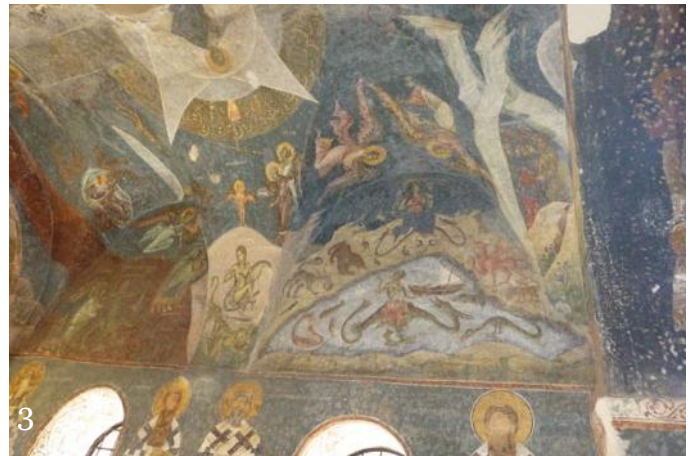


FMA STUDY VISIT TO KOSOVO

SPECIAL REPORT



Pictures

Page on the left: the Gracanica Monastery.

1. The delegation in front of the Monastery. From left to right: Martine Buron, Michael McGowan, Margarita McGawan (accompanying person), Karin Junker (Head of the FMA Delegation), Michel Pinton, Jean-Marie Beaupuy, Ursula Braun-Moser, Bob van den Bos, Colette Gadioux, Gisela Kallenbach, Brigitte Langenhagen, Henrik Lax, Jan-Willem Bertens, Peter Price, Gordon Adam, Robert Moreland and Elisabetta Fonck (FMA Secretary General).

2. Flags in Pristina.

3. Frescoes in the Gracanica Monastery.

4. The National Library in Pristina.

5. Mr Agim Bajtiri, Mayor of South Mitrovica, together with Peter Price, FMA member.

PHOTO REPORT



Pictures

6. From left to right: Thomas Gnocchi (Head of the Political Section of the EU Office in Pristina), Colonel Alberto Vezzoli (Chief of Cabinet to Commander KFOR), Jean-Marie Beaupuy, Karin Junker (Head of the FMA Delegation), Jan-Willem Bertens, Michel Pinton, Henrik Lax, Elisabetta Fonck (FMA Secretary General), Carlo Criumipero (KFOR Political Advisor) and Michael McGowan.
7. Brigitte Langenhagen in front of the Saint Archangels Monastery outside Prizren.
8. Kosovar Restaurant outside Prizren.
9. Meeting on the situation of minorities: Karin Junker, Bashkim Ibishi (KAAD Executive Director) and Henrik Lax.
10. Explanation of the management of the border between Kosovo and Serbia made by the Chief of Staff at EULEX, Mr Thomas Mühlmann (first from the right).

KOSOVO: TERRA INCOGNITA A FORGOTTEN HISTORY

Before and after the 1995 Dayton Accords, politicians, diplomats and the military proved to have a blind spot about Kosovo, where history was determined by ethnic and religious power struggles and a cycle of violence. In Dayton, Kosovo was not on the agenda.

On 28 June 1389, the Serbian Prince Lazar was defeated on Blackbird Field (Kosovo Polje) near Pristina by an Ottoman Turkish army, which is said to be the beginning of Turkish domination. The Kingdom of Greater Serbia, which around 1350 also covered Albania, Macedonia and northern Greece, had already suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of the Ottomans near Marica in Bulgaria. In 1389, the disintegration of Serbia was already well advanced. Lazar's successors acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty and behaved as docile vassals until their country was finally incorporated into the Ottoman Empire in 1459.

In Lazar, the Orthodox Church found a true martyr and a patron saint for the Serbian people. It was not until the 19th century that the myth of Kosovo Polje was revived, along with the cult of Lazar, to serve a new national consciousness seeking to restore the kingdom. The commemoration of Blackbird Field in 1889 changed the myth of the defeat into a historical fact that fomented hatred against the Kosovo Albanians. They, it was claimed, were really responsible for the defeat and the Ottoman domination.

The collapsing Ottoman Empire in the Balkans gave nationalism the opportunity to manifest itself. The religious factor - Orthodox Christianity against Islam - played an important part in this process. Serbia and Bulgaria were resurrected as states. Albanian nationalism led, after the Balkan Wars in 1913, to the recognition of the new state of Albania. Under pressure from Russia, Kosovo, which already had a large Muslim majority, remained part of Serbia. The Albanians protested, frustrated that more than half of ethnic Albanians in the Balkans would be 'deprived of a nation'. The Kosovo Question was born.

It was precisely on the anniversary of Blackbird Field, on 28 June 1914, that the fatal shots were fired in Sarajevo. Vienna declared war on Serbia. In Kosovo bloody fighting erupted between Serbs and Albanians. Serbia lost one-fifth of its population in the Great War, including

an estimated 100 000 in Kosovo. The Entente rewarded the country for its heroic role by recognising its claim to Kosovo, which became part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The USA even declared the date of Blackbird Field a special day of remembrance for all oppressed peoples in the world.

The collapsing Ottoman Empire in the Balkans gave nationalism the opportunity to manifest itself. The religious factor - Orthodox Christianity against Islam - played an important part in this process.

The attempt in the inter-war years to reduce the number of Albanians by forced emigration and deportation proved ineffective, as did the plan to make the Serbian language compulsory in education. During the Second World War, collaborating Kosovars took revenge on the Serbian colonists. In liberated Kosovo there was a bloody settling of accounts between Albanian rebels and the army. Tito was not moved by nationalistic considerations, purely by Communist ideology. The 1974 Constitution made Kosovo a republic in name. In fact it remained an autonomous province, though with its own administrative bodies, education, cultural institutions and flag, resembling those of Albania. The ten percent of Serbs felt themselves discriminated against, while the Kosovars were treated as a minority by Belgrade. They suffered under deplorable social and economic conditions, which became even worse after Tito's death in 1980 owing to the impending collapse of Yugoslavia. The tensions rose to such a pitch that in 1989 President Milošević abolished Kosovo's autonomy. Serbian nationalism reached a hysterical peak when, at the 600th anniversary celebrations on the site of Blackbird Field, he prophetically announced that this day the Serbs had won a historic victory in Kosovo, which would not be the last. Ten years later there was war in Kosovo. His Greater Serbian dream ended in a Little Serbian nightmare.

The rest is, hopefully, history.

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KOSOVO DESERVES BETTER FROM ITS POLITICIANS AND THE EU

The failure of Kosovo's politicians to form a new government following elections held in June is holding up economic development of the country including crucial decisions about the country's energy supplies besides the desperate need to tackle the corruption which has engulfed the country in recent years.

The young people of Kosovo are angry and frustrated by this situation and I am convinced they deserve better from their own politicians and the international community including the European Union.

Kosovo is a poor landlocked country which declared its independence in 2008 and is a partially recognised as a state by 110 UN countries including 23 EU member states but not by Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. It is officially a Muslim country with a 90 per cent Muslim population but is often described as "light Muslim" and appears largely secular.

It is a young country with a young population and it was a great privilege to meet so many young people in Kosovo, to take part in a dialogue with university students, and to observe the good natured protests of young people in the Pristina following the violent disturbances at the European Champions League football match between Albania and Serbia.

The United States has a huge influence in Kosovo and with the exception of the "Self Determination" group the main political parties all say they are "centre right" and seem keen to declare their pro US views as regards the economy and privatisation.

Many young people expressed their anger that visa free travel is limited to only 12 countries and that they suffer the worst visa regulations in the region which are more restrictive than in the days of the former Yugoslavia. They feel they are receiving a rough deal in relation to visa liberalisation even compared with Serbia and are unfairly treated and isolated.

The EU has a big presence in Kosovo, offers substantial support to the new country, and EU membership is widely seen as the way forward for the country. And



Meeting Ms Brikenda Rexhepi, Editor of the newspaper Koha Ditore.

although there is a real enthusiasm in Kosovo to join the EU, there is an awareness that the EU is experiencing serious austerity and high unemployment and the appetite for enlargement has decreased enormously.

The United States has a huge influence in Kosovo and with the exception of the "Self Determination" group the main political parties all say they are "centre right" and seem keen to declare their pro US views as regards the economy and privatisation. And Kosovo has been described as both "an artificial state" and "a creation of the United States".

Kosovo has experienced traumatic conflict following the break up of the former Yugoslavia and tension between Serbia and Albania especially in the North of Kosovo is at a high level and a threat to security in the region which the EU needs to take seriously.

Despite the widespread austerity in the EU and the election of populist and extreme nationalist parties to the European Parliament which has resulted in less enthusiasm for enlargement, the EU will have far greater problems if war returns to the Balkans and it would be appropriate for the new President the EU Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, to reconsider his statement that there will be no EU enlargement for the next 5 years.

I would like the EU to consider an early opportunity for several countries of the West Balkans to join the EU at the same time as a block so that the EU can use its historic experience of reconciliation between former enemies to apply to the current situation in former Yugoslavia.

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THE HOPE FOR KOSOVO AND ITS DIRECTION FUTURE

Arriving in Prishtina gave me hope. Passport control seems quick and efficient. The taxi to the hotel is straight forward - and much cheaper than London. The hotel service is pleasant and efficient. The nearby plaza is clean, wide and airy with lots of good cheap restaurants and bars with young people looking cheerful and friendly. All signs of hope.

As our visit progressed doubts arose. Recent elections have led to a parliamentary crisis in finding a majority to form a stable government. But that is not unknown in the best of western democracies. Indeed the Commission's October report is generally complimentary about recent elections. Any suggestion that Kosovo - a predominantly Muslim country - would be a hot bed for ISIS and extremism is soon dispelled not least because the vast majority seem very Western. Both men and women dress in Western style e.g. tee-shirt and jeans and many men can be seen with a beer or a wine in the bars.

The real doubts must start with the location. It is landlocked. It has a neighbour hostile and refusing to recognise it as a separate country. It must be clear that if Serbia is to be a member state of the EU all those blockages must be removed.

The next real doubt must be that the economy has a long way to go before it can seriously be competitive in the EU single market. It is much dependent on external aid from the international organisations like the World

As our visit progressed doubts arose. Recent elections have led to a parliamentary crisis in finding a majority to form a stable government. But that is not unknown in the best of western democracies.

Bank and on the EU and the United States. There is little industry that could be considered competitive other than minerals. Unemployment is high. A large part of tax revenue is from customs duty. Most seriously the word "corruption" comes into play too often - not least from businessmen. Indeed according to the Commission it is "prevalent" in many areas. Kosovo has not addressed public financial management. There is some distance to go in bringing in foreign investment despite the efforts of such excellent organisations as the European Investors Council.

The final doubt must be the extent that it can meet all the criteria for EU membership. This essentially means ethnic relations are good and fair. The October progress reports developments in a number of areas here but still concludes the need for new momentum.

Clearly the position is not just about Kosovo progress. It is also about the EU. There is clearly understandable concern in the EU about immigration. Schengen countries have introduced a tough visa regime on Kosovo. The UK has mirrored this and has added a high charge for a visa and a requirement for a long winded procedure of sending visa applications to a company in Warsaw. Mr Juncker, even before he became President of the Commission, stated there will be no further enlargement in the next five years and gave no vision on enlargement. The Commission needs to give hope to the applicants through the development of a roadmap to membership of the EU.

Maybe hope is not there? The Balkans may have been a Pandora's Box but at the bottom of the box always lies hope. In the case of Kosovo the hope is their clear aspiration for EU membership. This is incentive to improve and reform. More importantly the young people I met, not least those performing Mozart and Vivaldi enthusiastically in Prishtina's KamerFest, deserve hope.

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Meeting with Mr Artan Duraku, Director of the Department for European Integration and Policy Coordination of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Mr Luan Morina, Director of the Department of Energy within the Ministry of Economic Development.

KOSOVO: CONTRASTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

Kosovo is a country where:

- people dress in the same way we do;
- people are Muslim in name only, like Christians are here;
- the streets are as clean as they are in our towns and cities;
- the food is varied and excellent.

However, our conversations with local people revealed that, behind this façade, the situation is far more complex and often contradictory.

- This is a country of 'artificial' borders, given that 100 % of the Serbs living in northern Kosovo want to re-join Serbia.
- This is a country where hundreds (thousands?) of cars



have no licence plates.

- This is a country where you can change your identity every five years.
- This is country where part of the land registry was stolen, making it difficult sometimes to prove that you are the owner of a given plot of land.
- This is a country where the minimum wage is EUR 170 per month, where fuel costs EUR 1.20 per litre, where the unemployment rate is 50 %, and yet where the streets are full of shiny new cars.

Down the centuries, the country (or should we say province? or region?) of Kosovo has almost always existed under the control of other powers, from the Romans to the Serbs, the Turks, the Austrians and, most recently, Tito.

So the question is: can Kosovo become a permanently independent state? With the help of the European Union, it is possible, thanks to the considerable financial aid that the EU provides (the highest per capita rate in the world) and the impressive achievements of the 2000 EULEX staff who have been working to build Kosovo's administrative structure from the ground up. Kosovo has made remarkable progress over the past six years. However, historical, ethnological, economic and diplomatic factors continue to make the process of state-building a difficult and protracted one.

The European Union was right to intervene in Kosovo. And it should continue to do so. Because, without the work of the EU, the powder keg that is the Balkan region is certain to go off again, so entrenched are its complexities, contrasts and contradictions.

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Picture on the top right of the page: meeting with Mrs. Teuta Sahatqija, Member of the LDK Party, Mr Fatmir Limaj, President of NISMA per KOSOVEN and Mr Ramush Haradinaj, President of AAK.

Two pictures here above: meeting with Ms Kristen Stec, Danish Refugee Council in Kosovo, Ms Hamijet Dedolli, Executive Director of the PVPT Center, Mr Memli Jmeri and Mr Hilmi Jashari, Civil Rights Program Kosovo and Mr Juha Rumpunen, Kosovo Twinning Project, Strengthening Readmission and Sustainable Reintegration in Kosovo.

KOSOVARS SUFFER FROM VISA OFFSIDE

FMA Bulletin (B) poses questions to Henrik Lax (HL), Rapporteur for the visa reform 2009

B: *What is your view of the perspective for visa liberalisation for Kosovo?*

HL: Today the inhabitants of Kosovo are in a difficult offside position compared to their neighbours in the Balkans who have all been granted visa free access to the Schengen area. Right now the inhabitants of Kosovo are free to go without visa only to Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and the Maldives!

The present situation is largely perceived as discriminatory making the visa liberalization a hot topic on the public agenda.

B: *How important would it be for Kosovo to obtain visa liberalization?*

HL: Kosovo's future depends essentially on giving people in Kosovo a fair reason to believe that they will be able to set in motion the development, dynamism and progress of their country. Getting the economy going and building up the institutions to meet the requirements of the rule of law is essential. This will require broad and frequent contacts with experts, investors and colleagues in the EU. The present isolation due to difficulties in getting Schengen visas affects seriously both the mood of the Kosovo people and their chances to consolidate their fragile community.

B: *What would be the risk for the EU to lift the visa requirement?*

HL: Organized crime, trafficking of human beings and drugs are problems but hardly worse than in the neighbouring countries. In fact some of the alleged organized crime seems to bypass Kosovo. Negative experience from visa liberalization granted to other Balkan countries and overestimated fear of crime risk to distort the evaluation of the progress Kosovo is doing in meeting the requirements of the EU road map for visa liberalization.

Kosovo is already implementing agreements on re-admission and reintegration with most EU member states, the improvement of the border management is



Henrik Lax during his presentation on the visa issue to the students of AUK.

progressing, efforts to assure biometrics and other reliable documents are being carried out etc.

Poverty and unemployment are real problems pushing people to go for a better future in the EU. It is therefore difficult to understand why France is encouraging asylum seekers from Kosovo by keeping the country on the list of insecure states.

Corruption and a weak judiciary hold potential investors back hampering economic progress and the fight against unemployment which would reduce the push for migration. Insufficient energy supply adds to the difficulties to build up the economy and raise the living standards of the population.

B: *What would be your overall assessment of the situation?*

HL: The presence of the international community through EULEX and KFOR will continue to be important for a time. Institution building and stability are prerequisites for economic progress and so would be visa free access to the EU. Stability in the Balkans as a whole requires that also Kosovo can get on its feet. It would therefore be important that Belgrade and Tirana are engaged as well by the EU to support this end.

Contrary to the other Balkan states the Commission has been in charge of the visa liberalizing process of Kosovo. It should be recognized that this has implied tougher requirements for Kosovo. It is in the interest of the Balkan Peninsula and the EU to get Kosovo going. This end would be less cumbersome to achieve, if Kosovo were to be recognized by all the EU member states.

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THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN KOSOVO 15 YEARS AFTER THE END OF THE WAR

Thanks to the many international programmes for peace and development in the country, Kosovo, with its population of nearly 2 million, could have been expected by now to have established a transparent economy; however, according to the European investors council, a group of the most important investors in Kosovo, much of the funding disappears through corruption and maladministration.

The well-prepared fact-finding visit by former MEPs, which included many encounters and interviews with political and economic decision-makers, gave participants a good notion of what investors were complaining about: the endless red tape, the discrepancy between written law and the law in practice – more than 10 000 business cases are pending in the courts – and the failure to provide incentives for investors, unlike in the neighbouring countries Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

The PDK which came to power seven years ago (36% of the votes in 2014) says it wants to stay in power whatever the cost, even if three other parties (63%) are against it. The political instability, the lack of legal certainty and the generalised absence of trust – a source of much corruption and capital exports – are leading to an exodus of people looking for work. However, whether Kosovo should be considered internationally as an 'unsafe State', so as to justify asylum applications in the EU, is questionable in view of the impression we gained of peaceful cooperation between ethnic groups, even on the northern border with Serbia.

However, the fact that the government prefers to use its EUR 1.5 billion budget to fund showpiece projects, such as a motorway to Tirana costing EUR 25 million, rather than investing in education and other infrastructure, is a measure of the obstinacy of some politicians, who, like their counterparts in Romania seek to consolidate their

hold on power through popular gestures; for the alignment with Albania is a popular policy particularly among younger people, and the long attachment of Kosovo to Serbia is seen as an historical mistake.

The latest progress report drawn up by the EU embassy in Pristina put the subsidies granted to the country between 2007 and 2013 at EUR 673.9 million, i.e. EUR 600 per person, per year, much of it under aid programmes such as 'the reintegration of displaced persons' after the war. The report criticises, inter alia, the botched privatisation of State enterprises, mostly cooperatives, even though the previous transitional economies of Eastern European countries, such as Poland and Hungary, had shown the importance of a proper investor law and full privatisation in creating a market economy.

Economic growth slowed from 3.4% in 2012 to 2.8% in 2013. The EUR 70 million in EU subsidies brought the country to 11% of the EU average, while the trade deficit lies at around 31% and the budget deficit is 6.4% of the GNP.

Perhaps individual personalities should take a spectacular stand against corruption – like the mayor of the northern city of Mitrovica has done since his return from the Netherlands to his native city, and like the EU institution EULEX, which fights against corruption and for better law enforcement.

The restoration of property rights and the clarification of the land registry which was forged under Communism also have a role to play in tackling the war damage and encouraging start-ups.

The meeting with union leaders revealed a flaw in labour law which appears unenforceable as long as the unemployment rate is over 40%.

The various peace-keeping measures such as KFOR, with a force of 5 000, including 500 German troops, should have contributed to a greater degree of development allowing the mission to be wound up soon, because the country cannot sustain the steady stream of legal and illegal emigration in the long run. The question now is whether dispensing with the visa requirement – which is the subject of negotiations with the EU – will not make this situation worse.

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ENERGY FOR THE FUTURE

Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, in warm, sunny weather does not give the impression that this recently independent country is still suffering from the aftermath of war, ethnic and religious differences and an independence not fully recognised by Serbia. Nor does a fine boulevard leading to an impressive government centre signal successful and sustained economic growth in a country where GDP is only one third of the EU average.

The aftermath of war has certainly impacted on the energy situation, especially in relation to electricity supply and is further confounded by a recent explosion at Kosovo A, the oldest lignite burning power station now only operating at 30% of its 430MW capacity. Kosovo B, a more recent station, has a capacity of 530 MW.

For some time a third plant has been planned, but subject to frequent delays and reductions in its original planned output of 1000 MW to 600 MW. This can only replace the Kosovo A station which should be closed as soon as possible for environmental reasons.

It is understood that there are now four tenders under consideration for the Kosovo C plant but no decision will be possible until a new Government is in office. Meanwhile, winter approaches and there is every prospect of serious electricity supply restrictions. Without a secure and adequate electricity supply economic development cannot bring sufficient growth to lift Kosovo up the Balkan league table.

A lignite burning power station is not the environmentalist's desire, but equally a new plant using the latest combustion technology with the suppression of com-

Longer term, the securing of a supply of natural gas should be explored. Eventually this could be a replacement for lignite use in power stations and provide an alternative for domestic heating rather than the wood-burning which is the common practice.

bustion gases and particulates would be a big improvement on the current Kosovo A. However, generating capacity in addition to Kosovo C will be needed to meet the needs of an expanding economy.

The Energy Department is within the Ministry of Economic Development. My experiences in my home region, ravaged by the closure of its shipyards and coalmines, is that it can take years for new projects to make a big impact

As well as the electricity generation requirements, Kosovo has large reserves of lignite and the efficiency of its production and the reduction of its environmental impact can also contribute to the economic value of this resource. The same can be said of the mineral resources in the north of Kosovo, which we saw during our visit to Mitrovica.

There is also scope for improvement in the efficiency of the electricity supply system not only to for existing consumers, but for supply to allocated zones of industrial or commercial development. Longer term, the securing of a supply of natural gas should be explored. Eventually this could be a replacement for lignite use in power stations and provide an alternative for domestic heating rather than the wood-burning which is the common practice. There is also scope for developing other low carbon energy sources such as wind, solar and hydropower with indigenous manufacture encouraged.

However, Kosovo must solve the current constitutional impasse so that the Government can plan a future of growth based more on its own efforts and be less reliant on external funding sources.

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Kastriot (Obilić) Power Plant. Picture © Wikimedia



The FMA Delegation with both the Kosovar and Serbian Police Forces at Gate One, a crossing point on the Serbia-Kosovo border.

THE SERBIAN COMMUNITY IN KOSOVO

A few months ago the European Parliament found that Kosovo had become the largest per capita recipient of EU financial aid in the world. The aim of this aid is to help establish the rule of law, but its lack of effectiveness is raising concerns in Parliament. One of the main obstacles is the problem of the Serbian population.

In principle, the solution is simple. The Serbs make up a very small minority of the population: 6% of the total, according to the latest census figures. The Albanian majority (90%) have nothing to fear from them. Furthermore, EU experts have taken care to ensure that the rights of the Serbs are strictly respected: they are full citizens; their language is accepted in all public documents and in teaching; Serbian voters are represented in the Parliament by 10 MPs (out of 120); ownership of their land and property is guaranteed by law; their cultural and religious buildings are protected by the state. We were able to observe that all of these measures are being applied.

So why is Brussels so concerned? Because the EU's financial and legislative efforts are failing to bridge the chasm of mistrust which separates the two communities. For the Albanians, horrific memories of executions, arson attacks and the destruction of their villages that marked their liberation war are still fresh in the memory. The Serbs are unable to come to terms with losing their position of dominance. They look on with powerless indignation as their most ancient sanctuaries are desecrated. They too count their dead and disappeared. And as if the past were not enough to distance the two communities from each other, the future pushes them

even further apart: the Albanians look to Tirana, while Serbian eyes are turned towards Belgrade.

For the past 10 years Kosovo has been calm, but the legal safeguards imposed by the European Union are unlikely to be enough to prevent renewed intercommunal violence, which would have repercussions throughout the Western Balkans. The EU's credit would be destroyed.

What can be done? The Eulex officials we met were contemplating a radical solution: the partitioning of Kosovo. North of the Ibar river, in a mountainous region cut by deep valleys, lives a population that is almost entirely Serbian. They are in direct contact with Serbia and act as if they were part of that country. They pay no taxes to the Pristina Government, observe none of its laws and never cross the bridge over the Ibar into Mitrovica. It would be beneficial to recognise the fait accompli and place this enclave (15% of Kosovo's territory) under the sovereignty of Belgrade. To the south of the river the remaining Serbs live in small village communities cut off from the world around them. With no prospects for the future, the young people are leaving and their villages are condemned to a slow decline.

Any such decision would mean altering borders that were solemnly guaranteed by the Europeans and Americans in 1999. But if it led to definitive peace between Serbs and Albanians, if it paved the way for cooperation between neighbouring states and if it made it possible for both to join the European Union, would it not be preferable to the status quo?

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THE CALL TO PRAYER FIVE TIMES A DAY – BUT HOW ISLAMIC IS KOSOVO REALLY?

It's impossible to miss the mosques or the amplified call of the muezzin five times a day– but Kosovo doesn't feel like an Islamic country. You won't see carpets rolled out in public places at prayer times, with men removing their shoes before praying to Allah, as I have seen in Egypt. Kosovo today is without question a secular country, and not only because this is enshrined in Article 8 of the Constitution.

Nevertheless, some people wonder about the threat of fundamentalism. During the centuries of Ottoman occupation, the Ottomans failed to convert the formerly Catholic Kosovo (and Albania) to a strict form of Islam. Today, while well over 90 per cent of Kosovars count themselves Moslems, it is a very mild form of Islam. The main square in the city centre is home to a huge temple to consumerism showcasing an Italian fashion brand, while the store for Islamic women's clothing and hijabs in the vicinity of a mosque is reassuringly small. Maybe there were even fewer headscarves before, but today they are very thin on the ground. In any German, French, British or Swiss city they are much more frequent. Moreover, children continue to be given Albanian rather than Islamic names, as they always have been.

The roots of liberal Islam lie in a form of Sufism, which made it easier for the population of the Balkans to make the transition from Catholicism to Islam and spared them the uncompromising rigour of Qur'anic law. Sufism is a pantheistic form of belief, able to act as a bridge between mutually antagonistic religions

and schools of thought. Mohamed VI, the King of Morocco, tries specifically to enlist the support of Sufis in the fight against fundamentalists. The prayer houses of the Sufis (also known as Dervishes) are called 'tekkes' and are very widespread in Kosovo. Non-Muslims are welcome, because 'modern Sufism as a form of liberated spirituality has a unique, trans-confessional message of love, harmony and beauty which is addressed to everyone' (the International Sufi Order of Germany). Unfortunately there is no room to go into this in greater detail here.

The Serbian Orthodox Church, which accounts for about seven per cent of the population, is the second largest religious group in Kosovo, and the many historically significant churches and monasteries with irreplaceable icons and frescoes – some classified as part of the world cultural heritage – are eloquent testimony to its importance. The politically fraught situation means that the protection of KFOR is still needed on occasion. On the question of whether or not to cooperate with the Kosovo government, the Serbian Orthodox Church is divided. The oldest religion, Catholicism, now only accounts for about three per cent of the population, making it the smallest religious group in the country, but it still has a firm place in society, and not only because of Mother Teresa, who is honoured with many monuments and has many streets named after her. In Prizren, within a radius of a hundred metres, you will find a mosque, a Byzantine church and a Catholic church, all evocative of the historical heritage and the freedom of religion that exists today in Kosovo.

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RELIGIONS IN KOSOVO

1. Islam

Well over 90 per cent of Kosovars are Sunni Moslems who pray in mosques or Sufis of some description who pray in prayer houses called 'tekkes'. Between the two there are significant differences. Sufism, which is banned in Turkey and elsewhere, does not impose any religious obligations such as praying towards Mecca or the veiling of women, but uses dance, music and alcohol for spiritual purposes. The initiate has to pass through four stages:

1. Religious law
2. The mystical path
3. Gnosis
4. Truth

These replace the five pillars of Islam:

1. Profession of faith to God and His Prophet
2. The formal prayer towards Mecca, performed five times a day
3. The duty to donate to the poor
4. Fasting during the month of Ramadan
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca

2. The Serbian Orthodox Church

It also has four pillars as the basis of its Faith:

1. The 'right doctrine'
2. The 'perfect life of the Fathers'
3. The Liturgy
4. The 'Symphony of throne and altar' - the relationship between Church and State

3. Catholicism

The oldest religion in the Balkans. Legends about martyrs were already in circulation in the 2nd century. Missionaries covered the entire country in the 8th century. The Ottoman occupation led to gradual marginalisation. Some Catholic communities are now experiencing a minor revival, as can be seen from some newly built churches, particularly in the area around Peja.

4. The Kanun

The Kanun is not a religion, but a code of conduct and ethics – originally passed down by oral tradition only – in the mountains of northern Albania/Kosovo which the Ottoman occupiers found it difficult to penetrate; this ancient code, which also features the vendetta, persists to this day.

Summary

The overwhelming majority of Albanian Kosovars are Moslems, but there are also some Catholics. The Serbian minority belongs exclusively to the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Roma, Ashkali or Egyptian minorities are divided between the three religions, while the Croats are Catholics and the Bosniaks are Moslems.

AN ARTIST IS WORTHLESS WITHOUT TALENT, BUT TALENT IS WORTHLESS WITHOUT HARD WORK (EMILE ZOLA, 1840 – 1902)

If you always practise hard and have some luck in your social circumstances, you may have a chance. What is the catch? Only if you always practise hard and have some luck in your social circumstances will you have a chance... But you will still have to work hard: every day, every week, every year. At the age of 20, a professional pianist has clocked up some 10 000 practice hours, while an amateur has only done 2 000 – but the amateur has had a childhood.

Here we are at the inaugural concert of the 'Kosova Kamerfest 2014 Ensemble', in St Anthony's Catholic church in Prishtina, listening to the talented players, as many as twenty of whom were our generous and welcoming hosts last night in the typical local restaurant 'Pishat'. On both evenings these included major soloists: the excellent cellist Frank S. Dodge (USA) and the impressive bass Martti Wallen (Finland). We thoroughly enjoy their performance, 'Mozart and Vivaldi meet Fauré and Bartók'.

We are talking to Sihana Badivuku. She is a distinguished violinist and Art Director of the International Chamber Music Festival, which has now been running

for 15 years. She is accompanied by the distinguished cellist Werner Schmitt from Bern. He is Vice-President of the International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation, whose president is our current FMA President, Enrique Barón Crespo.

The ensemble comprises professors and students of the Art Faculty's Music Section and members of the Kosovo Philharmonic. The festival is generally sponsored. Unfortunately, this year it was particularly difficult to raise the necessary money, says Sihana; even some of the embassies declined to contribute. The Kamerfest is a cultural highlight; it deserves support and attention.

Now there is sustained applause for the musicians under their renowned conductor Alfredo Oyaguez (Spain).

The massive upheaval in civil society has affected artists too – perhaps especially – but it is they above all who are driven by the hope that their homeland of Kosovo can tackle its problems with forming a government and creating jobs, as well as its burning social issues. Sihana stresses that they are all well educated and willing to work and show commitment; many of them have more than one job. If anything has the power to move mountains, Sihana is convinced it is music. Music sharpens our senses, our perceptions and our social skills.

The place of music, art and literature as a binding element in a market-oriented world is something which

should be looked at anew and supported in the rest of Europe too. Man does not live by bread alone! The international community should also play its part. We are planning to express our appreciation by inviting musicians, via the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation, to the 2014 Brussels Colloquy, though this will be a drop in the ocean.

Kosovo has a long and diverse cultural history. Its various ethnic groups (Albanians, Serbs, Turks, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Circassians) have deeply enriched its everyday culture with their customs and talents. This is testified to not just by churches, mosques and monasteries – among which Gračanica is a world cultural heritage site. Kosovo is a treasure-house, but one that is sadly often exposed to wanton destruction or thoughtless neglect.

These committed musicians are still defying the badly under-funded Kosovo education system, studying and teaching their music – and continuing to practice assiduously.

We wish them the best of luck!

Brigitte LANGENHAGEN
EPP-ED, Germany (1990-2004)
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KAMERFEST: OUR ENCOUNTER WITH THE ARTISTS

“For 15 years now, KamerFest has been the first and main International Chamber Music Festival in Kosovo. Established in 2000 by the ArsKosova Music Foundation, it became an important cultural event and bridge between Kosovar artists and well-known European, American and Asian artists.

The idea came to my mind during the visit to Kosovo (1999) of well-known world violinist and UNICEF ambassador, Mr Maxim VENGEROV. His visit to our Faculty of Art and Music and his master classes to violin



Ms Sihana Badivuku, Director of Kamerfest, and Ms Karin Junker, Head of the FMA Delegation, during the opening dinner organised by KamerFest with artists, organisers, cultural attachés and many more.

students challenged me to start a Festival also in our society, where this activity was missing.

Now, our music school pupils and the students of the Music Academy of the University of Pristina have the possibility to gain an extraordinary knowledge in classic and chamber music thanks to the performances by well-known artists and professors from all around the world during some special Master classes.

On my behalf as the Artistic Director of Festival and my colleagues, staff of KamerFest and ArsKosova Foundation I would like to thank Former Members of European Parliament and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for their initiative to meet us during the KamerFest dinner on 12th October to listen to our needs aimed at developing and growing KOSOVA KAMERFEST as well as supporting us as artists and organizers during our chamber music concert performances.

Let me say that all Kosovar classic music festivals and projects belong to Europe, not only geographically, but also artistically.”

Sihana Badivuku
Violinist and Director of KamerFest

“The thirst for art, culture and music in a country and their people, especially young adults, was truly astounding and inspiring. Where war, fear, daily survival had been a normal occurrence for the population, that there could possibly be music and in live concerts was an extraordinary event.

Moreover, the lack of funds, the inability of a newly

born country trying to establish the fundamental institutions of a democratic republic to support the arts (quite understandably), make the reliance on outside support all the more vital and imperative.

As Kosovo overcomes the legacy of war and ethnic divisions, any support from European institutions is so very important and truly well invested in helping bring culture, art, hope and a glimmer of a brighter future to the young generations in Kosovo, and a source of pride for the entire Kosovo society.”

Derek Han
American Pianist



Ceremonial Opening of KamerFest 2014 - "Mozart & Vivaldi in front of Fauré & Bartok".

“It was in 2005 when I first visited Prishtina to prepare the concert tour of the “Youth Symphony Orchestra Conservatory Berne” consisting of around 120 young people from Switzerland and all Southern European regions. In Pristina the orchestra was invited to perform at the “Kamerfest” of “Ars Kosovo International Chamber Music Festival”.

I was so impressed, when I met my colleague and violinist Sihana Badivuku, an outstanding musician, and her wonderful Vice-President and Viola Player Blerim Grubi of the foundation for the first time. They recommended a good number of music students from Kosova to participate in the orchestra tour. Never before had these young people been given the possibility to exchange their love of music with other musicians of their generation, because of the political isolation of the country.

Sihana Badivuku is a perfect example of what can be achieved even when the difficulties are tremendous. Her “fire of fighting for the values of art” inflames. So it became a very important task in my life, to support the artistic life in this young country especially through international exchange projects in the field of music and art education. In the follow up several initiatives could be realized, many students could come to Switzerland for master classes and other musical exchange projects. Many of them are still in bilateral contacts.

In the spirit of Yehudi Menuhin, who was convinced that music can change the world, in 2010 I initiated the European MUS-E® program in Kosovo too, which brings arts into schools in 13 countries.

In this sense I was very glad to participate in the orchestra of the opening concert of the “Kamerfest 2014” and deeply impressed, when the representative of the Ministry of Culture said: “God gave us the music, so that we can pray without words”.

Werner Schmitt, Vice-President of the International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation Brussels

“Meeting so many artists, learning from them and talking to them, it means so much to me. I still have contact with a lot of them, I enjoyed playing with them and they have always been a huge inspiration. I think this is the main reason for never quitting art and continue being a musician, even though I knew from a young age how difficult such a profession is.”

Genta Hoxha
Viola musician and Ars Kosova staff member

“After the war in 1999, we’ve seen a spiritual renaissance in Albanese Kosovar. Until that time, we didn’t think we would have survived and lived to see a free Kosovo, but some artists of classical music in Kosovo immediately tried to remember our dreams and decided to organise festivals of classical music. Now it’s been 15 years that we made this dream come true with full enthusiasm and with over 200 concerts since its beginning, we make bridges with artists of different nations and countries. KamerFest is a unique model for the society in Kosovo and it brings together a wonderful audience.”

Prof Blerim Grubi
Viola musician and member of the KamerFest Board

WE, THE YOUTH – NOT THE ILLUSION!

An often encountered struggle in Kosovo is the attempt to divide problems between the citizens in general and the youth. This really gives the feeling that the youth faces some “special” kind of problems, which are different from other citizens. Even political parties have their youth forums which are supposedly concerned with the “youth problems.” But, in reality, by being an integral part of the society, the youth of Kosovo faces the very same problems as other ranges of age.

The notion that the “youth is the future” has become a cliché that we hear everywhere. Probably unintentionally, this notion causes the youth to act passively since, instead of inspiring them to build the present, it is preserving them for some later time – for some imagined future.

In the spirit of dividing the youth from the rest of the society, depoliticization is another attempt. We often hear how the youth should play sports, perform arts, etc., but not be politicized, as if sports, arts, and other areas are not politicized! In a way, even if you don't want to deal with politics, politics deals with you since it is everywhere. Year after year we are suffering the syndrome of indifference. So, politicization has become a necessity in order to be an active citizen and confront both indifference and propagandistic indoctrination.

Very often, the youth of Kosovo is misrepresented. Instead of dealing with the essence of problems, both the international community and the domestic elites have tried to build a façade which hides the real struggles. An example of that is the campaign “Kosovo – The Young Europeans” where the youth is portrayed as if we have fixed all the problems and now we are living in a para-



Lecture and meeting with students at the American University of Kosovo.

dise. That campaign does not show that we are among states that have the highest rate of unemployment in Europe. It doesn't show either that many universities here are created so that the statistical number of unemployed is reduced since now they are labelled as “students.” This also gives an excuse for these people who, instead of saying that they are unemployed, they claim that they are studying. This argument is further strengthened when we see that the diplomas that they receive in those universities are of little or no value.

In the regional context, we are aware that the European Union is interested in stability. However, it is crucial to understand this current stability per se is not enough for Kosovo. Even in a greater context, stability means a continuation of the status quo, with some progress probably, but without many ups and downs. Here, we see a sacrifice of justice for stability, which will not truly solve the problem; it will simply postpone it. For example, Kosovo's constitution denies us the right to self-determine. Although the right of nations for self-determination is an internationally recognized right, we are sacrificing it in order to preserve short-term stability.

It is very important for us to get rid of liberal clichés and discuss the very essence of problems without fearing taboos. Major achievements usually come from confrontations and not from the creation of illusions. Yet, the world needs to see that we are equal to other nations and, like other nations, we deserve a more dignified approach. Our youth is capable of reshaping the present if it follows universal values of self-respect, equality, justice and reciprocity with other nations.

Edison JAKURTI

Student of the American University of Kosovo

edisonjakurti@hotmail.com



Lecture and meeting with students at the American University of Kosovo.

THE LAST EUROPEAN PRISON - APARTHEID IN 21ST CENTURY EUROPE

I remember that day quite well.

It was March 17th 2004, I was 12 years old, just an ordinary boy, I didn't really care much about the enormously insane stuff taking place around me. I was heading back home, and – as I took a look at the bridge – I saw hundreds of people trying to cross it over to “my” side. I felt terrified. I ran as fast as I could. My parents were waiting for me and arguing whether it is wise to stay in the city, or leave it, as well as our only home. The Albanians were trying to enter the north side of my city and massacre us or, best case scenario, only make us leave our homes. I just understood that a few years later. After all, I was just an ignorant twelve-year-old kid who couldn't wait to get back home and play football, do his homework.

I am Stefan, I'm 23 years old now, and I study at the University of Priština with a temporary seat in Kosovska Mitrovica. It is this city – Kosovska Mitrovica – that I spoke about just a few sentences earlier. It is the place where I grew up, the place where a girl first kissed me, where I adored living in. It is the city of my dreams. Someone might argue that I have low standards! They wouldn't be wrong. But I have my reasons.

The systematic discrimination implemented by the Albanian majority in Kosovo and Metohia is an everyday thing all the non-majority groups face.

On March 17th 2004, I couldn't really understand all that hatred Albanians expressed towards us – the Serbs. I always asked myself what could be their reason for expatriating 300,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians from the southern Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohia. Were they savages? Apparently, this was not the case. They just wished for an ethnically cleansed Kosovo and Metohia. That was all. They almost succeeded. Today, Kosovo and Metohia, known better as only Kosovo, is precisely what the title of this article says – the Last European Prison. My people, the Serbs, are being systematically discriminated in, what most of the EU countries recognize as an independent state. It is utterly inconceivable that such an entity can leave and



Meeting at the University of Priština in Mitrovica.

survive in modern-day Europe – a place of tolerance and democracy. Most of the Serbs do not want to live in such an environment where their language, national script, basic human rights are violated on a daily basis. In my opinion, Kosovo will never succeed in being a democratic entity and in respecting basic human rights of its minorities (Serbs, Roma, etc), because the Albanian politicians in Kosovo and Metohia are feeding their people hatred, since they can't give them bread. Kosovo, as “a state”, is terribly poor, the unemployment rate goes up to 50%.

I don't feel free in my city. I feel as I was a pigeon waiting to be shot down. The bridge on the Ibar river which divides Kosovska Mitrovica into North Kosovska Mitrovica (where I live) and South Kosovska Mitrovica (with an Albanian majority) can be crossed at any point, and my family, friends, everyone I ever knew – could be massacred in cold blood. I think Europe needs to know about this.

The systematic discrimination implemented by the Albanian majority in Kosovo and Metohia is an everyday thing all the non-majority groups face. So, as for the hopes of the youth here, I guess that everyone wants to have a decent job, provide for their families and, as an unavoidable point, try not to get killed, abducted, etc. In the absence of an everyday normal life, young people do not really have something they could wish for, they first need to flee this European Last Prison – and by fleeing I mean – survive it.

Stefan VELJKOVIĆ

Student at the University of Priština in Mitrovica

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH KOSOVO AND WHY I LIKE GOING BACK

No, it wasn't my first encounter with Kosovo. Unlike almost all my fellow passengers, my contacts go back to the year 2000, when my three years' work with the UN mission began. As UN International Mayor in the city of Peć/Pejë, I was responsible, together with a team of international and local staff, for setting up local authority structures. At this time, the physical and psychological wounds from the conflict were still wide open, the country was largely destroyed, many people still lived in tents, the electricity and water supply was frequently cut, waste disposal occurred only sporadically and nothing worked. Nevertheless, the Kosovo Albanians were (and still are) grateful for NATO's military intervention and hoped soon to be integrated into the European family of nations.

The NATO intervention and the deployment of thousands of KFOR troops had been very controversial and the subject of heated debate in Western Europe, but over time interest in the region has decreased markedly. Reports in the Western media focus on unrest between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs, corruption, organised crime and political instability - despite the declaration of independence in 2008.

This may explain why almost all members of our delegation set off on the journey with rather mixed feelings and had the impression they were visiting a kind of absurd pantomime country rather than a 'normal' country. Of course, we were only able to visit the capital and two major cities and no rural areas. The many shopping malls, new roads, the motorway, the new airport, the

wide range of restaurants serving delicious meals and its prosperous appearance obscure the fact that Kosovo is one of the poorest countries in Europe. The main evidence for the estimated unemployment rate of 40% to 50% is the mass of people strolling up and down Pristina's main boulevard every day rather than any visible poverty. Money from the diaspora, from the EU and the international community has utterly transformed the country's appearance since 1999.

Nevertheless, to judge the country only by this outward appearance would give a superficial picture of what is going there. That was not our intention. Our meetings with players from the whole spectrum of political and civil society bear this point out. Of course, what they told us was subjective and partial, and it was far from easy to put all the pieces together and form a coherent overall picture.

Since 2003, I've always been happy to return to the region both as a member of the EP Delegation for South-East Europe and on private trips; perhaps also because, as a former East German, I had personally experienced a similar process of transformation from a socialist country to a free and democratic society - with the crucial difference that our starting point was a peaceful revolution and not a murderous war.

The process of building a democratic society with functioning, independent and reliable institutions is exhausting and takes time, and the wounds the parties in the conflict inflicted on each other require an intensive healing process. This is why people in Kosovo (and Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania) need our full support. Every euro invested in economic development and political stability saves many hundreds, if not thousands, of euros in military operations. All these countries are surrounded by EU Member States: they are part of our continent.

If Kosovars have the freedom to travel to get to know our democratic States and we ourselves go on unbiased visits to the region, this can make a real contribution to integration and mutual understanding. That's another reason why I like going back there.

Gisela KALLENBACH
GREENS, Germany (2004-2009)
Gisela_Kallenbach@yahoo.com



Mrs Kallenbach, lecturing students at the Kosovo School of European Integration at the the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation's premises.

THE EU WORK IN KOSOVO

It was a pleasure and an honour for the EUSR and the EU Office to support and assist the European Parliament former member association visit to Kosovo.

As you could witness, Kosovo has made relevant progress in building and strengthening its democratic institutions, although challenges remain.

The latest parliamentary elections, in June 2014, were largely free and fair and, according to the EU Election Observation Mission, consolidated progress in democracy in Kosovo. An ensuing stalemate, however, has so far blocked the constitution of the Assembly and the forming of a new government, proving a difficult test for Kosovo's institutional and political maturity.

Lights and shadows alternate when reviewing progress in Kosovo, with positive developments mainly centred on the initialization of the Stabilization and Association Agreement on July 2014, further meeting criteria of the visa liberalization dialogue and additional responsibilities undertaken by the local institutions in the rule of law area, following the reconfiguration of EULEX.

In a number of areas we expect, advocate and work for further progress and particularly on structural economic reforms, on strengthening the independence of justice, adopting the anti-discrimination package in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Outstanding progress, under careful EU facilitation, has been achieved in the normalization of relations with Belgrade, resulting in the Brussels agreement of April 2013 based on which local (and later general) elections were held under the Kosovo legislative framework, Kosovo wide, also in the northern Serb majority municipalities. Normalization of relations with Serbia is a precondition and an ingredient of normality and stability

in Kosovo, as well as in the whole region. EU facilitated dialogue also resulted, inter alia, in increased Kosovo's participation in regional cooperation initiatives, including the South East European Cooperation Process, in the establishment of a development fund for the Serb-majority northern municipalities funded by revenues from the northern crossing points, mutual recognition of diplomas between Kosovo and Serbia.

Lights and shadows alternate when reviewing progress in Kosovo, with positive developments mainly centred on the initialization of the Stabilization and Association Agreement on July 2014.

With improving the rule of law as one of the major challenges that Kosovo needs to address, the EU rule of law mission EULEX, currently extended until June 2016, has a central role to play. The mission is composed of two divisions, the executive one, which directly investigates, prosecutes and adjudicates sensitive cases, and the strengthening one, which monitors, mentors, and advises local counterparts in the police, justice and customs fields. The mission successive reconfigurations reflect progress made by Kosovo rule of law authorities, and their increased ownership on police and judicial matters. Over the past year, good cooperation with EULEX has resulted in the commitment by Kosovo authorities to set up the specialist court in accordance with the recommendations of the Special Investigative Task Force and adopt the legislative changes needed.

While the security situation has dramatically improved over the years, a solid international security presence still performs an important array of functions. The NATO-led KFOR is still almost 5' 000 strong and has gradually changed its mandate objectives from a deterrent military presence to a supporting mission assisting local authorities to build a secure and safe environment for all Kosovo citizens. KFOR's revised posture has reflected local political change as well as increased capacities by domestic security providers. In public order disturbances, Kosovo Police is the first responder, EULEX the second and KFOR the third one, intervening only in case the first two cannot handle a given situation. Also, KFOR has over the years handed over security responsibility to Kosovo Police over a number of religious and cultural heritage sites, retaining a fixed presence only at the Decani Monastery.



Meeting with Ms Flora Brovine, Mr Kadri Veseli and Mr Enver Hoxhej, representatives of the political party PDK.

EUSR/EUO Team in Kosovo

WHO WE MET AMONG OTHERS?



Meeting with the European Investors Council: Paul Garinis (second from the left) and Robert Erzin (third from the left).

THE EUROPEAN INVESTORS COUNCIL

Investors from the European Union and EFTA countries have in recent years brought to Kosovo a substantial amount of investment and created numerous jobs. They have discovered business opportunities in Kosovo that would otherwise have remained unexploited and in this way have contributed positively to the sustainable development of the country.

In order to contribute actively to the improvement of the investment and business environment in Kosovo through an open, constructive and lasting dialogue with the Kosovo's Government at all levels, 14 major investors from the European Union and EFTA countries established the European Investors Council (EIC) in March 2014. The initiative was supported by the EU Office/EUSR in Kosovo, which has, together with the EBRD, become an honorary member of the Council.

The EIC members believe that Kosovo needs a clear overall vision and strategy and a solid implementation plan. Nowadays, inaccurate or conflicting legislation, discretionary practices and inefficient enforcement of law prevent the development of various industrial sectors and thus undermine the efforts of foreign Investors.

The EIC has been created to give a voice to European Investors with the aim of reliving the systemic deficiencies of the business environment and increasing the Foreign

Direct Investment (FDI) which in turn would release the country's potential by increasing competitiveness and the capacity for citizens and businesses alike.

THE KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG IN KOSOVO

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a German political foundation that offers a wide variety of civic education with conferences, events and trainings. For a couple of years we have also been active in South-eastern Europe with different country programmes.

In 2007 we opened our office in Pristina and we have since then been active in three main fields of action in Kosovo. The most important one is the development of political parties. We cooperate very closely with parties that belong to the European People's Party (EPP) or would like to be a part of it. We offer regular training sessions and education programmes for politicians and mandate holders and we try to convince especially young people and women to be more active in parties and politics.

Another focus of our work lies in the support of Kosovo's way towards European integration. With conferences, seminars and workshops we inform about the requirements of the integration process, European values and current political discussion on the European agenda as well as about the institutions and mechanisms of decision-making in the EU.

Moreover, the KAS deals with the topic of inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue in Kosovo. With education measures we try to bring together members of the different ethnic and religious groups and to offer them a space for discussion, thus creating more awareness for each other and helping to shift the perception of religious and cultural differences among the population and increasing the awareness of the role and the importance of different cultural profiles in the democratic reality in Kosovo. Through our activities and publications we also support the dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia and we try to convey information about it.

For more information about KAS in Kosovo visit:
www.kas.de/Kosovo.



TWINNING: A SUCCESSFUL EUROPEAN STORY

The Twinning Project on ‘Strengthening the Rule of Law – Asylum and Migration’ started in November 2009 and ended in February 2012. It spent nearly 100 % of its allocated budget of EUR 1 million. One very important fact to be emphasised is that this project was the first rule-of-law project for Kosovo with such a strong focus on asylum and migration in general and on facilitating the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan on Reintegration of Readmitted Persons to Kosovo and its Related Areas in particular. All the actors involved, first and foremost the beneficiary and its key ministries – the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Austria, as the EU Member State implementing partner, and the EU Office to Kosovo – considered that the project was delivered in accordance with the twinning work plan and its target benchmarks, with good support and commitment from the beneficiary, and close coordination and cooperation with other international stakeholders such as EULEX, the Danish Refugee Council, the German Development Service (GIZ), the International Organisation for Migration, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, micro-credit institutions and the Migration Attachés from the Austrian, Belgium, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, German and Swiss Embassies.

The overall objective of the project was to align the asylum and migration legislation with the EU acquis and further strengthen the administrative capacities of Kosovo’s Ministries for Internal Affairs and for Labour and Social Welfare, to enable them to implement this legislation. The project focused in particular on enhancing the administrative and legal capacities to deal with asylum and migration, including intra- and inter-ministerial cooperation, and preparing for the implementation of the EU acquis in this field. The involvement of all stakeholders in the various phases was a strong

The overall objective of the project was to align the asylum and migration legislation with the EU acquis and further strengthen the administrative capacities of Kosovo’s Ministries for Internal Affairs and for Labour and Social Welfare.

guarantee that the beneficiary’s requirements would be met, and facilitated the buy-in and shared ownership of the project by the stakeholders. The work under the project was performed to a high quality standard, with a high degree of professional content and motivation and a maximum degree of flexibility.

Highly skilled and experienced senior experts from the EU Member State twinning country, Austria, working in partnership with senior experts from Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Slovenia, completed this project in 27.5 months.

It can be said, without doubt, that the Kosovo officials involved in implementing the project demonstrated great interest, motivation, commitment and dedication throughout its duration.

After the start-up phase, the Kosovo officials had a much better understanding of the ethos of the project. I provided the required support to all the Kosovo authorities involved, enabling them to explore and identify gaps and needs regarding a sustainable readmission and reintegration policy, in terms of both quality and quantity. As a result of the work carried out under the twinning project with the Kosovo authorities, the EU opened a Visa Dialogue with the Republic of Kosovo and started new twinning projects. Twinning is undoubtedly a successful European story!

Johann WAGNER
Resident Twinning Adviser in Pristina/Kosovo
Former Leader Twinning Project of Strengthening the Rule of Law in Kosovo (Readmission and Asylum)

CORRUPTION IN KOSOVO

During our study visit, the most widely discussed topic was the problem of what is generally regarded as widespread corruption that is undermining the democratic and economic development of the country, placing it just 105th on the Transparency International corruption index. In a recent progress report, the Commission indicated that: 'The implementation of the anti-corruption strategy and action plan fails to generate effective results due to weak political support'.

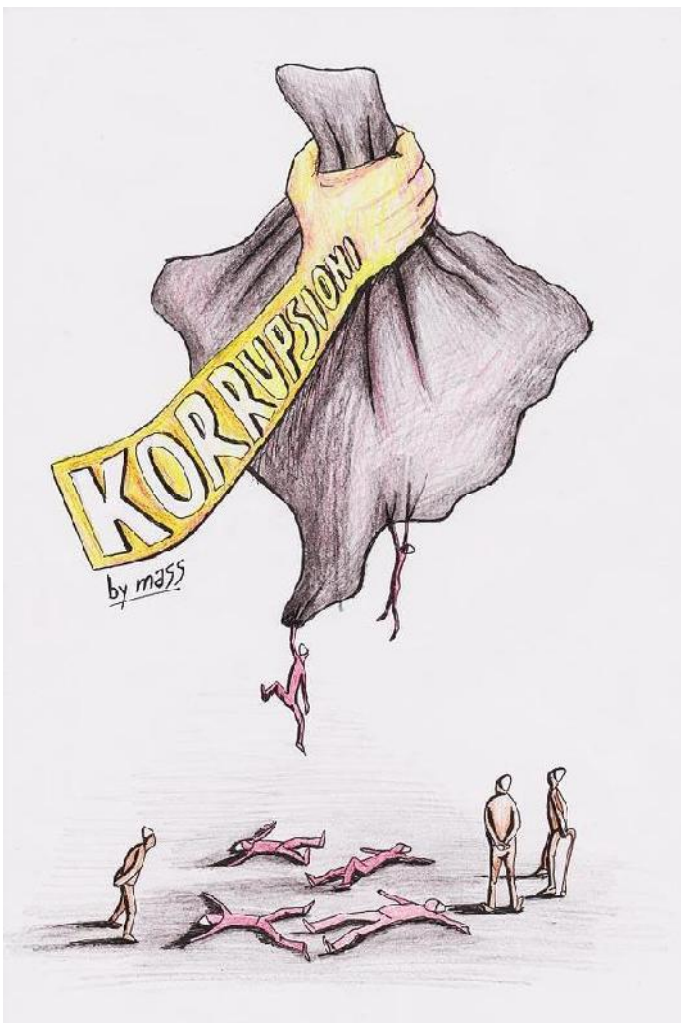
Significantly, the leaders of the five largest parties all assured us that they wholeheartedly endorsed effective measures to combat the problem. The fault always lay somewhere else. The opposition parties now seeking power were accusing the government parties of failure to act or, worse still, of active involvement in corruption. The civil engineering sector appeared to be a particularly attractive option for a minister with a keen eye for a little extra cash. For example, over one billion euros had been channelled into the construction of a motorway costing less than half that amount. However, given the great symbolic value for most Albanians of

the road link from Pristina to Tirana, the government was in no mood to quibble. Following a visit from the Transport Minister to Washington, the United States' Ambassador succeeded in having the contract awarded to an American company in which he now holds a senior post. According to NGO and business representatives, no members of the political establishment, whether in government or opposition, see anything wrong with supplementing their meagre pay on the side. The head of the Foreign Investment Council, a highly successful Greek oil magnate, informed us that he was careful to steer clear of public procurement, since it was always tainted by corruption, adding that he had nevertheless managed to conclude some highly successful deals in Kosovo. When I asked how, he replied that he was able to talk business with clients on a strictly objective basis, adding that it was his word not his wallet that counted. We were also informed by public officials that, while measures to combat corruption were an absolute priority under the rule of law, the problem was deeply ingrained in the Balkans as a whole and not limited to Kosovo. It is also proving hard to eradicate in a poor country where numerous laws have not yet taken effect and where the legal apparatus is still being assembled under the direction of EULEX.

A select delegation also met the leaders of the highly nationalistic Albanian Vetëvendosje (self-determination) party, including mayor of Pristina, who had adopted a hard line against corruption despite the risk to himself and been named bravest mayor in the world by the British Guardian newspaper. His party is in favour of the annexation of Kosovo by Albania and wishes to hold referendum to decide the matter. However, this would do little to help Kosovo in the anti-corruption stakes, given that Albania is even further behind on the index (116th)!

Kosovo still has a long way to go before being eligible for EU membership and must first of all put an end to the corruption blocking its road. It is by no means enough to have just one brave mayor. The entire political establishment needs to take a long hard look in the mirror.

Bob van den BOS
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EULEX CORRUPTION SWAMP IN KOSOVO, BUT A NEW COALITION STANDS!

EULEX, the European Rule of Law Mission, the EU's largest foreign mission with around 1,600 police officers, judges, lawyers and democracy experts from not only almost every EU member state but also from other countries as Canada, has been entangled in a corruption scandal, which first raised internally in 2012, and has come to the public attention thanks to the Pristina based daily newspaper "Koha Ditore". As explained by the Editor Ms Brikenda Rexhepi in a very impressive and open exchange with our delegation, the newspaper is devoted to investigative journalism and could already anticipate the disclosure of former scandals.

A few days after the return of the FMA Study Visit's delegation, "Koha Ditore" published some documents that revealed the extent of bribery of several high-ranking EULEX officials by Kosovar politicians. In exchange for payments, they did not start proceeding towards some politicians. The former Chairman of the Assembly of the EULEX Judges is alleged to have received up to €350,000!

Following the publication of the scandal, the British prosecutor Maria Bamieh was accused of having handed over the documents to the press. The fact is vehemently denied and there is no evidence. Nevertheless, she was

suspended from duty without a specific reason and continuing to get her full salary. However, the EULEX Head told the press this was not a sanction.

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament will consider setting up an investigation committee, as the EULEX representatives present at a meeting were not very willing to talk. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, has already taken strong measures appointing the renowned French legal scholar, Jean-Paul Jacqu , to start immediately his investigations. The preliminary results of his investigations are expected within four months.

Hardly anything worst could have happened to the reputation of the EU in the Balkans.

The FMA strongly supports the EC Vice-President's efforts as well as the elucidation asked by the European Parliament. This case concerns the credibility of us all!

At least, the political stalemate, resulting from the surprising election results, is now overcome. The two largest groups, PDK and LDK, will form a coalition. Moderate forces could provide a stable majority for a reform-oriented policy!

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Picture on the left: corruption warning notice in the Town Hall (for both employees and the public to see).

Picture above: photos of missing persons (alleged held or killed by Serbs) in Mitrovica.

REPORT ON THE VISIT TO KOSOVO

A member of our group visiting Kosovo was Peter PRICE. He has prepared a detailed 4-page report analysing all aspects of Kosovo, its problems and opportunities, based on the visit. If you would like to read the report, you may find it on the FMA website in the section dedicated to the Kosovo Study Visit.