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**Jakimovska Ilina (Skopje, Macedonia)****“BORDER CROSSINGS: PERCEPTIONS AND VIEWS FROM THE SOUTHERN BALKANS“****Two student conferences (21.11-24.11.03 in Skopje and 20-23.05.04 in Florina, Greece)**

The co-operation between the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and the University of Western Macedonia, Florina, Greece, started in November 2003, when 20 students and two professors from the latter participated, at a three-day student conference in Skopje, as guests of the students and the professional staff of the Department of Ethnology. The conference was held in English language, through morning and afternoon sessions, reading of student works and time dedicated to discussion. The topics, mainly from the area of anthropology, ethnology, but also history and contemporary political theory, touched issues relevant for young people of both countries - stereotypes, Balkan ethnocentrism, problems of minorities, human rights, as well as economic and cultural co-operation at the Balkans. Without prejudices, though an open and constructive dialog, students succeeded to create a real scientific and friendly atmosphere.

Unanimously estimated as successful, the co-operation continued with another such conference, in May 2004. This time 8 students and 2 members of staff from the Ethnological Department went to Florina, to a return visit to their colleagues in Greece. This time participants were students and professors not only from the University of Western Macedonia, but also the Universities in Thessaloniki, Yoannina and Athens. Through a well drafted program, built upon the basis of the previous experience, but enriched with



new issues, we could follow the presentations of 33 speakers. Besides the main topic, papers were categorised according to thematic blocks, according to the subject to which they related. Thus, topic of the first day were: “State Policies, uses of the Past and the Construction of National Identities“, “Exploring Borders as Cultural and Social Space“ and “Europe and the Balkans: Images, Relations and Representations“. Topics for the second day were: The Formation and Negotiation of Identity: Discourses and Practices“, as well as “The Balkans in the Post-Socialist Era: Social Transformation“. The informal part of the conference was equally successful as the formal one: there

was a theatre play, excursion to the lake of Prespa, as well as friendly chats until late at night.

Hoping that this co-operation will continue, we thank Prof. Yannis Manos and Prof. Ljupcho S. Risteski for the enthusiasm and the good will without which this co-operation would have not even start.