

SHARING COMMON CULTURE: BALKAN THEATRE NETWORKS FOR EU  
INTEGRATION  
END OF PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT 2012

*Sharing Common Culture: Balkan Theatre Networks for EU Integration* (BTN) was a peacebuilding program conducted by the Center for Common Ground (CCG) in Skopje, Macedonia between January 2011 and November 2012. The project was funded with €224,754 from the European Commission for Directorate General Enlargement, and was designed to respond to the ongoing challenge of establishing core EU values such as tolerance, unity, and interethnic diversity among and within Balkan communities. To address these challenges, the project pursued three core objectives:

1. To encourage creation of new networks of cultural CSOs as basis for sustainable inter-cultural dialogue and cooperation within the region and between the region and the EU.
2. To increase awareness of and access to different cultural traditions within and beyond national boundaries through the exchange of cultural experiences.
3. To increase youth participation in production of inter-ethnic, intended-outcome and interactive theatre performances.

***“In Skopje we got introduced with habits of other cultures and it helped us to understand that all of us are equal and that all of us have same problems regardless of our differences.”***

Over the course of the project, six groups of youth in Macedonia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina were trained to write, produce, and perform theatre dramas that discussed issues of social tension in their communities. The youth performed the dramas among their friends and neighbors, and then traveled to perform and engage with the other youth dramatists in other project cities. The key findings below are based on a final evaluation conducted in December 2012 using interviews, both individual and in groups, as well as a short electronic survey distributed to youth participants. The program highlighted a number of positive findings and suggestions to improve future programming.

CCG GAVE YOUTH INCREASED ACCESS TO CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The 82 youth that CCG engaged in the project were extremely enthusiastic about having the opportunity to create their own drama productions, to share them in their home cities, and to visit other Balkan cities for additional performances. Through touring their plays around the region, the youth learned more about other Balkan cultures and were eager to do so again. Many believed that the project had given them a rare opportunity for creative self-expression about problems in their communities that were relevant to their daily lives. In addition, the youth felt that they had gained performance skills as well as personal skills, like maturity, improved communication, and self-esteem. In Nish, Serbia some of the youth participants even started an independent youth drama initiative which recruits other youth in the town for the production of film and theatre.

## CCG INCREASED INTERETHNIC TOLERANCE AMONG BALKAN YOUTH

Through the project, the youth developed new friendships across ethnic lines and increased their personal levels of tolerance and respect for other culture in the region. Many believed that the theatre productions also may have had a positive influence within their community on alleviating ethnic tension.

## CCG FACILITATED RELATIONSHIPS AMONG FIVE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The six NGOs the implemented the drama program in each city participated in networking activities with one another, and five are hoping to maintain contact with one another post-project. These five indicated that they felt very positively about having established relations with one another, and that they have maintained informal and irregular contact. Many have plans for future cultural exchange visits in the future. However, most organizations indicated that without future funding or logistical support from CCG, the network will not remain active. Additionally, while CCG conducted some outreach activities to other organizations in Macedonia, the network did not meaningfully expand beyond these initial project partners, or outside of the Balkans.

*"All these socializing and getting to know other people, I liked so much. A man that was described to you by others as the worst man in the world, once you meet him, you realize that he became a better friend to you than others who you knew before."*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*The following is a complete list of recommendations for follow up:*

1. In the program design phase, plan for more activities to recruit a better ethnic mix of students in each city.
2. Plan and budget for additional touring activities.
3. Strengthen partner organization management.
4. Increase the number and frequency of network-building activities.

*Source: This document is a summary of and taken directly from "Sharing Common Culture: Balkan Theatre Networks for EU Integration: Final Project Evaluation" A copy can be acquired at [http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilt/dme\\_evaluations.html](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilt/dme_evaluations.html) or by contacting Vanessa Corlazzoli, Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation Manager at Search for Common Ground: [vcorlazzoli@sfcg.org](mailto:vcorlazzoli@sfcg.org).*

### **John Marks**

#### **President**

Search for Common Ground  
1601 Connecticut Avenue NW | Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20009 | USA  
Tel: +1 202 777 2222 | [jmarks@sfcg.org](mailto:jmarks@sfcg.org)

### **Vilma Venkovsa Milcev**

#### **Executive Vice President**

Centre for Common Ground  
Leninova 72, 1/10, 1000 Skopje, Macedonia  
Ph: +389 2 3118-572; fax: +389 2 3118-322;  
E-mail: [vilma@ccg.org.mk](mailto:vilma@ccg.org.mk)  
Website: [www.ccg.org.mk](http://www.ccg.org.mk)



**Understanding Differences; Acting on Commonalities ([www.sfcg.org](http://www.sfcg.org))**