



Around Europe

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Regional Truth Commission in the Western Balkans needs EU support

The need for a regional approach to the process of dealing with the past originates from the nature of the conflicts that took place during the 1990s and the subsequent post-conflict transition of the countries involved. Each post-

Yugoslav society has different truths and historical accounts of the past, especially when it comes to war crimes. In many cases, these truths are not based on facts, but on political opinion and interpretation. The denial of crimes perpetrated against others and acknowledgement of only one's own victims remain obstacles to a lasting, stable peace and have been used as tools by political opportunists. What's more, there is still a widespread fear in the region that the crimes could recur in the near future.

For years now peacebuilders in the region have recognised the need for a regional commission for truth-seeking and truth-telling about war crimes. Establishing a common truth about the conflicts and challenging the prevailing, exclusive narratives about the past requires a regional effort that involves each of the post-conflict societies. Cross-border dialogue and debate of contested issues is crucial if a minimum level of trust between the different ethnic communities is to emerge and prevent future conflict.

The good news is that the process of creating such a commission is underway. A Regional

Coalition for establishing the Regional Commission for Truth-seeking and Truth-telling about War Crimes (RECOM) has been formed by over 100 of the region's peacebuilding organizations. Once formally established the



Mostar's Old Bridge: a symbol of hope after the war's destruction

Regional Commission will provide a public platform for victims to be heard and to be acknowledged by others. It will also promote tolerance and understanding by enabling parties in the conflict to hear the pain and sufferings of the opposing side. This would help build compassion, solidarity, and social responsibility. The Regional Commission will also provide clear

evidence on how certain institutions, individually or in concert with others, failed to protect human rights in the past.

However, what still remains to be done is to secure the support of the region's governments. The support of the EU would help peacebuilders achieve this. Indeed, supporting such an

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QCEA's New Programme Assistant Faye Morten



Following a three year stint in Leicester studying for my Law degree I decided to take a break from education and travel the world, an unforgettable experience which promised to be over far too soon. Before long I found myself back in Yorkshire with a rapidly fading suntan and a little bit crestfallen... what should I do now?

Criminal justice and human rights within the working of the European Union first revealed itself to me in the content of my course at university. Being a reader of *Around Europe* I noticed the overlap between the work QCEA was doing and what I was learning. I came across the advertisement for the Programme

Assistant's position and inquired further into it. The opportunity to work for an NGO such as this and in a field so naturally inviting to me sealed the deal, I made my application and here I am!

I will be applying myself to the Criminal Justice Project, continuing with the focus on imprisonment. I am eager to contribute to QCEA's research into the social and political problems at the root of crime and continuing from this, alternatives to custody and the treatment of vulnerable individuals within the penal system. In addition to this I will be working on QCEA's contribution to the EU Budget Review and within EPLO for the working group Fundraising for Peace.

I am thrilled to be in Brussels with the opportunity to participate in the activities of QCEA. I look forward to the coming year and hope I can rise to the challenges set for me...and eat my weight in chocolate.

Faye Morten

Book Review: The State of the Middle East

2009 has not started well in the Middle East. So if you have resolved to make an effort to get a grasp on the issues, a reference work of such excellent quality as this publication by Dan Smith is just what you need. This is the second edition of the book and it is as up to the minute as is possible in a printed publication.

The book is divided into three sections: The Shaping of the Middle East sets out the history, going as far back as the Ottoman Empire and 1300 AD. It provides a helpful overview of how the current situation in the region has developed without overemphasizing the importance of the very distant past; the text, even in this chapter makes it clear that there are significant causes of the conflicts which lie firmly in the 19th and 20th century. The second section: Arenas Of Conflict, sets out the current situation not only in terms of Palestine and Israel but also in terms of the other parts of the region. This section makes very interesting if hard reading. The final section: The State of the Nations, puts a great deal of information into a region-wide statistical context.

It would be an impossible task to provide an overview of the content of this book. It is a book packed with information; it is presented

exceptionally well, with chronologies, text, maps and other graphics which together give a very quick overview in response to most questions about the region which an informed and interested lay person would want to ask. It is an excellent introduction but also holds much useful information for those with prior knowledge. And it does not shy away from politically controversial positions. In reading it, the fact that it is not possible to sit on the fence on this one, becomes unavoidable. Prepare to be challenged.

Dan Smith has achieved clarity about a situation which is so complex that many others would not want to tackle it. He acknowledges the work of Isabelle Lewis on the cartographic design and as a map junkie I have to highlight the excellence of these maps. It is a real pleasure to read them.

This is a must have and must read for anyone who wants to be informed (rather than shaped by propaganda) on this important set of issues. The full title is 'The State of the Middle East: An Atlas of Conflict and Resolution' by Dan Smith and it is available in paperback for only £12.99 from the publisher's website at: <http://www.earthscan.co.uk/>

Martina Weitsch



No Development without Peace

‘There will be no development without security and there will be no security without development.’ These were the words of the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan in 2005. He could not have been more right.

Development assistance has an important role to play in preventing violent conflict through addressing the root causes. But it can also trigger conflict, however, and end up doing more harm than good. People may feel bypassed or misled and frustrations may fuel violence. It is, therefore, important for development cooperation to mainstream conflict prevention or, in other words, be conflict-sensitive. The connection between development and peace is widely accepted, but despite this, development practitioners continue to sideline conflict-related issues in their daily work.

The European Commission has committed itself to mainstreaming conflict prevention in its development cooperation since 2001. Some progress has been made. Some positive examples worth mentioning are that the recent country strategy paper (CSP) for Uganda mentions conflict sensitivity as an issue to be mainstreamed; and that the checklist of root causes of conflict and the guidelines on conflict prevention have been developed by the Commission to assist the officials drafting CSPs and making decisions on programming. The achievements made often depend to a large extent on the commitment of interested individuals within the institutions. Dedicated officials are of great importance but mechanisms need to be put in place centrally by the Commission, to ensure that conflict prevention is mainstreamed, and especially in partner countries that are experiencing conflict or fragility.

A thorough, participatory, conflict analysis is the basis of conflict-sensitive development and without it there is no way of ensuring that any project or programme will do more good than harm to the local population. This is true at all

levels, from the smallest project to the comprehensive strategies defining cooperation with countries and regions. The European Commission does not normally base its decisions on this kind of analysis - a weakness identified by, among others, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC). This needs to be addressed.

The European Commission provides much of its aid directly to the budget of partner countries, through so-called budget support. The Commission argues that this is the best way in which to strengthen country ownership, and promote sound and transparent public finances, and it lowers the transaction costs. Arguments against this include that it gives the

donor more power over how the partner countries manage their budgets and how they prioritise, as a form of conditionality. Budget support focuses on the finances of a government and conflict is often perceived as too sensitive an issue to be dealt with in this context. If government spending benefits particular groups, however, this practice may unintentionally lead to conflict by deepening and prolonging economic inequalities.

The same is true for support to infrastructure projects, an area at which substantial European funding is directed. Such projects may or may not be perceived as prioritising certain regions and this can be a conflict driver.

QCEA has recently published a report on how the European Commission is living up to its commitments concerning the mainstreaming of conflict prevention in its development cooperation. The report also describes how the European Commission carries out its development cooperation from a conflict prevention perspective and includes a case study on Uganda. It can be downloaded from our website: www.quaker.org/qcea

*Sara Erlandsson
- former QCEA Programme Assistant*

“There will be no development without security and there will be no security without development...”

Kofi Annan



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initiative is in the EU's best interests. The resolution of latent conflicts and unresolved issues before the region's countries become Member States has to be a priority if their membership is to be a success. Furthermore, many of the internal ethnic tensions that are paralysing the pre-accession process in Bosnia-Herzegovina will only be resolved if the regional manifestations of the same tensions are addressed. Dealing with the past is a major part of this.

Recent developments suggest that the EU is gearing up to support initiatives like this one. Cross-border cooperation is an area targeted by its Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, which only this autumn highlighted intercultural exchanges that promote dialogue, tolerance and social inclusion as being initiatives it wants to support in the future. The EU has stopped short

of explicitly offering its support to regional truth-seeking and truth-telling projects, however the potential is there. Whether this potential is realised or not remains to be seen.

*Text and photo: Calum Shaw
-former QCEA Programme Assistant*

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