



The Balkans and the EU: Challenges on the Road to Accession

On November 18-19, 2005, the Project on Ethnic Relations, in cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized an international conference under the title *The Balkans and the EU: Challenges on the Road to Accession*. The roundtable, which was held in Bucharest, brought together senior political leaders and government officials from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo, and Slovakia, as well as representatives of the Council of Europe, the



From left to right: Alex Grigor'ev, Director for Western Balkans of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Zoran Loncar, Minister for Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Serbia, Arenca Trashani, Minister of Integration of Albania, Adrian Severin, Member of Parliament of Romania (obscured from view), Pal Csaky, Deputy Prime Minister of Slovakia, Michael Einik, Executive Director of the PER Regional Center in Bucharest, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations.

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PER Convenes Sixth Albanians and Their Neighbors Roundtable, Dedicated to Kosovo

Six years after Kosovo was placed under the interim administration of the United Nations, 2005 has been called a decisive year for the province. The first indication that this is indeed the case came in March, when the UN Secretary General appointed a Special Envoy to conduct a comprehensive review of the so-called democratic "standards" mandated for Kosovo. (The Special Envoy published his report in October, and the negotiation process to resolve the province's status has begun.)

In early 2005, while the international community appeared to be moving forward on the



From left to right: Miodrag Vlahovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Nexhat Daci, President of the Assembly of Kosovo, Musa Xhaferri, Deputy Prime Minister of Macedonia, Lawrence Rossin, Principal Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo.

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Passing the Baton

The Project on Ethnic Relations announces a number of staff changes that took place in 2005. Allen H. Kassof, the founder of PER and its president for fourteen years, retired at the end of March and assumed a new role as President Emeritus and Senior Adviser. Dr. Kassof, an outstanding moderator, brought to PER a balanced approach in dealing with interethnic tensions, believing that all sides in a conflict must be heard. He was instrumental in helping the organization earn its valuable

reputation for neutrality. PER's staff is very grateful to Allen for the years he dedicated to the organization and wishes him many years filled with joy!

The new president of PER is Livia Plaks, PER's co-founder and former Executive Director, who brings with her extensive experience in the field of conflict resolution.

Other changes at PER are: Alex N. Grigor'ev, formerly the Senior Program Officer, has become the Director for Western Balkans, and Andrzej Mirga, formerly the Chair of PER's

Romani Advisory Council, has become Director for Roma Programs. In addition, PER has added a new member to its Executive Board, Ambassador Alfred H. Moses, as well as a new member to the Council for Ethnic Accord, Professor Steven L. Burg of Brandeis University. The new Executive Director of the PER Regional Center for Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, located in Romania, is Ambassador M. Michael Einik. We also announce the retirement of Ambassador John D. Scanlan from the Executive Board, and thank him for his many years of fine service to PER.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Bringing Stability to Central and Southeastern Europe: Minorities as “King Makers” and Coalition Builders

In working over the last fifteen years on interethnic relations in Central and Southeastern Europe—during the period that saw the transition from communism to democracy—I have been struck by how, in some countries, ethnic minorities that began under a burden of discrimination and exclusion have emerged, paradoxically, as “king makers” and coalition builders.

There seem to be two main reasons that mainline political parties sometimes share power with minority parties by bringing them into ruling coalitions.

First, often no major party is strong enough to govern without coalition partners, so large parties sometimes seek alliances by turning to smaller parties, some of them ethnically based, to swing the balance of power. The appeal of ethnic parties as partners is that they are not seen as politically threatening since their constituencies are limited now and in the future.

It must be emphasized that, in this scenario, it matters who leads the minority party. The leader must be seen as a moderate, effective, and prestigious politician, able to rally his supporters so they will behave as a dependable bloc during crucial elections and parliamentary votes.

The second reason for accepting ethnic minorities as principal partners in governing coalitions is the need or desire to present a favorable image of interethnic harmony to West European powers and to the United States that have paid increasing attention to minority issues following the interethnic violence of the early 1990s.

These circumstances—which can offer significant advantages to minorities—are likely to prevail so long as no large parties emerge as dominant, a pattern that has characterized much of Central and Southeast European politics in recent years. Ethnic minorities that enter coalitions generally do so as privileged partners, and often exercise influence out of proportion to their numbers in the population.

Indeed, in some cases, minorities have the power to bring down governments if their demands are not met, and can attain some goals that are not very palatable to their coalition partners. We see examples of this in the cases of the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, and the Albanian community in Macedonia.

The Hungarian minority in Romania first entered into a ruling coalition in 1996 after six years of struggle in post-communist Romania to obtain rights that had been suppressed during the Ceausescu era. The internal dialogue in Romania between the majority and the Hungarian minority was often very bitter. (I witnessed this first hand through the work of the Project on Ethnic Relations which, in the 1990s, was the main organizer of high-level dialogues between government, opposition, and Hungarian minority leaders.) Because the support of their parliamentary bloc was critical to the new government following the elections of 1996, the Hungarians were able to join a governing coalition for the first time. Although the Hungarians did not join the government after the next change of government in 2000, they signed a special protocol of understanding with the ruling majority and supported them in par-

liament—a kind of *de facto* coalition. In return they earned a host of benefits that would not have been available otherwise. Today, following the 2004 elections, the Hungarians are again coalition members (having switched allegiance away from their most recent partner—an example of the power of their swing vote) and now have three ministers in the government, several state secretaries, and large representation in all aspects of political life, at both the central and local levels. Currently, the most contentious issue between the majority and the Hungarian minority in Romania is the dispute over the draft law on national minorities, which has been approved by most of the ruling coalition members but not by the strong opposition party (the Hungarians' former partner) which controls a large block of votes in parliament. If the law is not passed in the near future, the Hungarians might withdraw from the present coalition, causing its collapse.

In Slovakia, the Hungarian parties entered into the ruling coalition only after the elections of 1998 and again in 2002, acquiring considerable power and influence. (In both Romania and in Slovakia, Hungarian politicians who entered the parliament and government were often better organized and prepared than their majority colleagues, and also benefited from the relative political unity of their ethnic communities and strong party discipline.) Since 1998, all the governing coalitions in Slovakia have included Hungarians—a sign of the strong political influence of Hungarians in the country. Indeed, many believe that the Hungarian minority might have had the decisive vote in the 2004 presidential election had they not split their ballots between the two candidates most acceptable to their interests (both lost).

Since the fall of communism, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria has been represented in parliament, but the principal Turkish party entered a ruling coalition only in 2001. The interests of this minority have been represented since the fall of communism in Bulgaria by a pragmatic leader who, quite atypically for the Balkans, believes that it is more important for his community to improve its dire economic circumstances than to have schools in the Turkish language or more bilingual signs. Without the support of the Turkish minority in the government and in parliament, Bulgaria might not now be on the road to the EU. But there have been trade-offs: one example is the influence of the Turkish minority on the privatization of Bulgaria's tobacco industry, which employs a large portion of the Turkish population. The privatization process was managed in a way that ensured maximum benefits for the Turkish-inhabited areas.

In Macedonia, Albanians constitute over 20 percent of the population. A sizable community like this will inevitably have its voice heard on the political scene. Although Albanians have been represented in the ruling coalitions since Macedonia's independence, they did not have real influence and could do little to improve the lives of their constituents. But after a brief civil war in 2001, followed by



PER to Help Montenegro Develop Its Minority Policy

On October 21-22, 2005, PER organized a roundtable in Pržno, Montenegro as the first stage of a three-year initiative dedicated to strengthening Montenegro's minority policy. This effort is supported by the British Embassy in Serbia and Montenegro, and it builds on our previous work in Montenegro, which led to, among other outcomes, the creation of a draft law on the protection of minority rights. The law has existed in draft form since 2003, and the October roundtable was an effort to help Montenegro's political leaders break the stalemate over the law, and put it on a firm path to passage in parliament. Senior representatives of all Montenegro's parliamentary parties and officials from the government took part in the discussion, along with experts from the government working group on drafting the minority law and outside observers from the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the U.S. Office in Podgorica, and the British Embassy in Serbia and Montenegro. The project is being implemented in close collaboration with the Minister for the

Protection of Minority Rights of Montenegro and has been endorsed by Montenegro's President, Prime Minister, and the Speaker of Parliament.

During the discussion, broad agreement was reached on a number of key topics. The most important points of accord focused on the terminology to be used in the law, an agreement to guarantee representation of minorities in the Montenegrin parliament, a formula for determining such representation, the need to form minority councils in Montenegro, the need for a state strategy for the integration of Roma in Montenegro, and the desirability of passing the minority law as soon as possible.

All political parties but one agreed on these solutions. The representative of the small opposition Serb People's Party was the strongest opponent of the proposed draft of the law. He proposed alternative solutions; other participants sharply disagreed with him.

Despite these disagreements, the roundtable was characterized by a high degree of accord

among political leaders, and it appears that the law has a good chance for passage in the coming months.

PER will continue consulting with the principal political actors in Montenegro over this law, and plans the second stage of this project for March 2006.



From left to right: Rifat Rastoder, Vice President of the Parliament of Montenegro, Gezim Hajdinaga, Minister for the Protection of Minority Rights of Montenegro, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Alex Grigor'ev, Director for Western Balkans of the Project on Ethnic Relations.

PER Convenes Discussions of Romania's Draft Minority Law

Of the major ethnic fault lines in the Balkans, the difficult Hungarian-Romanian relationship, though perhaps less well known than some other interethnic divides, is one of the most sensitive and complex in the region. After a period of unstable relations in the early 1990s, ethnic Hungarians and Romanians in Romania were able to accommodate many of each other's most urgent demands, and violent conflict was avoided. The place of ethnic Hungarians in Romanian society is still far from settled, however, and a recent effort by Hungarian political parties to develop and ratify a national law on minority rights has reignited many dormant fears and tensions.

To help Romanian political leaders and the public alike better understand the proposed minority law, PER organized a number of roundtables and debates on the draft law throughout 2005. The series brought together legal experts with representatives of the minority communities, political parties, civil society organizations, and the media. The law itself was drafted and proposed by a group of parliamentarians from the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), a junior partner in the current governing coalition.

The roundtables, which took on the most sensitive and controversial aspects of the draft law, were significant markers in the ongoing interethnic dialogue in Romania. Participants were able not only to review and openly discuss the provisions of the draft law, but they also found that the PER-sponsored framework gave them an opportunity to devise new proposals for improving the text before its submission to parliament.

The most controversial aspect of the proposed law is its reference to a right to "cultural autonomy" for minority communities. This notion was the subject of extensive, and often heated debate at PER's roundtables, since most Romanians understand "cultural autonomy" to mean the establishment of parallel administrative structures and ultimately ethnic segregation. Hungarians, on the other hand, argue that the proposed law would only codify principles that already exist in the Romanian legislation and the Romanian constitution. At one session, PER arranged for a number of outside experts to discuss the concept of "cultural autonomy," and how this principle has been applied in various European countries. Though PER's roundtables helped all sides to better understand this controversial notion, it remains a sensitive topic, and its inclusion in the draft minority law has made the law's passage problematic.

As of this publication, Romania's draft minority law—including its controversial language on cultural autonomy—stands before parliament, with uncertain chances for passage. Regardless of the fate of this legislation, Hungarian-Romanian relations in Romania have many challenges yet to overcome. Helping the two sides find the best compromise solutions to their differences is a major goal of PER's Regional Center in Bucharest, and the Center will continue its active engagement in these issues in the year to come.

Mavrovo Process Supports Interethnic Political Dialogue in Macedonia



From left to right: Vlado Buckovski, Prime Minister of Macedonia, Musa Xhaferri, Deputy Prime Minister of Macedonia.

Though Macedonia has made important strides since its brief ethnic conflict in 2001, constructive communication among political leaders on different sides of the ethnic divide remains a challenge. Over the past year, PER's "Mavrovo Process" series of roundtables continued to provide a forum

for dialogue between leaders of Macedonia's governing and opposition parties, and among the parties that make up the interethnic ruling coalition. The series, which was launched in 2003 and is conducted in cooperation with the Swiss Embassy in Macedonia, has proven essential in supporting talks among political leaders of all stripes on the most sensitive and difficult problems facing the country.

A major topic of recent Mavrovo sessions was local elections, which were held in March-April 2005, and which were widely considered to be a crucial test of the country's readiness to become a candidate for European Union membership. During one roundtable, participants representing all parliamentary parties in Macedonia reaffirmed their commitment to a previously signed Code of Conduct for elections, and made additional pledges on specific points connected to ethnic aspects of the elections. The pledges included a promise to refrain from using ethnic rhetoric in campaigning—a promise that was later followed. After the elections (which were not entirely trouble-free), the participants at Mavrovo discussed what went wrong, areas for improvement before the 2006 parliamentary elections, and the state of local level intra-coalition relations.

In another important development, during one Mavrovo session the Prime Minister signaled his desire to organize, without outside assistance, a discussion among ruling and opposition parties on the sensitive question of ethnic symbols. This would be the last chapter in the process of implementing the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement that ended Macedonia's civil conflict.

PER Launches New "Serbs in the 21st Century" Initiative

After a decade of turmoil, Serbia's prospects seemed to brighten significantly with the popular ouster of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000. Despite early enthusiasm for change, however, since the drama of the October revolution, Serbia's internal political life has been plagued with crises and stagnation. The Serbian Radical Party currently holds the largest number of seats in the parliament, and the democratic parties continue to suffer from bitter and paralyzing divisions. Government policy on many of the most important issues facing Serbia—Kosovo, the future of the state union with Montenegro, the provisions of a new Serbian constitution—has remained fragmented and largely incoherent. Meanwhile, popular disillusionment with the state's political leaders is growing.

Assessing this state of affairs in the fall of 2004, PER determined that Serbia was overdue for a fresh and open discussion of the nation's aspirations for the future. Clearly, Serbs and Serbia—and their neighbors—would only benefit from an examination of the clashing assumptions and world views that underlie Serbia's present moral and political stalemate. PER developed a plan for a series of roundtable discussions that would, we hoped, offer a respite from the bitter partisan divisions that block Serbia's path to effective democracy and economic recovery, and help Serbia's leaders develop a common vision for the future.

In July 2005, PER launched, under the patronage of Serbian President Boris Tadic, its new initiative, titled "Serbs in the 21st Century," with a discussion on *Serbia and Serbs: Identity and Politics*. The Belgrade roundtable gathered senior Serb politicians, government officials, and leading thinkers from Serbia and from the Serbian communities in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and from Montenegro and Kosovo. A second roundtable under the title *Citizenship and Multiethnicity in Serbia*, held in November in Novi Sad in cooperation with the President of Vojvodina's Executive Council, expanded the discus-

sion to include members of Serbia's several ethnic minorities—Albanians, Croats, Hungarians, Roma, Romanians, and others.

All the participants in the first two roundtables agreed that such a discussion is necessary and important for Serbia at this time. A number of participants also emphasized that Serbia can and must develop a consensus over a national program that has achieving prosperity for the country as its aim. A new Serbian constitution was discussed as well, and some participants asserted that adoption of a new constitution has so far been impossible due to a deep ideological conflict between those parties in Serbia that see the country as a state of Serbs and those who see it as a state of citizens of Serbia. A number of participants, however, suggested that a compromise over these two visions is possible and should be reached. Some saw that possibility in electing a constitutional assembly.

As the third phase in this initiative, PER is planning a roundtable under the title *Serbs and Their Neighbors: Paths to Europe*, with participation broadened to include selected individuals from the first two roundtables and senior political figures from the neighboring countries, the European Union, OSCE, Council of Europe, NATO, and the United States.



From left to right: Bojan Pajtic, President of the Executive Council of the Vojvodina Autonomous Province of Serbia, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Alex Grigor'ev, Director for Western Balkans of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Nenad Djurdjevic, Representative in Serbia and Montenegro of the Project on Ethnic Relations.

ROMANI NEWS

PER Assists Macedonia Draft National Strategy for Roma

In recent years, the Romani communities of Eastern Europe and the Balkans have received increasing attention from international organizations, NGOs, and state agencies alike. While a range of actors is now involved in efforts to improve the situation of the Roma, national governments ultimately carry the responsibility for their welfare. Most governments in the region have adopted national Roma strategies to coordinate Roma programs, ensure state policy does not neglect the needs of Roma and maximize the effectiveness of measures targeting Roma. (Strategies for the integration of Roma are also an important recommendation of the Council of Europe, and are considered to be a prerequisite for eventual EU accession.) With PER's help, in early 2005 Macedonia became the last country of the region to adopt a state strategy on Roma.

PER's approach in this year-long initiative was to facilitate a collaborative process, involving Roma, government officials, and outside experts, through which Macedonia's Ministry of Labor and Social Policy could draft a comprehensive strategy document. Throughout 2004 we organized a series of roundtables and consultations that served as a forum for building consensus around the strategy and for collecting feedback from Roma on its provisions.

The strategy ultimately included chapters on ten priority areas for the integration of Roma, in particular: living conditions and housing, employment, education, health, social assistance and protection, human rights and discrimination, culture, media, Romani women, and political participation. It presented discussions of the current situation of Macedonia's Roma in each of these areas, relevant international agreements and practices, recommended state activities, goals and targets, and provisions for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating state Roma programs.

The strategy was adopted by the Macedonian government in February 2005. While this in itself is an important step forward, it is only a beginning. Implementing the strategy to the benefit of Macedonia's Romani communities will be a significant challenge, especially since, with decentralization, local authorities will gain increased responsibilities for assisting such vulnerable groups. Anticipating the next stage in the life of Macedonia's Roma strategy, in May 2005, PER held an additional roundtable for local mayors. The goal of this meeting was to bring local authorities to a discussion of the strategy and how their administrations can be involved (and will be expected to be involved) in the realization of the strategy's goals and recommendations. PER plans additional meetings on these issues in the coming year.



From left to right: Michael Sahlin, Special Representative of the European Union in Macedonia, Stevco Jakimovski, Minister of Labor and Social Policy of Macedonia, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Nezdet Mustafa, President of the United Party of the Roma of Macedonia, Andrzej Mirga, Director of Roma Programs of the Project on Ethnic Relations.

PER Facilitates Work on Roma Strategy in Montenegro

In parallel with PER's work on Montenegro's minority policy, in fall 2005 PER launched a new project aimed at helping the Montenegrin government develop a comprehensive strategy for integrating the state's Roma. This two-year initiative is supported by the British Embassy in Serbia and Montenegro, and is being implemented in close collaboration with the Ministry for the Protection of Minority Rights of Montenegro.

Though a state strategy for Roma was drafted for Serbia in 2002, Montenegro lacks its own comprehensive plan for assistance to the Romani community, which is unofficially estimated at more than 20,000 people. The goal of PER's project is to create an open and transparent process through which the government can collaborate with Romani leaders to develop a plan addressing such areas as housing, education, health, political representation, culture, and gender issues.

After holding consultations in Podgorica in July, PER started the project in September with a roundtable discussion. Participants were representatives of the Romani community, Montenegrin government officials (including the Minister for the Protection of Minority Rights and the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms), and members of international organizations or foreign governments. The most important objectives of the meeting were to introduce the participants to different approaches to governmental Roma strategies, and to begin a discussion of the issues that are the most urgent for Montenegro's Romani community.

The Romani leaders who took part in the roundtable were particularly active, identifying a number of key concerns that a state strategy should address, including: the problem of accurate data on Roma in Montenegro; discrimination against Roma; inadequate access to information on Roma-related programs; the widespread lack of personal documentation among Roma (especially among Romani refugees and IDPs); and relations between Roma and police. The question of how to ensure greater political inclusion of Roma was also raised by a number of participants.

In the next stage of this initiative PER will work with the Ministry for the Protection of Minority Rights to develop a methodology for drafting the strategy document. A second roundtable is scheduled for winter 2006, where participants will have a chance to begin formulating specific recommendations for inclusion in the state strategy.



From left to right: Gezim Hajdinaga, Minister for the Protection of Minority Rights of Montenegro, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Andrzej Mirga, Director for Roma Programs of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Veselj Beganaj, President of Pocetak NGO.

PER REGIONAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL,



From left to right: Nicolae Gheorghe, Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Nicoleta Bitu, Regional Programs Coordinator for Romani CRISS (Romania), Miranda Vuolasranta, Special Adviser on Roma Related Issues of the Council of Europe, Nicolae Paun, President of the Roma Social Democratic Party (Romania), Adrian Severin, Director ad interim of the PER Regional Center in Bucharest, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Andrzej Mirga, Director for Roma Programs of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Rudko Kawczynski, President of the International Romani Union, Ilie Dinca, President of the Romanian National Agency for the Roma, Ivan Vesely, Chair of Dzeno Association (Czech Republic), Klara Orgovanova, Plenipotentiary of the National Romani Community (Slovak Republic), Mabela Kamberi, Assistant Minister of Labor and Social Policy of Macedonia, Nezdet Mustafa, President of the United Party of the Roma of Macedonia.

Romani Politics Present and Future

In the spring of 2005, PER's Regional Center for Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe convened a meeting of leading Romani activists on the topic of *Romani Politics Present and Future*. (See above photo.) The purpose of the roundtable was to review, critically analyze, and articulate a clear picture of the current stage of Romani politics. An additional objective was to formulate common goals and future priorities for Romani leaders and activists, based on an assessment of current developments and achievements. The roundtable took up a number of the most urgent questions for the Romani movement, including the effectiveness of programs targeting Roma, the role of Romani actors in these programs, and the possibility of establishing a more coherent Romani politics in Europe.

The Political Uses of Anti-Semitism

In September 2005, the PER Regional Center convened a roundtable discussion on *The Political Uses of Anti-Semitism*. The roundtable aimed at identifying the ways democratic politicians can reduce the use of anti-Semitic and anti-minority rhetoric for political gain. The participants, including leaders of Romania's Jewish community, politicians, scholars, journalists and diplomats, emphasized the importance of adopting a clear position both in civil society and in state institutions in support of legislative measures against anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination. Education was also identified as essential in making future generations aware of the lessons of the Holocaust.

Working with Young Leaders

The PER Regional Center organized a two-day workshop in August 2005 for young political activists, representatives of NGOs and the media on the topic of *How do Future Political Leaders See Interethnic Relations?* Sessions focused on building greater sensitivity toward the culture of minority populations, the issue of affirmative action for marginalized minority groups (particularly the Roma), and the problem of ethnic stereotypes and discrimination. The program also included a visit to the Teleki Library in Tirgu Mures to help participants better understand the history of ethnic relations in Transylvania.

Roma and Romania's National Development Plan

In June 2005, PER's Regional Center organized a roundtable discussion on the development of Romania's National Development Plan (NDP), which will be financed through the European Union's "Structural Funds" in the 2007-2013 programming period. (As a new EU member, Romania will have access to these resources for the first time.) The purpose of the conference was to discuss the current stage of Romania's NDP and the positioning of Romani issues within it. During the debates, the experience in the elaboration and implementation of NDPs from Slovakia, Hungary and Poland was presented, along with measures in these countries' NDPs to improve the situation of the Roma. This was the first meeting of its kind in Romania, and it received significant attention both from Romani leaders and government officials.

Training for School Inspectors

The PER Regional Center for Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, through its Tirgu Mures office and in cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Education, organized an interactive training course for Romani school inspectors and Romani school mediators. The participants, who represented thirty-four counties in Romania, listened to presentations on education and interethnic relations, and discussed problems caused by communication barriers with Romani school children. The discussions led to the formulation of communication strategies for schools based on a best practices guide for interethnic communication.

Training for Journalists on Covering Interethnic Relations

In September 2005, the PER Regional Center conducted a field visit for journalists to Tatar, Turkish, Russian and Romani communities in Romania. The project was conducted in cooperation with the Center for Independent Journalism. The goal of the project was to help build greater interethnic understanding and tolerance by exposing journalists to minority communities. After visiting the communities and speaking with their representatives, the journalists con-

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cluded that Romania's ethnic minorities should be supported to preserve their traditions and cultural identity, and also that it is necessary to stimulate greater dialogue between ethnic minorities and the majority.

Romania, the EU, and Moldova

In November 2005, the PER Regional Center held its first ever roundtable in Moldova, dedicated to the question of relations between Moldova, Romania, and the European Union. Government officials, representatives of civil society organizations, leaders of political parties and academics from both countries participated in the discussion. One point of debate was the need for greater clarity about Romania's role in Moldova's European integration process. Another theme of the roundtable was the problem of Transdnistria, and how this issue impacts Moldova's ongoing reforms. Participants observed that while Romania's majority and minorities agree on the desirability of European integration, in Moldova, this issue is still debated, with

some seeing the country's future as more "Eurasian" than "Euro-Atlantic" in orientation.

Supporting Romania's National Roma Agency

The PER Regional Center, in cooperation with Romania's National Roma Agency (ANR), convened a roundtable for Romani organizations representing both the political and civil sector in November 2005. Responding to the request of the ANR, PER took up the challenge of facilitating the establishment of a consultation and consensus-reaching mechanism between the ANR and Romani organizations on policies aimed at improving the situation of the Roma in Romania. The Romani organizations gathered at the roundtable agreed to set up a Romani Organization Working Group, which will be an active participant and supporter of the ANR as a central government institution tasked with developing and implementing public policies for Roma.

THE BALKANS AND THE EU: CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD TO ACCESSION *continued from cover*

European Union, the United Nations, and the United States.

The purpose of the roundtable was to provide a venue for frank dialogue among countries of the region and European institutions on the next wave of EU enlargement, how to make accession a reality, and the regional implications of future European integration. The discussion also focused on the issue of Kosovo, and how the province's future status will impact the EU integration process for the region as a whole and for Serbia and Montenegro in particular.

The questions taken up by the participants included: What are the lessons learned in preparing a country for accession to the European Union? What does the EU notion of "a Europe of regions" mean for the countries of the Balkans? How would this help to resolve outstanding issues of minority-majority relations? How can greater regional cooperation move the states of the Balkans closer to EU integration?

Representatives of European institutions emphasized that, despite the recent decision to delay the planned 2006 deadline for ratification of a new EU charter, the "European perspective" for the region is alive and well. However, they cautioned that turning enlargement into reality will likely be a "lengthy and occasionally frustrating" process, and that there will not be another "big bang" of enlargement.

There was broad agreement among the participants that the EU perspective is key to stability in the region.

On the question of Kosovo, participants from Pristina argued that independence for the province would bring a resolution to an issue that has impeded progress in the region and prevented countries of the Western Balkans from moving closer to EU membership. For their part, Serb participants rejected the possibility of granting Kosovo independence. These speakers were concerned with the fate of Serbian minorities in Kosovo, arguing that even under UN administration their basic human rights are not protected. They also brought up the precedent that would be set by meeting the demands of the

Albanian "separatist movement" in Kosovo.

While others at the roundtable refrained from entering the debate between Belgrade and Pristina over Kosovo's future status, several cautioned that Serbia's future must also be taken into consideration. "Would a small, defeated, humiliated Serbia be good for the region?" asked one participant. Serbia's fate, and the potentially negative outcomes within Serbia as a result of developments in Kosovo and Montenegro, must not be neglected, stated this speaker. A solution for Kosovo, he argued, must be part of a "package" that addresses all the "legitimate aspirations" of the region's different groups.



From left to right: Ardian Gjini, Minister for Environment and Spatial Planning of Kosovo, Skender Hyseni, Principal Political Adviser to the President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, President of the Democratic Party of Kosovo.

PER Convenes Seventh Kosovo Roundtable

In April 2005, PER convened the seventh roundtable in its series on interethnic relations in Kosovo. The goal of the meeting, titled *Interethnic Relations in Kosovo: Toward Implementation of Standards*, was to launch a discussion between leaders of the Kosovo Albanians and the Kosovo Serbs on the progress achieved in implementing UN standards for Kosovo, the state of interethnic dialogue within Kosovo, and the pilot projects for decentralization in the province.

The meeting in Pristina represented the first discussions between Kosovo's Albanian and Serbian leaderships since the Serbs boycotted

the Kosovo general elections in October of 2004. It brought together heads of Kosovo's institutions and the three major Kosovo Albanian political parties with leaders of the Serb community in Kosovo (both so-called "cooperative" and "non-cooperative" Serbs), as well as senior international diplomats stationed in Pristina.

One significant product of the meeting was a statement by leaders of the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija that they were now interested in working on the decentralization process within the Kosovo Government Working Group on Decentralization, and will sit down to discuss details in the near future (a radical change in their position since October 2004). The Kosovo Minister

for Local Self-Government welcomed this political move on the part of the Serb leaders, and said that the working group should include Serb members.

While the Pristina roundtable created a rare forum for dialogue between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, regrettably, the space for productive cooperation that it appeared to open could not be sustained over the succeeding months. With Kosovo currently heading toward negotiations over its final status, however, PER plans to continue its engagement with the province's Serbs and Albanians, and will seek new ways to facilitate greater communication and, hopefully, compromise between the two groups.



From left to right: Miodrag Vlahovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Charles English, Director of the Office of South Central European Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, Agron Buxhaku, Vice President of the Democratic Union for Integration (Macedonia), Skender Hyseni, Principal Political Adviser to the President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, President of the Democratic Party of Kosova.

Kosovo and Regional Security

Shortly after the October 2004 parliamentary elections in Kosovo, PER and the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a one-day roundtable discussion in Bucharest titled *Kosovo 2005: Assuring Security for the Neighborhood*. The decision made by the vast majority of Kosovo Serbs to boycott the October elections and forego participation in Kosovo's governing institutions was only the latest sign that interethnic dialogue in Kosovo was at a standstill. PER's roundtable was held in an attempt to reverse this trend, and to stimulate greater involvement among the

province's neighbors in finding a solution for Kosovo, a problem which, indeed, impacts every state in the region.

The roundtable, which brought together senior officials from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo), and diplomats from the United States, Switzerland, the UN, NATO, the Council of Europe, and the EU, was part of PER's ongoing series on *Albanians and Their Neighbors*.

The discussions had several positive outcomes. First, it was noteworthy that Kosovo's neighbors embraced the importance of the

Kosovo question for achieving regional stability, and that different regional players showed a serious commitment to increased cooperation in helping both Pristina and Belgrade overcome the many challenges they face. At the same time, there was a range of different views on the best solution for Kosovo: some neighbors proclaimed their support for an independent Kosovo, some professed neutrality, while others emphasized the dangers for regional stability of granting Kosovo's independence.

Over the course of the discussions many participants concluded that finding a solution for Kosovo and for the region must also involve helping Serbia resolve its internal problems. As one government official from the region put it, "Serbia is a regional problem to the extent that without resolving the Serbian issue nothing positive will happen in the region. We need to help Serbia so that Serbia can help us." Kosovo's neighbors also considered different models of interethnic cooperation in the region—in Montenegro, Macedonia, or Bosnia and Herzegovina—and how these examples might apply to the situation in Kosovo. At the same time, Kosovo Albanian leaders continued to insist on their demand that Kosovo be given independence, and rejected the proposal that an international conference be held to work out an acceptable compromise solution. As one leader stated, "I don't believe a solution can be found by listening to the opinions of other countries."

KOSOVO AND ASSURING REGIONAL SECURITY *continued from page 9*

For their part, participants from Belgrade emphasized the importance of what they termed the “three ‘Es’” in Kosovo: “a European level of human rights, a European level of decentralization, and a European quality of borders.” The latter, they explained, means that borders “cannot be changed without the permission of the state concerned.” At the

same time, they added that in the future the border would not be visible, as for example, the border between France and Germany.

Whatever and whenever the ultimate resolution of Kosovo’s status, it is clear that the situation in the province will remain an important concern of its neighbors, and that

region-wide assistance and cooperation will be needed to ensure that progress is made. The Bucharest roundtable was a first step toward establishing this regional perspective, and in involving Kosovo’s neighbors in a discussion of how they can help each other close a difficult chapter in their common history.

PER CONVENES SIXTH ALBANIANS AND THEIR NEIGHBORS ROUNDTABLE, DEDICATED TO KOSOVO *continued from cover*

Kosovo issue, authorities in Belgrade and Pristina showed some signs of breaking their ongoing stalemate over official communication. Throughout the spring, reports of a potential meeting between Serbian President Boris Tadic and Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova appeared in the media, but an actual encounter failed to materialize. With Kosovo Serbs continuing to boycott government institutions in Pristina, the positions of Serbs and Albanians over Kosovo appeared as entrenched as ever.

While realizing that the large question of Kosovo’s status will only be resolved through a process established by the United Nations, the Project on Ethnic Relations nonetheless judged that an informal and off-the-record dialogue among Albanians, Serbs, leaders of neighboring countries, and representatives of international organizations could be of value. In July 2005, in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, PER convened a roundtable discussion under the title *Kosovo and the Region Prepare for Change: Relations, Responsible Governance, and Regional Security*. The agenda for the discussion included three broad topics: the regional implications of Kosovo’s future status, possibilities for high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, and relations between Kosovo’s Albanian and Serb communities.

As more than one participant in the meeting pointed out, the approaching negotiations over Kosovo’s status led Serbs and Albanians to harden their positions, and readiness to compromise over essential questions was not greatly in evidence at the roundtable. The Lucerne meeting did, however, represent a breakthrough in one small but crucial respect, as it was the first international discussion on Kosovo in four years in which the leadership of the Serbs from the northern part of the province was represented. While these leaders are known for their hard-line position, and their contributions at Lucerne



From left to right: Lawrence Rossin, Principal Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo, Allen Kassof, President Emeritus and Senior Adviser of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Micheline Calmy-Rey, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

were no exception, they do command significant support in the Serb-dominated north, and reaching a settlement that includes them will be a necessity for any government in Pristina that hopes to build a functional multiethnic Kosovo (of whatever final status). Implementing decentralization, a key “standard,” will especially require their cooperation. The Lucerne roundtable was a first step toward establishing some direct contact between these Serbs and Pristina.

The differences that emerged at the roundtable appeared extremely hard to bridge. By the end of the discussion, one international participant expressed his view that “it is clear that a solution will have to be imposed from outside—no negotiations will happen.” Whether or not this is true will become clear in the coming months. Nonetheless, many of the challenges Kosovo is facing—decentralization, refugee returns, building inclusive democratic institutions, and establishing rule of law—will require some degree of

interethnic cooperation, both between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo and between Belgrade and Pristina. The Lucerne roundtable provided a rare chance for all sides to communicate directly about their priorities and concerns, and to judge where compromise may be possible, and where, for the time being, it may remain out of reach.



From left to right: Ardian Gjini, Minister for Environment and Spatial Planning of Kosovo, Lutfi Haziri, Minister for Local Self-Government of Kosovo.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: *continued from page 2*

an agreement worked out by the international community, the Macedonians and the Albanian community gradually learned to work together in a government coalition. One strong common motivation is the prospect of future membership in the European Union. As one Albanian leader told PER, the Albanians of Macedonia would then be the first Albanians to enter the EU. But although the Albanian leaders in Macedonia know that there is a lot at stake for the country as a whole, they are also insistent on pursuing and expanding opportunities for their community. Relations inside the interethnic ruling coalition are not always easy, for Albanians are testing their power in Macedonia as a community, and are increasingly asking for recognition of national symbols, such as the right to publicly display Albanian flags in the Albanian-populated areas. They are adamant about acceptance of such symbols, even at the risk of alienating their partners in the ruling coalition, who often state that it would be better to ask for less and at a slower pace to avoid antagonizing the majority Macedonian population.

Minorities face the choice of pressing their claims from the outside—resisting mainstream political participation—or competing

within the system. In the cases described here, they have opted for participation and have benefited from coming to the table with the assets of group unity, specific agendas, and, above all, the capacity to influence outcomes in a highly competitive political setting where they often control the small but critical margin between the larger parties. In addition, the pull of the EU was and is a strong factor leading majorities to “do the right thing” for minorities in Central and Southeastern Europe. Still, important questions remain: how strong will the attraction of EU membership be for these and other countries in the region over time, and will it help to encourage or diminish interethnic coalitions? Will diversity prevail in these countries, or will the strong undercurrents of nationalism re-emerge? Will minorities continue to be “king makers” and coalition builders? Time will tell.



Livia Plaks

Decentralization and Interethnic Relations in Bulgaria

As Bulgaria moves closer to membership in the European Union, an important element of democratic reform in the country is the devolution of power from the central government to local administrations. With increased power, however, have come increased responsibilities, as well as a great deal of uncharted territory for the leaders of Bulgaria's many ethnically diverse communities. To help local officials successfully respond to the challenges they face in the newly decentralized state, PER's Sofia office organized a series of roundtable discussions on questions of local governance, and, particularly, the implications of decentralization for local-level interethnic relations.

The roundtables brought together legal experts, national and local government officials, and leaders of ethnic groups (including the Roma). One important topic of discussion was the provision in Bulgaria's decentralization law that extends protection from discrimination not only to individuals but also to communities. This has serious

implications for the budgetary process, since communities that feel that they have received less than their fair share of funds from local, regional, or national budgets may now take their case to court, arguing that ethnic discrimination played a role in the inequitable distribution of resources. Taking this into consideration, many participants in the discussions concluded that the existing semi-official network of predominantly ethnic Turkish municipalities is less relevant than before, since these towns now enjoy legal protection as ethnically based communities, and can take their grievances to court.

Another topic of the roundtables was the politics of implementing “ethnic policy” at the local level. Participants considered whether programs addressed to ethnic minorities (which can be costly and unpopular) are better run from the local or national level, the decision-making process related to these programs, and how best to coordinate the efforts of different levels of government and involve representatives of ethnic minorities in decision making. Bulgaria's Romani communities were a particular focus of these discussions.

Recent PER Publications

- ***Kosovo 2005: Assuring Security for the Neighborhood (2005)***
- ***Macedonia: The Next Stage (2005)***
- ***Central and East European Governments and Cooperation with the Hungarian Communities: Efforts, Accomplishments, Failures (2005)***
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PER Opens Coordination Office in Brussels

PER is pleased to announce that a new office has been established in Brussels, Belgium thanks to the generosity of a member of our Executive Board. This office will allow PER to develop closer working relations with European institutions, and will serve as a coordination point for our activities with the governments of the new EU members.

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Alexei M. Salmin

1951-2005

Alexei Salmin, a wise friend, a treasured colleague, an exceptional political analyst, and a distinguished member of PER's Council for Ethnic Accord, died prematurely on September 8, 2005 in Moscow. He was among Russia's most outstanding political thinkers. Until his last days he headed the Russian Public Policy Center, which he established, and the Department of Political Science at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO).

Professor Salmin was an international authority in the fields of comparative politics, democratic institutions, and interethnic relations. He was a member of the Russian Presidential Council, and his book on contemporary democracy became obligatory reading for students in Russia. He was a true Russian *intelligent*,



a word that is difficult to translate into English—both an esteemed intellectual and a true gentleman, a rare breed in today's world.

Together with Alexei, PER organized a number of groundbreaking projects on interethnic relations in Russia and Russia's relations with its Western neighbors. We were privileged to have learned much from him. He was always full of new ideas, and he was ready to

fight for any idea that would make Russia a stronger country and a better citizen of the world.

It is always difficult to say goodbye to a person, especially when he leaves at the height of his professional career. We will truly miss Alexei.

**PROJECT ON
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The **PROJECT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS (PER)** was founded in 1991 in anticipation of the serious interethnic conflicts that were to erupt following the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. PER conducts programs of intervention and dialogue and has served as a neutral mediator in several major disputes in the region. PER also conducts programs of training, education, and research at international, national, and community levels.

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