

## First ESHA Balkan conference in Macedonia

Under the umbrella of the annual conference of the Macedonian school heads organization, Lider, the ESHA representative for the Balkan Gorica Iljoska organized the first ESHA Balkan conference.

Delegates from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia attended the meeting. The main topics of the Lider conference were the Macedonian development plan for their schools, the reforms in the education system and the decentralization. The Deputy Minister of Education and other high ranked representatives of the ministry of education of Macedonia explained the official policy and discussed it with the Macedonian school heads.

Perhaps unexpected and new but highly interesting was the European dimension in this discussion. The representatives of the other Balkan states explained and discussed the situation of the school heads and the school systems in their countries. So it was possible to compare and to learn from each other. The President of ESHA, Dr. Burkhard Mielke, supported this and opened the view to the other European regions and to the official European policy following the Lisbon protocol. At the end the delegates expressed how important the integration into the European context is for them. ESHA will have new members and reactivate former members too. The last white spots on the European ESHA map will finally disappear.

The expectations towards ESHA are high:

- to support the countries on their way to become member of the European Union,
- to enable personal and school to school contacts,
- to be partner in projects and to be represented in discussions with the European Commission .

Many thanks to Gorica Iljoska. She worked extremely hard to organize and lead the conference to this success and will go on now to organize the future of the Balkan school heads organizations in ESHA. And many thanks to Katarina Vuckova, an English teacher and Ivana Naumovska – a student, the young and high skilled interpreters who accompanied me during the conference.

Macedonia, a forgotten paradise, this is really true. Ohrid the conference place situated at the Lake Ohrid and the national park Galicica is awesome. A place of history, the cradle of the Orthodox Church, with important relicts of the Orthodox culture and Slavic literacy. St. Kliment and St. Naum, St. Cyril and Methodius' disciples, lived and taught here, created the Cyrillic alphabet and founded the first European university and hospital. Old monasteries and churches, breathtaking views over the lake and the mountains and calm boat trips to the wells of this huge Ohrid Lake is really worth going there or coming back for holidays in an atmosphere of hospitality and friendship.

Dr. Burkhard Mielke

President of ESHA, September 2007