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IEDC Alumni Success Story

ŽELJKA ŠULC: »WE WORKED ON REBUILDING OUR COUNTRY AND OUR SOCIETY AND WHAT OTHER JOB COULD BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT?«

Interviewed by Vera Pasykova

Photos provided by Željka Šulc

Congratulations for winning the General Alumni Achievement Award 2020! Well-deserved. Tell us a bit more on where you are nowadays and about your work in the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina that you are with for the last 8 years? Why this work is so important for you? What are the current issues that you are working on?

I have been raised by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where I started working first in 1999. Those were the days of hope and initial reforms for the country, such as ensuring that there are democratic elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that a proper arms control is in

place and that the efforts are made to create a single Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence in a country that just got out of a conflict. As the peace in B&H became stronger, our activities shifted to strengthening of democracy, ensuring human rights and making the much needed education reform. We worked on rebuilding our country and our society and what other job could be more important than that?

I left the Mission in 2006 to pursue my postgraduate degree with the IEDC-Bled School of Management, I travelled and worked in different areas for the next six years and returned »home«, to the OSCE Mission to B&H, in 2012 re-joining my colleagues in assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina on its reform

paths. Since 2012, following the global trends, our scope of work broadened to include more extensive focus on anti-corruption, countering violent extremism, strengthening social cohesion and building a stronger rule of law in B&H.

Since 2014 I hold the position of the Chief of Press and Public Information Unit/Spokesperson of the OSCE Mission to B&H and my job (and a privilege) remains to tell and spread the



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Prior to joining the OSCE, you have been combining several roles and jobs, including lecturing at the Sveučilište Hercegovina and the Atlantic Initiative. Why did you go into teaching and stopped after 5 years? Did your experience with the CEEMAN association help you in lecturing and how?

I am a strong believer in the concept of lifelong learning. In the same manner, I believe that we also never stop teaching, with our words and deeds. Being a mom reminded me of a well-known truth – in whatever we do, we are a role model to some... So we better make it a good one.

Being privileged to run marketing and public relations division of CEEMAN – Central and East European Management Development Association allowed me to be exposed to the world class minds and practitioners of management education and to learn from them. Through work with CEEMAN and by completing my EMBA degree with the IEDC-Bled School of Management I've fallen in love with the art of management



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and leadership. I was keen on spreading the impressions and was offered an opportunity to engage in teaching at Hercegovina University, School of Political Science (my original background). It took me some time, but eventually I managed to convince them to open the Management division, where I started teaching management and marketing group of

to you?

Atlantic Initiative in B&H is a security related think tank, founded by three prominent professors of the University of Sarajevo and it was an honour to accept their invitation to join them and run the project: Gender and Security Sector Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, conducted



subject. I am very proud of this small victory and happy that the vision still exists.

I stopped working there when I assumed the role of the Spokesperson at the OSCE Mission to B&H, since it would be very difficult to combine the extremely dynamic daily work of running the Press unit and providing quality teaching on a regular basis. However, I never stopped learning nor teaching, officially or unofficially. In my line of work I get to be mentored and a mentor on a daily basis....or at least I believe I am.

What was the Atlantic Initiative about and your involvement in it? Why gender topics are so close

together with the DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. I didn't know much back then about the theory of gender equality, but have learned through the project about the great deal of discrimination that occurs in general and in terms of satisfying security needs of different genders: boys, girls, men, women and other genders. With a disclaimer that gender issues are not women equality issues, I'd say that I care dearly about this because I do see a glass ceiling for girls and women across the board. Research proves that women are less appointed to CEO posts, given less opportunities and very often are victims of subtle or less subtle, official or unofficial, discriminatory

practices and laws. Being a woman, living in the 21st century, by which we should have eliminated discrimination at all levels, how could I not care about the noble cause of achieving equality for all?

At IEDC you have completed an EMBA program in 2006. What are your favourite memories from that time? Your favourite professor and why? Anything from what you learnt back then you still apply in your day-to-day life? Do you still keep in touch with your classmates?

What a great life experience was the time spent with the IEDC-Bled School of Management! The best memories were created outside of school, namely in the Art cafe :), but I also loved every moment spent in the school, even when we were taught finance, a subject I still don't fully understand. :) (I am more of a soft skills type). Learning Financial management, for the first time in my life (and that was our first module too), was the biggest shock. However, I am still grateful for having an opportunity to listen to the amazing Professor Ellert. All the other professors were great, but my favourite was Professor Joe Pons because of his specific and unique style of teaching. I still remember most of the jokes from his classes and everything he ever taught me and I guess that his style of bringing in humour in all we did worked best for me.

Some of the most valuable lessons for business and life I learned from Danica Purg, the Dean of the school, to whom I am ever grateful. A few of



those lessons would be: »only the best is good enough«, or that we should be beautiful inside and out, in everything we do, and that having a passion and style are some of the key ingredients to just about anything.

I am indeed in touch with many of the schoolmates and, over the years, many have grown to be part of my closest circle of friends. I look forward to every opportunity to meet them and am grateful to Iva (*Eibel) first and now Manca (*Debeljak) for gathering us through different alumni events and initiatives.

Apart from the MBA and a degree in Political Science from the University of

Sarajevo, you also studied international relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. How come? Where you growing up in Israel? Or your childhood was sort of split between the two - B&H and Israel?

I wish I could tell that my childhood was split between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Israel. Instead, it was thorn or I should rather say that my childhood, even before it started, ceased to exist somewhere along the way, because of the war in B&H.

Yes, at the age of 14, I moved first for a short period to Serbia and then to Israel. I graduated from high school in Jerusalem

and enrolled into the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to study diplomacy and Spanish language. Coincidentally, at the age of 20, back in 1999, I returned to Sarajevo. I still think about some of the unfortunate events that happened in my teenage years and some of the choices I made, but I guess life happens while we are busy making (other) plans.

Looking back now at your career and overall experience, would you do something differently? Why or why not?

I have no regrets, but there

indeed are some lessons learned. Now I know - I should have travelled more and studied more different things. This is what, in my opinion, makes us grow beyond our inherited potential. Luckily, there is still a chance to make that possible, for each of us and every day.

So, I still hope one day I will be able to do this interview in Spanish/Italian/Russian. :)

What would you wish for 2021 to bring to you, your family, friends and colleagues?

I wish the entire planet

healed, from COVID-19, from personal dilemmas and fears, from collective chaos, from social and air pollution, from nostalgia, from regrets. I hope we will be able to see each other again, and that we will be able to laugh and celebrate, succeed in all of our plans and wishes in a free and prosperous society.

Until then, keep safe, keep distance and wear a mask.

MEET ŽELJKA IN PERSON



EMBA 2006

Željka Šulc

Spokesperson of the OSCE
Mission to Bosnia and
Herzegovina

When I come back home from a travel, the first thing I notice about my place is.....how much I missed it .

My favourite leisure time activity is...traveling to/being at/reading at/swimming at/anything related to the beach/sea.

One thing I can't live without is... my son Marko.

My favourite TV series are...because..... any with the happy end (either they get well or get married).

An advice I would give to my children...don't worry, be happy, eat healthy and exercise your body and mind every day .

If I lived in a parallel universe and could choose another career, I would become... an interior designer, a teacher, a psychologist, a florist....the sky is the limit.