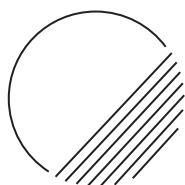


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Editorial

Sehr geehrte Leserin, sehr geehrter Leser,

zwölf junge Autorinnen und Autoren aus elf verschiedenen Ländern Südosteuropas folgten unserem Aufruf, einen Beitrag zu unserem Schwerpunkt „Junge Menschen in Südosteuropa: Situation, Hoffnungen, Perspektiven“ zu schreiben. Die Beiträge schwanken – manchmal auch innerhalb eines Artikels – zwischen sehr persönlichen Überlegungen und eher wissenschaftlich intendierten Analysen. Einige Themen ziehen sich wie ein roter Faden durch alle Ausführungen; sie sind ein Spiegelbild der tiefen Besorgnis angesichts der überall spürbaren politischen, wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Krisen, von denen die Jugend in besonderer Weise betroffen ist: Zweifel an der Qualität der Bildung im eigenen Land als Schlüssel zu einem späteren Job; das Risiko von Arbeitslosigkeit und Armut; und damit verbunden die immer wiederkehrende Frage „bleiben oder gehen?“. Alle Autorinnen und Autoren sahen es als eine große Herausforderung und zugleich Chance an, sich in ihren Beiträgen mit solchen Existenzfragen eines internationalen und öffentlichen Feldes zu beschäftigen. Für einige war es der erste Beitrag in einer „richtigen“ Publikation. Und: alle entschieden sich dafür, ihren Artikel in englischer Sprache zu schreiben. Ein Beleg dafür, dass Deutsch in der jungen Generation bestenfalls noch als zweite Fremdsprache eine Rolle spielt.

Am Anfang unseres Schwerpunktes stehen zwei übergreifende Analysen aus einer eher institutionellen Sicht: Nicolas Moll befasst sich mit dem vom so genannten „Westbalkan-Gipfel“ im Juli 2016 in Paris initiierten „Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)“, das sich in Tirana in Gründung befindet. Und Tanja Dedović von der International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Wien reflektiert über die Chancen der Jugend in Südosteuropa und speziell in Mazedonien, mit einem besonderen Fokus auf die Bedeutung der Migration.

Ein weiterer Artikel in diesem Doppelheft ergründet (im Licht des deutschen OSZE-Vorsitzes 2016 und der Migrations- und Flüchtlingskrise) die Rolle der OSZE-Missionen in den Staaten des westlichen Balkans im Angesicht der Öffnung und späteren Schließung der „Balkanroute“. Eine ausführliche Dokumentation der Arbeit der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Südosteuropa mit zahlreichen Projektbeispielen beschließt die Aufsätze dieses Heftes.

Wir wünschen allen Lesern eine anregende Lektüre und ein glückliches und friedliches Jahr 2017!

Ihr Redaktionsteam

Hansjörg Brey

Claudia Hopf

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Editorial

Young People in Southeast Europe

Situation, Hopes, Perspectives

In July 2016, the third Western Balkans Summit in Paris in its final declaration emphasized the need for a special support to be given to young people: "Improving the perspectives of younger generations is of paramount importance to ensure stability, sustainable development and progress in the region". In Tirana, on the initiative of the summit, a „Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)" is going to be established in January 2017.

Obviously, in times of political crises and social insecurity the perspectives of young people are often precarious. High youth unemployment throughout Southeast Europe is a strong indication for this. In this volume of our journal we provide a forum to young persons from the region, plus those who, through specific projects, care for the future of the young generation.

We confronted young people from our partner countries in Southeast Europe with various questions: What do they expect from the future in their home country? Are there sufficient chances for obtaining a good education and eventually a job in order to earn a living? How do they perceive Europe and the perspectives for a rapprochement towards the European Union? How do they express their dissatisfaction with the status quo and their willingness to change? What options do they see between conformism, protesting against the establishment and the search for a perspective abroad?

All of our young authors from eleven countries considered it both a great challenge and chance to express their experiences and expectations in an article, for some of them their first "serious" publication. Their insights have as many differences as they have issues in common: the quality of education, the chance to get a decent job in one's own country, the risk of poverty, the question whether to stay or to leave - these are the common topics throughout all the contributions.

The first two articles in this special focus set a kind of institutional frame to the personal accounts following. With this unique compilation, we want to help our readers to a better understanding of the personal expectations, hopes and concerns of the young generation in Southeast Europe.

Main Focus:
Young People in Southeast Europe

Summaries

Nicolas Moll

Youth Exchange Projects as Motor for Regional Cooperation? Origins, Development and the Political Significance of the Future "Regional Youth Cooperation Office" (RYCO)

In July 2016, the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia signed the agreement for the establishment of the „Regional Youth Cooperation Office“ (RYCO), a new institutional mechanism which will support the development of youth exchange in the Western Balkans.

This new institution did not come out of nowhere: Since the end of the Yugoslav break-up wars, there have been different regional youth exchange projects, including discussions about possible forms of institutional support for these encounters. But it was only in 2014, within the framework of the "Berlin Process", that the governments of the region took up the idea. Besides the political will of the governments, other decisive factors for the establishment of RYCO have been the support from external actors and the active involvement of civil society representatives.

The article examines different stages which led to the creation of RYCO. It discusses challenges for RYCO and the potential impact the future institution might have not only on young people, but also on the relationship between governments and civil society and on regional cooperation in general within the Western Balkans.

Main Focus:
Young People in Southeast Europe

Summaries

Tanja Dedović

Youth, Migration and Development in Southeast Europe The Example of the FYR of Macedonia

Youth development at the global level is led by the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth and Development. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a member of this network, as adolescent development is clearly linked to migration. In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia a regional trend of high juvenile out-migration is taking place due to several key challenges imposed on the young generation – including high youth unemployment, high rates of young people not involved in the educational process and long transition periods from school to employment. Subsequent high risks of poverty and social exclusion constitute strong incentives for out-migration for young people. Migration under such circumstances includes high risks of using irregular channels and becoming a victim of trafficking or exploitation. Creating a future for the young generation in the FYR of Macedonia requires to equip adolescents with the knowledge and skills matching the economy's demands. This can be achieved through closer cooperation with the private sector and employers in the education system, for example through internships and training opportunities in companies, as well as entrepreneurship training. Given the high out-migration rates of young people, the Macedonian government should promote temporary circular migration schemes with other countries to open up further labour markets and regular migration alternatives for adolescents. Such mobility schemes avoid brain drain, promote brain circulation and can stimulate positive changes through the transfer of money, ideas and investments in the country. Importantly, youth employment and migration policy objectives have to be mainstreamed into national development strategies.

Main Focus:
Young People in Southeast Europe

Summaries

Lura Pollozhani

The Student Movement in Macedonia 2014–2016 Formation of a New Identity and Modes of Contention

The university student movement in Macedonia presented a change in the context of the country's societal and political space. It started in late 2014 and several other movements subsequently followed. However, it was the university student movement which set some modular forms of contention that were later replicated by other movements.

What does the student movement tell us about youth participation and contention in Macedonia? What is the vision that students have of their society? How do they perceive their role within it? The article aims to analyze how agency was constructed through the student protests which enabled the development of a new collective identity and the articulation of the role of students through various forms of contention. The paper examines the university student movement in Skopje between 2014 and 2016 and analyzes the forms of contention that were employed and what purpose they served. It examines the effects and the meaning of the student movement, namely the reclamation of agency by young people, their vision of society and their newly established identity as students.

Victoria Stoiciu

Romanian Youth – Social Exclusion and Political Unrest

The article explores the situation of the Romanian youth, offering an overview on the young people's economic and social inclusion perspectives. The article argues that the high levels of unemployment, lack of access to education and poor living standards are the reason for young people's dissatisfaction with the country's situation and, more broadly, with the performance of democratic institutions in Romania.

The lack of economic perspectives generates a high migration rate to other EU countries, a solution that many young Romanians prefer for better living standards and more opportunities. The article claims that the dissatisfaction with the current situation creates a rejection of the traditional, institutionalized politics and elections and the pursuit of new, alternative forms of political participation, but it also feeds potentially dangerous authoritarian attitudes.

Main Focus:
Young People in Southeast Europe

Summaries

Magdalena Preshlenova

A Generation in Distress: Perspectives of Young People in Bulgaria and Southeast Europe

The current socio-political and economic environment places Europe's youth in a burdensome position. The financial crisis from the past decade, as well as the remnants of the political transitions after the fall of communism in Southeast Europe, have spelled some of the worst conditions for young people in historic terms, particularly in this region.

Youth unemployment is unprecedentedly high. The education system seems to fail in providing young people with the skills and knowledge to succeed. Governments are perceived as vastly detached from the issues relevant to their youngest constituencies. Political apathy is rampant. In the present environment, perspectives of young people are increasingly important, as they signal the urgent areas of action and can navigate social research and government policy. The present paper provides an overview of the current attitudes among young people in Bulgaria and Southeast Europe based on previous research and personal observation, filling some of the existing gaps in common perceptions of young citizens.

Tomáš Smutný

Challenges of the Young Generation in Eastern Europe: Young People in Slovakia

One of the phenomena of our time is the vision and problems of the young generation. Whether in Eastern or Western Europe, the problems of young people are about the same everywhere: Little or no vision for a better life because of youth unemployment, etc. At the same time it is most important that the generation that is building its own future disposes of adequate basics to achieve its goals. The main topic of this article covers the development of the young generation in the Slovak Republic.

In order to understand the perceptions of young people, the article is dedicated to current problems of adolescents in Slovakia. Their points of view are supported by various surveys. Presumably the biggest challenge in Slovakia is the high rate of youth unemployment followed by dissatisfaction with the current state of the education system. Unemployment is also the major issue concerning the question how young people perceive the European Union and the growth of political extremism. To sum it all up, we can say that the better any state and institutions work, the more positive will the future prospects for young people be.

Main Focus:
Young People in Southeast Europe

Summaries

Krenare Gashi

Young People in Kosovo at the Crossroads: To Stay or to Leave? Challenges, Circumstances and Perspectives

The article focuses on the situation of young people in Kosovo. It is divided in two main parts: While the first part illuminates the position of Kosovo's adolescents towards main challenges such as unemployment, a non-sustainable educational system and the country's isolation, the other part highlights the alternatives, respectively the importance of the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

Furthermore, the article focuses on the implications these challenges have caused on youngsters, since Kosovo – the "youngest country in Europe" – became an independent state in 2008. It is explained how much the young generation has adapted to the new reality, and how much the circumstances affect its future perspectives. Besides the challenges, the article seeks to present the opportunities Kosovo's young people can practically benefit from.

Ana Chiciuc

Future Perspectives for Young Moldovan People within the Internationalization of Studies

The article illuminates the subject of internationalization of higher education studies, and the effects of this process on the educational system in ex-soviet countries, namely in the Republic of Moldova. The first part of the text focuses on the reality and problems young people have in the country.

The second part analyzes a study on internationalization processes in some higher education institutions of Moldova. Finally, it refers to young people's perspectives, determined by the process of internationalization in the educational system of Moldova. The experience gained within academic mobility training schemes represents an advantage for young people. They can benefit from a cultural exchange, apply the knowledge and good practices in their home countries, broaden their cultural horizons, and strengthen their employability chances.

Main Focus:
Young People in Southeast Europe

Summaries

Adna Subašić

A Life Dilemma of Young People in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Leave or Stay?

There is a stereotype about the life of young people in Southeast Europe and in many respects it is correct: Young people are most affected by unemployment (in BiH 67 % of adolescents are jobless). We are excluded from political and social life, and our education system is chaotic and offers no perspective for the future. The priority of 77 % of the young people in BiH is to leave the country and go to EU member states, the USA or elsewhere in search for a better life and higher quality education.

The alternative to leaving is staying in Bosnia and Herzegovina / BiH and creating an efficient youth organization that can achieve new goals, unity and a youth leadership – redefining the model of society so that the needs of young people and their potential are taken into account. In fact, this is the key aspect of survival of this society which is, through migrations and other factors, gradually getting older and less educated.

However, only through concrete actions and radical requests from the establishment can young people achieve better positions and a clearer perspective of their future in BiH. Putting the entire young population in the process of change could open up new possibilities in BiH. The students would be particularly important here since they can provide a critical mass for pressure on the government by forcing it to change its underestimating and ignorant attitude towards the young. This though will require the support of intellectual and political elites in Europe which is already expressed towards the talented young people who decide to leave BiH and migrate abroad.

Main Focus:
Young People in Southeast Europe

Summaries

Tomislav Todorović

Youth in BiH's Republika Srpska

The article is about young people in the Republika Srpska, in the North-eastern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), about adolescents' understanding of life and their different attitudes in various aspects of life. It highlights the causes of some of the negative behaviour of the young and tries to give the reader a vision of both pros and cons about living in the area.

The political situation makes adolescents in the Republika Srpska tired of living at home and the best solution for most of them is to try to leave the country – leaving their homes, parents, partners and friends. The war 1992-1996 devastated nearly every family and young people live under the pressure of fear and hate. BiH's education system is horrible, with teachers spreading ignorance instead of teaching peace. Adolescents are deeply divided, unorganized, with passive fatalistic attitudes that things will not and cannot change. But not everything is as dark as it seems because there are those who resist being part of the paralysed society.

Milica Škiljević

Young People in Serbia: Situation, Hopes, Perspectives

The article analyses the current situation in Serbia from the perspective of young people. It tackles the two most important issues for them – education and employment – and tries to confront their perceptions with potential solutions.

Providing a rather personal insight and understanding, the article discusses Serbia's accession process to the EU and the upcoming launch of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office. Both are seen as new mechanisms to enable Serbian young people with a broader understanding and the possibility to increasingly include them in mobility schemes and the development of politics as a long-term solution towards regional cooperation and future perspectives.

Main Focus:
Young People in Southeast Europe

Summaries

Florijan Bašić

Problems and Perspectives of the Young People in Croatia

The article stresses the main problems of the Croatian economy and society. Young people are one of the groups that are most influenced by these problems. Youth unemployment, public debt, the educational system and labour market are the main problems for the adolescents in Croatia.

But even though young people are influenced by many negative trends in society and economy, they have a perspective in Croatia and in the EU as well. They are the ones who are the important factor for future changes and the politicians should give them a real chance. Young people in Croatia are educated and they are willing to work and to make contributions. But the state must not be an obstacle on their journey. They gain experience through national and European projects, and so they can help other young people in the EU candidate countries to benefit from the EU and change the situation in their own countries.

Dafina Peci

Young People in Albania: Looking for the "Promised Land"

It's not easy at all to deal with life as a young person in Albania, nowadays. Having the possibility to see the best images of a world full of beauty, fancy lifestyle, money and luxury, from social media and technological development, does not correspond in general with the opportunities that our state offers and more generally with our economic development. Between the need to express themselves, to enjoy years full of energy and explore the world around, young people have to deal with shaping their present and future, taking responsibilities and finding a solution in a system which does not guarantee a lot.

Except their personal and professional life, adolescents in Albania are struggling to bring a voice into those structures which will decide about them. Of course that needs good will, competence and continuing perseverance. It is important to note that in the years of Albanian transition we are now facing a little higher inclusion of youngsters into politics. This actually is good news because it shows that there is hope, energy and motivation to bring change – not only for this young generation but also for the generations to come. European integration is a challenge which can be achieved only through political awareness and tenacity for a better life. Young people in Albania do have that power.

Main Focus:
Young People in Southeast Europe

Summaries

Regilla Bastian

A Greek Eye on the Future Young People in Greece and Europe

Greece – as well as many EU countries – is in an admittedly hard situation, regarding politics, economics, social injustices, etc. This situation has taken its toll on everyone, but mostly on the younger generations and their perception of the future of Europe. On the one hand, we are facing extremism, which has started to arise since the beginning of the refugee crisis. On the other hand, youth unemployment and cut-backs on public expenditure – with whatever consequences these may have – are examples of how a stable future for young people is slowly being destroyed.

Is Greece capable of protecting its young citizens from dangers such as waste of potential? Does moving to some other EU country sound more appealing? Is there light at the end of the tunnel for the younger generation? I frequently like to think maybe, but possibly not. I also feel that we must remain committed to create this light, to enlarge it and share it with the young in Greece, in Southeast Europe and elsewhere. Despite everything and in light of.