



## *Security and Stability in the Balkans*

Nearly a decade after a series of devastating wars, the Western Balkans is still at a crossroads. Despite significant achievements in many areas, the process of integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions has slowed down. Political and economic reforms continue to be hindered by status issues, state border and name disputes, interethnic tensions, poor economic performance, organized crime, and political uncertainty as well as unpredictability. While the potential for a renewal of violent conflicts has been reduced, the international civilian and military presence is still needed to maintain the current stability. The fragility of peace is reflected in Serbia's February 2008 presidential elections, in which the Serbian Radical Party candidate received almost half of the total vote; increased tensions between Albanians and Serbs following Kosovo's declaration of independence; interruptions in interethnic dialogue in Macedonia; and persisting ethnic problems in South Serbia and Sandzak.

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**From left to right: Michael Christides, Director of the Directorate for Southeastern Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece; Imer Selmani, Minister of Health of Macedonia; Zoran Loncar, Minister of Education of Serbia; Gabriela Konevska Trajkovska, Deputy Prime Minister of Macedonia; Dora Bakoyannis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece; Livia Plaks, PER President; Ranko Krivokapic, President of the Parliament of Montenegro; and Ardian Gjini, Minister for Environment Protection and Spatial Planning of Kosovo.**

## *Interethnic Relations in Kosovo*

Anticipating the outcome of Kosovo's status negotiations and the following interethnic tension, PER in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs launched in September 2007 a new initiative on interethnic dialogue in Kosovo. The goal of this one-year venture is to strengthen interethnic trust and cooperation by focusing on practical issues, such as security, property rights, education, local administration, and decentralization. The long-term goal of the project is to encourage consensus on major issues, and help Kosovo political elites take ownership of and responsibility for the future of their communities.

Despite the sensitive nature of its focus and of the environment in which it works, PER has managed to retain the trust of community leaders to bring them together for discussions on the most pressing issues. The series of three meetings which took place on October 25-26, 2007 in Pristina attest to this trust.



**Albanian, Serb, and International Representatives at the Roundtable.**

The three roundtable discussions suggested that the status negotiations had indirectly exacerbated relations between Albanians and Serbs, and between Serbs and the international community. The statements of Albanian leaders about Kosovo's independence, and the counteracting Serb

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### Whither the Balkans?

Once again bad news is hitting the newsstands about the Balkans. Problems that had seemed almost settled are not. Yet, when compared with the seemingly intractable difficulties in more distant places like Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, there is every possibility of bringing a peaceful Balkans into the European family of nations. And at considerably less financial and military cost.

Kosovo's declaration of independence has triggered grave problems in the northern region, where the Serbs are in the majority, and of course in Belgrade, where the nationalist radicals are acquiring more influence and power every day. Macedonia's dispute with Greece over what the country shall be called remains unresolved. Bosnia and Herzegovina remains unsettled as competing ethnic leaders vie for power and influence and play their ethnic cards to frighten the population. Where, then, are the Balkans headed? Balkan history warns us that even small events have a way of getting out of hand.

The good news might not be quite as visible but there is a lot of it: Croatia and Albania received invitations to join NATO at the Bucharest Summit in early April. Tiny Montenegro is quietly making its way towards Euro-Atlantic structures as the ethnic communities there work to iron out their differences. Albania has been acting moderately and wisely towards its neighbors who have large Albanian populations, and has not encouraged irresponsible moves by co-ethnics across its borders. In South Serbia, which is populated not only by Serb Orthodox Christians but also Albanian Muslims, the good sense of those communities has prevailed—there were no incidents of any kind in response to the Kosovo independence declaration. More good news: in Kosovo, in areas with mixed populations of Serbs and Albanians it is quiet and there has been no exodus of Serbs. The new leadership in Kosovo is convinced that it will have to provide extra incentives to the minorities (especially Serbs) in order for them to stay and to make Kosovo a multiethnic state. And, at least so far, Belgrade has asked the Serbs of Kosovo to stay home and not flee to Serbia.

Perhaps one day Serbia will again turn its face towards the EU and ask to be a part of it.

What is needed most of all is regional cooperation on economic, security, and environmental problems on the way to possible EU membership. This will make the countries of the region stakeholders in the future of the area and teach future generations the value of cooperating with neighbors. There is tremendous potential for developing the region as a tourist haven, but only if all cooperate. Today, the sight of embassies ablaze and mobs on the streets frightens away not only tourists but investors. Leaders who fail in their obligations to create peaceful and democratic societies will sooner or later have to explain to their young people why they cannot be part of Europe. This is the time for Europe, with the backing of the United States, to reaffirm its commitment to bringing all of the Balkans into the mainstream—no matter how long it takes. A new message of hope is urgently needed.

A tranquil transition for the Western Balkans towards the rest of Europe was not to be expected; there is too much history to digest. Nevertheless, there are now more positive than negative examples, and they provide essential lessons in what is possible. Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia are already members of the EU and beckon their other neighbors to join them. And Greece, as an experienced EU member, could have an important moderating role.

Crises sometimes help to focus attention on possibilities for improvement by making clear how much there is to lose. Let us hope that this will happen in the Balkans.



Livia B. Plaks



## Special Thanks to Our Funders

- **Carnegie Corporation of New York**
- **The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**
- **Council of Europe**
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- **The Government of Great Britain**
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- **The Government of Romania**
- **The Government of Switzerland**
- **The People Technology Foundation Inc.**
- **The Rockefeller Brothers Fund**
- **The Alfred Moses Family Fund**
- **The United States Agency for International Development**

## *Interethnic Dialogue in South Serbia*

Persisting intra- and interethnic tensions in South Serbia and Sandzak demonstrate that interethnic relations in Serbia continue to require attention. The resolution of these lingering disputes and consolidation of democratic and inclusive institutions that will address interethnic grievances were the main topics addressed at PER's activities in Serbia in the past year.

PER held a series of productive discussions devoted to the participation of South Serbia Albanians in Serbia's national political life. The dialogue achieved some practical results: it helped persuade the majority of Albanian political parties to participate in the Serbian parliamentary elections of January 2007, in which they won a parliamentary seat. The participation was significant in the sense that it represented the willingness of ethnic Albanians to move beyond their fixation on difficult status and legal issues and address the practical questions of the Albanian community in Serbia. On the other hand, the attendance of discussions by senior Serbian officials indicated the seriousness of Serbian institutions to respond to minority demands and accommodate them accordingly.

Improvement of infrastructure in South Serbia was also tackled. In addition to a lack of political will, insufficient government

investment was mentioned as a factor for the region's slow economic progress. Belgrade officials contended that state institutions are aware of the need to improve the region's infrastructure serving minorities, but said they are not capable of meeting these needs due to budgetary constraints. Some of the main issues raised by the Albanian participants were the inclusion of Albanians in public institutions, development of textbooks and school curricula reflecting their culture and history, security, language issues, and the use of ethnic symbols. It was agreed that these are issues that require political will rather than financial resources.

PER used its contacts in the region and, on a few occasions, brought Albanian leaders from Montenegro and Macedonia to Serbia to help persuade the South Serbia Albanians to resolve their outstanding issues through institutional participation. In addition, PER encouraged South Serbia's local Albanian officials to integrate greater numbers of ethnic Serbs and Roma into their local administrations.

It is worth noting that after Kosovo's proclamation of independence and the protests

and violence which resulted in Serbia, South Serbia remained calm and quiet. By not organizing celebrations or protests, both local Albanian and Serb leaders exercised the caution needed to keep their communities from imploding or exacerbating the already high tensions of this momentous occasion. In fact, this caution shows that local leaders realize the importance of peaceful coexistence, restraint, and a moderate approach to politics. This is a significant development in the region's local politics.



**From left to right: Ragmi Mustafa, Mayor of Presevo; Dusan Spasojevic, Vice President of the Coordination Body of the Government of Serbia for South Serbia; Nagip Arifi, Mayor of Bujanovac; Alex Grigor'ev, PER Executive Director; Cathy Cottrell, First Secretary at the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Serbia; and Slobodan Draskovic, Mayor of Medvedja.**

## *Minority Councils in Serbia*

According to the 2002 census, 18% of Serbia's population is comprised of ethnic minorities. Accommodation of this one-fifth of the population is crucial to the country's quest towards European integration. Although Serbia has made significant steps towards accommodating its minorities, it has yet to introduce a clear minority policy to manage relations between its majority and minority communities. In this light, PER has been involved in contributing to the minority integration process, hoping to achieve three objectives: help adopt a new law on minorities; assist in drafting legislation on national minority councils; and launch a debate on creating a long-term minority strategy.

In October 2007, US-based PER and the Romania-based PER Regional Center for Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe convened a group of Serbia's minority leaders and senior parliamentarians in Belgrade to discuss the present situation of minority councils in Serbia. The existing drafts for a new Serbian law on minority councils were addressed, and several recommendations for improving the work of the councils and their effectiveness were made. As most of the participants noted, in order to improve the situation on the ground, governing institutions need to first adopt new and prac-

tical legislation. The adoption of a new law on minorities, and an update of legislation on national minority councils are most urgent. Delaying adoption of such legislation until the end of 2008, as envisioned in the government's current plan, would only exacerbate the problems of minority councils in Serbia.



**From left to right: Riza Halimi, President of the Party of Democratic Action and Member of the Parliament of Serbia; Laszlo Jozsa, President of the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority in Serbia; Livia Plaks, PER President; Vojislav Stanovcic, Member of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and Member of the PER Council for Ethnic Accord; Alex Grigor'ev, PER Executive Director; and Dusan Janjic, Coordinator of the Forum for Ethnic Relations and Member of the PER Council for Ethnic Accord.**

## *Montenegro Develops its Minority Policy*

Montenegro's minority policies represent one of the most visible successes facilitated by PER through the generous support of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Global Opportunities Fund as well as the British Embassies in Serbia and Montenegro. After a multi-year dialogue sponsored by PER, the Montenegrin Parliament adopted the Minority Law in May 2006. The law includes a number of important new provisions and mechanisms for ethnic minorities to assert their rights, influence policy in accordance with their interests, and obtain permanent representation in national and municipal assemblies.

The Minority Law has not been without its controversy. Shortly after the successful referendum for independence, the Montenegrin Supreme Court declared two key articles of the law unconstitutional. As a result, minority communities were temporarily left without the legal authority to vie for permanent representation in the parliament. Responding to this development, PER launched an intra-parliamentary discussion on the level of minority protection in the constitution.

As a result, the new Montenegrin Constitution, adopted in October 2007, specifically states that the issue of minority permanent representation in parliament will be resolved through the application of affirmative action, allowing for the possibility of these key articles or their modified version to be reinstated. PER intends to closely monitor developments in the next few months and continue to provide consultation when appropriate.

The Minority Law also included provisions for the establishment of Minority Councils, institutions which will provide minority communities a basis for cohesive interaction with the Montenegrin government. Minority Councils will also provide a forum in which government officials can seek consultation about minority policies.

PER assisted the Montenegrin Ministry for the Protection of Human and Minority Rights in drafting the rules for the elections of the first councils. The rules were adopted in July 2007. The Councils are set to be formed by the end of April 2008. Over the coming months, PER will encourage minority representatives to

move forward with the council formation process and will also continue to help build the capacity of minority groups to develop the administrative functioning of their representative institutions.

PER has also been assisting in building the capacity of the Ministry for the Protection of Human and Minority Rights. In order to help the government to capitalize on its progress in developing a more cohesive minority policy, in July, a seminar and a workshop on media relations were organized for the staff of the Ministry and members of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. Advantages of enlisting pro-active communication strategies were presented by Corinne Goetschel, a former Swiss Government spokesperson and an adviser to the Government of Macedonia. Special attention was paid to the issue of cultivating media as a democratic tool for dispersing accurate information and to developing the most effective strategies on promoting minority issues in Montenegro.

In April, PER organized a working visit to Budapest and Bucharest for the Minister for the Protection of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro, Fuad Nimani, and Assistant Minister, Sabahudin Delic. During the visit, the Montenegrin officials met with state secretaries responsible for minority issues in the governments of Hungary and Romania, members of parliaments, minority leaders and experts. In Budapest, the Montenegrin delegation was received by Katalin Szili, President of the Parliament of Hungary. The Montenegrin officials had a chance to share their experience in developing minority rights protection policies and to learn about the experience of Hungary and Romania, both EU members, in implementing their minority policies, functioning of the government bodies responsible for minority issues, organization of minorities and securing parliamentary representation. They also discussed prospects for regional cooperation in resolving minority problems.

Due to the Minority Law, the rules on the formation of Minority Councils, as well as the establishment of the minority fund, improvements in the lives of minorities living in Montenegro will continue. Action plans for these improvements are currently being considered in the country's Minority Strategy, set to be adopted in the next few months. PER's successful work on these documents is held as proof that long-term commitment to dialogue reaps outstanding benefits.



**From left to right: Alex Grigor'ev, PER Executive Director; Fuad Nimani, Minister for Human and Minority Rights Protection of Montenegro; Livia Plaks, PER President; and Rifat Rastoder, Vice President of the Parliament of Montenegro.**



**From left to right: Livia Plaks, PER President; Laszlo Teleki, Member, Parliament of Hungary; Alex Grigor'ev, PER Executive Director; Katalin Szili, President, Parliament of Hungary; Dubravka Kubatov, Interpreter; Fuad Nimani, Minister for the Protection of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro; Sabahudin Delic, Assistant Minister for the Protection of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro.**

## ROMANI NEWS

### *Roma and Sinti in the Bologna Region: Building Blocks of an Integration Policy*

In April 2008, the Municipality of Bologna, the OSCE/ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, the Istituto per l'Europa Centro-Orientale e Balcanica, and PER organized a roundtable discussion in Bologna on the situation of the Roma and Sinti residing in the Bologna region. The discussion focused on four major topics: security and legality issues; schooling and education; housing and camps; and use of EU funding and frameworks to address Roma and Sinti problems at the local level.

The issue of Roma and Sinti integration remains one of the most important and urgent problems in Europe today, and the most important decisions with the greatest impact on these communities are made at the local level. The local authorities in Bologna have taken this challenge seriously and are willing to tackle the issues associated with the presence of a considerable number of Roma coming from Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kosovo as well as the presence of a number of Sinti communities. They agreed that scapegoating of the Roma should be avoided and that placing the Roma among the majority population has more positive consequences than placing them in camps outside populated areas that are isolated and without access to health care and other basic facilities. Some of the participants urged the Italian authorities to work out a comprehensive national policy towards the Roma and Sinti residing in Italy and consider giving them the status of national minority.

The Bologna authorities and local NGOs, Roma and non-Roma, were also briefed by the President of the Roma Agency in Romania, Gruia Bumbu, and by the Chairman of the Board of the Roma Education Fund of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, Costel Bercus.

The Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues of the OSCE/ODIHR, Andrzej Mirga, and the President of PER, Livia Plaks, also visited two Roma camps in the Bologna area and one Sinti camp.

### *Montenegro Adopts a Roma Strategy*

In parallel with the work on minority policies in Montenegro, PER assisted the Montenegrin government in developing a comprehensive strategy for its Roma population. After a two year effort during which PER held a series of roundtable discussions with Romani activists, government officials, and international experts, the Montenegrin government adopted in November 2007 a comprehensive Roma Strategy. The Roma Strategy was drafted by a Montenegrin human and minority rights legal expert in close cooperation with Roma leaders.

The two year PER guided effort was successful in identifying many of the most pressing issues the Roma community currently faces in Montenegro. The document is considered uniquely progressive with regards to European practice in Roma related policies in that it requires the Montenegrin government to allocate 0.2% of its annual budget for the strict purposes of implementing elements of the strategy. Adoption of a Roma Strategy in Montenegro was recommended by the European Commission, Council of Europe, and OSCE. Furthermore,

### *Roma in 21st Century: Strategies for Integration*

In June 2007, the PER Regional Center in cooperation with OSCE-ODIHR organized a conference in Sinaia, Romania, on developing strategies for integrating Romani communities into their respective countries. The meeting brought together various Roma academics and scholars to explore ways of improving EU Roma integration policies and to define common guiding principles for their implementation.

An evaluation of current EU policies was conducted in order to determine whether they reflect Roma aspirations and interests. Participants drafted a list of practical outcomes against which the results of current integration policies could be measured, and encouraged a more active role for Roma leaders – academics, scholars, activists, elected or appointed state politicians – in drafting, implementing and monitoring Roma integration policies and in setting future priorities.



**From left to right: Gruia Bumbu, President of the Roma National Agency in Romania; Livia Plaks, PER President; Andrzej Mirga, Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues at ODIHR/OSCE; and Nicolae Paun, Chair, Committee for Human Rights, Religious Affairs, and National Minority Issues, Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Romania.**

greater integration of Roma into Montenegrin society is considered an important element of the political criteria for accession to the EU. PER's Roma Strategy dialogue and Minority Policy initiative would have been impossible without the support of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office as well as the British Embassies in Serbia and Montenegro through generous grants provided to PER.



**From left to right: Nebojsa Vucinic, Professor at the University of Montenegro; Fuad Nimani, Minister for Human and Minority Rights Protection of Montenegro; Livia Plaks, PER President; John Dyson, Ambassador of the United Kingdom in Montenegro; and Andrzej Mirga, Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues at the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights/Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.**

## PER REGIONAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL,



**From left to right: Dan Petre, PER Regional Center Executive Director; Adrian Cioroianu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania; and Livia Plaks, PER President.**

### *Frozen Conflicts in the Black Sea Region: the Role of the International Community*

In November 2007, the PER Regional Center convened a roundtable of experts and officials from parliaments and governments of Black Sea region countries, representatives from the EU, and the US to discuss and evaluate the involvement of the international community in Black Sea area conflicts. At the meeting, it was commented that it was one of the few times that participants from Tbilisi, Sukhumi, Chisinau, and Tiraspol were able to share first hand their perspective with new EU member states.

Participants made a set of recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the international community's involvement in the region. An increased coordination among various international actors involved in the conflicts and more flexibility to reach compromises were considered necessary in order to reach solutions. The participants also emphasized the need for active involvement of the regional actors through the establishment of a regional forum to negotiate and obtain experience in conflict resolution practices. It was concluded that the strengthening of civil society, the system of education, rule of law, and respect for human rights are necessary for the successful resolutions of frozen conflicts in the Black Sea region.



**From left to right: Batal Kobakhya, Expert at the Center for Humanitarian Programs in Sukhumi; Paata Zakareishvili, Independent Analyst in Tbilisi; Alina Doroftei, Project Manager at the Crisis Management Initiative in Brussels; Stefan Donea, Political Adviser of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania; and Serban Cioculescu, Member of the Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History.**

### *A New Minority Policy for the European Union*

In December 2007, PER and the PER Regional Center in cooperation with the European Parliament organized a meeting in Brussels titled, *New Approaches to the Minority Issues in the European Union*. Participants at the roundtable included members of the European Parliament, representatives of EU institutions, governmental officials, representatives of intergovernmental institutions, and minority policy experts. The discussion took place in the European Parliament and was chaired by PER's President, Livia Plaks, and the Chairman of the Intergroup for Traditional National Minorities, Constitutional Regions, and Regional Languages, Csaba Tabajdi. The situation of minorities in the EU and the creation of an internal EU minority protection policy were the main topics of the debate.

The objective of the discussion was to launch a process of addressing the salient challenges facing 'new' and 'traditional' minority communities, as well as the case of the Roma in the EU, on the highest institutional levels. In this context, the meeting focused on evaluating existing legislation and exploring new possibilities for enhancements, policy initiatives, and monitoring mechanisms as part of an encompassing internal EU minority policy. The discussion also addressed the role of various EU institutions in the design and implementation of such standards and policies, with special reference to the European Parliament.

### *Management of Interethnic Relations in Education*

In March 2007, the PER Regional Center, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research of Romania (MEC), organized a training in Sovata, Romania, for Roma and non-Roma teachers, school inspectors, and directors. In this context, the PER Regional Center consulted with the MEC in adopting new legislation banning segregation in schools. The result of this effort was MEC's regulations to discourage segregation in the system of education. The order is valid and has been applied starting with the 2007 school year. Another training organized under this program was held at PER's Regional Center headquarters in Bucharest in November 2007.

### *Role of Research and History Teaching in Interethnic Relations*

The program on the role of research and history in interethnic relations was initiated by PER in 1997, but its finalization was delayed due to complicated political contexts. The PER Regional Center started to work again on the issue of introducing minorities' history into history textbooks in 2006. In 2007, the PER Regional Center, in cooperation with the Information Office of the Council of Europe, and the Department for Interethnic Relations of the government of Romania, organized three workshops on developing history books for minorities.

## EASTERN, AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

### *Role of Police in Interethnic Relations: Strategies and Practices*

In May 2007, the PER Regional Center in cooperation with the Committee for Human Rights, Religious Groups and National Minorities Issues in the Romanian Parliament held a meeting in Bucharest on the *Role of Police in Ensuring Interethnic Relations' Stability*. The meeting was attended by representatives of Roma communities from areas where interethnic tensions are high, senior police representatives, including the leadership of the Institute for Crime Prevention, representatives of the National Agency for Roma, Romanian Government, and the OSCE-ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues.

The goal of the meeting was to analyze and enhance the methods of police intervention to prevent conflicts in multiethnic communities at the local level. Recommendations on how to transform the police from a mere protection force to a promotor of interethnic relations, such as the modification of current intervention methods and more training, were made.

In this series, the PER Regional Center organized a second meeting on *Policemen Training for Diversity Awareness and Respect in Multiethnic Communities*. Representatives of the Ministry of Administration and Interior, National Council for Combating Discrimination, National Agency for Roma and Roma Party attended the roundtable. Participants drafted several recommendations for police training. The PER Regional Center will continue to organize activities necessary for putting these recommendations into practice. The Ministry of Administration and Interior has pledged to continue its support.

### *Reducing Nationalist Rhetoric during Elections*

The use of nationalist rhetoric in Romania's public life constitutes a challenge to the 2008 electoral campaign, in which, it is feared, political and personal interest will overshadow national interests. With this in mind, PER Regional Center organized in March 2008 a discussion on the impact of nationalist discourse on interethnic relations in Romania. The roundtable brought together leaders of Romanian political parties and organizations of national minorities represented in the Romania Parliament, academics, media, and civil society representatives.

The purpose of the discussion was to intensify the dialogue among political leaders aiming to reduce nationalist discourse during the electoral campaign and to promote constructive approaches. Issues addressed at the roundtable included political party programs and strategies, and the impact of the nationalist rhetoric on interethnic relations in Romania and the region. It was recommended that political parties run electoral campaigns that address voters' real concerns, such as employment, and refrain from the use of nationalist rhetoric that will negatively affect the rather good state of interethnic relations in Romania.

### *European Union and its Neighborhood Policy*

In 2007, US-based PER and the PER Regional Center conducted an initiative on the EU's neighborhood policy. The first activity in the initiative focused on *History, Identity, and Interethnic Relations in the Context of European Neighborhood Policy* and was held in March 2007 in Bucharest. The conference was attended by civil society high-level representatives, political parties, academics, and representatives of international organizations. The discussions addressed the topic of history and how it generates different identities over time and the ways of approaching the European identity from the historic perspective of Romania and Moldova.

The second activity under this program was a roundtable on the *Role of Media and Interethnic Relations in the Black Sea Region*. The meeting was held in Bucharest in May 2007 and brought together journalists from Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine. The discussions focused on the ways interethnic issues in the Black Sea Region are covered by the media and how this reporting could be improved. The participants produced a list of practical recommendations for improving the media coverage of interethnic issues in line with European professional standards.

It was concluded that active dialogue between academics, civil society, and journalists contributes to the identification of problems and the charting of accepted solutions for them. The initiative aimed to develop a better understanding of the neighborhood policy and produce immediate and tangible results that benefit all countries and communities.



**From left to right: Edit Bauer, Member of the European Parliament (Slovakia); Dan Petre, PER Regional Center Executive Director; Katrin Saks, Member of the European Parliament (Estonia); David Koranyi, Officer of the Intergroup for Traditional National Minorities, Constitutional Regions, and Regional Languages of the European Parliament; Csaba Tabajdi, Member of the European Parliament (Hungary) and Chairman of the Intergroup for Traditional National Minorities, Constitutional Regions and Regional Languages of the European Parliament; Livia Plaks, PER President; Adrian Severin, Member of the European Parliament (Romania); and Alex Grigor'ev, PER Executive Director.**

**SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE BALKANS** *continued from cover*

Anticipating these developments, PER, in cooperation with the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with the support of the US State Department through a USAID grant, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, convened its ninth high-level Balkan regional roundtable in Athens on June 15-16, 2007. The two day dialogue titled the *Balkans as a Source of Security and Stability in Europe* provided policymakers from the Balkans, United States, European Union, Council of Europe, and NATO with an opportunity to exchange their views and coordinate their efforts to improve

the security situation in the region. The agenda consisted of two parts: *Peace and Democracy in the Balkans: Outcomes of peace settlements and lessons learned*; and *From Conflict to Cooperation: Strengthening regional security and improving institutional capacities in dealing with interethnic problems*. It was concluded that regional cooperation in political and economic areas is key to the region's sustainable development and European integration.

Participants came from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland, United States, and offi-

cial from the Council of Europe, European Union, and United Nations. The participants pointed out that one of the major persisting challenges for the nascent Balkan democracies has been the need to respond to minority demands while at the same time having to satisfy the will of the majority. It was agreed, however, that although a lot remains to be done in this regard, most countries have been able to strike satisfactory balances between majority and minority rights. The EU accession process was considered an important mechanism for committing these states to continue integrating their minority groups into public life and reform their political and economic systems.

The outcome of this dialogue was a number of consensual conclusions and recommendations for action by the Balkan countries and the European Union: the Balkan countries should improve interstate relations and intensify their efforts to integrate minority communities in local and central government institutions; the EU should ease its terms and conditions and set clear timetables for membership for the Balkan states; the EU should consider creating an intermediate or special status for Balkans states facing difficult challenges, and it should relax its visa regime for the people of the Western Balkans.



**From left to right: Dusan Spasojevic, State Secretary in the Ministry of Defense of Serbia; Ivan Vejvoda, Executive Director of the Balkan Trust for Democracy; and Zarko Korac, Member of the Parliament of Serbia.**

## **Confidence Building Measures in Kosovo**

*Confidence Building Measures in Kosovo*, which began in June 2006 and concluded in July 2007, was conceived as a means of addressing persistent interethnic tension in Kosovo. The program launched a series of confidence building measures focused on practical issues, such as security, education, freedom of movement, and fears and misperceptions affecting the daily lives of Kosovo's communities. The activities also aimed at strengthening the internal political position of Kosovo Serbs.

Prior to launching the initiative, PER discussed the planned activities with various local and international representatives, including senior representatives of the US State Department, the United Nations Special Envoy for the Future Status of Kosovo, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, and senior Swiss diplomats. In 2007, PER, in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, conducted three roundtables for Kosovo Albanian and Serb political leaders as well as representatives of the international community in Pristina. The implementation of interethnic aspects of the Ahtisaari status package, benefits of political participation, and security during the status process were addressed at the meetings.

The project achieved the following results: a consideration by the Kosovo negotiation team to establish a separate judicial district for the

predominantly ethnic Serb north of Kosovo; amendments to policies governing the appointment of municipal police chiefs; plans for the construction of a road crossing between two Serb settlements

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**From left to right: Tom Yazdgerdi, Chief of Political-Economic Section of the US Office in Pristina; Arben Qirezi, Political Advisor to the Prime Minister of Kosovo; Oliver Ivanovic, Head of the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija in the Assembly of Kosovo; Werner Wnendt, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo; and Rada Trajkovic, President of the Executive Board of the Serb National Council of Kosovo and Metohija.**



**INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN KOSOVO** *continued from cover*

statements that independence is not an acceptable solution, increased the uncertainty of Kosovo's population when looking towards their future. Perceived as supporting the Kosovo Albanians, the international community has been gradually losing the little trust it enjoyed from the Serbs.

The discussions also indicated that while the Serb community unanimously opposed Kosovo's independence, it remained divided and confused about political participation in Kosovo's political life. The majority of the Kosovo Serb leaders decided to boycott the Kosovo elections. However, a number of new Serb political parties and civic initiatives defied the Serb majority opinion and decided to take part in the November 2007 poll. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that the overwhelming majority of Serbs will not support the idea of joining Kosovo's institutions. As a result, new leaders will lack the necessary legitimacy and power to negotiate with Albanian leaders on behalf of the Kosovo Serb community.

Although the dialogue did little to narrow the existing differences between Albanians and Serbs, it provided senior Kosovo Albanian and Serb leaders with an opportunity to jointly consider the significant challenges they face in building a multiethnic and democratic Kosovo. The participants agreed that dialogue remains the best mechanism for resolving problems and for building sustainable peace in Kosovo. Albanians also acknowledged that Pristina has not done



**From left to right: Lukas Beglinger, Head of the Swiss Liaison Office in Pristina; Fatmir Sejdiu, President of Kosovo; Livia Plaks, PER President; and Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister of Kosovo.**

enough to integrate the Serb community into Kosovo's political process. Both Albanian and Serb leaders committed to working closely with their communities and to urging them to refrain from violence.

In February 2008, PER organized another two-day dialogue between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo. The discussions showed that the additional rounds of negotiations, September to December 2007, provided Kosovo Albanian and Serb political leaders with an opportunity to better prepare themselves and their communities for the apparent status outcome. At PER's roundtables, for the first time, representatives of both communities agreed that efforts to produce a consensual outcome have been exhausted

and any new attempts to reach a solution would be futile. Subsequently, they intensified communication with their own communities encouraging them to remain in Kosovo and refrain from using violence.

The outcome of this series of meetings was a number of consensual conclusions and recommendations for action by Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo Serbs, and the international community: Kosovo Albanians should send clear and strong messages to the Serb community that nothing will happen to them in the post-status period; political leaders of both communities should encourage their community members to refrain from responding to potential provocations and incidents in the aftermath of the status decision; leaders of both communities should intensify communication with Serbs at the local level; Kosovo's institutions should help newly elected Serb representatives deliver tangible results to the Serb community with the goal of bolstering their support within the Serb community; the prime minister should organize frequent meetings with Kosovo Serb leaders of all political parties, including those outside of Kosovo institutions; projects should be conducted in ethnically mixed areas involving members of both communities, cooperation in one area leads to cooperation in another; establish an interethnic forum for dialogue and reconciliation; establish the announced governmental office for communities as soon as possible and involve Serbs that are inside and outside Kosovo's institutions.



**From left to right: Nenad Radosavljevic, Former Advisor for Returns and Communities to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo; Randjel Nojkic, Member of the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija in the Assembly of Kosovo; Vesna Jovanovic, Member of the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija in the Assembly of Kosovo; Dragisa Krstovic, Member of the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija in the Assembly of Kosovo; and Momcilo Trajkovic, President of the Serb Resistance Movement of Kosovo.**

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near Pristina; and acceptance by Kosovo government officials of transparent parallel financing—allowing Kosovo Serb municipalities to receive funds directly from Belgrade without initial deposits at a Kosovo bank. In addition to reaching agreements on these practical issues, the dialogue complemented and supported the efforts of the international community to resolve the future status of Kosovo. It served as a venue for dialogue among political leaders of Kosovo's ethnic communities, most importantly between Kosovo's negotiation team and representatives of the Kosovo Serb community, who unlike Serbs from Serbia, are directly affected by the status outcome. The project helped the Kosovo Serb political elite to solidify the group and strengthen its position and negotiating leverage vis-à-vis the Kosovo Albanians.

The project indicated that the lack of trust between Kosovo Albanian and Serb communities does not prevent political parties from engaging in serious discussions to resolve entrenched differences. Indeed, as most participants noted, dialogue is needed precisely because of this lack of trust. Although PER tried to keep the Kosovo political status outcome off the agenda as a means of allowing participants to focus on concrete issues and prevent already strained relations from deteriorating further, participants raised it frequently and argued intensely over it. Albanians and Serbs held diametrically opposing positions in regards to the status issue, but they shared a common interest in the political and economic future of Kosovo. If the international community is to succeed in building a truly multiethnic Kosovo, it is this common interest that needs to be further cultivated and nourished.

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## **PER Announcements**

### **Staff**

**ALEX N. GRIGOR'EV** was named Executive Director in April 2007. Grigor'ev has been working in various capacities at PER since 1996. Educated in history and international relations and an expert on Balkan politics and ethnic relations, Grigor'ev most recently held the position of PER's Director for the Western Balkans. His knowledge and understanding of the Balkan region has contributed to PER's important successes in the region. As the Executive Director, Grigor'ev will continue to contribute to PER's ongoing work to secure peace and interethnic accord in the region.

**SHPETIM GASHI** joined PER's office in Princeton as a Program Officer in September 2007. Gashi was recently awarded a Masters of International Affairs degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Before studying at Columbia, he worked for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo.

**ANA STOJILJKOVIC** joined PER as its representative in Serbia in November 2007. Stojiljkovic received a Master's Degree from Central European University in Budapest. Before joining PER, she worked for various NGOs in Serbia.

**STEPHANIE NAZARIO** joined PER as an Accountant in November 2007. Nazario graduated from Rider University and has extensive experience working with the non-profit sector. Before joining PER, she has worked as an auditor for several organizations.

### **Council for Ethnic Accord**

**JOHN D. SCANLAN**, a Council member, died in Naples, Florida, on November 20, 2007. He was 79 years old.

Scanlan was a veteran diplomat who had spent most of his career in Eastern Europe and was named ambassador to Yugoslavia in 1985. He also served in Poland and Russia.

**PETER SAGER**, a leading 20th-Century European political essayist and politician, died at his home in Blonay, Switzerland on July 1, 2006 following a brief illness. He was 81 years old.

Sager was founder of the Swiss East Institute and was elected to the Swiss National Council (the lower house of parliament) in 1983, where he served until 1991. From 1984 to 1991 he was a member of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and was its vice-president in 1991.

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## **Recent PER Publications**

**Confidence Building Measures in Kosovo (2007)**

**The Balkans as a Source of Security and Stability in Europe (2007)**

**New Majorities and Minorities in the Balkans (2007)**

**Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic Integration: Advancing Common Interests (2007)**

**Learning to Live Together: The Role of the Media in Covering Interethnic Relations in the Black Sea Region (2008)**

**Reviving Interethnic Political Dialogue in South Serbia (2008)**

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**From left to right: Dan Petre, PER Regional Center Executive Director; Lilla Balazs, PER Regional Center Program Officer; Adrienne Laundry, PER Program Officer; Leon Malazogu, PER Representative in Kosovo; Ioana Oprisan, PER Regional Center Program Officer; Angelique Olmo, PER Administrative and Development Officer; Attila Pok, PER's Council for Ethnic Accord Member; Livia Plaks, PER President; Shpetim Gashi, PER Program Officer; Adrian Severin, PER's Council for Ethnic Accord Member; Alex Grigor'ev, PER Executive Director; and Ana Stojiljkovic, PER Representative in Serbia.**

**PROJECT ON  
ETHNIC  
RELATIONS**



**T**he **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.

PER is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Council of Europe, NCH Capital Inc., the Government of Great Britain, the Government of Greece, the Government of Romania, the Government of Switzerland, the People Technology Foundation Inc., the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Alfred Moses Family Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development.

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May 2008

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