



Children Together

Elementary education in Croatia can be qualified as excellent. I have visited some schools and kindergartens, as well as many facilities - classrooms, dining rooms, dormitories, recreational parks - and found them to be of a high level. Equally as good is the teaching, enabling young people to go to university well prepared for higher education. Croatia has nothing to be envious of in this field compared to more economically developed countries, where schools are frequently not at the level that could be expected judging by the functioning of other parameters.

Such quality extends on the education of 22 national minorities, each one of them being entitled under the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities to study in their own language and script and pursuant to their own curriculum. There are no objection to this right being exercised, on the contrary, to visit schools and preschool institutions of Daruvar, Osijek or Vukovar is a true pleasure.

The variety of languages studied - German, Italian, Czech, Slovak etc. will bring nothing but benefits to new generations of students, provided that such diversity does not create divisions in society.

The Serb minority constitutes a very particular case. Through their legitimate exercise of constitutional provision it has established, in the same way as other minorities, educational centres starting from preschool institutions to university level. This is perfectly correct, and to impede such a practice would negatively discriminate against the country's most numerous minority.

What is harmful in this case is that if the separate programmes of the remaining minorities lead toward

a united and compact society, the separation of Serb studies runs the risk of separating this minority from society. In fact, the Serb children who attend preschool institutions separated from Croat children, continue their schooling in separate primary schools, as well as in different secondary schools. They group themselves separately at university, they frequent separate bars and establishments, marry inside their cultural group and establish separate families; that is to say, they constitute a parallel social group, a sort of apartheid.

This particularly applies to the region of Eastern Slavonia where the OSCE has implemented a project titled "Children Together" which seeks to minimize the levels of separation while respecting the right of the Serb minority to a culturally specific education.

"Children Together" has brought together young students from thirty primary schools in the area of Vukovar and Osijek. During a three month period the children of different cultures - chiefly Serb and Croat - studied together, worked together, played together and the result was the production of magnificent drawings, concerts, dances, theatrical plays, essays etc. which were presented before a large group of ambassadors and a Government representative.

The project is currently ongoing and will continue in the years to come. This summer, children from different cultures have participated in a camp, which will be visited by the President of the Republic who endorsed this initiative. It will be necessary to continue with this project so that current and future generations become accustomed to the fact that the 22 minorities existing in Croatia must unite and not separate, and so contribute to the collective prosperity of the country and not to its deterioration.



"...twenty two minorities existing in Croatia must unite and not separate and so contribute to the collective prosperity of the country..."

Ambassador Jorge Fuentes,
Head of Mission

Calendar

4 June - Presentation of the Programme for Refugee Return and Programme for Housing Care in ASSC, Vukovar, host Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration

6 June - Plenary Meeting in the Ministry of Justice on War Crimes Prosecution, participants EC Delegation, ICTY Liaison Office and OSCE Mission on the side of international community and the Ministry of Justice, Chief State Prosecutor's Office and Supreme Court on the Croatian side

8-10 June - Diplomatic Outing, Brijuni, hosted by President Mesić

11 June - Judges' Meeting on Inter-State Cooperation in War Crimes Proceedings (B&H, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia), held at Supreme Court

12 June - Presentation of the Programme for Refugee Return and Programme for Housing Care in ASSC, Sisak, host Minister of Justice

11-12 June - Visit of incoming CiO, Ambassador Antti Turunen, Head of Delegation of Finland to the OSCE

15 June - Presentation of the Programme for Refugee Return and Programme for Housing Care in ASSC, Gospić, host State Secretary Antun Palarić, Head of Central State Office for Administration

16 June - HOM spoke at the Regional Conference: Countries in Transition: "Between remembrance of social state and growing social exclusion", organised by the Civic Committee for Human Rights

19 June - Plenary meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. Working lunch with Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović

20 June - Closing ceremony of FO Split

21 June - Presentation of the Programme for Refugee Return and Programme for Housing Care in ASSC, Knin, host State Secretary Antun Palarić, Head of Central State Office for Administration

26 June - Hidajet Biščević, State Secretary for Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, guest at the Morning Briefing

29-30 June - Regional Conference "The media and election coverage", organized by Radio 101 and ICEJ, Opatija

Activities

Closing Split, Part of the Legacy of the Mission's Field Presence

On 30 June the Split Field Office was officially closed. Its closure, marked officially in a ceremony headed by HOM Ambassador Fuentes and the last Head of Field Office Jeroen Jansen, and attended by leading city, Zupania and local officials, was another marker along the road to a completion of the mandate and closure of the Mission to Croatia. But Split's closure should not be seen in isolation, and the process of mandate completion should not be measured only in terms of "closures" but also in the history of "openings" and "transfers," of up-gradings and reducing of the Mission's Field Presence over the years since the Mission began in 1996. For it is in the expansion, redistribution, and closing of our Field presence that the course of Croatia's progress toward mandate completion might well be measured in very tactile and plastic terms.

Did you know, that at one point or another, the Mission had over thirty (30) different types of centers, offices, sub-offices and "presences" in the Field? Some, like Vukovar, Sisak and Knin, have "always" been there (although their status has changed over the years). Others like a number of one or two person police advisory posts in the Danube region, when the Mission took over the Police Monitoring function from UNTAES in the late 90's, appeared for only a brief period, located in trailers next to police stations or in the police stations themselves, served their purpose, and closed. Then there was Daruvar, which evolved downward from Regional Center to Field Office and then moved to Pakrac, where it, together with former Field Office Novi Gradiska, were merged to change Sub-office Pakrac into a full fledged Field Office, which in turn became a satellite office under Sisak.

In short, Field Offices have not always been "just so." Their shape, size, areas and levels of responsibility, have

constantly changed as the situation in Croatia changed with respect to the Mandate, and as the Mission itself evolved to respond to different conditions involving the status of return, minority interests, media, civil societal and legal conditions as well as other developments in Croatia.

Today six offices in the field continue to represent the OSCE in the Field in Croatia. Vukovar, once a Regional Office then a Coordinating Center, then a Field Center covers an area once covered by Field Offices Osijek, Vukovar, Vinkovci and Ilok. Sisak, the Regional Center/Coordinating Center with the greatest number of Zupania in its AoR, stretching from Karlovac (and its predecessors Ogulin and Sunj) in the West to Novski Gradiski to the East. Knin, once the hub of all Mission activities throughout Dalmatia, including (did you know it?) a sub-office in Dubrovnik, which operated out of a pair of rented hotel rooms! Today Knin serves as the arm and eyes and ears of HQ covering an area once covered by at least five Field Offices and several sub offices.

In assessing these changes, it is important to realize that this reflects the positive changes the eleven years of the Mission have brought. In 1999 we needed nearly 30 field locations densely spread throughout the Areas of Special State Concern to perform our mandate related work. Today the progress which Croatia has made has resulted in a new role for the Mission, as partner and guide to Croatia's institutions, providing a light touch, accompanying the process into its final phases, focusing on specific issues, rather than the broad pallet of problems the Mission faced in 1996 when it opened. A mission remains, but as Croatia takes on more of that mission, what remains for us grows ever smaller.

Todd Becker, Deputy Head of Mission



Farewell to our dear colleagues

Mario Pavlović, UNHCR Associated Protection Officer, Leos Javurek, Head of the OSCE R&I, HoM, Christian Loda, former Head of OSCE R&I Unit, Stanko Janić and Milivoj Mikulić, Deputy Ministers of Development, Marina Rožić, Head of OSCE Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Anna - Maria Radić from the Ministry of Development, Mrs Fuentes, Mira Loda, Massimiliano Iacchini from the Italian Embassy and Alphons Peeters from the EC Delegation at Christian Loda's farewell lunch.

Information, Communication and Technology Unit

The OSCE Mission to Croatia is a complex organisation with many „outposts“ across the country. In order for it to function properly and for its employees to gather and process the information necessary for their work, it is imperative to have a solid, functional, and above all reliable communication system in place. The ICT Unit does that for us all!

The Unit is led by Davor Grgičević, an IT specialist that heads a three-man team of IT and communication professionals responsible for the hardware and software we all use in our daily activities. Stanislav Fuštar has been with the Mission, first in Field Office Split and then in the Headquarters in Zagreb for seven years. Danijel Stojisavljević started in Sisak and has been with us for five years.



Stanislav Fuštar, IT Assistant, Davor Grgičević, National IT Officer, Danijel Stojisavljević, IT Assistant

The System

The OSCE Mission to Croatia ICT Team prides itself on using as much Open Source technologies possible thus retaining the maximum control over the systems they use as well as reducing the overall costs of their activities. The Team has setup for us a Linux Operative System which ensures we have one of the best communications systems setup through all OSCE Missions. The Team also co-operates very closely with the central IT Department in Vienna, not only as daily routine requests, as maintaining Internet and World Wide Web links and e-mail connectivity, but also in the development and updating of currently used technologies and best practice procedures as well as always being on the lookout for new ones.



A centralised system that enables the team to monitor all software, and some hardware, activities throughout the Mission

Hardware

The Team currently maintains sixteen servers in Croatia and over one hundred and twenty work stations spread over six locations. Another responsibility of the Mission „techies“ is the proper functioning of our phone

lines and apparatuses. The team has setup a centralised system that enables them to monitor all software, and some hardware, activities in all the Mission's work stations and peripheral support, such as printers. So, basically, they can monitor and intervene in case of malfunction or a regular updating procedure from a central focal point without the users even noticing it. For example, sitting at their work place in Zagreb, they can see the status of a printer in Gospić and monitor its usage and what is more important, fix any software problem that might occur directly thus saving precious time and resources.

Software

Apart from the standard OSCE applications, all or most of the Missions have, our IT Team maintains a separate group of applications we use in our Mission. In Croatia, we have the benefit of using a Picture Gallery, a repository of the imagery we have gathered over the years. The Mission uses a Novell GroupWise e-mail application and a File Storage application we all refer to as the Global Folder. All software is updated regularly, firewall protection is always in place and regularly maintained, the system is checked and double checked and all data and system functionality backup procedures are firmly in place in order to ensure no data is ever lost and all work can be done without losing precious work time due to possible malfunctions.

Dorijan Klasnić,
Public Information Assistant

Photo story



16 June 2007 - Tennis tournament on the occasion of the Day of Croatian Diplomacy hosted by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović. The OSCE was represented by Alan Švarc, Suzana Munić, Ivica Maltar and Ivanka Golić. The Mission's champs Alan and Ivica won the doubles tournament and in the singles they reached the second and the fourth position respectively.



Photo Gallery



HoM with Fausto Pocar, Chairman of the ICTY, and with the Head of the Croatian Supreme Court, Judge Branko Hrvatin, during a recess of a Judges' Meeting in Zagreb, 11 June 2007



Coffee break during the SEECP Parliament Presidents and Speakers' meeting 15 April 2007 in Zagreb. HoM with Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, State Secretary Hidajet Biščević, EC Ambassador Vincent Degert and Miguel Angel Martinez, Vice-President of the European Parliament, a distinguished socialist that made a point of never wearing a tie during his political career. Photo courtesy of Novi List daily.



OSCE organized in Zagreb an important meeting in the context of the Palić Process bringing together Judges and Prosecutors of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as highest ranking ICTY guests, 11 June 2007



Since FO Split was about to close, HoM paid a farewell visit on 20 June 2007 to Mr. Milorad Čirić, the poor widower that lost his wife and daughter in a traffic accident in which a OSCE staff member was involved. The pictures of his late relatives stand sadly on a wall at his home.



HoM delivers his speech during one of the 'Plenaries in the Field'. The picture corresponds to the Sisak Plenary, chaired by Minister Lovrin, on 13 June 2007



The newly appointed Secretary General of the Regional Co-operation Council, State Secretary Hidajet Biščević and HoM in the Missions HQ in Zagreb, 26 June 2007