



20 Years Promoting Tolerance in Central, East and Southeast Europe

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and Central Asia

Publication on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the 'Promoting Tolerance'
program, initiated and jointly organized by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for
Freedom (FNF) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC).

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Globalization as an Opportunity – A Greeting for the 20th Anniversary of the 'Promoting Tolerance' Program

Michael Link
Germany

Michael Link has been Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office and Commissioner for Franco-German Cooperation since 2012. He has been a member of the

German Bundestag since 2005.

Mr. Link is a member of the executive committee of the "Europa-Union", a member of the German Council on Foreign Relations, the German Association for Eastern European Studies, the Southeast Europe Association, the German Atlantic Association and the Workers' Samaritan Federation. He is also active in the hospice movement in Germany.

In 1986, he joined the FDP; from 1989 to 1995 he was Treasurer and Deputy Federal Chairman of the Young Liberals. From November 2009 until January 2012 he was Chairman of the working group on international affairs of the FDP parliamentary group.

Since 2003 he has been a member of the FDP executive committee in Baden-Württemberg, and since 2006 Treasurer of the FDP in Baden-Württemberg.

I.
As a Liberal, I am not one of those who see the dangers of globalization before anything else. On the contrary, globalization offers enormous opportunities. Not only for technical progress and prosperity, but also for those goals and values for which we, Europe and the Western societies in general, stand for – i.e., peace and prosperity in freedom. The Western countries would not be this successful today if they had not put two principles in the center of their social models, equally and together – the pursuit of individual happiness and a comprehensive concept of tolerance. It is no coincidence that the intellectual manifestation of both principles can be found in equal measure in the great writers and thinkers of the Enlightenment Age – Voltaire, Lessing, Goethe, or Mill.

Indeed, even in Europe the rule of law, freedom and prosperity had to pave the way first. And many dead ends and immense suffering had to be endured until the notion of tolerance was able to assert itself as one of the fundamental principles of modern societies. After the disasters arising from Germany in the first half of the 20th century, Europe as we have it today is the living proof that the rule of law, security and prosperity can be created as a real mutual benefit and not at the expense of others.

Globalization creates probably the ideal conditions to preserve these values, and at the same time to advertise them on a global scale. The increasing media interconnectivity ceaselessly uncovers injustice, oppression and intolerance. This annoys those in the Arab world and Iran who tried to secure their power over the decades through the suppression of their own people, but also to others who are economically successful, but manage only with increasing efforts to keep the appearance of a harmonious society. Europe and the West can look with great confidence – despite the financial crisis – towards the competition between systems that globalization almost automatically brings along through informational transparency. In a globalized world, Europe influences – as Wilhelm von Humboldt put it as his educational ideal – "by what it is to others." And we see over and over again how attractive this model is, for which we stand for, in our political work – whether as politicians, foundation representatives, employees of an NGO or politically active bloggers – around the globe as well as on the World Wide Web.

At the same time, the West must be vigilant to defend the model of enlightened societies inward and promote it onward. When populists exploit the understandable fears of the people in the economic and financial crisis, and consequently advocate a policy of nationalism, isolationism and intolerance, we have to be vigilant and stand firm against this.

II.

20 years of 'Promoting Tolerance' as a joint project of the American Jewish Committee and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom is a cause to congratulate its initiators and participants – and to encourage them to continue and expand this extraordinary commitment. It has lost none of its relevance. The variety of experiences offered by this project to its participants and the resulting network, are a valuable contribution within the context of the civil commitment of the political foundations. I wish all participants and initiators further a lot of "fortune" and success in this great project.



20 Years 'Promoting Tolerance' in Central, East and Southeast Europe

Dr. Wolfgang Gerhardt
Germany

Dr. Wolfgang Gerhardt is Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom since May 2006. Since 1994 he has been a member of the

German Parliament; from 1995 until 2001 he was Leader of the FDP and from October 1998 until April 2006 Chairman of the FDP-parliamentary group.

Since March 2002 Dr. Gerhardt has been Vice-President of Liberal International and since December 2006 Head of the Board of Trustees of the foundation "Bundespräsident-Theodor-Heuss-Haus". He studied at the University of Marburg, majoring in Education, German Studies and Political Science, and received his Doctorate degree in 1970.

The 'Promoting Tolerance' program was conceived by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the American Jewish Committee only a few years after the end of communist dictatorship in Eastern Europe. Those were truly revolutionary times back then! Established political regimes and their elites were swept away – not overnight, but certainly quickly. Moreover, societies that had experienced decades of oppression, fear and injustice, had won their freedom. The entire political, social and economic architecture that had lasted since the end of World War II was torn down and rebuilt. And all, by the way, without a single gunshot.

Naturally these changes were accompanied not only by high hopes, but also by expectations and demands. "Freedom" is ultimately more than a word! Once fought for and won, freedom should be shaped and lived. Consequently, with freedom comes responsibility. According to the words of a German-Jewish political scientist from Berlin, Richard Löwenthal – he who has won "the freedom to self-determination", who can pursue his own happiness and set his own priorities, he must also assume responsibility for his decisions. This is as true for an individual as well as for a society. It holds true both for the private and the public sector. People did not want only democracy, freedom, and civil rights, they also wanted more wealth, more mobility, and more opportunities for self-

determination. The following right is also part of a person's dignity: to be able to live according to one's own potential, to take one's own chances! Herein lies the reward, the fulfillment of the risks of freedom.

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom has accompanied these people on their journey from day one. This was a challenging, sometimes bumpy road, and is in many areas still not completed. "Transformation" certainly has an additional individual component that is often overlooked. It means – to use the words of the German President Joachim Gauck – "the transformation from a 'resident' or 'inmate' of a dictatorship to a *citizen* of a free state." It fills me with joy – even with pride – to note that in many countries of the region we liberals were among the first to establish new collaborations and partnerships. The idea of freedom, the norms, values and the political solutions which Liberals vouch for were taken up with great, even enthusiastic, interest everywhere.

Bridges had to be built during the process. Bridges that could connect people – yes, quite literally, neighbors – with each other. Freedom and democracy do not develop in a vacuum. They live by the encounter, the exchange, by knowledge about each other. Moreover they can only develop properly under peaceful circumstances.

This is true among nations but also within societies. The societies of Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe were never monolithic blocks, as they appeared to some in the West during the Cold War. Rather, they are pluralistic societies which were then faced with the task to establish for themselves the open and pluralistic structures which could protect and provide for human and civil rights and the rule of law above all and equally to their own society's groups and citizens. This is especially true with regard to minorities.

"Tolerance" is of great importance in this respect. To recognize the essence and the potential of the 'other', to accept differences – in normative frameworks, in political cultures, in the respective perceptions of history – and to seek common ground: This constitutes the core of a modern understanding of tolerance. So understood, tolerance is the necessary foundation of pluralism – and thus a prerequisite for freedom and democracy.

So what can we do to deepen our understanding of each other, accept our differences and yet appreciate our similarities, based on which we can contribute to greater freedom, democracy and peacefulness? These were the essential questions and topics 20 years ago when the first two representatives from the

Foundation and the AJC conceived the program 'Promoting Tolerance': Dr. Jürgen Wickert and Rabbi Andrew Baker.

From its very beginning, 'Promoting Tolerance' was a program of dialogues, whose goal was to create bridges in three respects. The first one is: To promote personal interaction among the civil societies of Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe in order to deepen the knowledge about these societies – their problems, but also their potential for development and progress. What can we learn from each other? How do we prevent a relapse into nationalistic thinking and policies? How do we overcome xenophobia, exclusion and discrimination? What specific activities, which educational, informational and technical programs can be developed to encourage the commitment, especially of the younger generation, to promote tolerance, pluralism and liberality? This project provides an excellent forum for our partners from the region to discuss precisely such questions and to initiate a variety of ideas for such activities. This purpose is especially served by the first two parts of the 'Promoting Tolerance' program, the online seminar and the international seminar, held each year in a different country of the region.

The project also aims at a closer integration of our partners in the new democracies and transition countries with the Euro-Atlantic community. This is the second bridge the program seeks to build. Many countries in Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe are already members of the European Union and NATO, i.e. institutionally part of the Euro-Atlantic community. Furthermore, there are various co-operation and partnership relationships through which the community is linked to its eastern neighbors.

But political institutions, which are primarily operated by government, are one thing. The establishment of a common value system is another. This is a long lasting process, and it requires constant exchange, not only through intellectual dialogue, but also by the teaching of practical skills, and even more, by the accumulation of personal experience. This is the special focus of the third part of the annual 'Promoting Tolerance' program, namely the study tour in the United States. How is *tolerance* institutionalized in America's dynamic, open civil society – that is, the protection of the right to be different and of the human privilege of self-determination of one's life? How do they deal with racism in the U.S., with discrimination – such as towards sexual minorities – or anti-Semitism? In this tour, the participants come in touch with many specific local projects and initiatives in order to study the American experiences in these respects.

The nearly two-week long visits to the United States, which include not only Washington but also three other locations, are, of course, a particularly attractive part of the 'Promoting Tolerance' program. They are supported by the Transatlantic Dialogue of the Foundation for Freedom and are superbly organized and executed by the American Jewish Committee.

And this brings me to the third bridge of the program, which for me and for everyone in the Foundation for Freedom and for the Liberals in Germany is of great importance: German-Jewish cooperation. The fact that a German political institution such as the Foundation for Freedom and the American Jewish Committee, one of the oldest, most prestigious and important Jewish institutions in the world, are working closely together in complete trust for over twenty years is not a given. It was certainly not a given when the program was launched in 1992. In light of what has been done in the name of Germany to the European Jews, this cooperation with the AJC is a special commitment for us.

I am proud that our liberal beliefs and our work for democracy, human rights, the rule of law and minority protection are supported by the American Jewish Committee, that we stand together as partners and work together to realize the values that we hold in common.

This German-Jewish cooperation is of a great value for us, the German liberals, as well as for all those who hold positions of responsibility in our state, political and administrative systems. This is also reflected in the fact that its implementation is made possible by two German ministries simultaneously – the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Federal Foreign Office. I am truly grateful to both ministries for their support.

The strengthening of a stable and shared value system of tolerance, freedom and democracy is a long-term task. We in the Foundation for Freedom will do our utmost to advance this program for the next 20 years at least and to continue our cooperation with the American Jewish Committee.



'Promoting Tolerance': In it for the Long Term

Rabbi Andrew Baker
USA

Rabbi Andrew Baker is Director of International Jewish Affairs of the American Jewish Committee. Since 2009, he also serves as the Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism of the Chair-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). He is Vice President of the Jewish Claims Conference and a member of the International Auschwitz Council, the official body that oversees the memorial site. In recognition of his work in Europe he was decorated by the Presidents of Germany (2003), Lithuania (2006), Latvia (2007) and Romania (2009). He is a past President of the Interfaith Conference of Washington, a former Commissioner of the District of Columbia Human Rights Commission, and a past President of the Washington Board of Rabbis. In 1991 in cooperation with Dr. Jürgen D. Wickert he developed the AJC-Friedrich Naumann Foundation project, 'Promoting Tolerance'.

Over two decades have passed since the Wall came down. Today's pedestrian walking in Berlin has a hard time knowing where that formidable and forbidding concrete divide once stood. As the city itself has been once again knitted together, so too Germany and Europe. A new generation has grown to adulthood without knowing even those last days of the Cold War and Communist life.

Twenty years ago we first imagined the possibility of a Europe "whole and free." But the challenges were enormous—decades of secret police and authoritarian rule, only the remnants of a sham "command economy", and no democratic institutions or even memories of a distant democratic past. Western governments and civil society provided help and guidance, instruction on good governance and electioneering. Yet, even as democracy began to take root, we recognized that there were new problems that these now open societies were forced to confront.

Ethnic and religious hatreds kept in check under Communism were never vanquished. A free media was also free to print racist and anti-Semitic material. Free speech, essential to democratic political debate, also meant hate speech and appeals to ethnic incitement. In some places, such as the former Yugoslavia, this would have genocidal consequences. Even in the best of situations, old prejudices helped fuel troubling, populist movements.

Enter the American Jewish Committee and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation—at first glance unlikely partners.

In the 1980s AJC and the Naumann Foundation collaborated on programs bringing together a younger generation of Germans and Jews. The legacy of the Holocaust still loomed large in these encounters. Questions of guilt and responsibility were never far from the surface; the idea of "reconciliation" was approached gingerly if at all. But through those years a measure of trust was secured and a shared view that this very difficult history should serve as a foundation for a better future. In 1991 we concluded that we had complimentary resources that could make a tangible contribution to the changed environment of Central and Eastern Europe.

Since its founding in 1906, AJC's primary focus has been on protecting the civil and political rights of Jews. But it recognized that Jewish security and well-being could not be addressed in a vacuum. In large measure it would be assured only insofar as American society was open to and respectful of all its minorities. And thus so much of AJC's work has emphasized the building of interethnic and interfaith coalitions and seeking allies in combating anti-Semitism, prejudice and discrimination. We believe that pluralism and diversity in society are to be valued and not feared.

But we also know this is not everyone's assumption. American society is religiously and ethnically quite diverse, which does not lead automatically to tolerance and harmony. Quite the contrary, it has meant that we have had a great many problems in learning to live with each other. And so what we believed we had to offer were some lessons in addressing those problems—the role of government and the role of civil society in fighting intolerance and discrimination—that might prove helpful to others.

The Naumann Foundation directed its attention to establishing offices and contacts in the post-communist landscape of Central and Eastern Europe. Through this early network of the Foundation a new generation of emerging political leaders was identified that became the focus of our formal cooperation in 'Promoting Tolerance'.

For two decades now we have hosted these participants in America. They are introduced to the large variety of public and private initiatives. They have discussed political lobbying with advocates from Hispanic, African American and gay rights organizations in Washington, outreach to minority students at the Metropolitan

Museum in New York, and reporting on ethnic communities with newspaper editors in Chicago. They have had an opportunity to worship in synagogues and churches and to sit informally in the homes of AJC members to better understand the very personal investment we have in these efforts. And through these intensive visits we hope emerging leaders have found techniques and strategies and pragmatic examples that can be replicated when they return home.

It is no mere coincidence that 'Promoting Tolerance' is a German-Jewish initiative, and this fact is not lost on those who participate. Its special parentage speaks to the possibility of promoting understanding, dialogue and cooperation even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Over the years this program has extended its reach from Central and Eastern Europe to Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In the meantime our participants bring with them not only a desire to effect political and social change in their societies—this has always been a hallmark—but also their own increasingly more sophisticated experience and expertise.

And yet, even as 'Promoting Tolerance' encompasses a broader geographic area, we recognize that the challenge is an ongoing one in all the countries touched by this program. In these times of economic distress and immigration within and to Europe tensions have increased. Right wing parties are gaining support. Racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic ideologies have their adherents. Our work is as vitally important today as it was when AJC and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation first joined hands.



'Promoting Tolerance' – 20 Years of German-Jewish Cooperation for Freedom, Democracy and Pluralism

Dr. Jürgen D. Wickert
Germany

Dr. Jürgen D. Wickert joined the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in 1973 as Project Director for Indonesia. He served the Foundation in many positions, among them as Representative at the UN-Headquarters,

New York (1983-1985), as Director of the Transatlantic Dialogue Program with the United States and Canada in Washington, D.C. (1986-1991), as Head of the Institute for "Politics and International Cooperation" (1996-2003) and as Director, International Political Dialogue, European Institutions and North America based in Brussels (2003-2011).

From 2007 until 2009, Dr. Wickert was Coordinator of the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP). Currently he is Senior Partner of "Wickert & Partner" as a corporate diplomacy consultant and senior advisor. He is Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board of the Eberhard-Schöck-Stiftung in Baden-Baden, Senior Consultant to the Director General of "Deutsche Welle" and a member of the International Advisory Board of the Holocaust Fund of the Jews from Macedonia.

In 1992, in cooperation with Rabbi Andrew Baker, he developed the American Jewish Committee – Friedrich Naumann Foundation project, 'Promoting Tolerance'.



Dr. René Klaff
Germany

Dr. René Klaff is Regional Director for Central, East & South East Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and is based in Sofia, Bulgaria, since August 2010.

He studied Political Science, History and Islamic Studies & Arabic at the University of Kiel, Germany, and at several institutions in the USA and the Middle East.

From 1988 – 1994, Dr. Klaff was Lecturer and Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Kiel.

After joining the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in 1994, he served as Project Director in Pakistan, Singapore and Israel and as Regional Director for South Asia based in New Delhi, India. From 1999 – 2001, he was Secretary-General of the German United Nations Association (DGVN) in Bonn.

Integrity and imagination – the beginnings of an unusual partnership

In 1983, both the head of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in Jerusalem, Peter Finkelgrün, and the Foundation's then-partner in political education, Noam Semel from the Haifa Municipal Theater, suggested that the Foundation's newly established New York office, under the direction of Dr. Jürgen D. Wickert, partner with the American Jewish Committee, in particular, that they contact Rabbi Andrew Baker.

The exchange of ideas about solutions for political, economic, inter-cultural and other challenges was the prerogative of a newly designed dialogue program, with well-defined modules extending from civic education to policy advice. The dialogue – not in the form of meaningless shallow banter – had to cut to the core problems and thus it needed stakeholders whose social standing was as impeccable as their political credibility as campaigners for freedom, and therefore as being against oppression, racism, xenophobia and the disregard of human rights.

The AJC turned out to be an ideal partner because of its decades of experience in education, its hundreds of thousands of members and its wide network of regional offices in the United States and related numerous activities. The Committee also had an international perspective; it had taken the responsibility for the protection from and fight against anti-Semitism worldwide and especially in Eastern Europe. The Foundation and the Committee rapidly developed a cooperation, strengthened by the often inventive events staged in New York and soon, far beyond.

This also involved a lot of courage and backbone on the part of the American Jewish Committee. It was by no means inevitable that American Jewish organizations would work closely in public with German organizations and together advance the shared values of democracy, pluralism and tolerance. Enmities were plenty, emanating in particular from the right and left wings of the political spectrum – on both sides of the Atlantic. This was especially true after the Foundation shifted the focus of its work to Washington, DC in 1986 and expanded its activities beyond the affluent suburbs of the capital. Then the American Jewish Committee proved to be especially helpful precisely because of its many branches across the vast territory of the United States. Another fortunate occurrence for the development of cooperation during the following years was the choice for the primary contact, a man who soon became my personal friend, Rabbi Andrew Baker, Director of International Jewish Affairs.

This strengthening of cooperation also included multi-day training sessions

with young people, significantly, those who were future liberal stakeholders and decision-makers – especially those from Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe – but also from the U.S., Germany and Israel. These 'trialogue' measures were often difficult to direct, but proved extremely successful by sustaining the desired educational goals. In many cases, the habitual constraints between the grandchildren of victims towards the grandchildren of culprits and vice versa could be changed in a positive way, and thereby create the prerequisites for an accurate, unprejudiced dialogue.

Challenge and opportunity – the end of communist dictatorship in Europe

In the early nineties of the last century, it became apparent that the walls of the communist states in Central, Southeast and Eastern Europe would collapse faster than many had hoped – and some had feared. By that time it became evident that there would be an enormous demand for anything that might be needed to develop democracy, a market economy, the rule of law and human rights.

But where would the qualified experts and trainers come from, and – more importantly – on what values and norms could one build upon? After all, one had to deal with societies whose extent of deformation after decades under the reign of violence, terror, oppression and tyranny could only be guessed at and, at best, compared to reminiscences of Germany in 1945.

Unlike the situation in Germany after its defeat and liberation, here one was faced with a change without the milestone of a finished war, without military losers and winners, without capitulation and occupation. The Soviet Union and its satellites found themselves on the fast road of thorough renewal, whose profound cataclysms spared nothing and no one and seemed to sweep away everything familiar. In addition, the risks posed by a declining but still nuclear armed Soviet empire were not to be underestimated. Many of the former Western policymakers even feared a "roll-back", i.e. a violent throwback to the old days of the Cold War, with unpredictable global consequences.

As always during difficult times of fundamental change, back then there was also the concern that dissatisfaction and disappointment with the slowness of the anticipated changes would also find a release through xenophobia, hatred against minorities, and especially, in a revival of anti-Semitism.

Many people were of course inspired by their newly won freedom. But many others were disappointed and retreated to the 'loser's corner' in fear and despair of

the coming unknown. The progress towards democracy and market economy was fragile, parties were created and collapsed, leaders without an inherited legacy were rare, and the pressure in societies on all sides grew as constant as the erupting promises and lures of the Western consumer culture produced by its industries and media. Civil society was a small presence and the models and suitable means to improve it were scarce.

'Promoting Tolerance' – sustainable educational and dialogue work

Against this background, the Director of International Jewish Affairs of the American Jewish Committee, Rabbi Andrew Baker, and the then Head of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's Transatlantic Dialogue Program in Washington, DC, Dr. Jürgen D. Wickert, designed, at first alone and then with the energetic support of their institutions, organizations and sponsors, a program called 'Promoting Tolerance in Central and Eastern Europe'. It was soon to become well known far beyond its own discipline as an example of successful and sustainable educational and dialogue work.

Because of its historical legacy, Germany, which had undoubtedly developed into an anchor and lighthouse for others both in terms of democracy and human rights, obviously could not be a suitable place to communicate the message of pluralism and tolerance. Europe as an institution was not yet a presence while other European states showed little or no interest. Hardly any country had created the civil society institutions suited for the tasks of political education. On closer inspection, it became clear that only the United States of America, being a place of refuge and a haven of freedom, with its unique history of fighting racism and oppression, could be the host country for the planned multi-week training courses. The decisive point was that although racial, religious and other forms of discrimination have to this day not been overcome in the U.S., there are more mechanisms, instruments and rights here to be learned, lived and experienced which can be mobilized and deployed against discrimination, than in almost any other country.

The 'Promoting Tolerance' Program was created as a contribution to the reduction and even prevention if possible of any kind of suffering or misery caused by racism, terror, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Pluralism and tolerance are teachable prerequisites for democracy and the rule of law, for a life of safety, peace, prosperity and participation in the decision-making processes of modern societies, especially those with a liberal character.

'Promoting Tolerance' – the first 20 years

The collaboration between the Foundation for Freedom and the American Jewish Committee has proved to be not only viable, but close and trusting, through all the structural changes over the last 20 years. Shared values and goals unite. Each year, the Foundation and the AJC jointly formulate a new topic for the program. The recruitment of the participants and the planning of the various events are then conducted by the Project Offices (currently six) and the Regional Office for Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

Of essential importance in this first phase is the 'international seminar'. It is conducted each year in a different country of the region and provides the participants with an opportunity for an intensive dialogue on the respective main topic. The AJC and the Transatlantic Dialogue (TAD) of the Foundation are both involved in the execution of the international seminar, because it is where the way is paved for the second phase of the program – the study tour in the U.S., the highlight of the whole program. It always takes the participants to Washington, DC, and then to three other varying locations each year. This study tour is organized by the AJC and conducted in cooperation with the TAD.

These two core elements of the program are accompanied by other components – in the early years by 'follow-up seminars' after the study tour and as of 2008, by an initial online seminar, dedicated to the intensive development of the year's main topic, the successful completion of which is a prerequisite for the participation in the two core elements of the program. Additionally, over the years publications have always been produced on the individual topics, with contributions by the participants from the different viewpoints of their home countries. And of course, many program alumni stay in touch with each other through various new channels of social media.

By the end of 2012, more than 275 participants from 28 countries of Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia will have participated in the program – mostly young leaders from liberal parties and the liberal sphere. In the 1990's, the participants were recruited primarily from Central and South Eastern European countries that were soon to be members of NATO and the EU; but from the very beginning representatives from Russia as well as from the Western Balkans also took part in the program. At the start of the new millennium the circle widened considerably. Since then, liberals from the South Caucasus and Central Asia are also represented in the program.

Most of the participants were at the start of impressive professional careers, whether in politics and government, in academia, the media or civil society institutions or the economy. Many reached key leadership positions, some in high political office, as MPs in national parliaments or the European Parliament, as ministers or even, in one case, as a deputy prime minister. Our compilation in the following chapters provides an insight into the career of our alumni. Only a few have vanished from our sight.

The political careers of former participants may only be a partial indicator of the program's success. The impact of the program could prove difficult to measure empirically in a precise manner, whether regarding the intense preoccupation with human and civil rights or regarding the expansion of knowledge and awareness through dialogue with people from other countries with different experiences, or regarding the impressions of the dynamic and pluralistic civil society of the United States. The nearly universal enthusiastic feedback from the participants, the diverse and sustainable cross-border contacts and the number of different initiatives that have emerged in many countries through the program have shown, however, that the commitment to pluralism and tolerance against nationalism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism is worth it. For the Foundation for Freedom and the American Jewish Committee, these experiences are incentive enough to continue their involvement for many more years if possible. Democracy, freedom and responsibility, the pillars of the Euro-Atlantic system of values, require further consolidation. 'Promoting Tolerance' is an important contribution in this direction.



Some Personal Remarks about the 'Promoting Tolerance' Program

Kristiina Ojuland

Estonia

Alumna 1996

Kristiina Ojuland became a member of the European Parliament in 2009. She is a member of the Estonian Reform Party and of the ALDE Group in the European Parliament. She has been a Vice President of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR) (1998-2002; 2007-2009), a Chair of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, ALDE-PACE Group (1999-2002) and a Vice-President of PACE (1996-2002). She was Foreign Minister of Estonia from 2002-2005. She was an MP in the Estonian Parliament (1994-2009) where she served as Chair, European Union Affairs Committee (2005-2007), as First Deputy Speaker of the Estonian Parliament (2007-2009), and as leader of the Estonia-France Friendship Group (1995-2002; 2007-2009). She is a graduate of Law (1990) and a Master of Political Science (2010) from the University of Tartu and is an accredited diplomat from the Estonian School of Diplomacy.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to refresh my memories of the 'Promoting Tolerance' program - I had the honor of participating in it 16 years ago. Over the long years since then, my memory of it has become patchy but I recall first of all some personal reflections, some funny stories that I still remember because I have shared them frequently with my friends.

However, let me start with a description of the Program. I must admit that thanks to 'Promoting Tolerance' I made my first trip to the United States. That means it was not only about learning about the different communities, races and nationalities living together in the US, but also very much about getting my first taste of the USA in much broader terms. Because the participants were divided into small groups and sent to different parts of the country, we got the opportunity to know each other much better. We were young and eager to see and experience life in the USA. Our common background and memories were of growing up under totalitarian regimes.

Lesson 1. The American Jewish Committee. Our first contact with this organization took place in one of New York City's skyscrapers. We were strongly

impressed by both the exciting view over Manhattan and the AJC's position and influence in US politics. I was already familiar with a Jewish community - the one in Strasbourg, where I had worked as the first permanent representative of Estonia at the Council of Europe. In Strasbourg I lived in a neighborhood with orthodox Jewish families. I was familiar with their customs and very strong traditions. The Sabbath I experienced during the program was in Los Angeles. The Synagogue in Strasbourg is the biggest in Europe and I used to meet tens of Jewish families with many children on the streets on Saturdays. It seemed that they all know each other and dressed and behaved in the same manner. In New York, I learned about another side of Jewish life, their influence and power in politics. I now understood about the connection between Israel and the US and the grounds for their close co-operation. Shortly after the Program, I visited Israel and Palestine.

Lesson 2. Chicago. The Gospel and Black community - jazz and business. My strongest recollection is probably a Sunday visit to a Catholic church and meeting the local communities of people of different colors and backgrounds. But they were all united through a strong emotional commitment to their religion. In Chicago I got a confirmation to the legend that says in the US, everybody can create a business. You simply need to be creative: walking one night with a friend after visiting a jazz club, we saw an old black man selling a newspaper at this late hour. We decided to support him and bought that paper for one dollar. Later in our hotel we discovered that the newspaper was one year old - but business is business.

Lesson 3. Los Angeles. The Rich, the Poor and a "Deficit". My most vivid memories were the visits to private and public schools. In private schools, everything was perfectly proper: nice students, nice environment, and smiling people all around. The contrast with what I saw in public school was dramatic. It was really poor. I could not have imagined previously that any school in the US could look so bad - it was dirty, old, had broken furniture and lots of immigrant children and a teacher who was the strangest part of all, he looked like a construction worker. I still wonder what kind of education this sort of school can offer.

In our group there was a historian from Siberia. Most of us were in our late twenties and he was about ten years older, with a very open, sincere personality. One sunny day we were told that the bus would take us to the ocean and whoever wanted could go swimming. Since some of us did not have swimming suits, we were first driven to a shop in the LA suburbs. After returning to our bus, we heard an unbelievable story from our Russian friend - he had discovered a "deficit"

(shortage) in the US! He was deeply shocked that in the biggest capitalist country you could buy "kupalniki" – male bikinis. He was deeply moved by this, exclaiming "Can you imagine, I found a deficit in America!" After a few minutes, our American guide explained that there was no 'deficit'; our friend had simply gone to the wrong shop. There was plenty of revealing male swimwear but its clientele was predominantly gay – straight men usually wear larger 'swim trunks'. But in Russia, all men wear little suits and swim trunks are unknown.

Lesson 4. The border between US and Mexico. I met a Mexican family who had the good fortune to be legal residents of the US. However, the illegal community of Mexican and other Latin Americans was huge. Many of them had risked their lives while crossing the border illegally. We visited the border region and it looked quite surrealistic- on the US side, a high barbed wire fence with border guards patrolling and on the other side, there were tens if not hundreds of Latin Americans waiting there to try their luck. Some of them were sleeping on the ground near the fence; some of them were just sitting and waiting. Children and grown up people – all together – all envisaging entering the land of their dreams one day. We also visited a small town in Mexico not far from the US border. The contrast between their standard of living and the small towns on the other side of the border was huge.

In conclusion. Without a doubt, the Program broadened my knowledge and understanding of the US as a country. Tolerance is a relative thing. Promoting tolerance is even more relative. I believe that tolerance and freedom are strongly linked to each other. The more freedom one has, the more tolerant people are. Different groups of people can live peacefully next to each other under certain conditions. They can accept each other's customs and traditions if their own customs and traditions are appreciated too. But tolerance is not automatic – the biggest lesson from the Program was definitely the understanding that one has to work for tolerance on a daily basis – among families, schools, communities, and governments – we all have to promote the idea of "different people living life in peace", as John Lennon put it.

The complete, detailed and updated list of Alumni of the program can be found in the section 'Promoting Tolerance' at the website: <http://www.msoc.fnst.org>

Alumni Recollections of the 'Promoting Tolerance' Program



Solomon Passy

Bulgaria

Alumnus 1995

Solomon Passy is President and Founder of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria. He has served as Minister of Foreign Affairs (2001-2005), OSCE Chairman-in-Office (2004), Chairman of the UN Security Council (in 2002/3), Chairman of Foreign / Foreign and Defense Parliamentary Committees (2005-2009 / 2001), and as a Member of Parliament in three sessions (1990-1991, 2001-2005, 2005-2009).

I am a modest representative of the lucky Bulgarian Jewish community that was saved by the brave Bulgarian people during WWII. My first exposure to public political activity was back in 1985 when, at the age of 28, I was one of those who supported the Turkish minority in Bulgaria which was oppressed by the communist regime. Therefore, I gained both personal and family experience of what tolerance is and what is not.

In the mid-'90s I was President of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, the first NGO founded in a Warsaw Pact country, whose goal was membership for our ex-communist countries in NATO and the EU. One of our most prominent programs was 'Promoting Tolerance', under which the Atlantic Club hosted key religious leaders like Pope John Paul II, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Dalai Lama of Tibet. We knew that differences should not be treated as threats but rather as opportunities for mutual enrichment and joint actions leading to a common progress. This is what the Euro-Atlantic values are about. Therefore, in 1995 I was pleased to accept an invitation to participate in the 'Promoting Tolerance' program of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the American Jewish Committee. The program provided me with a great arsenal of fresh arguments and compelling examples about how to defend our common values. My visit to the USA that same year was an eye opener and the lessons learned from 'Sesame Street' in New York City are still useful for me.

Later in my career, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chairman-in-Office of OSCE or Chairman of the UN Security Council, negotiator and signatory to Bulgaria's accession treaties with NATO and the EU, I have frequently had the opportunity to revisit my memories of the AJC-FNF tolerance program and make use of them again.

Currently, the Atlantic Club is focused on sharing the Bulgarian experience of its transition to democracy with countries in need. Among them are North Korea, Iran, Cuba and many others. Today we enjoy a new high-tech information environment and we know that the internet will be much faster than Guttenberg's printing press in bringing the fruits of democracy to enslaved peoples. The Arab Spring is just the beginning of a new political era and, hopefully, a better one!



Tomáš Kraus

Czech Republic

Alumnus 1993

Mr. Kraus graduated in Law at the Charles University in Prague. Since 1991 he has been the Executive Director of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic. Since 1999 Mr. Kraus has also been active as a professor, teaching for New York University and other educational institutions and training programs in Prague. In January 2009 he was elected the Vice-President of the World Jewish Congress and the Vice-President of the European Jewish Congress.

I had the privilege of participating in the program 'Promoting Tolerance' in its early days back in 1993. For me this was a turning point not only in my professional career but also truly as a life experience. Why?

Only a few years before that, in November 1989, the Velvet Revolution brought freedom to my homeland, Czechoslovakia. This country suffered first under Nazism and then under Communism. These totalitarian regimes devastated the country for decades. Czech society was then recovering from years of economic ruin and moral decay. The Czech Jewish Community – only a remnant of the glorious society which had lived in the country for centuries and whose contributions to world culture include such giants as Rabbi Löw (Maharal), the legendary creator of the Golem, Franz Kafka, Sigmund Freud and Gustav Mahler – was re-establishing itself and I was asked to participate in its revitalization.

Therefore, the opportunity offered to me by the American Jewish Committee and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation was a gift which came at exactly the right time. I was able to learn all aspects of life in the United States, meet interesting people and exchange opinions on all possible subjects. I also learned how its political system works and what are its challenges and opportunities.

Though my work as the Executive Director of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic is not purely political, I can use all the skills and knowledge which I was able to learn during that (relatively) short program. Thank you.



Edita Tahiri

Republic of Kosovo

Alumna 2003

Edita Tahiri is the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo. She is a prominent politician, diplomat and negotiator as well as an initiator of immense political changes in Republic of Kosovo and the surrounding region since the end of Cold War. She was a leader of the movement for independence of Kosovo, of the Democratic League of Kosovo, (1991-1999), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1991-2000), and a negotiator at the Conference of

Rambouillet (1999), the London Conference (1992) and all other peace processes of the pre-war period.

She is a Harvard graduate and holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government (2002). For excellence in her studies she was awarded the title 'KSG Stellar Student of 2002'. She completed her PhD in 2011, and her thesis topic was "International State Building under Uncertain Sovereignty".

She is also the President of the reformist party 'Democratic Alternative of Kosovo', the Chief negotiator of Kosovo in the technical dialogue with Serbia facilitated by the EU with the support of the USA and is the President of the Regional Women's Lobby (RWLSEE).

'Promoting Tolerance' is a remarkable program in its support of peace and democracy worldwide. It provides an opportunity to learn from best practices as to how the chapter of hostilities can be closed and a new chapter of peace and justice can be opened in the history of oppressed nations. I had the privilege to be part of this program in 2003, during the time when my nation was living through its fourth year of freedom while trying to heal the pains of war and suffering. After the war, as one of the leaders of the movement for the independence of Kosovo, I had taken the decision to look to the future and put the past behind us but making sure that genocide never again happens to Albanians. During the challenges of transformation, I found this program's support to be both relevant and inspirational, in particular because it was established by two organizations, FNF and AJC, of German and Jewish background working together for better world. It helped me to better understand how fulfilling the dream of freedom can be transformed into a benefit for everyone and strengthen our nation.

Congratulations on your 20th anniversary, I wish you all success in helping prepare future leaders of change.



Evgeny Gontmakher

Russian Federation

Alumnus 2006

Mr. Gontmakher is Deputy Director of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Science. He is a Member of the Managing Board of the Institute of Contemporary Development (INSOR) – an independent think tank for which President Medvedev is Chair of the Monitoring Board. Mr. Gontmakher graduated with a degree in Geography from Moscow State University and holds a PhD in Economics.

From 1993 to 1994, he served as Deputy Minister for Social Protection, from 1994 to 1995, as Department Head within the Administration of the Russian Government, from 1998 to 2003, as Head of the Social Development Department of the Cabinet Apparatus, from 2003 to 2004, as Vice President of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs and from 2006 to 2009, as Head of the Social Policy Centre, Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Sciences.

This program is now very appropriate for Russia. Recently we've seen a new wave of intolerance in the matters of ethnicity, religion and migration. Nationalism has become more active and is trying to influence political life. There is, for instance, intimidation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender movement. I've seen in the USA good examples how to construct peaceful and tolerant relations between the conservative majority of society and minorities and I hope that this experience will be useful to the new democratic Russia. My thanks to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the American Jewish Committee!



Ostap Semerak

Ukraine

Alumnus 2011

Mr. Semerak has been a Member of Parliament since 2007 and a Member of the Budget Commission. He is co-founder of the Reforms and Order Party and Secretary General of the party's National Board. From 2006 till 2007, Mr. Semerak was a vice-governor of the Kyiv Regional State Administration. He holds a master degree in political science from the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

The issue of tolerance has become extremely important in our globalized and multicultural world. Altogether we are different people, we live in various countries, under different conditions, and our vision of events and practices around us may sometimes coincide or diverge. Unfortunately, from time to time some people begin to believe that their origin, views or actions are better than the others' and that this fact entitles them to dominance. My participation in the program 'Promoting Tolerance' allowed me to evaluate my thoughts about the idea that all people are free, have the right to their own views, own positions and that all their neighbors should accept, understand and accept this fact.

As for the program's organization, I would like to underscore that I truly appreciate the extant of preparations carried out by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the American Jewish Committee. The two organizations clearly understand the priorities, objectives and values of this mission of tolerance. That is why I enjoyed and appreciate my participation in the program.

I do hope that the 'Promoting Tolerance' program will continue its work in the coming decades and will successfully advocate for liberal ideas in Europe and in the world.



Martin Bútorá

Slovakia

Alumnus 1994

Martin Bútorá is an Honorary President of the Institute for Public Affairs in Bratislava. He was one of the founders of the 'Public Against Violence' movement in Slovakia in November 1989, and served as Human Rights Advisor to President Václav Havel (1990-1992). He taught at Charles University in Prague and at Trnava University before founding the Institute for Public Affairs in 1997, an independent public policy think tank in Bratislava,

and becoming its first president. Between 1999 and 2003, he served as Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the United States. He writes on civil society, foreign policy, and democratic transformation and has written three prose works.

I recall my participation in the program 'Promoting Tolerance' in 1994 with pleasure. I found the program exceptional. And this is not only because of its special US study experience, but also due to the fact that within this program, both organizations, the American Jewish Committee and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, are able to bring together and introduce people from our own region of Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. Different people from different parts of the region, with different personal, professional and cultural backgrounds are given the opportunity to build an informal network of colleagues and friends and to discuss and exchange their experience of support for ethnic and religious tolerance, respect for human rights and the promotion of democracy. I deeply believe that initiatives like this, that bring together such an enormous number of leaders from all across Eastern Europe, are playing a crucial role in the process of building a pluralistic and tolerant society. And I think that the American Jewish Committee and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation should be aware of their important contribution to that process.



Adina Ioana Vălean

Romania

Alumna 2000

Mrs. Vălean has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2007. She was an Observer to the European Parliament (2006), a Member of the Romanian Parliament (2004), an NGO director (2001) and a Director at the Ministry for Youth and Sports (1997-1999). Mrs. Vălean was also Vice-Chairwoman of the Prahova county branch of the National Liberal Party (PNL) during 2006, Secretary of the PNL Committee on the business environment and competition policy (2002-2004) and Secretary-General of the National Liberal Youth Organization (2000-2002). She holds a master's degree in European Integration and Security Studies (2006) and has done postgraduate studies in National Security and Defense Management (2005).

As an alumna of 'Promoting Tolerance' I am extremely grateful to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the American Jewish Committee for allowing me to get to know a whole new world of ideas and beliefs. Coming from a new democracy and being a liberal, it was like a homecoming for me getting to know all these brilliant minds and having the opportunity to share and acquire so much knowledge and information. Fostering pluralism, a respect for diversity and promoting economic liberalism are core values for every liberal and they are still high on my agenda as a politician and as a Member of the European Parliament. There are moments in one's life that can define one's entire career. For me this was one of them.



Emil Kirjas

Republic of Macedonia

Alumnus 1999

Since September 2007, Emil Kirjas has been Secretary General of Liberal International, the world federation of liberal and progressive democratic political parties. From 2004 to 2006 he was State Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. His working experience includes involvement in various international organizations and institutions, including the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the International Federation of Liberal Youth. He holds a Master's Degree in Geopolitics from King's College in London.

'Promoting Tolerance' is a truly inspirational program, unique of its kind; a real unforgettable experience. It is a program that brings a perfect harmony - the content, the people, the environment and the cultural diversity. Brilliant in its conceptualization, the 1999 program that I participated in included a schedule of events that I remember as some of the most valuable in my career. It gave me additional motivation to look into the opportunities that the world of open cross-cultural and cross-religious dialogue can offer. It created a network of amazing people with whom I continuously cherish communicating and working. The 'Promoting Tolerance' program is not only about learning from the past but also about answering the challenges of today. It is about building our common future. In that spirit, with a number of the Macedonian Alumni, we strongly advocated for and worked towards erecting the Holocaust Memorial in Skopje, which has been opened to serve both as a commemoration of a part of our past that should never be repeated, but also as a center of education for Tolerance, Dialogue and Peace. I am eternally grateful to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the American Jewish Committee for giving me the opportunity to participate in the program.



Mikhail Kaluzhsky
Russian Federation
Alumnus 1999

Mikhail Kaluzhsky is supervisor of documentary programs at the Josef Beyus Theatre in Moscow. His work at the Beyus Theatre includes *Artists Anonymous* (2008, co-author, performer), *Legacy of Silence* (2010, playwright, director, performer), *Me, Anna and Helga* (2012, playwright), and *Grandchildren* (work in progress, playwright). He is one of the curators of the *Working with Documents: Documentary Theatre and Minorities* international theatre

laboratory (Moscow, 2012). Mr. Kaluzhsky is author of *Music Repressed* (2007) and many articles on culture and media (in *Ruskiy Reporter*, *Bolshoy Gorod*, *Snob*, *Booknik.ru*, *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, *Ost Europa*, etc.). Mr. Kaluzhsky is also a head of the public debates program at the Andrei Sakharov Centre in Moscow.

I'm sitting in Big Bird's nest - that is my favorite photo from that trip; it was taken in New York at the Sesame Street site. Truth to tell, I didn't expect we would visit that workshop. I didn't expect that a program called 'Promoting Tolerance in Central & Eastern Europe' would pay any attention to cultural matters. Educational programs for civic or political activists usually lack a focus on arts. This component is perceived as redundant, but politics itself rarely changes cultures and societies. But 'Promoting Tolerance' is really different and that is why it was an exceptional, guided tour of not only liberal values but also of the tools needed to create and promote those values.



Mane Manukian
Armenia
Alumna 2009

Mane Manukian graduated in Journalism at Yerevan State University in Armenia and later in Advanced European and International Studies at the Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales in Nice, France. Since 2010 she has been the Executive Director of the International Federation of Liberal Youth (IFLRY) in London, UK; from 2009 till 2010 she was Administrative Assistant/Interpreter for the European Union Advisory Group to

Armenia; from 2004 till 2005 she was a responsible for Public Relations at the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Armenia.

Peace and stability are so hard to achieve – and can be lost in a second. 'Promoting Tolerance' showed me that both people and nations become more tolerant when they transcend their difficulties rather than remain trapped by them, this can make people stronger and nations more powerful. The program made me dream of a day when the major actors in my region become wise and strong enough to not be absorbed by conflicts but to stand above them and then tolerance will be granted; it made me dream of a time when my friends from Turkey and Azerbaijan and I are able to promote tolerance in countries, where people still need to overcome the painful history. The past is gone, we can't change it, but we can try to shape the future.



Hovhannes Igityan

Armenia

Alumnus 2002

Since 1988, Mr. Igityan has been a member of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) – a liberal democratic party that is a member of ELDR. He was a member of the National Assembly of Armenia (1990 -1999), the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Head of Delegation in PACE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and the Co-Chairman of the European Parliament- Armenia joint committee.

Since 2002, Mr. Igityan has been the Executive Director of the EU Chamber of Commerce in Armenia, an expert for several TACIS projects and a member of the European Business Organizations Worldwide Network.

That the FNF and the AJC initiated the 'Promoting Tolerance' program has already been often called quite symbolic. This is certainly the case. However, the importance of choosing the right time to start the program should be taken into account as well. It was a time when political processes, especially in Eastern Europe, indeed required tolerance.

In 2002, when I was invited to participate in the program, it was already obvious that compromise alone was not sufficient to solve internal political problems and in particular, inter-ethnic conflicts. Compromise, as mutual concessions of the parties, can of course ease the tension, however, only tolerance will help achieving stable models of political culture and peaceful interethnic coexistence.

It is quite symbolic that in 2002 our seminar took place in Belgrade, where representatives of the republics of the former Yugoslavia as well as Eastern Europe and the former USSR participated and presented their points of view. It was a good opportunity during several days to understand and experience what these nations had gone through.

Afterwards we visited the USA only a year after its terrible tragedy. People hadn't yet fully recovered. Grief, anger, and distrust had not yet disappeared. It was very useful to have an inside view of the situation and meet representatives of various cultures in the US cities due to the great hospitality of the AJC and the Jewish community. Later I had opportunities to participate in different FNF seminars where the subject of tolerance was often emphasized while discussing political, social, and human rights related issues along with other topics.

I am grateful to the FNF and the AJC for this opportunity to be a part of the 'Promoting Tolerance' program, which has proved to be useful in my subsequent political and professional activities.



Oriano Otočan

Croatia

Alumnus 2010

Born in Pula (Region of Istria, Croatia), Mr. Otočan graduated in Mechanics and Economics at the University of Rijeka. In 2001 he was Head of Staff for the President of the Region of Istria; since 2005 he has been a Member of the Regional Government and Director of the Department for International Cooperation and EU Integration. He is in charge of activities in multilateral regional international organizations; bilateral interregional cooperation, EU programs and EU funded development projects and human resource development providing information on EU integration to citizens and cooperation with Istrian emigrants. Since 1996 Mr. Otočan has been a member of the Istrian Democratic Assembly. Currently he serves as the International relations secretary of the party.

Since 2002, Mr. Igityan has been the Executive Director of the EU Chamber of Commerce in Armenia, an expert for several TACIS projects and a member of the European Business Organizations Worldwide Network.

The program 'Promoting Tolerance' is remarkable for several reasons. It originated as a result of cooperation between two different organizations from different parts of the world, including joint education and meeting people who come from different countries, different cultural environments and experiences on issues of minorities, providing insight into the history and current state of the Jewish people, including familiarization with the American way of life and the way in which different ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and other minorities fit into the common life in the American multicultural environment.

The program enabled me to better understand the challenges that people face in the diversity of a multicultural global society today, and how to overcome these challenges. With regard to the scope of my work, which includes collaboration with emigrants, and based on the experiences of this program, I got a chance to directly apply the lessons learned and improve the cooperation by my region with emigrants who live and work in the United States.

The most powerful part of the program is definitely the contact with the Holocaust as an eternal reminder of unimaginable crimes. Since this lesson is not learned, and violence motivated by ethnic or other differences is still going on, it is obvious that the process of awareness is not enough and it is necessary to permanently continue and repeat it.



Arastun Orujlu

Azerbaijan

Alumnus 2004

From 1993 to 1996, Mr. Orujlu was Head of the Analytical Group for the "Yurd" Public Union and from 1996 till 2000, a member of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party Assembly and Chairman of the Commission for International Relations. From 1996 till 2011, he was a Project coordinator and Consultant for the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in Azerbaijan. Since 2004 he has been a political analyst, the Head of the East-West

Research Centre Azerbaijan, and the author of many articles on regional security and cooperation in the South Caucasus, on individual rights and freedoms, and on the political situation in Azerbaijan.

The 'Promoting Tolerance' (PT) program, which the FNF and the AJC have been implementing jointly in the framework of the Transatlantic Dialogue for 20 years, has become a good experience for young liberals who propose liberal values and promote tolerance in the Eastern European nations that have recently cast off the chains of authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Indeed, a number of societies across the entire region seem to be in crying need of a thorough study – perhaps not surprisingly, a series of studies – of how the culture of tolerance from the angle of liberal values has anchored itself in the minds of people in the West, particularly the USA. Yet both the FNF and the AJC need much to adapt themselves better to current expectations. Promoting the emergence of more politicians, civil society activists and media professionals who embody liberal-democratic values in their perspectives and actions could be the first step towards solving the dilemma that there is no democracy without democrats nor is there liberalism without liberals. Consequently, these two influential organizations have already provided room for others to learn and benefit from what the West has encountered and what it has gone through and how these values have become established in their respective communities. Another beauty of the PT program is networking since it involves participants from all over Eastern Europe. Evidently, it is joint efforts and continuous cooperation that can foster and subsequently contribute further to cementing democracy and its fundamental pillars – individual rights and freedoms, the market economy, reconciliation and civil harmony – in Eastern Europe. I feel happy being a person who has availed himself of the opportunity to participate in the PT program and later joined subsequent events in my capacity as a program alumnus. I am confident about the attainment of the objectives of the program over the past 20 years – the outcomes are impressive and outstanding. On this occasion, let me extend my sincere congratulations to the organizers who were and remain in the vanguard of this movement, and wish new, more challenging horizons for cooperation to the FNF-AJC partnership.



Cristian David

Romania

Alumnus 2003

Cristian David has been a Member of the Romania's Senate since 2004, a Member of the Controlling Committee of the Intelligence Service and a Member of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Head of the Institute for Liberal Studies (ISL), Bucharest. He studied Economics, Statistics and Cybernetics and in 2006 graduated with a PhD in Economic Sciences. From 2007 till 2008 he was Minister of Interior and Administrative Reforms. Before

that he was Minister on the Acquis Communautaire (2005–2006) and Vice-president of Liberal International (2009–2011).

Sometimes we are not aware of all the forms and expressions of diversity, even if these are a constant presence in our everyday life. When I joined this program I had only an open heart and mind, at the end I returned with a conscious understanding of the values of diversity and a deep comprehension of tolerance! Romania is a country where diversity and tolerance have not often marked our history; instead we have a tradition of a majoritarian spirit built on national pride and patriotism. The communist regime imposed intolerance and valued homogeneity and uniformity.

After the fall of communism, we aligned our attitudes and actions towards tolerance and a respect of minorities according to European standards. But this endeavor will not be truly successful until it comes from our own deep beliefs and conscience.

The program and especially the study visit gave me the opportunity to see and understand society from a different perspective, that of a minority. I now recognize how minorities struggle for integration and for recognition of their social and economic contributions. I have grasped the efforts they make for preserving their cultural and ethnical identity in a dynamic society ruled by competition, performance and efficiency.

Beyond the words and theories, I have discovered the practical sense and value of diversity and I have realized that the richness of a society can only come from multiculturalism, social heterogeneity, and by affirming individual liberties and responsibilities as the foundation of that society.

And how could I have learned more or better than from all the admirable people that I had the chance to meet and who now remain with me in my memories!



Mateja Demšič

Slovenia

Alumna 1999

Mrs. Demšič is a Director of the Youth Department at the Municipality of Ljubljana and is working on her PhD in historical anthropology. Her topic is the Balkans. Mrs. Demšič, together with colleagues from the region, is the initiator of the network of Young Liberal Democrats of the Balkans (ISEEL Network, 2003) and later, a network of liberal democratic individuals, groups and political parties from the region (Network Libseen, 2007). She also works

with young people, NGOs and institutions that deal with Human Rights Advocacy and Multicultural Education.

Being a part of the 1999 study trip to the USA by AJC and FNF meant to me a huge step into learning diversity, overcoming stereotypes and upgrading my knowledge and tolerance on several levels.

I understand 'Promoting Tolerance' as a program that encourages people who feel committed to foster multinational peaceful co-existence, understanding and partnership in Central, South Eastern and Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

In the last almost 13 years since I finished the Program, I have often asked myself if the AJC and the FNF realize what an impact the Program has had on individual lives? Professional and personal relationships have enriched the participants.

People with such an experience ought to make a difference in their societies regardless of whether they operate at the local, national, or the regional level. I have absolutely no doubt about that! Bringing together people with diverse backgrounds enables them to learn and (try to) understand different points of view. It doesn't matter really, on which level they act, what really matters is the change that they initiate. From my very personal point of view, this is still a necessity in the region of Southeast Europe (but not only here, of course). There are still open wounds, still voices ignored, and still fears present. Less and less though, but to become a tolerant and progressing society one still needs to try harder.

Being grateful for that experience, I want to remind the creators and organizers of the program that they should be proud of the number of participants but, above all, they should be proud of the differences those people made and still make in their societies.



Csaba Tóth

Hungary

Alumnus 2011

Csaba Tóth has been the Director of Strategy at the Republikon Institute since 2007 and Assistant Lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Budapest since 2008. He graduated in Sociology and Political Science and is now he engaged in Doctoral studies in political science. He has also been the Strategic Campaign Director at the Alliance of Free Democrats (SDS) and a Political Analyst at the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Education.

The 'Promoting Tolerance' program was a unique and exciting opportunity for me to experience first-hand the culture of tolerance prevalent in the United States. What struck me most was a phrase I heard in the central AJC Meeting: "Jewish Assertiveness". Although I have always tried to fight for the rights of minority groups, the notion that a previously disadvantaged minority might not only struggle against discrimination but actually use its cohesiveness and intellectual power to shape the national agenda – as well as the agenda most relevant to its experiences – struck me as a remarkably bold notion. The minority groups in my country, Hungary – including but not limited to the Jewish Community – could learn a lot from this assertiveness. At Republikon Institute, a liberal think-tank I head, we are now including this notion in some of our programs as well as trying to communicate it in our media appearances.

We often read about 'multiculturalism', but it requires programs such as these to see how it actually operates. I am grateful to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the AJC for giving me the opportunity to participate in this program.



Borislav Tsekov
Bulgaria
Alumnus 2006

Borislav Tsekov is a lawyer and a politician. He has served as president of the Institute of Modern Politics since 2009 and as the national president of the World Jurist Association since 1999. When he was a Member of Parliament (2001–2005), he sponsored over 30 bills, half of which were adopted. He has served as Secretary General of the National Ombudsman office (2005–2010). Since 1993 he has published over 300 articles on political and legislative issues.

'Promoting Tolerance' 2006' was one of my most remarkable visits to the USA. There were very important and interesting meetings with representatives from American politics, arts, and human rights organizations. Discussions with representatives of the American Jewish Committee and major foreign policy think-tanks improved my vision of the modern world. These two organizations, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the American Jewish Committee, had planned the program very carefully. We were given the opportunity to touch the different layers of American society and politics, to experience a true kaleidoscope of values, civic initiatives, advocacy and political activism.



Tatyana Konyayeva
Azerbaijan
Alumna 2009

Mrs. Konyayeva is responsible for the English desk of the ANN.Az News Portal, which was initiated by the Azerbaijani Democratic Reforms Party. She also leads the implementation of various projects within the NGO (the Jewish Women of Azerbaijan – a public organization) as the body's vice-president. She was the Persian desk's correspondent in the Trend News Agency and later she ran the European Neighborhood Journalism Network Program

for facilitating networking between journalists from Southern Mediterranean, Eastern European and Southern Caucasus countries with the goal of building bridges within her neighborhood.

About three years have passed since my participation in the program. During this period, I have grown from a Russian-speaking representative of the local media to an English-writing journalist and have advanced to the position of an editor-in-chief at a news portal's English Desk. I am absolutely confident that the program has contributed to my professional development as a journalist and to my re-examination of the concept of tolerance.

Moreover, the program has increased my professional capabilities since I've gotten fresh ideas and to implement them, I've used the experience and new contacts gained during my 10 days in the US. I managed to involve some of the people we met in the program when writing some articles, including those promoting building bridges among different societies' ethnic and religious groups.

Of course, first of all, the program is invaluable in terms of establishing warm-hearted relations among all program participants, which is an indicator of the project's efficiency.

As for me, the most unforgettable parts of the program, full of the most interesting meetings and events, were trips to New York and Seattle, where I could experience fully the concept of respect for diversity.

Unfortunately, all good things come to an end too soon. I wish future program participants will have an opportunity to extend the duration of the program and a chance to participate in the development of the program's agenda, for example, to include the specific organizations or their representatives which they are interested in.



Ramona Nicole Mănescu

Romania

Alumna 2004

Mrs. Mănescu is a member of the National Liberal Party, part of the ALDE in the European Parliament. She became a member of the European Parliament in 2007 and currently sits as a full member on the Committee on Regional Development. Mrs. Mănescu was Vice-Chairperson and Undersecretary of the National Youth Authority from (2005–2007) and Vice-Chairman of National Liberal Youth (2002–2004). She completed her doctorate in

International Relations and European Integration at the National School of Political and Administrative Studies in Bucharest in 2006. Between 2002 and 2004, Mrs. Mănescu was a parliamentary expert in the Romanian Parliament and an adviser to the Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Defense, Internal Affairs and National Security in the Chamber of Deputies. She completed a degree in Law at the University of Bucharest in 1999.

An inspiring program especially for young political leaders, meant to better understand and promote tolerance and respect for diversity. Many thanks to Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the American Jewish Committee for such an excellent and successful program which brings together different experiences to be shared.



Gia Jandieri

Georgia

Alumnus 2008

Mr. Jandieri is an economist and a graduate of both Georgian Polytechnic University and Tbilisi State University. He has worked for the Central Election Commission, the State Audit Office, the Georgian Parliament, and the Open Society Foundation. Mr. Jandieri is a founder and the Vice-President of the New Economic School - Georgia, a ten years old think-tank and has been a member of the Board of Trustees of the Office of National Statistics

since 2010. His main field of research and educational activities is the theory of Public Choice.

Let me first of all thank all the people who organized the program. I participated in the joint Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom - American Jewish Committee Program 'Promoting Tolerance' in 2008 and I think I will remember that November forever and would recommend participation in it to everybody. The program was superbly planned and executed. We visited different cities and locations, famous organizations and some very nice and friendly families.

Participants of the tour in the USA were people from Southern and Eastern Europe as well as the former Soviet Union. The people from these countries really need this kind of education because their societies have lost for a long period of time the feeling of tolerance or respect for people as individuals. Nowadays, it is very important for the people to value any individual even if he has, for example, recently been released from prison.

We visited the world famous Holocaust museum in Washington DC which reminded us of our past - the crimes of the Nazis and Bolsheviks; we discussed the reasons why totalitarianism appeared and how could we prevent these kinds of problems for our people in future. The program gave us a chance to listen to experienced local people but also to each other, to share our visions and strengthen our knowledge of these issues.

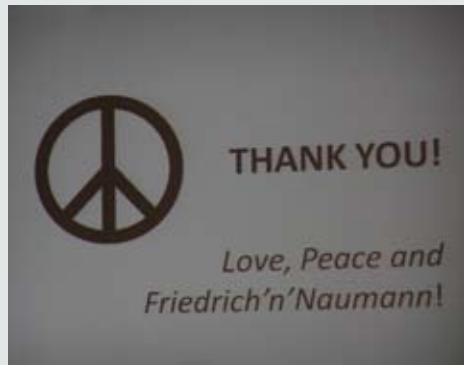
My overall opinion is that the program was important, interesting and effective. As one of the results of the program was my strong friendship with one of the families we met in Philadelphia, Mona and Alton Sutniks, whom I visited several times later and they also visited my family in Georgia. Thank you again!

Program Goals

- ◆ Promoting a climate of tolerance, pluralism, respect and an appreciation of diversity
- ◆ Improving the rights of minorities and creating an atmosphere of mutual acceptance
- ◆ Exchanging 'best practice' experiences of multicultural societies
- ◆ Encouraging cross-border co-operation
- ◆ Promoting tolerance through the strengthening of civil society
- ◆ Establishing and strengthening contacts between the various levels of society through the efforts of the program's open-minded, liberal participants and alumni

Some Photographic Impressions of the
'Promoting Tolerance' Program







Regional Office for Central, East and Southeast Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia (CESE)

The major tasks of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) are the promotion of democracy, human and civil rights, pluralism and market economy. To achieve our goals, we use the classic instruments of political education, political consultancy and political dialogue, such as conferences, workshops, publications and exchange programs. In our projects we cooperate with liberal-minded networks of political parties, citizens' initiatives, human rights organizations, think tanks and scientific institutions.

In the vast region of CESE, the Foundation maintains offices and projects in six sub-regions: Central Europe and the Baltic states; Southeast Europe; West Balkans; Ukraine and Belarus; Russia and Central Asia; and South Caucasus. Currently, the CESE Regional Office in Sofia coordinates activities in 27 project countries. The Foundation has some 40 staff members in the region's ten representative offices. Our activities in the entire region amount to roughly 500 events per year with several thousand participants.

Transatlantic Dialog Program (TAD)

Since 1983 the TAD has made an important contribution to the political dialogue between the USA, Canada and Europe by facilitating the exchange of ideas and information between transatlantic decision-makers in the areas of politics, economics and culture.

Through various communications platforms TAD fosters an exchange of perspectives on national, global and transatlantic issues. The aim is to consolidate the well-established Atlantic community of values as a global stabilizing factor, to strengthen mutual trust, and to create a permanent dialogue between North America and Europe, with a special focus on Germany.

Together with our partners, we hold numerous international conferences, symposia, lectures and discussion events. An additional focal point of the TAD is the organization of study tours which enable the political leaders of tomorrow to gain personal experience and to carry on the legacy of the transatlantic relationship.



The American Jewish Committee (AJC) was established in 1906 by a small group of American Jews who, deeply concerned about pogroms in Russia, felt that the best way to protect Jewish populations in danger would be to work towards a world in which all peoples were accorded respect and dignity.

Over 100 years later, AJC continues its efforts to promote pluralistic and democratic societies where all minorities are protected. AJC is an international think tank and advocacy organization that attempts to identify trends and problems early – and take action. Our key areas of focus are:

- Combating anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry;
- Promoting pluralism and shared democratic values;
- Supporting Israel's quest for peace and security;
- Advocating for energy independence;
- Strengthening Jewish life.

In addition to its New York headquarters and Office of Government & International Affairs in Washington, D.C., AJC has regional offices and independent affiliates across the U.S. and overseas in addition to a multitude of global partnerships.



Advancing Democracy - Building Civic Society



**Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom
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