



GPKT Phase II – Education Committee Report No. 14

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'Art Across Borders' GPKT Student Art Competition

Following the series of multi-ethnic cross-border activities successfully implemented by the GPKT Education Committee since November 2003, which have included sport activities, schools cultural exchanges, English language camps, tolerance campaigns and a series of publications, the Committee completed the second project phase with an art competition. Adopting the slogan 'Art Across Borders', the event was hosted by Bajram Shabani school in



Kumanovo on 29 February. Twenty-four students interested in expressing their talent in art attended, accompanied by art teachers, parents and school directors representing: Musa Zajmi from Gjilan/Gnjilane, 15 Nentori from Presevo, Branko Radicevic from Trgoviste, Koco Racin, Naim Frasheri and Bajram Shabani from Kumanovo.

The event began with a warm welcome from Mr. Ylber Limani, Bajram Shabani school director, who underlined the importance of co-operation between the different communities and expressed the commitment of his school to continue its contribution toward positive relationship building between students and teachers in the region. Such co-operation is crucial for the region's future generation. He stated, "...children representing all GPKT communities know best to express their sincerity and friendship through colors and lines." His speech was followed by a student violin performance and a publication of student's poems from Musa Zajmi School was donated to the host school in recognition of their contribution to the event. Mr. Zika Krstevski from the Kumanovo Education Department was present at the event and appreciated the support of the EastWest Institute GPKT Project in fostering co-operation and understanding among the GPKT communities.

Split into four age groups ranging from eleven to sixteen years old, the students painted pictures on the theme *Art Across Borders*. A judging committee of art teachers from all municipalities was formed to select the winners. Musa Zajmi school from Gjilan/Gnjilane won first place, Bajram Shabani, the host school from Kumanovo, was



second, Branko Radicevic from Trgoviste placed third and 15 Nentori from Presevo took fourth place. Prizes were awarded to all winners. The paintings were immediately exhibited in the school hallway to allow other school children and teachers the chance to see the art work. The exhibition will be open for several weeks in Kumanovo. The paintings will then be framed and the next exhibition is scheduled for Musa Zajmi school in

Gjilan/Gnjilane to mark their school day on 10 May. Mejdi Zymberi, a parent from Gjilan/Gnjilane, who joined the group and participated in such an activity for the first time, was pleased to see the children's paintings. "I'm very impressed by the students passion for art and moreover for their openness to interact with children from different ethnic background representing Kosovo, Serbia and Macedonia communities regardless of the latest political developments that fortunately seems not to have reflected in their attitudes. This is the only way to live in peace with our neighbors."

At the end of the day all the students took home certificates of participation, the paints, brushes and palettes they had used on the day, and their *Art Across Borders* t-shirts. All art teachers also received certificates of appreciation for their support in organising the students and supporting the event. Many attendees felt that the positive messages contained in the paintings prove that there is hope for the region, and the ability to convene such activities reveals the commitment of communities to work together across borders. The GPKT Project has learned firsthand that the use of art to enable young people to express themselves has proven popular, and should be more broadly supported.

The GPKT Education Committee is looking forward to the next steps of the Committee, with the hope that they will be in the position to continue with similar activities in the future as well as to continue with capacity building for their school staff.

The event was made possible through the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and was filmed by TV Festa, a local station from Kumanovo.