute to local community development. It is also designed to have a conflict-defusing and preventive effect.

Project objectives and strategies

The key objectives, as outlined by the stakeholders, are as follows:

- to support the social integration of young returnees and local refugees in rural communities in Eastern Bosnia,
- at local level, to facilitate capacity-building and promote peaceful relations among families from different ethnic groups (Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs),
- to change the widespread attitude in Bosnia which encourages dependency on foreign support: the project aims to provide an impetus and offer an opportunity for young people to invest more of their own energy in their country's reconstruction,
- to provide incentives which encourage young people returning to their families' pre-war homes to stay and take on responsibility for rebuilding economic and social life,
- to offer young people economic prospects through income-generation measures,
- to ensure that young people outside the urban centres also have the chance to participate in social (political, cultural and educational) activities,
- to offer young people a space where they can develop their creative potential and social skills while providing opportunities for them to deal with the past (trauma work and psychosocial counselling).

As well as the returnees (from the Bosniak community), the project also benefits young people from the local Bosnian Serb community and refugees living in Eastern Bosnia. The aim is to encourage them to participate in shared activities involving reconstruction, training and production. Of course, the „fun factor“, with leisure activities and encounter projects, is also important.

The centre opened in December 2003. Around 1000 people, including 600 young people and many official guests (representatives of UNHCR, OSCE, SFOR, local and regional NGOs and key figures from schools and ministries) attended. The opening ceremony had been planned and initiated by the young people as a joint project. Young people from the region were also directly involved in the construction of the centre, and this had been a condition of the contract awarded to the building firm. The next steps planned by Ipak include the development of a programme of foreign languages courses and ICT/Internet training, music and culture, the setting up and registration of a youth cooperative, and the launch of occupational training courses in the workshop, including certified

training in agricultural production, woodwork and metalwork (carpentry and welding courses). This will be accompanied by encounter activities, international youth exchange programmes and seminars in civil conflict transformation and democracy-building. Key priorities are also to provide psychosocial care, undertake trauma work with young people and teachers, and launch drug prevention measures. The team – which is mainly composed of education specialists – has therefore also started to involve psychologists in the work at local level.

In addition, the current network-building with young people from the Drina region in the Tuzla-Zvornik-Bijeljina triangle will be expanded. Krizevici will become a centre for various types of encounter events, ranging from international festivals (involving German and Swiss youth groups which have taken part in exchanges with Ipak for many years) to targeted workshops on civil conflict transformation, which will provide training in youth work for young people from the local community and the region.

The project leaders, young people, parents, teachers and political decision-makers at local level all agree, in discussions, that the project is urgently needed in this structurally very weak region which is severely traumatised by war. However, that does not mean that the project is operating within a framework of unity and harmony within the region. The following sections summarise the experiences to date, highlighting both the successes and the difficulties facing the project.¹²

4.1 Successes during phase one of the project

For the four-member Ipak team¹³, the first phase of the project mainly consisted of networking and publicity work. This included intensive fostering of contacts with the local political level (Zvornik municipality and Krizevici village community) and the appointment of a project advisory council in which persons from the FBiH and RS, i.e. from the Bosnian Serb and Bosniak communities, work together. Before construction work started, an intensive preparatory stage took place when „ownership“ of the project concept was embedded in the region and the project was firmly established in a political and social context. The Ipak team therefore began by forming two working groups involving young volunteers from the region. Their task was to intensify the contacts with youth groups (Ipak has been working with youth groups from the RS for some time) and raise awareness of the project's objectives among other NGOs and especially, through regular visits, among the target group in all the outlying villages. Contacts were also developed with key figures and functionaries working in the fields of youth and education (school directors and teachers). For example, many local schools were encouraged to participate in an art competition with the theme „Young People Build the Future“, which raised awareness of the project among all the teaching staff and schoolchildren. Parents' meetings also played a very important role.

Many schools in the region are still in a very poor state. Everything is in short supply – from sanitary amenities to heating fuel, teaching materials and workbooks. Ipak has therefore set up a lending library in Krizevici school which is used intensively. The team's strategy is to advise teachers on ways of taking action themselves in order to identify remedies, e.g. by initiating a partnership with German schools.

The goal defined in the project proposal – to contribute to multiethnic cooperation –

¹² This is based on talks with members of the Ipak team, as well as discussions with members of the target group (schoolchildren and young people from Krizevici and the surrounding area, including partner youth groups from Zvornik. Multipliers working in the fields of youth and education were also interviewed, including teachers from local schools, representatives of Krizevici village community, and members of the project advisory council.

¹³ The team which is responsible for implementing the project in Eastern Bosnia currently comprises Lahira Sejjija (project manager), Adnan Harbic as the coordinator of the youth centre, Aleksandra Anicic (administrative assistant) and Nermin Memi (technical assistant).

was achieved during phase one of the project, inasmuch as this is possible in the initial stage: the team put together by Ipak for Krizevici is made up of members of both the Bosniak and the Bosnian Serb communities. The same applies to the project advisory council. Ipak has also managed to achieve its goal of ensuring that both communities are represented on an equal basis in the cooperation with schools and contacts with youth organisations.

The information campaigns and extensive networking activities during the first phase of the project helped to ensure that the youth centre can count on the active involvement of schoolchildren from both Bosnian Serb and Bosniak communities in future. In this way, other multipliers, i.e. persons working in youth and education, such as teachers, have also been secured as partners. This has laid the foundation for networking at regional level as well. Initial steps were also taken towards establishing networks for cooperation between government agencies and NGOs involved in youth work and school education.

In the discussions held with young people in Zvornik municipality, it became apparent that the construction of the youth centre and a youth cooperative in the region has raised high expectations. In general, younger people hope that it will create better leisure activities and educational opportunities, whereas older people hope that it will also lead to occupational training and employment initiatives. Almost all the local residents voiced the hope that it will open up the forgotten rural areas of the Drina valley to „the world“, either through the provision of training in electronic communications (e-mail and Internet) or through language courses and international opportunities for encounter.

To what extent can the „Young People Build the Future“ project genuinely influence the political and social environment? This is impossible to determine at the end of phase one of the project, and will only become apparent once the project has been consolidated over the long term, i.e. after a number of years. However, it is already clear that besides the benefits for the target group, i.e. young returnees, the project is also having an impact on the social environment by promoting cooperation among multipliers from the education sector.

- In cooperation with the schools, the project has succeeded in taking several major steps towards empowering young people to engage in self-organisation, capacity-building, multiethnic cooperation and international networking.
- A bilingual school newspaper project has been set up at the schools. Ipak team members provided technical advice and supervised the production of the first issues. Funding is provided by Schüler Helfen Leben.
- Teachers have been motivated to support the objectives of the project and are actively involved in it.
- School partnerships with German schools are being planned.
- Measures to support further training for teachers (e.g. team-building seminars, training in participatory working methods etc.) are being developed.

Here, the Ipak team – together with key partners from the social environment – has at least contributed, through its activities to date, to establishing conditions favourable to the emergence of a „peace constituency“. The same applies to networking among youth groups.

Ipak has been successful in generating enthusiasm for the project among young people from the Bosniak and Bosnian Serb communities, not only at local level but in the wider Eastern Bosnian region. Indeed, this was achieved even before the project itself had become a tangible reality. During the planning of leisure activities, music events, and training in PR and democracy-

building, successful cooperation was established with youth groups from Zvornik, which will also be involved in publicising the project in the predominately Serb villages around Krizevici. The initiators had hoped for this development but knew that it could not be taken for granted, for in the villages of Eastern Bosnia, most of which are ethnically homogeneous, it still takes a great deal of courage, self-confidence and determination to participate in activities in a village whose population belongs to the other ethnic group.

In its initial phase, the project was also confronted with a number of difficulties and challenges.

4.2 Difficulties and challenges

1. Tremendous efforts were made to *foster contacts with the political level* in particular. A great deal of patience and an ability to tolerate frustration were required from the Ipak team before the municipal council could finally be persuaded to vote in favour of the centre's construction in Krizevici. During the subsequent phases of the project as well, contacts with politicians and the administration in Zvornik had to be cultivated continuously. Due to the frequent changes in the political majorities, it has been essential to maintain the contacts and, if necessary, repeatedly „socialise“ new people by making them aware of the project's objectives and regularly updating them on progress. Several times, the project faced new challenges as a result of political changes, such as the replacement of the (female) Social Democrat mayor by a representative of the radical Bosnian Serb party, the SDS. Even after the municipal council had given its consent to the centre's construction, obstructions within the administration resulted in a systematic delay to the issuing of the building permit. Furthermore, the local police initially blocked the team's efforts to ensure that the site and its immediate vicinity were cleared of mines. The team overcame all these difficulties by rigorously pursuing dialogue with the various political levels and drawing on informal networks and contacts (including, in the latter case, support from SFOR).

The frequent changes in the political majorities, Members and decision-makers at local level have created considerable uncertainty and continue to pose a major challenge, with the result that the members of the project team frequently have to invest their energies in building trust and confidence with the relevant persons. However, it is now assumed that no major impediments to the project are likely to arise from this quarter as long as Ipak remains „politically neutral“ by supporting young people from all „nationalities“.

2. One frequent difficulty facing the project team is that *school and education policy regulations adopted at a higher level* are geared towards ethnic segregation (different curricula which provide no teaching in the mother tongue but prescribe either the Bosnian or the Serbian language; rules on religious education and religious rites, etc.). These make life difficult for teachers who are interested in multiethnic cooperation and, in many places, result in the geographical separation of children and young people from different communities. For example, the curricula in place in the RS stipulate that in the first year, teaching must take place using the Cyrillic script, with the Latin script only being introduced in the second year, whereas in the FBiH, it is the other way round. Fearing that their children will suffer discrimination or fall victim to nationalist indoctrination, many parents are sending their children to schools some distance away where their own ethnic community predominates. These very long journeys to school also cause great strain.

The discussions in the schools revealed that there are teaching staff and colleges in the region who would like to work towards changing this situation and promoting integrated

multiethnic education. However, they feel isolated and lack the know-how or contacts necessary to achieve these goals effectively. Links between these individuals and bodies must be fostered in order to form an „alliance“ or „lobby“ so that they can work together to achieve their objectives within a professional context. A further challenge is to devise professional development programmes for teachers, with a view to phasing out the outmoded teaching methods which are still widespread in schools (e.g. teachers lecturing from the front of the class and following an out-dated curriculum).

The networking activities which have been initiated, especially with teachers and schoolchildren, should be stepped up during the next phases of the project. It is also especially important to combine Ipak's activities with strategies aimed at reforming education policy at state (local and regional) level. It would be presumptuous to assume that the „Young People Build the Future“ project can dismantle the conditions and problems which have been created by government authorities or key political forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nonetheless, through its networking activities, it can help to establish a social climate which is favourable to peaceful community relations and understanding, in which people working in education are encouraged to transform school and education policy provisions that are geared towards ethnic segregation.

3. The *gender mainstreaming* in peacebuilding and development projects that is demanded by many foreign donor organisations faces a number of challenges, especially in rural regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In traditional Muslim families in particular, it is common for girls to have to spend large parts of the day doing chores in the home and in the kitchen while their brothers are involved in activities at the youth centre. In this milieu, the call for girls to take part in craft training is likely to go unheeded. Consideration should therefore be given to providing training opportunities for girls in agriculture, book-keeping and marketing instead.

In the next project phases, greater account should therefore be taken of gender aspects. In order to develop the potential of young people of both sexes to the greatest possible extent, it is essential to take account of boys' and girls' different realities, needs and roles that are typical in this society and region. It is especially important to maintain the freedoms and changed roles experienced by girls and young women when they were refugees during and after the war, e.g. in urban centres. When devising programmes for young women, the challenge is therefore not simply to adapt to the customs of the village community, but also to help change these customs. Girls and women should be offered programmes which appeal to them without overwhelming them or expecting them to enter into open confrontation or opposition to their environment.

5. Summary and outlook

A key priority is to promote local initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina which offer young people a place in the community, open up prospects for occupational development, facilitate self-organisation and individual initiative, create space for encounter and understanding, provide support as they work through their experiences of war, and teach them strategies for constructive conflict transformation. There is also a need for strategies that combine peacebuilding and development measures in other neglected areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina which suffered massive destruction in the war. In addition, re-equipping schools and reforming the school system are key priorities.

One difficulty constantly facing NGOs is that school and education policy regulations adopted at a higher level are geared towards ethnic segregation (different curricula, linguistic

segregation, religious greetings or rites, etc.). These make life difficult for teachers who are interested in multiethnic cooperation and, in many places, result in the geographical separation of children and young people from different communities. NGOs – no matter how successful their project strategy may be – are not in a position, or lack the necessary influence, to transform school and education policy provisions that are geared towards ethnic segregation. However, the examples show that through their networking activities, they can help to establish a social climate which is favourable to peaceful community relations and understanding, in which people employed in education are encouraged to work towards changing these conditions.

International organisations – in conjunction with NGOs – should therefore intensify their efforts to promote school reform and focus on multiethnic education work. This applies to the standardisation of curricula and the introduction of guaranteed mother-tongue teaching in order to safeguard integrated schooling (instead of the current ethnically segregated system) and, in line with the model which existed in pre-war Bosnia, to counteract the division of villages and municipalities along ethnic lines.

International organisations charged with implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement in BiH, including the HR and the OSCE, recently introduced important measures to implement educational reform and also placed youth organisations, as a target group, at the heart of their measures to promote civil society. However, in order to offer this group prospects in their own country, it is important to work towards the introduction of practical occupational training at schools and universities as well. The launch of suitable training programmes in technical or craft occupations, commerce and industry could improve young people's prospects in the job market and go a long way towards tapping their potential for their country's benefit. Appropriate projects can and must be initiated and supported by international development agencies which have access to the state level. At the same time, domestic and foreign companies must be encouraged to assist this process. It is important to ensure that these measures are not primarily designed for young people; instead, young people must be actively involved in needs analysis, project design and implementation.