

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

Understanding the Differences, Acting on the Commonalities

The Centre for Common Ground (CCG) has been working since 1994 to strengthen interethnic relations, resolve conflicts, prevent violence and promote reconciliation in the Western Balkans. Its programs in Macedonia have in particular been supporting multicultural, bilingual education, and engaging youth from diverse backgrounds on issues around participatory democracy and human rights through Arts & Culture.

SFCG in Macedonia

In 1994, CCG – then SFCG— began working in Macedonia to strengthen interethnic relations and help prevent violence. In 1999, our efforts were put to the test when war erupted in neighboring Kosovo. Many observers have said that our projects made an important contribution to weathering the crisis. After the tensions subsided, CCG continued working toward cooperative solutions, resolving conflicts, preventing violence and expanding activities to the regional cooperation.

PROGRAMS IN BRIEF

1. BALKAN THEATRE NETWORKS FOR EU INTEGRATION
2. MOZAIK

BALKAN THEATRE NETWORKS FOR EU INTEGRATION

In January 2011, CCG launched a 24 months' regional project "Sharing a Common Culture: Balkans Theatre Networks for EU Integration". This theatre project involves youth from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and FYR Macedonia in the creation of theatre plays highlighting a common European culture while promoting cultural and ethnic diversity.

Common Ground Theatre

is a form of educational Theatre that promotes interethnic tolerance by debunking stereotypes, celebrating differences, and highlighting commonalities. This initiative uses Common Ground Theatre to reach youth from different ethno-linguistic, religious, and social backgrounds, at an age when expressing creative potential and strengthening identity, self-esteem and respect for others is key for their personal development.

Since January 2011, CCG, in partnership with the **Centre for Drama Education (CDE) in Bosnia & Herzegovina**, the **Student Cultural Centre (SDC) in Serbia**, and **Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in Belgium**:

- Produced a Formative Research measuring youth access to- and attitude towards culture across the three countries
- Organized an Inaugural Conference in Skopje bringing together 40 youth and cultural stakeholders from across the region
- Set up the foundations for the creation of a "Balkan Cultural Network" (www.balkanculturalnetwork.com)
- Developed a Curriculum (Statement of Intended Outcomes) for the theatre plays
- Organized a Playwrights seminar in Skopje for 6 playwrights from the 3 countries

Looking Forward:

- Six theatre plays will be written and staged by youth across the three Balkan countries, creating an opportunity for hundreds of youth – actors and audience – to meet each other and learn more about the cultural traditions in their neighboring countries.
- Interactive debates will follow each performance.
- A final theatre event will be held in Skopje.



Youth participants in the Inaugural Conference

EDUCATION PROGRAM: MOZAIK

After 12 years of successfully reaching over 850 kindergarten children in nine multi-ethnic municipalities, SFCG achieved the full institutionalization of its *Mozaik* educational program as all *Mozaik* groups were integrated in the educational system and *Mozaik* teachers' salaries were included in on the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy payroll.

The innovative *Mozaik* educational program introduced a unique model of bilingual and multicultural pre-schooling in public kindergartens, bringing together children from Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, and Macedonian communities in a country where education is highly segregated along ethno-linguistic lines.

Reaching over 2000 beneficiaries, the *Mozaik* program socializes children from 3 to 6 years old, teaching them to be free from prejudices and stereotypes towards their diverse classmates, while also influencing their kindergarten staff, parents, family members, and local education authorities, thereby bringing a larger change in attitudes within the pre-school education system in Macedonia.



Children of the MOZAIK project

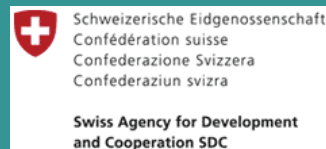


Kindergarten Children in Macedonia part of the MOZAIK Project

Key results of the program include:

- Children attending *Mozaik* groups have shown *high levels of tolerance* towards the opinions, needs and acts of other children, regardless of their ethnic background.
- Most children express a high level of sensitivity towards others in conflict situations, thereby demonstrating understanding and practical implementation of *conflict resolution* techniques.

SFCG thanks the following donors for their support:



CONTACT SFCG:

FYR Macedonia:
Leninova 72-1/10
Skopje 1000
P: +389 2 3118517; 3118572
F: +389 2 3118322
Email: ccg@ccg.org.mk

Kosovo
UCK 46/5
Prishtina 10000
P/F: +381 38221857
Email: ccground@gmail.com

Web:
www.sfcg.org