

Ethnic diversity: provoking conflicts? A forward-looking analysis of the Kosovo conflict.

From June 9th to June 12th 2005, 25 students from all over Europe gathered in Passau to discuss ethnic conflicts in general and the Kosovo conflict in detail. The conference was organised by AEGEE-Passau in co-operation with TAP and IPWG.

The topic is of great actuality due to the negotiations concerning the future status of Kosovo in 2005. Taking the Kosovo conflict as example, we pointed out the roots of ethnic conflicts, their development, their consequences and ways conflict regions might be built up again to sustain permanent peace.

Not only did we want to inform, but become active and discuss possible solutions for current problems in the area.

The participants learned about ethnic conflicts in general and examined the Kosovo conflict thoroughly. Experienced lecturers taught the participants about international conflicts and changes and conflicts in the enlarged house of Europe. After this general introduction, we continued with specific lectures about the Kosovo conflict. The participants learned how the conflict arose, about Kosovo between past and future and the future status of Kosovo. Another lecture dealt with the role and problems of the juridical body of the United Nations, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Den Haag.

In the long workshops, the participants had the opportunity to make use of their theoretical knowledge. The three workshops dealt with the political process, the humanitarian and the economic situation.

The workshop on the political process aimed at offering a framework for analysing conflicts. The participants then used these tools to understand the positions, interests and needs of the parties in the Kosovo conflict and to explore possible solutions for the Kosovo conflict.

The second workshop dealt with the humanitarian situation in Kosovo. Firstly, the participants explored the current situation and focused on actual problems young people are facing nowadays. Having identified a 'lack of perspective' as a major problem and education, information and spare time activities as a need of young people, the group developed a feasible project proposal: creating a theatre group to give young people the opportunity to express themselves and to forget daily life for a while.

The workshop about the economic situation first explored the elements that affect an economy. In a brainstorm session, the participants determined about 20 factors which were then cross-examined with each other. The five factors which influenced the most factors in the highest degree, as transparency, corruption, legal framework and education were called

'drivers' while the 'drivens' are the five factors which were influenced the most, such as image, trade and tax base.

Additionally, a short workshop was offered which concentrated on the roots, sense and problems of *Education for Democracy* and aimed at fostering this AEGEE programme.

To give a vivid view of what life in Kosovo is like, we invited two former *Education for Democracy* scholarship holders, a Serb and a Kosovo-Albanian who talked about their experiences, about growing up in an ethnic conflict.

The third lecture on personal experiences was given by a Detective Chief Superintendent who worked for the UN mission UNMIK in Kosovo for several years. He talked about the problems of the mission and about his impressions (kann man das sagen?) of the conflict.

The thematic work was accompanied by a varied social programme which included Balkan specialities, music, films and of course a European Night party.

The conference was a great success due to the highly motivated and interested participants and speakers.

By Sandra Geldmacher

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