

The Work of “Wi.e.dersprechen” (prev. “Vacation from War”) in the Western Balkan region

Review and Recommendations

“Looking back, moving forward: Dialogues across Borders”

Terms of Reference

1. About „Wiedersprechen – Dialoge über Grenzen hinweg“ // „Speak Up – Dialogues across Borders“

In 1991, the “Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie e.V.” (“Committee for Fundamental Rights and Democracy”) supported internally displaced persons in the area of what was then Yugoslavia with Humanitarian aid. Devastated by the suffering especially of displaced children, volunteers of the organization created the initiative “Ferien vom Krieg” (“Vacation from War”), which from 1993 / 1994 onwards organized two-weeks-long recreational camps for children from all sides of the conflict at the seaside.

Over the years, the “Vacation from War Project” evolved: work with children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia gave way to political youth dialogue. In 2014, local partner organizations founded the cross-border youth network “Youth United in Peace” – “YU-Peace”. To date, more than 23,000 participants benefited from the opportunity for encounters and exchange.

In the early 2000s, during the Second Intifada, the project began working with partners in Israel and Palestine. Since then, more than 2,600 young adults from Palestine and Israel have gathered for intensive political dialogue seminars in Germany.

Local partners in both regions also work with the groups on the ground both before and after the summer camps and dialogue seminars, respectively.

In both project regions, the goal is to encourage young people to break down stereotypes and prejudices, develop an awareness of the political reality, and – together – become actively involved in bringing about a just, nonviolent transformation in their societies.

In 2023, “Ferien vom Krieg” changed its name to “Wi.e.dersprechen – Dialogues Across Borders.” The play on words between “widersprechen” (to contradict / to object to) and “wieder sprechen” (to speak again) highlights the core of the project: Participants themselves raise their voices and speak again with the “others.” At the same time, political dialogue with the other sides is an act of speaking up, of resistance against endless cycles of violence and a political reality that knows only friends or enemies.

2. Background of the strategic process for the Western Balkans region

“Wi.e.dersprechen – Dialoge über Grenzen hinweg” (formerly “Vacation from War”) across Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia (total of five partner cities, three in Bosnia and Herzegovina and one in Croatia and Serbia, respectively) is an initiative, established on and still fundamentally reliant upon volunteer work which has grown organically and evolved over the years.

At the same time, the political and societal context has transformed significantly in the project region and has given rise to new challenges.

While local teams conduct ongoing short-term evaluations of annual activities and adapt them accordingly, a broader perspective is essential to facilitate deeper reflection on the project's trajectory and the way forward. By collectively critically analyzing its development, successes, and challenges, the project aims to define concrete strategic goals for the coming years. Simultaneously, this process seeks to refine, clarify, and potentially recalibrate its vision, ensuring that all partners align with a shared direction. Furthermore, the strategy will help identify the most effective methods and activity types to achieve these objectives – providing inspiration and room for creative ideas while drawing on the experiences and expertise of local partners. The process also aims to establish a robust framework to ensure the project's financial sustainability in the long term in the region.

3. Overarching Goals of the Process

The strategic process pursues the following overarching objectives:

1. Understand project evolution over time: Mapping the project's development across key dimensions, such as activities, strategic focus, priorities, vision, outcomes, and long-term impacts through analysis of documents and e.g. focus groups with former participants.
2. Create spaces for collective reflection: Facilitating structured dialogues amongst current and former team members.
3. Re-calibrate project vision and goals: Reviewing and realigning vision, goals, strategies, and implementation approaches against current realities.
4. Develop a shared vision among partners: Ensuring alignment across all partners on a common direction.
5. Define a strategy for the coming years (including a concrete strategy for financial sustainability)
6. Translate the strategy into concrete steps: Creating clear, actionable steps including a preliminary timeline to bring about the project's goals and align actions with the shared vision

4. Tasks and Responsibilities of the External Consultant

The external consultant will be responsible for the methodological design, facilitation, and accompaniment of the entire process. The scope of work includes:

1. Process Design & Methodology: Development of a methodological framework for the strategic process, including selection of appropriate tools for outcome documentation and participation of all stakeholders, with theory of change methodology, participatory evaluation and strategy building tools, and participatory action research as points of reference.
2. Baseline Assessment & Historical Analysis: Systematic collection and analysis of project development, including document reviews, interviews, and/or focus groups with current and former team members as well as program participants.
3. Structured Dialogue Forums: Conceptualization, facilitation and documentation of reflection sessions and dialogue formats with participating stakeholders.
4. Strategy Development: Drafting of a strategy for the coming years (+/- 3 years) based on collected findings, including a strategy for long-term financial sustainability.

5. Action Plan: Translation of the strategy into concrete, prioritized action steps with a preliminary timeline.

6. Communication and Documentation of Results: Preparation and delivery of the final outputs (see Section 5).

5. Deliverables

1. Kick off meeting with participatory validation of objectives, collection of interview partners etc.
2. Inception Workshop: Presentation of methodology and workplan, incorporation of feedback from stakeholders
3. Validation Workshop: Power Point presentation or other creative product such as infographics summarizing overall findings, recommendations & incorporation of feedback from stakeholders
4. Final Report including a summary of findings, recommendations and takeaways as well as a resulting strategy and action plan with preliminary timeline

5. Proposed timeline

WHEN	WHAT
October 2026	Kick-Off meeting with stakeholders (online), finalizing and presentation of work plan
October 2026 – December 2026	Collection of data, workshops, field visits, interviews. Monthly check-In reporting meeting with coordination
January 2027	Drafting of deliverables, commenting by stakeholders, finalization of deliverables, presentation of results

6. Competencies required of the consultant / consultancy team (max. 2 persons)

- Proven experience in facilitating regional process support and knowledge exchange, similar assignments undertaken
- Experience in participatory action research
- Expertise in moderating participatory workshop formats
- Knowledge in political dialogue work, Youth empowerment / political education methods, dealing with the past, conflict sensitivity
- Strong skills in conflict-sensitive, empowering and hierarchy-sensible communication
- Proven experience in evaluation or social research using qualitative data collection and a variety of analysis methods
- Regional competency and understanding of the Post-Yugoslav / CSO context; we strongly encourage regional consultants to apply

- Language Skills: Proficiency in English required, BCS strong advantage, German desirable

7. Payment

Lump sum: 15.000 Euro including all travel costs (50% advance payment, 50% final payment)

8. Duration

3-4 months starting on October 1st, 2026

Report to be presented latest 2 weeks after completion

9. Application procedure

Applications with the subject line “Strategic Process Western Balkans 2026” are received under consultancy@wiedersprechen.org. **Offers should be submitted in English.**

Offers shall be submitted in a pdf-document and contain the following:

- Consultant's CV or portfolio (maximum 4 pages), with detailed information relevant to the required qualifications.
- Expression of interest outlining your understanding of the assignment, the skills you bring to it, and your proposed methodology and related time-frame. In case you are applying as a tandem of consultants your methodological offer should also clarify how you will divide the work.
- Bid – financial offer: The Consultant shall propose the overall price that includes daily fee/rate in EUR per consultancy day including transportation costs, food and accommodation costs, totaling no more than 15.000 €

Closing date for applications is August 30th, 2026, 15h (CET).

Only complete applications shall be considered. Only short listed/successful candidates will be contacted.

The interviews are likely to take place on September 3rd, 2026.