



# Firefly International

Cross-cultural creative projects  
combating social division worldwide



Annual Report April 2007 – March 2008

## Annual report

Over this year Firefly continued and developed it's work in Brcko, Bosnia and internationally. These again formed two separate, but intertwined aspects of Firefly's work, through it's support of the locally managed project in Bosnia, along with encouragement of international collaboration and international volunteering projects through the European Commission's Youth in Action programme, which Svitac now became an officially registered partner. We welcomed new volunteers to the project, both local and international and events continued and diversified within Firefly Bosnia.

The project in Bosnia continued to be managed by Gordana Varčakovic, along with assistance from Mirela Mitrovic. They were joined this year on the staff team Sanjin Vosanovic and Dina Vosanovic, both of whom have been great additions. Local volunteers were also heavily involved in a variety of projects and workshops, and international volunteers joined both independently and through the European Commission's Youth in Action programmes.

The political situation in Brcko had some instability with the secession of Kosovo in early 2008, reinforcing the need for Firefly's valuable work.

Firefly's Director, Ellie Maxwell continued her fight against cancer. She was supported in this by her husband and family and by staff and volunteers of Firefly.

The following annual report has been compiled from individual reports from Gordana Varčakovic, Ellie Maxwell and staff members and volunteers.

Jack Richold, Edinburgh, August 2008

## CHILDRENS DAY

Children's Day took place on 18<sup>th</sup> June again this year and was held outdoors, in front of the Brcko Youth Centre. The event was organised by local volunteers along with international volunteers. There were a lot of activities, with much more of a focus on music than before, with members of the various music workshops doing performances. In addition there were sack races, whipped cream pie eating, bingo, dancing, performance, recitation etc Kuća Prijateljstva Amika from Brodusa, Brcko, also participated this event with their dance group and recitations.

## WINTER FESTIVALS

Omladinska organizacija Svitac this year decided to host a number of different parties and festivals in the Winter. The first of these was a New Year Party on 28<sup>th</sup> December in the Youth Centre. The party started at 7 p.m. and all Svitac members were invited to attend it, and encouraged to bring friends and relatives. Around 60 people came, which was a good number for the event. Gordana Varčakovic was in charge of preparing the prizes for the bingo and the refreshments, and Dina and Sanjin Vosanovic were in charge of programming. Members of the dance, Spanish, piano, guitar, samba and photo workshops all took part in the program with different things they prepared. The party was a great success and everybody hopes that next year Svitac will be able to organize another bigger party.

Svitac had the unfortunate news from the local Government that their budget would not cover Svitac's annual winter festival, however Svitac staff and volunteers met to discuss this and decided to go ahead with the Winter festival, albeit on a slightly smaller scale than before. The festival took place from 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> February 2008 and the main organizers were Kristina, Denis, Arman, Adnan and Masa, along with Svitac staff. Although the festival was a success, attendance was hampered by political strife in the region, as a couple of days prior to the festival Kosovo declared independence and there was the fear of protests in Brcko. However people did come to the events, especially those held indoors, due to their relative safety.

The festival opened on 21<sup>st</sup> February with an exhibition about France and French culture and with a music program featuring members of Omladinska organizacija Svitac, the Music primary school and a partner NGO Proni. The second night was reserved for French film and attendees watched Asterix and Obelix: Mission Cleopatra. The third night was a music night again and more people came to watch the program than the first night. This time 4<sup>th</sup> primary school, partner NGO Kuća Prijateljstva Amika and Omladinska organizacija Svitac's members performed. During the both music nights there were

different competitions and games in which the audience could participate and win some prizes. The fourth night was the big concert night and four local music groups performed. Thankfully the festival finished very peacefully even though there was a lot of tension in the air in the whole region. All Svitac staff and volunteers worked together very closely and were very supportive of each other. After the festival Svitac made certificates and burned CDs and DVDs with French music and videos for all participants. The festival was held in the youth centre.

One key discovery was that since the festival is a big project it was agreed that in the future a festival project coordinator must be employed and funding for the festival must be found. Without these two conditions it won't be possible to organise festival again because all Svitac staff are busy with the ongoing projects and don't have time to organise a festival on top of these.

## TRAINING AND SEMINARS

Svitac was involved in lots of training events and cross-partner seminars and working groups over the course of 2007-2008. It has led to more and more cross-agency working, which is benefiting staff, volunteers and participants in Svitac.

'OIA BiH', a leading non-governmental organisation in BiH focussing on youth policy development, organised a meeting for representatives of 40 municipalities in BiH to look at the relationships between young people and local authorities, and with a special focus on establishing information centres for young people. This meeting was related to last year work on the youth policy field in which framework the manual 'Local Authorities and Youth' was published (with SDC/IBH/FODBiH/Care/Mott support) and 4 training sessions were held, with more than 90 participants (representatives of local authorities and NGOs). OIA BiH is national partner of the European Agency for Youth Information (ERYICA) and runs 4 information desks for youth in BiH as well as the biggest web portal for youth information - [www.mladi.info](http://www.mladi.info). The main aims of this meeting were: to recognise a level of the policy towards youth development in 40 municipalities; to learn more about the youth information desks and to agree about their aim and content; to make an action plan for launching information desks in 40 municipalities in BiH; to create proposals for youth information desks other methods of youth information in local level. This meeting was held on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April in Mostar. Representatives of 40 municipalities in BiH were present on this meeting. Borislav Maric represented Omladinska organizacija Svitac.

Amela Catovic attended a seminar against racism, xenophobia, discrimination and non-tolerance from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> May in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, in the name of Omladinska organizacija Svitac. The seminar was organized by People to People International – Plovdiv as project of the campaign All different – All equal. The seminar's main aim was to promote tolerance between different

ethnic groups in the Balkans and to fight against racism, xenophobia, which are large problems in the region. The target groups were: young people, youth leaders and youth workers. The participants were from Austria, Bulgaria, Czech, German, Greece, Romania, Turkey, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. The seminar was from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> May but the first and the last day were days off planned for arrivals and departures.. Different methods of active and participative character were used during the seminar: discussion, work in small groups, presentation, role plays etc. The participants could share experiences, discuss about important issues connected to their countries and other countries in the region. They also planned projects they would like to cooperate on in the future. These projects were connected to the themes the participants have found interesting to work on together in the future: peace building, homosexuality, how much and why are we proud of our country, our personal contribution to peace building etc. One of the concrete projects was 'Ship of Peace', which will circumnavigate certain countries and promote tolerance and understanding. As a part of the seminar one day was organized visit to religious objects in Plovdivu, and that was opportunity for the participants to visit a synagogue, a church and a mosque. During these visits the participants could have conversation with members of these different religions and evolve their knowledge about religion. During the seminar participants had an opportunity to present their organizations and countries, and to share promotion material with others. At the end of the seminar an evaluation was completed with all participants.

Gordana attended presentation of the brochure 'Guide for work of NGOs in Brcko district' organised by the Brcko district Government in cooperation with Centre for Brcko district improvement. At the presentation Associations could learn more about registration process and how to apply for funds that the Government gives every year. All participants received the published guide, which should help NGOs and Associations in their future work. The presentation was held in the Brcko Youth Centre.

Niko Salatovic, from the Brcko district police invited representatives of NGOs (Omladinski Centar "Vermont", Proni institut za socijalnu edukaciju and Omladinska organizacija Svitac) to meet on a number of occasions with the local police. He proposed the idea that all NGOs, Associations, Local Communities, representatives of the government and the police establish a Consultative Body for Citizens Protection (KSGB) in the Brcko district. This idea was supported and Gordana was involved in the process leading to the adoption of a Constitution for the organisation (drafted initially by Svitac) and the first 'Forum gradjana' Assembly. Omladinska organizacija Svitac has 3 representatives in Forum's Assembly: Gordana Varcakovic, Edina Vosanovic and Sanjin Vosanovic. Management Board, Supervisor Board and Assembly were elected. The four founders of the 'Forum': Vermont, Proni, Svitac and Kult automatically were elected into the Management Board. Damir Radenkovic, from Omladinski centar Vermont was elected for president of the Management Board and Sead Sadic from Kult and Gordana Varcakovic from Omladinska organizacija Svitac were elected for vice presidents of the

Management Boards. Vladimir Matijevic was elected for president of the Assembly.

Edina Vosanovic and Gordana Varcakovic represented Omladinska organizacija Svitac the public tribune with theme: *Stop violence in the family and towards children*. Organised by local NGO Proni. Doctor Zlata Papric from Center for Mental Health, Slavica Mihajlovic from Centre for Social Service and Niko Salatovic from Brcko district police talked about their experiences on this field. After this a public discussion was held and all who were present could voice their opinion or experiences connected to this topic.

Kristina Varcakovic represented Omladinska organizacija Svitac at a round table discussion on 23<sup>rd</sup> October with the theme 'Addiction – illness or freely chosen life still'. This round table discussion was organised by the NGO UG PROI from Sarajevo. The main aim of this round table was to discuss drug addiction and related illnesses as well as to present activities which will be organised in Brcko district in the future. The round table was organised in cooperation with Brcko district mayor and Brcko district Ministry of Health. Representatives of the Assembly, prosecution, police, religion communities, health department, OHR, sector for social work, education system, young people, parents who have already faced drug problems gave their contribution, sharing information with people who was present on this round table. Media representatives were there as well and in this way supported this action in Brcko district community.

Gordana attended a meeting organised by Brcko district government focussing on future planning and a Brcko district strategy from 2007 – 2012. Earlier this year the government had chosen a group of people (representatives of different parts of public life in Brcko district) who should work on this theme and strategy. Omladinska organizacija Svitac was been involved in developing two Brcko district strategies: general Brcko district strategy (2008 – 2012) and environmental protection in Brcko district strategy for the period from 2008 to 2018. Svitac's members have attended several meetings where different ideas were presented. Representatives of other NGOs and Local Communities did the same, all hoping that this all will help to improve life in Brcko district in the future period.

## STAFFING CHANGES

From the beginning of May 2007 Svitac was very happy to welcome Edina Vošanović to the team. Edina works with Svitac as International volunteer coordinator and Piano workshops coordinator. As the International volunteer coordinator she helps international volunteers with their needs (accommodation, paperwork, supervision and mentoring etc). She also runs Piano workshops, the only free, public piano lessons in the Brcko district for

young people aged 9-16. These are held on Wednesdays from 10:00a.m.-12:00, and on Fridays from 10:00a.m.-12:00. Welcome Dina!

### SUMMER CAMPS 2007

Firefly's summer camps are a chance for some of the poorest and most vulnerable children to have a holiday away from the political and social tensions of their home areas. Most of these children have not ever travelled outside Bosnia or even their own home town, except as refugees. The camps provide a neutral space for children to recover from the trauma of the conflict and space away from continuing tensions. They also allow time and space for children from different ethnic groups to spend time together, making friends and creating cross-community links - it is vital that these links are created so that children do not grow up thinking it is normal for different ethnicities to live separately. All participants are children from Brcko and the outlying returnee areas, and attend activities at our youth centres or those of our partner organisations, in Bosnia. During the camp, children take part in numerous games and activities together each day, as well as preparing a performance or event for the final evening.

#### Preparation

Summer Camp preparations began in earnest in May, with the local government call for funding proposals for the 10<sup>th</sup> May. Gordana wrote and sent the project proposal, and Svitac was informed in general it had the full support of the funding commission members. At the end of June Svitac was informed it's funding bid was successful for the summer camps and the local government would fund travel and insurance costs for this project. However since this was very close to the start date of the camps Firefly International had to help through subsidizing the camps until the finance was received, along with Svitac asking creditors to accept 50% payment before the camp and 50% on it's conclusion.

This year 43 participants came from Omladinska organizacija Svitac, 7 participants came from Kuca Prijateljstva Amika and this year, for the first time, two members from Omladinski centar Vermont were involved in summer camps project. It is planned to continue this cooperation in the future. 6 staff from Omladinska organizacija Svitac, 5 international volunteers from United Kingdom and United States of America and 6 EVS volunteers who were from United Kingdom also took part. Firefly International staff were not able to participate the camp itself but they were present in Brcko district, where they welcomed all the volunteers and have been involved in all activities, which were organised before the camp in Savudrija. Most of the international volunteers came to Brcko district in advance, while 2 of them went straight to Savudrija due to time constraints. Omladinska organizacija Svitac paid for health insurance for all the summer camps participants.

Initially it was hoped that 30 participants will be involved in the project (15 in each camp), 4 local young volunteer, 3 staff from Omladinska organizacija Svitac, 5 international volunteers and 2 staff from Firefly International. However, due to Firefly International and Svitac becoming members of European volunteer service (EVS), along with local and international funding, it was decided to increase the number of the summer camps' participants (71 people were directly involved in the project). There were a higher level of interest in the camps than ever before, but unfortunately even with a larger budget this year, it still wasn't possible take all of them.

In the run up to the summer camps children's parents Svitac staff busy, asking many different questions regarding summer camps. All this was understandable because, for the most of the children and teenagers this was the first time to spend 10 days without their parents, or even to leave Brcko district. However this is usual and Svitac staff were able to put their minds at ease and address these concerns. It was noted that is was especially useful to be returning to camp *Veli Joze* again, as the staff were knowledgeable about facilities and conditions there.

The preparation for the workshops at the summer camps (*Music & drama* and *Creative*) started at the beginning of May 2007, when participants were selected. The public call for local young volunteers between 16 and 18 years old was then announced. Svitac staff chose the 4 the best candidates. These candidates had also been involved in Svitac's activities and projects during the previous year. In cooperation with Firefly International it was decided that Sanjin Vosanovic would coordinate the Music & drama camp and Mirela Ceran would coordinate the Creative camp, in addition to having 4 Svitac staff involved as well. Several pre-camp workshops were held in Brcko district with camps' participants with the aim that participants, coordinators and volunteers get to know each other better and have a better idea about how workshops would be during the summer camps in Savudrija. Everything that was made during these workshops was exhibited during Children's Day, on the 18<sup>th</sup> June. Summer camps participants with their friends and relatives attended this event, along with large number of parent, who took the opportunity to discuss the camps with the project coordinator, Gordana Varcakovic.

### Problems

Some of the participants were not born in Brcko district, so they had to get the birth certificate (not older then six months) in the place where they were born. The second problem was that some of the participants have discovered they had the same ID numbers with children and youth from Federation and Republic Srpska. Gordana managed to solve these issues without too much trouble and the rest of the camp largely went smoothly.

### The Camp:

Most of the volunteers from the United Kingdom arrived in Brcko district between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> July, with two volunteers going directly to the camp in Savudrija. During their stay in Brcko district they met camp participants, organised several workshops and made a camps' activities plan in cooperation with camps' coordinators and young local volunteers from Brcko district. At the same time, each young local volunteer was paired with an international volunteer. Together they worked on pre-camp workshops and also on planning other activities for the summer camps. Also, the young local volunteers acted as a guide to the international volunteer and helped him / her to adapt during volunteer's stay in Brcko district. As it was planned that the EVS volunteers would come back to Brcko district after the summer camps, this cooperation would continue on their return. Even though the volunteers did not know each other before this project, it seemed that they had known each other for years and they cooperated very well during workshops and planning activities. This year, Omladinska organizacija Svitac employed Edina Vosanovic as the International coordinator for international volunteers. Her job was to contact international volunteers before they arrived in Brcko district and to answer their questions about their stay in Brcko district and summer camps 2007. Her job, also, was to find adequate accommodation for volunteers, meet them at the station, and be available for them during their stay in Omladinska organizacija Svitac. Before the volunteers arrived, project coordinator, Gordana Varcakovic, prepared a lot of material relating to the summer camps.

The participants arrived at Savudrija on 6<sup>th</sup> July at 10.30a.m. and the camps, began. During the eight days of the camp activities were held from 9.00a.m. to 11.30a.m. in the morning with a couple of. After lunch and in the evening, after dinner, there were different social games, events in the stadium and discos. Activities were very different; every morning participants learnt how to make different things such as masks, painting etc., while the music group prepared a modern take on 'Romeo and Juliet' which was performed at the end to camp participants. In the evenings the camp organised presentation from other groups and countries who shared the campsite, along with discos. During these activities participants had the opportunity to meet young people from other countries. The Bosnia and Herzegovina presentation was coordinated by Kristina Varcakovic and Denis Vlajsavljevic, and the Svitac group represented Brcko district and Bosnia on the second night of their stay in Savudrija. During this presentation the dance group presented choreographies, participants sang different songs and DVD about Brcko district was shown.

The group returned to Brcko district on 14<sup>th</sup> July, without any problems. After the summer camp project was finished Gordana collected pictures from Savudrija and burned CDs for all camp participants. One copy along with some printed pictures was sent to the government as well, together with a narrative and financial reports. All participants received certificates for the camp and some big posters with camp's pictures were exhibited in the youth

centre. The project coordinator met with parents following the camp, and the conclusion was that parents were very satisfied with the camp and after they returned to Brcko district most of the participants were satisfied as well.

### Evaluation:

Independent evaluation was carried out of the camp by an external evaluator, and the participants also completed anonymous prepared by Firefly International. International volunteers, local volunteers and staff reviewed the camp and discussed future possible changes in the camp activities.

## LANGUAGE TUITION

Gordana Varcokovic and Denis Valisavljevic continued to run English and Spanish Classes, which remain popular. These classes are seen as valuable for job prospects and communication with international organisations and volunteers, especially with peoples aspirations for Bosnia joining the EU in the future. In addition to this the Spanish Class was very involved in organising Spanish cultural workshops on the Summer Camps

## MUSIC WORKSHOPS

The Music workshops have continued to grow and grow, particularly with the addition of Edina Vošanović who coordinates Piano workshops. Sanjin Vošanović continues with guitar workshops (both classical and contemporary) which continue to grow in popularity, so much so that demand outstrips supply. Likewise the Samba Workshops, which has approximately has 15 core members. This workshop received injections of energy in the form of international samba maestres from France and Italy coming to visit and tutor.

Local volunteers also coordinate workshops as follows:

Arman Jasarevic - sound engineering workshop  
Adnan Jasarevic - photo workshop  
Denis Vlaisavljevic and Masa Bacanov – dance workshop

However, one key issue is that on occasions the music groups were missing their workshops on Thursdays (4.30 – 6.00p.m.) because the Youth Centre is not open after 5.00p.m. Because of this, when the situation allowed, staff were forced to give classes at home.

## EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

This year Omladinska organizacija Svitac and Firefly International registered as sending, hosting and coordinating organizations for European Voluntary

Service (EVS). Svitac has been registered under reference number 2007-SI-13. The full EI form is available for the public under this number in the general database of Host Organisations on the European Commission website.

Svitac hosted 6 EVS volunteers in 2007/2008, who worked on a wide variety of projects following the summer camps and were paired up with local volunteers and mentors.

Following this staff and volunteers evaluated the EVS project and concluded it was successful, especially with regard to Intercultural Exchange. The EVS volunteers and all other volunteers who were in Brcko and on the camps, the participants, staff, and local volunteers have gained new experience through working together. And it was not just the Intercultural exchange, but also individual exchange, tolerance between different ethnicities, between individuals and understanding one another through communication, fun, work, even with problems both solved and unsolved. It was successful because they put two plays on in short period of time (everybody were involved). It was successful because Svitac had so many new members (different ethnicities, and different background) during these two months. This project helped everybody to gain a lot of experiences working with youth and kids. Everyone agreed it would be good to work with new volunteers again and to bring some new energy to Brcko.

### UK ACTIVITIES

Due to Ellie Maxwell's illness UK activities were kept to a limited amount

### STUDIO PROJECT

The studio project continues to grow and is maintained by Firefly international and the Forest.

### KIDS INTERNATIONAL FUNDRAISING WEBSITE

KIND - Kids International Net Donations continued to run well this year. It was set up to help children's charities around the world; and to help their supporters. We noticed that many of the 'Give as you shop' and free donations sites don't allow charities' supporters to decide which charity they want to support. At most, they might allow you to choose the type of charity. This means that many smaller charities are overlooked in favour of a small number of larger, already well-funded charities.