



Mission's end

Eleven years ago, in 1996, the Croatian Government and OSCE decided to open a Mission in Croatia with an aim to assist the process of reconstruction and democratization of the country after a recent and devastating war, newly born as an independent state and needing all possible assistance to construct - "ex novo" in many fields - the basic institutions of a democratic state, a Rule of Law state and market economy.

Thus, 1996 saw the arrival of a few internationals in Zagreb who opened a Mission in the vicinity of Dolac Market, a Mission headed by the Dutch Amb. Albert

Nooij that barely included two dozen people. Several months later, Nooij was succeeded by a Swedish Amb. Henrik Amneus and he, in turn, by the Swiss Amb. Tim Guldemann who, from 1997 onwards, expanded human resources, deployed them in numerous offices established throughout the entire country and transferred the Headquarters to its present location in Florijana Andraseca Street. In 1999, at the moment of the arrival of the new HoM, French Ambassador Bernard Poncet, the Mission had close to 800 employees whose progressive downsizing began already during the same year under the lead of the Swedish Ambassador Peter Semneby.

Calendar	Activities
<p>25 January - Meeting with Prime Minister</p> <p>31 January - 2 February - Seminar in Opatija Overview of the 2007 Parliamentary Elections and recommendations for the enhancement of the electoral process, organized by State Election Commission and UNDP</p>	<h3 data-bbox="906 197 1168 241">Mission's end</h3> <p data-bbox="571 273 1024 533">electoral legislation, the protection of national minorities, education etc., which allowed the closure of four out of the six units contained in the mandate in 2006 as well as the achievement of a qualitative jump in the two remaining and very sensitive issues - the Return and Integration of Refugees and the Rule of Law.</p> <p data-bbox="571 564 1024 967">As a result of all the abovementioned, opinions in favour of closing the Mission were voiced already at the Ministerial Council in Madrid (29 and 30 November 2007), and echoed at the Permanent Council in Vienna that adopted a Decision which clarified that, in light of the progress made by Croatia, OSCE agreed to close the Mission and leave an Office consisting of less than 10 internationals, which would be located in Zagreb with a mandate that would include only the Monitoring of War Crime Trials in</p> <p data-bbox="1050 273 1503 533">- which implies a serious effort in the training of judges, public prosecutors, lawyers and NGOs - and the housing issue until it has been verified that Croatia is able to construct the agreed 7,000 apartments which would receive many families of returnees, for the most part Croatian Serbs.</p> <p data-bbox="1050 564 1503 801">An important cycle was closed in 2007. Through its transformation, the OSCE reflects the reality of an open, modern, democratic country on the eve of its Euro-Atlantic integration and, as of recently, admitted as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.</p> <p data-bbox="1050 833 1503 967">OSCE could not remain indifferent to such a process of worldwide acceptance of Croatia and has thereupon acted in a consistent and responsible manner.</p>

As of my arrival in 2005, the number of employees was 220, deployed at Zagreb HQ and in nine Field Offices, in addition to five unstaffed offices. Naturally, the number by itself does not mean very much. What is significant is that the decrease of personnel was directly related to Croatia's fulfilment of the mandate and the huge steps of progress that the country was making.



The four Heads of OSCE Mission to Croatia who lead the Mission in its eleven-year-long presence in the country. Ambassador Tim Guldinann (1996-1999), Ambassador Bernard Poncet (1999 - 2002), Ambassador Peter Semneby (2002 - 2005) and Ambassador Jorge Fuentes (2005 - 2007).

Awareness that the goals included in important chapters such as democratization of the police, the media and the civil society were close to their resolution, appeared already in 2000. Progress was also achieved in the reinforcement of the political and judicial institutions, such as the

co-operation with the Hague Tribunal and the reporting on residual aspects of housing care.

Both chapters must contain clear time limits - the first one until the Croatian judicial system no longer needs international monitoring

Ambassador Jorge Fuentes,
Head of Office

Activities

Closure of Field Offices

During the almost 12 years of existence of the OSCE Mission to Croatia its size and organizational structure experienced continuous changes adapting with great flexibility to any new mandate-related need or to any change in the situation.

The building up of a field presence in the war-affected areas, for example, was remarkable: only one year after a group of seven OSCE Internationals arrived to Zagreb in mid-1996, the Mission counted 13 Offices: a HQ in Zagreb, 3 Coordination Centers in Knin, Sisak and Vukovar and 9 Field Offices. The Mission continued expansion until a peak in 1999, when around 780 staff members were operating in 25 field locations!

Almost all of the Field Offices were placed in small towns of the war affected areas in inland Croatia, the so-called 'Areas of Special State Concern'. Some of the places were still very disheartened by the war, but all of them were charming and picturesque: attractive places for OSCE officials to perform their daily activities. Finally, the personnel of two Field Offices were lucky enough to be placed on the coast! The need for the OSCE to be in close contact with the authorities, the Justice Courts and the Media in main regional centres of decision, made it absolutely necessary to keep an OSCE presence in the nice touristic cities of Split and Zadar in sunny Dalmatia.



The building of the OSCE Mission to Croatia's Field Office in Vukovar

On a smaller scale, the Field Offices played a role for the Mission to Croatia similar to the one played by Field Operations for the OSCE: they were the jewel in the crown. Field Offices have been a way to approach the problems and to facilitate its solutions. A way to also hear the 'other version', to have access to information and facts directly from the sources, from the implicated people, that could complement the official version of authorities or politicians.

The OSCE staff from the Field Office in Gospić talking to a returnee in the Cukovac village (Gospić Municipality) in 2005.

Photo by: Krunoslav Rac



During the early times of the Mission, the Field Offices represented for some refugees or war-affected people, the only way to present to the international community the difficulties or injustice they were enduring. In those times, some did not dare to submit their claims to the official authorities. Frequently clients would secretly approach the OSCE field officials because they did not want to be seen near the OSCE premises. The situation ameliorated rapidly as soon as new protective laws were adopted by the Croatian Parliament, for example the Constitutional Law on National Minorities. Then, in an evolutionary step forward, the Field Offices gradually shifted their initial fact-finding role to a more proactive one by providing assistance and legal advice to people (who believed themselves not to be proficient enough in legal issues) on how to proceed under the new Laws, for example, to recover their possessions or rights, or to obtain final justice for a forgotten crime, etc.

Not surprisingly, the dismantling of the OSCE field deployment has been object of considerable discussion not only in Vienna, but also in

Brussels! Some OSCE Participating States reminded that field presence was one of our more valuable assets and our main added value in comparison with other international organizations in Croatia. Some EU Member States, and many Embassies in Zagreb, very much appreciated the regular information obtained through the ample distribution of field fortnightly reports and were reluctant to admit its discontinuation.

However, the OSCE Council finally decided to close the OSCE Mission to Croatia and to establish a one only OSCE Office in Zagreb. This implied the disappearance of the permanent OSCE field presence and deployment in Croatia. Of course, the Office's officials will continue to attend war crime trials in every corner of Croatia and visiting Housing Care facilities, however, our officials will now travel from the headquarters in Zagreb, the only OSCE facility that will remain in Croatia from 1st April 2008.

The dismantling of the former Mission's field presence implied a considerable downsizing in personnel. Very valued colleagues had to leave us. This article pays tribute to their many years of competent service for the good of Croatia. We were relieved, at least, to see that most of them have very quickly found other positions in international organizations, in other OSCE Field Operations or within the Croatian Ministries. The expertise they acquired while working for the OSCE served them to easily find other deserved jobs in similar fields of occupation.

Enrique Horcajada,
Head of Executive Office

Feature story

New Government

OSCE Office partners within a new Ministry

On Saturday, 12 January, the Croatian Parliament voted confidence in the new Croatian Government, headed by Prime Minister Ivo Sanader in his second term in office. The new Government comprises of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), the Peasant Party (HSS), the Social Liberal Party (HSLs) and the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS).

In terms of posts, the Cabinet has 15 ministries, two more than the previous one, and four deputy prime ministers, again two more than the old one.

Two new ministries have been formed - the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management. Within this change, the OSCE Office partners and interlocutors in the area of housing care for the former OTR holders are now within the Ministry of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management's portfolio. The new Ministry is headed by Petar Čobanković, formerly the Minister of Agriculture. Two new State Secretaries in his Ministry, Miroslav Janjić and Milivoj Mikulić, both coming from the former Ministry of Sea, Tourism, Transport and Development, are the interlocutors for our new Housing Care Unit, formed after the closure of the OSCE Mission to Croatia and in line with the mandate of the newly-established Office in Zagreb.



The new Minister of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management is Petar Čobanković, formerly the Minister of Agriculture.

Coming from the ranks of the SDSS, Slobodan Uzelac has been appointed the Deputy Prime Minister for Regional Development, Reconstruction and Return. Mr. Uzelac, formerly the State Secretary for Higher Education, is now in charge of Regional Development, Reconstruction and Return and a new esteemed partner to the OSCE Office in Zagreb.



SDSS' Slobodan Uzelac has been appointed the Deputy Prime Minister for Regional Development, Reconstruction and Return.

Justice Minister Ana Lovrin has been reappointed, and her department strengthened by the arrival of Dražen Bošnjaković as the State Secretary. Alongside the demanding judiciary reforms, the important Law on Free Legal Aid is also among this department's benchmarks. It has already undergone the first reading in the Parliament, and HRK 30 million had been allocated to enable access to the judiciary to those who lack money to achieve their rights.

The former Minister of Economy Branko Vukelić - now the Defense Minister - will most probably have the privilege of receiving NATO invitation to Croatia scheduled to take place in Bucharest in April. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration is Gordan Jandroković, while Bianca Matković, the former Head of Prime Minister's

Office, has been appointed new State Secretary at the Foreign Ministry. Jandroković's predecessor, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, becomes Croatia's Ambassador to the US.

State Secretary for Administration, Antun Palarić has announced that the new Civil Servants Act will clear the State Administration of people who do not have an impeccable record. The new Law envisages the possibility of suspension for anyone suspected of corruption. Under the new Law, the 'whistleblowers', those who report on corruption, will be protected from negative consequences of their act on their jobs.



The new Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration is Gordan Jandroković, here seen during his visit to the OSCE's HQ in Zagreb in 2007.

In his first addresses to the media, Prime Minister Sanader was emphasizing his Cabinet's main points: the talks in Brussels, reforms of the judiciary, the state of the economy and battle against corruption. Announcing the Government's additional efforts in completing EU negotiations by 2009, the Prime Minister also said he was convinced that this was achievable. To this aim, the Government announced a National Program for EU accession, which contains 119 laws and amendments that Sabor needs to accept by the end of this year. Political analysts agree that alongside a stable and competent Government, Sanader will also need a stable political situation to successfully lead Croatia into EU and NATO.

Ljerka Draženović,
Spokesperson

Encounters with Prime Minister Sanader

In almost three years since I arrived at the helm of the OSCE Mission to Croatia - transformed into an Office as of January 2008 - I have had the privilege to meet with Prime Minister Sanader on numerous occasions. I am not going to include here the informal lunches, official dinners, contacts in the margins of summit meetings or Prime Minister's participation in conferences or roundtables organized by the Mission or the visits to my painting exhibition "Man and the City".



HoM first met Premier Ivo Sanader in May 2005 and the PM returned the visit to the Mission's HQ a few weeks later.

I will talk about some of the meetings that we had in his office which successively decided the course to follow in order to progress towards the fulfillment of the mandate, development of the country's institutions, establishment of the necessary mechanisms for such progress and the consequent outcome of the closing of the Mission.

The first meetings took place in May 2005, shortly after my arrival in Croatia, with a view to establish contact, a common language of understanding, transparent and continual communication, followed by the visit of Prime Minister to the Mission Headquarters a few weeks later.

The second meeting in autumn 2005 expanded the Government's readiness for holding regular high level meetings with the ministers responsible for the key areas of our mandate: foreign affairs, justice and reconstruction. The Plenaries, the main mechanism of the negotiating Platform, were born.



After a certain period of time and having held numerous ministerial Plenaries, at a meeting with Ivo Sanader in September 2006 it was decided that the moment had come for the Prime Minister to visit the Permanent Council in Vienna, to present to the delegates the situation in Croatia, the progress achieved, his readiness to continue with the democratic development and his hope that the Mission could conclude its tasks in Croatia successfully.

The visit to Vienna took place in July 2007. The Permanent Council decided on the closing of the Mission on 31 December the same year.

My most recent meeting with Prime Minister took place in January 2008. In the course of the meeting, Ivo Sanader expressed his satisfaction with the good work performed and offered his support with regard to the still pending tasks that the new Office in Zagreb has to realize.

In September 2006, HoM met with Premier Sanader and Ministers Grabar Kitarović and Kalmeta, State Secretary Bišćević and Head of PM's Office, Bianca Matković, prior to the PM's visit to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna

These half a dozen meetings throughout the period of three years marked the beginning of a new dialogue - that in some way relaunched the course laid out by my predecessors, the decision on a strategy to follow, the design of goals and their achievement. Those were meetings marked by understanding, good faith, flexibility, availability, transparency. A beautiful example of how the final stages of the life of an OSCE Mission can end.



In January 2008, Ambassador Fuentes, the Head of the newly established OSCE Office in Zagreb, met the PM in his second term in office, together with the new Foreign Minister Gordan Jandroković, the new Government's Spokesperson, Zlatko Mehun and the new State Secretary for Political Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, Bianca Matković

Ambassador
Jorge Fuentes,
Head of Office

Where are they now

A decade with Return and Integration Unit

In the process of downsizing the OSCE Mission owing primarily to the improvement in the area of refugee return, the Return and Integration (R&I) Unit has been transformed into the Housing Care Unit, while our colleagues Vera Milovanović - Gedošević, Ivana Horvat and I left the Mission. I am confident that we will all benefit from the experience, knowledge and skills acquired in this office, but the greatest value gained comes from the people we worked with in an atmosphere of genuine collegiality and true friendship. Most importantly, I sincerely believe that our work has made a difference towards a better and more dignified life of the people we were assisting during the past ten years. After all, the successful completion of the R&I Unit proves it.

Since 1999, when the Mission was employing some 800 staff, a gradual downsizing commenced, with this process intensifying recently. More colleagues from other Units left the office in January, again as part of the downsizing process transforming the Mission into an Office: Media Assistant and Web Focal Point, Nikolina Balija, Mirsad Mujkanovic, Interpreter, Dubravka Gec-Alapic, the Secretary to the Deputy Head of Mission, Receptionist Suzana Maltar, Democratisation Assistant, Marija Djerfi and Police Affairs Advisor, Nataša Roksandić .

Unfortunately is no longer with us, and who will always hold a special place in our hearts.

Ever since the beginning, the atmosphere within the Unit can only be described as inspiring and positive. We have been a great team in every sense of the word. The collegiality often turned into firm and durable friendships, which remained strong even after people parted from the Mission.

One person who left a special mark on the Unit was certainly Axel Jaenicke, who had been heading the R&I team for five years. The team owes him a lot, professionally and personally. His commitment and devotion to the job was appreciated not only by his colleagues, but also by national and international counterparts. And most of all by returnees whose sensitive issues were always a matter of the highest priority for him. Axel now holds the position of Senior Parliament Advisor in the OSCE Mission to Montenegro.

He was succeeded by Christian Loda, who provided an added value to the team's work with his previous long-term field experience from the Mission's Field Office in Karlovac. Christian's excellent communication skills, his enthusiasm and also his knowledge of the Croatian language helped to bring the relations with the Croatian interlocutors to a new level.

Vienna.

Photos of many present and former R&I colleagues covering a wall in my office, reflect special moments spent together. Remembering many dear and remarkable colleagues who were part of the R&I and left the Mission a long time ago: among the first ones - Simone Joseph, Anne Davies, Mirjana Pašić, Eve Weisberg and Tea Pečarina. Snežana Đokić holds the position of Legal Advisor in the EC Delegation in Zagreb; Takashi Koizumi works as Senior Confidence Building Officer in OSCE Macedonia; Miriam Anderson is finalizing her PhD at Cambridge; Romana Mačešić joined the team monitoring the war crime trials; Giuli Kakhniashvili took up another duty in Vienna and Eve Weisberg, after building houses with Habitat for Humanity in Romania in 2001, became an Analyst at the US Government Accountability Office in Washington.

Eva Zieschank completed an MBA in England and is now working in a consulting agency in Munich. Berengere Neyroud, after having worked for the French Foreign Ministry, started working recently for the UN Office in New York. Magdalena Spalinska can be often seen in the media as the Public Information Officer at the ICTY in The Hague while Rita Marascalchi works as the External Co-operation Officer in Vienna. While mentioning the R&I, we should not forget our pro-active



The Return and Integration Unit's team was successfully led by, among others, Axel Jaenicke from 2000 - 2005 (LEFT) and Christian Loda 2005 - 2007



Now upon leaving, I feel privileged to have witnessed the ten years of the Return and Integration Unit from the very first co-ordination meeting taking place back in 1998. The Unit was then headed by Trügve Nordby, assisted by Branimir Radev, Oliver Lacey Hall, who ran the office until 2000, Henri Marinx, myself and our dear Andrea Crnković, who

After spending a year and a half heading the Unit, Christian Loda was selected by the OSCE Secretariat to cover the issue of return, as well as other issues pertaining to the OSCE mandate, for all the countries of the Western Balkans. Since summer 2007, he has been performing important duties as the Policy Support Officer in the Conflict Prevention Centre in

and hard working interns, Aleksandra Hardina, Friedericke Foltz, Jasna Jurišić, Solveig Richter, Maria

Breitfuss, Claudia Nohren and Gulnoz Saydaminova who, in their times, quickly blended with our harmonious team.

Maja Andrić Lužaić

Activities

Mission spends over €5 million on projects

The OSCE Mission to Croatia initially began sponsoring projects through the Democratisation Programme back in 1999 to support local initiatives for the upcoming parliamentary elections and raising public awareness on voters' rights. It also helped to foster and develop a sense of community activism especially in the war-affected areas of Croatia where NGOs were either non-existent or at a low level of development.

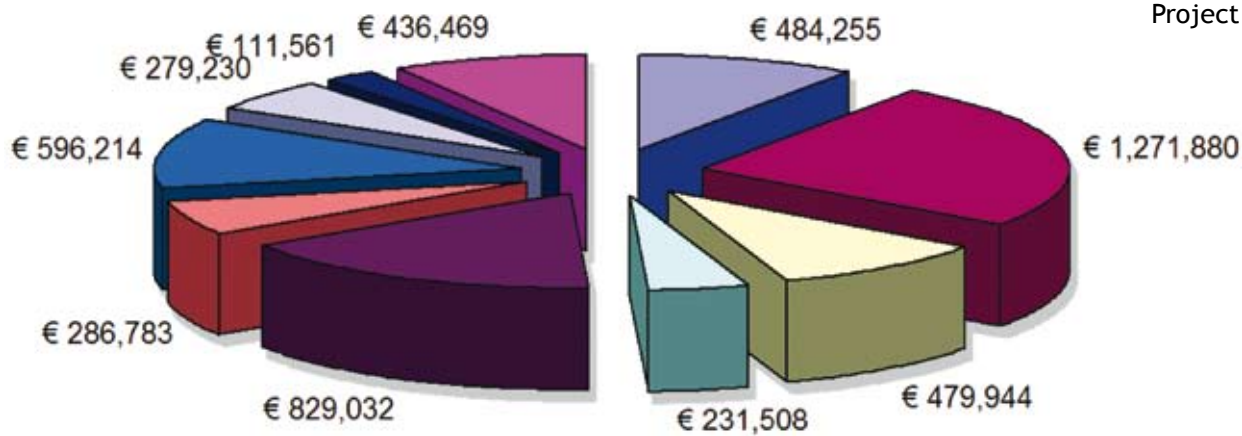
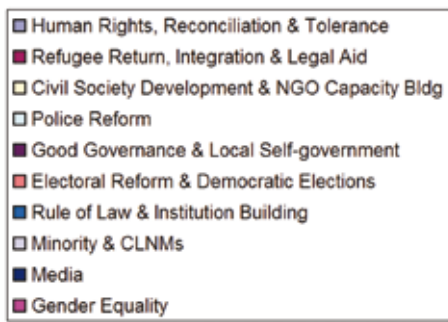
The Mission took a more proactive role in generating funds to sponsor small scale grassroots activities such as multi-ethnic creative workshops to promote tolerance and trust-building in the return areas, as well as workshops for youth, women and minority groups, to stimulate democratic and civic initiatives at the local level. In 2003 the Democratisation was transformed into the Civil Society and Project Management Unit to reflect the importance of the project management and took on a more Mission-driven approach by addressing the mandate related issues through projects i.e. return and integration, legal aid, Roma and minority rights; as well as providing technical support to the Mission's six substantive units.

In 2004 the Mission shifted its attention to larger scale projects such as capacity building and training of judges, journalists, NGOs, minority

groups and institutional support to the Ombudsman and Constitutional Court; however, some limited funds were available for local initiatives like the 'Children Together' project in Eastern Slavonia. The priority was given to projects with a likely multiplier effect, by which skills and knowledge were transferred from one party to another or from a higher governance level to lower. The projects were based on nationwide themes though emphasizing the importance of locality and inter-regional differences in project implementation.

Since 1999 until 2007, the Mission has supported 435 projects totalling over €5 million, through the Mission programmes from the unified budget of €3.86 million, and over €1.2 million through extra-budgetary contributions from the OSCE Participating States.

Suzanne Salopek
National Democratisation Officer
Project Management



Farewell to our dear colleagues



Recently, the Mission marked the departure of three distinguished members. In December we honoured the Deputy Head of Mission, Ambassador Robert W. Becker and the long-serving Head of General Services Unit, Ari-Pekka Hirvieniemi (LEFT). While in January the newly established OSCE Office in Zagreb wished all the best in the future to the Language Assistant/Translator, Mirsad Mujkanović who's catchy sense of humor will be greatly missed.



Photo Gallery



Ambassador Fuentes congratulates Prime Minister Ivo Sanader for his second term in office and Minister Gordan Jandroković for his appointment to the Foreign Ministry , 25 January 2008



In December 2007, the OSCE Mission to Croatia honoured eight members who were leaving the Mission: Ivana Horvat, Vera Milovanović, Maja Andrić Lužaić, Nikolina Balija, Suzana Maltar, Marija Djerfi, Dubravka Gec Alapić and Natasa Roksandić.



The Republic of Croatia's Council for National Minorities awarded Ambassadors Fuentes and Becker and Rule of Law Unit Head Mary Wyckoff with an Award issued for the first time to a foreign national. Since Ambassador Fuentes was absent, the Award was received by the Head of Executive Office, Enrique Horcajada, Zagreb, 14 January 2008.



Ambassador Fuentes and the Finnish Ambassador to Croatia and Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Ann-Marie Nyroos with a group of OSCE staff remaining after the former Mission's downsizing at the HQ of the newly established OSCE Office in Zagreb, 6 February 2008



The Political Affairs Assistant, Ankica Kuna Ambassador Jorge Fuentes, President of the Supreme Court, Branko Hrvatin, UNDP Resident Representative in Croatia, Yuri Afanasiev at the seminar: Overview of the 2007 Parliamentary Elections and Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Electoral Process, organized by the State Election Commission and UNDP, Opatija 31 January - 2 February 2008.