

## Editorial

Last early summer we were travelling as a family for a few weeks in Croatia. What fascinated me very much were the two aspects of the landscape: on the one hand, the Mediterranean coast and, on the other, the mountain and hill range covered for miles by intensely green mixed deciduous forests.

In this newsletter, we report on our projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo – also countries that emerged from the tragic history and the wars of the former Yugoslavia. Our local collaborators report about many positive and hopeful aspects – but at the same time, the different peoples fight with huge problems and ethnic tensions. They remain among themselves, as only single roads lead over the range of the green hills to the other side.

Therefore, with your support, our long-standing commitment in this region remains as important as ever for the long-suffering population.

Thank you for your interest and happy reading!



Anita Ruinelli,  
Secretariat

## The turbulent and tragic history of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**The multi-ethnic state of Bosnia and Herzegovina is coming to terms with a turbulent, sometimes tragic history. The inhabitants are tackling this process with a lot of energy, courage and confidence – but it also means an enormous effort and needs additional support from outside.**

During the Second World War, the German Wehrmacht occupied the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After the end of the war, the founding of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia created a federal state with the six constituent republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia with the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. A good ten years after the death of Tito, the founding father of the Serb-dominated country, first Slovenia and then Croatia and Macedonia became independent in 1991. Serbia then declared war on Croatia.

### The Bosnian War and the Dayton Treaty

On 2 March 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina also declared its withdrawal from the Yugoslav state. The war between Bosnia's Muslims, Serbs and Croats, which now broke out and lasted for over three years, claimed a total of 100,000 lives. 45% of the industrial plants, one third of the roads, two thirds of the railways and half of the telephone and electricity network were destroyed. The end of the Bosnian war was marked by the Dayton Treaty, signed in 1995, in which power sharing was agreed.



Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo  
once belonged to Yugoslavia.

### Disagreement slows down reforms

The economy has recovered strongly in recent years and several European companies have discovered the production location for themselves. The European Union and its political and financial support are having a positive economic and social impact. Meanwhile, Bosnian politicians want to centralise the state, while the representatives of the Serbian population demand more independence. This disagreement prevents the necessary reforms and paralyses the country in its efforts to join the EU in the medium term.

# Gardendeco in Bosnia and Herzegovina

For many years, PartnerAid has been supporting help for self-help in the Travnik region, which promises long-term, sustainable success. Currently, the focus is on the business-oriented small business development project Gardendeco in metal and wood processing.

Previous projects have achieved their goals in many respects and have permanently improved the incomes and living situations of many people. Based on the diverse experiences of the past ten years, the local team, in cooperation with local, regional and Swiss partners, plans to promote Travnik as a production location even more fundamentally and to increase exports and

sales primarily in Switzerland, Austria and Germany. The main goals are to promote small businesses, create new jobs and transfer knowledge similar to the dual education system in Switzerland.

## Traceable value creation process

At the heart of the Gardendeco project is always a concrete value-added and core process with which all participants can identify and in which they can immediately see the progress and benefits at any time. The production of metal and wood products for the garden sector always achieves economic success for the benefit of local businesses and employees and ensures the long-term, sustainable future of the programme. The project is based on responsible, sustainable and social action by all participants

## More partnerships needed

In the future, a special focus will be placed on topics such as biodiversity,

knowledge transfer, Industry 4.0, but also the potential benefits offered by corporate culture.

The Gardendeco team is convinced that, in cooperation with partners and the further expansion of this initiative, it will be able to make an even greater contribution to vocational training as well as to creating and securing jobs – and thus also to social, sustainable development – in the future.

The production location in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the many years of experience of the local staff with the Bosnian culture, politics and economy offer excellent conditions for this. However, in order to successfully establish and expand this initiative, further partnerships that financially support this project are needed. The necessary know-how to support interested investors in setting up their own production in the region is available. We look forward to hearing from you.

*Purpose of donation:*

*Bosnia, small business development*



The manufacture of metal products is a mainstay of small business development.



Loading of wooden fences for export.

# The Susret farm as a showcase project

PartnerAid has been supporting the Susret agricultural project in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1998. At that time, so shortly after the civil war, the situation was very difficult. Most people had lost much or everything in the war.

Houses were damaged, machines or equipment stolen or destroyed and factories burnt down. There was no more paid work. People had to keep their heads above water with the little bit of land owned by their families, but had no means to cultivate and manage the land. In this situation, agricultural machinery was introduced via the project and made available to the families to enable them to plough, sow, mow and harvest their fields. Hundreds of people

have benefited in the years since the post-war period.

## Building a model farm

In a second step, a model farm was set up on site. This farm was confronted with the “normal” local challenges such as corruption. It also became obvious that there were no training and education opportunities in the agricultural sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Farming had been done the same way for generations,





Susret has become a model farm known far beyond the Region.



Socially disadvantaged people find work and sense of life on the farm.

with important background knowledge missing.

It was important not only to impart knowledge theoretically, but to make it visible in real life. In this way, a lot of scepticism could be overcome. In the meantime, this model farm is known up to the government level and as an inspiration for many farmers beyond the local borders.

#### **Opportunities for the socially disadvantaged**

In a third step, socially marginalised people were offered the opportunity to work and learn on the farm. This was

not done through a standardised teaching programme, but through practical work. It is important that these people help out of their own accord. The assignments are individually regulated.

The aim is to give hope, to open up perspectives for the future and to convey values and a sense of life. In the residential community and the work, trust is built, the personality is strengthened and character is developed.

#### **Repair workshop for agricultural machinery**

Since last summer, a workshop for agricultural machinery has been built

on a neighbouring plot of land. It was completely self-financed by the project from income and functions independently. In this workshop, agricultural equipment and machines can be repaired, renewed or modernised.

One of the aims of the farm is to offer young people – in addition to the unfortunately only school-based and theoretical training in the country – an opportunity for practical experience. Clarifications are still underway.

*Purpose of donation:  
Bosnia, agriculture*

## **Kosovo: between broken hope and international crime**

**In 1999, centuries of ethnic and religious tensions between Christian Orthodox Serbia and its breakaway Muslim-majority province of Kosovo led to war. Eventually, NATO air strikes pushed the Serbian army back out of Kosovo.**

From then on, the province was under UN administration and security was guaranteed by international troops stationed in the country. In 2008, the Kosovars of Albanian origin declared independence on their own. In the meantime, almost all European and many other states have recognised Kosovo. However, nowadays, the situation in the country is sobering from the point of view of a large part of the population.

#### **Intended changes not realised**

The desired changes, such as economic recovery, political stability, better education, justice in the legal system, etc., have not been realised for the most

part. Due to nepotism, corruption scandals and domestic political rivalries, the country has been run down in the last 13 years. In terms of foreign policy, negotiations with Serbia are not getting off the ground, which has a negative economic impact and blocks negotiations with the EU.

Many people no longer see a future for themselves and their children here. Many want to leave the country, if possible, in the hope of finding a better future in Western Europe.

#### **Hub of international crime**

Unfortunately, the difficult economic conditions encourage dark business

such as drug, arms and human trafficking. Kosovo is considered a hub for international crime such as heroin smuggling from Afghanistan to Western Europe, which is controlled by the Albanian mafia. Due to the depressive mood in the country, drug consumption has also increased drastically locally.





Community is an important part of the therapy.



Cultivation of organic vegetables for the local market and own consumption.

## Streha refuge: unsolved problem of drug rehabilitation

The unsolved problems in the field of drug rehabilitation in Kosovo led to the foundation of Streha, which means refuge, in 2008. The aim of the association is to offer drug-addicted people a home and therapy in order to later release them drug-free into society.

The Streha project is a therapy station in the form of a living community with seven therapy places for young addicted men. The programme consists of individual and group talks with therapy assistants as well as work, sports and other leisure activities. Since room and board, doctor's visits or other expenses are free of charge, practical work is done on the premises. Thus, the participant himself contributes to the financing of his maintenance and therapy.

### Self-acceptance, forgiveness and trust

The therapy programme is geared towards long-term therapy. In the group discussion, current topics from everyday life such as conflicts in the group are addressed and analysed due to which pattern or behaviour something happened. A solution is sought on how it could be done better next time. With the help of such events, parallels are also sought in the past where the same patterns have destroyed relationships with friends and family members and triggered negative behaviour.

The weekly individual meetings deal with similar topics, but the discussion is more personal. The past and the family situation are looked at. Addicts suffer from the fact that in most cases they are not accepted by their families. Deep hurts come to the surface again when the drugs are withdrawn and the feelings can no longer be suppressed by addictive substances. They therefore need to be addressed differently. This involves forgiveness, self-acceptance and building trust in oneself.

### Varied activities

In order to create a structure in everyday life, the participants organise the household and the kitchen themselves

in the residence. They undertake to comply with the guidelines and the house rules.

In the in-house cardboard factory, packaging material from raw cardboard – from pizza boxes to normal transport boxes – is produced with simple machines.

Salads and cucumbers are cultivated in the greenhouse for local traders, and organic medicinal and herbal plants are grown in the fields. The latter are dried in an oven and delivered to a local company. Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers or onions are produced for personal use.

Many leisure activities are possible in the residents' own gym or on the sports field. They not only promote the community and team spirit of the residents, but also bring mind and soul back into harmony.

### Investment pays off

For "normal" people, the fact that a person can lead a drug-free life may not make much difference. But it does for the person affected. It is worthwhile to get involved and support the Streha project.

*Purpose of donation:*

*Bosnia, Streha.*

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