

Integrity in
Integration

Developing
Sustainable
Dialogue

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Ecumenical Anthology VII of
the WSCF Central European Subregion

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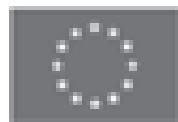
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Building with Integrity

The Turkish poet Nâzim HIKMET wrote, in his famous poem I love my Country, the following verses:

I love my country:
I've swung on her plane trees, been inside her prisons.
Nothing dispels my depression
Like her songs and tobacco.¹

These few words depict in a very condense way the ambivalence of the poet's feelings for his country – an ambivalence that many of us experience from time to time. Both for our own country and for other countries, for the community we belong to and for other communities.

This book – and the project in which it is rooted – attempt to look for the best in our own identity and in the identities of others, in our own tradition and in the traditions of others. In other words, to bring forth what connects and enriches us and to maximise the space for it.

Only by understanding ourselves, our heritages and dreams, and those of others around us, can we truly look towards creating and developing the future together. As Winston CHURCHILL once said: "First we shape our buildings, then our buildings shape us."

I. History of a Movement

Our Central European ecumenical youth cooperation has aimed to build up paradigms of peace and reconciliation through dialogue, and to strengthen Central European identity before and after joining the European Union (EU) by mutual education, cooperation and cultural exchange.

The idea of a Central European ecumenical youth cooperation was born in 2001 amongst a group of young people from Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, who came to know each other through the activities of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF).

Established in 1895 as the first international youth and student organisation, and the first ecumenical movement, WSCF has more than a hundred years of experience in grassroots activities similar to ours: breaking down barriers of centuries-old enmities and mistrust.

The first incarnation of our Central European cooperation began during the *interwar years* (1921–1939), starting just after the Versailles treaties, in the form of conferences of Austrian, Czech, Slovak, Magyar, Polish, and even Romanian and Yugoslav students, devoted to reconciliation and developing future ecumenical leaders.

In 2001 we felt that our respective countries were facing very similar and parallel challenges and we could benefit immensely from addressing these issues in a multinational context, which would also further awareness of cultural diversity and help to establish a Central European identity within Europe as a whole.

WSCF was founded for the specific purpose of healing the painful divisions which tear apart Christianity. She wanted to heal it by coming to a full knowledge and understanding of each denomination's uniqueness and the special richness each denomination adds to our common body, the Church.

II. Dialogue and Identity

We are committed to realising in society the values issuing from our faith: peace, justice and respect for human dignity, developed through a *culture of dialogue*, tolerance and appreciation of diversity.

There is an ongoing dialogue among the countries situated between Germany and the former Soviet Union, in the heart of Europe, to rediscover their belonging together, and to develop their sense of common identity. Central Europe is in a strategic geopolitical as well as spiritual position. Here not only Orthodoxy meets Western Christianity, but also Protestantism meets Roman Catholicism. The issue at stake is *identity* – how we define ourselves and how we define the 'Other'.

Identity is a sensitive issue particularly in this region of the world, where the legacy of crumbled empires is a collection of nation states haunted by a history of majority (or minority) oppression and

¹ HIKMET Nâzim, *Beyond the Walls*. London, 2002. 100.

subjugation. In order to fully integrate in the EU, it is imperative that citizens of our countries come to define themselves in terms larger than our own nationality, culture, religion or religious denomination. Central Europeans can contribute to the unity of Europe with their own unity within Central Europe.

Thus our *objectives* are to *deconstruct national, denominational and religious prejudices* in Central Europe through intercultural and interdenominational dialogue; to *build additional supra-national identities and relationships* through cross-border cooperation; and to *educate new generations of committed leaders* through training and practical leadership experiences.

III. Ongoing Methodology

We organise *two seminars* each year, and the responsibility to host each seminar rotates. Special care is also taken to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to share their perspectives, in particular many minority voices. The themes are carefully chosen to cover a broad area, providing a solid background on issues of importance to future Central European leaders and youth leaders. Our first seminar on *Ecumenism and Central European Identity* was held in the Békés Gellért Ecumenical Institute (BGÖI), in Pannonhalma, Hungary, in 2002.

Since then, we have focused on a variety of topics: Growing EU: Hopes and Fears of Members and Candidates; Central European Culture; The Myth of Independence; Searching for Security in the XXIst Century; Ecology and Environmental Protection, Corporate Social Responsibility; Leadership and Decision-Making in Democratic Communities; Conflict Resolution in our Inner Life and in Community; Overcoming Nationalism, Xenophobia and Populism in Modern Societies; The Spirit of Central Europe Sixty Years after Shoah; Minority Integration and Sustainable Renewal; Equality of Chances or Equal Discrimination.

Each year we publish an *ecumenical anthology* (which are also downloadable from our website: www.wscf-cesr.org) to follow up the themes of the seminars and to spread them to a broader audience. The first anthology, *A Pentatonic Landscape: Central Europe, Ecology, Ecumenism* was compiled and published by the Békés Gellért Ecumenical Institute (BGÖI) in Pannonhalma, Hungary, in 2002.

The title and topic of the other five publications are as follows: The River Book: Identity, Culture and Responsibility; medi(t)ations, (re)

conciliations: Conflict Resolution and European Integration; Subtle as Serpents, Gentle as Doves: Equality and Independence; Dreaming Our Neighbour: The Shoah and the Utopia of Yesterday; Roots of Vision, Routes of Change: Nationalism and Ecumenical Leadership.

Our cooperation is *wholly conceived and implemented by youth* (ages eighteen to thirty-five). We work to promote *civil society* – young people engaging in private efforts for the public good, taking the initiative for social development through collective action. Young people are involved at all levels in activities, from organisation to participation, implementation to strategic oversight. The participating countries, following the example of the EU, take turns providing the chairperson for the cooperation every half year. Our main goal is to educate generations of students and young people, who acknowledge their responsibility and are prepared to take up the challenge of building a common Central European future.

We also implement cooperative *informal education* in all our seminars, led by the participants themselves, in the form of workshops, working groups, discussion groups and moderated panel discussions. Special care is taken always to ensure that each participant is properly encouraged and provided with a space to share her or his knowledge and experience related to the general or specific topic.

To the theoretical dimension we add the practical dimension of *learning by doing*, not just from lecturers and leaders, but also from each other, as we come together to learn and work across boundaries of nation, gender, ethnicity and religion. We believe that the only way young people can learn to work and make decisions in an international and intercultural context is simply to be enabled to do so, within a suitable and supportive environment.

In a seminar, one significant topic is explored in depth through a variety of methodologies, considering it from every angle to give a true *multidisciplinary* approach. The seminar programme itself consists of a combination of lectures as well as first-hand experiences through cultural excursions.

The *interdisciplinary* method to themes encourages the *synthesis* of information, drawing together understanding and expertise from many walks of life. Education is by its very nature a long-term investment, many times passing through generations: knowledge, wisdom and erudition have no expiration date.

Our cooperation is *designed entirely in a 'bottom-up' manner*, with the needs of the partner organisations determining the direction of the project. Therefore, our programme is structured to provide these

opportunities at different intensities, suitable to the various levels our participants are at and allowing space for them to develop during the course of the project.

Our emphasis is on informal education combined with *leadership training*, which interact and mutually enrich each other. We also foster a sense of *ownership* and responsibility among the many youth involved.

The concept and theory of *dialogue* is central to our philosophy and provides the unifying foundation, which subsumes all our work. We understand it to be an end as well as a means; the experience of engaging in dialogue has value in and of itself. The mentality of dialogue is complementary; it is relational and involves mutual correction: not ‘superior-than’ but ‘in-relation-to’. It allows for issues to be addressed in a multidisciplinary way, rather than artificially removing them from their natural and proper relations.

Dialogue is a crucial prerequisite for deconstructing the oppressive historical dualisms and hierarchical relationships, which breed prejudice, hostility and intolerance. True dialogue assumes that the parties engaging in it meet as *equals*, each bringing a uniquely valuable perspective. Through all our enlisted principles and activities we try to facilitate knowledge, *reconciliation* and appreciation among our nations, thus contributing to an assertive, more unified and ecumenical Central Europe.

IV. Minority Integration and Sustainable Renewal

Near the border to Austria and Germany, within Bohemia, the city of Český Krumlov offers a fascinating case study of minorities within society and of urban renewal and development despite historical political turmoil and international economic pressures. Thus the nearby Poněšice provided a fitting venue for our youth seminar, entitled *Together and Developing: Minority Integration and Sustainable Renewal in Central Europe*. A society, a community at large, can only truly maintain sustainable development with cooperation and participation of all its members, minority and majority.

Karolína RYVOLOVÁ, a PhD student from the Czech Republic, gave a lecture on the history of Roma within Central Europe. She revealed common misconceptions about the origin of the Roma, and gave an overview of the changes in society throughout history that led to the realities of today. Her lecture provided a backdrop for discussion of minority integration in Central European society, a topic which was to be addressed throughout the week.

Ostap PAPAREGA, a specialised trainer from Romania working with community development in Harlowe, Great Britain, led an introductory activity on community development. He began by speaking about community leadership, focusing on the difference between management and leadership as well as on the balance between meeting urgent needs and working towards long term goals.

Bryce BELCHER, an American who has lived in Český Krumlov for the past fifteen years, gave a lecture on the history and current situation in Český Krumlov, revealing it as a case study in sustainable renewal and minority integration. The town originated to serve the needs of the castle, and is an example of seven hundred years of development. Though Český Krumlov escaped destruction during both World Wars, it was left as a ghost town, known as the “dead city”, after the Second World War and the evacuation of the Sudeten Germans.

Gradually, Český Kumlov was resettled by young Czech and Slovak families, as well as by Roma. Uniquely, the town encouraged its residents themselves to rebuild, after decades of decay and abandonment. The city council and residents did not turn towards outside investment and involved all, including the Roma minority, in the renewal process. Today, Český Krumlov is a model in successful development and about two million tourists visit this town of fifteen thousand inhabitants each year.

Jan VONDROUŠ was the first freely elected mayor in Český Krumlov after the Velvet Revolution, and served for eight years. Through his efforts and vision, the Roma were incorporated into the development of the town and the renewal process occurred through local actions, rather than through foreign investment. Our time of discussion with the former mayor provided an inspiring first hand experience with the topic of sustainable renewal.

Martina NOVÁKOVÁ and Karol ZBOŘIL from *Človek v Ohrožení* (People in Peril), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) working with immigrants and refugees in Slovakia, delivered a lecture on the integration of disadvantaged minorities and migrants. Efforts for enduring solutions involve legal, economic, social, and cultural processes. Integration is a dynamic long-term two-way process, involving both the migrant or minority and the hosting society.

Participants gathered in the cinema to watch *Smell* (The Brats) (*Smradi*) (Rotzbengel), a Czech film by Zdeněk TYC (1956–) in 2002, about a family with two adopted Roma children who migrate within the Czech Republic, revealing the everyday tolerance and intolerance that exists towards the *other* in regular life.

V. Folk Traditions in Intercultural Dialogue

Culture is changing and redefining itself along transnational lines. Therefore, our student seminar *Folk Traditions as a Basis for Intercultural Dialogue in Central Europe*, organised in Supraśl, Poland, aimed to discuss the importance of folk culture today, examining for example the following questions:

What are the roots and shared components of our folk traditions? Is folk culture still developing today? What are the influences? Can it be modern? Can young people influence and contribute to folk culture? Do they feel responsible for it? How is folk art and culture preserved or continued among younger generations within Central Europe today? What role does folk culture have in personal identity? Can we use our folk traditions as a source for intercultural dialogue?

Participants joined in a scavenger hunt around the venue, the nearby Orthodox monastery, Monaster Zwiastowania Najświętszej Marii Panny w Supraślu, and in the town of Suspraśl. Their task was to both photograph and sketch the folk art they found around them, in this way allowing all to explore their conceptions of folk culture and how it is portrayed or used within the local context.

On another day, participants also went by a small transport train to the monastery for a tour of its icon museum. The tour guide explained the religious traditions and origins surrounding the icons in the museum's extensive collections.

On the excursion day, all travelled to Czarna Wies Koscielna, a small Polish town, to visit a blacksmith and a pottery shop, before going to Czarna Białostocka to see the weaving process. These artisans showed traditional techniques, told about their histories and efforts to preserve and market their goods in an increasingly globalised world.

In Kruszyniany, the home of a Tatar minority, participants had a traditional Tatar lunch before visiting a Tatar mosque and hearing a presentation from a local Tatar about the integration of traditional Tatar culture and lifestyles in the area throughout history and today.

NÉMETH Márton, a masters' student of European history, who works at the Magyar National Library, gave a lecture entitled *Folk Culture, Literature and Nation-Building Efforts in the Modern Age of Central Europe*.

A lecture was given about traditional Slovak town bynames by Katarína BABICOVÁ and Zuzana BABICOVÁ, from Slovakia. By focusing on the origin of these names, they were able to explore the roots of various histories and current names in contemporary society.

An orthodox priest from Białystok, Włodzimierz MISIJK, who had formerly been the Eastern European Coordinator for WSCF global from 1991–1995, gave a lecture on folk traditions and religion, following up from the earlier excursion to the monastery. He talked about the history of the region as well as the difference between Tradition and traditions in the Church, and about how these traditions, both similar and different, influence dialogue among youth.

A film-screening of *Pacho: The Thief of Hybe* (*Pacho, Hybský Zbojník*, 1976), written by Peter JAROŠ and directed by Martin ČAPÁK, parodying the Slovak national hero, Juraj JÁNOŠÍK, was shown before an outdoor picnic one evening, complete with a Polish folk band and dancing.

VI. Behind the Images

Boldi, alias SZMRECSÁNYI Boldizsár (<http://boldi.sculptor.hu>), was born in 1970 in Budapest, Hungary. He majored in the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Wien, and in the Magyar Academy of Fine Arts, before completing his Master's School in the Janus Pannonius University of Sciences in Pécs.

He had individual exhibitions in Budapest, Veszprém, Tihany, Győr and Fonyód in Hungary; as well as in Rome, the Hague and Wien. His sculptures can be found in public places in Körmend and in various districts of Budapest; as well as in Dunajská Streda (Dunaszerdahely, Slovakia), Rome and Campocecina (Italy), La Charité-sur-Loire (France), Brusque (Brazil), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Woerden (the Netherlands), Ayia Varvara (Cyprus) and Guatemala Town.

His overwhelming passion is marble, especially marble quarried in Carrara. His technique is *taille directe* (direct carving): forming the material with (flat, toothed or claw) chisel, hammer, point, file and finally polisher, without set plans, sketches and models. Thus the concept and idea of the sculpture comes into light in the process itself.

His works are organic, impressive, monumental, elementary, individual, and highly original. Their authenticity comes in a great measure from their and the artist's orientation Godwards. Thus there are not only aesthetic, but also ethical standards shining and radiating from his artwork: patience and care, dignity and honesty, precision and passion.

We are very grateful that we could include photos (most of them made by RÁTKI János from Képesítő Műhely); as well as by

Csíkszentmihályi Márton and VARGA Gábor) of his wide-arching artwork.

These sculptures are: *Golden Fish* (front cover), *Odysseus* (Ulysses, inner front cover), *Archer* (2004), *Concerto, Morning, Dance, Theatre, Woman Braiding her Hair, Brazilian Woman, Shell, Mother with her Child* (2001), *Sitting Archer, Head II., Straight Back, Saint Francis, Watching the Stars, Motherhood, Archer* (2004), *Music, Genesis IV., Orpheus, The Good Shepherd, Stone Head, Sunbathing, Mother with her Child, and Europe* (inner back cover), *Shell* (back cover).

VII. From Back to Foreground

We remain thankful to the Benedictine Archabbot of Pannonhalma, Bishop VÁRSZEGI Asztrik OSB, the director of the Békés Gellért Ecumenical Institute (BGÖI), for his strong and unceasing support.

We are especially grateful to our seminar donors: the *Youth in Action Fund* of the European Union, the *International Visegrád Fund* (IVF, www.visegradfund.org), and the *Lingua Franca* programme of WSCF-Europe.

In particular, we would like to thank our mother organisation, the *World Student Christian Federation Europe Region* (WSCF-E, www.wscf-europe.org), and the European Regional Committee (ERC), especially her chairperson, Alessia PASSARELLI, and her regional secretary, Jooa VUORINEN, for their support and valuable incentives.

Finally, we would like to thank the preparatory and the hosting committees of our two seminars, as well as our coordinator, who spent valuable time and care planning and working for the realisation of our activities.

At our winter seminar, in Poněšice, the preparatory committee members were Zuzana BABICOVÁ, Marianne BSTEH, Jiří BUKOVINSKÝ, Adam GAJDOŠ and NÉMETH Zsófia. Myroslava BUKOVINSKÁ was on the hosting committee.

In Supraśl, in the summer, the preparatory committee members were Katarína BABICOVÁ, Tobias HECHT, Sára POKORNÁ, Anna SKIEPKO and SZÜCS Laura. Marlena RYSIO and Grzegorz SAWICKI were on the hosting committee.

The preparation of both of the mentioned seminars was overseen by our coordinator Rachael WEBER, whose excellent work and experience greatly contributed to the smooth course of the events.

In addition, Jiří BUKOVINSKÝ and Stephan ANZENGRUBER both served

as chair of CESR this year, and were deeply involved in the planning and organization of the seminars, also supporting and overseeing the Subregion through their work.

Together, these teams of members of our sister organisations worked to fundraise, organise, implement, and follow-up our joint activities. We are extremely grateful for their efforts and vision.

VIII. Developing Community

At each seminar, a community of dialogue is developed within the setting of the week. The challenge to build such communities, sustainable spaces for dialogue and peace, lasts beyond the time constraint of the seminar, providing an aim for WSCF, CESR, and all individuals involved.

We are challenged to multiply the dialogue in our daily lives and environments. Quoting the Spanish poet, Antonia MACHADO: “Travellers, there is no path. Paths are made by walking.” And these new paths must be walked.

Each section of this publication elaborates on these themes, focusing on the development of sustainable integration in both society and the Church, on dialogue between cultures and religions and on integrity of identity in the plurality of a multicultural and multireligious Europe and world.