

Swiss Cultural Programme

Art Horizons

European Cultural Youth House, Kardjali



Country / region or city:

Bulgaria / Kardjali

Name of Cooperation Project:

European Cultural Youth House (ECYH) Art Horizons

Partner organization:

Krug, Youth Center Foundation (Kardjali / Sofia)

Coaching-/Monitoring-Partner:

Future Association (Sofia)

Duration of Project:

June 2004 – May 2007

In the South of Bulgaria, a region with a big Turkish minority, the partner organization KRUG (circle) is establishing a youth cultural centre. It consists of two "zones": a "professional zone" based in the gallery in the city of Kardjali, and the "live zone" in the neighbouring village of Duzhdovnitsa, where young people were engaged in renovating the building of a former Koran school.

The Turkish population living in the region of Kardjali was deprived of any independent cultural expression during communist times. Moreover, people were even forced to change their names into Slavic (Bulgarian) ones. Therefore, after the political change in 1989, close to 300'000 people of Turkish origin emigrated to Turkey. Nowadays, local Turkish and Bulgarian communities mostly live rather segregated from each other. And the Turkish population is socially and culturally marginalized. The lines of segregation run through cultural institutions as well and there is little mediation happening between the two communities and cultures.

www.artfactories.net

Art Office
Karnigradska 2A
BG-1504 Sofia
artofficessofia@gmail.com
www.artoffice.cult.bg

Pro Helvetia
Swiss Cultural Programme
Hirschengraben 22
CH-8024 Zurich
info@prohelvetia.ch
www.prohelvetia.ch

Link:
www.deza.admin.ch
(Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC)

The project aims at revitalizing this marginalized region with cultural programmes and to create the ground for an active cultural and artistic exchange between young creators and artists. The local communities are invited to join this process – and an international network with other youth cultural organizations is being formed.

The Youth Cultural Center works in two different "zones":

- The **Cultural Center in the village Duzhdovnitsa** is a former koranic school, which in the beginning of the project-phase has been renovated with the help of young people from the region and international volunteers from 8 countries. The multipurpose building and the neighbouring open space allow for professional cultural work in different areas. Main issue is the involvement of the local population and its experience in order to explore the history of the region. In September 2005 the first open air cultural festival with international participation takes place in Duzhdovnitsa.
- The **Gallery in the town of Kardjali**, a space offered by the city council for the purpose of the project, is meeting point and place for experiments for young and culturally engaged people. Many activities combine visual arts and literary writings. Villages from the region regularly receive a platform to present their history, resources and culture. In the adjoining studio drawing courses are organized or the editorial meetings of the literature magazine Krug are held.

The project-staff, mostly young people, receives training in project-cycle management and organizational development to strengthen their team and the efficiency of their work. The large group of volunteers also are invited to join the workshops.

The Swiss Cultural Programme is a joint initiative of the Arts Council of Switzerland PRO HELVETIA and of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC. The SCP encompasses Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Kosovo and the Ukraine.

It supports local partners, which emphasize the variety, independence and performance of cultural life. The SCP cooperation projects focus on the capacity building and institutional development processes of cultural organizations. ■