



World Council of Churches
Regional Relations Team
Europe Desk

**WCC South-East Europe
Ecumenical Partnership
Research Project:**

*Towards strengthened
ecumenical co-operation
in South-East Europe*

FINAL REPORT

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Preface	3
1. Introduction	5
2. Albania	7
2.1. The National Context: Challenges	7
2.2. Responding to the Challenges	8
2.2.1. The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania (KOASH)	8
2.2.2. The Baptist Churches	11
2.2.3. Useful to Albanian Women (UAW)	12
2.2.4. Albania Centre for Human Rights (ACHR)	12
2.3. Summary	13
3. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)	13
4. Croatia	14
4.1. The National Context: Challenges	14
4.2. The Response	15
4.2.1. Return and Integration Programmes	15
4.2.2. Strengthening Democratisation and Civil Society	16
4.2.3. Strengthening Media Awareness and Involvement	17
4.2.4. Caring for the Needy	17
4.3. Perspectives for Future Involvement	17
4.3.1. Areas of Involvement	17
4.3.2. Potential Partners	18
4.3.3. Consequences	18
5. Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY): Montenegro	19
5.1. The National Context: Challenges	19
5.2. The Response	20
5.2.1. The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC)	20
5.2.2. The Islamic Community of Montenegro	21
5.2.3. “Sigurna Zenska Kuca” (SZK) Podgorica	21
5.3. The Response of Ecumenical Agencies and International NGOs	22
5.3.1. International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)	22
5.3.2. Church World Service (CWS)	22
5.3.3. World Vision International (WVI)	22
5.4. Perspectives for Ecumenical Co-operation	23
6. Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY): Serbia	23
6.1. The Context: Challenges	23
6.2. The Response	25
6.2.1. The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC)	25
6.2.2. The Protestant Churches	25
6.2.3. The Ecumenical Agencies	26
6.3. The Future of Ecumenical Co-operation	26
7. Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY): Kosovo	27
7.1. The National Context: Challenges	27
7.2. The Response	28
7.2.1. The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC)	28
7.2.2. The Protestant Church of Pristina	29
7.2.3. The Islamic Community in Kosovo	26
7.2.4. UNMIK	29
7.2.5. European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO)	30
7.2.6. International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs)	30
7.3. Perspectives	31
8. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)	32
8.1. The National Context: Challenges	32
8.2. The Responses	33
8.2.1. Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC)	33

8.2.2.3.	The Baptist Church	35
8.2.2.4.	Summary	35
8.2.3.	Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	36
8.2.3.1.	Union of Women's Organisations	36
8.2.3.2.	Union of Albanian Women in Macedonia (SAZM)	36
8.2.3.3.	Assoc. for Emancipation, Solidarity & Equality of Women	36
8.2.3.4.	Summary	37
8.2.4.	"Mesecina" – Roma Humanitarian and Charitable Association	37
8.3.	Perspectives	38
9.	Regional Perspectives and Summary of Findings	38
9.1	The Situation: Challenges	38
9.2	The NGO Response	39
9.3.	The Stability Pact Challenge	39
9.4.	Available Response Mechanisms	41
9.5.	Constraints of Co-ordination	41
9.6.	The Need for a Common Understanding of Development	42
9.7.	The difficulty of Integrating Peace Work	42
9.8.	Towards a Regional Co-ordination Structure	43
9.9.	Hubs for Co-operation and Action	44
9.10.	Financial Implications	45
Appendix I:	Churches and organizations encountered	47
Appendix II:	Project Terms of Reference	58

PREFACE

It was a great privilege to be asked to assist the WCC Europe Desk and CEC in their endeavours to strengthen co-ordination and co-operation, and a closer linkage between relief, reconciliation and development among ecumenical partners in South-East Europe.

Until now, my short-term research project has been a journey of joy and lasting impressions, but also one of obstacles.

It has been a joy to work with WCC Europe Secretary Alexander Belopopsky who not only stated purposes, objectives and methods very clearly, but was also always available with patience and competence to keep the project on track.

Many people have been helpful in initiating me into their work and aspirations, and especially a very complex region, from the Conference of European Churches (CEC) – Keith Clements and Rüdiger Noll, from ACT – Miriam Lutz and Thor-Arne Prois, from LWF - Rudolf Hinz, and many others.

Meetings with churches, ecumenical partners and relevant organisations were realised during two journeys. The first, from 7-24 March 2000, included the ACT Regional meeting in Budapest and visits to Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo. Plans for a first visit of orientation to Belgrade already in February, including an audience with His Holiness Patriarch Pavle, failed because of visa problems.

Diakonia Agapes (DA), the Macedonian Centre for International Co-operation (MCIC), and ACT – Kosovo have been tremendously helpful in providing the necessary logistics, their connections with churches and organisations. They shared their collective insights and visions on the state and future of their countries and the role of churches and agencies with me. All of them have been very friendly and patient in response to my incessant questions. Horst Croessmann of Diakonie, Djakova, and the ACT-NCA team in Pristina offered accommodation in their apartments, the latter reviving talents of kindling fire in a stove.

The second journey followed from 6-19 April 2000, visiting churches and partners in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. In Zagreb, Boris Peterlin had offered to help with his contacts, and in fact lined up a number of important meetings. Bishop Luksa of the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church offered me a ride to Osijek to meet with Lutheran and Reformed church members there and en route.

Most of the rest of the journey was done by bus, and though comfortable and on time, travelling by public transport took a lot of time and limited my visit to the capital cities. It was the gracious help of Mark Ohanian of IOCC, Banja Luka, Vitali Vorona of CWS Sarajevo, and Matthew Parry of IOCC Podgorica which made my stay in these cities very rich and worthwhile. Due to the short and indirect notice, I must have appeared to them as though fallen from heaven. But they took it with admirable calm and put their contacts, staff and logistics at my disposal to make the remaining time useful.

At Podgorica, Carolyn Boyd, WCC EWSF Consultant, joined me with her husband Miroslav, and it was a good experience to exchange views and impressions and to receive excellent interpretation.

I am very grateful to all the people who, in spite of heavy workloads and very short notice, helped to make these two journeys a rich source of impressions and data. My sincere thanks go of course also to all those who so kindly received me and shared their views, compassion and dreams with me (a list of contacts is attached to this report).

Very soon it became painfully clear that working without administrative assistance has its price: considerable time was lost on the material preparations for the journeys. This also had the consequence that announcements of my arrival were received at short notice, sometimes limiting the choice of people and organisations to be visited. Preparatory information, data and literature, had to

Some “outsourcing” became necessary. I am grateful to Philippe Boudart, Paris, for surfing painstakingly the internet and diligently choosing and extracting data for me on the region and on the international organisations involved. Administrative assistance came from the WCC Europe Desk. Many questions could be solved by Isabel Csupor, my experienced administrative assistant from Unit IV days, having always an open ear. Rosemary Green rendered precious services by putting the manuscript on the computer and editing it. I am profoundly thankful to both my former colleagues.

The research project has brought me together with many people of vision and hard work. In every country people have stood up for democracy, peace, human rights and “life in fullness”. I admire their courage and commitment. Support has come during times of war, suffering and displacement from the international community, not least from the ACT related agencies. They have rendered a great humanitarian service. Others have engaged in assisting churches and NGOs in transformation and long-term development, proving to be understanding and reliable partners.

With my sincere thanks to all who have helped this report come to fruition, I express my hope and wish that the process for closer co-operation in South-East Europe, linking relief, development and reconciliation, may be put on a mutually acceptable and successful course.

***Klaus Poser
Geneva, May 2000***

1. INTRODUCTION

Work on the WCC South-East Europe Partnership Research Project started in mid-February 2000 with the outlining of its terms of reference which were later accepted by the Reference Group in charge of guiding the process for closer co-operation in South-East Europe. The research project was mandated by the WCC South-East Europe Partnership Consultation in November 1999, and was guided by a reference group nominated by that consultation.

First of all, the **area of concern** was defined. It included Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This area is referred to in this report as the Region.

Serbia was included in the data collection and preparation work from the beginning, but in spite of repeated applications, it could not be visited because visas were not granted. As Serbia is the key country for the future political and economic developments of the Balkans, it is deeply regretted that it has not been possible for the consultant to gather a firsthand personal view of the country and its churches. A short overview is offered in this report which gleans its information essentially from documents and literature. A personal visit to complete the picture is still recommended.

Bulgaria has been included in the Region because of a very active Bulgarian National Christian Committee (BNCC), and due to its importance as a venue for church-, NGO- and other regional meetings. However, it was impossible for lack of time to visit the country or even to deal with it extensively during the preparatory phase. Bulgaria is not included in this report, but remains part of any future regional co-operation.

The inclusion of Croatia was justified by its new role for peace in the Region. The new President and the new Government have expressed their determination to grant right of home to refugees and to support return and to disclaim any national ambitions with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The stand and advocacy of the churches for peace and their co-operation in the return programmes is crucial.

For Bosnia and Herzegovina, only a short review is presented in this report. The full text will be added later.

Second, the **specific objectives** of the research project were outlined:

The project was to analyse the current socio-political and ecumenical context, the impact of the present crisis on the societies in the Region, and possible future political developments.

The volume of information, documentation and studies on the Region is overwhelming. The Kosovo crisis has raised public awareness; daily news coverage on the Region has made knowledge about it almost commonplace. Under these circumstances it is not surprising to find intimate and detailed acquaintance and expertise not only among local people but also among many agency representatives.

In order not to duplicate efforts during the short time available, it was decided to concentrate on essential and “accidental” information, i.e. interesting observations gathered during interviews. For the future of the process, it is suggested that a mechanism be agreed upon by which to pool existing and manifest knowledge and information in such a way that it can also be shared and made instantly available to other interested parties.

The data and analysis proposed in this report are neither complete nor the single truth. They are offered with the understanding that they will be enriched and completed in the course of the process towards better co-operation. This is also true for the predictions on future developments. Rather like a

The project was also supposed *to research and collate information on church and ecumenical partners in the region and to review the existing church and ecumenical development initiatives.*

I have tried in each country to meet with churches, not necessarily their leaders, but those people who are in charge or cognisant of their diaconal outreach and other missions. They were not restricted to WCC/CEC members but included Roman Catholic and Muslim representatives and organisations. As the Orthodox Church is the largest by far, care was taken to meet with its members. This was not always possible because of absence or other duties.

Concerning ecumenical partners, contacts were sometimes difficult to establish because some field officers are based outside the capital cities. With regard to funding agencies, telephone contacts and some meetings were held. However, the original idea of visiting their home offices could not be pursued for lack of time. This deficit can be met within the process: As most of them will be present at the extended Reference Group meeting in June in Geneva, there is a chance to share data and views on present and future involvements in individual countries and on the regional level.

Visits have also been paid to other humanitarian agencies like Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and ADRA, and to international organisations like UNDP. In some instances it was possible to see government officials. All these meetings helped to get a better understanding of the context in which churches and ecumenical partners are operating, and to learn about the interpretations, concepts and expectations of other bodies.

Because of limitations of time and logistics, the choice of contacts could not be as systematic and complete as desired. But those realised provide a cross-section of important partners and change agents which are of key importance for better regional co-operation.

Reviewing the existing church and ecumenical (non-emergency) development initiatives in the Region was partly done during the meetings with churches and partners. Reviewing was not understood to mean evaluation or checking on viability and procedures of individual projects but rather to find out about the partners' views on their past and future involvement in long-term development and their vision, concepts and needs.

Consortium meetings have recently been held with MCIC in Macedonia and DA in Albania. It would be desirable that their results with regard to national and regional co-operation in long-term development be shared with the participants in the process. Any question pertaining to specific initiatives could be answered by their representatives.

It was not possible *to prepare an inventory of international and government priorities and funding opportunities for the Region.* This would have meant contacting or even visiting headquarters of international structures like the EU in Brussels. It would also have been difficult to check on national governments and other back donors of funding and operational agencies. As the ACT Kosovo experience has demonstrated, agencies have a keen interest in and a complex knowledge of their national and international funding sources. Therefore it is hoped that an inventory would eventually be the fruit of the ongoing process towards better co-operation in the Region.

Finally, *preliminary findings should be proposed and possible strategy directions and programmatic priorities be outlined for WCC/CEC and related ecumenical partners in the area of ecumenical collaboration and of development co-operation, including eventual new ecumenical instruments and mechanisms.*

The Consultation on Ecumenical Development Co-operation in South-East Europe in November 1999 in Geneva had done considerable and visionary spadework towards a better co-operation linking the relief, development and reconciliation work. The research project has confirmed some of these views. Further suggestions are offered on the basis of the analysis and the reactions from churches and partners.

Every country of the Region will first be presented with an analysis of its current socio-political context and the challenges emanating from it for churches, civil society and partners. Second, an overview will be presented of the churches, NGOs and partners visited and their responses to the challenges. A third chapter summarises the findings and develops perspectives for further ecumenical co-operation, including a regional dimension.

In a final chapter, the findings of the country analysis are summarised from a regional point of view and suggestions made how to organise co-operation on a regional level. The question of linking relief, development and reconciliation work is taken up, and recommendations offered as to how to relate and structure them for a comprehensive approach to the renewal of the Region.

At all stages of the process, careful co-ordination with ACT-Action by Churches Together International was sought, with view to promoting a complementary approach to the region and a coherent transition from relief to development. All recommendations in this report are understood as feeding into the process towards better long-term co-operation among all churches and ecumenical partners present in the region.

2. ALBANIA

2.1. The National Context: Challenges

In 1991, Albania emerged from 50 years of communist rule, ending this period of total international isolation. When the communist régime collapsed, the economy of the **country collapsed** as well, with infrastructure in a poor state, communication and power systems virtually broken down and agricultural and industrial production almost at a standstill. The crisis was compounded by the massive destruction inflicted on public assets by the mass uprisings of 1991-92. Only extensive international humanitarian aid and economic assistance prevented a major human catastrophe.

The situation improved with the accession to power of the freely elected Democratic Party. In consecutive years, the country changed to a market economy and started a democratisation process. The economy scored an annual growth rate of 8%, albeit from a very low level. Albania reached an Agreement on Trade and Commercial and Economic Co-operation with the EU.

This process was abruptly stalled by the collapse of the **pyramid schemes** in 1997. Not only did thousands of investors lose their precious savings, but in a flood of rage and violence public facilities and institutions were again senselessly destroyed. More serious, however, was the way in which the people were affected. As all of them were cheated, they had also to realise that they were victims of their own greed in face of unrealistic promises and expectations which in their hearts they knew could not be met. They were and are deeply demoralised.

Again the country was only able to survive through massive humanitarian aid and economic assistance which compensated for the drastic reduction of GNP by 7%. Not only was the economy affected but also the political and public life of the country fell into a situation which could only be described as anarchy. Mass seizures of military weapons endangered security and induced the UN to mandate an international military intervention. The intervention force led by Italy succeeded in re-establishing security, stopping the outflow of refugees, and averting total collapse of the Albanian State.

A year later, in 1998, the **Kosovo crisis** began with the influx of some 20,000 refugees which reached almost half-a-million during the NATO bombardments, putting an enormous strain on the country's scarce resources and already fragile infrastructure. In spite of generous humanitarian aid, the country has suffered heavily, especially from being prevented from continuing its normal economic and social development. This record and the fact that the democratisation and transformation process of Albania

In 1998, the Albanian Parliament passed a **new constitution** which expresses the commitment of the country to democracy, human rights and law and order. This step was honoured by the international community. Albania was received as a WTO member in 1999 in recognition of its endeavours for transformation. The EU is considering to enter a Stability and Association Agreement. Altogether the country has received more than US\$ 1 billion in financial support since 1991.

It has made progress in legislation towards a free market economy. Laws have been passed on intellectual, industrial and commercial property, on consumer protection including rights and responsibilities of consumer associations. A patent office has already been founded in 1995. Since 1999, a Permanent Office for the Reform and Approximation of Legislation (to EU and international standards) has been established, to monitor and promote co-operation with EU and other international bodies.

But still, much more needs to be done. Legislation on NGOs is pending since 1998. Privatisation of industry and legislation on land titles and properties have to be promulgated. However, the government is reluctant to pursue these issues in face of strong resistance from the side of the opposition. NGOs are involved in monitoring and stimulating of the legislation process, and to further transformation.

Equally important is the state of **law awareness and enforcement**. The judiciary is weak and the concept of an independent judiciary difficult to understand after 50 years of communist rule. The lack of public order and security is notorious and impacts negatively on domestic as well as foreign investment. It has its roots in the weakness and instability of public administration and the main state institutions. Corruption is widespread. The new Government under PM Ilia Meta has declared strengthening of the state of law and public order, the fight against corruption, and further reform of the justice system its main priorities, but the reform process proceeds at a deplorably slow pace, due to the internal political rivalries which increase political instability.

The economic breakdown has led to a dramatic rise in **unemployment**. Due to massive multilateral and bilateral aid, GDP is on the rise again, but not enough to create sufficient jobs. This refers to industry as well as agriculture. Agriculture contributes 50% to GDP but is increasingly moving towards a subsistence production, partly due to the unresolved issue of land titles but also because of lack of investments. As a consequence, many people have turned to the service and grey sector or operate illegal businesses. Almost half-a-million Albanians are seeking employment in neighbouring countries and overseas. Their remittances constitute an important source of income on which many families rely for survival. But at the same time, this emigration of educated and highly motivated young people constitutes a loss to the country.

Emigration, but also the financial crisis, are having a devastating effect on social services. Much of the infrastructure was looted and destroyed during the mass uprisings of 1991 and 1997. Experienced staff have left for better remuneration elsewhere, or abstain from regular work. This has led to a deterioration of educational standards as well as of the health situation, especially in rural areas.

Albania has the potential for transformation and development. These processes which have started almost from scratch need the participation of the people in order to be dynamic and effective. Here NGOs play a crucial role in organising participation and innovation, and critically and creatively monitoring these processes.

2.2. Responding to the Challenges

2.2.1. The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania (KOASH)

“Ngjallja” - risen from inhuman suppression and almost non-existence the KOASH has undergone a

Many **parishes** have been reopened or newly founded all over the country. They are served by 110 newly consecrated priests organised in three dioceses. Most of them are graduates of the Theological Seminary of Durres which was established soon after the reopening of the Church, partly with ecumenical assistance. Like the seminary 72 new and 65 renovated churches and monasteries and more than 130 further buildings form its infrastructure serving religious, medical, educational and social purposes.

The basis of the Church for worship and witness lies in its parishes. Parishes are also involved in diaconal activities and have organised appropriate structures for the different purposes. In Tirana the **Church Women's Group** takes care of and promotes the diaconal activities of the Cathedral. Twenty-four women, one-third of them young, serve as volunteers under the able leadership of Reimonda Shqevi. They visit prisoners and orphans, take care of single old people, support poor people with donations in cash and kind and participate in parish life through catechising and assistance at baptism.

The Tirana Group assists up to 500 families irrespective of ethnicity or religious affiliation. Clients are either sent by parishioners or apply for help. The Group decides after thorough check and careful consideration. Its decision is honoured and welcomed by all parties.

During the Kosovo crisis, the Group demonstrated considerable flexibility and capacity - a virtue which could be observed among many church and religious groups all over the Balkans. They took care of 3000 registered refugees and supplied them and their host families with food, clothes, hygienic kits, etc. which were donated by ACT/DA.

Normally the Group receives its funds through a poor box placed in the Cathedral. (This is the only case I came across during my visit in which funds for the poor had been raised from within the Church). Annual income is around 400.000 Leke which is usually topped by contributions from the Archbishop for special purposes. The Group keeps its own books and accounts for the use of the monies to the Archbishopric (Metropolis).

Church Women's Groups exist already in other parishes like Korca. This Group has opened a soup kitchen feeding 100 people four times a week. Sister Galini who takes care of the Church Women Groups at the Metropolis pointed out that further chapters will be founded in Kavaja, Skodra and other places. The range of their activities is essentially determined by the means at their disposal. They would merit any support.

Support could come as well through exchanges and exposure to the experiences of women's groups also in other countries. Experiences have already been gathered and shared at a regional conference on prison chaplaincy in Sofia, Bulgaria. More encounters were desired to profit from examples of diaconal involvement of other groups including health education and income creation. Linking up with the Movement of the Least Coin may be another way for the women's groups to connect with the wider church and ecumenical networks.

Other parish initiatives include **Children's Nursery Schools**: these have already a firm place in the programme of Diaconia Agapes (DA). The same is true for the **Orthodox Youth Fellowship Groups**. Their activities are well-documented in DA's report. The record of the Tirana Group is impressive. With regard to the challenges of transition these groups are prime agents of learning democracy and solidarity and of rearing a leadership which will respect human rights and the rule of law from a deep Christian understanding.

Exchange of experiences and exposure to other groups from within Albania and from other countries may enable a deeper understanding of regional issues of youth development, societal change and peace promotion. Syndesmos should be considered as a facilitator in this process.

Besides decentralised, mostly parish-based initiatives, the Church has created institutions of central importance to its life such as the **Theological Seminary in Durres, Radio "Ngjallja", the**

In 1998 the **foundation "Fryma e Dashurise" (Spirit of Love)** was registered. It is supposed to include and administer all the institutions of the Church. According to its director, Mr Jorgo Papadhopulli, the foundation is still in a state of formation with regard to its structure, boards, administration etc.

The foundation will operate separately from the Metropolis. This would necessitate sorting out and clarifying the various functions with DA, which has been instrumental in initiating, advising and funding some of the institutions. Fund raising could be pursued by the foundation which has access to various sources including the Association of Albanians in the USA for the support of educational facilities. The foundation may also want to monitor, evaluate and orient its member institutions properly. In any case, the necessary clarification of these functions and responsibilities will also have consequences for the mandate and responsibilities of DA.

Diaconia Agapes (DA) was established in 1992 as a department of the Metropolis to take care of the diaconal outreach of the newly recreated Church. It was immediately challenged to distribute humanitarian aid donated from churches and agencies from abroad to the population which suffered heavily in the wake of the collapse of the communist regime and of law and order. DA participated also in the reconstruction of some of the health and educational facilities in Tirana.

Humanitarian aid remained a major task of DA. During the uprisings in 1997 it participated in the supply of food-parcels to "highest at risk families" throughout Albania and to Kosovo refugees in 1998, on both occasions with great success as partner of ACT and IOCC.

While DA succeeded in meeting these challenges largely with its own staff complement and administrative resources - though partly at the expense of the implementation of its other programmes - the Kosovo Crisis after the beginning of the NATO bombardments enforced a different response. The sheer magnitude in terms of finance and numbers of beneficiaries, quite apart from the demands of the operational colleague agencies, made organisational changes necessary: DA set up a special **Emergency Unit** with a separate operational capacity including staff, logistics, communication, etc., qualifying it as a full member of the ACT-network.

The build up of this effective response capacity was possible because of emergency funding through ACT. Presently DA is in a transition phase: Emergency funding has dried up. The chances of a continuation of activities in resettlement and reconstruction in Kosovo as proposed to ACT are virtually nil. School reconstruction as a sequel to the refugee emergency in Albania is continuing but may be taken care of under the usual DA programmes. Should DA wind up its Emergency Unit?

DA may go back to the *status quo ante*, wind up its Emergency Unit and respond with its own resources. This may work in emergencies of limited size. But even then it would have to be expected that the implementation of its own programmes would suffer. Thus, DA may decide to arrange for some disaster preparedness. This would entail keeping a minimum capacity of logistics and communication ready to act and some staff on call to man it. Furthermore, it would mean that DA would establish emergency plans for the contents, provision and distribution of emergency goods and equipment and prepare appropriate procedures with suppliers. Lines of command would have to be established as well as rules and regulations governing the labour assignments and co-operation with partner organisations, including the employment of expatriate staff.

As the ACT - Kosovo experience has demonstrated, disaster preparedness is not a task confined to DA. Though DA should apply its own lessons from the Kosovo Crisis, it may also be supported by ACT when ACT takes its challenge seriously to improve the instruments of disaster preparedness and emergency action and co-ordination.

Disaster preparedness will need some resources. Therefore DA will have to seek the co-operation of the supporting agencies. Failing ACT they may even assist with the necessary expertise and

In 1993 WCC/CEC organised the first Albania Round Table. It established an ecumenical support structure with DA as the key partner on behalf of the Church. DA presented Diaconia and Inner Church Programmes as an expression of the Church's vision, commitment and financial needs. They included an Agricultural and Development Programme, which was initiated by HEKS, and a Water Projects Program as a clear demonstration of its willingness and mission as a church to be involved in the betterment of people's welfare through community and economic development. In 1995 these programmes - which are essentially operating as credit schemes in the Shpati Mountain Region - were complemented by a Women's Rural Health and Development Programme.

Through these programmes DA has become operationally involved in development. Because of their strong community based and participatory working concept they started off successfully. The credit schemes, however, have suffered a setback in the wake of the 1997 public disturbances. Some debtors failed to meet their obligations and had to be brought before the court.

The DA loan funds need to be reviewed with regard to their organisational set up and methodology. A similar review should be considered for those Diaconia and Inner-Church Programmes for which DA is seeking funding through the Round Table mechanism. All of them are very important. However, in view of limited funding and limited mandates to cover running costs, the dynamics of the programmes may be questioned: Will the same nurseries, youth groups and health clinics always be supported? What efforts must be made towards sustainability of the various initiatives in the medium- and long-term to allow for their continuation without constant support?

The basic decisions must be taken by DA and the Church. However, the co-operating agencies can contribute a good deal to this process. The provision of a "seed money fund" may facilitate the enabling role of DA to support the growth of the women's, youth and other movements. Improving the flexibility as well as globalisation of the rigid 3-year budget approach would not only take into account DA's growing competence and maturity but also strengthen its ability to respond to changes and new challenges of the country and in the Region.

The lead agency concept has been proven an effective and widely accepted instrument of ecumenical dialogue and assistance. The challenges of organisational change facing the Church and DA may at least for some time demand an intensification of the dialogue.

2.2.2. The Baptist Churches

About 3,000 Baptist believers are organised in 120 parishes of which 19 are in Tirana. Since 1999 a **Union** has been formed by four congregations with a national committee. The Union is still in its formative phase. The Baptist Foundation of Tirana, registered in 1992 as the legal basis for the missionary and development outreach of the European Baptist Foundation, has been asked to help with statutes and by-laws and all the prerequisites which make the Union function. A Forum of Donors helps it to keep going.

The strong growth and involvement of the Baptist community in mission and development was abruptly discontinued by the evacuation of the missionaries during the violent uprisings in 1997. Deserting their local flock and mission produced a credibility problem from which the relationship with the old Albanian believers has not yet recovered. Not least for this reason has emphasis been put on youth work. Seminars are offered on sexism, religious tolerance and conflict resolution to contribute to the diffusion of the social conflict potential and to counter the re-emergence of discriminating and dividing attitudes and stereotypes.

Like other groups in the country and all over the Balkans also the Baptist churches have been active with humanitarian aid programmes for Kosovo refugees. They distributed food parcels donated by the Baptist Missionary Society of Britain to 2,000 host families and spent emergency funds received from HEKS on medical and other complementary needs of the refugees. They continue with their own

The Baptist Union is a member of AEP, the **Albanian Encouragement Project**, and the **Evangelical Alliance**. Both organisations have been active with humanitarian aid to Kosovo refugees. Since early 2000, a Development Office has been established to express their commitment to social and economic development; this is still in its formative phase. Considerable difficulties were expected to get people to strategise, plan and implement development programmes. Rural exodus was identified as a major problem and chances to counter it expected from the community development expertise of missionaries from Central America. A greenhouse and micro-credit programme of the Mennonite Central Committee would serve as a model.

The further evolution of the structures and development programmes of the Baptist Churches and the Evangelical Alliance should be observed.

2.2.3. Useful to Albanian Women (UAW)

UAW is one of the most active NGOs **in Albania**. It has a strong leadership and a committed membership of mostly young professional women. Its growth is due to the very intensive dialogical partnership developed by Brigitt Hüni of HEKS. It has inspired and encouraged UAW and opened it to many other international sources of inspiration and financial support.

Today UAW can operate from a solid infrastructure from where it offers legal advice for women, vocational training programmes and campaigns against violence against women. It has organised home care for the elderly and lonely and humanitarian assistance and education to marginalised children and women. UAW has gone beyond the confines of Tirana. With the help of ICCO it has started a centre in Elbasan which provides children with a hot meal and vocational training and offers women professional training. Similar activities with youth and women have been started in Durres, Burrel, Skoder and Pogradec. UAW operates through 16 branches all over the country. Only a few have developed serious social work as yet. It remains a great task to activate and animate also the other branches to organise women to respond to their specific needs in their respective areas and to carry the movement to more places.

UAW has also gone **beyond Albania**. With the support of HEKS and United Way, USA they have undertaken a survey in preparation of a Regional Conference on Peace and Understanding to be held in Tirana in May. They have been working with co-ordinators in Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo thus establishing a rudimentary regional network. Also the campaign "Stop Trafficking" has been conceived as a regional initiative with sponsorship from Austria.

Dialogue should be continued with UAW specially with regard to the peace issue and its regional dimension.

2.2.4. Albania Centre for Human Rights (ACHR)

The European Convention on Human Rights has been ratified by Albania and its principles been incorporated into the Constitution of 1998. Now the legislation and the judiciary have to be changed accordingly to arrive at a society which respects **human dignity and rights**.

To promote this change is the major aim of ACHR. It has lobbied the Law for State Police as well as the establishment of the Constitutional Court of Albania. Now UAW participates in the discussions about the High Court.

Education is another means to bring about change. Human rights education is offered in primary and secondary schools and more broadly in teacher training institutions. Very important is the human

prepares for the elections in October 2000 advocating human rights issues and preparing for monitoring.

ACHR has gone **beyond the borders** to set up a human rights group in Pristina supported by Trocaire. It is also involved in the work of the Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims and the Albanian Centre for Conflict Resolution. ACHR co-operates with the Macedonia Helsinki Committee which it has invited to participate in training in Albania. Within the context of the Stability Pact, its ACHR's executive director, Kozara Kati, serves as the local chairperson of the Table for Democracy and Human Rights. For the summer 2000 an intensive peace education programme is planned with foreign participants attending. Minority rights will be a special issue as well as the role of NGOs in peace preservation.

ACHR addresses a key problem area of the transition of **Albania towards democracy** and the rule of law. It is not the only NGO active in this field. Another one is the Albanian Human Rights Group supported by ED/ICCO. ACHR which is assisted by ED/ICCO's Roman Catholic opposite number CORDAID is presented here also as an example of an NGO which takes care of an important issue which is not covered by our church partners.

2.3 Summary

Albania may not be a key country in the Balkans. Its political instability may produce uprisings any time. They would lead to a disastrous implosion of the political system like in 1991 and 1997 rather than to upsetting Albania's neighbouring countries. However, any uprising is bound to aggravate the miserable situation under which most of the Albanians are suffering. Therefore contributions to the country's political stabilisation and process towards democracy, human rights and rule of law have to be accorded very high priority.

But the existing poverty and lack of basic services cannot wait. Partner groups need to be supported which take economic and social development at their heart and contribute to the improvement of the social services. Involving the communities in decision making and self-help is an essential prerequisite, assisting in mobilising people or groups for committed action another one.

It has also to be seen that only nine years after the breakdown of communism there is still a considerable need for institution building and qualification of the partner organisations with a strong emphasis on sustainability.

This three-pronged approach seems to answer the most urgent needs of Albania. Much of it can and will be realised in the traditional way. But with regard to the special organisational challenges and changes which KOASH and DA are facing an intensified lead agency approach may be considered.

3. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BiH)

(Note: The full text of this section will be added later. The following represents a short overview.)

BiH is probably in the most deplorable state of all the countries in the Region. Severe war damage is still visible everywhere.

The “Entities”, the Serb Republic and the Federation of BiH, are behaving like separate states, also with respect to their national government. The UN High Representative intervenes as the supreme

The separate régimes are still run by old socialist cadres, guarding their sovereignty jealously. Railways and power grids are not linked, economic relations are not encouraged, thus missing out on a great potential for synergies and economic development.

Antagonisms have kept social tensions alive. As a consequence, the return of refugees and IDPs has slowed down. While about 190,000 were returning in 1996, the number shrank to 45,000 in 1999 leaving still 1.2 million people stranded as refugees.

But there are also **signs of improvement**: on 10 May 2000 agreement was reached among the entities to use the same school books and curricula, after having been purged from socialist remains. The two entities have agreed to apply the same customs regulations and to adopt the Deutsche Mark as a common currency.

However, governments are moving slowly and reluctantly, distrustful of any change. But it has become obvious to them that progress must be made as the patience of the international community is running out. Humanitarian organisations are leaving the country and bilateral aid is suspended, such as the US AID assistance programme for privatisation.

Churches have been keenly aware of the threat to peace by inter-community tensions; religious leaders have come out with joint statements on peace and tolerance. Peace groups and centres have been founded, prominently the Franciscan Peace Centre in Sarajevo. Catholic Bishop Kumarica of Banja Luka has urgently reclaimed world awareness and advocacy for the intolerable situation in the Balkans.

The diaconal structures of the religious communities have highlighted the plight of the people and taken action accordingly in line with other NGOs. They are substantially supported by a host of international agencies. Some of them have already left for Kosovo and Africa, leaving the unfinished business to the local NGOs. Most of the ecumenical agencies have been faithfully continuing their operations. They are delivering relief to refugees and the local poor but have also participated in strengthening of NGOs, promotion of income generation, and rehabilitating the social services.

There is no local ecumenical **key partner** on the ground. But in view of the enormous need for social and economic development and peace work, an ecumenical approach is urgently recommended. Ecumenical agencies operating in BiH could be helpful in establishing an appropriate structure. However, the financial backing and development understanding of the funding agencies is urgently required to make the ecumenical effort a community oriented operation.

4. CROATIA

4.1. National Context: Challenges

The landslide victory of the Social Democratic Party and the Croatian Social Liberal Party in recent elections have released great hopes for new **political and economic reforms**. The previous HDZ government under the autocratic leadership of President Franjo Tudjman had slowed down reform and led the country into an economic recession, while at the same time isolating it from the international community.

The new leadership has declared itself to be firmly committed to political, economic and social change, to speed up the transformation process, and to improve international relationships. Prospects for respective actions are favourable. WTO membership, an invitation to join the EU association process, better access to EU markets, and standby agreements with IMF, are all within reach, but the international community also clearly expects Croatia to

- accelerate privatisation and restructuring, and
- in foreign politics: support the advance for a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

The new government has already taken important steps: the sovereignty of Bosnia was confirmed and any claims dismissed, and nationalistic ambitions of Bosnian Croats discouraged. The government has further subscribed to the return of refugees and drawn up a comprehensive plan amounting to US\$ 55 million, which has meanwhile been over-subscribed at the Stability Pact meeting in Brussels in March 2000. The government is prepared to involve NGOs in the implementation of the return programme.

However, the **political culture has not yet improved**; government and administration are acting in a highly authoritarian way. Corruption is widespread; women and minorities are discriminated against; the media are partisan and often slandering their political adversaries, obscuring the truth. The criminal acts of the former government are increasingly being denounced and the perpetrators brought to justice. But public morale is generally low and needs to be revitalised.

Supporting democratisation and the build-up of civil society is imperative in preventing a relapse into monopolistic and dictatorial politics. All groups of society are called upon to contribute to this process.

Also the **legal system needs reform**. Many laws are not in accordance with the new constitution, e.g. regarding gender equality. Laws regulating religion are unsatisfactory and discriminatory. Also legislation governing NGOs needs improvement, including tax regulations concerning tax deductions for humanitarian activities. Civil society and volunteer work have little tradition in a country in which the state claimed to take care of the welfare of its citizens. After the collapse of communism, not only the economic base proved to be insufficient, but social security and work had to be newly defined in terms of citizens' responsibilities, subsidiarity, and a new social solidarity. This process is still going on and needs to be critically and actively accompanied.

The discussion on the transformation process needs also **media involvement**. A "media watch" is needed to denounce discrimination and falsification of news as well as "hate language". An ecumenical journal could promote issues of peace and social development within and outside the churches.

The **economic recession** of the last three years had a deep impact on people's income and wellbeing; unemployment increased to a record 22%; even if employed, workers have to wait for months for their salaries. Pensioners/retired people are no exception. Survival is frequently only possible through additional income or support of relatives. The conditions are worse in some rural areas where people live close to an emergency situation. Usually they have also been suffering under discriminatory treatment. This is especially true for certain minorities like Muslims on the Croatia/Bosnia border.

Croatia has been taken off the list of countries needing humanitarian assistance. This will make the work of NGOs more difficult. In view of the existing challenges, however, and the role of churches and NGOs to respond creatively to them, ecumenical support becomes important though it might be rendered in a selective way.

4.2 The Response

4.2.1 Return and Integration Programmes

The return of refugees to their homes will meet with considerable difficulties and also with setbacks and failures. Nonetheless, it seems to be imperative that the churches and their related agencies be involved:

- It has proven that people start returning after religious leaders have done so. The people feel more

- Religious leaders in some countries have come out with strong commitments for peace and tolerance in a multi-ethnic community. The return programmes could be facilitated by their dialogue and visible co-operation.
- For the return, a community – and process – approach is required which is basically different from the individual case-load approach applied during emergencies and reconstruction.
- The involvement of churches and agencies can only be complementary to government and self-help actions. However, through their infrastructure on the ground, they can observe return movements, identify needs of returnees and their communities, and enter into dialogue on supporting measures of strategic and community-wide importance.

Return programmes are planned in various parts of the country, e.g. East Slavonia. They have a regional dimension by reaching out beyond the borders where refugees have fled. Within Croatia the **Evangelical Church and the Reformed Church** are interested in participating in return programmes, the former with a combination of return and multi-ethnic community development. The Reformed Church already accompanies returning villagers of Hungarian origin in East Slavonia. Support for the recovery of their economic existence is urgently desired. However, neither the Evangelical nor the Reformed Church are in a position to administer support programmes responsibly. They can provide valuable resources through their lay and religious leaders. But they would definitely need technical and organisational assistance from a competent organisation.

4.2.2. Strengthening Democratisation and Civil Society

“Autonomous Women’s House” in Zagreb started work with women suffering from war trauma. Later it extended its assistance to victims of domestic violence and rape, and offered crisis counselling, legal advice and information on other services. The House realised that neither the civil nor the penal code complied fully with gender equality as prescribed in the constitution and that they neglected domestic violence altogether. It has consequently lobbied also for legal change and mobilised forces towards a more democratic legislation. The House faces the need to become sustainable. They welcome seed money but no compromise with donor conditions: “we are not here because you are here”.

“Desa” in Dubrovnik has been active in emergency assistance to war victims. Presently its emphasis is on training and promotion of income-earning for women. Language and computer courses are offered, as well as “training in hospitality” to revitalise the service competence in tourist industries and when offering “bed and breakfast”. In other fields of action like silk production, clothing and patchwork, they are reaching out to villages meeting with great acclaim among rural women.

Desa is expecting the first women’s group from Montenegro, a former enemy country. Dubrovnik is still deeply traumatised by the siege and destruction inflicted by the Yugoslav Army. A letter of deep regret and apology from the women’s group in Montenegro, at the request of Desa, paved the way for this remarkable peace-promoting encounter. This genuine contribution to peace and reconciliation will hopefully be expanded and replicated with other groups and in other places. **The WCC Ecumenical Women’s Solidarity Fund (EWSF)**, of which Desa and the House are close partners, will have a decisive role in promoting such encounters.

According to **CERANEO**, the Centre for Development of Non-Profit Organisations, there are about 2,000 NGOs registered in Croatia, but only a limited number are really active. CERANEO offers training and organisational advice to strengthen the NGO movement; it also offers help with improving relationships between government and NGOs which are still not very well accepted and insufficiently covered by the law of association. Further dialogue with government and awareness-building among administrators is required. As Stability Pact and EU association processes put emphasis on NGO participation, there is hope that the government will improve its relationships.

4.2.3. Strengthening Media Awareness and Involvement

At their first General Ecumenical Gathering in Zagreb in 1997, representatives of the Croatian churches committed themselves to promoting ecumenical dialogue and to co-operate in church and social activities, including promotion of ethical values. To promote future co-operation and understanding, an **Ecumenical Co-ordinating Committee of the Churches in Croatia** was formed. This Committee, working only with volunteers, has developed various initiatives for peace and reconciliation which have drawn criticism from the previous government but also respect and consideration from the people. Peace centres have been established in various parts of the country.

Christian Information Service (CIS) has been co-operating with the Committee. CIS was founded by Christians of different denominations at the height of the Croatian War in 1993 to gather reliable information to be shared with the wider Christian community. They wanted to mobilise world attention against the war, and support for war victims. CIS encourages Christians to work together and provides channels of ecumenical communication through publications, occasional documents, and other means. It continues to highlight the need for peace and reconciliation.

CIS has created a considerable resource base from which to conduct dialogue among Christians, both nationally and internationally.

4.2.4. Caring for the Needy

The Roman Catholic Church started to reorganise its **Caritas** activities in 1991-92. This happened partly as a response to the challenges of the war, to provide material aid to the victims and to refugees. Caritas Zagreb today runs old people's homes, kindergartens, day-care centres for handicapped children, and social centres in each of the 28 parishes, providing ambulatory services. It provides medicines from two pharmacies and stimulates volunteers to visit sick and elderly people at home and in hospital.

Caritas receives the larger part of its means in cash and kind from abroad. It would not be able to continue its services without this help. Funds raised locally from parishes or from the state for services rendered are limited. To increase income, Caritas Zagreb has started income-earning enterprises, especially in agricultural production, which also serve therapeutic purposes and help to supply the various soup kitchens with the necessary provisions.

Caritas Zagreb has also developed a diaconal outreach to a Muslim enclave on the border with Bosnia, supporting them in improving their economic conditions and providing health services and training.

The **Baptist Union in Croatia** is involved in co-operation with neglected Serb communities in assisting with comparable services. It also started in 1991, responding to the needs of war victims. However it chose not to become operationally involved but to act as a facilitator. Its size, with about 2,000 members, and its sparse infrastructure, were the limiting factors. Thus the Union started to work with humanitarian organisations like **Moi Blisni (Good Neighbour)** or, when distributing food parcels, through **local Baptist Churches**. Funds from **Diakonisches Werk and Samaritan Purse** allowed them to reach even the most remote villages, which were assisted with electricity generators, tractors, and farm tools.

The withdrawal of international organisations and NGOs from Croatia in 1996, and from Bosnia in 1998, has greatly curtailed the involvement of the Baptist Union. This is all the more regrettable as the Union promotes long-term development which needs long-term funding.

4.3. Perspectives for Future Involvement

Croatia is one of the strongest countries in the Region. Since the change in government the international community speaks even of a “**New**” **Croatia**, which has all the prerequisites of speeding up its transformation. Much will depend however on further democratisation. The pursuit of this process merits strong support from the ecumenical movement, not least because of its regional dimension. Support could concentrate on **three fields**

- promotion and strengthening of NGOs involved in the struggle against the marginalisation of women,
- advocacy for a just and non-violent society through media work, education and lobbying,
- promotion of peace and reconciliation through participation in return programmes.

4.3.2. Potential Partners

There is **no single major ecumenical partner** in Croatia. Co-operation is characterised by a decentralised approach. Many relationships have been developed, mostly in emergency co-operation but also in other fields through denominational links or through church and ecumenical mediation. These bilateral relationships will and must continue.

The **promotion of NGOs** involved with women’s issues could be entrusted to **EWSF**. It has assisted women’s projects in critical times of their development and encouraged and nurtured women’s initiatives. More than 120 projects have been supported in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and FRY since 1993. Future work may include networking and sharing of experiences for growth and peace beyond national borders. It may also address the problem of sustainability as NGOs risk folding up their work for lack of resources when external aid subsides. These and other functions raise questions about EWSF resources. In view of the national and regional challenges, it may be considered to strengthen it with the necessary personnel and logistics to cover the additional work involved.

Concerning **ecumenical media work**, **CIS** offers valuable experience. It is closely linked to the churches and the Muslim community, and is conversant with the struggle for democracy, justice and civil values. Media are of tremendous importance in the ideological struggle for transformation and in situations of conflict between nations and ethnic and religious groups. With regard to the extreme conflict potential in the Region, media involvement merits much greater attention beyond the national responsibility. **Regional networking** is to be considered with representatives in other countries.

Return programmes are highly complex affairs. Many prerequisites have to be met such as co-ordination with local authorities, legal clarification, etc. They pre-suppose considerable competence and experience. Local churches and church groups in Croatia (except for the Roman Catholic Church) are too small and lack the necessary human, financial and technical resources and therefore cannot take the sole responsibility for major return programmes. But they can contribute competent leadership, important contacts and people’s participation, especially in a decentralised process-oriented approach. Under these conditions, the **involvement of international NGOs** must be considered. Some of them such as **LWF/WS** implement already their own emergency and reconstruction programmes and have started to respond to the political demands for return.

The same is true for ecumenical agencies in neighbouring countries such as **IOCC or UMCOR** which also prepare for the internationally sponsored return programmes. Cross-border co-ordination of plans and activities may produce considerable synergies. This co-ordination should however include the religious groups and people involved, so that refugees and their communities may remain owners of the process.

4.3.3. Consequences

considerable resources which Christians and churches in Croatia are able to offer, it should be considered to utilise and integrate them into the formation process of an ecumenical structure. Thus, they may form a creative part of the proposed hubs (see pp. 41-42), or even take the role of co-ordinating agency while at the same time serving the national constituency in an enriched way.

For the ecumenical movement it is important that the experience of Croatian Christians and churches be valorised for its regional approach and that their voices be heard.

5. FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (FRY): MONTENEGRO

5.1 National Context: Challenges

In 1992, Montenegro decided to form with Serbia the **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia** (FRY). Montenegro thus remained closely connected with the economic régime, reform process and security and foreign policy of its much greater partner. Expectations may have been to profit from continued income redistribution and the advantages of an economic and currency union, but it soon turned out that Belgrade's reluctance to implement reforms and its conflictive foreign policy had grave consequences for the wellbeing and the development of Montenegro.

Tensions have encumbered relations between Montenegro and Serbia and the FRY leadership for years. They came to the fore during the Kosovo war when Montenegro sought to remain neutral. Serbia took successive economic and administrative actions to discipline the country, and finally closed the borders. Montenegro took several steps towards an independent, Western-oriented economic and social policy, the last example being the adoption of the Deutsche Mark instead of the Yugoslav dinar.

Thus the Yugoslav army stationed in the country remained the only link with Serbia. Montenegro is sitting on the proverbial powder-keg. Any move towards secession from the Federation may provoke armed resistance by Belgrade. Armed intervention may also occur for ulterior reasons, creating **political instability** beyond the control of the Montenegrin government. Initiatives for a new Yugoslavia involving equal rights and a minimum of federal institutions have not been well received by Serbia.

The present stalemate cannot continue for ever, but as long as it lasts, Montenegro enjoys near-independence which allows it to pursue reform policies and rapprochement with Europe. Both may strengthen its position in the further dialogue with Serbia. It must be remembered in this context that Montenegro constitutes only about 6% of the population and economy of FRY.

The **political deadlock has its price**. The Sword of Damocles represented by Yugoslav intervention has deeply hurt tourism which is the major source of income. Political insecurity is also the reason why plans for establishing a Montenegro Free Economic Zone have been attracting much less attention than expected.

Paralysing effects are also registered concerning internal investments. People find little use in making efforts to invest or to start enterprises with a longer gestation period. This apathetic attitude pervades the whole of society and leads to a quest for quick returns in an expanding grey market, and in illegal trade.

The general feeling of insecurity is reinforced by Montenegro's **backlog in economic and political reforms**. A new beginning of the privatisation programme was decided shortly before the NATO bombings; it has to be taken up again. Legislation and administration need to be transformed.

This process requires the active monitoring and **participation of civil society**. NGOs are called to contribute their creative capacity, reassuring influence and advocacy of citizens' interests. For this role and task, they must be encouraged and strengthened.

Montenegro has shared with Serbia a drastic slump in GDP to 40% of its pre-1989 level, **widespread unemployment** reaching 30%, and increase of corruption and crime. As a consequence, poverty is widespread and has led to the virtual disappearance of the middle class.

In order to create employment, a massive **reorganisation of the economy is necessary**, including agriculture which has been heavily subsidised and needs rationalisation and modernisation to cover costs and raise profitability. The greatest potential is in tourism. Besides the security situation, the human and material resources need reviewing and upgrading to make the "ecological state" Montenegro attractive again for foreign visitors.

Participation in job creation and income generation is a major challenge to which also NGOs can respond by addressing those people who are neglected by official programmes or have access problems for lack of information or training. In view of widespread disillusionment and the conviction that "work does not pay", NGOs can exert a mobilising and encouraging influence.

Montenegro has been suffering considerably under the influx of refugees from the Bosnian and Kosovo wars. Numbers reached 15-20% of its population. Fortunately the needs of the remaining 60,000 refugees and IDPs are taken care of by the international community. Some of them are starting to **return**. Ecumenical agencies are ready to facilitate it, but co-ordination with partners and programmes in the receiving countries is needed.

With its reform-oriented policy and desire to join the EU association process, Montenegro has attracted a lot of support from the international community. However, reform and open society rest on the acceptance and participation of its citizens. Involvement with this process and strengthening the NGO sector is therefore indispensable.

5.2. The Response

5.2.1 The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC)

About two-thirds of the Montenegrin population are Orthodox, most of them belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church. (There is also a small breakaway **Montenegrin Autocephalous Orthodox Church** established in 1993, which is not recognized by other Orthodox churches. Its present head is Metropolitan Miros Mihailo Dedeic.)

The SOC has established **Filanthropia** as its institutional arm for diaconal and social outreach. Each diocese should have its own Filanthropia. Where this is not established, a priest will be appointed.

The Church has been assisting refugees. Relief items and funds were donated from abroad. Some came also from the Metropolis of Cetinje which wants to continue with relief operations for the local poor. Priority needs are for medical supplies, as they are deficient and expensive. They could be handled by the **Association of Serbian Sisters** with the help of a pharmacist.

The Church is ready to co-operate in **return programmes** through inter-diocesan networking. It is called upon to give a sign of peace and reconciliation. If priests return, they will be followed by others. Concepts and procedures are already discussed at inter-religious conferences. The question remains, however, whether people will really return. Lack of security and difficulties with economic survival have a deterrent effect. But dialogue and research on peaceful co-existence and inter-religious understanding must be continued as promoted by **WCRP**.

people in institutions like old-age homes, orphanages, homes for disabled children; they also reach out to the villages with food and clothes for the old and sick people who remain. Most of the material aid comes from outside, from humanitarian organisations like **IOCC**. In fact, it has also stimulated the Associations to share with the suffering communities in neighbouring Bosnia and Kosovo.

The Associations work with volunteers. They dispose of **little funding** from their own sources. There are some personal donations and occasional contributions from the Church. In view of an increasing demand for more and diversified social service, the Associations are faced with the need to develop sources of more regular and substantive income. This is difficult because support from factories has ceased and knowledge about alternative funding through agencies or other possibilities is rare.

The Associations of Serbian Sisters in Montenegro have a great potential for a wider outreach and sustainability. Continued support and encounter with likeminded people would help them to meet the challenges which they are facing together with their Church and community.

5.2.2. The Islamic Community of Montenegro

The Islamic Community of Montenegro comprises about 200,000 people or some 30% of the population. It represents a great heritage which has enriched the Montenegrin culture. The community runs schools and *medresses* (*Koranic schools*) and worships in about 140 mosques.

Every mosque organises a committee to run its affairs. They are also responsible for **social welfare** and humanitarian activities. Supported by the gracious giving of the believers, some have opened soup kitchens for the needy and rendered humanitarian aid to refugees.

In this work they are supported by the Muslim Humanitarian Organisation “**Merhamet**” which takes care of relief programmes and contacts with international organisations and NGOs.

The community considers **peace** and employment the most important challenges. Through “Merhamet” it tries to enter into income generation programmes. The problem of peace is seen as resulting from lack of faith and moral crisis. Therefore pastoral care and activities must be improved and Imams be trained accordingly, who are presently not qualified or available in sufficient numbers.

Peace is also seen as a matter of dialogue with other religious communities. It already takes place in day-to-day interaction, but needs to be further developed in terms of better understanding and overcoming derogatory stereotypes and marginalisation. Initiatives at national level should be related and extended to the peace efforts, and dialogue in the Region.

5.2.3. “Sigurna Zenska Kuca” (SZK) - (Women’s Safe House), Podgorica

SZK was founded by its charismatic director Ljiljana Raicevic with the support of **US-AID** and funding from agencies like **IOCC** and **WVI**. SZK addresses the fact that about 30,000 women and children suffer from public and **domestic violence** in various ways. Accordingly SZK offers an SOS telephone line and shelter, as well as legal advice, psychological treatment and counselling.

SZK goes beyond hands-on action to address the public through

- seminars on violence against women and on women’s rights for representatives of the police force, the judiciary, schools and NGOs;
- lobbying the revision of laws for an equal and just treatment of women, and
- lobbying for inclusion of more women into the judiciary and the police force.

operation with a SOS Women's group in Zagreb. SZK understands itself as part of regional network and is in touch with a number of international groups.

Recently, SZK has run into trouble with regard to support from donors which plead for stronger financial involvement by the municipality, or demand the inclusion of refugee and Roma women in larger numbers, probably to satisfy funding criteria of back donors. Montenegrin politics and society may not yet be fully prepared for both. SZK's work is however important for the ongoing change process.

5.3. The Response of Ecumenical Agencies and International NGOs

5.3.1. International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)

The US-based IOCC has been providing **humanitarian assistance** to refugees, IDPs and other civilian victims of the successive wars to the tune of over US\$ 30 million since 1992. The Montenegro office was established in September 1989; it became the focal point of IOCC's involvement in FRY during and after NATO's intervention in Kosovo.

IOCC has carried out its activities with the **assistance of counterpart organisations**. In Montenegro these include the Orthodox Church, the Associations of Serbian Sisters, the Catholic Church and the Red Cross. All counted, IOCC has been operating through roughly 70 contacts all over the country. Programmes are co-ordinated with relevant municipal authorities and count on co-operation of government ministries locally and with UNHCR and others internationally. Funding came from private and public sources in the USA and Europe.

Contributing to **economic recovery**, food security and social stability are essential pre-requisites for lasting peace in the Region. IOCC has accordingly been implementing respective projects like egg production in the south of Montenegro: egg-laying hens are offered with on-site technical advice to recipients to help them start on income generation. Sheep, seeds and irrigation equipment are distributed in a project in the north of the country. This project is designed to gather experience for cross-border return programmes from Croatia and Bosnia. IOCC Montenegro will co-operate closely with IOCC offices in Banja Luka and Belgrade in planned return programmes.

5.3.2. Church World Service (CWS)

CWS (relating to the NCCC USA) started activities in Montenegro and opened an office in Podgorica to assist economic investments to **promote recovery** and job creation. A micro-credit programme was launched which includes loans to rural as well as urban projects with special attention to small businesses of refugees and IDPs.

According to its thrust, to **facilitate empowerment** of people by supporting local initiatives and strengthening local NGOs, CWS has approached Alter Modus as an implementing partner. After agreeing on lending methodology, selection criteria and budgetary requirements, CWS provided loan capital to the tune of US\$ 70,000 while Alter Modus covered all operational expenses. About 50 loans had been screened and approved by the end of 1999, and granted to businesses including food production and processing, fishery and commerce. Half of the beneficiaries were women. After an evaluation in June 2000, CWS will decide on the future co-operation with Alter Modus and consider additional and complementary programmes in this field.

5.3.3. World Vision International (WVI)

WVI is conducting a major programme in Montenegro. It works with a staff of 12 expatriates and 70 local employees, who implement projects totalling some US\$5-7 million annually. Funding is

Greenhouses were distributed for income generation with recipients being obliged to share part of their produce with neighbours.

Communities are assisted to improve their **health services** by providing health education and supporting mobile teams and ambulances. An aid programme to Roma communities discovered a high incidence of TB and hypertension among the target group, with no research data available to guide remedial action. WVI reacted by massively supporting the Institute for Public Health as a research base.

WVI has developed plans for disaster preparedness according to UNHCR standards, including a food reserve of 200,000 tons and an emergency evacuation plan.

5.4 Perspectives for Ecumenical Co-operation

Montenegro's situation is highly insecure and unpredictable. It is threatened from within and from outside. Any intervention by the Yugoslav army would be fatal for the Montenegrin régime as at present at least 40% of the population are pro-Serbia and much of the rest would not stand up against it in case of conflict. On the other hand, the political advantage of reform-oriented President Djukanovic as against his political rival, Serbia-oriented Bulatovic, is relatively slim. However, aspirations for joining the EU association process and for reforms are rising and may increase the political weight and mandate of President Djukanovic.

As FRY could not dare to risk an intervention without retaliation from the international community, so the Djukanovic government could not dare to secede from FRY without losing the support of the international community. As a result, Montenegro finds itself in an **uneasy truce** and has to live with all the painful consequences for its economy and for the society.

In this situation, NGOs assume a role of special importance. Swimming against the tide, they are an expression of trust in reform and economic recovery, and social peace and justice, encouraging others to follow their example. Therefore, NGOs merit all possible support.

No local NGO, which would be capable of relating to the ecumenical community as a **key partner**, exists at present. As promotion of NGOs, including the diaconal structures of the religious communities, is of great importance, it will hopefully lead also to establishing an ecumenical key partner in due time, as happened in the case of MCIC in Macedonia.

To monitor this process, a **Montenegro Consortium** could be established with a **lead agency** which would take the responsibility for the NGO promotion programme, to be funded by the consortium members.

Another possibility might be to involve a lead agency from among the members of the South-East Europe Ecumenical Partnership Forum, with a special assignment. The lead agency could take the responsibility to establish a key partner.

6. FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (FRY): SERBIA

6.1 The National Context: Challenges

The following analysis concentrates on the Republic of Serbia including Vojvodina but excluding Kosovo. The consultant was unable to visit the country due to visa restrictions. Official figures are difficult to come by and are mostly aggregates for the whole of FRY. But even without official figures

The beginning of the crisis dates back to the early 80s when the economy started to deteriorate and disagreements between the Republics on federal decisions – a central part of the Yugoslav Socialist system – paralysed political and economic actions. Financial support by the IMF and Western aid helped the system to survive but growing political and economic tensions led to a deadlock in 1991 and finally to the disruption of SFRY.

The disintegration of the political and economic union had disastrous consequences for Serbia as well as for the other parts of the former Yugoslavia, but here they were intensified by the consecutive wars and the consequent sanctions by the international community. The Kosovo war and the NATO bombings finally brought the country to near collapse. War damage which included strategic sectors like transport and energy and manufacturing, are estimated at between US\$30 and 60 billion

Meanwhile, GDP has declined to 30% of its pre-1989 level. Average income has been decreased accordingly. Worst hit are the retired people whose pensions are very low and received many months in arrears. Unemployment has risen to 33% with a great part directly due to damage from air-strikes. Many workers are still on the payroll of industries but on furlough with a fraction of their salaries. Two million people are estimated as requiring food aid; more than half the population today live below the poverty line.

Refugees and IDPs are an especially vulnerable group. Their numbers are estimated to be at some 700,000 for Serbia alone. They live in collective centres and with host families, thus increasing the heavy burden on the country in spite of considerable international humanitarian assistance.

Lack of maintenance and new investments for years has also impacted on the social services. The health system is fraught with breakdowns in deliveries of medicine and medical equipment

Human suffering and the plight of the people demand **massive relief** urgently. It will in the first line have to comprise food, but also items for basic daily needs.

However, the economic problems of the country must also be seen to be partly self-inflicted by a reluctant and **deficient transformation and reform policy** and to a small extent also by such measures as the commercial blockade against Montenegro. The government is reluctant to lift price controls. In fact, it pays lower prices to farmers than their production costs, with grave consequences for agricultural production especially in Vojvodina. The government is also slow in improving administrative regulations and other basic requisites for the transition to a free market economy.

Likewise and obviously, the process of **democratisation** is suffering setbacks through the closure of independent media and actions of the security forces including violence against demonstrators.

In spite of massive protests also by the SOC and the loss of its electoral basis, no end to the Milosevic régime is presently visible. It is important that civil society be strengthened, that NGOs develop the competence to participate in the public debate and share in projects of public interest. However, all the strength of the people seems to be absorbed by the daily struggle for survival. Nevertheless strong resistance groups have been formed which are working against war, ethnic and gender violence, and an undemocratic régime.

Serbia will economically only recover if it opens up to multilateral and bilateral financial resources. From experience with pre-1989 Yugoslavia, positive responses can be expected from the international community. A precondition would however be that Serbia abstains from further conflict and that democratisation and transformation will progress.

The renewal of Serbia is a great challenge to civil society on a broad scale. Beyond the immediate urgency of meeting the basic daily needs of millions of 'social cases', NGOs must participate in setting the basis for **economic restructuring**. Cynics say that the bombings of technically outdated

Recovery and restructuring will require massive financial and technical inputs, but it will also require entrepreneurial and skills training, and the organisation of trade and labour. NGOs can also provide regional and international links which would help Serbia to revive its vivid and credible relationships with other countries and movements, thus opening it up to new energies, not least the European integration process.

NGOs, and especially the churches, have a definite role to play in democratisation and reconciliation. Tolerant and respectful co-existence with equal participation in decision-making, the observance of human rights, and the implementation of the rule of law, must be the paradigm for a country which counts substantial minorities among its population. Working towards social peace may therefore also contribute to mutually satisfactory solutions for Sandzak and Vojvodina.

The Western Balkan project which is the key to stabilisation and EU association will not succeed without Serbia as a fully and unimpaired co-operating member. **Sanctions** must be lifted and assistance for recovery offered. But at the same time civil society, and especially the churches, are asked to co-operate in creating the necessary conditions and to serve as agents of renewal.

6.2 The Response

6.2.1 The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC)

The SOC is most conspicuously responding to the challenges. It has voiced opposition against the régime as it did against the previous communist régimes. It demands the end of conflict and human rights violations for all people, and the suppression of corruption and crime. It offers reconciliation and pastoral care to the victims of conflict.

Of great consolation and succour to the needy is the church's diaconal outreach. On the diocese level, it is organised by **Filanthropia**. Filanthropia is involved in the care of refugees and IDPs in collective centres and with host families. It runs soup kitchens for the local poor and assists 'social cases' in a number of ways.

On the ground at parish level, **Associations of Serbian Sisters** do most of the actual work. They are part of the distribution system of humanitarian aid. They take care of old and disabled people, and also of youth and women and their various needs.

With its diaconal outreach, advocacy and reconciliation work, the church sets **inspiring signs** of a just, peaceful and caring community.

6.2.2 The Protestant Churches

Serbia counts a respectable Protestant community (Lutheran, Reformed and Methodist) which is concentrated in Vojvodina and linked to the various nationalities living together there. This linkage has both created considerable centrifugal as well as ecumenical forces. Churches have **split** along ethnic lines. The strength of witness and diaconal outreach of the anyhow small groups has been reduced even further.

On the other hand, the challenges of political disruptions and economic depression have released remarkable ecumenical resolve to assist victims together. As a consequence the **Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation (EHO)** was established to organise and implement joint assistance programmes. EHO has created a remarkable support structure by associating **diaconal groups** all over Vojvodina, which are frequently linked to local church structures and run by volunteers. They have developed their own social programmes including soup kitchens, material aid and personal care. EHO

EHO has reacted to the need for reconciliation and mutual understanding by “**building bridges**”: this includes ecumenical prayers for peace, vacation camps for refugee and host youth, and the project Rainbow for young and old.

EHO will also get involved in the promotion of economic activities. This may inaugurate an extension of its programme to strengthen NGOs, to enhance networking also regionally, and to grow into an ecumenical key partner who will also represent competence in economic and social development.

6.2.3 The Ecumenical Agencies

Ecumenical agencies have been assisting the churches and people of Serbia almost from the start of the problems.

IOCC renders humanitarian assistance on a large scale, co-ordinated from its office in Belgrade. Target groups are refugees and IDPs but also host families and increasingly the local poor. IOCC works in close co-operation with the respective Orthodox dioceses, local NGOs and other organisations such as local Red Cross branches. It has also substantially supported social institutions.

Realising the need for employment and income, IOCC will engage in income generating activities by providing micro-grants and entrepreneurial and vocational training for the start-up of small businesses.

Hungarian Inter-Church Aid (HIA) has been involved in Serbia for a considerable time, and helped to establish EHO. Its major work is with local **Muslim groups** and the Muslim organisation “Merhamet” in the Sanzab region. HIA is assisting IDPs with food parcels, hygienic kits and other relief items. It runs two soup kitchens in co-operation with “Merhamet” and is planning to get involved in agriculture; a dairy farm has started to produce milk for the soup kitchens. A land preparation programme would similarly contribute to their supply with produce. HIA sees its major concern for the time being in humanitarian assistance. It is especially commended for its competent acquisition and handling of relief goods also for other agencies.

Diakonie Emergency Aid has been working in Serbia with a major programme since 1999, concentrating on the Kragujevac-Kursumlija area and Vojvodina. Diakonie cooperates with the **SOC Eparchia of Sumadija** and with EHO. It has supported soup kitchens and the supply of food and medical kits to refugees and the local poor. A humanitarian pharmacy was set up to serve children and pregnant women. Diakonie shares an office with **Filanthropia of Sumadija** as part of its institution building programme for diaconal structures.

LWF-LWS is operating its Serbia, especially Vojvodina, programme out of Osijek. It has been providing humanitarian assistance through EHO, and plans to intensify and enlarge its support to include seed packages for agricultural production. Assistance is also envisaged for a **Diaconal Centre** which EHO is planning to improve services to its clientele and fellowship.

6.3 The Future of Ecumenical Co-operation

The shocking situation of increasing poverty and human suffering demands a great effort of humanitarian assistance. But there is no doubt that the political régime will change and Serbia will be challenged to pursue its **transformation**. For this process, civil society must be prepared to contribute its competence and vision.

Presently there are more than one thousand **NGOs** established as an attempt by the citizens to change their economic and social conditions and make life bearable by their own initiative. The movement has however great organisational and programmatic problems, lack of know-how, and has hardly started networking.

which determines the problems of ecumenical partners, but the assistance which responds to the perceptions and visions of the local partners.

7. FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (FRY): KOSOVO

7.1 The Context: Challenges

Kosovo was the **poorest province** of the SFRY. The situation improved slightly after Kosovo was granted autonomy under the new Yugoslav constitution of 1974 and received assistance for industrial development. Many Kosovo Albanians took over public and state offices, sometimes at the expense of their Serb colleagues. However, because of the economic crisis in Yugoslavia in the 1980s and the inflexible economic system, no major improvements were realised.

On the contrary, a severe backlash took place with the suspension of the autonomy in 1989: the Albanians were removed from public offices and from work in state institutions and enterprises. “Enforced measures” were taken against them, including barring them access to education and health services. Unemployment figures jumped to an extreme of 70% and GDP shrank considerably.

The Albanian population reacted by migrating back to the villages, almost doubling the rural population, and hundreds of thousands emigrated to Western Europe. Many tried to make a living in the informal sector, starting private businesses. Illegal trade stimulated by the sanctions against FRY also increased.

At the same time, “**parallel structures**” were organised: schooling was offered in private homes; health services were provided by doctors and nurses, many of them volunteers. The system was financed by a tax levied on Albanians in Kosovo and in the diaspora. This arrangement lasted, with Belgrade’s acquiescence, until 1996. When the armed conflict started, the régime cracked down on any Albanian structure.

When the war ended in June 1999, 30% of housing and 50% of agricultural assets, much of the infrastructure and most of the telecommunication network had been destroyed. Even more important for post-war reconstruction was the **loss of human resources**: many of the Serb experts left with the Yugoslav Security Forces, thus inducing an implosion of the public and economic system. Many more followed when Albanian extremists intensified harassment and prosecution of all other ethnic groups. Open violation of human rights and of the right to return as guaranteed by the UN Resolution 1244 continue to call in question the Project Kosovo as a peaceful multi-ethnic community.

The international security presence, **KFOR and UNMIK**-Police were only able to secure a fragile and partial peace by concentrating non-Albanians in heavily protected enclaves, virtually splitting the country into almost impenetrable parts.

Rebuilding Kosovo means starting almost from scratch: after the war a lot has been done by the Kosovars and the international community to reconstruct houses, re-start agricultural production, open schools and health facilities. The most urgent emergency needs are met. Now, long-term development “Building Peace through Sustained Growth” is needed. Kosovar Albanians have been quite inventive in starting businesses again, using experience gained after 1990 or during their emigration. However, lack of financial means, up to date management and technical know-how, marketing and storage facilities, limits their possibilities. In agriculture, small farmers abound, with similar problems. In addition, land use is hampered by landmines, and insecure land titles.

There is considerable **potential for economic improvement** and employment. It is faced however with institutional obstacles. Existing legislation discourages the founding of co-operatives, land and property laws have to be reformed to invite long-term investments, and the legal and regulatory

The last ten years with a deficient educational system have left their traces. **Remedial action** is required in terms of human resource development: professional training and upgrading of teachers and health personnel is of critical and strategic importance for the running of social services. The modernisation of the economy needs the development of new skills in management, accounting, finances and data processing. Special target groups must be considered, such as young people between 15 and 25 years of age who may only find employment with additional job training. In the long run, Kosovo's development will only succeed with the broad participation of people in politics, public affairs and the economy. Democratisation and the development of civil society is a must.

A number of NGOs have already been formed which are involved in development and peace work, and which take care of special target groups like women and victims of violence. Many of them need organisational and programmatic support, better communication and networking. Strengthening them and enabling them is crucial in the present political situation in Kosovo.

7.2 The Response

7.2.1. The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC)

The involvement of the SOC in humanitarian assistance and development is determined by the situation of the Serb community: it is heavily reduced with the majority of Serb people having left the country and the remaining faithful living in separate enclaves under heavy KFOR protection. Movements between **enclaves** are only possible with KFOR escorts, communication is poor making it very difficult to keep abreast of developments and needs in the various places. The diminishing population in individual enclaves is ever less able to maintain their social services and even to satisfy their basic needs.

In this situation, which is constantly changing, the church has chosen **not to be operationally involved**. It has been active, however, in advising and directing the humanitarian organisations in relating to the Serb community. Parish priests have served as contact persons and church members as volunteers for the distribution of relief items.

Help has come from international organisations and **other Orthodox Churches**, less through ACT or the ecumenical fellowship. The SOC is unable to raise funds of its own under the prevailing conditions, even the diaconal structures like the Associations of Serbian Sisters have stopped functioning.

Instead, the Church has backed the **Serb National Council of Kosovo (SNC)** as a political and humanitarian representation, independent and even in opposition to the régime in Belgrade. Priests hold important ministerial positions in the Council. The Council structure is represented in the enclaves through regional councils. The formation of the national and regional structures is still in process and endangered by the emigration of office holders. Even if they stay, they lack personnel, material and programmatic resources to start programmes effectively.

The Council has clearly taken a positive position on a **multi-ethnic tolerant Kosovo** respecting human rights. It is expected to propose a relevant plan for reconstruction and development of at least the Serb enclaves. In fact, a programme indicating priorities and major activities is under preparation. It concentrates on the basic sustenance of the people and developing resources which increase self-sufficiency. Starting points are improvements of agriculture and animal husbandry and promotion of food processing.

It is important to assist the SOC in its role as leader, communicator and comforter of the Serb community. This may entail strengthening its communication capacity. It could also be helped to revive its diaconal structures. Because of its close links with the Serb National Council and the

7.2.2. The Protestant Church of Pristina

The Protestant community in Kosovo is **very small** with about 2-3,000 believers worshipping in various places of the country. The church in Pristina, founded in 1984, has about 150 members and is of Pentecostal/Baptist background.

The Church has participated in humanitarian aid and has for this purpose registered its humanitarian organisation “**Agape**”. Supported notably by the **Samaritan Purse**, it distributed food parcels, also to school teachers who have not received any salary for months or who work as volunteers. It has helped schools with “shoe-boxes” containing writing material, etc. “Agape” considers participating in house construction and care for orphans, and is already supporting orphans and their host families.

The Church offers English classes for free, computer courses are also planned. But most important is its intention to **upgrade school teachers**. This programme meets an acknowledged need, and it might be worth while to learn more about its methodology. Its capacity for handling relief should be remembered in case of emergencies.

7.2.3. The Islamic Community in Kosovo

Most of the Kosovo Albanians are Sunnites. Their Spiritual Leader is the Mufti of Kosovo, presently Dr Rexhep Boja. A Faculty of Islamic Studies was established in 1992 as a “parallel structure”. There is also a Theological School (*medresse*). The Imam is responsible for the mosque which makes him also the contact person for **social activities**, emergency response and advocacy. As a spiritual leader he is participating in post-trauma socio-psychological care.

To assist the mosques in their diaconal outreach, the humanitarian organisation “**Bereqeti**” was established. As it receives only limited amounts of local funding, it is mandated to raise and channel foreign emergency aid to people in distress. As it works through the mosques all over the country, it has a strong delivery potential. However, lack of funds has considerably limited its actual involvement.

The Islamic Community has not been involved in development programmes. Creation of employment is considered very important. Clear concepts have neither been developed in the community nor by “Bereqeti” as yet. Ways should be explored to establish closer contacts with the Muftiate for more intensive co-operation with “Bereqeti” or the Faculty of Islamic Studies as the Islamic community is supporting the peace declaration of the religious leaders of Kosovo. This co-operation may also capitalise on the **peace building** and reconciliatory potential of the Islamic community.

7.2.4. United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)

UNMIK is the “international civil presence in Kosovo in order to provide an interim administration... under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the FRY (...) while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic self-governing institutions” (UN Resolution 1244, article 10). UNMIK has been gradually building up the interim administration by opening **special branches**. There are 14 of these already in operation, staffed by UN officials drawn from all over the world, and with a co-director of political background and an expert vice-co-director representing the Kosovo side.

The Education Department is in charge of **all sectors of education**, including vocational and professional training and education for the disabled. It has taken on the task of rehabilitating the educational system and getting it functioning again. It is also concerned with the development of new

The Department is struggling with the **lack of qualified teachers** at all levels. In vocational and professional training, it means improving teaching methods and contents as well as introducing new technologies. Part of the problem of youth unemployment is exactly the failure of schools to prepare students adequately for employment.

Like most of the UNMIK branches, the Department is understaffed and under-financed. This is also true for the Kosovo counterpart structures, hence the desperate cry “put people into UNMIK”. The Department would be willing to work together with NGOs in the field of education, accepting co-operation with experts, even within its own structure. Experts are needed for curriculum development and for teacher training in key areas.

Co-operation with UNMIK in education and other areas will always be a **politically sensitive** affair. Close consultation must be sought with the Kosovo counterparts and local NGOs. However, it can safely be assumed that co-operation in some of the critical and strategic educational issues would not only be necessary for the reconstruction and promotion of the educational system, but would also find mutual endorsement.

7.2.5. European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO)

ECHO has **scaled down** its Kosovo programme considerably, as have other organisations like WFP and UNHCR. However, the rehabilitation of schools, agricultural support and assistance to health care programmes will be continued with UNMIK and WHO co-ordination, and through the services of traditional partners. ECHO has launched a pilot project for **income generation** which transcends its mandate. It will be implemented by traditional partners including the Danish Refugee Council and Première Urgence, France, continuing with beneficiaries from previous shelter projects. Part of it will be deliveries of agricultural equipment and vocational training.

ECHO has only a very small staff remaining, and insists on compliance with agreed reporting procedures as frequent control visits are impossible. Adherence to agreed rules and frequent **information visits** would positively influence later recommendations for funding and access to the traditional partners’ network. This refers also to other funding sources. UNHCR has scaled down its involvement but is still promoting income generation for women as a longer-term follow-up. The shift of emphases by the international organisations should be closely watched.

7.2.6. International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)

The Kosovo Crisis triggered a tremendous wave of compassion and readiness to assist the Kosovars with **humanitarian aid**. They themselves made every effort to rebuild their houses and livelihood, and to re-open their schools. It was the contribution of the international community, however, that made it possible for the crisis to go by without major catastrophe and loss of human life. More than 300 humanitarian organisations with varying expertise and aid volumes were operationally involved in the emergency programme, covering large parts of Kosovo. But competition and overlap occurred in spite of co-ordination mechanisms provided by UNHCR.

The different agencies followed a variety of approaches. Most of them concentrated on direct humanitarian aid. With few local NGOs functioning as yet, INGOs established their own distribution systems with expatriate and local staff, logistics, warehouses, etc. under their own control. Others integrated rehabilitation measures into their programmes. For the recovery of agricultural production they provided the necessary investments. Included also was the restoration of public buildings.

To this latter group belong most of the WCC-related agencies working with ACT funds:

UMCOR is committed to a comprehensive approach with intensive inputs in a limited number of

rehabilitation. It fosters establishment of parent-teacher groups and the promotion of women's initiatives and youth work. Programmes are directed at refugees and IDPs of all ethnic groups, hoping to build bridges between the groups and the minorities and the Kosovar authorities.

LWF/WS started a construction programme in four municipalities. It complemented it with a trauma counselling project which was later revised to include the formation of women's groups, and income generation. Plans for 2000 extend this community approach to include credit schemes for small-scale enterprises, reconstruction of agricultural centres, the running of an out-patient clinic, and the initiation of 60 community rooms with activities. Conflict resolution, leadership training, strengthening of civil society, are all in the purview of this programme.

Diakonie Emergency Aid follows the principle of "restoration of habitation and livelihood" as a comprehensive relief and rehabilitation approach. Relief programmes go together with the stimulation of local agricultural production, house construction with the procurement of local materials, and, as far as needed, the rehabilitation of production capacity. It also includes the restoration of public buildings to get social and administrative services going again. Future plans recognise the need for longer term participatory and selective approaches such as promotion of co-operatives, the introduction of intensive crops, raising productivity and technical and organisational know-how. Diakonie co-operates closely with MCIC.

MCIC applies a participatory multi-sectoral approach to "restoring livelihood" in two municipalities. Re-construction is encouraged to be done by self-help as far as possible. This includes also public infrastructure such as clinics, community buildings, etc. To increase food security and income generation, tools and equipment are distributed with the obligation of recipients to hand part of the benefits on to other community members. MCIC got production capacities working again to assist both the construction work and the development of agriculture.

From the beginning, MCIC has treated the involvement and strengthening of local NGOs as an integral part of its programme. It has provided technical and organisational assistance and funded Round Tables and seminars on human rights, as well as media work. Future activities will be spelled out in the new Medium-term Programme for the years 2000-2002. MCIC is reflecting on the development of a Kosovo Centre for International Co-operation.

7.3. Perspectives

Kosovo is shaken by violent **clashes** between Serbs and Albanians and KFOR. Some witnesses even fear that Albanians may turn their arms against KFOR and UNMIK, their protectors. UNMIK has not been able to install a fully-fledged and credible transitional administration. The development of Kosovar counterpart structures is slow so that a vacuum still exists since the implosion of the Yugoslav system, which is taken advantage of by self-help initiatives, as well as criminal elements.

In this situation, pro-active responses are urgently called for: peace and reconciliation must be promoted. The religious leaders in Kosovo condemned all acts of violence and all violations of basic human rights. They established the **Inter-religious Council of Kosovo** to pursue more active co-operation among themselves and their own communities, and to develop appropriate structures for it. The **World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP)** is assisting this process.

Civil society needs to be strengthened. NGOs representing different clientèles, issues and resources, should be prepared for active participation in the institution-building, democratisation and peace process. There is a **rich culture of NGOs** in Kosovo, which needs to be invigorated and nurtured.

Restoring and developing the economy is essential for Kosovo to get onto its own feet again. Stability Pact and the **EU Reconstruction and Recovery Programme: Building Peace through Sustained**

capacity and competence of NGOs to co-operate efficiently in the implementation of these programmes.

At present there is **no local partner agency** existing in Kosovo capable of aligning the ecumenical community to the efforts needed for the recovery and development process. However, a number of ecumenical agencies are on the ground who have developed plans to extend their activities from emergency aid to long-term development. Each of them is pursuing individual fund-raising, also among WCC-related funding agencies. It has to be expected that each agency will implement its own approach and typical programme according to its own culture and corporate identity.

Instead of joining individual agencies on their terms, funding agencies could pool their resources to support a commonly agreed programme through a **consortium approach**. This would offer the advantage of pursuing some of the ecumenical principles such as local ownership and participation, by involving local partners as counterparts and members (after 9 years of presence of ecumenical agencies in Croatia and 4 in Bosnia, no local counterpart is in sight there). Also, special programmes could be agreed upon which may not generally be in the purview of an agency like the strengthening of the diaconal structures of religious communities.

For Kosovo, the consortium approach would pre-suppose taking stock of available resources in a realistic way. They are, from experience, considerably lower than those which were available for relief and reconstruction. Thus the consortium may not get involved in expensive reconstruction or geographic limitation but would concentrate on activities of strategic importance. The consortium would also have to consider the long-term commitment which development requires. Such commitment offers the advantage that not speed but sustainability through involvement, growth and ownership of the people on the ground rules the programme as a guiding principle.

On the basis of a clear understanding of priorities and methodology, the consortium would have to decide on its operating procedures. From previous experience, it would be recommendable that one of the members act as **lead agency**. As a local counterpart does not yet exist, the lead agency would have to be present locally and operational. The consortium might participate in its field staff expenses.

The change of paradigm from emergency to long-term development is test and opportunity for the ecumenical family to prove that a fellowship of service and sharing built on mutual understanding and discipline and the acknowledgement of ecumenical principles is still possible.

8. FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (FYROM)

8.1 National Context: Challenges

Since independence in 1991, Macedonia has pursued its international recognition and internal transformation with **great resilience** against strong external opposition and internal difficulties. It remained the only former Yugoslav Republic which did not experience fighting on its soil. After its admission to the UN as “Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, it was neither recognised by FRY nor by Greece, the former creating a constant source of irritation, the latter threatening its economic survival. Greece closed its border and denied Macedonia access to the sea as well as to its markets.

Soon after the embargo by Greece was lifted in 1996, the **Kosovo Crisis** began and exerted tremendous political and economic pressures on the country through the enormous influx of Kosovo refugees and the renewed sanctions against FRY, its major trade partner. It was not a matter of course that Macedonia should go through these tribulations without internal upheavals. Independence and transformation, embargo and sanctions, had resulted in rising unemployment; the leadership and administration was still highly Yugoslav and communist oriented. With a strong Albanian minority of

The government had started to change the legal, institutional and administrative framework towards democratisation, rule of law and a free market economy. It had also begun to restructure the economy through privatisation. The new reformist centre-right government, which was the result of free elections of 1998, promised to push forward the modernisation process. Many of the hopes which had been raised were dashed: the public sector is still strongly staffed by former socialist cadres, with little inclination towards civil society. The government is not taking necessary decisions concerning the privatisation of the last twelve industrial combines, and the de-nationalisation of real estate and land. This is creating considerable **insecurity**, scaring away badly needed international investors as well as potential internal entrepreneurs.

The transformation implies legislative reform. Part of present legislation has still to be purged of restrictive communist elements. Also the administration is still expressing authoritarian views with hardly any room for participation by the people. In 1998, a new law on civil associations and foundations was adopted which improves the admission and registration of **NGOs**. About 2,000 are registered in Macedonia, of which 1,500 are in Skopje. Only about 300 are pursuing political, social and economic aims; many of them are poorly organised and take only sporadic action. Awareness and knowledge of the role and functions of NGOs is low, and public recognition and social support is missing. Strengthening NGOs is therefore a major challenge.

The economy may grow by 6% in 2000, but the growth rate may also be much lower. In view of the general uncertainty, predictions are difficult. Meanwhile, an increasing number of people experience a deterioration of their personal situation. **Unemployment** has reached 40%; salary payments are months in arrears, and many Macedonians live below the poverty line (72,000 families are already receiving relief from five international NGOs). Women and girls, but also minorities, are worst hit, and social peace is endangered.

This impoverishment is a **traumatic experience** for a nation which was the poorest in the SFRY, contributing only 5% to the total output, but which had enjoyed some relative prosperity. The redistribution of income from the wealthier to the poorer republics allowed the majority of Macedonians a “middle-class” status including housing and private cars. It also helped to develop new infrastructure and to establish (subsidised) industries.

Without the socialist redistribution system, and left to themselves, Macedonians cannot uphold their previous living standards. This situation was compounded by embargoes and sanctions and other economic difficulties during recent years, but even if these are taken into account, Macedonia will only regain its former level of welfare if it were to develop its own productive resources accordingly. This requires also foreign financial and technical investments. The great challenge however is to enlist and empower the remarkable **potential** of the country, especially in human terms, for building a new society and economy.

8.2. Responses

8.2.1 Macedonian Centre for International Co-operation (MCIC)

MCIC was founded in 1993 by the Committee for Peace and Civil Initiatives (CPCI) and Dutch Inter-Church Aid (DIA). While CPCI provided the programmatic emphasis and a network of local groups, DIA contributed organisational and financial inputs as the lead agency of WCC-related agencies which later constituted the Macedonia Consortium. In only seven years, MCIC has developed into a **key partner**, establishing firm and trusted relationships also with governments and international organisations.

Through a process of reflection, evaluation and critical dispute, MCIC has endeavoured to adjust its work to changing challenges and new insights expressed in its “Long-term Programme Objectives”

One of its major projects is to develop civil society. MCIC offers organisational support, information, training and financial assistance through a Small Projects Fund.

Its commitment to peace and **reconciliation** is reflected in its strong emphasis on the dignity of the disabled and the marginalised. MCIC runs a Roma Empowerment Programme which assists Roma initiatives all over the country. “Women NGO Health Education Capacity Strengthening Programme” has been launched in co-operation with Christian Aid and funding from the EU. Eight women’s NGOs will be supported to better and sustainably serve their members. By choosing NGOs from different social and ethnic backgrounds, and linking them in a network, MCIC endeavours to contribute to a better understanding among them and to social peace.

Village development and promotion of **employment** are further activities of MCIC to which it has successfully applied its participatory and self-help approach: for installing a water supply, a village has to form a users’ association and assure training for its operation and maintenance.. Including the installation of meters, these measures were a drastic break with former socialist customs, and a step towards an economical and sustainable water management.

In 1998 MCIC founded the **Macedonian Enterprise Development Foundation (MEDF)** for business promotion through loans. The “general goal of MEDF is to support this possibility for self-employment and development of small businesses to reduce poverty... and to promote harmonised relations within the community”. MEDF provides funds to financial intermediaries for on-lending to final beneficiaries. MCIC is entrusted with the management.

MCIC has been involved in **humanitarian aid** and social assistance. It co-operates with scores of NGOs to bring relief to refugees and the local poor. It has introduced efficient local purchase procedures, thus avoiding expensive imports and complicated warehousing, and remaining flexible in responding to different cultural preferences. Because of its competence and the international standing of its director, but also because of the backing of the Consortium members, MCIC was able to resist the traumatising pressures of aid agencies exerted in other places during the Kosovo crisis. It kept its autonomy and the number of expatriates low, who were accepted only if they provided expertise locally unavailable. MCIC has accompanied returning refugees and started a reconstruction and re-integration programme with Diakonie Emergency Aid in the Djakovica area, where it co-operates with local NGOs, thus combining relief with rehabilitation and longer-term social recovery.

The humanitarian aid programmes taxed the infrastructure and organisation of MCIC heavily: a large part of its original programme had to be suspended. MCIC is facing again a challenge of **structural adjustment**: should it continue the emergency capacity in face of the withdrawal of major donors as happened in 1997? Would disaster preparedness be sufficient in view of the instability of the Region? By founding MEDF, MCIC has been entering into structural diversification. Could this model be applied to emergency aid as well? However, even MEDF seems to be a half-hearted step as the management remains with MCIC. **Out-sourcing**, though, could also be an opportunity for new and wider leadership and a reduction of the tremendous workload of the director.

MCIC remains an outstanding key partner for ecumenical co-operation to serve the people, NGOs and churches of Macedonia. It is only natural that MCIC plays and will play a decisive role also in the regional context.

8.2.2. The Churches

8.2.2.1. The Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC)

Since October 1999 the Archbishop of Skopje, Stefan, has been head of the MOC which insists on autocephaly and independence from the SOC. The Church is not recognised as canonical by the Orthodox community but dialogue on overcoming the schism has started. 67% of the population of

orphans. In 1998 a “**Diakonia**” group was spontaneously formed in one of the Skopje parishes to organise diaconal activities. When this movement spread, a bishopric of Diakonia was established and entrusted to Bishop Agatangel. Djakonia looks after the respective groups at parish level, organising supplies for their various activities. Each group has to account for the donations it receives.

Like in other churches and places, diaconal activities have been largely activated and made possible because of foreign humanitarian assistance. In many cases the groups which started to organise effective social activities beyond relief, want to continue the work and to expand it into other areas like health education and supply of medicines. Diakonia does not seem to have plans at the moment to go beyond its present activities or to tap local resources.

In order to handle relief items from abroad, MOC has founded the humanitarian organisation “**MILOSDRIE**” as a public legal person. Its work is managed centrally and implemented locally through ten regional branches. It is mandated to cover a range of needs including assistance to the elderly and the sick, the poor and homeless, orphans and abandoned children, and helps in emergencies. “**MILOSDRIE**” is commissioned to raise, receive and distribute foreign donations in cash and kind. It has no local income, but the Church provides the office and the salary for the director as the only full-time employee.

In spite of a deficient infrastructure, the organisation has, with the help of MCIC and foreign donors, participated in the assistance programmes for refugees. Its work depends on the availability of foreign donations. There is little hope that it might get more regular and reliable as long as donations are emergency- or media-driven.

8.2.2.2. Evangelical Methodist Church

Diakonia is part of Methodism. After 1990, the Evangelical Methodist Church (EMC) started medical care and organised food aid as soon as it became possible. Later this church of about 4,000 members in 12 congregations also took care of centres for mentally retarded children. The EMC also offered education on hygiene in schools. Presently a **social centre** is planned in Strumica where most of the Methodists live. It will provide space for legal and social counselling, a soup kitchen and medical care. Funding will come from Austria. Earlier on, the work was strongly supported from The Netherlands and is still assisted by MCIC. Services are offered to all needy persons irrespective of ethnicity or religious affiliation.

EMC is promoting good ecumenical relationships and understanding, and is an active member of MCIC. It develops its projects as an occasion for dialogue, directed at promoting mutual trust and helping to overcome pre-Independence attitudes.

8.2.2.3. Baptist Church

The Baptist Church is very small with a few hundred members. Unfortunately some of its congregations have separated themselves. During the Kosovo Crisis, the members were very eager to help. A humanitarian organisation “**Christolubje**” was registered following the example of other churches like the Evangelical Church which formed “**Agape**”. With funding from the **Samaritan Purse**, food and other items were bought locally, packed and distributed to more than one thousand refugees and their host families. Most of the work was done by volunteers.

The Church continues to give food parcels to very needy people, including Roma. It supports small numbers of children in Skopje and Ochrid. All these activities take place within the framework of its diaconal outreach.

8.2.2.4. Summary

distributing emergency aid. Thus they served as members of an effective distribution network, operated by MCIC and also other agencies. They could be involved again and form part of a disaster preparedness system.

However, without foreign donations, most of them would have to reduce their work or give it up. Their diaconal witness is threatened. **Sustainability**, mobilising local resources, looking for non-financial alternatives, are issues which are not yet well understood. In view of the numerous initiatives in the MOC, and also the other churches, means should be explored to assist them to find ways towards sustained witness.

8.2.3. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

8.2.3.1. Union of Women's Organisations

The Union was registered in 1994 and represents 46 independent women's groups. It assists them through networking and regular exchange of experiences and plans, training and consultancy on organising and management of NGOs. It helps them with the planning of programmes and implementation of action. During the Kosovo Crisis, it procured food parcels and other items of humanitarian assistance for its members.

The Union implements its own programmes: **combating violence against women and children** has become a major activity, including advocacy and public awareness-building, counselling and support of the victims as well as an SOS telephone line and a shelter for women.

Great emphasis is placed on **peace work**. Its members come from all ethnicities: Roma, Vlach, Albanian, Serb and Macedonian. In workshops they labour for a better understanding of differences and commonalities, and for mutual respect and tolerance. The Union has extended its peace work by starting dialogue with women's groups in neighbouring countries. They exchange information and educational material with **"Admira" in Sofia/Bulgaria**, with **"Women in Black" in Belgrade** and with many other initiatives elsewhere, such as the **"Mouvement de Paix"** in France. The Union welcomes intensification of regional peace efforts, including a peace conference for exchange on practical peace initiatives, and the formation of cross-border peace alliances.

8.2.3.2. Union of Albanian Women in Macedonia (SAZM)

SAZM was founded in 1992 as the first women's NGO in Macedonia. Its headquarters is in Tetovo and relates to 15 branches in major towns and with small groups in villages. It has implemented practical hands-on programmes as a response to illiteracy, bad health, and high child mortality among the Albanian population. A UNICEF-supported "School for Parents" programme helped to reach uneducated mothers, but it is realised that good health depends also on the environment, culture and economic situation of the target group. Therefore SAZM endeavours to apply a **comprehensive approach**.

During the Kosovo Crisis SAZM concentrated on helping its members to assist refugees and their host families. It opened an out-patient clinic in Tetovo with volunteer doctors offering medical care and medication free of charge to refugees and the local poor alike.

SAZM has no income of its own except for a membership fee of DM 3 payable on joining. Other income accrues as a percentage of programme costs. This puts the group under considerable pressure for acquisition of programmes and makes long-term planning difficult. SAZM is a partner in MCIC's "Women's NGO Health Education Capacity Strengthening Programme". Like the others, it will be equipped with a Women's Resource Centre to develop data bases on gender and health aspects. Together with staff training this is also supposed to increase **sustainability**.

ESE was established in 1994 as a joint project of Dutch Inter-Church Aid and EWSF, with a vision to **empower women** regardless of their background and to increase their participation in public decision-making. Responding to immediate needs, especially in rural areas, ESE offered health education and vocational training. Since 1997 ESE has concentrated on four issues: domestic violence, legal education and action, health education, and participation of women in politics. After thorough consultation with its constituency, ESE has shifted its emphasis from operational involvement with women's groups to strengthening NGOs, to advocacy and lobbying, research and publication, and consultations and seminars on the four issues mentioned above.

ESE has also been directly involved in the preparation of **legislation** on domestic violence and lobbied political parties for a larger share by women in their decision-making bodies. It has broken taboos and brought gender issues to public attention. ESE has reached out to other countries, contacting women's groups working on similar issues and starting to organise regular meetings with them.

8.2.3.4. Summary

Women's organisations in Macedonia are energetic, innovative and good communicators. They are involved in **peace** and reconciliation work and do not hesitate to raise related questions with women's groups in neighbouring countries. They courageously address challenges affecting women's lives, including civil rights and equal opportunities, participation in decision-making, as well as helping to improve health education and job creation.

Women's NGOs still have organisational and programmatic shortcomings, especially regarding sustainability and their capacity to become **self-supporting**. However, learning processes dealing with these issues are underway, being also promoted by the MCIC/Christian Aid programme. The development process of the women's movement should be further encouraged, respecting its absorptive capacity and need for taking their constituency along with it. The regional dimension should be given special attention.

8.2.4. “Mesecina” – Roma Humanitarian and Charitable Association

“Mesecina” was founded in 1993 by Roma intellectuals and addressed especially the issue of higher **education**. Only six out of 200,000 Roma had graduated from a university at that time. Today, with 40 graduates, they still remain far behind other ethnic groups. Promotion of education, including vocational training, remains a priority. The work includes awareness building among parents, material support for students and educational institutions, and lobbying the government to provide a non-discriminatory and encouraging environment for Roma students..

“Mesecina” develops the human and material **resources** of the Roma community by providing micro-credit, management and professional training directed to assist in the start-up of small businesses. Facing discrimination, marginalisation and social violence, “Mesecina” has embarked on human rights promotion. Seminars are organised for police officers; a law office offers legal advice. These efforts are connected with involvement in peace and conflict resolution. It is working towards tolerance and mutual respect for differences, and overcoming stereotypes. For this purpose, a host of information and publications is offered to the public and its own constituency.

During the Kosovo Crisis, “Mesecina” supplied **humanitarian aid** to refugees and assistance to disadvantaged Roma through its various branches. It co-operated with MCIC in improving water supply and sewage systems in Roma settlement, also as a contribution to a healthy environment

“Mesecina” is part of the **Roma Balkan network** and has contacts with various groups in neighbouring countries such as RomaCriss in Bucharest or Roma Plovdiv. It organised a Balkan seminar on Roma culture, politics and economy in 1999, and wants to expand its relationships in accord with the issues raised by the Stability Pact and its Working Tables.

the organisation has come a long way in a very short time. As it plays a key role in the development of Roma welfare and political standing, it merits continuing support.

8.3. Perspectives

Macedonia is confronted with **radical changes**. It must compensate for the income redistribution effect of the Yugoslav period if it wants its population to enjoy a comparable standard of living. This is only possible with the broad participation of the people in politics, the economy and social activities, the mobilisation of their ingenuity and resources, and the opening up to and exploiting of international financial facilities.

Macedonia has so far succeeded in promoting its **transformation** peacefully. The growing NGO sector shared significantly in this process. Now the country has arrived at a point at which further bold decisions need to be taken in order not to lose the impetus of change and increasing international support. As this would mean further sacrifices and pressure to adjust to change, the NGO sector is even more challenged to contribute to democratisation, peace and economic restructuring.

For the ecumenical fellowship, MCIC remains the **key partner**, responding to many of these challenges through its existing programmes. In doing so, it has put emphasis on involving strengthening and networking of local NGOs. In fact some of them have come of age and developed considerable expertise and networks in their respective fields of activity. MCIC might consider **outsourcing and devolution** of some of its responsibilities to local partners in order to concentrate on new challenges and programmes which need close attention.

Among these new challenges it might be considered to ask MCIC for an involvement in regional growth and networking of NGOs and to facilitate the dialogue about it among regional groups and overseas partners. The **regional dimension** of MCIC's work has grown in importance with the formation of the Stability Pact and the EU association process. It needs to find ways of working effectively in this new framework and will therefore require appropriate resourcing.

MCIC is backed by the Macedonia **Consortium** which has turned out to be a viable and effective means of co-operation which is based on a common ideology and understanding, periodically tested and reconfirmed through the Consortium process. In face of the new challenges, the Consortium will also have to reconsider its positions. Regional outreach, and special programmes like strengthening the diaconal structures of the churches, will require respective funding. This is also true in a case of outsourcing or decentralising activities by MCIC. Some of the projects may become sustainable, others may even require larger funds.

When getting more involved in peace work, it may also be necessary to invite peace groups to provide their expertise and resources within the Consortium structure, thus allowing for a competent and comprehensive approach, combining efforts for development, peace and democratisation.

9. REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

9.1. The Situation: Challenges

The Region suffers from basic external and internal insecurities. The Milosevic régime may trigger an armed conflict in Montenegro; Albanian extremists create disturbances in Southern Serbia; unrest may break out in Kosovo, etc. Even a continuation of the political stalemate in Bosnia nourishes feelings of insecurity and imminent destabilisation which paralyses life, economic recovery and transformation.

The transformation process has not yet made substantial progress. Privatisation of industrial assets has

Some parts of the legislation and regulatory framework have been changed to facilitate transition towards democracy, rule of law, and a free market system. However, autocratic and control-minded attitudes are still prevalent in governments and administration. Together with lack of education and competence, high staff turnover and discriminatory practices, they stifle self-help and ambitions and actions for recovery. Corruption and criminal use of power are part of the existing system.

The Region has seen a decrease and unsteady development of its GDP. The break-up of the Yugoslav economic and currency union, successive sanctions against Serbia, and finally the disruptions of the transport systems, have contributed to the economic break-down. Refugees and IDPs from the successive wars constitute an enormous burden on the economy and resources of the host countries.

Today, the GDP of most countries is still below pre-1989 levels, with high unemployment and widespread impoverishment. Social services have suffered due to lack of public funds. Health delivery systems have become deficient and fragmented in the absence of new investments and necessary maintenance. They have been chronically understaffed and underpaid.

9.2. The NGO Response

On the other hand, the concept of civil society experienced an enthusiastic reception. The collapse of communism released strong social forces. Some were dating back to pre- World War II and earlier times, like most of the diaconal structures of religious communities. Many of them catered to immediate needs, others subscribed to the participation in the reform process and development of their societies. Many of the NGOs which resulted from these movements were included in the humanitarian aid delivery system which was set up for assisting the refugees, IDPs and the host population during and after the successive wars. Through this involvement, they were greatly encouraged and found new competence and vitality. Today, NGOs cover a vast range of activities including peace and reconciliation, charity and social services, as well as income generation and development. Frequently they are small, and their organisation is fledgling. They suffer from programmatic deficiencies and lack of contacts. But NGOs have become an important element meanwhile in the political and social life of their countries and have increasingly started cross-border regional initiatives and networking.

9.3. The Stability Pact Challenge

The Stability Pact and the EU Stabilisation and Association Process for Countries of South-East Europe have introduced a new dynamic into the work and ambitions of states and NGOs in these countries. With the prospect of an EU Association Agreement and eventual integration, the two instruments offer a firm European anchorage. They also offer financial assistance to the tune of _5.5 billion for the period 2000-2006, and other support through trade preferences, technical advice, etc. Aiming at stability, prosperity and lasting peace in the region, all assistance is conditional on commitment to effective regional co-operation and progress in the realisation of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and rights of minorities, and the transition towards a free market economy.

The Stability Pact is structured into a Regional Table and three Working Tables, through which the Balkan countries and their various representatives – government, NGOs, etc. – participate in the process. The Regional Table fosters regional projects and facilitates exchange between the Working Tables..

The Working Tables on Democracy, Economy, and Security, facilitate cross-border dialogue and action in their respective fields of responsibility.

The Working Table on Democracy promotes

- co-operation between the countries in the region towards preserving their multi-national and multi-

- development of regional NGO networks involved in human rights, democratisation, civil society and institution building;
- development of independent media;
- an active role of women in the political process of the region and struggle against gender bias;
- enhancement of the cultural dimension, including inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue, education, vocational training and multi-cultural youth activities for development of civil society and mutual respect.

The Working Table on Democracy supports also

- regional co-operation on refugee related issues with priority on addressing obstacles to and opportunities for safe, dignified and free return;
- development of specific vocational training and job schemes to keep human resources in the region.

The Working Table on Economic Reconstruction, Development and Co-operation aims at greater prosperity and confidence in the Region through

- encouragement of private investment;
- strengthening human capital by giving priority to training and education for sustainable growth and poverty reduction;
- establishment of an environment conducive to the dynamic growth of small and medium enterprises;
- assisting in developing a viable agricultural sector.

The Working Table on Security issues includes

- promotion of co-operation on disaster relief and support for humanitarian operations, and
- developing institutional and professional capabilities in the areas of migration and asylum.

Working Tables perform important functions

- they develop work plans establishing the priorities within the areas of prospective responsibilities
- identify a limited number of priority initiatives/projects to be addressed, and
- agree on these initiatives/projects for submission to donors after evaluation by a lead organisation /country.

The regional approach of EU and the Stability Pact to the Balkans offers churches, NGOs, civil society and, not least, related ecumenical agencies a unique chance

- to enhance their advocacy for peace, democratisation, human rights and civil society with their own governments which are under pressure to align with the EU standards in order to be associated;
- to participate through presence in or lobbying of Working Tables in the choice of priorities for regional co-operation and in the setting up of work plans;

The churches can only make use of these chances if they position themselves regionally. There are strong reasons for regional co-operation:

- synergies can be exploited in return programmes between different countries and ethnic and religious communities;
- cross border communication will enhance advocacy, news verification and promotion of a regional identity;
- exchange of experiences in long-term and community development may help to avoid unnecessary duplication, reach a more cost effective use of resources, and to realise an emancipatory, people-oriented approach;
- joint projects could be used to foster dialogue and peace-building between ethnic groups across the border.

9.4. Available Response Mechanisms

How much are the churches and how much is the ecumenical community prepared for this regional challenge?

At the WCC/CEC Geneva consultation on “Ecumenical Development and Co-operation in South-East Europe” in November 1999, partners agreed that regional co-ordination and joint programming among ecumenical partners should be promoted. However, except for Macedonia and Albania, co-ordination and joint programming does not yet exist, even on the national level. Concerning development there is no basis as yet for all the countries to form a regional network.

Only Macedonia is ready: MCIC has developed into an ecumenical key partner, being backed by the Macedonia Consortium. MCIC is convinced of and prepared for regional co-operation.

In Albania, DA, the diaconal outreach of the KOASH, serves as an ecumenical key partner, supported by the Albania Consortium. DA may presently however not be prepared to take an active role in promoting regional co-operation.

There is no ecumenical key partner to be found in the other countries who would be able to offer agencies and third parties interpretation and guidance for co-operation. It was obviously not on the agenda nor in the timeframe of humanitarian assistance that ecumenical organisations would help autonomous and representative structures to develop, which could serve as key partners.

Presently, operational agencies dominate the scene. They have performed outstanding work in the area of humanitarian assistance. They are essentially working on their own with co-ordination by the UNHCR or other international organisations.

9.5. Constraints of Co-ordination

As the ACT Kosovo experiment demonstrated, ecumenical co-ordination among agencies is difficult to achieve:

- culture, “intervention logic”, philosophy and methodology are very different among agencies;
- agencies are potential competitors for the same scarce funds and need to “sell” their programmes

- to run the field work efficiently and cost effectively, international experts with the respective experience are hired who do not necessarily have either intimate knowledge of the organisation or attachment to it, much less to the church or the ecumenical context to which it belongs;
- if programmes are funded essentially by public donors, conditions may be attached which are difficult to accept in an ecumenical context;
- pressure to perform extensive and demanding programmes with limited staff in a limited timeframe frequently leaves little room for exchange, quite apart from time consuming co-ordination. Sustainability is sacrificed in favour of speed and “efficiency”. Deliberate withholding of information is also observed.

9.6. The Need for a Common Understanding of Development

The humanitarian assistance record of agencies operationally involved has been outstanding with a comparatively high coverage of planned targets. But does this qualify already for development? Development is not just the continuation of humanitarian assistance with other means. It requires a complete U-turn. Humanitarian assistance has clear target groups, fairly well-defined needs and obvious aims. The agency is the subject. In development, the people are the subject; they determine the tempo, extent, direction and structure of their change.

While during emergencies funds may flow abundantly and allow massive investment in reconstruction and rehabilitation for individual benefit, they have usually dried up when it comes to development. Scarce means, however, suggest by themselves a different approach. They should be spent in areas which increase the options of choice of people and communities.

It is difficult to change from a product- to a target group-oriented from a result- to a process-oriented approach. Ideally, development assistance should be rendered by development agencies. Realistically, at least a common understanding of development should be found among committed agencies and agreement on concepts, priorities, and methodology to be applied. Even if it would not be sufficient for co-ordination, a minimum consensus could at least help to avoid contradictory approaches and thus raise regional credibility and visibility of the ecumenical community. On the basis of a common understanding, operational agencies could be asked to serve as lead organisations with the clear perspective of nurturing an ecumenical network and a key partner in the country of operation.

The onus of realising this basic point of departure is with the funding agencies. It is their participation and insistence on a common understanding of development which will decide on the relevance, intensity and direction development co-operation will take on the Balkans.

To repeat: under present conditions, it will not be possible to ask for inter-agency co-ordination in countries where key partners do not exist. Not only do the operational agencies have their limits and preferences; also among funding agencies are some who follow a selective approach by choosing parts of programmes or try to suggest alternatives which are contradictory to the promotion of a joint approach.

9.7. The Difficulty of Integrating Peace Work

It is difficult for an operational agency to link humanitarian assistance and community-driven development. It is almost impossible for it to combine it with peace and reconciliation work. Usually contributions to peace and reconciliation are mentioned, but at a closer look they turn out to be a by-product like the construction of houses in both parts of a multi-ethnic community.

operations by preferential treatment or creating mono-ethnic reconstruction sites. To take care of the necessary precautions, competent peace groups may be invited for co-operation and guidance.

Fortunately, developments in the field of peace and reconciliation have been going on. Leaders of religious communities in BiH and Kosovo issued a statement on tolerance and commitment to a multi-ethnic society. Different church groups and centres have elaborated relevant programmes and conduct educational projects, consultations and conferences. There is no doubt that a holistic approach to development includes endeavours for peace. But rather than putting the onus on the operational agencies, a complementary solution should be sought. The need for peace work could be accommodated as part of a Regional Ecumenical Structure and thus be promoted as a regional dimension.

9.8. Towards a Regional Co-ordination Structure

To sum up, regional co-operation is a must. Peace, democracy and prosperity in the Balkans will only be realised if addressed by a regional effort.

How to build such a structure? It will not succeed without substantial and long-term funding. The WCC-related non-operational funding agencies are playing a key role. They must take a basic decision to back the regional approach, to accompany it and to give it financial priority. Without a core group of dedicated funding agencies, the regional approach will not succeed.

Committed to an integrated approach which contributes to the renewal of the societies in the Region, the structure would have to include the pursuit of relief, long-term development, and peace work simultaneously. A successful combination of all elements is rare. Hence the system has to be open. Co-operation must include those who contribute the experiences from the required fields of responsibility, competence and connections. A comprehensive approach requires a comprehensive partnership. Such a partnership should be realised within the framework of a Regional Co-ordination Structure which could build on the experiences and the existing capacity of the ACT Balkan Co-ordination Office.

This structure could consist of four elements: A **South-East Europe Ecumenical Partnership Forum** could be an Assembly on which churches and agencies, as well as groups involved in the integrated approach, would be represented. Such a Forum could meet every 2-3 years to check, stimulate and enrich the process, to secure accord about principles, approaches and methodologies of work, and to agree on priorities and action.

A **Steering Group** composed of representatives of local members, funding agencies, and the various action fields would monitor the co-operation and co-ordination between the action fields and report back to the Forum.

An **Ecumenical Liaison Office** or equivalent capacity (inside or outside the Region) could be the visible and accessible expression of the Regional Co-ordination Structure. This Office would essentially work as an information and communication centre and a first point of contact for all those who are interested in joining the various initiatives. The Office would facilitate the communication among action fields and assist the Steering Group in its task of monitoring the co-operation and co-ordination among them. The Office would also document the regional process.

In a changing world with quickly changing challenges, a flexible response mechanism is needed which could best be realised by a decentralised approach. **Hubs** (co-ordinated working groups or networks) follow this line: special assignments are given to a co-ordinating agency which develops the programme in co-operation and communication with partners in other places. The co-ordinating agency provides also the link to other hubs or action fields and encourages local initiatives for an integrated approach.

9.9. Hubs for Co-operation and Action

The following hubs are suggested here:

A hub for peace and reconciliation would require strong inputs from CEC which has experience with peace and reconciliation programmes and contacts with competent groups. This hub would be involved with considerable programmatic and institutional work, promoting dialogue, encounter, educational programmes for peace, and on-the-ground endeavours to overcome mistrust and virulent conflict situations. This hub might also help to provide a platform for dialogue with and among the different groups of society. Christian academies have been successfully spear-heading processes for democratisation and social reconciliation in such places as Crete, Korea, and Slovakia. Youth is another important target group. Youth exchange, regional summer universities and work camps for peace are well proven instruments to foster regional community.

Part of the hub's assignment would be to dovetail its resources and programmes with development and other endeavours, and vice-versa. For this purpose, links with local partners would have to be promoted for co-operation, especially with development and return programmes.

Media work could also be taken care of by this hub: media work is being carried out in almost all the countries of the Region. A network could be formed which would help to publish a "regional newsletter", to establish a news check, to produce publications and documentaries on regional issues, and support regional advocacy.

A hub for capacity building is of high priority. **Strengthening civil society and NGOs** is of strategic importance for the democratisation as well as the development and peace process in the Region. The hub should be lodged with an ecumenical key partner like MCIC which has years of experience, a clear philosophy on the selfhood of local NGOs and a wide contact net beyond the national borders to offer.

It may also contain **women's networking**. Women's networks and groups have been established in all countries of the Region. Women's groups and networks have started cross-border consultations and activities; some have already successfully accessed the working group structure of the Stability Pact. The ESFW is presently the only ecumenical institution which is operating almost all over the Region. It might serve as a facilitator for women's groups to improve their abilities and intensify the regional co-operation.

Disaster preparedness is a regional responsibility, especially in a disaster-prone area like the Balkans. With exceptions like MCIC and, for smaller emergencies also, DA, most ecumenical partners are not in a position to respond adequately. They need capacity building and to be prepared. One of ACT's prominent responsibilities is "investment in capacity building and emergency preparedness among implementing partners" (from Official ACT Document of October 1995). ACT should be invited to promote disaster preparedness in the Region. It could co-operate with the ecumenical agencies including MCIC and DA as they are likely for sometime to be the key implementing partners in disaster response. Denial of co-operation may result in exclusion from ACT funding. But this is hardly to be expected as agencies should also be interested in well prepared, well informed and well equipped local partners. As important as any training is the systematic approach of positioning and endowing local partners in line with their resources and according to what might be expected from them.

A hub for long-term development is at present difficult to conceive as an operational or even co-ordinating body. Unless development is defined for the Region and a common understanding reached on concepts, approaches and methodologies, the basis would be missing for a concerted approach and co-operation.

It is therefore suggested that this hub be mandated exactly with the task of elaborating concepts and

A hub for long-term development might gradually transform itself into a body for co-ordination or, at least, recommendation of ecumenical action and co-operation. Terms of reference for development and co-operation elaborated by it could also serve as guidelines for partners wanting to align with the regional process and looking for partners. However it must be realised that the participation of the non-operational funding agencies is the cornerstone of this endeavour. Their backing provides the necessary credibility and their insistence on adherence to agreed policies and standards of co-operation will assure the necessary discipline to realise the regional approach.

A hub for return programmes seems to be advisable as return programmes affect at least two and possibly four countries. This hub would identify areas of co-operation between implementing agencies working in the same area and between them and churches and peace groups which are involved in a peaceful return, and the renewal of deeply traumatised communities. This hub would need to link up with the hub for long-term development with regard to concepts. It is of crucial importance that a community – rather than a result-oriented approach be followed, emphasising the pull effect of an appeased community rather than the push effect of an integrated return programme focusing on a specific and usually very small group of refugees or IDPs.

It may be difficult to find a co-ordinating agency for this hub. Operational agencies may only be ready to assume responsibility if additional funds were to become available. However, the funding should be made conditional on the pursuit of the alternative community approach.

Other hubs may be established as the need arises. It comes to mind to rally churches and groups in a hub for Roma people; co-operation with them is an important regional challenge.

9.10. Financial Implications

Some of the hubs may operate in an advisory, consultancy and reflective capacity, with little cost involved which may be carried by the participating organisations. In general, however, the hubs will require funding for their activities. This funding may take the form of small project funds, seed money or disposition funds, which allow the financing of actions and programmes within an agreed framework.

Some of the hubs may require the funding of the budget of the co-ordinating agency, or even of the participants. It should also be expected that the activities of the hubs will spin off concrete projects which will require funding as well, e.g. the funding of an Ecumenical Centre or Academy, or the publishing of a newsletter.

Some of the funding might come from Stability Pact and EU sources for which this regional ecumenical project wants to qualify. Bilateral and private funds may be tapped as well; however the first and foremost financial backing of the various parts of this project would have to come from WCC-related funding agencies.

The envisaged regional approach is financially flexible both in terms of numbers and extent, as well as in composition and intensity of the planned activities. Flexibility is also provided through the operation of working funds which can be more or less endowed. Therefore, total funding needs and expenses can be well controlled.

However, it should be remembered that democracy, prosperity and rule of law in the Balkans are not only a question of life and death for the people there. Their development impacts also on the peace and well-being of the whole of Europe and beyond.

Further, to strive for ecumenical development co-operation in South-East Europe with the ambitious claim of an integrated approach linking relief, development and reconciliation is costly. But in

self-determination of the people concerned and triggering ripple effects which will mobilise many more initiatives and actions for peace, development and democratisation.

Now is the *Kairos* to go beyond agency and country boundaries and to assist the churches, people and NGOs in the Region to interact for peace and renewal of their societies.

Appendix I

WCC South-East Europe Ecumenical Partnership Research Project
Churches and organizations encountered

HUNGARY

The Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary

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Kisha Ortodokse Autoqefale e Shqipërisë

Mr Artan Kosti, Secretary to the Archbishop
Sister Galini
Fr. Eustinos

Diaconia Agapes

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“Fryma e Deskurisë” – Spirit of Love” Foundation

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Baptist Church of Albania

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Ms Fabiola Laço-Ergo
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Caritas Shqiptar

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WCRP -World Conference on Religion and Peace

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Association of Serbian Sisters

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Association of Serbian Sisters

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Appendix II

South-East Europe Ecumenical Partnership: Preparatory Research project Terms of Reference

WCC account no:

BG0004 South-East Europe Programme

WCC staff person responsible:

Mr Alexander Belopopsky, Europe Secretary

Name of consultant:

Dr Klaus Poser (Germany)

Period of implementation:

February-May 2000 (part-time)

1/ Background

The consequences of the Kosovo crisis and of the NATO bombardment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia mean that the range of challenges facing churches and ecumenical partners throughout the South-east Europe region are immense. For several years, churches and ecumenical agencies working in the region have sought to respond to the long-term needs of people in the region. This situation offers a critical challenge to churches and to broader civil society to contribute effectively to long-term development, ecumenical co-operation and peace-building in the South-East Europe region.

In response to this situation, the WCC Europe Desk, working in close co-operation with the Conference of European Churches, the WCC International Relations Team, and ACT-Action by Churches Together, is seeking to promote co-ordination and strengthen strategic co-operation among churches and partners in the South-east Europe region. A consultation on ecumenical development co-operation in South-East Europe was convened by the World Council of Churches in close consultation with the Conference of European Churches, in Geneva, Switzerland, 22-24 November 1999. Participants in the meeting agreed on a number of priority areas and requested the WCC to commission a research report and to pursue the process.

2/ Definition of the South-east Europe region

WCC and CEC member churches and other partners in the following countries are expected to be included in this process of consultation and research: Albania; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); FYR of Macedonia.

3/ Purpose of research project

The project will seek to strengthen co-ordination and co-operation and a closer linkage between relief, reconciliation and development among ecumenical partners in South-East Europe, through the research and publication of a report on the region. The purpose of the project will be to gather information and analysis on the church and ecumenical context in the region, and to identify a framework and possible priorities for ecumenical cooperation in the region during the coming 2-3 years. The report of this short-term research project will provide the basis for a discussion among ecumenical partners during a WCC South-East Europe Partnership Meeting, planned for June 2000.

4/ Specific objectives

- To analyze the current socio-political and ecumenical context, the on-going impact of the crises on societies in the region, and possible future political developments which may challenge churches in the coming period ;
- To research and collate information on church and ecumenical partners in the region;
- To review the existing church and ecumenical (non-emergency) development initiatives in the region;
- To engage with churches and other partners on the ecumenical and diaconal and development needs and priorities of the region;
- To prepare an inventory of international and governmental priorities and funding opportunities for the region;
- To propose preliminary findings and outline possible strategic directions and programmatic priorities for WCC/CEC and related ecumenical partners in the areas of ecumenical collaboration and of development co-operation, including eventual new ecumenical instruments and mechanisms

5/ Working methods

The consultant may use a variety of working methods in the preparation of the research report. Particular attention should be given to the consultation and involvement of local churches and other partners in the process; to ensuring the full involvement of women and men in all stages of the research; and to careful recording of data which may be used for further networking.

6/ Phases / Timetable of the project

February 2000

The consultant is appointed by the WCC on behalf of ecumenical partners to elaborate with local churches and partners an in-depth analysis of the development needs and the ecumenical context in the region.

19-24 February 2000

Travel to Serbia with WCC/CEC delegation.
Consultation with member churches and partners.

March 2000

Further briefing with WCC/CEC staff and other organizations in Geneva.
Consultant travels to FYR of Macedonia ; Bosnia-Herzegovina ; FRY/Montenegro ; Albania ; FRY/Kosovo.
Consultation with member churches and partners.

April 2000

Consultant visits agency partners in Europe.
Drafting of report.

Early May 2000

Final draft of report is circulated to WCC and reference group for discussion.

15-16 May 2000 (to be confirmed)

WCC reference group with other experts meet with consultant to discuss draft report.

End May 2000

The final report with any revisions is circulated widely to provide a basis for common discussion among partners in the region.

5 June 2000

First meeting of the South-East Europe Ecumenical Partnership Forum in Skopje, Macedonia FYR (dates and venue to be confirmed), convened by WCC in consultation with CEC, and open to all interested partners. The meeting will discuss and approve the report as a basis for establishing the Ecumenical Partnership, and would agree on programme priorities and common instruments for ecumenical development co-operation in the sub-region in the coming period.

7/ Reporting of the project

The consultant will submit a written report of a maximum length of 100 pages (including appendixes) in English language to the WCC Europe Desk, in hard copy and electronically, according to the agreed plan.

The report should include the following elements:

- Cover page with name, period, consultant's details and mention of WCC.
- A concise executive summary of the report including major findings.
- Contents page.
- Review of purpose, process and methods of the research report.
- Main body of the report, including sections relating to the specific objectives of the research (see above - point 4).

Appendixes may include:

- project terms of reference.
- list countries and partners visited.
- list of sources and important documents.
- inventory of church and partner data.
- map of the area visited.
- additional detailed information relevant to the report.

If the report contains confidential information obtained from parties other than WCC, this information should be presented as a separate annex.

8/ Agreement

The consultant and the WCC will agree terms and conditions in a separate, signed, partnership agreement.