

# PROTOCOL ON INTER-ETHNIC TOLERANCE

*This Protocol was signed for the first time in Tuzla on January 21. 2002 by three mayors from three neighbouring countries – Serbia and Monte Negro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia – Jasmin Imamaovic (president of local council in Tuzla), dr.sc. Zlatko Kramarić (mayor of Osijek) and Borislav Novaković (president of executive board in Novi Sad), and also representatives of NGOs: project leader: Aleksandar Popov (Centre for Regional Cooperation – Novi Sad), Vehid Sehic(Forum of Citizens – Tuzla) and dr.sc. Milan Ivanovic (Centre for Peace Nonviolence and Human Rights-Osijek)*

*At the **Conference on Tolerance and Understanding**, held in Belgrade on July 5-6 .2004, the protocol was signed by representative of another 34 towns and more than 34 NGOs from South-Eastern Europe.*

**Aware** of the fact that post-socialist transition of the economic and political system, state of law and stabilization of democracy are essentially dependent on the culture of peace, tolerance, trust and stable inter-ethnic relations,

**Committed** to the European system of civic values, to the realization of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe and integration in the EU institutions, and to the policy of respect, neighborly relations and cooperation between the states to the benefit of their citizens, regions and local self-governments,

**Adherent** to the philosophy and legacy of civilization of inalienable human rights and freedoms, including the idea that the extent of democracy in modern political orders is measured by the majority's relation to the minorities,

**In accordance** with the standards of the UN, OSCE and Council of Europe, in relation to the protection of rights and freedoms of national and ethnic minorities,

**Being of opinion** that borders between the neighboring states and regions safeguard the preservation of self-distinctiveness, but deeming that those borders are not there to disregard the likeness and the need for inter-communication and free exchange of commodities, people and ideas,

**Hoping** that minorities will no longer be used as an “apple of discord” between nations and states,

**Confident** that the time is coming when the old and new national minorities, with guaranteed rights and freedoms to cherish and develop their cultural identity, will become the important lever in the overall cooperation,

**Intending** to preserve the multicultural wealth of their environment, to develop the direct and most efficient participation of citizens of all nationalities in the decision-making process related with issues of any interest to their communities, as well as to contribute to the stabilization of the region, communication and cooperation among citizens and institutions of neighboring countries, regions and local self-governments,

**Pursuant** to the European Charter on Local Self-government, and in the spirit of the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter on Regional and Minorities' Languages,

**Realizing** the importance of the process of regional cooperation initiated in the triangle Novi Sad-Osijek-Tuzla,

Citizens, non-governmental organizations and political representatives of the local self-governments (municipal and city) of multicultural cities in Southeastern Europe (West Balkans) hereby accede to the

# PROTOCOL ON INTER-ETHNIC TOLERANCE

---

## Article 1

Signatories of the Protocol on Inter-ethnic Tolerance (hereinafter: the Protocol) hereby declare their adherence to the following objectives, principles and action programs:

### I. OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE PROTOCOL

## Article 2

Protocol objectives and principles are as follows:

1. To establish the social framework for the activities of local self-government bodies, local public institutions, non-governmental organizations and citizens of multicultural cities of Southeastern Europe, in all social, cultural and educational fields, committed to the development of liberal democracy, ethnic and religious tolerance and to the protection of human rights, in accordance with the authentic citizens' needs and with the European system of social values;
2. To preserve cultural diversity, to protect the rights and freedoms of national and ethnic minorities, to cherish the civic virtues and the good tradition of coexistence;
3. To promote the European principles and experiences in the field of human rights, freedom, multiculturalism and interculturalism, as essential pre-conditions of democracy;
4. To oppose to the language of hatred, xenophobia, prejudices, inflexibility and all forms of ethnic and religious intolerance;
5. To develop the civil society, democratic public, social criticism and atmosphere where reason, creativity, competence and responsibility become the main attributes of public debates, political initiatives and decision-making process related with issues of local and regional importance;
6. To create the conditions that facilitate and encourage the use of regional and minority languages, both orally and in writing, in public and in private life;
7. To encourage the mass media to re-affirm the tradition, culture and languages of national and ethnic minorities on the local territory;
8. To develop the communication and cooperation between the citizens, non-governmental organizations and bodies of local and regional self-governments of all countries of Southeastern Europe in accordance with the ratified international treaties and multilateral and bilateral (inter-state) political agreements as well;
9. To improve the culture of law, including the respect for the state, constitutional and legal norms, general deed and local regulations, on the part of members of national and ethnic minority, as well as the respect for the rights of other national minorities and members of the majority who are a minority in certain parts of the state's territory;
10. To affirm the European tradition of open cities and to expand the freedom of market communication, cooperation between the public and private sector for the purpose of prosperous economy, healthy society and sustainable ecological development

11. To join the processes of euroregional cooperation, those being the important factor of the overall development of Europe as a sustainable union of democratic countries and nations, all ethno-national minorities and old and new regions as well.
12. To strive to make borders against the political violence, organized crime and terrorism the only borders in this “Europe without borders” (“Europe of Nations”, “Europe of Citizens”, “Europe of Regions” and “Europe of Minorities”)
13. To solve the problems of communication between the citizens of neighboring countries and members of national communities in the Region of Southeastern Europe which will be created through the potential earlier accession of other countries to the European Union and the so called Schengen visa regime
14. To develop the “triangles” of cooperation into concentric “circles” of cooperation, while respecting the given state of affairs or specific traits of each environment, with a desire to find an area of joint activities, likely and realistically acceptable for each local and regional community.

## II. PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

### Article 3

In the field of education, according to their own abilities, rights and competencies, the signatories of the Protocol will:

- Monitor the realization of state education programs dealing with issues of cultural identity in preparatory schools, elementary and secondary schools and universities;
- Pay special attention to the contents of following subjects: language and literature, history, arts, music and other subjects that are related with vital issues of rights of national minorities to the preservation and development of their own tradition and cultural identity
- Initiate or support activities aimed at training teachers and their assistants and associates in institutions of education, to develop the culture of peace, tolerance and multiculturalism;
- Support the existing programs, or initiate activities in cooperation with the educational authorities and other institutions of alternative education to provide learning of local community languages and introduction of culture of other nationalities and ethnic minorities to the children and adults who are interested in it,
- Take steps to strengthen the trust and prevent the behavior that threatens to spoil the atmosphere of inter-ethnic tolerance and the right to be different within the institutions of education;
- Organize meetings of students and teachers to help them to get to know each other better, to develop creativity, competition and education for tolerance and interculturality

### Article 4

In the field of culture, according to their abilities, rights and competencies, the signatories of the Protocol will

- Take steps to enable wide-ranging cultural development for the members of all national communities, including the improvement of conditions for freedom of expression and development of tradition and culture of national minorities and ethnic communities;
- Periodically organize meetings and manifestations (art, music, film, television and video, eco-cultural manifestations, sports etc.) to promote, particularly among the young, advantages of multiculturalism and inter-ethnic tolerance;
- Organize and support all activities aimed at protection of cultural goods and prevent activities that are detrimental to cultural goods of nationalities, national minorities and ethnic communities;
- Cooperate with all cultural institutions, organizations and associations in the so-called civil sector, committed to tolerance and development of multiculturalism and particularly with organizations and cultural associations of national and ethnic minorities.

#### Article 5

In the field of social organizing, signatories to the Protocol will:

- Incite and develop social organization and coordination of activities of non-governmental (non-profit and profit) organizations that promote multiculturalism and inter-ethnic tolerance and protection of minority rights and cherish tradition and development of the culture of each nationality individually and all together;
- On the basis of public calls for proposals and quality of offered programs, provide financial support to multicultural projects and permanent activities of non-governmental organizations and cultural and educational associations of all national and ethnic communities;
- Help non-governmental organizations to obtain offices and fulfill other working conditions, according to their aptitude and results they achieved.

#### Article 6

In the field of implementation of administrative power and organization of public city services, the signatories to the Protocol will:

- In accordance with state, constitutional and legal regulations, ratified European conventions, as well as in accordance with local regulations, improve conditions for realization of national minorities' rights to the free use of their language in private and public (official) communication, orally and in writing, including the right to use family names and names in the language of the respective minority;
- In accordance with current conditions and to the reasonable extent, provide and encourage the use of officially recognized minority languages and writing systems when it comes to contacts between the citizens and the authorities of the local community and regional authorities, and in printing official documents in corresponding minority languages and so on;
- Respect historical multicultural heritage and requirements of the social environment when it comes to putting up and giving names to the cities and settlements;

## Article 7

In the field of public communication and program policy of the media which serve as a public service, the signatories to the Protocol will:

- Exert influence on local media to inform their citizens in corresponding minority languages as well;
- Encourage or facilitate founding newspapers, radio stations and TV channels in minority languages;
- Encourage promotion of multicultural values, inter-ethnic tolerance and rights of minorities and particularly promote individual achievements, prominent authors and proven human rights activists;
- Oppose to all forms of discrimination, to the language of hatred and to all manifestations of inter-national and religious intolerance.

## Article 8

1. In keeping with the Article 16 of the European Convention on Protection of National Minorities, Signatories to the Protocol will refrain from measures that change the ethnic structure of the population in areas populated by national minorities and which lead to constriction of rights and freedoms implied by this Convention

2. In accordance with norms of state of law and demands of justice, they will make efforts to help the citizens who had left their homes during the past wars in former SFR Yugoslavia and who are not in violation of law, to fulfill their civil and proprietary rights, including freedom to choose their own place of residence.

## Article 9

In accordance with European standards, signatories to the protocol will make efforts to utilize the opportunities provided by the current bilateral and multilateral agreements on cooperation in the field of economy and social life, as well as to initiate drafting and realization of new agreements with the purpose of improvement of cross-border communication and cooperation between countries, regions and cities, i.e. economical, political and civil subjects in the Region.

## Article 10

1. In keeping with the liberal principle of free private enterprising, as well as with experiences of cooperation between the private and public sector in local communities of the countries with stable market democracy, signatories to the Protocol will encourage all activities that strengthen the small and middle scale business
2. Signatories to the Protocol will pay special attention to the establishment of wide-ranging communications between the subjects in economy, including the periodical meetings and fairs, being aware that in doing so they improve the material preconditions of local democracy: production, flow of goods and capital, local border traffic, understanding between people and nationalities, as well as chances for the return of young experts and entrepreneurs from abroad.

#### Article 11

Through their public actions on the local, regional and national level, non-governmental organizations that are signatories to the Protocol will promote and develop the spirit of multiculturalism, especially in the field of:

- Stabilization of preconditions for peace and security in the Region of Southeastern Europe
- Protection of individual and collective rights and freedoms, especially for the members of national minorities and ethnic communities
- Providing information and education to the citizens aimed at encouraging their active participation in the process of post-socialist democratic transition;
- Education of citizens, both young and adult, about European standards, principles and experiences of multiculturalism;
- Cooperation with local government bodies on specific projects, as well as the necessary control and social criticism in the process of decision-making and implementation of public decisions;
- Cooperation and coordination of activities of citizens' associations on projects of public, cultural and political importance
- Civil dialog between the citizens, NGOs, expert and professional associations in the cities and regions of countries of Southeastern Europe

#### Article 12

In order to improve interethnic tolerance and realization of rights and freedoms of national minorities, and in keeping with European standards and recommendations of the High Commissioner for National Minorities at OSCE and respective expert groups, city authorities will make efforts to set up advisory bodies comprised of representatives of local authorities, national communities and non-governmental organizations, to permanently monitor the state of inter-national relations and advise respective institutions of the administration system of public affairs.

#### Article 13

Municipal Councils and City Halls or Municipal and City Assemblies will look into problems and conditions of the improvement of inter-national relations in accordance with their working programs and current situation. In doing so, they will make an effort to put these issues once a year in the agenda of the bodies of local authority.

#### Article 14

In all fields and forms of mutual cooperation, signatories to the Protocol will express their adherence to the principles and solutions of the European Charter on Local Self-government, continuously exchange experiences and promote positive examples of decentralization of power and prepare the local administration to serve as a public service for citizens' interests.

#### Article 15

1. In accordance with their role and influence, institutions of autonomous government and representatives of citizens' interests in country's capitals, as well as in large urban environments, political, cultural and university centers of regions in Southeastern

Europe, are especially important for realization of ethno-cultural justice and development of multiculturalism.

2. For the above-mentioned reasons, we will regard the accession of the government and civil sector of capitals of countries and regions to the Protocol on Interethnic Tolerance as an important encouragement to the overall process of cooperation initiated by this Protocol, as well as to the stabilization of conditions in the Region of Southeastern Europe (West Balkans).

#### Article 16

1. Through their representatives, all participants, signatories to the Protocol, will once a year review the realization of the Protocol and issue a draft plan of future joint activities.
2. As a constituent part of cultural manifestations and actions in “triangles”, i.e. “circles” of cooperation, these working-consultative meetings will be held each year in a different city, and periodically, there will be meetings of all cities signatories to the Protocol.

#### Article 17

Signatories to the Protocol agree to the idea to launch an initiative to form a Joint Award Committee to reward the contribution of individuals and organizations to the improvement of relations between nationalities and cooperation between people, towns, regions and countries. The Award will be called: “National Tolerance Charter“.

### III. ACCESSION OF OTHER SOCIAL SUBJECTS TO THE PROTOCOL

#### Article 18

1. Protocol signatories wish to reaffirm and expand the cooperation initiated in the Novi Sad-Osijek-Tuzla triangle, through the inclusion of new social protagonists.
2. Apart from the Administrative bodies of multicultural cities, countries’ capitals and regional (entity, canton, zupan, province) centers, and neighboring cities of cross-border regions as well, new subjects and equal participants in the process of cooperation initiated by this Protocol may include NGOs, cultural and professional associations, media and other social institutions and organizations which promote human rights, interethnic tolerance and interculturality.

#### Article 19

Stepping out of the process of cooperation defined by the Protocol on Interethnic Tolerance may occur:

- a. In case of public acting against the standards of UN, OSCE and Council of Europe,
- b. In case of continuous absence from every activity related with realization of the Protocol
- c. In case of the official request for stepping out

