



### Ankara Child Rights Cooperation Platform had a gathering in Ankara

Nine member organizations of the platform have signed the memorandum of understanding.



### Turkish Environment Platform in İstanbul

TÜRÇEP members are coming together on 5-6 May in İstanbul.



### Conscientious objector Ersan Uğur Gör:

"My conscience is clear as I am not a spare part for the militarist structures...."

# Siviliz

April 2007 • Issue 8

ISSN 1306-5297

Bulletin of the Strengthening Freedom of Association for Further Development of Civil Society Project implemented by STGM and supported by the European Commission. Published every two months.

## Volunteer work gives hope

A group of mothers. They came together. They were visiting the children in the hospitals; sharing the toys of their own children with them; playing games and reading them stories. These stories had been created by mothers for their own children. Each one was unique and special.

The hospitals they visited established special play rooms. They started receiving propositions from other hospitals. They understood that what they were doing served its purpose. The number of volunteering mothers increased and volunteer mothers got organized. They took the name of "Mother's Heart, Child and Family Support Association".

With the project they put together, they came to us. They wanted to take ten genuine stories mothers told to their children, write and illustrate them. Then they would put them on record, prepare CDs and deliver them to the child wards of hospitals. Furthermore, they wanted to put VCD players to the play rooms and make the CDs available to children whenever they wanted. Would it be possible to realize that small project from scratch, without dealing with money? far would volunteer work take us? We wanted to give it a try.

We made a list of the necessities and announced it. A team comprised of a professional speaker and volunteers for dubbing took the job of reading the stories. The recording took place with the support of Faculty of Communication of Ankara University at their radio studio. More than twenty people from all over Turkey even from the USA and France replied to our announcement, "looking for volunteer illustrator", claiming that they wanted to be a part of the project. VideA, Video Research Audio Visual Research Association, has accepted to edit the illustrations and recordings and to prepare a nice story CD. The illustrations are about to be finalized.

As you may easily guess, we are really thrilled but beyond this having seen all this excitement for volunteer work, we are hopeful.



"Only STGM is responsible for the content of this publication which does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union."



## LGBTT network held its last meeting in Ankara

LGBTT societies had their fourth and last networking meeting on 7-8 April 2007 in Ankara. Under moderation of Feray Salman, the members worked on the strategy document and activity plan of the platform. The group, which will continue its work on their own means from this month on, is on its way to become an LGBTT Platform with the monthly meetings of the action committee. We wish them good luck.



## Local Administration- NGO Cooperation meeting in Mardin

The third "Local Administration-NGO Cooperation in Participatory Democracy" meeting was to be held in April in Seyrek. However, we had to cancel the meeting to the 25-27 April 2007 due to our loaded schedule and change the meeting province to Mardin. One of the participant municipalities, Samsun Gazi Municipality, will not be able to continue with the program as it experienced difficulties getting the NGOs to take part in the work.



*STGM training coordinator assistant Özgün Emre Sorkun will continue his 'civilization' activities while doing his military service in İzmir Gaziemir Ulaştırma School for a period of five months and fifteen days.*

## Ankara Child Rights Cooperation Platform pursues its goal

Ankara Child Rights Coordination Platform held its third and last meeting with the support of STGM on 5-6 March 2007. Thanks to the meeting Ankara Child Rights Coordination Platform strategy document took its final form. Nine member organizations of the platform signed the memorandum of understanding. From now on the platform will proceed on its own means, but will receive the support of STGM whenever it needs.



## STGM project visits in progress

STGM continues its visits to monitor and support the projects which received grants within the program of "Strengthening the Civil Society in Turkey" In February and March the project owner NGOs in the cities of Rize, Edirne, Ankara, Isparta, Konya, Antalya and Datça are visited.

## NGOs show keen interest in İz TV

Following the news item about the documentary channel, İz TV in our previous issue several NGOs such as Adana Street Children Association, Safranbolu Love Volunteers Association and Tema Association have contacted the channel and had the programmes they prepared broadcasted. You can contact İz TV and have the documentaries and films you prepared for social responsibility broadcasted for free.



### İz TV

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e-posta: info@iztv.com.tr

www.iztv.com.tr



*Our training coordinator, Tezcan Abay, has left STGM at the beginning of March and started to work in the field of coastal zone management. We miss him and wish him good luck with his new job.*

## Turkish Environment Platform will be in Istanbul in May

Turkish Environment Platform (TÜRÇEP) held its third meeting on 3-4 March in İzmir. Global warming and climate change were on their agenda as the main items. The issues of the combat against pollution transfer, especially nuclear and thermal plants, European Union negotiation period and expansion of the organization of TÜRÇEP were discussed respectively. The platform is having its fourth meeting on 5-6 May 2007 in Istanbul.



## Autism NGOs were in Ankara

The NGOs working in the field of Autism came together for the fourth and the last time on 24-25 March in Ankara to form Turkish Autism Platform. In the last meeting the platform discussed the regulations, strategy document and activity plan. We wish Turkish Autism Platform ease and luck with their work.



## New grant program for NGOs was announced

Within the framework of 2005 Financial support before joining EU, for the purpose of strengthening civil society, the grants for civil society organizations have been announced by the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU) on behalf of the Turkish Government on 30 May 2007:

- > The program to protect and improve women's rights
- > The program to improve the integration of the challenged people to the society
- > The program to protect consumers
- > The program to strengthen the protection of child rights (*with an emphasis on forced child labor*)

Documents pertaining to the program and the information on the cities and dates for the presentations are available in [www.stgm.org.tr](http://www.stgm.org.tr).

## "Let's keep our forest clean" campaign proceeds



Clean Forest Group, which is founded by the people who visit Istanbul Belgrad Forest for tracking or fresh air, launched the campaign "Let's keep our forest clean" to develop sensitivity in the issues of environmental pollution and waste accumulation in the Belgrad forest and to contribute to find solutions.

In the "Media Training" sessions Clean Forest Group, which received communication expert support from STGM, searched for the answers of the questions such as 'How can the NGO-media relationship be established? How is a campaign promoted? What is the effect of media in finding a sponsor and getting public support? Which methods can be followed without using the mass media?' with the communication expert, Haşmet Topaloğlu.

During the training, the group also improved its project "Wire Fence Project", which they produced with the aim of separating picnic areas from forests and preventing the dump in picnic areas from infiltrating into natural habitats.

The projects awarded grants within the scope of "Strengthening Civil Society in Turkey: Supporting Civil Networks, Capacity Building Programs and Participant Local Projects" program are proceeding their work with an accelerated speed. From this issue on we will be reporting on the grant projects.

## "Let's Not Put Our Future into Dustbin"

Association of City Entrepreneurs of Bingöl, aims at recycling solid waste through sustainable solid waste management and decreasing the environmental damage and waste of resources with their project titled



"Let's Not Put Our Future into Dustbin". Within the framework of the project, so far a group of ten volunteers have received training on the management of solid waste. Volunteers have carried out a survey at 170 houses and

50 working places. To create environmental awareness, they are holding training seminars for students at schools, women and street cleaners in neighborhoods. Waste containers have been situated in the pilot neighborhoods to separate the waste. Project work will continue until the end of June.

You can reach detailed information related to the project at the following internet site: <http://www.guzelbingol.com/>

## "Ecodialogue Project"



The aim of the Ecodialogue project, run by Karadeniz Environment Association, is to found a permanent NGO-public cooperation system which promotes a sustainable ecotourism infrastructure and the active participation of civil society in the decision making procedure in the field of ecotourism by raising the awareness of enterprises and local tour guides working within the boundaries of the National Park including the Ayder Plateau, Fırtına Valley and Kaçkar Mountains. 100 training sets, 350 informative booklets and 500 brochures have been published. Upon the arrival of its fourth month, the project, which started with the warm interest of the local government and related organizations, completed the first phase of its trainings in Ayder Plateau on 1-10 March with the participation of 24 NGO representatives. Information about the project is available in the website: <http://www.ekodialog.org/>.

## "Step by Step from Anatolian Steppes to EU: Civil Society is Walking"

"Step by Step from Anatolian Steppes to EU: Civil Society is Walking" project run by ASKA (Anatolia Sustainable Development Agency) Association and YESCAP (Green and Esthetic Cappadocia Working Groups) Association proceeds with enthusiasm in four cities. The project which aims at bringing the NGOs working in the field of environment and nature together through trainings and campaigns to be held in four cities (Kırıkkale, Kırşehir, Nevşehir ve Niğde) in the Cappadocia region, forming NGOs where they do not exist and gathering those NGOs in a platform that can yield comprehensive projects. Within the scope of the project the trainings have been completed in four cities.



A commission of 20 representatives from the civil society organizations in these cities, visited the Turkish Delegation of the European Commission with STGM, REC, World Bank, Central Finance and Contracts Unit on 21-13 March in Ankara. The foundations of "Underground Cities Platform", which will be formed to promote the cities and joined initiatives, were laid. Project work will continue until the end of May. To receive further information about the project you are welcomed to contact [dilaracaglar@yahoo.co.uk](mailto: dilaracaglar@yahoo.co.uk).





## We hosted Manisa villagers for training



Oktay Konyar, the spokesperson of Bergama Villager Movement, joined Izmir Capacity Building Training, held on 5-9 March 2007, with the villagers of the Kabazlı village of Salihli, Manisa, who are known for their protests against the establishment of a solid waste treatment plant in their village. After the conversation between the NGO representatives and Manisa villagers, who came to the fore for their violence free acts of disobedience, NGO representatives were presented their certificates by the villagers. Oktay Konyar, who is a consistent participant of our

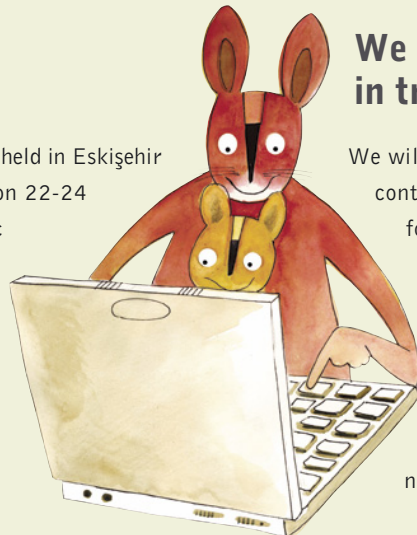
training program, and Kabazlı villagers told about their struggle and gave examples to action methods without violence. Then, Manisa villagers and NGO representatives agreed to work together in the forthcoming activities.



At the end of this session we, once again, realized the importance of combining theoretical knowledge with life experiences for even more fruitful training sessions. In the following term we will continue delivering training sessions that lead to sharing experiences among activists.

## Computer training for NGOs

With the last two set of training sessions held in Eskişehir on 15-17 March 2007 and in Denizli on 22-24 March 2007, we have finalized "Basic Computer Training for NGOs" with the support of Microsoft. Considering the positive feedback we received after the work, we will continue and diversify our basic computer training program for NGO representatives in the following term.



## We are preparing for the new phase in training

We will give a break to our trainings in the month of May and continue with a new program starting in October 2007. In this four-month break we will restructure our program in the light of your suggestions and needs.

Within the framework of this work we will have a demand from NGO representatives in April. We will ask you to support us by filling out a short questionnaire to assess the trainings we delivered and to make suggestions for the new phase.

## Ersan Uğur Gör (Conscientious Objection Platform)

Conscientious objection, which means the individuals rejection to doing military service for moral choice, religious belief or political ideas, appeared first in 18th century England among the members of a religious order named 'Quaker' who rejected resorting to violence due to their religious beliefs. Turkey was introduced with conscientious objection in 1990, when Vedat Zencir ve Tayfun Günül announced that they were conscientious objectors. In 1996 with the arrest of Osman Murat Ülke, the head of Izmir Anti-war Association, under the 155th item of the Turkish Penal Code for committing the crime of 'disinclining the public off the army', the issue became the order of the day. Ülke was in jail for 701 days for conscientious objection, which is also considered as an act of civil disobedience. In January 2006, on the case of Ülke, ECHR decided that Turkey infringed upon the ban on torture and maltreatment, personal security and freedom, respect to individual life and the freedom of thought, conscience and religion items of the European Convention on Human Rights. In Turkey there are approximately 600 thousand soldier fugitives and 59 conscientious objectors. Among 46 member of the Council of Europe there is no alternative to military service only in Turkey and Azerbaijan, which is currently working on an alternative civil service legislation draft.

Ersan Uğur Gör, whom we interviewed for this issue, made his conscientious objection public in the Militarism Festival in 2004. Gör, who met activism through University Students Coordination in 1995, has been taking part in anti-militarist organizations since then. When he went to Sivas to support Mehmet Tarhan's court case, they wanted to take him under custody claiming that he was a soldier fugitive. He was taken into custody despite his resistance and was sued for 'showing resistance' to the police. Gör, who had previously worked for Istanbul Antimilitarist Initiative, Solidarity Initiative for Mehmet Tarhan, also worked in organizations such as , Militarizm Festivals, traditional conscientious objection rice day activities, we're facing it Campaign, Antimilitarist Meeting, Mehmet Loves Banış Campaign, and Conscientious Objection Conference. Currently, he is working in Conscientious Objection Platform.



### A lot of people wonder why one would choose to be a conscientious objector instead of living comfortably? What will you say about this?

As military service is obligatory for men in Turkey, the prerequisite of a comfortable life is conducting that service. When I made my conscientious objection public, I was aware that I was set on a long and painful journey. I knew that I would never be peaceful if I had done my military service, held a weapon, learned how to use a weapon, maybe shot at a creature, humiliated others and was humiliated myself, filled with militarist elements and returned back to my own life. Whereas now I know that I am not a spare part for the militarist structures and feel the relief of it. Twenty years ago there were some stories my grandfather used to tell me. During Dersim Revolt he was a soldier in the region and took part in putting down the revolt. Even after fifty years, he would cry telling us that he had to kill a Kurdish woman. He still had the weight on his conscience. As an individual, even if I cannot change the world, I am doing my best to keep my thoughts, discourse and praxis integrated and live accordingly as much as possible. It was also an option not to make the objection public and survive within the cracks of the system as a soldier fugitive but I wanted everyone to know that they should not count on me when making some 'sacred' plans.

### What do the concepts like nation, homeland, citizen mean to a conscientious objector?

In my understanding, nation includes all the creatures living around the world. Being on top of the food chain, we consider ourselves the owner of the world. As for homeland and citizen, I see them as the vehicles of the official ideology. I do not adopt these concepts as I think that they will entail an infinite number of demands such as obligation, commitment and a recipe on how to live. We should fight against them.

### Last January, at the Conscientious objection Conference held in Bilgi University, we had the opportunity to listen to the experiences of conscientious objectors from different countries. What can you say about the situation of conscientious objection activists in Turkey in comparison to their counterparts in other countries?

The activists in the countries which took conscientious objection as a basic human right with the liberatory wind of the 60s are naturally in a different position. Yet, I can tell that we show similarities with the activists in Greece and Israel. We experience the same difficulties in terms of reaching masses, organization and support but the organization of the activists in

those countries is more pervasive and institutionalized. Recently, the fact that conscientious objection supporters are faced with lynch and courthouse raids have shown what kind of a taboo military is. Furthermore, in Turkey there is a crime entitled 'disinclining the public off the army' which poses a threat to activists.

### Is each conscientious objector an activist at the same?

In my opinion, each conscientious objector is an activist in his/her life milieu. Contentious objection movement has been trying to express itself for 20 years in Turkey. Since objectors are people who announce their decisions publicly and do not hide, it is possible that they talk about conscientious objection with the people they meet sooner or later. I think that even the act of explaining what conscientious objection is in a plain language is related to activism. Among the anti-militarists there can be people who formerly took part in militarist structures, physically challenged people, women and gays who are not obliged to do military service.

### Does being a conscientious objector or an anti-militarist activist affect your private life, the flow of your life in any positive or negative way?

First of all I need to be cautious as I do not want to spend my life in prison. Like any other fugitive I face many hindrances in social arena and am being pushed to underground. I take the prevention of traveling as an abuse of my rights. The problems that I had with my family because of my objection are still continuing. The day after I made my objection public, my parents told me that they would commit suicide if I did not do my military service and they cried for days. That period was really tough for me as death appeared on both sides of the equilibrium. Then, I realized how deep the affects of militarist manipulation was on society. I am aware that I am just a fragile individual who puts a spoke in government's main mechanism. I know that any moment something to ruin or end my life might happen to me and I feel the terror of it from time to time. In spite of this, my effort to live my life not in the way the government defines but the way I believe eradicates that fear.

\*In Turkey, the family members and friends of young men who are going to do their military service send them off by throwing them in the air with the cheering "Our soldier is the greatest soldier".

THE GREATEST OBJECTOR IS OUR OBJECTOR!\*



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Owned by on Behalf of Civil Society Development Centre Association: Levent Korkut  
Responsible Editor in-Chief: Gamze Göker  
Graphic Design: M. Cem Kocatay, Banu Çetintaş  
Illustrations: Ferit Avcı  
ISSN: 1306-5297

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