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Dear reader,

With the second edition of the *ENoP Quarterly* we wanted to honour the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009.

This issue is focused on four projects that contribute towards raising awareness on the importance of creativity and innovation for social and economic development. Based in Eastern and Candidate European countries, these projects promote policy debate and political dialogue among European actors from a variety of backgrounds.



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Facing Regional Crisis

Other links between self-government and investment in a time of economic crisis

Marcel Gibóda

Slovakia, not long ago a Central European tiger in terms of economy, is slowly but surely feeling the impact of the financial crisis.

The worst-hit region is Eastern Slovakia, which lies along the Schengen frontier: it is the poorest region not only in the country, but in the whole of the EU.

was organised under the auspices of Prof. András Inotai, director general of the World Economic Institute in Budapest, Hungary. The hot topic for weeks before the forum was how to form other and better links between self-government and investment at a time of economic crisis, with the aim of preserving jobs and creating a better environment for fostering new investment.

The [Feman](#) Society, in cooperation with Hanns Seidel Stiftung, has therefore decided to hold the *International Economic Forum Košice 2009* there, entitled "Other Links Between Self-Government and Investment in Eastern Slovakia". The event

The forum tried to find answers to a variety of unsolved questions. Among others, special focus was dedicated to the possibilities and readiness of East Slovakia's self-government to make new investments during an economic crisis and of their ability to create new jobs for post-crisis growth, and to recommending specific solutions for self-governments on how to address the impact of the crisis on the financial and social sectors.

Delegates at the *International Economic Forum Košice 2009* had the opportunity to hear presentations delivered by experts from Slovakia,

Hungary, Germany and Belgium, as well as the viewpoint of the Košice self-governing region itself.

Feedback from participants expressed a clear need for better communication among self-government, and for greater commitment to common projects of public and private sectors - not only at local and regional levels but also at the cross-border one.

There was a call for a clear strategy to be formulated for establishing industrial parks and supporting the tourist industry. As regards development of the green and creative economy, there emerged a strong need for the use of local resources.

The organisers of the *International Economic Forum Košice 2009* have stated their intention to organize an international economic workshop at which they will reassess the self-government's initiative to invest in this region. This further link between the public and private sectors is truly important during a time of global economic crisis.



Broadening the political horizon

Young meets old - progressive economics seminar bridges the generation gap

Volker Heinemann

Just at a time when the global financial crisis is deepening and an increasing number of countries and individuals are actively seeking alternatives to the standard economic model,

a selection of junior and senior political activists gathered for a highly innovative 2-day seminar on practical economics. The timing could not have been better when more than 25 participants met in Berlin in December 2008, bringing with them great enthusiasm.

The event followed completely new and innovative training methods, starting with the choice of participants. An explosive mix of young and old political activists was deliberately selected, and a strict gender-balance policy complied with. Participants came from all over Europe, with a particular focus on Eastern and Candidate countries. As befitting such a diverse setting, the teaching was case-study-based and focused on intense and controversial group discussions, with a view to stimulating a debate with the widest possible range of opinions.

One of the many techniques employed was so-called "role-playing", in which participants are forced to defend positions they might not necessarily agree with. This allowed for a practical analysis of the political mechanisms of a given scenario, as opposed to a lecture on the theory of possible alternatives.

This was the goal of the funding body, the [Green Economics Institute](http://www.greeneconomicsinstitute.org) (UK), and of the co-creators, the Federation of Young European Greens and Green Seniors. They all wanted to provide the skills lacking

in a particular branch of studies – economics – in which traditional classroom-based lecturing prevails.

A truly progressive economics seminar must include distinctive 'green' factors, so as not to miss the main political elements for shaping the world's future. The term 'green' in this case goes far beyond the standard public perception related to environmental issues. In fact it is made up of a combination of social and cultural issues as well, with economics being defined as a distribution of values for this particular enhanced meaning. This contrasts with the standard, boring and ideologically limited definition of economics and its teaching methods.

Participants reacted to these modern approaches with great enthusiasm: a much wider scope of debate led to the discovery of relevant practical insights into political processes. Topics of discussion included the Stern Report, ethical investments with an alternative UK-based building society, infrastructure projects (dam construction) in Ethiopia, and structural change in EU applicant countries, from industry to tourism.

At the end of the seminar, participants confirmed that they felt they had gained a truly new experience and broadened their horizons. This feeling was further strengthened by the fact that the seminar brought together a diverse range of people from 17 different countries that do not typically co-operate very closely.

This positive feedback helped to achieve the main aim of the event. The Berlin seminar was indeed designed to create a group of trained campaigners not just able to discuss their economic views, but also capable of understanding dif-

ferent positions and backgrounds. The participants could return home and start teaching and training others at various levels. This created a snowball effect in terms of dissemination of knowledge, materials, references and sources of information, as witnessed at a remarkable rate in Ireland, Finland and Armenia.

In the latter, after attending the Berlin seminar, the Head of the National University's Economics Department in Yerevan has now set up a Master's Course in Green Economics. Indeed, Ms Margarita Gevorgyan was positively impressed by the training and information she received in Berlin.

Given the current financial climate, green economics is fast gaining political relevance. The training helps to link economics with a broader spectrum of political issues, problems and dilemmas, just at the right time. The participants are now successfully equipped with knowledge they can use to find specific solutions in their own countries. Moreover, the events always provide a great opportunity for knowledge-sharing, raising awareness of how diverse Europe is, and what strengths lie in this diversity.



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E N O P

INDEPENDENT ACTORS IN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION, DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND POLITICAL DIALOGUE

A School Without Walls The "Ovidiu Șincai" European School

George-Vadim Tiugea

It was a hot day in June 2004. Romania was preparing to close the final chapters on negotiations for accession to the European Union. People were anxious to come back to Europe after decades of marginalization and dictatorships and a hard transition marked by hyperinflation and increasing poverty. Luckily, everything seemed to be on track, especially since the country had become a NATO member (in April of same year) and there were no fears of outside aggression or internal turmoil.

The Council of Europe was searching for a partner to extend its Schools of Political Studies project. It was to become a platform for countries in the former Soviet Union and the Balkans, with a view to strengthening democracy by instilling the values of dialogue, democracy and human rights into young people aiming for leading positions in society and politics.

From the very beginning, the real question was whether Romania actually needed such a project. After all, it was almost an EU member state and transition seemed to have been a success. The Hungarian minority had been in government for almost eight years, irrespective of the change in the government's political orientation. The economy was starting to grow at a rate higher than the EU average, the national currency was getting

stronger and consumption was stimulated by an expanding banking system. So why would Romania still need a political school for its young elite?

The answer was obvious: even if there had been significant improvements, there were still some major problems to be solved, requiring a joint effort from society as a whole. Romanians still lived in a highly polarized society, with rural areas based on subsistence agriculture of few resources and not much chance of improving. Politicians seemed to be thinking more about themselves and the personal advantages they could gain from European integration. Most people still considered the Roma as undesirable neighbours, and sought to isolate and diminish them.

A new class of politicians was therefore called for, together with the

and ethnic and religious groups, creating the space for dialogue and unique synergy that was so very necessary for the country's future.

The "Ovidiu Șincai" Institute (Romania) was the partner the Council of Europe had been looking for. Together, they started this project from scratch. Initially, the Institute had some difficulties establishing channels of communication with other parties; they seemed to regard the Institute as a spy trying to get behind enemy lines for the interests of one specific party. Eventually they managed to recruit one representative from each party, who were soon followed by representatives from public administration, civil society and the media.

From the outset, the overriding impression was one of amazement: people from different walks of life began to see that they were very much alike, that they were committed to solving similar problems, even if they employed different ideas and means to do so. They became a family, thus emphasizing the school's socialization dimension. Even after finishing their courses they kept in touch, thus giving birth to a real network.

Five years on, the project is still going strong. Almost 200 people have been trained, and a quarter of them are already in leading positions in politics, society and administration. With their support, the school is hoping to help Romania recover from the economic crisis and continue to develop as a country.



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From conflict to common interest

Steps towards a multicultural civil society: Promoting political dialogue and minority participation in FYROM

Kaija Korhonen

Since the early 90s, ethnic divisions and nationalism have had a detrimental effect on development in the Balkans. The tendency towards mono-ethnicity, together with a lack of communication and a weak culture of democracy among civil society and political parties, represent the main challenges to democracy and development in the region.

The violent elections witnessed in FYROM in 2008 were a manifestation of the challenges to democracy in the Western Balkans. Despite the institutional improvements in minority rights in FYROM as a result of the Ohrid Peace Agreement that brought an end to the conflict in 2001, differences and a lack of communication remain between the Macedonian and Albanian communities.

There is a need to support political dialogue and cooperation across ethnic boundaries, and to seek means of cooperation and political identification beyond ethnicity. In post-conflict areas where basic state structures are being rebuilt, functioning political parties and political dialogue can be crucial to society's broader development.

In 2008, the Kalevi Sorsa Foundation (Finland) joined forces with the Progress Institute for Social Democracy and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Office Skopje on

a capacity-building project for managing diversity. Entitled "The Integration and Participation of Minorities in Civil Society in Macedonia". The exercise gathered together young local-level activists from political parties and ethnic NGOs to discuss multiculturalism and the problems of intolerance and ethnic divisions that often culminate in multiethnic municipalities.



Multiculturalism and inter-cultural communication training sessions were focused in particular on local-level issues and decision making processes. The aim was to raise awareness of one of the main pillars of the Ohrid Peace Agreement: decentralisation. The decentralisation process has indeed brought ethnic relations to the forefront at the local level, seeking to increase the participation of minorities in political decision-making.

As a solution to overcoming the problem

of Macedonian and Albanian communities inhabiting separate and parallel worlds, participants highlighted the need to expand the discussion and widen the target groups of events on multiculturalism among ordinary people. Managing inter-ethnic issues was seen as being too much an exclusive right of politicians and leading only to the further politicisation of ethnicity.

The training debates clearly showed that existing procedures aimed at improving the position of minorities need to be reinforced by developing the capacities of political actors to engage in dialogue. Participants expressed a wish to see training courses offering advanced communication and negotiation skills.

In 2009 the Kalevi Sorsa Foundation and its partners will be making even greater efforts. They are in fact organising a series of workshops that will gather members of different political parties from FYROM and Kosovo to discuss topics of common interest across ethnic and national boundaries. The aim is to empower political parties to develop political dialogue both at national and regional level, creating a platform for sharing experiences and establishing cooperation on a range of issues.

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