

Balkans' Initiative for Cultural Cooperation, Exchange and Development (BICCED)



Country / region or city:
**Albania, Bosnia-
Herzegovina, Kosovo,
Macedonia and Serbia**

Name of Cooperation Project:
**Balkans' Initiative for
Cultural Cooperation,
Exchange and Development
(BICCED)**

Partner organizations:
**Balkan Investigative
Regional Reporting Network
(Sarajevo),
SEECult (Belgrade),
Balkan Investigative
Reporting Network
Macedonia (Skopje),
Balkan Investigative
Reporting Network Serbia
(Belgrade),
Balkan Investigative
Reporting Network Kosovo
(Prishtina)**

Duration of project:
**January 2010 – December
2012**

The project aims at building a platform for development of culture-related cooperation in the targeted countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, and Macedonia), focusing on common cultural policy issues contributing to the change and development of individual country policies. Activities are grouped around participating journalists, media and culture organisations, as well as government representatives, through research, training, publishing, public debates, capacity building, and the creation of annual award for a project that contributes to cultural cooperation in the region.

After the years of conflicts in former Yugoslavia and a painful transition from communism and dictatorship into the multiparty systems, cultural sphere has been marginalised. Since then, political party leaders on state level have been allocating modest amounts of money in most cases either to state institutions perceived as symbols in the building of new national identities or to personal 'favourites'. Political affiliation is often the criteria for choosing directors of national institutions even without cultural background. Simultaneously, new lively scene was born across the Balkans, with many independent initiatives, mostly funded by international donors, and later, since those funds had become scarce, surviving on very small amounts of money and pure enthusiasm.

The goal of the project is to connect local cultural institutions, both locally and regionally, train journalist to write analytical reports, highlighting activities and main issues, and also to edit, publish, and disseminate information on local level through local media outlets, and on regional level, via web site. It will involve government officials and policy decision makers, and work to improve the situation in the region by strengthening cultural life and cross-cultural cooperation as an important element of a participatory, open, and dynamic civil society.

www.birn.eu.com
www.seecult.org

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(Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC)

The specific objectives of the project are:

- Improved journalists' skills in analytical reporting on issues in the sphere of cultural policy and cooperation. This objective is concentrated on a group of 30 journalists who will, in the course of three years (10 journalists each year), be trained to produce high quality analytical journalism on crucial cultural policy issues.
- Enhanced cross-regional cooperation and exchange of information between journalists, media, culture professionals, and organisations. This will be achieved through study visits that will be an obligatory part of the training for the journalists, as well as regional workshops that will bring the journalists together for an open debate, involving decision makers and representatives of the government.
- Raised awareness of the importance of cultural policies development in the region through the establishment of a dedicated website section developed within the www.balkaninsight.com, expanding the reach and impact of local journalists' reporting, and through free republishing in both culture-oriented and mainstream press, electronic, and internet outlets.

Balkans' Initiative for Cultural Cooperation, Exchange and Development (BICCED) will be implemented through four main areas of activities:

- **Training in analytical reporting for thirty journalists from the 5 target countries;** three groups of 10 journalists will undergo individual on the job trainings during each year of the project implementation, as well as trainings during one workshop event per year where all the journalists will come together.
- **Study Visits organised for the journalists;** participating in cultural events taking place in the country they are visiting, as well as meeting cultural organisations/institutions dealing with the cultural policy in the given country.
- **Publishing;** During the project implementation, the trained journalists will write analytical reports of high quality on national and regional issues related to culture and, more specifically, cultural policies. The journalists will provide output on a weekly basis and it will include analytical reports, features, critics, comments and other forms of written expression. Through three series of training, 10 month length each, including both primary and advanced level of training, the BIRN will train 30 journalists to specialise in analytical reporting on culture, which will contribute to the sustainability of the project in the future.
- **Public Events;** the public events are placed at the beginning and the end of the project.

The opening event will aim to open a discussion around common issues related to cultural policies, with the participation of project partners, culture professionals from target countries and abroad, government representatives from the region, and culture organisations and media. Discussions on cultural policies in each country of the region will take place, debating problems which artists and cultural workers face, the similarities and differences in the countries, and best practices regionally and in Europe. This event will aim to attract guest speakers from all relevant stakeholders in the region, as well as international speakers.

The closing event will be organized towards the end of the project as an occasion to decide on the Award for contribution to cultural cooperation in the region. *The Award for Contribution to Cultural Cooperation in the Region* will be initiated in the last year of the project, offering a monetary award as a contribution to support a regional cultural initiative.

The Swiss Cultural Programme in the Western Balkans (SCP) is run by Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council, upon mandate of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The SCP encompasses Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo. It supports local partners, which emphasize the variety, independence and performance of cultural life. The SCP regional cooperation projects focus on the capacity building and institutional development processes of cultural organizations with a regional orientation. ■