



Fond dr Zoran Đinđić

## ***Building Bridges***

Now, just as in the past, democratic, civic Serbia is trying, and I hope it will succeed, to find support from Austria on its road to relearning democracy. Austria is a country which, throughout history, has set a good example in the education of the modern Serbian elite. When the first Serbian scholarship holders were sent to be educated abroad, back in 1839, their first stop was Vienna, followed by other Austrian cities. Despite occasional political tensions, right up until 1914 the majority of young Serbs were educated at Austrian universities or colleges. Geographic proximity and the fact that the beginnings of Serbian culture were founded on models from neighbouring Austria, contributed much to that.

I am convinced that Zoran Djindjic, the first democratic Prime Minister of Serbia, tried to restore a line that for centuries now, has connected all that is modern, democratic and European, everything that represents the values of our common civilisation, which are the guarantee of our future, deeply aware of the risks and dangers that awaited him but willing to persevere even if that cost him his life – the most valuable thing a man possesses. And that life was not sacrificed in vain.

The Zoran Djindjic Fund, which was established after the tragic murder of Zoran Djindjic, with the aim of continuing to promote the values that he insisted on, is one of the youngest organizations in Serbia, but has experience in its favour, along with a clear commitment to the principles of a modern, progressive and educated society, a society with tolerance and respect for diversity, both cultural and political. By choosing the Zoran Djindjic Fund as its partner, the Austrian government has recognized that fact.

Thanks to the generous support of Austria this year we have initiated a program entitled *Serbian Young Professionals in Austria – Zoran Djindjic Internship Programme*. This is a project which is intended as a bridge that will connect our two countries, in all that which is modern, democratic and European and that forms our common values and common future.

Ruzica Djindjic