**Report: SIESC 2022 meeting: Tirana, Albania**

From 23 to 29 July we gathered in Tirana for the 66th SIESC meeting. Even if we were only 27 participants, we were very happy to meet again, in flesh and blood after 3 years. We came from 8 different countries. We thought a lot of our Ukrainian friends and all our friends who were prevented from coming for different reasons.

The theme of the meeting **"Without memory we cannot go forward"** allowed us to better understand the painful history of Albania.

Teuta Buka, who put SIESC in contact with Irida Kuci and Sister Judita Marku, and coordinator of the National Committee of Catholic Education in Albania, plunged us directly into the world of schools: **"The Global Compact on Education, an important sign of hope".** The Global Compact on Education proposed to all by the Pope is part of the reflection on the identity of the Catholic school in Albania. This Pact is not (very) well known in some countries.

The lecture by Professor Pjerin Mirdita, historian, teacher, director of the Museum of Memory in Shkodra**, "State atheism and the persecution of the clergy in Albania during the communist dictatorship"** made us discover the dark hours of Albanian history, the horrors perpetrated on the population, the churches and mosques and their representatives by the communist rulers, with the fierce will to make religions disappear. After the fall of communism, the different religions have experienced a renaissance, they live in harmony because, after having been united in persecution, they are united in the love of their country.

The third speaker, Zef Paci, a specialist in the history of photography at the University of Tirana, spoke to us about **"Reshaping the memory of the past"** through an art form, photography. Professor Paci, thanks to many pictures taken by Pietro Marubi, an Italian photographer, underlined that photography allows us not to forget, even if, like any image, it can be modified, manipulated, instrumentalised to respond to an ideology.

This discovery of Albanian history was supported by visits to Tirana: the Bunkart (bunker of the communist leaders), the "house of leaves" where all Albanians were monitored (mail, phone calls...), the national museum. We also discovered, north of Tirana, the city of Kruja, the first Albanian capital in 1912 and the city of the national hero Skanderbeg, who defended the country against the Ottomans. On the excursion we went north to the town of Shkodra, which has a large Catholic community. We met the local bishop, a Franciscan, who came to greet us. We visited the photo library and the museum of memory with the prisoners' cells. Under communism, the city had no less than 26 prisons!

During our stay we appreciated the warm welcome of the Albanians and in particular that of Irida and Sister Judita, who overexerted themselves to make our 66th meeting a complete success. Many thanks to them!

See you next year in Sweden!

**Catherine Le Coz**