

Process of Reconciliation in the Western Balkans and Turkey: A Qualitative Study



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BANJA LUKA / ZAGREB, 2017

Published by:

Compex d.o.o.
Braće Pišteljića 1, 78 000 Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
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Layout and cover design: Nebojša Đumić

Printed by:

Compex, Braće Pišteljića 1, 78 000 Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
compexbl@blic.net

Circulation: 300 copies

This publication has been produced with assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union



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Introduction

QUALITATIVE RESEARCHES HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and Turkey under the project “Divided Past – Joint Future”. Subject of research involved attitudes and opinions of citizens, representatives of public, private and civil sector on peace building and the process of reconciliation as well as the role of civil sector in those processes in the mentioned countries. In line with general objectives of the project, the empirical research goal is to determine opinions and positions of representatives of all four sectors on peace building and the process of reconciliation in seven countries whereat the intention was to get responses to specific research questions such as:

- 1. What is the nature of the relationship between research participants and the process of reconciliation and its progress in a specific country and region; and*
- 2. how do research participants assess and perceive the role of civil society in the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding in a specific country and region.*

Considering that one of the main objectives of the project is the establishment of the Regional Social Lab for Peace and Reconciliation, the research was partly focused on the reception of the idea of establishing cross-sectoral cooperation.

This report contains the main findings of the carried out research and it is structured as follows: the first part of the report provides a theoretical framework that contains relevant theoretical approaches to peacebuilding, in particular the concept of reconciliation; the second part describes a research methodology; the third part contains the main research findings by countries; the last, fourth part of the report contains the conclusions and recommendations related to the improvement of the process of reconciliation and strengthening of the role of civil society in the area of the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Theoretical framework

POLICIES DIRECTED TOWARDS PEACEBUILDING IN THE POST-CONFLICT PERIOD WITHIN ONE society or between states mostly consist of four components that are concurrently the objectives of these policies: preventing the continuation or escalation of violent conflicts in unstable areas, addressing the source of conflicts, (re)building social institutions and values (in particular respect for human rights) and (re)building of government institutions and the rule of law (Newman, Paris and Richmond, 2009). These goals necessarily imply the implementation of a range of different activities whose focus and reach largely depend on the social context and the intensity of previous conflicts. Given their characteristics, peace policies are significantly based on the idea of liberal peace building (Mac Ginty, 2010). Liberal peacebuilding involves principles such as liberal democracy, liberal understanding of human rights, market values, joining the globalization flows of the world and secular state.

What does it mean? This means that the creation of liberal or democratic peace is based on the idea that states founded on liberal postulates and/or consolidated democracies provide institutional limiting of decisions and behaviours of political leadership to enter into a war conflict. In addition, viewed rationally, they have no interest by entering into conflicts to endanger, and risk established economic and market relations with other countries (Newman, Paris and Richmond, 2009; Doyle, 2012). It is precisely because of the existence of outer interdependence and strong inner-built institutions, that a democratic or liberal state is simply considered as more stable, peace-loving and finding peaceful solutions, in contrast to those non-democratic (Newman, Paris and Richmond, 2009; Doyle, 2012).

Of course, this approach has many problematic points, and one of the more important is the question of the transferability of the democratization matrix and the liberal (capitalist) market to post-conflict societies, which in most cases were not part of democratic political systems. The question is to what extent a democratic value system (which in this constellation gets the status of a virtually universal) can be replicated to societies with sociocultural traditions that are not

susceptible or initially suitable for its application (Newman, Paris and Richmond, 2009; Chandler, 2013). Moreover, one of the critically oriented perspectives problematizes the relationship of global and local¹ actors in peacebuilding, resulting in hybrid peace, as well as the hybrid policy that allows it (Richmond, 2015). Hybridity signifies the meeting of liberal (in principle external) and local norms, actors and practices that in their interaction create hybrid characteristics both on the structural and cultural plan of the post-conflict society, for example, at the same time coexisting liberal norms and norms opposite to liberal (Bjorkdahl and Hoglund, 2013). Or, for example, it is possible to imagine how at the same time local value patterns dominantly form a relationship towards reconciliation, while international practices and norms are quite successful in finding their way to local economic structures (Mac Ginty, 2010).

In sum, hybrid forms of peace represent an intersubjective mediation between local and international levels, institutions, norms, rights, laws, needs and interests, depending on both power and legitimacy (Richmond, 2015 according to Massey, 1994, 2007: 84), whereby limits of global-local binary are blurred (Mac Ginty, 2010; Bjorkdahl and Hoglund, 2013; Richmond, 2015). A hybrid peace *per se* that means neither good or bad, says Mac Ginty (2010), is the result of an interplay of four factors that appear in different environments with more or less intensity.

The first is the mechanism of coercion for the adoption of liberal peace whose holders often represent arbitrators in deciding on what is “acceptable” in the process of peacebuilding (this can be done, for example, through an international financial system that often finances a conflict of impoverished society, so a part of the financial sovereignty of the state is sacrificed for such benefits, but also through local transmission agents - from the highest bodies of state and local government to civil society organizations).

The second is the work to increase the power of liberal peace, which in fact implies the empowerment of the most important dimensions of liberal peace (security and stabilization, empowerment of the state, democratic governance and free market), whereby the discourse of partnership and cooperation with the institutions/organizations of the post-conflict society is used.

The third factor relates to the ability of local actors to resist, ignore or adapt to the intervention of liberal peace, which depends largely on the very context and intensity of external intervention, but Mac Ginty thinks that in this case the key is degree in which traditional structures and norms have maintained their continuity despite the conflict. In other words, the level of resistance to liberal peace by local actors depends on the extent to which local actors have retained power during transition from conflict to peaceful situation, then the degree to which external actors are dependent on local actors, then it depends on the extent to which national, regional and local institutions remain untouched by conflict, and the extent to which

¹ When talking about local, the authors refer to national level in relation to international (global), so the same applied herein.

local actors can raise funds through taxes, trade, etc. whereby resistance can be visible but also subtle.

The fourth factor relates to the ability of local actors, structures and networks to present and retain alternative forms of peace and creation of peace although it is evident that liberal peace, with its strong economic background and the power that arises therefrom, often leaves little or no room for alternative models of peace building (Mac Ginty, 2010).

The interplay of these factors is dynamic, fluid and involves multiple actors dealing with a variety of problems during their interactions. According to Mac Ginty, liberal peace applied top-down in combination with bottom-up effects in a certain social context necessarily becomes hybrid (Mac Ginty, 2010). As regards the normativity of hybrid peace, Richmond (2015), following the trail of the difference between positive peace (which is emancipatory and affirmative) and that negative (which means a mere absence of conflict), thinks that there is a negative and positive hybrid peace. Negative hybrid peace refers to the transfer of power and norms from the international level to a state or society, while positive hybrid peace is a contextually rooted process through which widespread political and social injustice is addressed - this form of peace implies that significant activity in this sense springs from the local level (Richmond, 2015).

In the context of local and global relations, it is important to mention the approach that emphasizes the conflict inherent in the peace-building process, whereby local and global actors are thought to be in constant confrontation and mutual transformation. Peace building, in this sense, is a dynamic field of power in which formal and informal, external and internal, state and non-state actors struggle for influence (Bjorkdahl and Hoglund, 2013). Although the notion of hybridity reflects, to a certain extent, the power relations, it is necessary to further analyse the conflict potential of the union and the meeting of local and global, using the conceptual prism of "friction" through which conflicting encounters between local and global ideas, actors and practices in peacebuilding can be identified and analysed. Friction therefore includes "uneven, unexpected and uncertain process in which global and local confluence to mediate and negotiate differences and affinity" (Bjorkdahl and Hoglund, 2013: 294), which often creates new dynamics, actions, and structures that change the image Local and at the same time affect the access of global actors.

Friction encounters between local and global actors involve six responses and related outcomes, where after each outcome there is a re-encounter and/or constant interaction. Abating as a local response involves forcible respect or submission to global/external discourses and practices; the response of adopting results in local actors adopting global/external norms and practices; the response of adapting implies the outcome of the contextualization of global/external norms and practices into a local framework; the co-opt response results in the strategic adoption of the global/external to the local world as a means of avoiding pressure; resistance response results in domination of local features and limited adoption

of global/external norms and practices; the refusal response produces the exclusion of global/external norms and practices from a local context (Bjorkdahl and Hoglund, 2013). These responses at the local level and their outcomes, according to the above authors, have the potential to change the balance of power, action and practices related to peacebuilding.

Regarding the nature of the process of reconciliation specifically in the Western Balkans, it should be emphasized that it is closely related to European integrations (for example, visible in the Thessaloniki Declaration of 2003), which points to the international level as the main impetus for reconciliation in the region. In the meantime, the EU's policy towards the Western Balkans emphasizes in the first place the importance of building a state and its institutions in line with EU membership requirements, while fully neglecting the strengthening of aspects that require "post-conflict state building", that is, elements contributing to a wider reconstruction of society and the state arising from war and conflict (Kostovicova, 2013). According to the EU logic, the process of reconciliation is inseparable from the institutional transformation required by the process of EU approximation. However, Kostovicova (2013) thinks that this logic is wrong because it is based on an unreasonable expectation that states and societies will confront their role and responsibilities for warfare. Moreover, the opposite tendencies have erupted so that all ethnic groups emphasize their role of the victim without a critical assessment of their own actions during the war events, and war crimes are often politicized and instrumented independently of the existence of transitional justice mechanisms whose unintentional by-products often reinforce such unfavourable circumstances for the reconciliation process (Kostovicova, 2013).

An interesting research shows that the intervention of western European states in terms of peacebuilding has overlooked the specific configuration of the networks that emerged under the auspices of the war and during the establishment of peace, adjusted their actions that held them in positions of power, and at the same time make it difficult to implement the policy of peace (Bojicic -Dzelilovic, Kostovicova, Randazzo, 2016). These are practically interest-based networks of closely related key social actors whose public interest (from reconciliation to general community development) is simply not even peripherally important in reality. Such interest, clientelistic and corruptive networks consist of representatives of the military, security services, political elites, organized crime, religious leaders who informally, as well as through formal resistance to EU peace policies in the fields of justice, economics and security, seek to maintain their social and political influence by creating the illusion of achieved peace (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Kostovicova, Randazzo, 2016). Such a peace is, in fact, an "elite peace" that the majority of the population does not feel - namely, although there is progress in the functioning of economic and political institutions in accordance with the EU membership proposals, the very institutions are networked in the informal networks of power which interest is primarily to keep the resources and influence gained during the war period (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Kostovicova, Randazzo, 2016). In this sense, the authors conclude, there is a great possibility that those who promote EU prac-

tices and policies at the same time and those who sabotage the implementation of these said policies and practices through established informal networks at the local level.

Bearing in mind the dialectical emergence and the existence of hybrid peace in the societies of the Western Balkans, at this moment, we are focusing on peace-building processes, where restorations of relations and relationships appear as their key aspect. The focus of the theory of transformation of relations, namely, criticizes the theory of liberal peace from the perspective of the key concept - reconciliation. The importance of the local social context and the important role of the transformation of relations both, at the individual as well as at the macro level are emphasized. However, we will not remain on the critique of the theory of liberal peace, since we shall deal with the concept of reconciliation more closely in the next sections.

Reconciliation as a key aspect of peacebuilding

It is usually considered that reconciliation is necessary when societies or groups within a society that are in conflict develop widespread beliefs, attitudes, emotions and motivations that maintain that conflict, thus the opponent is delegitimized, which prevents the development of peaceful relations (Bal-Tal & Bennink, 2004). What the reconciliation really is? Many will agree that there is no consensus on the definition of reconciliation. In this sense, there are different conceptualizations of reconciliation. So, one defines it as a goal striving, aspiration, hope, and to a certain degree as utopia. Moreover, some identify it with re-entering a friendship marked by trust that goes beyond traditional divisions (Marrow, 1999 according to Barthal and Bennink, 2004). In order to achieve reconciliation, it is expected that once the conflicted parties express mutual recognition, appreciation and acceptance, as well as sensitivity towards the needs and interests of the other side, and to detect mutual interests and work on developing trust and building a peaceful relationship (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004).

The authors Bar-tal and Bennink (2004) consider that reconciliation as a social outcome requires a broad and stable social consensus and support - both structural and cultural. Structural elements include a series of activities of a formal type such as demilitarization, the exchange of representatives in all relevant social spheres (economy, politics and culture), the establishment of regular communication and dialogue between the leaders of countries, the development of free trade, cooperative economic projects, the exchange of information and cultural assets. If it is a conflict within a state, then it is necessary to implement institutional reforms such as political integration and the establishment of structural equality and justice based on respect for human and civil rights. In the economic sphere, a reorganization is also necessary in order to include all social groups in equal circumstances in the economic system. Generally speaking, in the search

for liberal peace, democratization of all spheres of society and the construction of institutions is necessary, as well as enabling the functioning of the economic system according to liberal principles which are the characteristics of Western societies. This in fact means that the institution building and rules of the game are aimed at creating interdependence and solid links in order to prevent further conflicts.

However, Bar-Tal and Bennik emphasize that the solution to the long-standing violent conflict, and thus the achievement of reconciliation, is not found in structural elements - their role is limited to the facilitation of a more important element - a psychological process that supports peace. The essence of reconciliation, according to them, is a psychological process that affects most members of society and consists of motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes and emotions that are diametrically opposed to those who have led to the conflict. In particular, they cite five areas of social convictions that must be changed steadily to seek reconciliation.

Firstly, it is necessary to change the social beliefs of people about the goals of the group they belong to, which implies the cancellation of beliefs about the goals of the group that were in force during the conflict and the definition of new, as well as the establishment of new symbols and myths.

Secondly, it is necessary to change the image and perception of the enemy group, to raise awareness of stereotypes that uncritically adhere to them and to accept the fact that on the opposite side there were victims and suffering during the conflict.

Thirdly, it is important to deal with the perception of one's own group, whereby objectivity and self-criticism should be introduced in assessing (non)acts and behaviours during the conflict.

Fourth, change the social beliefs about the relationship with the former opponents, which means to emphasize the importance of cooperation, equality and reciprocity in relations with the recent enemy, whereby collective memory is synchronized.

Fifth, it is important to change the social beliefs about peace that were reduced to the utopian perception of peace during the conflict. Specifically, after the conflict, peace, and especially reconciliation, embrace multidimensionalism which includes the "other side" in compromises and negotiations on conditions and ways of achieving reconciliation.

It can be said that reaching reconciliation is mainly based on radical changes in psychosocial relations both in relation to one's own group and its thinking, as well as towards the recent opponent, which includes the transformation present at the emotional level - transforming the collective sense of fear and hatred into hope and positive orientation towards a common future (Bal-Tal & Bennink, 2004).

The second conceptualization understands reconciliation as a process which is a very important element of peacebuilding and involves a number of actors of different social levels that participate synergistically and complementarily in that process. According to Fischer and Petrović-Ziemer (2013), reconciliation is a long-term process the basis of which is recognition of the past and responsibility for the decisions taken and their consequences, and taking concrete steps towards building confidence. It can also be considered a renewal of peaceful relations between the entities, which, if nothing else, at least do not harm one another, which consequently creates confidence that such a relationship will remain in the future, and it is important to note that the desire for revenge has been rejected (Santa Barbara, 2007).

Moreover, the central of relationship transformation for some researchers is forgiveness, an act characteristic of Christian religion (Santa Barbara, 2007). Reconciliation is also a process that is actually being developed by society and social institutions that should be based on common values and human rights so that opposing groups would find new ways of cohabitation not only in peace, but in tolerance, cooperation and appreciation (Žagar, 2010).

Also, there is talk of reconciliation as a way of dealing with conflicts and trauma outcomes and/or events that have produced pain and suffering for many people (Hutchison and Bleiker, 2013). It is a comprehensive, but voluntary process consisting in discovering and dealing with the truth about events that marked the conflict, the establishment of just relations, which requires the functioning of the justice system, forgiveness, work on the establishment of interpersonal relationships and trust, confrontation, recognition and learning from the past, and implies also finding a way to live with a glimpse of the future (Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse, 2003; Santa Barbara, 2007). This is a “process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future” (Bloomfield, 2003: 12), with a focus on the relations of those who should implement the solutions reached in peacebuilding agreements (Bloomfield, 2003). Hamber and Kelly (2004) consider that reconciliation includes five interrelated dimensions that include a temporal, relational, cultural and structural aspect. Therefore, the reconciliation process rests on the development of a shared vision of the future with the simultaneous recognition and assumption of responsibility for the past by establishing various mechanisms for attaining justice, healing, restitution, reparation and restorations.

It also involves building positive relationships that are marked by values of trust, tolerance, acceptance of similarities and differences, but also the change of dominant attitudes about each other, as well as the transformation of emotions - the culture of fear, distrust and violence should be replaced by respect for human rights and diversity, participatory political culture and culture of inclusiveness. The structural aspect of the process relates to the taking apart and restructuring of past conflict-supported social, economic and political structures. From these definitions it is possible to derive three important characteristics: first, recon-

ciliation is a process in which practically all social actors participate, at all levels from individual to macro level. Second, at the structural level, the process of reconciliation requires that social institutions introduce innovations or a new way of work that would be complementary to the idea of reconciliation. Third, reconciliation at the cultural level rests on redefining and transforming the relationship between the conflicting parties at all social levels (from institutional to individual relations).

These ideas may be best systematized in Lederach's conceptualization of reconciliation within his highly influential theory of conflict transformation. Lederach (1997) considers reconciliation a long-term peace building process whose essential characteristic is the transformation of the quality of relationships.

He considers that the relationship is equally crucial for conflict as for peace, and that the social system cannot be understood or treated partially, but it needs to be approached and understood holistically by including all of its parts in the process of peace building. What keep the system together are relationships therefore their transformation is a key element to focus on in thinking about reconciliation.

Secondly, reconciliation is understood as a meeting place and space for articulation, dialogue and exchange of feelings and beliefs that accompany the devastating effects of the conflict. At that place or in that area, confrontation and recognition of the past and visions of the shared future are encountered, resulting in a different understanding of the present.

Thirdly, the process of reconciliation transcends the approaches of international political traditions and the rigid setting of political science in peace building and includes both the spiritual and the religious dimension. Thus, it introduces the truth, charity/grace, justice and peace as the concepts encountered in the social space of reconciliation.

So, as a social phenomenon, reconciliation is a meeting place for formerly conflicting sides, and as a perspective, it is oriented towards the relational aspect of the conflict (Lederach, 1997). In this sense, it is necessary to create a safe environment in which people can meet and establish a dialogue in which they will articulate and share their impressions, memories, feelings and experiences with one another, all with the aim of creating a new, changed angle of view about the lives of each other and creating new shared experiences.

Lederach notes that reconciliation deals with paradoxes that must be accepted as a kind of paradigm of reconciliation - as reconciliation promotes a discussion of a painful past, it equally seeks for a shared future, as it gives space for the discovery of truth about events in the past that should be accepted by all formerly conflict-ed parties, it also demands that it be dismissed in the name of the renewal of relations, and the third, as it recognizes the need for justice and all its consequences for the parties involved, at the same time promotes work on the shared future.

Justice, however, is most often associated with the process of reconciliation (Bloomfield, 2006) and it is often considered a central concept. Although it is extremely important to institutionally establish individual responsibility for committed crimes, a society that cries out for stability and establishing new links of trust needs, as Bloomfield (2006) says, restorative justice with an emphasis on the victim's side while trying, in various ways, to restore or compensate for the pain, and establish a healthier relationship between the two sides in the conflict.

J.N.Clark (2008) examined the relationship between retributive and restorative justice and reconciliation on the example of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Although retributive justice is needed to a certain extent, restorative justice is of key importance to reconciliation. Those who advocate the retributive justice believe that war crime courts contribute to reconciliation in a way to show the justice is executed, establish the truth about the circumstances of the crimes committed and, by doing their job, personify the guilt. However, such an approach to justice and reconciliation is not enough sufficient because reconciliation processes do not take place only in the courtroom, especially if there is a perception that the international court of justice in its case-law is selective and somewhat politically controversial (Clark, 2008).

It should be understood that the nature of the concept of justice involves not only the punishment of the perpetrators, but the joint search for solutions of the two conflicting parties in order to promote reconciliation. In other words, for sincere reconciliation, it is necessary to insist on restorative justice that has a greater capacity to promote and develop reconciliation.

Restorative justice emerges from the everyday life of the community and involves an active and deliberate work on dialogue and jointly finding quality solutions that contribute to reconciliation, whereby the mediator is a community - in most cases it is a civil society organization. Bloomfield (2006) also mentions the importance of regulatory justice that relates to setting rules for all social behaviour - in fact, this type of justice implies building of trusted institutions that will function fairly by respecting all rules and procedures that equally apply to all citizens.

Regarding the principles of fairness, their existence should be reflected in social justice (including distributive and economic justice) that is the foundation of a fair society. Social justice thus ensures a fair division of all social resources (economic, political, social), which is a prerequisite for building trust in a common future in post-conflict societies (Bloomfield, 2006).

That said supporting the thesis that the foundation for the building of peace and reconciliation is the "healing" of connections and interpersonal relations in post-conflict societies. In addition, such a comprehensive understanding of the process of reconciliation requires active involvement and the sincere commitment of all relevant social actors at all social levels.

Actors of reconciliation

Lederach (1997) considers that the key to the reconciliation process is at the local level and that the influence of international factors must be reduced to supporting internal actors in their efforts to build peace. Although the emphasis is on the specific social context that shapes the reality and in general the opportunities for progress in peace building, Lederach believes that key players have certain universal features that quantitatively and qualitatively define their contribution to the reconciliation process.

He illustrates social actors in the form of a pyramid whereat he places at the top the highest level of leadership, in the middle is the middle-range leadership and at the bottom is the grassroots leadership. The main features and functions of each of the above levels will be listed below.

Top-level elite leadership

Top-level elite leadership includes the most prominent military, political and religious leaders characterized by broad public visibility and legitimacy in representing groups in conflict. These types of actors are, however, determined by this high position, so their action is limited given the expected need to maintain their power and influence. The approach to peace building from these instances and from top to bottom gives a primary responsibility to leaders of conflicted parties whose consequences of negotiations and agreements, usually at the first stages of the ending of the conflict, considered crucial for the acceptance of the idea of peace building by the rest of society (Lederach, 1997).

The reconciliation that comes from this level can be called "political" or "pragmatic" (Bloomfield, 2006). It is publicly visible especially in the establishment of a new mode of work of reconciliation-related institutions previously agreed politically. Regarding the Balkans, recognizing the diversity of individual social contexts, Žagar (2010) finds that political will and readiness to begin the process of reconciliation in most of the countries in the region does not exist or is very limited. If there is a declarative level of political will, then the process of reconciliation is a matter of co-optation (Bjorkdahl and Hoglund, 2013) and/or the introduction of certain procedures or institutions in order to nominally meet the demands or expectations in the eyes of international actors (above all the European Union) while in reality the activities that would contribute to reconciliation are not implemented.

As an additional proof that reconciliation as a process simply is not on the real political agenda of the countries in the region, Žagar (2010) recognizes it in a formal paradox. Although reconciliation as a term is cited in the texts of a series of declarations and documents throughout the Western Balkans (usually in the context of human rights, the protection of minority rights, the return of refugees, etc.),

these same documents do not define the principles of reconciliation or how to implement it at all, and what should be the results thereof. Such a state of affairs is especially worrying, given the research findings that exactly the actors of this level have the greatest and crucial influence on the dynamics and success of the implementation of peace building activities in society (Paffenholz, 2014).

Middle-Range Leadership

The middle level of leadership is made up of ethnic, religious leaders, intellectuals, leaders of civil society organizations, and small and medium-sized entrepreneurs from the economic sphere. It is principally about individuals who do not have political and military power or embody them, but they maintain relationships with the highest level who know their work. They are also linked to experts belonging to the “other side” and in that sense maintain such a network that goes beyond identity divisions. These types of actors also have a good insight into the “situation on the ground,” they know the social context as well as the power relations at the highest social level (Lederach, 1997).

A peace building approach from the perspective of this mid-level society consists of three elements: workshops aimed at tackling the problems that are gathered by thinking of the conflicting parties to mutually test and analyse the conflict resolution process in a politically safe area; conflict resolution trainings, which are nevertheless directed at the change of consciousness, the acquisition of knowledge and skills of individuals, with the aim of raising awareness and conflict education and developing skills for peaceful resolution of conflicts; forming peacekeeping commissions during conflicts that depend on many contextual factors. This middle-out approach or Lederach middle-out approach is core in building peace since it offers a high potential for creating an infrastructure for establishing relationships and relationships, and the skills and knowledge that can sustain this process.

Therefore, the role of civil society organizations and the private sector (small and medium-sized entrepreneurship) in peace building and the process of reconciliation will be further reflected in the text and in line with the research settings.

The role of civil society organizations in peace building

Civil society, in general terms, is said to be “the space encompassing the family, the state and the market where citizens are joining to promote common interests. Civil society is a society of citizens, their initiatives, groups and organizations that have their own structure, their own administration, non-profit status, involve volunteers in their activities, citizens are entering their membership on a voluntary basis, and as such, various stakeholders provide them with material support “ (Bežovan and Zrinščak, 2007: 18).

The most important prerequisites for the smooth functioning of civil society include the rule of law, guaranteed basic civil, political and socio-economic rights and freedoms, procedural democracy and institutions, market economy and private property, democratic political culture and citizen participation. On the one hand, it is obvious that a strong civil society is empowered by a developed liberal democracy, and on the other hand it is also a prerequisite for the development of democracy itself.

It is important to mention the influence of civil society, specifically civil society organizations (CSOs) at the individual or micro level. As early as 19th century, Tocqueville concluded that associations, on the one hand, indirectly strengthen the stability of democracy and improve its efficiency, while on the other hand they socialize the citizens because during the joint work on the realization of a goal, "the heart expands, and the human spirit develops " (Tocqueville, 1990: 466) and people become/remain civilized in the process of cooperation. Thus, associations, and especially those for political purposes, become "large free schools" where they learn, in a picturesque manner, "the general theory of association" (Tocqueville, 1990: 472). In other words, these are the socializing and educational effects of the association (Wollebaek and Selle, 2002). Firstly mentioned refer to the "habits of the heart," cooperation and solidarity, as well as a number of other, most widely speaking, civic virtues (Fung, 2003; Newton, 2004; Dekker, 2009), such as trust, moderation, compromise, reciprocity, empathy, tolerance, reciprocity and civil relations (Newton, 2001; 2004; Fung, 2003), which is extremely important for the reconciliation process. Since they are referred to as "schools of democracy" (Newton, 2001), education effects relate, broadly speaking, to the acquisition of competences for democracy (Wollebaek and Selle, 2002), which include, among other things, solving the problem in a cooperative way (Putnam, 2008) and learning to solve conflict situations.

Also, within the association of people, they learn the communication skills that are central to articulating the demands towards the state (Westholm, Montero and van Deth, 2007), as well as discussion and organizational skills (Fung, 2003; Newton, 2004), and generally in the adoption of participatory orientations and critical skills that are of paramount importance for participation in democratic processes in general (Zmerli, 2010). In this educational process, the structure of the organization itself is important, and it is often discussed about the importance of horizontal versus vertical structure, which allows frequent face-to-face and stream-of-knowledge transfer (Fung, 2003).

The impact of CSOs on societal or macro levels is created by means of more overlapping networks that allow the meeting of different people who establish relatively weak links of lower intensity (Wollebaek and Selle, 2002), thereby contributing to the reduction of conflicts and a greater degree of compromise and negotiation. Associations are kind of hubs of interpersonal relationships that

make and keep society “gathered” in a way to connect not only those with similar orientations, attitudes and interests, but also have the potential to connect diverse social groups especially through multiple memberships (Newton, 2001). This type of effect Wollebaek and Selle (2002) call a mitigating effect, and recognize the cumulative effect that is generated by accumulating networks or groups with individual membership whereby it increases confidence or promotes moral civic orientation (Westholm et al., 2007). Šalaj (2011) in the context of contribution to democratic political culture attaches to associations a dual role. It regards them as a dam against an overwhelming feeling of isolation and helplessness in the society of the paternalistic and authoritarian state authorities. On a similar track, Newton (2001) considers them to be the source of security and belonging to members and the organizational basis of a democratic culture, as well as builders of social solidarity links that are, for this author, the basis of a democratic society.

Although mentioned features have positive repercussions on peace-building in society, it is worth mentioning additional specific functions that CSOs have in peace building processes. It is primarily about the protection of civic life and freedom in relation to state and non-state actors, then monitoring of government activities and actors in conflict with regard to various problems from corruption to human rights, advocating specific interests of particularly marginalized groups, as well as participation in negotiating processes, then facilitating or establishing links to support cooperation between stakeholders, institutions and the state, and providing services and assistance to citizens in reconciliation related activities (Foster and Mattner, 2006).

It should be noted that civil society is a space that enables social entrepreneurship and/or the use of innovative and systematic approaches that can help find solutions for marginalized, disenfranchised social groups, as well as for the problems faced by the post-conflict societies. Social entrepreneurs are developing new models for the human communities development (Dees et al., 2001), offering new ideas to solve the greatest social problems and in that sense they represent pioneers in social innovations that are particularly needed in environments where already tested social solutions have not come to life or simply, for various reasons, are not suitable for use.

In the context of peacebuilding, it is important to mention the strengths, weaknesses and challenges facing civil society organizations. CSOs advantages and/or the strength in the process of building are the specifics of their structure, characteristics, and functions (Foster and Mattner, 2006). They thus have a good insight into the “situation on the ground” and in the way the policies are implemented at the local level. They can also reach areas and groups unreachable for the ruling to carry out their activities, whereby they can also make social change more efficient than the governing structures. Organizations that directly work in the local environment have created a certain reputation and enjoy a high degree of trust and legitimacy by citizens, which certainly contributes to the promotion and success

of project activities. Also, their structure is flexible, allowing them to easily adapt to the requirements of the context.

The weaknesses or limitations of CSOs in building reconciliation concern limited organizational capacity and funding, and focusing on the local level. Then, the issue of questionable legitimacy arises, given the breadth of the base, and the presence of often tense relations with the ruling ones showing mistrust towards them.

The main challenges of the civil sphere relate to difficult measuring of the effects of peace-building and peace-building initiatives beyond the reach of CSOs (Fostner and Mattner, 2006). Despite the many contextual factors hampering the work on reconciliation of civil society organizations, their role is irreplaceable and precious in societies that are still closer to conflict than emancipatory and positive peace.

Bearing the said in mind, it is necessary to indicate the concrete civil society contribution to the process of reconciliation in the Western Balkans. The contribution of civil society is crucial concerning the insistence on including the of mass casualties and human rights violations from the recent past in the political agenda of the region (Kostovicova, 2013). Kostovicova (2013) distinguishes three important civil society roles in the post-conflict period of the Western Balkans, which are reflected in the promotion of public discussion on war crimes responsibilities, the impact on policy making and the advocacy of transitional justice in an implicit and explicit manner. The states tend to exploit the indictments of the International Criminal Court to portray their own nation as victims, while civil society has practically delegitimized collective assumptions about victimization by facing society as well as a state with its own responsibility for crimes. The influence of civil society on politics is reflected in its compensation for the weakness of the state, especially when it comes to taking criminal cases from an international court to domestic courts. In this case, civil society assumed the function of a practically supervisory body in relation to policies for rewarding impunity, avoiding responsibility and marginalizing victims of mass crimes. Regional civil society has also assumed the role of advocates for reconciliation and transitional justice far beyond interstate and interstate ethnic divisions by linking to civil society networks (e.g. the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, etc.).

The challenges that civil society encounters in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes are related to internal and contextual reasons (Kostovicova, 2013). The challenges contains the lack of capacity of the civil society itself (lack of fundraising possibilities and the lack of expertise for complex issues related to specific policies), then in relation to state and non-state donors (lack of financial autonomy that affects their public perception and legitimacy for a dialogue with the state regarding the adoption of policies), and in its (non)coherence in the role of the social actor in the process of reconciliation (fragmentation, the priority of the national before transnational ways of acting - the primary framework for civil society activities are the states, whereby RECOM is an exception). Also, a chal-

lenge to mention is the “illiberal alliances” that are created between social groups belonging to a non-liberal civil society (those who propagate national exclusivity and anti-EU rhetoric) and those state levels that provide resistance to addressing the issue of responsibility for conflict and the consequences of these conflicts (Kostovicova, 2013).

The role of private sector in peace building

Economic development rests on building peace, but vice versa, peacebuilding is facilitated by economic development. The presence of conflicts often negatively affects local business operations - infrastructure destruction, loss of labour, withdrawal of foreign capital, high security costs, market failure, and regulatory confusion contribute to the high cost of conflicts for the private sector (Killick, Srikantha, Gündüz, 2005). Therefore, the assumption is that the peace building is in the interest of the private sector. However, the role of this sector in peacebuilding is minimal and poorly explored (Killick, Srikantha, Gündüz, 2005). Nevertheless, there are examples of supportive active role of the business sector in the post-conflict period. As “insiders” entrepreneurs often participate in negotiating teams in formal peace negotiations and, as external actors, contribute to building confidence between conflicting parties, lobbying for peace, advising and sharing know-how (Banfield and Gunduz, 2006).

In spite of the possible positive effects, especially in the area of economic security in the form of job creation, their role can be (inadvertently) negative for peacebuilding, since their decisions and actions can suit the conflict actor-powers often found in the exclusion or restriction of access to resources or employment for certain social groups (Banfield and Gunduz, 2006).

It is widely known that economic development of the community necessarily requires security and certainty in business, which includes meeting basic conditions such as capacity building of local institutions, strengthening the regulatory legal framework and eradicating corruption (Banfield and Gunduz, 2006). In fact, the impact of private sector on peacebuilding is as far as the political and social climate is conducive to peacebuilding. The relationship between the state and the business sector in all societies is complex, and this complexity is particularly evident in post-conflict societies that are often burdened not only with structural problems such as poverty, but also with widespread and deeply rooted corruption, clientelism and general distrust. In that sense, the private sector is often an extended arm of the ruling regime, simply because of the high connectivity and interdependence of the business sphere and high politics, which may, after all, be a symptom and cause of conflict (Killick, Srikantha, Gündüz, 2005).

Focusing on the private sector role in peacebuilding, it is important to list four latent conditions of importance for the promotion and maintenance of this role (Killick, Srikantha, Gündüz, 2005).

Firstly, it is necessary that the interest of the private sector for peace is widely recognized, as this justifies their potential involvement in the peace building process - it is presumed that the immediate threat from the outbreak of a new conflict will stimulate and motivate the private sector at the local level to warn collective action against multiple harmful consequences that may arise from the eventual conflict.

Secondly, it is the existence of an influential and diverse private sector that can participate in decision-making on peace-building at the local and national level through collective action and an organized approach.

Thirdly, the perception of the private sector as a positive and independent one is crucial in accepting the private sector as an equal partner in peacebuilding by both the representatives of the conflicting parties and the wider community. This certainly means that one should be aware of the negative consequences of corruption and other socially undesirable phenomena that are eventually generated. In addition, the power of the private sector rests not only on internal consolidation and self-organization but also in cooperation with various social actors, bearing in mind that the private sector is also a part of society, not a socially isolated sphere.

Fourth, the existence of brave, high-quality individuals from the private sector who are willing to take the initiative and use their influence to gather and co-operate with other peace-building actors (Killick, Srikantha, Gündüz, 2005).

These conditions in most of the post-conflict societies are not met for various reasons, and one of the main is the lack of awareness of the social importance of economic activity. According to Banfield and Gunduz (2006), the actions of companies in post-conflict societies can never be socially “neutral”, driven solely and exclusively for business interests, since their action is essentially a reflection of the situation in the environment. In this sense, the work of the business sector in post-conflict societies must overcome the usual income logic and take into account its social impact. The desire for rapid economic growth of the private sector should derive from the understanding that the nature of the income growth and progress in specific post-conflict environments is more important than the rate of profit growth. In other words, private sector should take responsibility for its role in building peace and reconciliation, and society - primarily politics, political stability and political orientation towards reconciliation - should ensure the conditions for this responsibility to be practiced.

One of the biggest obstacles to achieving the potential of the business sphere in peacebuilding processes is the lack of recognition that the private sector really has its role in this process, as well as the misunderstanding of the very role (Killick, Srikantha, Gündüz, 2005). The same authors state that it is necessary to work on raising awareness about their role not only within the private sector, but also with other social actors. Also, it is necessary to investigate and familiarize better with the types of roles that companies may have in view of the size and

profile of operations in relation to the type and level of conflicts. In addition to that stated, it is necessary that the international environment, civil society organizations and researchers promote and support various existing initiatives coming from the private sector.

Grassroot actors

The third level of actors in the reconciliation process, the grass-root area makes up the largest number of people who are focused on maintaining their own livelihoods and first to feel the atmosphere sprinkled with animosity, intolerance and hatred in everyday life (Lederach, 1997). In addition, this includes members of civil society organizations dealing with projects at the local level as well as people who generally work “on the ground” in different areas of life from education to health. The approach to peacebuilding from this perspective is called bottom-up and this impact is limited – not only in lacking capacity to implement comprehensive programs, they are often pressured by poverty and the struggle for existence (Lederach, 1997). From this, in fact, the socio-cultural level (Bloomfield, 2006) reconciliation emerges bottom-up, which is actually a social impulse for sociopsychological transformation of relationships between people. Unlike reconciliation at a structural/political level that involves compromise and a certain amount of pragmatism, on an individual level reconciliation denotes the transformation of relationships and the establishment of interaction between people who were directly involved in conflict and the production of pain to those “others” in order to decide together on the future of their coexistence (Bloomfield, 2006).

It is especially useful to mention herein a contact theory developed by Allport (1954) in which he cites the conditions that need to be met in order to minimize prejudices, stereotypes and generally discriminatory practices of the majority over the minority. It is a long-term process whose successfulness is dependent on the accomplishment of some criteria. First, in order to successfully break prejudices, it is necessary that members of conflicting groups entering into contact share similar characteristics, especially in terms of socioeconomic status and cultural capital, since just these characteristics are the ones that influence the most on positioning in the relationship.

Then, both groups should work on the same clearly defined goal that everyone finds useful, and in doing so, they can use their own knowledge and potential to achieve that goal. In that sense, it is important to foster intragroup cooperation whereby rivalry and competence should be discouraged. It is necessary that such cooperation be supported from outside in the form of “good customs” or formal authorities that enjoy a reputation among these groups. In addition, it is necessary to encourage personal interaction of an informal type so that people can get better acquainted at the subjective level and connect to other connectivity aspects of the identity. This creates confidence at the individual level.

However, another factor is particularly important, although a part thereof has already been mentioned previously. Social trust (it does not include trust in primary groups such as family and friends, but above all members of a society that we do not personally know) is largely mediated by institutional trust. This means that one cannot expect the restoration of trust relationships at the individual level if the widespread perception is that the institutions of society function unfairly and thus untrustworthy.

First of all, in addition to the functioning of the judicial system, literature often refers to the political system as crucial in the “production” of social trust. Political corruption and clientelism directly damage the potential of building interpersonal trust, and then, consequently, reconciliation. On this track, the reality of some Western Balkan societies shows that there is a strong polarization between the “ordinary people” located at the bottom of the vertical axis of power and the political elite at its top (Jensen, 2016). The common people in describing this relationship use the discourse of the object, and not the subject (Jensen, 2016), whereat expressing not only distance from politics but repulsion, a pronounced backlash and deep distrust towards the institutions of government.

At the same time, the said ordinary people while being united to condemn the methods of work of political and state elites are weakened among themselves by ideological value antagonisms and the struggle for existence and that is part of the explanation why interpersonal trust does not go beyond close relatives. Such an unfortunate circumstances have far-reaching repercussions on the potential of post-conflict societies in the Western Balkans for honest and fair participation in a demanding and comprehensive reconciliation process.

Methodology

THE RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED IN SEVEN COUNTRIES (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and Turkey) in the period from April to November 2016, and consists of two parts. During the first part of the research, secondary data were collected for the purpose of analysing the current situation in each individual country with respect to current strategies and policies dealing with the process of reconciliation and describing formal political goals in the field of peace and reconciliation. In addition to mapping valid documents and public authorities responsible for reconciliation, if any, the task was to investigate findings of relevant research on the subject matter. By analysing secondary data, an overview of the most important elements of a political context is provided, which provides assumptions for social processes aim to building peace and reconciliation, as well as elements of a social context that empirically show in what extent and in which social segments reconciliation is present.

The second part of the research was aimed at examining the opinions and attitudes of the representatives of four sectors on peacebuilding and the process of reconciliation in each of the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey. In addition, this research part is based on the findings of focus groups conducted with representatives of four sectors (private, public, civil sectors and citizens) in seven countries. Standardised forms are attached to the report, which contain were used in both parts of the research. A significant role in the research played national researchers² and/or experts in the field of peace issues, who collected secondary data and organized and moderated focus groups. The collected data and transcripts were analysed and interpreted by a group of researchers from the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb³.

Empirical research involved the organization and implementation of focus groups in the following manner. In each country, seven focus groups were organized: two focus groups of representatives of civil society, the private sector and citizens, and one focus group of representatives of the public sector. Considering the nature of the research, a division has been made not only as

² Irida Agolli for Albania, Jasmin Jašarević for Bosnia and Herzegovinu, Nora Ahmeti for Kosovo, Ilija Jovanović for Serbia, Tamara Čirgić for Montenegro, Toše Zafirov for Macedonia and Varduhi Balyan for Turkey.

³ Mirjana Adamović, Anja Gvozdanović and Marko Kovačić

per sectors, but also as regards the conflict affected area. Therefore, a total of seven focus groups with representatives of individual sectors in the country's capital and in the post-conflict area were organized: a total of four focus groups were conducted in the capital (private sector, public sector, civil sector and citizens), and in the post-conflict area three focus groups (private sector, civil sector and citizens). Such a division enabled us to gain insight into the understanding of the process of reconciliation and its progress with respect to the sector, as well as the possible qualitative difference between the notion of reconciliation and the main actors in the process in view of the social context that (to a greater or lesser extent) requires stronger engagement for the issue of peace building.

Thus, the focus groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina are organized in Sarajevo and Brčko, in Serbia in Belgrade and Novi Pazar, in Kosovo in Pristina and Kosovska Mitrovica, in Montenegro in Podgorica and Rožaje, Albania in Tirana and Himari/Gjirokastrri, in Macedonia in Skopje and Kumanovo and in Turkey in Ankara and Istanbul/Izmir⁴. A total of 316 respondents participated in the research⁵.

The profiles of participants by focus groups are determined by the goals and nature of the research. Thus, in the focus group of the public sector is an intended sample, since the intention was to gather individuals who are "street level bureaucrats" (Lipski, 1980), that is, a subgroup of employees in state institutions that carry out or strengthen activities stipulated by laws or public policies related to reconciliation, peace building, minority rights, and so on. The focus group of the private sector included representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises, and a focus group of the civil sector gathered representatives of civil society organizations focused on the topic of reconciliation, intercultural/inter-ethnic dialogue, human rights and so on. The sample of the focus group of citizens was the only one of convenience sampling, whereby a condition was to be met that the representatives of the citizens in the post-conflict area were members of the national or religious minority.

The focus group content is recorded with a voice recorder or mobile phone, on which occasion participants in the focus group were guaranteed anonymity in presenting and storing data. National researchers have organized a transcription of the content of the focus groups, and it should be noted that the transcripts should have been translated into English if they were not discussed in the Serbian/Bosnian/Montenegrin language. The respondents' cites in the research report were transferred depending on the language in which the content of the focus groups was transcribed.

4 The complex political circumstances in Turkey caused by a military coup attempt in the late spring of 2016 made it difficult to carry out the research or organization of focus groups, therefore the research plan for Turkey had been modified to some extent. Thus, a focus group research in Ankara was conducted with citizens and public sector representatives, while two focus groups were conducted in Istanbul with representatives of civil society organizations and one each with representatives of the private sector and citizens. Additionally, an interview was conducted in Izmir with a private sector representative who refused to fill out a socio-demographic questionnaire for the sake of protecting his own security.

5 The structure of the respondents is attached to the report.

A computer program for the qualitative analysis of NVivo 11 was used for data processing and analysis. Thematic analysis of data was carried out for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data and which allows the interpretation of various aspects of the research topic (Trako Poljak, 2016 according to Braun and Clarke, 2006). A theme therefore captures something important about the data in relation to the research goal and/or patterned responses or meaning. (Trako Poljak, 2016, according to Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes and/or thematic patterns are obtained by encoding and/or categorizing data in qualitative analysis. For the purposes of value analysis of participants' narratives on themes, the notion of discourse, which necessarily contains the value element of narrative on a theme, is also used. In reporting the research results, direct statements or narratives from the conducted focus groups are cited.

The data analysis structure of each country contains some common elements. After the introductory part based on the synthesis of secondary data on the political and social context of each country, the findings of empirical research are divided into five parts, following the questions asked to respondents in focus groups. It begins with the conceptualization of the notion of reconciliation, i.e. presentation of various perspectives and narratives of the participants. Subsequently, the understanding of actors that should foster reconciliation is analysed, taking into account the national and regional levels, and highlighting the different mechanisms that contribute to the achievement of this goal. Then, the third part is dedicated to the role of civil society in the process of reconciliation and building sustainable peace, while the fourth part relates to cooperation between the sectors. Focus groups served to explore the potential for regional cooperation between different countries with the aim of constructing a common interdisciplinary intersectoral space that would accelerate the processes of reconciliation.

The analysis ends with recapitulation, extraction of the most interesting or most relevant findings, as well as specific recommendations for each country for the purpose of promoting the process of reconciliation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

THE MAIN NATIONAL PROTAGONISTS OF THE POLITICAL AND THEN THE WAR SITUATION IN Bosnia and Herzegovina are three parties: the Party of Democratic Action, the Serb Democratic Party and the Croatian Democratic Union. At the end of 1991, the Serb Democratic Party, not agreeing with the decisions of the power umbrella of B&H (Bosnian Assembly, Government and Presidency) on many substantive issues, established a Serbian Autonomous District, later proclaimed Republic of Srpska, in the places where it won a majority of electoral votes. With similar reasoning in late 1991 was formed the Croatian Community of Bosnian Posavina in Bosanski Brod and the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosna. The Croatian Community of Central Bosnia was established in early 1992.

An independence referendum of Bosnia and Herzegovina was held in early 1992, but the representatives of Serb Democratic Party refused it. However, 67% of eligible voters turned out to vote in the referendum who voted independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This referendum was a cause for serious preparations of the Serb Democratic Party for the beginning of the war.

Without opportunities and aspirations to broaden a story about the manner of evolving the war, especially in view of involvement in the military operation of the Yugoslav National Army, various paramilitary units, followed by the national/military units (BH Army, the Army of the Republic of Srpska, Croatian Defence Council), suffice it to say, in the context of the topic herein that constituent peoples in B&H relate to various events and the years (1991, 1992) to mark the beginning of the war, which lasted until 1995, and is named, qualified, interpreted and understood differently. Due to interference of Serbian and Croatian authorities in the events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and more or less clearly stated/conducted pretensions to territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there have been various negotiations during the war, but also conflict and incidents. One such conflict was the one between Bosniaks and Croats in the area of Herzegovina and Central Bosnia in 1992, whereby the total war in Bosnia began.

After numerous plans of the international community served to try to find a model of further coexistence of three nations, the Dayton Agreement⁶ was concluded in 1995 which marked the end of the war and determined a state and legal framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This agreement stipulates that Bosnia and Herzegovina has two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska, while the town of Brčko received the status of a neutral district that is placed under the central authority according to the decision of international arbitration in 1999. Entities are not states, however, the agreement set forth them to have state functions and organization and may make international relations and conclude international agreements, also “the B&H Constitution is based on decentralized model of state with great powers of the entities and complex decision-making model”⁷.

The important thing to note in the context of the theme of reconciliation is the scope of large and brutal crimes that the civilian population was exposed to during the war in Bosnia. According to current estimates of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, around 105,000 people⁸ were suffering of the war. In the bloodiest armed conflict in modern Europe, concentration camps have been opened; mass executions conducted, and in one part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Srebrenica) an act of genocide committed. The war had a pronounced gender character because women were indirectly involved through noticeably large number of rapes primarily Bosniaks and then Serbs and Croats. As this is a sensitive issue with major repercussions on the lives of women and their families, the exact number of persons who suffered is difficult to determine, that is why sources indicate different numbers.

According to the Research and Documentation Centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is registered over 440 locations of prisons and concentration camps, 320 mass graves and 900 incidents of mass killings in which most of the victims were civilians.

In early 2008, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has sentenced 45 Serbs, 12 Croats and 4 Bosniaks for war crimes committed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By 2015, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina legally binding for war crimes convicted 140 defendants. Among the defendants and convicted persons there is a number of people from the political

6 The Dayton Agreement was implemented both, military and civilian aspect; military part of the agreement was provided by the international Implementation Force (IFOR, and as of 1997 the Stabilization Force, or SFOR) under the command of NATO, while the civilian implementation was the responsibility of several organizations (OSCE, UN, UNHCR). The first parliamentary and presidential elections after the war took place in 1996 and 1998. In the first Presidency after the war, the elected were Alija Izetbegovic, Momcilo Krajisnik and Kresimir Zubak as national leaders of divided Bosnia. International forces of NATO in 2004 replaced the forces of the EU (European Force - EUFOR).

7 <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=8918>

8 The following sources talks about these data: http://www.media.ba/sites/default/files/rat_i_brojevi_-_final.pdf,
<https://www.icmp.int/where-we-work/europe/western-balkans/bosnia-and-herzegovina/>,
<http://www.helsinki.org.rs/doc/testimonies33.pdf>

and military leadership that directly or indirectly made decisions and/or operating in the territory of B&H and which are not listed individually herein.

The perception of the role of the Court in the B&H public is very controversial⁹ although a database of the Tribunal contains seven million documents that indicate the history of the conflict. Many arrests were portrayed as “voluntary submission” “so that the accused could save some dignity and receive cash compensation by their governments offered them only to stop hiding” (Berger, 2016)¹⁰. However, numerous examples show that persons convicted before the court in Hague for crimes committed in the war, after having served the sentence, while returning to B&H, they were feted as national heroes.

Bosnia and Herzegovina filed an indictment against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)¹¹ before the International Court of Justice and the Court issued the verdict in 2007 according to which the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina had an international character. The judgment is, among other things, stated that Serbia was not responsible for the Srebrenica genocide, but it is responsible for not preventing the genocide and punished the persons accused of genocide¹².

The implications on events in B&H had also both indictments of Croatia and Serbia at the International Court of Justice. In 1999, Croatia lodged a complaint with the International Court for war in the former Yugoslavia against Serbia for genocide in Croatia¹³. In 2010, Serbia replied with counter-claim related to military operation “Storm”¹⁴ of the Croatian Army. The International Court of Justice dismissed both charges and found that there was not genocide committed against Croats or even against the Serbs. The verdict was awaited in B&H with great tension on all sides; moreover, regarding judgment, the President of the Republic of Srpska in 2015 stated that he expected the judgment be an opportunity to declare amnesty in Croatia for all proceedings initiated against Serbs¹⁵.

9 Julian Berger (2016) argues that the Tribunal has worked thoroughly, comprehensively, fairly and slowly. Many lawyers in the process enriched. The image of Tribunal in public was not accompanied with confidence but doubt in its fairness given that national heroes of all three nations have been detained. The surviving victims and families of the dead were outraged because of the comfort that the accused enjoyed in Scheveningen.

10 Berger, J. (2016). Krvnikov trag, Sarajevo: Bybook.

11 The Court found that Montenegro is not a party to the dispute because the respondent State (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) was inherited by Serbia, while Montenegro only shared accountability. Source: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/697117.html>

12 Source: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/697117.html>

13 Croatia sued Serbia for the death of 12,500 people, the suffering of camp inmates, the destruction of religious facilities and the return of cultural heritage. The lawsuit had sought information related to solving the fate of 865 missing Croats.

14 Serbia stated that in Operation Storm 1,719 was killed and forced 250,000 citizens of Serbian nationality were forced to displacement. The counterclaim demanded punishment of the perpetrators of genocide, the return of refugees and respect for human and civil rights.

15 Source: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/republika-srpska/saznajemo-hag-odbio-zahtev-bih-za-reviziju-presude-protiv-srbije/wssjnt9>
Source: <http://vijesti.hrt.hr/378138/sud-u-haagu-odbacio-zahtjev-za-reviziju-presude-protiv-srbije-za-genocid-u-srebrenici>

In early 2017, Bosnia and Herzegovina has applied to the International Court of Justice for a review of a judgment in the B&H lawsuit against Serbia¹⁶. This, in the opinion of many internal and international actors, is making the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina again complicated and caused a political crisis. Indeed, according to Bakir Izetbegović, member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this is the biggest crisis in the post-Dayton history of Bosnia and Herzegovina¹⁷, while RS President Milorad Dodik said that the initiative on the review is an “an act of hate of Bosniaks in Sarajevo, against the Serbs”¹⁸. On this occasion, the public began to talk about the possibility of recurrence of the conflict. However, the International Court in Hague in March 2017 rejected the legitimacy of Sakib Softić as a representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the head of the review on the grounds that there was no prior approval by three members of the B&H Presidency about Softić appointment. Such a decision of the Court led to the rejection of the request for review since the adoption of the leaders of the review was a precondition for eventual trial¹⁹.

According to the Constitution of 2009, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country of three constituent peoples consisting of two entities, the Federation of B&H and the Republic of Srpska and the District of Brčko. High Representative of the international community in 1998, secured with the international military force has a mandate of making decisions that constitutional authorities cannot bring. The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a collective head of state with three members (Bosniak, Serb, Croat), and members of the Presidency are elected from among themselves and rotating chairman. The Council of Ministers exercises executive powers. The Parliamentary Assembly performs legislative power and has two chambers. The Constitutional Court has nine judges. After the election in November 2014, the B&H Presidency was established the members of which are Dragan Čović, Mladen Ivanić and Bakir Izetbegović.

As regards the composition of the Presidency and the House of Peoples of the B&H Parliament, indeed it should be mentioned the case of Dervo Sejdić and Jakob Finci who in 2009 won the suit against B&H at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, because as Roma and Jews cannot be election candidates for these two bodies²⁰. The case of “Sejdić-Finci” says a lot about the establishment of functional democratic society. The verdict is still pending and the execution thereof will eventually depend granting the candidate status to B&H for EU membership. The B&H Presidency has made a tentative commitment the judgment to be realized by the end of 2017²¹.

16 After the Court should ascertain certain facts, it will invite Serbia to submit its observations on the application. The Court gives ad hoc term of between three and six months. Read more on: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bih-revizija/28326887.html>

17 Source: <http://pescanik.net/revizija-koje-nema/>

18 Source: <http://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/DW-Revizija-vrlo-neugodna-prica/414595>

19 <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/republika-srpska/saznajemo-hag-odbio-zahtev-bih-za-reviziju-presude-protiv-srbije/wssjnt9>

20 Source: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/sest-godina-od-presude-sejdic-finci/27442432.html>

21 Source: <http://www.nacional.hr/inzko-bih-u-2017-mora-provesti-presudu-sejdic-finci/>

The Federation of B&H was proclaimed in 1994, an entity chaired by the President is agreed, while the Government of the Federation exercises executive power. The Federation Parliament has two chambers (House of Representatives and House of Peoples). The judicial power is exercised by the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and Court of Human Rights and the cantonal and municipal courts. Judgments of the Supreme Court are final and binding. "Cantons are territorial and political units in the Federation. Based on the Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina each of the 10 county-canton has its own constitution, which provides the legislative, executive and judicial functions of government and business and the organization of local self-government"²².

Republic of Srpska amended its originally accepted Constitution of 1992 and harmonized it with the Constitution of 1995. The President of the entity is the head of state, but elected by the citizens. The government carries out executive functions and it is elected by the National Assembly as a single chamber parliament which performs a legislative function of government. The control over the passed laws, regulations and acts of the National Assembly to determine whether the adopted law, regulation or act jeopardize the vital national interests of constituent peoples performs the Republic Srpska Council of Peoples²³. In addition, there is the Senate, which is an advisory body of constitutional institutions. The Supreme Court is the highest court to ensure the application of the law. The administrative and territorial Republic is divided into municipalities.

The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Law on Basics of Social Protection in 1999, Protection of Civilian Victims of War and Protection of Families with Children, while the Law on Civilian Victims of War of the Republic of Srpska was adopted in 1993. The reform of criminal legislation began on a smaller scale by adopting a new criminal legislation in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1998), in the Republic of Srpska (2000) and Brčko District (2001). A comprehensive approach to this reform was launched yet in 2002 when the activities were initiated on the adoption of criminal law regulations at all levels and with the engagement primarily of the OHR (Office of the High Representative), that is how are brought all new and harmonized CPCs and CCs in the year 2003. The Law on Protection of Threatened and Endangered Witnesses was adopted in 2003.

Amendments to the Law were brought during 2004 and 2005. This law prescribes measures of psychological support to the witness and protection of identity and privacy via measures such as the video link testimony, the testimony without the presence of the accused, and which testimony could be followed from other rooms, voice distortion and other measures. The Law on Witness Protection Program in Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted in 2004

22 Read more on: <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=8918>

23 Source: <http://www.vijecenarodars.net/index.php/vijece-naroda/o-vijecu>

as a measure which prescribes a physical protection, safe houses, relocation, identity change, etc.

The Law on Missing Persons was adopted in 2004 with the aim of clarifying the fate of missing persons. This is the first law of its kind in the world. It envisaged the establishment of the Missing Persons Institute (MPI) at the B&H level in order it to replace the work of the commissions for missing persons of entities, the establishment of the central registry (database) and the Fund for the purpose of the shortest possible investigations period and identification of found human remains as well as resolving the fate of missing. MPI was established in 2000 and the founder was the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP). Since 2005, the Council of Ministers became co-founder of the Institute together with ICMP. It has been established the Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law. The Institute was established within the University of Sarajevo and engaged in documenting war crimes.

A series of official, institutional initiatives in B&H to document war crimes and telling the truth about the crimes of the past has been initiated. The First initiative for the creation of a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been launched in 2000, then, in 2005 the Second initiatives for the creation of a Commission in B&H. Based on this, were established in 2003 the Commission for Investigation of the Events in and around Srebrenica between 10 and 19 July 1995, and in 2006 the Commission for Establishing Facts on Suffering of Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Jews and others in 1992 - 1995 in Sarajevo. At the entity level, the Republic of Srpska Centre for the Investigation of War and War Crimes and the Search for Missing Persons is acting, while the Federal Commission for Missing Persons is established in the Federation of B&H.

Civil society involved in the process of documenting war crimes and telling the truth, and, in 2004, the *Research and Documentation Centre* (IDC) was formed which "investigates and collects documents, facts and information on genocide, war crimes and all forms of violation of human rights regardless of ethnic, social, religious or racial group to which the victims belong". However, the *Republican Organisation of Families of Captured and Killed Soldiers and Missing Civilians of the Republic of Srpska* expressed dissatisfaction with the work of the IDC and the Prosecutor's Office of B&H because of the slowness in dealing with requests for exhumations and doubt and biased character as regards the collection of evidence. The same organization asked to bring back the process of searching for missing to the entity level²⁴. In addition, the same organization was critical as per the work of the *Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina* because of focusing on Srebrenica and victims of Srebrenica where it sought only the responsibility of the Serbs²⁵, and ignored the responsibility of Bosniaks in particular in

24 Source: <http://www.poginuliinestali.rs.org/index.php/2013-03-06-00-20-38/79-процес-тражења-несталих-вратити-на-ентитетски-ниво>

25 Source: <http://www.srna.rs/novosti1/310484/institut-za-trazenje-nestalih-bih---produzena-federalna-komisija.htm>

connection with crimes that occurred in the middle Podrinje²⁶ and/or in relation to the suffering of Serbs in Sarajevo.

The civil society organizations (Humanitarian Law Centre from Belgrade, IDC from Sarajevo and Documenta from Zagreb) involved in the regional initiative for the establishment of mechanisms to document war crimes and truth-telling. They launched a wide initiative of national and regional consultations with different groups from civil society (victims, artists, war veterans, youth associations, civil organizations for human rights, women's associations, etc.) on the mechanisms for establishing and truth-telling about war crimes of the past.

Concerning regional connectivity, the Igman Initiative is part of it whose holders were the Centre for Regionalism, the Democratic Alternative Forum of Sarajevo and the Civic Committee for Human Rights from Zagreb. The Initiative was established as an umbrella association that brings together more than 140 non-governmental organizations aimed at strengthening economic and political cooperation and encouraging the normalization of relations between the countries that were included in the Dayton Agreement (Croatian, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro).

Out of researches that cover the issue of peace-building, it is worth highlighting a few of them.

One of the first researches on the subject of peace-building was carried out in 2008 titled Peace Activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Topic et al., 2008) on a sample of 1,500 citizens from the entire territory of B&H. The aim of the research was to present information about the peace work and inter-ethnic dialogue, the fight for human rights and minority rights, to evaluate the work of the NGO sector, define challenges and improve future activities in the field of peace work. The research was conducted on a sample of 1,500 citizens from the entire territory of B&H with the intention to examine attitudes towards the peace NGOs. The results showed that B&H citizens are generally familiar with the work of non-governmental organizations (81%), mostly through the media and public meetings. The citizens consider that the most useful organizations are those non-governmental organizations dealing with human rights, reconstruction and rehabilitation and education, and slightly lower scores obtained organizations involved in training and employment, and religious organizations. A large number of citizens (72%) are not familiar with the work of organizations involved in peace-building, confidence and improving relations between peoples in B&H, and only less than 1% of the respondents named one or more of these organizations. The work of peace NGOs, citizens assessed as medium-successful (55.4%), 25% of their work is considered unsuccessful while the smallest percentage of respondents (18%) believed that their work is successful. The activities of NGOs on the protection of human rights, le-

26 Source: <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/2378781/stradanje-srba-u-podrinju--pravda-za-slobodana.html>

gal aid services, renovation and reconstruction of facilities, education on tolerance and peace and establishing the links between persons separated by war are most valued. The largest contribution to the reconciliation process, at the discretion of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, provided the institutions involved in the organization of cultural and sports events, then educational institutions, local NGOs, the business sector, media and international institutions. Below average are valued political parties, government institutions, the Hague Tribunal, domestic courts and religious communities.

Qualitative research 'Unfinished Peace - The need for a long-term strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo and Saferworld, 2010) has brought several conclusions. The study concludes that the problems of the past remain and are transmitted further. In fact, "official attempts to initiate a wider public discussion or dialogue on the war events with the aim of helping communities to reach a common understanding have not been taken in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (2010: 29). As a result, there were no significant efforts to support reconciliation. The research study noted that people have no awareness of the suffering of other ethnic groups. Also, the public institutions "continue the war, only with other means". Field research has confirmed that the ethnic divisions are deeply institutionalized in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The research also pointed to the biased and negative media coverage "because they are focused on examples of inter-ethnic confrontations much more than on co-existence" (2010: 30).

Research titled 'Leaving the Past Behind' of the views of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo and Saferworld, 2012) was conducted in 2011. The qualitative analysis (focus groups and interviews) found that young people have the potential to engage constructively for the future of B&H and to overcome inter-ethnic barriers in the long-term, if they are provided with sufficient support, and if they can see the results of constructive engagement in social life. Lesser was the impact of war on young people than on the older generation. Although young people do not agree with ethnic divisions and constructive social interaction are considered positive and desirable only few opted for this direction on their own initiative. Social trust of young people is low; they do not trust the authorities, politicians, public administration, the media, and the police. Young people do not try to change society but dominated is a sense of apathy and fatalism. This is partly due to the fact that everything related to politics is seen as 'dirty', but also because youth do not feel confident enough for proactive action. The research concludes that it is unlikely that young people will become victims of ethno-nationalist manipulation and ideas that support the conflict, but it is also unlikely the apathetic youth to become a driving force for positive change without significant support and incentives. Despite this way set conclusion, the research ends in an

open question how young people will behave in an atmosphere of fear of “others” especially in the context of stirring up nationalism and whether they will be strong enough to resist the violent impulses.

Research titled ‘Youth and Peace Work in B&H’ (Sejfija et al., 2013) has shown that young people do not find this current situation normal, and that among them there is interest in the issue of peace and peace work (Sejfija et al., 2013). Most of the peace activism among the young is educational in nature, i.e. it relates to the acquisition of knowledge in the field of “pedagogy of peace” and human rights. In doing so, they “acquire the tools for peace work, but they do not use them further” (Sejfija et al., 2013:88). In peripheral areas, dealing with peace activism can be considered morally dubious and also pose a safety hazard to its protagonists. The results show that advocating peace by the non-governmental sector has been recognized among young people. They feel that they should be more involved in the creation of peace programs and projects together with the older generations (64%) and that they should be included in the evaluation of these activities, and the methods and forms of peace work to adjust to their expectations. It is encouraging that 34% of respondents believe that should affect peacefully through the work of political parties whereby they have shown awareness of the importance of the impact of policy on peace building. As a negative experience, peace activists usually referred to discontinuity in dealing with the peace process because “all ends after participation in educational activities” and the lack of a continuous dialogue between politicians and participants in individual events (Sejfija et al., 2013:91).

In the same year, 2013, a survey ‘Factors in Reconciliation: Religion, Local Conditions, People and Trust’ (Wilkes et al., 2013) was published, whereby it was tried to identify and explain the impact of various factors on the attitudes of reconciliation. The respondents (75.4%) confirmed the support of reconciliation and trust between religious and ethnic groups in B&H. The results showed a wide public support for spending budget money on educational activities that enhance understanding, respect for diversity and reconciliation (84.4%), and on the recognition of and compensation for war victims in their local communities (71.4%) (Wilkes, et al., 2013:6). Respondents considered that projects focused on mutual understanding and future should be supported and they were less willing to support the investigation of experts about the causes of war and experiences related to the war and the establishment of memorials in places of war crimes. In order to improve the process of reconciliation, 68.2% of the respondents found important to reach an agreement with regard to the historical facts that are associated with genocide, while 64.7% of them thought that it was important to agree on the facts related to the number of casualties person of all, former conflicting parties. The reconciliation process has an important future dimension for which the national and religious identity should not be considered an obstacle.

Results of Empirical Research

Reconciliation Concept

The concept of reconciliation is analyzed through a range of narratives that, according to their definition, are more or less refined gradations of ways in which reconciliation is achieved. There is consent among respondents that a formal reconciliation has happened, but, a series of further narratives points to difficulties in its full implementation. The respondents view reconciliation most often in terms of everyday life, and some put it in a broader political and economic context.

We have started the elaboration of the concept of reconciliation understood as an abstract ideal. Although the reconciliation should be recognizable and accepted at all levels of society, it is not the case in reality.

We can be reconciled to ourselves or with our family. However, at the present time and in the present conditions as such i.e. post-war situation in general, after the collapse of the former state, reconciliation is something that is very large. This word seems so distant that it could be considered as an ideal. Reconciliation should extend over all segments of our society in order to come to a balance.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

I think that the notion of reconciliation is actually dependent on the context in which reconcile certain sides. The reconciliation in a children's play and reconciliation, say, in a political thing is not the same. Political reconciliation, in my worldview, and perception is actually a somewhat deceptive term.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

The following discourse shows that a word match for reconciliation is pardon or forgiveness. In addition to forgiveness, reconciliation, according to some respondents, is the same as confidence. The trust can be placed on two levels, supra-national and transnational where the first level indicates inhomogeneity with the approach to reconciliation within the same nation.

In any case, there has been no reconciliation in B&H as I wanted to. Still here we have some kind things do not suit me, as a human being, but the situation is such, life must go on... This refers to the war in B&H, which was as it was, a bloody war; people were killed, tortured and raped. Now, I am asking, how to ask a person who experienced all of that, how he/she feels. Luckily, I have not experienced it; I had only experienced the destruction of objects, so I forgave²⁷ and carried on living.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

²⁷ Turc. *halaliti* means to forgive.

Reconciliation may not be just between ethnic groups and civic groups. Confidence, and/or reconciliation can be within a single national group.

(CITIZENS, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Reconciliation has not yet taking root in people's everyday lives. There is a visible national segregation through informal spatial division of people, especially in smaller communities. The division is also observed in political activities at the local level whereby there is a constant possibility that some representatives of the three peoples in different bodies block decisions making process. Party interests prevail over the interests of local communities. One of the respondents believes that there are three truths about the war in B&H and, as such, they should be accepted, it could only contribute to the stability and development of reconciliation.

We know that the town is divided. Pubs are divided informally. Formally, no one is prohibited from nowhere, nothing would happen to no one entering anywhere, but it is known informally where the Serbs sit, Bosnians or somebody else. Reconciliation in people's minds has not happened, but, in the system, it has. So, the institutions are as such - multi-ethnic. The power is made of people of all three nations. Outvoting is possible, which is why, currently, we have not adopted budget, we have no a Law on Youth, a lot of things is not regulated, for the reason that there are always a certain ethnic group representatives who think that the subject matter is either not needed for them, or they want to use it to achieve a greater interest for their national community. More attention is paid to their political, party interests, than them thinking of the benefit for their national community. However, the point of my story is that reconciliation happened on the paper, but it is not a case in practice... If an event is organized in the town, for example, if Serbs organize some of their religious or national event, other citizens will not be there. Of course, those invited will participate, representatives of other religious communities, political parties. Colleagues will tell their colleagues to come, but ordinary people, of course, will not attend such event ... There are not many cases that people from one national group support the others, to find that it is all right. All three groups have a common feeling to individually consider the members of two other groups - written under quotation marks - the enemy. Someone whose ideology they disagree with, someone they misunderstood, who is to blame for the past. .. What is the truth? Well, maybe we shall not live long enough to find the truth. So, there are three truths and only if we accept that there are three truths, then we can talk about reconciliation. In general, in this country, if anyone would impose its truth to someone else, there was a problem, and in Brcko District as an example of one state.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Political and religious elite little work to establish peace, and in their behaviour it may recognize one of the obstacles to reconciliation. Citizens, in general live a low standard of living, and consequently they do not feel safe. The process

of reconciliation is also disrupted by examples of criminal and corruptive behaviour.

I think politicians and clerics do not contribute to reconciliation in B&H. As for the people, I think, it is their only preoccupation economy. All of us live worse than before, it means that the a generation of mine, we have less freedom, less we feel safe when it comes to crime, corruption and everything else ... It is really hard to see on television and I am trying not to watch either the daily news or read those information regarding the arguments of politicians and I do not know, it is really difficult for the new generations of children, to live in such a country.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Political elites are mutually reconciled and people are still boosted by the government and media, divided according to who died on what side and what nationality they are victims. It is important for the elite to constantly “play with” mono-ethnic interests that dominate over the interests of all male/female citizens. About co-existence and building reconciliation is talked about very little and positive examples are rarely displayed in public.

As long as we are still, of course, encouraged by the authorities and the media, to count the victims and crimes, as long as we are “our” heroes, and “their” criminals, I think the final reconciliation and overcoming the past, we cannot reach. The reconciliation process needs to be taught to the policy level. But unfortunately, today’s political elite does not want it at all. Of course, all of them, I mean the elite of any individual ethnic group are long ago reconciled among themselves, but they still insist on “warm regime” maintaining the state of tension among the citizens of B&H, maintaining certain “status quo”. We continue to be heated up every day and served to stories about crime, criminals, the impossibility of living together, the differences among us, but no one is talking about those little, every day, positive stories that are happening everywhere in B&H. There is, above all, a thesis of “vital national interest” the one which prevents gaining confidence and building a process of reconciliation among the citizens.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

Cycles of local and general elections are taking place with a gap of two years, so we can say that political elites relatively often mobilize their voters. Nationalism and reheating tensions among formerly warring parties is not a permanent method of communication of elites, but they are used cyclically - whenever politicians feel the danger to maintain power. In these cycles, the reconciliation process suffers the most because radical attitudes are expressed that discourage reconciliation.

Well, of course, the political elites in B&H love in order to keep their position and continue to enjoy their full benefits from time to time when they

notice that their popularity has dropped, to spin such stories. Somehow I am positive that almost every time, when you spin the story about the impossibility of reconciliation, accompanied by some conflict, something much bigger is behind it.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

The concept of reconciliation means to accept unquestionably the responsibility for the committed crimes. The crimes in Kazani, Kravica, Srebrenica, Mostar, Prozor, etc. should be accepted by the offender, Bosniaks, Serbs or Croats. Reconciliation would, at the same time, be initiated from the local community to the top and not vice versa. So, this discourse insists on memory and valorisation of the past whereby the bearers of peace initiatives should be the members of civil society.

Bosniak, Serbian or Croatian side should accept the crimes committed in its name. In this case, it would be about, for example, the Bosniaks to accept crimes at Kazani, or in Kravica. That the Serbs accept the crime of genocide in Srebrenica, and the Croats to accept the crimes they committed in Mostar, Prozor and so on. And, of course, that reconciliation must go from vertical scales of civil society to the state.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

Completely opposed discourse to follow is formed on the necessity of repressing the past and past events from the public discourse which included symbolic and numerical marking the anniversary of the three nations, which is, allegedly, harmful for the future. Numerous celebrations, constantly reminded by the media, are leading to the conflict of “memories” and “symbolism” and heating up the memories of the war and sacrifices and toughening up national tensions.

In my opinion, it is primarily just overcoming the past and everything that happened in the past. I say this specifically about us in Sarajevo. This is a process in which people should finally cross over all war stories from the nineties, the stories that have been talking here for twenty years, and nothing happens. People should live together, but on a daily basis, both in the media and on the street, we mention constantly the same stories about who is guilty, who started the war and the like.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

I have nothing personally against the celebration, but if that happens in the media every day, and in the city, the streets are closed, and someone lays flowers, and then someone else tosses it into the container ... Too much hatred is still among people, although this hatred, in my opinion, is more “spinned” by political leaders and all kinds of organizations.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

The following narrative is about the spatial dynamics; rural areas accept reconciliation with more difficulty and, as an example, it talks about education in small, mono-ethnic environments in which teachers can be only the same nationalities as the pupils they are teaching. It is said that the inhabitants of urban areas are not as burdened with closeness and that they value as more tolerant.

I would somehow divide the word B&H as well, and that word and the life and coexistence with regard to Brčko District would divide on urban part and the rural part. Indeed we are, specifically us in the town and especially those of us who are active in the civil sector or in any organization, much more open and having wider views, we accept differences ... While, may be, 20 kilometres, or 30 out of the town of Brčko, in rural areas, it is a totally different story. Starting from education; in the Serbian village is a Serbian teacher, in the Muslim village is a teacher who is a Muslim. We had a case in [respondent cited the place], where a teacher could not work [respondent cited the name], who is a Muslim, because parents of pupils objected.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Brčko District has the same problems as the entire B&H. Outside the towns the movement of people is less certain, especially in abandoned parts of the country. Due to the low flow of people in rural areas, many residents have not yet met with members of other ethnic groups but, according to them one respondent, they have more pronounced stereotypes and prejudices. In such environments, activities of civil society and local communities should be intensified in order to enable meeting people more often.

I think that a formal reconciliation took place. Brčko District can be seen as a segment separate from Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is reflected in its entirety ... When we say - reconciliation - it is true to say that people do not attack each other, they can walk and go anywhere normally, though, this should be taken with a grain of salt ... Outside the town it is just not so liberal environment. You must strictly take into account how you dress, what you have put on, and, may be, which music you should listen in the car ... When we talk about urban environment; I think people just get used to each other. They have the opportunity to meet people of different nationalities and faith every day and they just learned not to fear from them anymore. In rural areas, many people have not yet had the opportunity to sit at the same table with people who are different since the war and they still have prejudices. So, the process of reconciliation should be continued in the sense of having somewhat more activity going on in these rural areas.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

The reconciliation process, if it is seen through the restitution of property and the return of refugees' home, is nearly completed. Many parts of B&H do not offer

always any prospects of employment for its citizens. In general, young people are faced with the same problems, that is, the lack of work. Nevertheless, this discourse is based on the fact that peace-building is a slow process yet progressing from year to year.

Our country has had a terrible war and that war resulted in no winners. The Dayton Peace Agreement has brought peace, stopped the war, what is the most important. We are in a situation where millions of people live outside of B&H. The process of return and reconciliation is somehow tied to the political situation ... The reconciliation process is running its course and has a terribly good progress, but, our country has elections every two years both, general and local. In these elections, the issue of return and reconciliation is always used to increase some ethnic tensions so that the ruling parties could be able to reach their goals and held us fenced. Twenty years after the signing of peace, we are witnessing these days' rallies in RS and counter rallies which happened in FB&H two years ago. And what happened after these specific protests... Look, I am reading in the newspaper that the returnees are somehow the most risky group of the population ... and who wanted to return to their homes, they did. Now, if you go back to a place Sokolac, Ključ or Cazin, you are jobless, and that is the second part of the problem. Mainly, the reconciliation process is running. Working, here, in the B&H institutions, I have had the opportunity to watch people who sit in the Parliament on the TV news fighting and neck-catching and I could not believe my eyes seeing them the next day to sit in the restaurant. And then I realized that the process of reconciliation is something that is a permanent category and that each year it gets better and better. Just the politicians use us, as people - voters that at some point raise the issue of reconciliation in order to achieve their political goals. I..., let's say, working in the institutions of B&H, so far, have not experienced any negative connotation from colleagues whose religion is different to mine and other political establishment ... Working with young people I found, well, I was in Trebinje, in Vlačić, in Rudo, in Banja Luka, Brčko, Glamoč and I saw that all young people in B&H, no matter they come from, they all have the same problems in particular the scholarship, education, unemployment and everything else. And these young people are exactly our chance for the country to move forward. I believe that reconciliation is possible in B&H. Unfortunately, there will always be those sporadic cases, where policy and/or people in power will use for daily political goals ... It means, and people live and return, they depend on each other.

(PUBLIC INSTITUTION, SARAJEVO)

The next discourse considers reconciliation as a prerequisite for the recovery of the economy. The fact that is that large crimes happened and that people have not yet overcome them, has an impact that economy is not in the first place but minding the nationality of those who engage in business ventures.

We are a multi-ethnic environment, where, unfortunately, there are, still, after twenty years since that insane war ended, still the business is not put first, which, in my opinion, is a basic factor for people to work without worrying about issues like religion and so on. Practically, if this issue was raised in the year 1980, people would answer: "We do not know, why you ask that, we do not have any problems." Today, this question makes sense, as the people experienced what they did, or what is still present and I am afraid it has tremendous implications in business which I personally feel in my firm. Aside from the fact that you a quality and business person etc., still, unfortunately, it is taken care of your nationality.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

The discourse that place reconciliation on an individual level seems extremely important. If there is no individual reconciliation, reconciliation implemented "from the top" from the global or national level, cannot be achieved.

The discourse "holds" logic of the deepest, personal reconciliation that some members of the community cannot accomplish. It is opposed to lifting the political tensions of the national collectivity. This discourse could lead to an attitude that rejects collective responsibility for the crimes.

Essentially important reconciliation is that on the individual level. It is extremely important to let politicians to say and countries, too, but actually reconciliation is based on the individual level as such ... This is said in the media and in the name and on behalf of some country, the same has been said and nineties, and individuals are the ones who eventually committed crimes.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

The research discovered a discourse according to which reconciliation is fully realized. A very simple approach to reconciliation finds an argument in everyday life and level.

For me, reconciliation is here and realized. Because, once we cooperate with each other, live in the same city, go to the same school, drink the same water, the same sun keeps us warm, the same streets we share, play and everything else ... So, talking about reconciliation now, I think it is past.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

There is a good dose of reconciliation at least in Brčko has. Come on, let us all remember the time after the war how everyone behaved. I used to enter into the town fearfully and now we feel absolutely safe in any part of the town.

(CITIZENS, BRČKO DISTRICT)

We showed, from the research level, how respondents conceptualize reconciliation, how it is accepted and which are barriers to it. It is not just about the concept/notion that respondents could not easily explain, but also the circumstances that prevent respondents understanding of how would reconciliation in this complex country work especially in the context of a crime that occurred. Reconciliation is a process saturated with different meanings (political, economic, as well as individual and cultural), so it is not surprising that there is no clear-cut answer but rather a different gradations in progress assessment in the reconciliation process usually in local communities.

National level

There is a very low level of national reconciliation in B&H. This result of research is based on a series of narratives in favour of mutual relation between politicians, relation between politicians and religious leaders, the separation of policy from “people” and unstructured state behaviour (compliance with laws).

In the process of building peace, the question of the significance of religious communities and the role of religious leaders who inevitably have a major impact on national collectivities has been raised. Respondents believe that religious leaders should lead to reconciliation but assess that their discourse is traditional and often strongly associated with extreme attitudes of politicians and it contributes to fanning interethnic intolerance.

And then there are the religious leaders that should lead to reconciliation rather than lead such a policy, I can see their last appearances. How will people, then, gain confidence in each other both, on religious grounds and concerning the state authorities. Well, a lot can be said about it, but if we want reconciliation, we must make the institutions to operate according to the law, in accordance with modern principles of law so that the citizens feel safe, especially when it comes to the judiciary and the police and then the other state bodies. Then the religious leaders do their part of the job not to push extremism in the context of religion, because right-wing leaders are ahead of all the religious confessions. Then the politicians, who are often acting together with religious leaders ... especially before elections, keep the fear among the people to effectively maintain their own power.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

As a returnee, I can say that the return to B&H was relatively successful. Somewhat is a factor that citizens, due to unemployment and a standard of economy, are still largely dependent on politicians and policy ... The key actors for improving the situation and position of the society are politicians and representatives of religious communities.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

In accepting reconciliation, political elites act instrumentally. Quarrels and conflicts are just a farce and only seemingly come to conflicts - respondents are convinced that the political elites are mutual solidary. However, the nation is separated from the policy because the policy does not strengthen the economy, whose development is essential for the development of society. Media conveniently support toughening tensions and they, as associates of political elites, are perceived in a negative context.

People, yes, but when it comes to politicians, somewhere in the media certain argument and seemingly ... conflict. And, in fact, it is actually only an image made for people, some semblance or show to keep the people away from the true topics that would be discussed and that should be a priority, such as the economy. Not to mention other things, that we degraded education, we have a poor education, that our culture is bad.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Due to the political situation, the society has poor prospects. The "old" political parties "blackmail" the people, and there are no actors who would be able to effectively oppose. Passivation of the nation is obvious. On the part, there is a "schizophrenic" situation which does not contribute to the prospects of reconciliation nor building communion. Respondents obviously cannot be reconciled that in the same state/city one nation is celebrating the victory and the other is celebrating defeat.

Difficult economic situation in the last couple of years, unfortunately, is in the rise in B&H, and it is becoming more and more difficult, it does not allow ordinary people to think for themselves. The nation is completely blackmailed, there are no more students, workers, and there are no more young workers who would raise their voice. Everything is in the jaws of politicians, who are the party leaders since the war end to date, and who execute nothing. It is unnatural that in the same day in one city one celebrates their victory and another glory the defeat. Meaning that in such a country there are no prospects.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

In order to accept reconciliation, it is required that states act according to the laws. Only structured behaviour of state institutions can guarantee inter-religious and inter-ethnic tolerance.

If we want reconciliation, we should first make the safety and there should also be tolerance, inter-religious and inter-ethnic. In order to develop the said, state bodies must first act properly and in accordance with the law and regulations at all levels. Regards the international community, they should not give priority to any group. An example which prevents the faster reconciliation is favouring one group of victims in relation to the other group of victims. I have a lot of colleagues in the B&H Court and I

know that the Serbs are convinced by that law in B&H, the indictment are written so to be sentenced more in relation to the Bosniaks charged with war crimes even when judged by a more lenient law. This will confirm all lawyers and prosecutors who are telling the truth honestly. Therefore, not even the Hague Tribunal applies the same yardstick for all, talking about some people acquitted of crimes for mass casualties while the others do not, or one court found guilty and the other is completely acquitted, which means that the policy is in question. This prospect for reconciliation must be changed in relation to this discriminatory attitude in many respects, in particular concerning the most important ones. The criminal is a criminal and one should judge by the same yardstick.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Political system allows outvoting in decision-making at local levels. This method of voting affects the dissatisfaction of citizens. Many citizens feel betrayed. The following narrative draws attention to the problems in the local community in a situation where the local ruling party rejected humanitarian aid at the expense of all, and especially of special minority population.

I come from a small municipality of some 25,000 inhabitants and I think it is particularly important to point out some fact, and that is the situation of returnees in these certain areas. Here, for example, in my area case, there are Croats who were not displaced like Bosniaks in the area of that municipality. There is no tolerance when it comes to Bosniaks as returnee people, or some kind of feeling. Here for example, some few months ago we had a situation where representatives of political parties in the municipality through some of their contacts and cooperation managed to provide one type of agreement and cooperation, that twinning with a Turkish municipality. Through this one agreement, all citizens would somehow benefit in terms of implementation of some infrastructure projects, enhancing cultural life, mutual cooperation, etc. However, the Croats as majority population, i.e. people who have a majority in the political sense in the municipality, in the legislative body of the municipal council had decided to overturn it. Although really, specifically, when those councillors are asked individually for their reasons against it, they did not provide you with an objective response. I think that through this process of reconciliation some further efforts should be invested so that those people, in addition to the economy, and in addition to other key factors, should take into account so that these returnees have a slightly better status ... So, the majority people have a greater sensitivity to minority people.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Economy development would certainly improve the process and acceptance of reconciliation. The state, however, does not help the businessmen to operate in safe conditions and employ people. If the economy in society would be stronger

and the businessmen united, nationalism and politics would no longer have the power to disturb social development.

Well, the essence is in the problem that people have not been put the emphasis on business. The issue is starting new businesses, to employ people. When you have a large number of unemployed people, then they are slowly being served with nationalist rhetoric and keep that kind of status that actually does not lead to reconciliation.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Businessmen are quite divided, they do not act together, they do not seek the change of business environment, and they do not ask them to be placed in the first place and to be given certain incentives to employ people. People who work, they do not have time to think about this some trivial matters at all, and who is who, in religious sense.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

The main actors of reconciliation, primarily the state, should approach to reconciliation as its main goal. Also, a civil society should, through the development of a culture of dialogue, carries out a general set of social goals. In doing so, they should take into account the characteristics of the communities in which people live. Some will suit the multi-religious and multi-ethnic environment, while others will be satisfied with life in mono-ethnic areas - this is the attitude of the respondents from the public sector. So, once multi-ethnic Bosnian society after the war has changed and people today perceived ethnic coexistence in different ways.

I believe that all of these which could be considered as the main actors of reconciliation, that, on the one hand, this should a systemic approach to the problem handled at the state level. On the other hand, at the local level, there should be set some non-governmental organizations which should find some method to approach people and to talk about this issue. ..and then, help them to observe all these problems from another angle. In different parts of B&H, for example, people prefer to live in mono-ethnic environment and that is how the people feel the best, perhaps so it should be allowed to people. However, in some parts, people prefer to live with people of different religions and nations and such people should be allowed to live in such a multinational community. In my opinion, this should be viewed from different angles in order to enable a systematic approach to that reconciliation.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

So - we have been reconciling for 20 years and ... today, we are still at war, only using different weapons. And, we are all tired of it.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

Hiding crimes as well as the denial of genocide is a substantial obstacle to reconciliation. Even at this level, where they are evidently proven crimes, there is no political consensus on the events between B&H entities: even the greatest suffering of the population occasionally is manipulated with for political purposes.

Ratko Mladić has been hiding for sixteen years ... The whole country has been a hostage of one man.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

I think that one of the major obstacles to the reconciliation process in B&H is a denial of genocide. In this sense, in particular, I refer to Srebrenica ... Yet, it is something that happened as a horrible crime, but it seems to me that most politicians, especially those from the Republic of Srpska, have constantly swept it under the carpet. And these "ours" from the Federation, are triggering this question only when they collect political points. I think that Srebrenica is the big one, as a peer-mate said, a real thorn in the side of us and, our politicians, but also the region.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

The media is an obstacle to national reconciliation because it does not transmit positive news but negative events, and criminal behaviour prevails in their information, while economic issues in the news are poorly represented.

If you are watching news on the radio and television of Republic of Srpska or Federation of B&H, watch the same event on both of them in the same term, you will have two different versions. If I had not been at that event, I would not have known what to believe in here in B&H.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

The set of structural problems presented is also reflected in the level of trust among ethnicities. The following thematic pattern shows what the situation is with citizens of Brčko District. They fear among themselves not only from others but also from new conflicts.

I think that 98% of people in this town act that reconciliation is accepted. For the sake of their interests, for the sake of work, for some things, individuals will act, but, once at home, their way of thinking is the same as back in 1992, nothing has changed, the same thinking since they are born, as thought by parents.

(CITIZENS, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Respondent A: *And do you believe now that people you know, who are not your nationality, would be ready to attack you again?*

Respondent B: *I do believe, deeply.*

Respondent A: *And thy represent themselves as being your friends?*

Respondent B: Yes. *I am afraid of this situation and I am again in fear of this region.*

(CITIZENS, BRČKO DISTRICT)

We have shown in the conceptualization of reconciliation that peace is not unambiguous in nature; it is a multifaceted and layered process. At the national level, reconciliation is not realized because it is not clear when someone advocates it for the national interest or for a general interest i.e. whether it works in the direction of reconciliation or not. Is the absence of war conflicts proof of peace? According to the following narrative, this is one of the dimensions in the interpretation of "poor peace" in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The first obstacle is that we must be aware that peace does not mean the absence of war. There are 17 shades between war and peace, and, as the peer-mate says, he does not need to reconcile because he is not at war with anyone and, I disagree ... The first thing that we must admit is that we are not reconciled with many people, on many bases. We will start from "Željo-Sarajevo", and bring up this topic which has absolutely been provoked here, and we have not even mentioned it: the nation and our diversity. So, first of all - to admit that we are not in peace, but that we are in something that is neither war, but something in between. The other thing is to drop it down definitely to the individual level, I do not see how groups and collectives can reconcile unless someone tells them that they are reconciled, that definitely ... And the third thing is what we listen to, because politics in B&H mostly fills us with information via media and literally focuses us in the direction of distrust.

(CITIZENS, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Young people perceived as extremely vulnerable because their social resources are not available. The negative global trends (terrorism, Islamophobia, etc.) and global political influence in Europe and the world have impact on the pessimism of youth. In such a context, radicalization of their attitudes is not strange. In resolving this problem, the entire social support (especially the media) is needed, as is the time in which changes will occur.

In my opinion, reconciliation has not yet been accepted in our society, and many factors contribute to it. First and foremost, the media and hate speech in the media are the biggest factors ... And this hate speech is most common among young people. These are those who were not even born in the ninetieth, ninety-second, even in ninety-fifth ... I think that hatred is "inherited". First of all, from their parents, but also from the media, heating such hatred on a daily basis. Today, everything is present in our country ... situation, economic, is very difficult, young people have no money; the political situation and corruption is even worse; among the majority of the citizens their war wounds have not yet been overcome; then global political influences, terrorism, Islamophobia in Europe... this all very much

affects young people in B&H in a negative context. This all contributes to the expansion of radical attitudes and hatred among us. This radicalism and hate speech cannot be resolved promptly, but I think that we, from the non-governmental sector, can work on the contribution of suppressing extremism through social media, and thus accepting the process of reconciliation.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

Furthermore, the education system recognizes the factor of obstruction of peace. Three types of educational programs teach children about differences rather than similarities. Young people are not mobile, but isolated and passive; they do not know and do not socialize with young people outside their national borders.

As long as there are in the country three schools under one roof - fortunately in Brčko we do not have that - we will teach our children, your children that diversity exists. We will have the foundation for what we have talked about earlier, the foundation on which we will lose confidence.

(CITIZENS, BRČKO DISTRICT)

What I (female respondent) wanted to say is that there is still no mobility in B&H, especially young people. We are all partially fence-closed. I can guarantee that ninety per cent of people from here from Sarajevo, young people, or from Ilijaš, Vogošće have ever not moved even 50 kilometres away from their city. And that is why they cannot talk about reconciliation, because they do not know who are they supposed to reconcile, and they were born after the war.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

EU efforts contribute to accepting reconciliation. A war in the Balkans is no longer in the interest of Europe because international institutions have invested a lot of effort and money to end the war. The countries of the Western Balkans should be integrated into the European Union.

As far as state institutions are concerned, they have gone a step ahead in the way the international community has pushed them, made them, and asked them or whatever. Simply, the process of reconciliation is inevitable. The world does not want more conflict in Europe. B&H is a factual part of Europe; in general, the Western Balkans should integrate into the EU in my opinion. Simply, the West will not allow any conflicts. That is why they are investing enormous resources - primarily through the non-governmental sector, in the processes of reconciliation, and in other forms of improvement of life in this region.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Regional level

The behaviour of countries in the region has been assessed through several dimensions: political, economic and even ecological.

The following discourse shows how citizens closely monitor events on the regional level and assess how certain events reflect on the situation in B&H, especially with regard to Croatia and Serbia, and acting of Croatian and Serbian politicians as the most important actors of reconciliation.

Me, from B&H, I would like to say some crucial things, we, as the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, have no consensus in some basic things that would help reconciliation. In particular, in the case of the attack on Vučić in Srebrenica who did not receive any judicial epilogue, nor discipline, even by the responsible ones, it is an evidence that we are very low, and without a more objective approach of politicians and all subjects in society, there will be no progress there. For example, in Croatia, that is, the Catholic Church should declare a saint Stepinac, who, it is known, blessed the fascist regime in Croatia responsible for hundreds of thousands for the genocide in World War II. Normally, this would be an obstacle to the convergence of religions, that is, on a regional level, in general terms. However, this is very much reflected on us, where these things happened, and it is the most difficult thing for people.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Here in B&H, the strongest parties are exactly the nationalist parties, that is, the Party of Democratic Action, the Serb Democratic Party and the Croatian Democratic Union, and the same is in Croatia, similarly unfortunately in Macedonia, while, for example, it is not the case in Slovenia. So, all of this transmits to the wider region They still have not realized that they had to start living from work, that they have to live with neighbours and that it would last for years, and unfortunately, I do not see the light of the future.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

B&H policy should be based on some other foundations that would help it develop economically. The attitude of the EU towards B&H is politically "incorrect" since the process of European integration is slowed down primarily (considered one of the respondents) because of the Islamic population and the threat of terrorism. The respondent believes that B&H is not a danger to Europe and that linking to terrorism is exaggerated.

Slovenia should not have admitted to the EU without Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia ... However, they ... returned B&H because of Muslims, etc. If Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were admitted together in the EU and ... to admit Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro,

we would be ahead of both Romania and Bulgaria. We have been much more advanced than them before. And now, here is the war has come and Europe does not want us. What don't they receive us now in the EU, this supervisor (High Representative) came here who will not punish these nationalists who have been the leaders for twenty years, and he will not punish and dismiss them. Well, the international community, if it wants to help, they must sanction such people and employ young people living in this country who are born here and want to live here ... Who is smarter than the Bosnians? Romanians, Bulgarians, Poles? They are neither smarter nor more capable or more social. It is not just nationalism here in question, it is more for religious reasons ... they are acting towards us (like that). They simply mention terrorism every time, what kind of terrorism?

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Global relations and the strengthening of the right-wing parties and the appearance of neo-fascist tendencies are a particular threat to B&H. The narrative of the next respondent suggests linking the current circumstances and the beginning of the Second World War. Some respondents are scared of global tendencies on the basis of which they predict the possibility of a new world conflict.

It is not only here, in our region. If we notice a bit, a perfect ground is created on the world stage. People are starting to come, that company from 1941 ... Again, fascism appears on a large scale in the world. All national parties win now in Europe. It seems to me, too, I have overheard something, there is a clock counting down to nuclear war, it is now set at three minutes to 12, and during the Cuba crisis with the Russians, it was set at 7 minutes. So, I think that we are very close to it, and we are just the perfect ground to set up something else to start a new war.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Those good-doing businessmen consider the economic aspects of regional reconciliation good. Trade has been established with all countries in the region, and even with Turkey. In such a framework, reconciliation is not considered important, but achieved.

We also trade with Serbia and Croatia and beyond. B&H has some strategic relations with Turkey; we have duty-free exports, so it is very important for my sector, because we are doing great jobs with Turkey. So it does not even appear in our country, in the business world, this reconciliation as something important. Doing business is important and it is important that everyone in this business is happy, we are placing products and get paid for that.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

The interest of the citizens of Bosnia for ecological issues is certainly of recent date. The next narrative talks about disposal of nuclear waste in Novi Grad (for-

merly Bosanski Novi). It is a waste from the *Ruđer Bošković Institute* (Croatia), against which the petition was signed in that town. The problem should be resolved at the intergovernmental level. This is a moment that does not contribute to the level of regional reconciliation. Therefore, ecology is included in the assessment of reconciliation, which would until recently be an ephemeral issue in the normalization of relations between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Something that bothers me the most with my neighbours, the Croats, is that they are all nice for Europe, and then, they serve us with the nuclear waste across the border with B&H. This is a big problem in our canton, which now has 300,000 people and relies on Banja Luka and the entire Krajina, it is the only oasis. Toni Meggle, when he came to B&H, the owner of the dairy, climbed on the biggest hill and seeing that there are no industrial chimneys anywhere, he immediately invested money. This year, he invested 14 million in the process of milk production. And now we have this problem, they are all fine with us, and then, they drop their part of the nuclear waste from the Krško power plant on the very border, where Una flows into the Sava in Bosanski Novi²⁸, which is two kilometres of air lines, on a waterproof soil, and threatens to pollute the whole area ... so much about their good faith. Again, they want to make the Pelješac Bridge, to shut us down, and they always use it for pre-election purposes, this was used by Milanović and Sanader and every governments of theirs. So we need a little in this relationship, OK, we should respect our neighbours and say OK, but what is not right, that is just not right.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Perspectives of reconciliation

National Perspective

The next part examines the perspectives of the national one. Characteristic narratives that reflect the expectations of respondents in the future and the ways in which reconciliation could be improved have been selected. Respondents see the change in the complex decision-making in B&H, the change in the Constitution, and the new generation of politicians the most important for the perspectives of reconciliation from a structural point of view. Furthermore, education has proved essential because it should practically include all layers of the population. Perspectives of reconciliation also depend on economics, i.e. its strengthening and networking of small business entities.

The emergence of new generations of politicians would help the prospects of reconciliation, although respondents cannot answer how and in what period this could happen. Nevertheless, citizens are those from whom the change, in the po-

28 Una does not flow into the Sava but in the Sana.

litical direction, should start. The respondents from the civil and private sectors present the change initiatives.

Very little has changed in the elections in the last 10-15 years. Still on the power are those who were in the power in the 2000s. We are the ones who need to change, if we want the change for the better in the process of reconciliation, and in everything.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

We as individuals and organizations must act on this, because I really think that by now, by experience and everything, I do not have much expectation from ... some global community. It means you, as an individual, need to adapt to do everything in the field of reconciliation and other things to be successful and to go onward and upward.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

The change of the Constitution and the complicated decision-making system would contribute to peace. This is particularly important in the context of the fact that the international community, according to the assessments of the respondents, is no longer interested in B&H, but rather focuses on its interest in new areas of conflict.

As far as B&H is concerned, it is definitely a change in the Constitution and this context, as it is, because we can proceed like this way for another 20 and 200 years. We will never make one decision, one opinion, or something like that.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

After 20 years, there is no longer international support, because this international support goes to Syria, Afghanistan or Kosovo.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

The respondents expect a lot from education in the future. This is perhaps the most common pattern in this focus topic. Namely, although the future rests on youth, young people are not ready for dialogue and they are more radical than their parents. There are, of course, different examples, but those examples, in the opinion of the respondents, are extremely rare.

Just to continue, this situation is being artificially produced and it is being systematised, starting, for example, from primary schools. From primary school, all policies and all structures work on that to teach children that the process of reconciliation is important, but it goes into the wrong direction. So, now we have a generation of young people who have neither remembered the war nor remembered the conflicts, but they are much unprepared for reconciliation and for mutual dialogue. Perhaps even more than us, who were participating in all of that. And this is now one problem

that really needs to be solved, because if it continues this way, I have a feeling that it will not finish well. A good example is the last two schools, I do not know where I was, I think in Jajce, where the children organized themselves and wanted to abolish two schools under the same roof. So, it is very important for reconciliation, but I have a feeling that everything will be done there these children to be silenced and prevented from doing such activities.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Education, within elementary education: that you have as in Germany for fifty years and still today, to talk about what the Germans did to others at the homeroom class, and in this case what everyone did to others in B&H, only then you will be able to talk. Because, people, be careful: 52% of Serbian citizens have no idea that Sarajevo was in a state of siege. Do you think that Vladicin Han or some place called Surdulica know about Sarajevo?

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

Education should not be directed only to children or young people, but also to wider ones. People should be educated through programs in local communities. This does not apply to large cities, because in them people by nature meet and communicate, but primarily to smaller towns, rural environments where, as claimed in the following allegation, the situation is critical.

Concerning reconciliation, there should be some critical mass of people who are willing to talk, and it means education, education and education only. Local communities, as long as we are talking about reconciliation in Sarajevo, Tuzla, and perhaps in Banja Luka, this is all, end of story, no use of that. The must is to go out of big cities, educate people who live in smaller communities, trust me, the situation there is critical in every way.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

However, there remains fear that elderly people would not accept education for peace. The next narrative warns about the importance of a family that instills a core values in children towards other nationalities.

I think that the family is much more important. Why? Because I have already been teaching for two years, and I had a student who is a primary school age and who has terrible hatred, to say, against others and the different. When I asked him why this is so, he did not know to answer, he only knew that his granddaddy told him so. Well, what his granddaddy told him, it does not mean that the granddaddy should be rebrought up now, neither could he. But it can, I believe, in certain steps influenced that grandfather to wider his views. For as long as grandfathers, grandmas, grandfathers, 'nennies', nannies, and I do not know how to call them, even

parents influence ... children will be like that. And that is the heritage. It is passed from generation to generation.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

The experiences of respondents who have been engaged in youth education programs are positive, so we share this narrative as an example of good practice.

Participant: We had a project related to breaking up the prejudices of high school students, where we wanted to exchange pupils from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina. We included children from the whole RS and the Federation and the Brčko District. We received approval from all ministries. The Ministry of RS did not give us permission, but through the organizations in the RS with whom we have contacts we asked that they send us children to the open invitation that we sent. A lot of children applied to participate in this project. We had a one-day seminar at Bjelašnica, where they were of different religions. They came really, what we say from the rural areas, where they [spoke]: we are Serbs, we are the main, and nobody else can ... Already in the first day when they came we saw that distance and they, literally, for the first 24 hours could not [fit]. [But] ... we literally had to split them at 4 or 5 in the morning, because they saw that these barriers do not exist.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

Moderator: Then, you are proposing some projects where young people meet...

Participant: To connect them directly. We entered the secondary school in the centre of Sarajevo and when we asked: who was in Banja Luka, nobody came to us. When we asked: Why? "Well, they are there, this is ours ... "When we asked the children from Banja Luka ... or from Drvar, "Were you in Sarajevo", "Well, no ...", "We have to walk covered" ... As if Sarajevo is Tehran.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

It is important to educate teachers in the process of education for peace building. Also, it is necessary that teachers of different nationalities work in the multinational environments.

There is also a redirection of teaching staff, because things in education will not actually happen if 90% are still people who have completed studies before the war or the beginning of the war ... I think that we should start from the kindergarten. Because I really think the kids learn a lot of different things. I am not just talking about the ethnic divisions of the country or the region.

(CITIZENS, BRČKO DISTRICT)

The Brčko District should work according to the principle of “mixing” and not the one-national environment assigned by [persons] of the same nation, faith or religion. I think we should work on raising awareness. Again, I do not know how to measure it, how to do it. Perhaps, this can be achieved via media, or through conversations, and some similar things. As for ordinary citizens during the voting, we still vote the same – these for the SDA, those for the HDZ.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Furthermore, the perspective of reconciliation relates to scientific research and the valorisation of history. Scientists should create textbooks and find a way to interpret history that would present all “three truths”: The following discourse rightly warns of “mythology” that disables the understanding of history. The role of historical figures is controversial, and national collectivities are building their identity upon them.

I think that one should, first of all, deal with the scientific approach to the research of history. We, here in B&H, still have three different histories. I think we should finally stop taking advantages of three truths. These three truths, three different versions of the truth, with a lot of mythology contribute to the greatest extent of mistrust and hatred in B&H. Today. We even consider Gavrilo Princip a terrorist, and a national hero and who knows what. Not only Gavrilo, everything else in our country is based on three versions.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

In addition to education, the economy is crucial for development perspective. People should take the initiative, connect and work on solidarity principles. This is particularly concern of economy.

It means that it is necessary to move towards the economic sector. We are in a bit disadvantaged position here in Brčko, at least the economic sector, because they give us some incentives, but it is more or less to keep us a sort of silenced. When gone to other municipalities, when is gone to Tešanj, when you see a businessman having the say, you can see what kind of advantages they have. And it is known, if a businessman has a problem, the whole administration will not go home until the problem is solved and they fight for every job and then you are aware of what we miss in Brčko. With a budget of over 200 million and we have over 14,000 unemployed ... Instead of giving priority to the economy, employing people, having a perspective for the young, not to go away from here, we just do contradictory things. And, whom it suits, it suits only to these nationalist parties that have no vision of employment or the creation of new values, and then, they have to work in order to remain in power ... For this situation are exclusively to blame authorities and the international community because this situation suit them. We used to have economic giants before

the war ... we had organized production, not to mention, talking about small and medium enterprises and that we should develop a company that will have two employees, these are absurd. Today, we have 20-30 companies dealing with the same industries in the District and we are mutually competitive, and each of these companies in agriculture has to buy that one tractor in order to plow two or three hectares of land. These are absurd ...so that we could buy from Europe some kind of nonsense and that we are divided.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Civil society has a chance to work with young people as long as there is poverty and the inability of young people to get employment, as well as social conditions for a normal life are poor. Well-to-do youth do not show interest in engagement or volunteering. If the situation, in the first place, is economically improved, civil society would have less and less reasons and opportunities for work.

I think that just a difficult economic situation, from the aspect of the youth organization, is in favour of us. Because of that, young people come right here to youth organizations looking for some alternative in life. Young people who have money are rarely strayed into a non-governmental, multi-ethnic, youth organization ... As the situation in the state is recovering, NGOs will have less and less human resources, young people whom they can work with, who can send somewhere to some seminar ...We, in Brčko, for example, we do not have the Law on Youth or the Law on Volunteerism, which means that young people are not involved in the system. The system has not recognized them. And, it did all other categories. The reason for this is that it would just take away the resources from the national political parties.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Regional Perspectives

The regional prospects for reconciliation will depend on the countries in the region, primarily Croatia and Serbia, because they are interested in the influence over the Croatian and Serbian ethnicity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The next narrative suggests that the Serbs and Croats have a lesser sense of belonging to a common state than Bosniaks. The respondent obviously believes that the influence of Croatia and Serbia on the constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be less than it is, and that it would contribute to the building of peace in the region.

The key factors for further reconciliation in B&H are representatives of political parties and representatives of religious communities in B&H ... I

think that Bosniaks, as the majority of people in the state, love the state ... However, it is my opinion and attitude that the other two constituent peoples, in some way, will not say opposite, that is, that they hate their city or their local community or the state they live in, but there is a dose, not that I think it is not something wrong again now, just I think that some things should be set up and practiced in a different way in the future I think that perhaps there is a slightly higher dose of love of the people of Croats and Serbs towards these countries, i.e. Croatia and Serbia, against their own state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although it is normal for Bosniaks to have this love for Turkey, etc.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

The next narrative warns of the position of Croats in BH which is considered unfavourable, primarily because of the change in Croatia's official policy towards Croats in B&H. The respondent believes that it is necessary to talk about this in order to ensure stability in the region.

Regional policy is of great importance ... The official policy of Croatia worked out with the Bosnian Croats to accept some kind of unequal role in B&H in order to clean up Croatia from the Serbs, but they have achieved a great goal, they have cleaned Croatia from the Serbs. Thus, the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina accepted to join the Federation of B&H, which is made up one entity, while the RS is another entity. However, it is logical that Croats in B&H are aggrieved and nobody will admit that ... The official Croatian policy has changed ... Now, of course, disputes arise, so that real facts that have happened must be acknowledged.... And, in this regard, in terms of stability and progress, it is necessary, from the highest level as well as from the international community, to help and balance the approach, find a political solution ... All peoples will be losers if this continues and we are all happy when our children go abroad.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

In the next narrative, B&H is viewed through the status of a victim in the regional context between the political interests of Serbia and Croatia, which could change the chances of B&H joining the European Union. In terms of reconciliation, the EU should have played a more active role. All the countries of the former Yugoslavia should have been admitted to membership because that would, indeed, contribute to the recovery of the region. Thus, many problems, countries that are not admitted to membership, cannot solve themselves alone and the question is when they will be able.

If I can say, it seems to me to be political, in fact, that B&H is doing the worst in the whole region because the bargaining between Serbia and Croatia and all others go through B&H. They all conduct their programs well, but when something else in question needs to be done, it's lit up and all this goes to the account of B&H... I mean, Croatia and Serbia are mov-

ing forward, Croatia has entered the EU, Slovenia long ago, and, really, Serbia is on its way.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

If we wait to solve some of our problems ourselves, I am referring to Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, this will not happen. They need to admit all of us, in the package, in the EU and apply the EU standards.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Civil society organizations should contribute to the regional perspectives on peace, and their work, in this regard, is significant but at the same time dangerous; many individuals who advocate regional reconciliation have problems in their own environments. Some respondents considered that the civil society organizations are not networked enough, and there were no collectiveness while collecting signatures for RECOM²⁹, nor were this idea recognized by all civil society organizations.

Organizations dealing with facing with the past have the hardest job. Their task is, by definition, to be recognized by their community as traitors, while others will recognize them as some people who build bridges. Now we can talk or think about Nataša Kandić what we want, but she comes to Sarajevo or Zagreb as a recognized humanitarian and human rights activist, while in Belgrade, they are often turning her head away from her.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Civil society is divided in B&H, and also in the region, unconnected. When signatures have been collecting for RECOM, we had the situation that half of the civil society organizations supported it and joined and a half said: "I will not do it, it is Nataša Kandić", or we will not do it because the initiative came from Serbia. ... So, there is generally no cooperation among civil societies in the region in terms of anything, except in individual cases, for example ... let's say this Igman Initiative. Local problems are in focus of all, nobody is more concerned with reconciliation, and there is no such a thing like communication.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

More people should be involved in the work of civil society and thus could be more intensively influence the realization of reconciliation. The next narrative is about non-institutional ways of influencing media that can be effective, and that would animate people to act. The goal is actually mobilization of politicians for building peace and restoring trust among the constituent peoples.

There are many opportunities today how to reach the media. Those institutional, but also this - guerrilla marketing, informal cooperation ... Also, I

²⁹ Source: <http://www.recom.link/hr/>

think that all of us from peace building organizations should offer a long-term structure and platform for civic engagement ... Well, 'people are not sheep' .. Maybe today, they act like that, because of the influence of both the crisis and the media and everything else, but if more people were involved in peace movements, many things could have been much easier to bring out.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

Reconciliation agents in the region are education and mobility. Teachers should be educated because the reach of civil society organizations is small. Young people are perceived as actors of reconciliation, although they are not a homogeneous group and are not equally interested in reconciliation. In the education of young people, the past barriers should be broken and accept the cooperation (inter-state and inter-ethnic) that have been inconceivable so far.

Education and mobility. This is also the same for the state and the region. For example, we come from the NGO sector. We cannot have enough young people to contact and influence them through some workshops ... as many teachers in schools can - with thousands of people. It would be much more powerful to impart if educate, meaning, to educate those people who work with young people. Here it goes a floskula: "Future rests on youth". In fact - the present rests on youth. It influences those who work with the young, because there are just a few people who are currently promoting this idea.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

Serbia and B&H have signed an agreement in the field of cooperation with youth in the area of sport, but it is only used by RS. No civil society organization from the Federation and Brčko District had in mind to try to use this agreement. No one from Serbia crossed their mind to establish some kind of cooperation with Mostar based on this agreement.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

Regional reconciliation could jeopardize the global crisis, for example, migrants, natural disasters, etc., so the interests of the state in the region could be in conflict. As B&H has not been affected by the migrant humanitarian crisis, but the migrant wave moved through Serbia and Croatia, the next narrative only warns about the danger of distracting the balance of power in the region.

Several respondents warned of the possibility that a tightening of the relationship about border openness could jeopardize the attitude towards B&H. The surprise factor in establishing reconciliation appeared in the event of natural disasters in the countries of the region. Respondents believe that the regional solidarity of citizens has proven to exist even without political influence. Some respondents argue that interstate solidarity is not complementary to the interests of politics.

Well, [the migrant crisis] has had a negative effect on us ... We, from Bosnia, were fortunate that they it not pass much through Bosnia. But passing through Serbia could have some major, better say, negative happenings. So anything that happens in the environment, if neighbouring countries permit something to happen because of someone else, I think that is not right.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

The Hague judgments are continually acting on reconciliation. Whenever a new judgment is rendered, the level of reconciliation and trust is in decline. The next narrative talks about how judgments should not be commented in the media or political context. The decisions of the Court should be accepted so that peace cannot be endangered in the long run.

As far as the Hague judgements are concerned, I think that our political structures can't wait for such situations to do what they want. So, when reconciliation proceeds with an ascending path, there is a Hague conviction that, in my opinion, should not, of course, be commented on. The Court has decided so, it is legally pronounced, if somebody disagree, let them complain, and similar. However, each and the smallest decision of the Hague Tribunal is presented in a way to bring reconciliation completely below zero. In my opinion, the media have a great influence ... they are in someone's service ... It is served to children who are still developing their intellect ... they are being filled with all this information in order to grow into people who are not overly willing to talk about reconciliation and this is a vicious circle.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

The role of the civil sector

The role of the civil sector has been recognized and important, and during the war, the civil sector also had a heroic role in the discovery of certain crimes. The respondents perceive it as a promoter of positive values related to reconciliation (impact on youth mobility, breaking barriers, confronting citizens with crimes, etc.).

The remarks on the work of civil society organizations are related to the internal work of civil society (e.g. activities, relationship with donors) and external work (fragmentation, non-cooperation, non-recognition of initiatives, etc.). However, here we start the presentation of positive narratives.

Reasons that civil society organizations are deemed to perform useful activities are related to peace activism during and after the war. In their activities, they were concentrated on the young people. I think that, as a whole, while we are not overly bragging, many things in the process of reconciliation in B&H would not happen without the enormous participation

of peace activists and civil society organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Peace activists at that time, when it had not even been known what the civil sector was, largely influenced primarily on the mobility of young people in B&H, and then on building reconciliation and returning trust. Let's say, immediately after the war, in the '96s and 97s, the youth meetings started from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina. At a time when it was very difficult to cross the entity boundaries, when politicians did not overly care for cooperation, the Youth Network of B&H organized meetings..... And breaking of barriers and isolation among young people contributed most to the process of reconciliation.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

Never would the citizens of Serbia face the crimes in Srebrenica that they did not see a cassette that was released on B92 where the shooting of five or six Bosniak civilians at Trnovo was shown. This was done by the civil society organization, who bought the clip to publish it. It was not the government of Serbia; it is not even the government of B&H, particularly, because it is not interested in anything. Another thing, we would never be able to talk about Serbia as a country that faces more easily, if it had not been 20 years of the Republic Square and the standing of Women in Black on the occasion of Srebrenica. Today, in Serbia, 4.5 or 5 million people cannot say 'I did not know it' because he/she has seen it, because he/she saw that the said organization has been calling for 20 years for facing with the past. These are the various organizations that I am referring to now. The CZKD organization which was the first in Serbia in 1995, and perhaps even in the former Yugoslavia, made "Do we remember Sarajevo?" It was an exhibition organized by citizens, who escaped from Bosnia and Herzegovina, from surrounded Sarajevo with the only things that had with them, a cigarette or candy, to exhibit these things.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

Civil society is fragmented, the critics say, since in this sector prevail different interests that often promote the interest of donors. As per its importance, this sector in B&H should be dominant, but there are a lot of small organizations which do not sufficiently enough compete the interests of political parties and, at the same time, they can be the protagonists of political interests.

Civil society can be quite helpful here, but I have the feeling again that there are different interests in this non-governmental sector, and it depends on where the donors come from, what is the interest of donors, and then the talk is that context oriented. I do not know how strong this sector in B&H is now, and it should be dominant. I think they are too small and fragmented, weak in the hands of various political parties, and they are used for their propaganda.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Regional cooperation of civil society organizations is realized on the project basis. When projects end, they cease to maintain connectivity because it is difficult without needed financial resources. Unlike project connectivity of activists, the individual connection is much more frequent and easier to maintain.

Unfortunately, donors are still largely creating a policy of regional civil society cooperation on reconciliation. When there are financial resources for this, and when calls for projects are announced, there the regional cooperation begins. And before that, it is on individual examples of cooperation between organizations, or individual examples of exchanges, and similar. Simply, it is very difficult to act in the region, if we all, more or less, are limited in resources.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

Some respondents, mainly from civil society, criticize the way in which project funds are obtained. They consider that there is an interest between consultants who guarantee the approval of projects, especially as far as the EU funds are concerned.

There is also a huge problem of corruption, unfortunately, also among civil society organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, most of the projects related to reconciliation in B&H, or civil society development, for example, are paid by consultants and advisers. And those same consultants and advisers who get money to write projects actually work in the EU institutions and the international community, and in fact, they take money the "project to pass" (be approved). And then all this leads to exclusivity, where it is precisely known which and how many civil society organizations in B&H can get funds, withdraw funds from the European Union or the Council of Europe and implement them. While we are pushing beyond our limits here to explain what is needed in order to bring the B&H reconciliation process to some level, those organizations, or as the colleague (female) said, consortia from the EU countries are getting funds to "rescue the penguins in Bosnia". Although it is generally known that we really do not have these penguins. Well - corruption, exclusivity, but unfortunately at the same time also poor support and cooperation with the state.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

Individual respondents with business experience claim that they are no longer interested in a client-donor relationship. In the process of contact with the economy, civil society should be proactive.

We had some kind of cooperation with a non-governmental organization that served as a link between our businessmen and Turkish businessmen, so we had some sort of such meetings. It is a very important market for us, because we produce fruits, vegetables and dairy products. And it is

important for us to have a placement, so sometimes we do something for merging of businessmen. However, this is not enough, since most of these NGOs are based on how to get some funds, in order to pay off some kind of salary to those employed in these organizations.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

A civil society engaged in peace activism should strengthen its capacities, especially in the educational sense. Peaceful activism requires the mobilization of citizens and political actions.

Professional assistance should be offered and work on the capacity building of all NGOs engaged in peace activism. The activism, as the word itself - tells us that there should be many of us involved in this ... Not a handful, as some media know sometimes to minimize the presence of citizens on protests. But far more.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

Non-governmental organizations should strive to work long-term rather than short-term projects, especially if they concern reconciliation.

Yes, an additional problem is in that organizations that deal with reconciliation treat their initiatives as projects that have a shelf life. Something like, we will solve reconciliation with one IPA [project] of three years and we will reconcile some people. We, essentially, should not have such approach, so, this is also one of the important things, and reconciliation is a long-lasting process by itself even if there was no war.... But the process of understanding among people is long-lasting and essential. I think that there were too few civil society organizations in B&H that neither observed nor seen well enough.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

Of course, among the various levels there is a clearly expressed discourse of negativity towards the work of civil society organizations. This not only applies to their number, but also to the presence of international civil society organizations that compete with domestic organizations.

We, in the Brčko District, have 600 organizations and for the first time I hear this information, I would not have known to counter them in B&H even for 600 years. I personally speak as a long time business man I have never had anything good from those NGOs.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BRČKO DISTRICT)

International organizations, that have won international tenders or calls for projects from the EU gains significantly, and those organisations dealing with peace here with us in Bosnia. With all due respect to all of them, their capacities and international competences, how will an

organization from Italy or Germany, as far as I know, deal with the issue of reconciliation and confidence building in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when most of them do not know the situation in Bosnia. I had the opportunity to talk to some of them, being as surprised as Pygmy or Bantu Negro, when I realized, that I could not possibly assure or prove them that we, also, have if not the same, then certainly more competences, and as regards experience and knowledge of problems, methodology and mentality, definitely higher than theirs. And then later - in those reports, we saw that in B&H I had been invested, a certain number of billions of euros, and yet, not much was achieved, because, my God, the people do not want to reconcile ... Of course, the people want to reconcile, but most citizens, I can reasonably claim this, do not know, and they are not aware that the process of reconciliation is being implemented in B&H.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SARAJEVO)

Intersectoral cooperation

Cooperation between the political and economic sectors in B&H is not stable and predictable. In some cases, politics has proven to be a barrier to development. Read below the narrative about that.

Surely peace is desirable because it means stability for business and economy. We do not have problems in communication with Banja Luka, Mostar, it is even positive. The other thing we have to look at is how this political instability reflects on the economy, I already said, last year, 100 million was supposed to be an investment in Prnjavor and I was part of that project, we did everything and bought the land and the construction was about to start. Suddenly a letter came that due to political instability, Dodik began to use that nationalistic rhetoric a little, and to stop everything. There are thousands of such examples. I, also, began thinking in a way that I am supposed to have an investment, but, better to wait, because even me frightens this, whether there will be secession or not, me either cannot start the venture just like that. I should have built something and made it, but I have to wait for situation development. And a lot of companies are in such a position, so I was thinking what to do next? Over 5 billion KM population has been deposited, but no one has to do anything because of the fear of what will happen and it is normal that all of that reflects on all aspects of economy.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

The labour market in B&H is not arranged. Many employers do not report workers and illegal employment is everyday occurrence. Only those citizens working in the public sector feel somewhat protected.

Let's say specifically about the business I deal with, we have a market that is unregulated, the labour market is unregulated. We have shortage occupation that are such a problem of this country, although Europe as well, but our countries particularly. We have personnel being educated who, thereafter, are completely incapable for the labour market, and that all concern policy and reconciliation.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Additional education is needed for members of civil society organizations to withdraw funds from funding mechanisms and to communicate with the economic sector more easily. In addition, more transparent operations of civil organizations are required, as donations are not spent for specific purpose. In Brčko, it is a very bad situation in this regard.

So far, attempts to co-operate all three sectors in Brčko have been weak: it was about the public sector giving money for something organized by civil society, and the private sector was in the position to donate beverage and food. There were also more serious ways of cooperation between businesses and civil society where companies offered concrete opportunities to young people, such as, for example, opportunity for practical work.

For example, a project I was working on focused on the reconciliation of young people and had the connectivity of local authorities that had to make some contribution, whether a room or some other kind of support, it did not have to be financial support. A private sector was supposed to give young people the opportunity for working in practice for a month and opened companies like BH Telecom of various size, big and quite small entrepreneurs, mobile phone shops and the like. Also, the civil society created and managed the whole process over the course of two years. So, such examples exist.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

I have been working on three projects in two different organizations and I do not know how it can be incorporated into this issue, we have the example of Info House doing volunteering-crediting for high school youth. Initially, it was in a canton of Sarajevo, and later it spread to the whole B&H. These young people work one day in a particular enterprise or a particular company or institution. They thus acquire a volunteer experience and get to know other young people from the B&H area. There is another project related to primary schools, and its name is "volunteering is cool", so lasting for two months. There are schools in the whole B&H region doing certain activities of their choice in cooperation with someone whom they choose and contacted are these organizations, companies, institutions. There are very positive results.

(CITIZENS, SARAJEVO)

Reconciliation is essential as a basic prerequisite for investors to invest their money in B&H.

Why would a man invest his money in an insecure area, if someone would burn him/her a factory? Every serious investor when comes to B&H wants to know whether it is a stable region, that we can enable him as a state in the form of some tax incentives to invest his money. As far as investments in B&H are concerned, the mayors of municipalities are much more specific in this regard, they give municipal land that is neglected, and Gorazde is perhaps the best example for this in all of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Where the investor can get 1000 squares for one convertible mark plus will get all the infrastructure, electricity, water, gas i.e. all he needs for his/her investment with the only obligation to hire, may be, about 100 workers in the next 5 years. Also, Konjic is the second example thanks to the project Underground, last year, we were in Konjic and, I was standing to get into the warehouse and seeing 300 people leaving the factory, you cannot believe your eyes that people are working in three shifts in Konjic, i.e. in B&H.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

B&H has a lot of potential for production, and one of the most attractive branches can be the development of tourism in which it could cooperate with civil society organizations.

Plitvice Lakes are 30 km away from us and there are some millions and two hundred thousand tourists each year, our goal would be to transfer 10% of this from across the border. It is a classic example of how people can work together. You have an example below in Medugorje, where there is a fantastic relation between business and non-governmental organizations.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SARAJEVO)

Respondents agreed that if there is an organized co-operation between different sectors (economic, civil, and public) at regional level, they would support such an initiative.

Among others, they mentioned areas of cooperation such as sports, cultural and tourism co-operation at the regional level. Civil society should be the initiator of cooperation with the government and the private sector i.e. one should explain the investment opportunities and develop ways to attract business people.

Also, it would be necessary to have an inter-entity co-operation, as this would help to the reconciliation process. One of the respondents stated that a very well-designed partnership would be needed to satisfy the interests of all partners.

Social Entrepreneurship

As an idea, social entrepreneurship was mostly unknown to respondents. Some respondents under this term include cooperatives whose examples can best be seen in agriculture. Those respondents who have more information believe that social entrepreneurship is a positive idea, but that there is no legal framework for its development. The general conclusion of this focus is that people do not have information and should be educated on this issue.

The very idea and work of such companies that exist in Europe and in the environment, I think they provide a lot. They can even organize such a thing at the level NGO, and include a larger number of people from the community, employees can be certain groups, disabled people, young people, and women.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BRČKO DISTRICT)

Conclusion and recommendations

Throughout these twenty years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been trying to maintain peace in the first place and establish a civil, legal state.

From the perspective of many citizens, the extremely complex way of distributing power between constituent peoples and entities contributes to the sluggish performance of the system and the growth of the bureaucratic apparatus on the one hand, and the lack of understanding of the way the government actually functions on the other. In the eyes of the citizens, the state is shown to be cumbersome and inert, and almost self-sufficient apparatus, closed from society, characterized by the long-standing survival of political national elites.

National collectivities are sensitive to issues of one's own identity, which is visible at different levels: from symbolic marking of events from the war past to everyday life.

Reconciliation has not been achieved, unless viewed through the "end of war" prism. It is a process that has its ups and downs that depend on electoral cycles in which media in concert with politicians are pointing out stories that are not on the discourse of reconciliation. Election incidents and the production of nationalist tensions have counter-effects and destabilize the process of reconciliation.

At the level of everyday life, there is a segregation on a national basis; in terms of education, employment, communication and socializing (visiting cafes, cultural events, etc.), especially in smaller areas, for example, Brčko District. At the symbolic level, reconciliation has not been established, nor can it be established if viewed from this perspective. This situation has an impact on the separation of citizens from politics and the suspicion of the work of the political elite on reconciliation.

Brčko District has not proven to be distinctive for the situation in B&H. Although we expected that, as in some other reports, there is a difference in attitudes with regard to a special position within B&H. The results, however, confirm that Brčko area is wrought with similar problems as the other two entities.

It is difficult to expect that reconciliation will be implemented (only) by the efforts of the state. Of course, apart from the initial input of politicians, the respondents consider that it is necessary to insist on individual reconciliation in local communities. More powerful launching of the reconciliation process is possible, and the respondents believe that reconciliation could be achieved with the more powerful efforts of civil society organizations.

The national level of reconciliation is assessed to be very weak in the first place at the political and economic level. The national level of reconciliation is precisely determined by the tie of political and religious leaders of all nations. Religious leaders are particularly engaged in election activities and advocate established, national political options.

The actors who could contribute to a higher level of reconciliation are recognized in Croatia, Serbia, and the international community the policies of which depend on peace in B&H. The mutual relations between Croatia and Serbia also have a great and significant impact on the reconciliation process.

B&H continues to expect assistance from the international community, primarily in the field of economic development. Some narratives suggest that B&H should have been a member of the EU long ago or that it should become part of it as soon as possible, along with other countries in the region. It is expected of the EU highly and uncritically to solve many, and in the first place the existential problems of citizens. As a negative aspect, it is recognized the EU's suspicion towards B&H as well as the danger of "Islamizing Europe" and the danger of terrorism, which the respondents hold unrealistic.

Politically viewed, the national level of reconciliation is bound up with the fear of strengthening the right wing in European countries. Strengthening the right wing in the international context can give a boost to the strengthening of the right-wing options in B&H, and thus to the development of local extremism and intolerance among peoples at the local level.

Many respondents cannot talk at all about the economic aspects of reconciliation: they often do not have enough knowledge or information about these aspects. Focus groups in which entrepreneurs participated demonstrate that they do not deal with reconciliation, and/or if they do business successfully, it means that reconciliation has been achieved, in their opinion. Economically successful collectives are almost not interested in political problems if they do not interfere with their business.

Although one might say that ecological topics belong to ephemeral ones and they may have been accidentally found here, the results of the research suggest that this is not the case. The fear of the population that they might be threatened by the waste management policy from Croatia which could jeopardize their lives as well as the economic investment is high. Novi Grad is mentioned in this research, but similar situation exists in other border towns where citizens rebel against environmental pollution caused by obsolete polluting plants. This focus topic could be one of the more important in the next research. Of course, this topic has also repercussions on citizens' trust towards neighbouring countries.

What are the prospects for reconciliation?

Since the political field is perceived as the weakest link in peace building, and it has not been shown to be persistent in pursuing reconciliation, it is not surprising that respondents expect the most from it. New generations of politicians are expected, that would probably bring a new way of viewing reconciliation, but also a change in bureaucratic and complex decision-making manner as an important prerequisite for the implementation of reconciliation policies. However, in order for this to happen, it is necessary that citizens, on an individual level, become aware of the need for peace building and bottom-up approaches in implementing change. The key lever of reconciliation is the education of all layers of the population (children, young people, and even elderly citizens, but also teachers), whereby the most important would be turning to small, isolated environments where people's mobility is extremely low. Economics, of course, a neglected component by many, should enable networking and the use of shared resources in order to achieve the competitiveness of small enterprises (example of the Brčko District).

Regional prospects for peace are more dependent on relations with neighbouring countries. B&H should resolve the status of regional "toy" in the hands of neighbouring countries. In order to achieve this, citizens want the state to enter the EU, which would contribute to the stabilization of relations. A migrant crisis or natural disasters, however, can disrupt peace building, although citizens have shown an enviable level of regional solidarity during the recent natural disasters. Hague judgements in neighbouring countries are also a factor that contributes to destabilization, because, according to the respondents, they should not be critically valorised at all, but simply accepted. In civil society, that leverage can be seen that can help maintain peace in the region through organizing education and mobility of citizens. In that sense, it would be necessary to break barriers in order to establish new collaborative relationships, where the focus should be on socially deprived and underdeveloped environments.

A great task is posed on the civil society both, within the country and regionally. There are great expectations from it, despite criticism for fragmentation, ineffi-

ciency, dependence on donors, and even the corruption of those who allocate financial resources to civil organizations.

As a peace promoter, civil society organizations should devise new forms of co-operation, connect regionally and, above all, educate the population in all of its layers. In particular, it would be good to work aimed at connecting citizens, taking into account gender, age, nationality, political commitment, social status, war or refugee experience, and the like. Therefore, it is necessary for civil society to strengthen its research and activist dimension. Given the established lack of interest among the media for building peace and the susceptibility to political interests, civil society should seek different and innovative ways of penetrating into the public.

Civil society cooperation with the economic sector is low; mainly the client/donor relationship is mentioned. In this regard, new ways of accessing the economic sector should be devised, prior which it would certainly have to put efforts to “educate educators”. In other words, civil society should invest in its potentials that could motivate the economic sector to more productive cooperation.

An analysis of cross-sectoral co-operation, primarily economics and politics, points to politics as a brake on investment in individual projects. On the other hand, some businessmen praise state support through incentives. Some economic subjects complain about the lack of a sufficiently educated workforce, and in this segment, it is also possible to cooperate with civil society. In the development of industries such as tourism and agriculture, there is a need for innovative solutions and cross-sectoral connectivity. Analysis of the responses related to the potential of social entrepreneurship showed little or no knowledge of this idea, so in this segment the possibility of additional education of citizens, and especially entrepreneurs, and is evident.

Montenegro

AFTER THE MULTI-PARTY ELECTION HELD IN 1990 WHICH WAS WON BY THE LEAGUE of Communists of Montenegro, later renamed the Democratic Party of Socialists, Montenegro became part of FR Yugoslavia (Serbo-Montenegrin federation) in 1992. Momir Bulatović became President in 1993 and Milo Đukanović became Prime minister. As part of the Federation, Montenegro was subjected to economic sanctions from 1992 to 1996 and a rift in the party started in 1997 which led to a political conflict between Momir Bulatović and Milo Đukanović. Đukanović, unlike Bulatović (inclined to Serbian politics) advocated independence, openness towards the West and equality within the federal state. Milo Đukanović won the presidential elections held in 1997, while the parliamentary elections held the year after were won by Đukanović and the reformist coalition oriented towards Montenegrin independence. Montenegro directly opposed the implementation of federal laws, even during the time when Bulatović was the Prime minister of FR Yugoslavia (1998). During the NATO attacks on Yugoslavia in 1999, Montenegro tried to stay out of the conflict. Not even the reorganization of the State Union in 2003. deterred Montenegro's attempts at reaching independence and in 2006. Montenegro proclaimed independence. Coalition led by DPS (Democratic Party of Socialists) and Milo Đukanović won every election between 2002 and 2012. From 2003, the president of the state has been Filip Vujanović ³⁰.

Montenegro was not in war with its national territory during the 1990s, although, at that time, in the area of former SFRY, a large number of Montenegrin citizens were mobilized (even violently) so they participated in the war by means of reserved composition of the former Yugoslav People's Army (YPA)³¹.

A relatively small number of events (which will be discussed later) on the Montenegrin territory which had casualties did not have a significant effect on inter-ethnic dynamics. It can be said that, considering the total number of victims in other

³⁰ Source: <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?ID=12765> (23 November 2016.)

³¹ Milo Đukanović who was the Prime Minister of Montenegro in 1991 declared, in the capacity of the President of Montenegro (2000), his regrets over the role of Montenegro in the war in Croatia in the Dubrovnik-Neretva County. On that occasion he said that individual responsibility for war crimes needed to be established, however until 2016 no procedure for determining responsibility (criminal, political) has been initiated. Source: <http://www.recom.link/sr/dvadeset-pet-godina-bez-istraga-za-bombardovanje-dubrovnika/> (24 November 2016.)

areas of the former SFRY, Montenegro came out relatively intact, even though families of the victims are still searching for those who were killed or missing, about which a number of institutions and civil society organizations have been engaged.

In order to confirm its peace support orientation on the territory of former Yugoslavia, Montenegro adopted the Declaration on Acceptance of European Parliament Resolution on Srebrenica on 9 July 2009. In addition, Montenegro is a signatory of the most important international documents in the area of human rights: the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. However, even though the initiatives existed, Montenegro has never adopted the Lustration Law (i.e. Law on Responsibility for Human Rights Violations), nor has it ever established a special investigation centre that would contribute to establishing the truth about the events that occurred between 1991 and 2001.

After gaining independence, Montenegro was expected to implement research and trials for criminal acts committed in war while fully cooperating with the Hague. One of the main conditions set by the European Commission to Montenegro back in 2011. was reaching stability of institutions which would enable rule of law, so as to be in a position to open negotiations for its membership in the EU. At the same time, a year before the European Commission suggested 'depoliticized system of election of members of the Court Council, Council of Prosecutors and state prosecutors, based on merits and through strengthening independence, autonomy, efficiency and responsibility of judges and prosecutors' (Human rights in Montenegro 2010- 2011: 22). In 2014 Progress Report for Montenegro, it is claimed that Montenegro needed to step up its efforts to fight impunity for war crimes, and effectively investigate, prosecute, try and punish war crimes in line with international standards. there was no serious endeavours (European commission, 2014: 24)

In Montenegro, there were four trials for war crimes: for war crimes against POWs and civilians in the Morinj camp in 1991; 2)) the trial for war crimes against the civilian population - refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the so-called Deportation of Refugees case, in May 1992;. 3) the trial for crimes against the civilian population in Bukovica region in 1992 and 1993 4) the trial for war crimes against the civilian population, refugees from Kosovo, at Kaluđerski laz in 1999 (Human Rights Action, 2013). There was not a single indictment on grounds of command responsibility in Montenegro and despite recommendation from the European Commission about the need for punishment of war crimes, the Government of Montenegro transferred jurisdiction for processing war crimes to regular, higher prosecution responsible for processing the rest of criminal acts as well³².

32 Source: Tea Gorjanc Prelević Transitional justice and reconciliation in post-jugoslavian countries (voices of institutions, religious communities, activists, academy, culture and victims), 2015: 22.

“Out of these four cases, only the trial for crimes committed in Bukovica area ended with a final judgment on 22 March 2012. The judgement acquitted all seven persons indicted for the crime by May 2013, i.e. four years after the beginning of the trial for crimes in Kaluđerski laz on 19 March 2009, the trial has not reached a stage at which a first-instance judgement would be rendered. In the Morinj case, first-instance judgement was overturned two times and, at the time of the publication of this report, the trial before the first-instance court (the High Court in Podgorica) was under way for the third time. In the case Deportation of Refugees, the first-instance judgement was overturned, the retrial ended and a new acquitting judgement was rendered, against which the Supreme State Prosecutor and families of victims filed appeals. In Morinj case, four out of six defendants have been found guilty by a non-final judgement of the first-instance court, while two have been acquitted by a final judgement. In the Deportation of Refugees case, the court acquitted the defendants in both first-instance judgments..” (Human Rights Action, 2013:5).

Neither the process of lustration in Montenegro nor checking the war past of military and police was implemented due to lack of legislative regulations. In some cases, such as those of Kaluđerski laz and of the victims of NATO air raids in Murino, reparation proceedings were suspended, pending the completion of the criminal proceedings, or declared time-barred. In spite of the insistence of the civil society, there are no monuments to the victims...”.

Activities of civil society on realization of transitional justice did not bypass either Montenegro or all other countries that were involved in war happenings in the region. A number of both individuals and civil society organizations from Montenegro have been active in REKOM coalition³³. The Capital of Montenegro, Podgorica, was the first point where the REKOM initiative presented the Regional Team of Public Advocates and asked for the political support from the president of Montenegro Filip Vujanovic. All of this was made as part of efforts for this problem to “go move from civil society to political level since only states, governments and parliaments can lead to realization of this idea³⁴. In the same year, the establishment of REKOM was supported by the Democratic party of socialists and Social democratic party of Montenegro.

In 2013, Human Rights Action published the Report: War Crime Trials in Montenegro where it is concluded, after analysing, that that out of the total of twenty two persons accused for war crimes in Montenegro, four were found guilty by first-instance non-final judgements. The remaining 18 defendants have been acquitted, nine of which by final judgements.. The reasons why no one has been convicted for war crimes in Montenegro in recent years “lie in failures of the State Prosecutor’s Office and competent courts to fully implement international humanitarian law that obliged and still obliges Montenegro”. (2013: 6)

³³ REKOM Initiative advocates for the establishment of this commission.

³⁴ Nataša Kandić executive director of Humanitarian Law Centre.

Source: <http://www.vesti.rs/Politika/Crna-Gora-REKOM-vazan-za-suocavanje-sa-prosloscu-drzava-regiona.html>

The direction in which international humanitarian and international criminal law was interpreted appeared to be trying to find a restrictive interpretation of domestic and international legal norms, in order to reduce the possibility of punishing members of Montenegrin police and former Yugoslav Army.

Centre for civic education from Montenegro, one of the founder of REKOM initiative, published the report "The process of Reconciliation in Montenegro - the Morinj case" (Marić, 2014) in which it is highlighted that reconciliation process is inevitable if building civic society. The introduction part, critically intoned, informs and labels many high-ranking persons for being involved in war happenings and being in a position obstruct research activities and trial processes. With this approach, civil society puts pressure on the government and wider public by expanding data base on war crimes, while establishing cooperation with other civil society organization from region in trying to perceive multidisciplinary causes and consequences of Morinj case for the Montenegrin society.

Except on the report level, reconciliation was the topic of two empiric researches. The first research Attitudes of students of law faculties on reconciliation was conducted by Civic alliance (Civic alliance, 2014). The intention of research was to encourage the dialogue on both – war crimes and human rights violation so they would not be forgotten. Results showed that reconciliation concept is not close to students, while for a significant number of students it was not important. Although there is no case from Montenegro that happened on Montenegrin territory that was prosecuted in the Hague in front of International court, 11% of students considered that prosecution was executed which proves their lack of information and ignorance. Even 75,6% of students did not know if some war crime, happened in Montenegro, was prosecuted in front of the domestic court, while even 76,7% of students during education did not have information of committed war crimes on the territory of Montenegro. Comparing earlier period, the research concludes that today there is an increase in number of students who were not informed about war crimes.

Balkan Investigative Network BIRN³⁵ has conducted a research regarding the post-war *storm* of lifting monuments in the Balkans. They sought to establish how states and ethnic groups use symbolism of monuments to present their own interpretation of events from the past, as well as how they manipulated history to win political power. The study also addressed the question of how monuments should look in order to promote peace rather than past conflicts. The research included 7 countries in the region. Investigation has shown that, since the war, building of 13 monuments was approved by the Ministry of Culture since 2008, but the government had no record of the public funds spent for these purposes. The only example that could contribute to reconciliation is a memorial plaque for victims of the 1990s war in Pobrežje Park in Podgorica. As far as the region is concerned, most governments could not provide the information on either what monuments were built or where they were.

35 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/rs/page/balkanska-tranziciona-pravda-suprotstavljena-se%C4%87anja>

Results of empirical research

Concept of reconciliation, acceptance and reconciliation obstacles

The topic of reconciliation that the presented narratives talk about is largely related to opinions of respondents about the war past of Montenegro. The research has found a series of discourses that go from so-called 'zero point' (there is no need for reconciliation because there was no war) to those indicating that reconciliation was not achieved and/or that it is a long-term process. An example of neutral discourse is the following two narratives -the first one that places Montenegro beyond the wartime context and the other which speaks of the youth and their disinterest in reconciliation.

I think there is no need to reconcile since we were not at war.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The younger generation does not have a direct experience of war or prosecution, so apathy and lack of interest in war and political events are noticed. This is in line with the introductory empirical evidence that young people have no information on war crimes committed in Montenegro.

I agree that, for young people, this topic is outdated ...

(CIVIL SECTOR, ROŽAJE)

The following discourse relates to the 'indirect' participation of Montenegro in the conflicts in the region. From that aspect, in Montenegro, it is 'the easiest to reconcile'. The participants of the discussion do not explain the concept of reconciliation, because, for them, it is self-explanatory and natural. They mostly comment on how Montenegro went through warfare and how, during the war, Montenegrin citizens showed solidarity with the citizens of neighbouring states.

The reconciliation of all states, in my opinion, of the former Yugoslavia... this reconciliation is most easily achieved in Montenegro. Well, I will start with the fact that Montenegro accepted both Serbs and Bosniaks from the town of Trebinje in the 1990s and that in 1999 it accepted Kosovars, Albanians from Kosovo and Roma from Kosovo after that. In my opinion ... we can be the highest in that rank from all the countries in the region.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

A similar focus can be found in responses from other respondents who, on the other hand, connect the 'ease' of reconciliation to, apart from anti-war history, awareness of the perpetrated crimes that should not interfere with reconciliation.

Montenegro is, luckily, a country that was the only member of former Yugoslavia that was not a participant of the 1990s' war. Nevertheless, the

war environment, events, influenced some crimes being committed in several parts of the country. I mention the cases that were, say, in Bukovica, Kaluđerski Laz and on the road to Herceg Novi. And we lived in a country that in the 1990s opened its doors to all the citizens in need who were residents of the former Yugoslavia.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

In the past two narratives, and in the following one as well, the cultural features (discourse of cultural openness and hospitality) are emphasized and the following emphasizes the tradition of relations with other cultures, which, in some elements, also has a 'mythological' note (humanity/heroism) with respect to the reconciliation to be achieved today. It was said that the previous narrative was a critique in its nature and the following resents a completely opposite discourse presented by an individual employed in the public sector.

The Montenegrin tradition is long. In many times and times of King Nikola and the previous rulers, we have been very careful about ... the relation to the different peoples and nations living in this area and the relation to the prisoners of war, so that some tradition, say, of respect for man in any variant is present and the enemy who was the conqueror in this area was respected and given the maximum importance in a certain period ... On this tradition of, say, a fair relationship between people and respect for diversity, therefore, is Montenegro today built and continues this tradition of civil state first of all.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The following thematic segment associates reconciliation with individual, emotional discourse. Thus, first, there is clemency, forgiveness for the participation in war events seen as a pledge for peace building in the future, which younger generations need to be educated on. Concept of justice carries a similar connotation that is also tied to the future of the youth.

To me, reconciliation means forgiveness, forgiveness yes, but not forgetting, forgiveness for some events that have occurred and forgiveness in the sense that, despite all that has happened, we can continue to live together normally, to socialize, to build a society in whole, to educate our children in different ways, precisely on those examples that were negative. To tell them that that was not good and that they need to communicate quite differently.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

I would define reconciliation in one word - justice. Orientation, building peace for good and society, for the peace of present and future generations.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

The aforementioned dimension related discourse, on the need to face the past that has been pushed out of public space, at least in regards to the critical valorisation of the role of Montenegro in the recent war. However, the last sentence of the following narrative refers to a kind of “romanticization” of the status of the state in a regional context.

There is this story that we had a role that was not very constructive and that it should somehow be cleared up and face the things that happened. In principle, I think the public has forgotten. We are that kind of peace vessel in the region.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Furthermore, the results point to the existence of a more critical discourse according to which reconciliation has not been achieved in the entire society. Politics and various stakeholder groups shape the public space “to suit oneself”, so reconciliation, seen from the perspective of high politics is achieved, but among the citizens it is “an ongoing current story”. The process of reconciliation has been repeatedly interrupted if we are looking at the relationship of authority towards war crimes.

You can see that reconciliation has not been achieved because as soon as something happens people start digging up the past... really, it has not been told as it is, only certain people who have the possibility to state publicly their opinion. I think that we, even though we were not directly involved [in the conflict], we have a lot of unresolved things from the 90s.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The process has been interrupted several times. I assume, the approach changed depending on how it suited one politically.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Respondents from Rožaje, as was mentioned at the beginning of the report, are mostly of Islamic religion. They believe that the past is unclear, so it is possible to say that the following discourse is more radical than the previous ones, because it is about the defeat of the state.

Do you know what the past is? The past are not the 1990s, they are still the present, because we still have not cleared up this story about reconciliation, we need to face ourselves first and only then can we face others. Kaluđerski laz that is not the past that is the defeat of Montenegro of not facing its weaknesses. Then Herceg Novi in 1990, political protest against the SDA.

(CITIZENS, ROŽAJE)

Furthermore, the concept of reconciliation also has dynamic characteristics. It starts from the idea that reconciliation and reconciliation actors are participants of a long-term process. One of these actors is a civil society.

Accepted by the notion, and I see especially that the non-governmental sector is committed to the implementation of some projects that directly lead to the indicated process, however, compared to the countries in the region, I think that only in Montenegro some progress is evident. There are some key factors that challenge this process that is obvious. Apprehending the culprits - every year the same story is repeated. I think that is a key factor for the failure of this process. It is being worked thereon.

(CITIZENS, ROŽAJE)

Among the actors who are the bearers of the process of reconciliation mentioned in the following narrative, beside civil society, are the state and citizens. The political will of the ruling is the basic which means that the state is the most important of all the above mentioned actors.

For me, reconciliation is a process that involves a lot of activities from all sides. First of all the state, then the civil society, and then the citizens. It is a comprehensive process. The essence of the process of reconciliation is the political will to reconcile. So, I think that there was no political will for the reconciliation to happen, because the lack of reconciliation is always a potential focal point for the existence of a new conflict.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Reconciliation as a national process also has its interstate level in regards to the number of people killed and missing in the war.

Those interviewed who have direct work experience in interstate meetings are advocate a discourse according to which reconciliation will be difficult to reach, which is contrary to the discourse given earlier and according to which high policy considers reconciliation a completed process.

Considering that on the territory of former Yugoslavia 12000 people are being searched for that went missing in the war of 1990s and considering that I often attend conferences organized by international institutions and which are the only ones who can enable the presence of the families of missing persons, as well as us who are government representatives involved in this work, at these meeting we can see how hard it is to reach reconciliation. I really think that as long as families are searching for their members...there will be no reconciliation.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

It is a very difficult and painful subject, because, in fact, reconciliation would mean establishing a mutual life together, that everything would be as it were, but with all these events, and the pain that the families feel today, that is very, very difficult.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Starting from the research assumption that reconciliation is necessary for peace building in Montenegro, we asked the respondents whether it was accepted and whether there are obstacles in its acceptance. In the first thematic segment (acceptance of reconciliation) we find a discourse indicating that reconciliation is not accepted. The first narrative speaks of how reconciliation does not exist at the level of everyday life, in inter-ethnic relations, because society is focused on the past. A narrative indicating the existence of nationalism that needs to be restrained in order to maintain peace talks about this. It is interesting that a respondent from Rožaje talks about this. The last narrative, also recorded in Rožaje, speaks of the majority population's attitude toward Albanians.

No, reconciliation in the Montenegrin society ... is not accepted, we see it more in everyday life, it is the most obvious in everyday life when opposite you are, for example, people of different nationalities and if you start any conversation on any topic, you will always return to that conflict that has arisen.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

If Serbia and Montenegro controlled their extremes as we control ours it could be ... this way, there is no national reconciliation. Reconciliation governs here, here there are 4% Albanians, 9% Orthodox, others are Muslims.

(CITIZENS, ROŽAJE)

I am an Albanian woman, or a Shiptar, whatever, that is the same. I get a lot of trouble for being Albanian, in Rožaje. People ask me openly: "Where are you going?" or "What is she doing here, she is a Shiptar?" that is happened to me ... in that sense, there will be no reconciliation until some kind of normalcy is reached.

(CITIZENS, ROŽAJE)

The following narrative speaks about how acceptance of reconciliation needs to be achieved first of all in the family, the local community, and the education process.

Everybody is smart enough to talk about how we need to reconcile, and they all use that to win some points, whether at work or with somebody else but in essence nobody is striving for true reconciliation. ... They need to say that to their child, their neighbour, I don't know, a relative, friend, acquaintance. And it starts with professors who... don't know what they need to do for proper education.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

The obstacles to peace-building in Montenegro, which is the last thematic unit related to the concept of reconciliation, are located in the area of politics, i.e. the long-term survival of the political elite in the positions of power. Political elites

quickly reconciled with those in the region, but within the country they did not do enough for reconciliation because they did not accept the responsibility for participating in the war along with Serbia. The respondent warns that the war in Bosnia ended before Montenegro became independent.

Political elites have lead the war, and they quickly reconciled. And the political elite of Montenegro found it appropriate to apologize, they found it appropriate to pay reparations ... You cannot reconcile with those outside, when [process of reconciliation] is not over from the inside. So this process has been stopped here, but they we always pretending at the international, regional level that Montenegro did not endanger the political elite ... And many political elites function this way ... If all the parliaments created these institutions that ... confirmed by the number and facts of what happened, it would be different ... Our politicians are very willing to sign but there is no activities resulting therefrom... In this matter, it seems the most hypocritical to me, they washed their hands of the crimes because we were the puppet of Slobodan Milosevic so Montenegro did not participate in the war as Serbia participated. So in 1995 the war in Bosnia ended and in 1997 Milosevic and our leadership broke out. So we have participated in that war, but Montenegro is somewhere abolished, I believe both in the region as well of that responsibility.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Apart from politics, the following discourse on peace building opposes the media and their (non)dissemination of information. Political actors seem to manipulate political scenarios in cooperation with the media.

Manipulation is the main tool, the main weapon of voice in Montenegro, media manipulation. Everything happens with the manipulation of political scenarios, so I apologize to all the optimists.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

One of the obstacle-related discourses assesses the Balkans as a place of “centuries old hatred”. It is believed that the same conflicts are repeated for centuries and are based on “archetypal” deeply rooted forms of conflict resolution, acquired in the family. This kind of pessimistic stance according to which conflict is the “default state” and peace is just a break from war really speaks to ineradicable divisions that lead to further conflicts.

We are in the Balkans, which is portrayed as one the most unstable areas. It's always been this way. For hundreds of years we have been coded into one and the same conflicts, completely identical, with completely identical family patterns. So reconciliation in the broadest complex is to accept yourself, your family, your state with all the stupid things. We don't do this at all.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PODGORICA)

National level of reconciliation

The level of national reconciliation is determined by several discourses that include the following: political and economic division in the north and south; the influence of stereotypes and prejudices; the relationship between the state and the judiciary towards the crimes and the existence of a dominant culture of non-communication. According to the results obtained, the following narratives show a diverse level of (non)confidence in actors and institutions at the national level that hinder the building of peace.

Gaining Montenegro's independence has affected peace building. The respondent from Rožaje alludes to the nationalist divisions provoked by the referendum on independence. This referendum, as the respondent argues, divided the society politically, even though economic disunity existed since before.

Referendum divided the Montenegrin society. It had a negative impact. Unfortunately, politics still abuses the referendum, we have in Montenegro now whether somebody is pro-Montenegrin this or that. Sadly, somebody is using this for political gain skilfully. Unfortunately, in 1997 the Milo-Momir politics were our barriers. Referendum put an end to those divisions and I can't close my eyes that there is no divided society in Montenegro, in all segments, political "for and against the referendum" still. When I say in all segments, I also mean economically.

(CITIZEN, ROŽAJE)

A respondent from Rožaje also points to intraregional divisions, claiming that Montenegro is divided into north and south. He claims that stereotypical divisions usually refer to residents of the northern regions (Rožaje, Pljevalja, Berane, etc.) who are perceived to be ranked lower socially. He thinks that it is about prejudice and hate that are recognizable in the media as well as in social media communication.

We have a lot of prejudice in the 21st century, we even have prejudice between the regional divisions of Montenegro, between the central region and the north ... We have a lot of cases where people from the central region, from Podgorica, have prejudices against people in the north of Montenegro. Specifically, people from Rožaje, Pljevalja, Berane ... For example, simply put there are some people who probably didn't go through enough, are not informed or educated, they simply perceive people from the north of Montenegro as a lower class ... There is a lot of ridicule on the portals, we can mostly see these prejudices in the comments of big news agencies and see that this hatred is still widespread. So we need to work on educating to reduce this prejudice. Specifically, for example, for people from the central regions to get to know the south and to get to know the culture of the north of Montenegro.

(CIVIL SECTOR, ROŽAJE)

The degree of closeness or distance between the ethnic groups in Montenegro speaks of the national reconciliation level.

You have found numerous cases of mixed marriages in Montenegro, god-fatherhoods, I don't know what else, but you tell me which family fully approved their son or daughter telling them that they're marrying a member of a different nationality. Can you tell me which family didn't have a problem with this and didn't have to discuss things thoroughly? Until this is resolved in Montenegro and other countries respectively, it's not possible to resolve it in a region that has a million of proofs about serious crimes and serious blood spilled... In the end, how many issues we have in Montenegro, like this recent event with the young man of Roma nationality that was beaten up, and we are so ready to be proud...in this "oasis of peace". Maybe it's really easy for others to come here but I have family in Sarajevo and other states.... I remember before when I would visit they would say "my relative from Montenegro came to visit" and everybody would like you. Now that's not the case. Now I see that my relatives are not so eager to introduce me.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The position of Montenegro toward war crimes is one of the issues that hinder the building of peace on a national level, but also the relationship with the European Union. Punishing crimes is one of the ways of collective communication, i.e. communication with younger and future generations that learn from these examples.

I really think that all of those who did wrong should be the first brought to justice, and at that moment when he/she comes to face justice, and when you, the young primarily, see that this is that person ... that means that the country is functioning, means they have started working, that something is changing, that something is happening, that things are clearing up. So dirty laundry is being protected, we need to get rid of it.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

The unresolvedness of the disappearance of certain people, as well as the families' disability to obtain information about their disappearance contributes to the complexity of reconciliation on a national and regional level. One of the respondents talks about detecting crime scenes that officially, on a state level, were not recognized as places of suffering. The public is not informed about it, however civil society representatives have information but have no power to inform the public or act in that direction.

We have accepted all international standards, we have accepted all suggestions that came from outside regarding fighting adequately against the impunity of war crimes, initiating proceedings, and we have raised charges that fell through due to non-realization. We had passed judgements that were extremely exculpatory, nobody took any responsibility, huge court

costs were a burden on the state... In the past couple of years, 3-4 years ago, there was no talk of war crimes in Montenegro, so nobody started the conversation about it, nor has the international community dealt with it. In the last few reports on the progress of Montenegro there are special paragraphs that charge Montenegro and talk about how this will be extremely stimulating for Montenegrin society. There is only one single final judgement and it is for the case of Morinj. In line with that, our prosecutor's office has issued a special document, the "hilarious" strategy of 2015 where it said that they will deal with all the past crimes that the justice system in Montenegro was dealing with... Thanks to this they formed three more cases. So now, we have seven cases on war crimes in the prosecutor's office, and all the while we have absolutely no information on what was achieved there. There is a special paragraph in that strategy that says that the Prosecution is obliged to submit a special report every two months, informing the public and other bodies of the Prosecutor's Office on what has been done in regards to that. From May 2015 until today, we have absolutely no information, nor will we get it from the prosecution. They do not disclose it, they think of it as an internal document.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The state does not show enough sensibility to citizens who are searching for their dead or missing. The deaths of Montenegrins are not adequately marked because the monuments that are raised have a symbolic, general character.

The state has not sent any apology to any of the victims in Montenegro. It has been 20 years since that all happened and we have over 60 people that are considered missing... Some even got compensation, I mean people who were victims of war, but not even that was adequately done. There is Herceg Novi, the deportation of refugees, Bukovica, Kaluđerski Laz... we.. visited all these places of suffering a few years ago and we are the only ones in the country who did so. I believe that no representative of our institutions or people from the parliament has made this trip...The public is not being informed on it, and there is one reason why they are not being informed, because one of the crimes that was committed in Montenegro is that they [authorities], I do not how many years ago, built a monument to these victims, located in Podgorica, and this was supposed to cover everything. Those who died in Montenegro and outside of Montenegro, all the nationalities... Nobody is guilty of Bukovica as far as I know, there is not guaranty that it will not happen again.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, PODGORICA)

The achievement of reconciliation on a national level includes transitional justice, meaning criminal, political and moral responsibility. In all these segments it is considered that there is no agreement and that not even the first degree of responsibility has been met. Several respondents mention "a culture of non-communication" that prevents listening and respect for other, different opinions. Fur-

thermore, the initiative for national reconciliation is important and it should come locally (from citizens) rather than the European Union.

What we have said within the country... reconciliation within the country, for not only these or whatever other events in the past, can only happen if we have two-way communication. There is a desire for [everybody] to close themselves in these little...oases...allegedly protected that do not have any desire for communication unless somebody from Europe makes them for the sake of some bigger projects. It seems to me like the very initiative that would come from the bottom would be much more significant than if it comes from high European policy only or from the state level of Montenegro.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Young people are seen as holders of national reconciliation even though they do not have real information on these events, therefore education is seen as a key variable in the process of peace building.

There must be education. That is the main thing... for the generations to know... So it is not important to say that we know, we know what happened and how it was; there are still people who know but how to explain it to the younger generations so that they do not wander or listen to their parents, so that they have their own opinion? Let them form their own opinion, but it is important for them to get the right information.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

Regional level of reconciliation

The regional level of reconciliation has been rounded to several discourses: the role of the European Union in regional reconciliation; regional cooperation of Montenegro; the role of regional political elites; work of the Hague Tribunal; relations between Croatia and Serbia; and strengthening of the right and neo-fascism in the regional and European context.

The following narrative warns of two problems in achieving regional reconciliation: firstly, the generation gap between the young and the elder primarily due to the experience of living within the framework of the socialist system, even though both generations are inclined to closing off and national homogenization. Accession to European integrations is considered to be a factor of reconciliation which will have an impact on the quality of life, although it is emphasized that this is not what is essential to build peace.

We, who grew up before the 1990s at the time of fraternity and unity, Yugoslavs etc... we are all great and wonderful but in essence we separate

ourselves into groups...at the same time we are not or we do not have the space or we are not ready to talk, to sit and talk... Access to European integrations is one of the factors of reconciliation, first of all for quality of life. But that cannot be the only thing that pulls us forward to, as a region, reconcile and everything else.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The following narrative presents just the opposite opinion on European integrations, and according to this Europe makes reconciliation harder and not easier. Europe's efforts influenced the regional level of reconciliation but equally important is acceptance of reconciliation on national levels.

The policy of European union unfortunately... has not helped this reconciliation at all and has made it harder, I think... we have moved on to the region too fast... it's like there was no pressure made inside the countries for the reconciliation process but instead they rushed reconciliation in the region, which is impossible if there is no reconciliation bellow... European policies, like all policies, they don't care about inside projects. If the citizens of the country don't care about changing the situation then the international community will absolutely not be interested, so in this part we failed. It was impossible to 'catch the train of developing' civic responsibility for everything that has happened... Every person needs to know what has happened and have that degree of responsibility for all that was done in their name because we cannot wash our hands of it.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

I feel like that very initiative that would come from bellow would be much more significant than the one coming only from high European policy or from state level of Montenegro.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Regional cooperation has been good so far and Montenegro has participated in it. Most of the peace building achievements have been achieved thanks to regional co-operation, one of the activists of civil society claims.

We have done a mapping that showed that over 70% of what was done in Montenegro and in any way related to the process of reconciliation was a regional project. It's good that there are regional initiatives in Montenegro, because if there wasn't it, there would be almost no mention of doing something about it.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Regional political elites are the bearers of a culture of fear and they manipulate fear in order to realize their interests, all in the name of collective actors - nations. The narrative warns of the possibility of new conflicts in the region.

Political elite intentionally plays the fear card... They survive on the account of our national divisions and they only encourage this when it suits them because they are here... the point is that we are closer to war now than we were 10 years ago and we thought that when we became an independent state we wouldn't even think about it, that instead institutions would work on it, transitional justice...

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Evaluation of the situation in Serbia points to the problems of regional reconciliation. Situation in Serbia is assessed especially poorly in the context of Vojislav Šešelj's acquittal given that Serbian authorities were leaders of war policy in the region.

On the anniversary of Srebrenica, when the President of Serbia appeared, the whole story was somehow ugly because the cause of the gathering turned into a story of non-reconciliation but, conversely, of the separation. And again, for example, Šešelj, a suspect in Hague who was freed of charges and so on... speaks about very low level of reconciliation and speaks about very little awareness on bad policy that wasn't for reconciliation but opposite, and that speaks about the bad situation in Serbia. When we talk about Bosnia and Herzegovina especially, I think that this system of three presidents creates an even bigger problem every day... there are no clear lines.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

In the context of evaluating the Hague Tribunal's work there is thematic pattern indicating that the Tribunal was led by politics in its decisions and therefore, in this context, its credibility and independence are disputable.

The Hague Tribunal, which is extremely significant, has done much to make these crimes visible and recognized; in the end it condemned Karadžić, Šešelj. When you see these convictions, you can see that they are more political than... so trust in international justice is being severely shaken. Of course, what's happening in Hague suits all the political elites because they, you see what's happening, "all praise their heroes and their criminals". The International Court of Justice did not have enough credibility or independence not to be misled by the political situation.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Relations between Croatia and Serbia put a burden the reconciliation of all countries in the region. It is estimated that there has been a political turnaround in these countries to the right and that neo-fascist tendencies appear that are not local or regional, but can be recognized in both the European and world contexts.

There is still a problem between Croatia and Serbia. We have not come far. There is, say, a change of government in Croatia, it's taking a step back

and continuing the same story, going back to the 1990s. In Serbia it's the same, so this very much affects the whole process in the region.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

There are events in the very countries like Croatia and Serbia, for example... The Ustashe movement has awakened, fascism has awakened literally, fascism that is the worst thing that has been happening recently. The pure fascism that is rising in Croatia, which in Serbia is the Chetnik movement, herein this and that and therefore I think that the situation is the same both in the world and in Europe, it is a big problem.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

One of the few approaches that speak from an economic standpoint recommends economic cooperation being the focus of countries in the region. It recommends studying the barriers to economic cooperation and establishing joint multilateral institutions that would deal with it.

The fact is that there needs to be work done on studying the business barriers of all countries and striving to equalize reciprocity. There need to be levels that would deal with it on a regional level.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Reconciliation perspectives

National perspective

In the analysis of the perspective of national reconciliation stands out a discourse of political change, the attitude towards ethnic minorities and a discourse pointing to the need for an internal restructuring of north and south Montenegro.

Politically speaking, it is necessary to encourage a new generation of politicians who would insist more on developing a civil state. The following narrative claims that civil society should have supported the enactment of lustration law that would have sparked good political change. If this had happened, civil society wouldn't have had to work so hard on raising awareness among citizens.

I feel sorry that civil society hasn't been doing a few things exclusively for the past 20 years. Seeking crime maps, demanding the implementation of RECOM initiative, to be disclosed who the people from Montenegro were, justifying and what they did. The second thing is the existence of criminal responsibility for what was done. Civil society has said nothing on the lustration law. And this law was the essence of change, of political change. So, only to change the ruling power, to eliminate all of those from the 90s from the politics. Every person who has crossed a line during this

war needs to be named. To ask them what they did there. Montenegro has the highest degree of mobilization on the entire territory of Yugoslavia. We cannot say that a large number of people has not rushed, we can take it into consideration because these people have something to say too, on why they crossed the border towards Croatia and towards Bosnia. They have the answer, but we do not have the answer on why 90% of the people were mobilized, when in Serbia it was around 54%. This is what the state needs to do, and civil society...they missed the boat, they should have put pressure on this... Raising awareness is not possible if all conditions are not met. So, if all of this was taken care of we would have to raise awareness. [When someone says:] "Oh, don't, I don't want to watch these films, you torture and pester there and we can't take that" [speaking of educational movies of civil society] - I understand that, you don't want to come each week to watch the murders in Bosnia or raping of women. But do you know, perhaps, that your father did that?

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The second perspective is proportional representation of all ethnicities living in Montenegro in the work of state institutions. Furthermore, institutions need to be connected, especially the public sector and the civil sector, which should contribute to the transfer of knowledge and experience.

In an effort to improve the process of bidirectional communication it is necessary to particularly encourage communication among young people of different nationalities.

[There needs to be proportional representation of]...Serbs, Albanians, Montenegrins, Bosniaks through state institutions and we would all be equal there. So, it wouldn't be, there is us Bosniaks, and there are, I don't know, 6%, 10% of us according to the listing, Montenegrins the same, this many to Serbs, that many to Albanians. Therefore, having a relationship with minorities in order to provide a basis for reconciliation and for equality among all people.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ROŽAJE)

Actions would need to be connected among many institutions, both the public sector and the non-governmental sector, together they could influence a lot. Of course, we can't expect change to happen soon, the same as with everything else, but step by step. In fact, if young people work on the process of reconciliation now, they will transfer these values to their children in the future.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

In communicating with people, I hear that nationalism among young people who did not participate in any war at all is much greater than with their parents who were involved in the war. The only way to mitigate this

is to socialize, not to close in a narrow national community because for me it's always dangerous, it always provokes.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

National reconciliation would be enhanced also by better cooperation between the north and south of Montenegro.

More investment, cooperation; in the south there is only seasonal work, here it is all year round. [In the north] we have nothing, we haven't even had snow in recent years, we have absolutely nothing.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ROŽAJE)

Regional reconciliation perspectives

Regional reconciliation perspective is confined with the following discourses that are based on the relationship between Croatia and Serbia, establishing truth and culprits of perpetrated crimes, economic co-operation, civil society organizations and culture.

There are constant crisis focal points in the region. We have previously seen that these are relations between Serbia and Croatia, and now there are warnings about the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia, for which the following narrative does not give an optimistic prognosis. Serbia needs to invest in reconciliation with neighbouring countries the most.

For example, Bosnia and Montenegro are in good relations and Croatia and Montenegro as well. We have a problem in the region, Serbia, which has a problem with Kosovo. Specifically, there will be no reconciliation there. I stress this out, based on the relations of these states in the Balkans, because half of them are in good relations, and half are not. Mostly, this refers to Serbia, which needs to reconcile with the neighbouring countries.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, ROŽAJE)

Proper functioning of judicial bodies, establishing the truth and the perpetrators of crimes committed in the region, is one of the key areas that will affect peace building. However, since it is still about the process of discovering mass graves and revealing the truth, it is difficult to achieve regional reconciliation.

I really believe that there is no true reconciliation until the truth is discovered about what has happened and all of the facts are determined about all the deceased, because the fact is that over 13 000 people are reported missing in the region... For example, a few days ago a mass grave was discovered in Bosnia. There is Batajnica, which is a catastrophic evil, people

simply couldn't believe that this was the centre of Belgrade, there was a movie made on this recently that provides striking data.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Economic cooperation is seen as one of the levers of regional rapprochement. There is already experience on this, and in this story the preservation of "national identity" plays no role. The big business has no limits.

You would not believe how well we work in the region with companies when it comes to business, how much people are willing to cooperate when they have a common interest. It's not a question of national identity at all, it's funny to say, the main partner in Sarajevo is a Dutch company ... I have perfect cooperation with various Croatian agencies, when we talk about big businesses.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Young people are seen as actors of regional reconciliation and one of the essential agents is the process of education, which is supposed to broaden horizons and affect change of values in the entire society. Civil society organizations have a big role in this, and they need to shape educational campaigns aimed at all citizens.

What he talked about... looking at the Balkans specifically... it's not young people's fault. It's still present here, what we talked about, media being run and all the other means, by older people who still impose this matter... It's not the youth, it's...these people who want to impose their opinion and their memories on young people. Now, let's say, this process in the region is going slowly, it's not all of a sudden.

(CIVIL SECTOR, ROŽAJE)

Organization of educational campaigns and forums by non-governmental organizations, where people would express their opinion... divided, perhaps even the citizens themselves, who would benefit most in all this, in my opinion.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The processes launched by the EU are considered to be positive for the situation in the region and there are also romanticized memories of the old models of connecting "peoples and ethnicities in Yugoslavia" (e.g., work actions) that were functional at the time. Respondents also got the chance to add things that weren't talked about in focus groups or were not elaborated enough. Two topics were highlighted: art and research being extremely important for national and regional reconciliation of nations. Research results could help the media as well in giving true information.

Very, very important to me, in this aspect of regional and national level, is art, which we haven't mentioned as a segment per se, and which we

often forget and is forgotten in the state but it's a value that needs to be worked on.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

We are focused on this determining of facts, but also certain research, of which there is very little in this field... to obtain some data that could [be useful] to the media as well.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

Perception of the role of civil society organizations

The role of CSOs in Montenegrin society is assessed in a variety of ways; discourse ranges from their great importance to the limited possibilities of action. Criticism related to the inter-state CSO connections as well as regional connections have been reported. For co-operation between the CSOs and the public sector, it is proposed to maintain long-term projects whose effects can be monitored. The CSO's cooperation with the economic sector is not understood and people do not understand how this co-operation should take place in general. As far as access to funds is concerned, criticism has been made that the same organizations keep receiving projects while it's harder for smaller or less known ones to break through.

The explanation for the importance of civil society organizations is seen in the area of shaping and raising values and in which other social institutions are not active (for example, schools). There should be far more such programs than possibly organized.

The problem with the non-governmental sector is that we don't have quantity, and we have quality, because the sector operates on donations. It's harder to achieve a larger quantity... In Montenegro specifically, NGO sector works a lot on reconciliation, by implementing these programs in other structures as well, when I say a large role I [mean] an extraordinary one.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

I see that there are even some non-governmental networks, from different countries in the region. I see that members of the non-governmental sector are coordinating, working, coming up with phenomenal ideas, connecting with funds. They apply for foreign funds, a lot has been done... but that doesn't mean that it can't be better. Of course, as citizens we have expectations, and I speak as a citizen now, we expect an even higher degree of engagement.

(CITIZENS, ROŽAJE)

The limited perception of civil society's influence elaborates the following narrative claiming that this sector is not independent from the state, i.e. that better cooperation with the public sector strengthens civil society.

And the next narrative goes in the direction of criticizing the civil sector that should "cooperate and not oppose the public sector".

In order to truly be a non-governmental sector they need to work separately from the state, but they are not independent, not all non-governmental sectors are independent. Depending on how much they rely on state money, that is how successful they are. And they certainly were a bright spot in the history of Montenegro.

(CITIZENS, ROŽAJE)

In any case, [their influence] is very limited... I think there is so many of them that this segment is quite underestimated in the sense of its significance, especially regarding reconciliation, no matter that we weren't directly involved in conflict with our neighbours and other countries... Also, there is often a bad interpretation of the role of the NGO sector in terms of opposing instead of cooperating... It doesn't mean that being the opposition means always saying no, same with the NGO sector, they need to be partners, to see themselves in certain projects, to initiate, to visit.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Another criticism of the civil sector is their interest in only those topics funded from European funds.

If you have support from European funds regarding a certain topics, then non-governmental sector will initiate this issue. If not, nobody wants to deal with that issue. Whether we admit it or not, that is the fact.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The civil sector is divided and they cooperate poorly, but if they worked together they would have a bigger influence on citizens and the media.

Unlike earlier narratives in which awareness is stressed as one of the main roles of civil society, the following warns that this is not what civil society should deal with; its roles should be advocacy and disrupting official discourse.

Civil society can advocate and disrupt, I don't see what else, and I even think that it's a waste of energy trying to raise awareness. This needs to be done by institutions and this needs to be done by the education system... What's hard on a national level is that there are too little of us and we are divided. If all non-governmental organizations in Montenegro dealt with this topic, we would have a chance to do something on a global level. But we can see now how much are we dealing with this topic within our or-

ganizations, we don't even have an organization that deals with this topic exclusively and connects.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, PODGORICA)

The narrative which conveys the experience of a public officer, who looks at this disunity from his perspective, talks about the lack of cooperation among the civil society organizations.

To add something shortly about these non-governmental organizations, we cooperate with the association of families of missing persons in the area of Kosovo and from the cooperation we've had with them so far and from the meetings we attended; they are always attended by associations of missing persons from the area of former Yugoslavia. I see that cooperation between them is not developed sufficiently, and I think that these associations should have significant role in order to reconcile... I can see at these meetings that they don't even greet each other. This association of missing persons from the Kosovo area, they are stationed in Sutomore and they were with us at this conference in Sarajevo, and there were attendees from Republic Srpska, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, and I see that they don't communicate at all... And then... I wonder what their goal is anyway.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Furthermore, in the critique of the work of civil society organizations, the low number of those who deal with the topic of reconciliation is highlighted, that is, specifically with victims, and little attention is paid to direct contact with people in the field. The "allocation of funds" by the EU is blamed for such a situation, although this is not sufficiently explained in this discourse.

I think that this regional cooperation is very problematic, because these organizations and European Union have created a chaos. You have organizations that needlessly deal with victims, you have organizations that don't deal with victims at all. And now, there is a big problem in civil society, there is not many of them in Montenegro because there is not many of us, and in other countries there is this diversity. There is a small number of these organizations that deal with [this topic] specifically, in Bosnia as well, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro. It's awfully difficult. But not dealing with victims is in the interest of politicians only, because they manipulate it.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Intersectoral cooperation

The public sector (state) works a lot with civil society organizations in the legislative domain. Whenever there is a draft law of state institutions, civil society organizations are contacted. Critique of civil sector's work emerges from the interest

for European Union's money, but when it is less-finances national projects this interest is not so great. Civil sector should criticize and advocate their interests and not be susceptible to EU's competitions. Serious critique goes to the evaluation of the later effects of projects run by non-governmental organizations, because when they pass, it can happen that more than one thing on a project theme is not working, so the effects of CSOs can only be evaluated as long as an individual project takes place.

There is not a single forum, public gathering presentation where we were invited that there was no one from the ministry... [I have] a cooperation with 10 non-governmental organizations. There is not a single law proposal that didn't have a member of the non-governmental sector publicly invited. But these projects that have funds, money from European Union funds, that's where we have problems because a larger number shows up... I want to add to these issues that the non-governmental sector needs to criticize the government but also they need to work on some things on their own. When there is something in the budget, it all ends as soon this money gets spent, and then the projects ends [from that point on].

(PUBLIC SECTOR, PODGORICA)

The cooperation between the non-governmental sector and the private sector is not satisfactory, moreover, the narrative indicates the private sector's exploitation by non-governmental organizations, although the whole situation is not explained. Negative work experience created animosity towards any further cooperation.

I just want to say that I have been exploited by the non-governmental sector... us, the businesses, have nothing to do with you. And now there is a big battle between the non-governmental and the business sector, which is a great pity and for the first time this topic is being set up within such a focus group with businesses.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PODGORICA)

One of the narratives argues that CSOs should behave in a market-like way, meaning that they should adopt and convey the knowledge that the private sector does not have. Although such a market approach, presented in the following narrative is probably beneficial to the private sector, the non-governmental sector functions according to different rules.

NGOs should behave like a company, have their product that they can sell, and companies should behave like NGOs a little, and adopt some knowledge that they don't have. This is a great approach, combining the most diverse endpoints always gives great results.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Non-governmental organizations are poorly acquainted of the private sector operations. The following narrative implies that they do not have enough knowledge. At the same time, the private sector does not have enough money to support CSOs' projects. Although such a situation is assessed as interim, there is a possibility of cooperation but without specifying the topics.

Though former work I see specifically that... the NGO sector doesn't understand it enough; that businesses in Montenegro do not have enough money to allocate... I'll say it again, that it's a matter of current situation. If, at this moment, a surplus of some resources in the domain appeared... I think that there are a lot of topics, and the NGO sector has dealt with a great part of these topics in the past.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Civil society organizations could find their place in cooperation with the private sector in legal initiatives. There, they should be a corrective that would introduce to laws the solving of problems related to the private sector.

Well, for example, let's look at this legal part, that I think is not practiced and acknowledged; it would be a much better solution if the non-governmental sector got involved in certain issues... I think that if all the non-governmental organizations there are in Montenegro did their job the way they're supposed to, we would certainly be a dreamland. Laws would be respected.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ROŽAJE)

Cooperation between the private, public and civil sectors is one of the key research interests of this project whose results show that this cooperation is at a low level in the content sense.

One of the factors is certainly the underdevelopment of the private sector as well as its willingness to cooperate with the public and civil sectors. The economic sector is deprived and it can be said that it has low capacity and does not understand the concept of "cross-sectoral cooperation". A similar conclusion could also be applied to the civil sector.

What the respondents point out is the importance of economic stability and the development of the private sector. If this does not exist, or where the areas are regionally underdeveloped, it is illusory to expect support or some kind of development.

Our municipality is not developed and so these businesses [do not work] ... It all comes down to a smaller volume of work. And down in Podgorica, it's a different story, the port of Bar also. Kolašin is another country when it comes to business. Rožaje used to have 10 factories and now there is none, industry in Gornji Ibar, it was once a city to look up to, it was known

outside the region as well. Gornji Ibar used to employ so many workers, and now there are only attempts. When a client walks in I know instantly what he wants and where he is going.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ROŽAJE)

If there was cooperation on a regional level between the private and public sector respondents would support such an idea, even though they question the capacities, will and desire of the sector for cooperation.

[Regional cooperation] could definitely contribute to reconciliation. We have people from private companies who work with Bosnia and Herzegovina ... and they are of different religions... and definitely I cannot say that there is total reconciliation between them now. But really the communication they have with private companies here delighted me. Just take how much they've become friends, how much they socialize. There is possibility of some reconciliation there... Not only interest.

(CITIZENS, PODGORICA)

Social entrepreneurship is generally assessed as a great unknown among respondents in Montenegro. Some have never heard of this concept. Only one respondent considered that there was great potential in this regard.

I see great potential here. Great potential and a great field of manipulation... Entrepreneurship needs to be built directly and that's the essence, it's a great thing, for somebody to do field work, for entrepreneurship not to be only making bags, but also entrepreneurship as serious work of socially and psychologically raising awareness. So, this is where the great potentials are... I went to a meeting and I said, please don't make laws, because laws take a lot of money, there's a lot of talk, and there's nothing left in the field. What these social enterprises should do is start working and then we can make laws in Montenegro according to them.

(CIVIL SECTOR, PODGORICA)

Conclusions and recommendations

We have shown in the first part related to conceptualization of reconciliation that the relationship towards war in the former Yugoslavia, and therefore towards reconciliation, is of dual character.

Firstly, there are discourses that negate Montenegro's participation in the war and, similarly, those who claim that Montenegro's role was minor in comparison to other countries in the region, and that the state can be considered a kind of "peace vessel of the region". From this perspective, reconciliation is the most easily achieved in Montenegro. In such a conceptualization,

crimes committed in Montenegro are divided into separate cases that do not disturb interethnic dynamics.

The second approach to peace and reconciliation is of dynamic character because implies that reconciliation is a process. Reconciliation is, according to some narratives, accepted in the national, political elite, but not among the people. Precisely because it is in the hands of politics, the process of reconciliation is not linear in character but it is broken and has been interrupted several times so far - discourses indicate that the interruptions were related to the interests of the political elite. With such an approach, the process of reconciliation should be continuous and evolutionary, and necessarily intertwined with facing the past.

Three actors of reconciliation were identified: state, civil society and citizens. The state has been recognized as a powerful and most important peace builder of the three, but that does not mean that there is confidence that its role will be realized. Reconciliation should first and foremost be achieved among the citizens at the levels: family-to-neighbours-education, i.e. private and private/public domain. Such a proposal is contrary to the results of research suggesting the youth's lack of interest in the process of reconciliation.

The analysis of barriers to reconciliation shows that respondents who have knowledge on the process of searching for dead and missing in areas in which Montenegro also fought are considerably more pessimistic and they find that reconciliation is difficult to achieve. This process will be even more difficult if nationalism is not "kept under control". The obstacles to peace building are further located in the media and their (weak) interest in reporting on reconciliation (avoiding critical discourse and revalorizing the role of the state in the war) and there is a discourse that locates the Balkans in a constant, conflicting area where "violent codes of behaviour" rule. The latter refers to a kind of cultural conditionality that does not support a peaceful resolution of conflict, but encourages problem solving by force.

Crimes scenes in Montenegro where there was suffering are still not officially recognized - this is identified as a key point of national awareness. However, the public is not sufficiently informed on these events and civil society, who has information, is not powerful enough to place them in the media.

Regional level of reconciliation is assessed through accession to European integrations, but in reality, benefits related to the quality of life are expected rather than reconciliation. Reconciliation should, as seen from a regional context, happen within national states first (discovering the truth, accepting the past, processing crimes). Out of the more important topics, it is necessary to highlight the relations between Croatia and Serbia, who have a negative impact on overall, regional relations. Also, right-wing political tendencies in these states cause fear and are assessed as damaging.

Perspectives of national and regional reconciliation should certainly be marked by networking between civil society and the public sector. Additionally, a new generation of politicians would contribute to better perspectives, which suggests to some respondents the importance of political change. Out of the other actors, younger generations, that should communicate more regionally, are mentioned. Economy is not particularly pronounced in the narratives, but where it is, an important leverage in bringing together states in the region is seen in it.

The range of assessments of the role of civil society organizations in the process of reconciliation and evaluation of the work of this sector is wide. Citizens praise the engagement of civil society, the public sector argues that civil society is not independent, but it should be, while members of civil society focus groups (and also the public sector) are extremely critical. Certainly, a lot is expected of civil society still; interconnecting and working together is one of the ideas that could help to strengthen their social power. Also, the topic of reconciliation as such is in the work domain of a very small number of civil organizations. Project orientation, especially when it comes to reconciliation, is not desirable, but continuity of work on the same issue, which points to the necessity of focusing and specialization of civil society organizations.

Intersectoral cooperation of all three sectors (public, private, civil sector) is not sufficiently represented or recognized. Civil and public sector co-operation exists while the economic sector is perceived more as a donor and less as a partner to a civil society. The private sector is considered impoverished and the one who needs help as well. One of the ideas that emerged is that civil sector should actually help economically in those areas that are problematic for it (e.g. laws that do not facilitate business).

In conclusion, given the EU requirements and state behaviour, the process of reconciliation has not progressed much. Such a message is also received by citizens, and according to previously presented research on the process of reconciliation there is no excess interest even in the professional public.

The role of civil society could encourage possible co-operation in other important actor, but as the role of civil society is assessed as controversial, potential that can trigger change can only be expected of those organizations that focus on the subject of reconciliation.

Kosovo

THE AREA OF TODAY KOSOVO HAS BEEN THE SCENE OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN SERBS AND Albanians from long ago. Multi-year conflicts between these two ethnic groups culminated in the year 1996 in Kosovo war the aim of which was to retain Kosovo in Serbia, while the Albanians wanted independence. The armed conflict ended with the military intervention of NATO, and Kosovo was placed under the UN Protectorate. Mentioned territory located in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula is currently the subject of a dispute between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Kosovo. Namely, the Parliamentary Assembly of Kosovo proclaimed independence of Kosovo from Serbia in 2008, and, in this moment, 113 subjects of international relations³⁶ supported the independence of Kosovo. At the same time, Kosovo is not officially recognized by the UN, but it should be noted that 56.5% of the Member States of the UN recognized Kosovo as an independent state. This historical and foreign policy dimension has repercussions on the population divided into ethnic Serbs and ethnic Albanians whose relationship is marked by divisions, conflict and intolerance, making coexistence challenging and complicated. The overview of relevant legal and other documents, bodies and researches that illustrate the ethnic picture of Kosovo with the goal of contextualization of findings of empirical of qualitative research are presented in the second part of this chapter.

There are several normative and legal acts which stipulate commitment of Kosovo to human rights, freedom, and the rule of law and protection of minorities against discrimination. Given the fact that Kosovo is not a state member of the UN, it has no possibility of ratification of the International Convention on Human Rights, but the same core values are embodied in the Constitution of Kosovo.

The preparation for the adoption of the constitution included, even before declaring the independence, the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement in 2007 in which the emerging state committed to protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, religious and cultural heritage of the citizens, the rights of refugees and migrants, providing mechanisms for invention missing persons and solving economic problems, as well as the problem of poverty among citizens. Thus, Kosovo, at least declaratively, and before gaining its independence,

³⁶ It is about 109 sovereign states and four other government entities.

opted for fundamental democratic values. Furthermore, the Kosovo opted for the European path so that in 2012 drafted the Action Plan on negotiations of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, which entered into force on 1 April 2016. The Stabilization and Association Agreement focus on respect for key democratic principles and the implementation of the main elements that make up the core of the single market of the EU. The idea of the Agreement is to establish a free trade area and facilitate the application of European standards in other areas, such as competition, state aid and intellectual property. Other provisions included the political dialogue, cooperation in a wide range of sectors, from education and employment and energy, the environment, justice and home affairs. Among others, the Agreement calls for interethnic dialogue and peace building.

Due to the turbulent past of Kosovo, especially in the context of the conflict between Serbs and Albanians in 2012, the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Dealing with the Past and Reconciliation was established. The purpose of the establishment of this body was situation resolution concerning serious violations of international humanitarian in order to encourage peace, accountability, ensuring reparations for victims of conflict in the past and general promotion of the rule of law.

The mandate of this working group is based on the four pillars of Transitional Justice including truth-searching, reparations, justice for victims and institutional reform. Although designed as a project that brings together different stakeholders to create an enabling environment for quality coexistence of different groups, political support for the project is extremely limited. The representatives of the ministries which should be key actors in this process were not willing to engage in the work of this Working Group that is eventually reduced to a deliberative forum of representatives of civil society and technical staff of UNDP.

In the year 2008, it was founded the RECOM - Regional Commission for Establishing the Facts about War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the period from 1 January 1991 to 31 December 2001. According to the Statute, it is an interstate commission which is established by the states emerged in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. This extrajudicial body aimed to investigate all allegations of all war crimes and other serious violations of human rights in connection with the war; individually list all victims of war and victims of crimes related to the war and to collect information about the camps and other places of forced detention.

The Constituent Assembly of RECOM was held in Pristina, and during the process, some forty civil society organizations (CSOs) joined that conducted, throughout the territory of Kosovo, local and national consultations with relevant stakeholders and focus groups and analysis of secondary sources of information with organizations of victims, missing persons, women, young people, artists and the like. Although RECOM was widely accepted by the progressive forces in Kosovo, there was no real support from the government. The positive side of the overall process related to the establishment of RECOM was placing the issue of dealing with

the past on the agenda. The disadvantage was insufficiently developed advocacy strategy, as well as excessive ambition with regard to the socio-political context of Kosovo.

Besides RECOM and inter-ministerial working group, a special court for investigation of war crimes during and after the war in Kosovo will start its operations in 2017. The idea of the court is to be physically located in Hague, and to operate under Kosovo law aimed at ensuring justice and war crimes processing. The uniqueness of this institution is evident in the fact that it is composed of international judges who will try cases in concordance with Kosovar laws, but also provide the legal standards of the Dutch trial. The latter is in fact necessary because witness protection is quite deficient in the jurisprudence of Kosovo. Although the implementation of these institutions should have started in 2016, it has been postponed for a year.

Several relevant research reports of international organizations in relation to human rights situation and indirectly related to reconciliation with the past and transitional justice in Kosovo. It is emphasized the adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan for Human Rights (2013-2017), as well as the satisfactory level of involvement of different stakeholders in the processes related to the protection of human rights at the local level. Somewhat more detailed report brings the results of the OECD, i.e. their offices in Kosovo dealing with the assessment of the involvement of the minority population in the processes of normative acts at the local level. The research results show minimal or no involvement of minorities in decision-making processes and a translation of relevant laws on minority languages despite stipulated legal obligation. In addition to linguistic minorities, the context and gender-based facing the past, so, in 2013, a research titled Mapping of local initiatives on Women, Peace and Security in Kosovo 1999-2012 Chapter 3, Mapping of institutional framework and Overall Implementation of UNSCR 1325 showed that more efforts need to be put for creating an enabling environment to effectively address the issues of sexual and gender-based violence in the area of Kosovo, in the context of facing the past.

Potentially the most interesting initiative, and thus the follow-up report is a BIG DEAL: Split Asunder. It is about a research on a sample of 100 respondents (citizens, journalists, local politicians and negotiators) that showed actual state of implementation of the agreements reached between the official Pristina and Belgrade. The findings show that only four out of 17 agreements between Kosovo and Serbia have been actually implemented, while two have been almost realised. The content of mentioned agreements varies, including regulation of recognition of higher education qualifications, the issues of telecommunications between the two countries, the position of Serbs in Kosovo until the institutionalization of free movement of citizens of Kosovo and Serbia between the two countries. Similar to the previous cases related to the body and the implementation of normative

acts, it seems that the variable of political power is the most appropriate to explain the reasons for the slow unravelling of the situation between Kosovo and Serbia.

In view of the above, it can be concluded that the institutional situation of reconciliation and transitional justice in Kosovo is ambivalent and depends on the segment to segment. Although the regulatory framework is in place, the problem is its implementation, while the reasons for the poor quality implementation can be found in the lack of commitment of political elites to processes of achieving sustainable peace.

Empirical Research Findings

Reconciliation Concept

The concept of reconciliation is well known to the participants of focus groups. It is one of those concepts encountered on a daily basis, whether in private life, whether used in the public sphere by various institutions and organizations. From the analysis of the findings of focus groups it is possible to identify four main discourses related to the conceptualization of the construct of reconciliation. The first of these discourses explains the largest part of conceptualisation of reconciliation, and it is about understanding of the said as a compromise to end the conflict. Understanding the process of reconciliation through the eyes of a compromise is particularly relevant because it includes the intention to open a dialogue between the conflicting parties. Putting an end to a conflict is often used metaphors whereby respondents recognize that the process of reconciliation, though seen as an on-going process, however, however, has its end. This is evident from the findings that suggest that respondents in the focus groups clearly highlight the achievement of justice and the future prospects as the building blocks of the reconciliation process.

In order to reach reconciliation, I think that both sides, after the conflict, should come to some kind of conversation, just to hear problems or about crimes committed on both sides. After such conversation, it would be good both side to be punished for all these criminal acts 'after the kind of justice' because the reconciliation is reached only at that moment when justice is enforced.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, PRISTINA)

Look at the future, not the past any more.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

Another discourse that occurs while analysing the results of the focus groups is inevitable linking of reconciliation with the ethnic dimension. When talking

about defining the concept of reconciliation from the ethnical standpoint, participants are referred to the conflicts between Albanians and Serbs in the territory of Kosovo today. In other words, the ethnicity is a factor providing sense to the explanation of the concept of reconciliation in Kosovo wherein reconciliation should begin on the “top-down” manner. Perhaps it is best summed up by the civil society female representatives from Kosovska Mitrovica:

Well, given that we live in Kosovo, to us, really, reconciliation is always linked to an association of reconciliation between two ethnic groups of Serbs and Albanians, right away we have the association of conflict we experienced, the war and everything else, so that the reconciliation is the association thereto as a kind of reconciliation collectively, then, thereafter we attach to that some individual, personal, etc.

Ethnically, the collective character of reconciliation is especially important because it implies a broaden component of the inherent conflicts in the Balkans. In fact, several respondents believe that the Balkan area, is the scene of numerous conflicts for centuries and that the Serbian-Albanian conflict should be observed in this context.

Besides the ethnic discourse, it appears, although in a lesser frequency and economic dimensions of reconciliation. As expected, private sector representatives interpret reconciliation through economic relations. Moreover, some representatives considered that a private company are flagship insistence on reconciliation, because it is in their interest to place their own product on the market and become competitive abroad with the aim of gaining profit.

To reach reconciliation, a certain form of cooperation must exist, at the business level. To have no limits, to change the administration, to be irrelevant whether I am a Serb or whether I shall place my product somewhere. Since I know that there was, for example ‘Plazma’, the case here with us of specifically boycotting of our products.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

As I previously mentioned, businesses and economic development are very important. Two factors brought peace in the Balkans: economic development and ethnic divisions.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PRISTINA)

The last emerged discourse, but relevant in the context of the research question, is the artificiality of the concept of reconciliation itself. However, there is thinking that the concept of reconciliation is a construct imposed by the West whose integral components are not successfully embedded into the society.

Respondents, particularly those from civil society, do not believe that the concept is inherent in a social context that is burdened with centuries-old ethnic conflict,

but it has been imposed by the international community including the European Union as a precondition for the access thereto.

I said at the beginning that the concept is imposed by the international structures that have come and intervened in Kosovo, it is also a political concept that undergone different dynamics in the post-transition countries.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, PRISTINA)

Historically, we are at war with reconciliation, we Albanians have always had a tendency for revenge, for centuries brothers have been killing each other, so the reconciliation has always the key point of us to move forward as a nation, and we still have this problem. Reconciliation not only in major cases, such as national or state ones, but also many disagreements in the home and discord in a family, I even think that the problem is the lack of communication with each-other, we are in a hurry a lot and we have prejudices, so that we do not listen to each other, we have a very strong anger, that is why the reconciliation remains an obstacle. It is good to discuss about reconciliation, because I think that there is still a problem. This is a key point that must be worked out.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, PRISTINA)

At the same time, they understand the importance of European integration which, as they say, should bring economic prosperity.

If agreed notion on boundaries is to be settled, if we could enter the European Union with all those criteria, then it is normal the reconciliation is to happen, because we would develop economically for sure and then we would have obligations required by the EU itself, so that we should reconcile with our cross-border neighbours because we need to cooperate with each other.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, PRISTINA)

Furthermore, the concept of reconciliation being imposed is especially interesting if one take into account the relationship between personal and collective. The respondents also believe that reconciliation at the individual level is more honest than the one at the collective level, i.e. reconciliation at the individual level (at the average level) more progressed than that at the level of society. Here, again, it is highlighted the role of states and scepticism towards the existence of political will for genuine reconciliation. This is confirmed by the articulated scepticism towards negotiations between the official Pristina and official Belgrade because it is considered that there is no true political will the reconciliation to happen at the state level.

Furthermore, perception of the public sector is somewhat different from the perception of all other sectors:

Yes, I think that in our society there is an impression of reconciliation. As a nation, we have often proved in history that we are a people who forgive.

Concerning the factor of reconciliation, it is considered that an apology is a precondition for starting the process of reconciliation because it brings, at least, a certain level of satisfaction with the victims and those close to the victims. Respondents also address the concept of justice, but they are quite sceptical about the effectiveness of the judicial system. Furthermore, two factors are pointed out in explaining the concept i.e. education and youth. The prevailing thinking is that education is necessary for the promotion of reconciliation, and as regards the role of youth in understanding and lasting of reconciliation, opinions are divided. While some believe that young people are more tolerant as they were not as exposed to direct conflicts, others are concerned of them showing exclusionary tendencies that the system does not correct, but encourage. Finally, it should be noted and understanding of reconciliation in relation to stronger-weaker. Individuals understand reconciliation as a power relation where the stronger imposes and a weaker must accept the rules of the game.

It is clear that history is written by the winners and defeated bear most of the blame, so is in this case, but it is a bit illogical situation in the field which shows that many Serbs are missing in Kosovo today, and no one is responsible for that.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

An interesting is a discourse in which a certain number of respondents call for Greater Albania as a way of parrying the neighbourhood.

In fact, we are not the strongest here; we are the weakest one in the Balkans.

Neither we have an economic power, nor political, nor military.

(CITIZENS, PRISTINA)

Convicted, not convicted, for example: Seselj is not apologizing; he wants to come to Kosovo to encourage the Serbs. I think that there is something else herein, the question of how weak we are in every aspect, once we unite, to create an Albanian nation of 7-8 million people in the Balkans, then you are equal with the Serbs, the Greeks, Bulgarians and Croats then there shall be the reconciliation, which means that there is no the strongest one who is imposing but they will see that you are strong.

(CITIZENS, PRISTINA)

On the other hand, a direct replica of the foregoing shows that there is no unified thinking on that matter.

First, I object to accept the role of inferiority and I do not accept us as being weak in the role. If we do not see ourselves as at least equal in terms

of power in the Balkans, if we start with the assumption that we do not deserve equality and reconciliation, not to get it as a gift given to us from the strongest one, or from foreign friends. I think this mentality should not have followed us.

(CITIZENS, PRISTINA)

This non-uniformity in opinions is a reflection by the polarization of citizens and those who believe that it is possible to achieve equality with rigid means and those who are prone to diplomatic solutions. It is particularly interesting that this type of discourse comes from the citizens.

In conclusion, although pessimistic towards the actual situation related to reconciliation with Serbia, they still consider it a necessary precondition for the normalization of life.

As regards reconciliation, I think that there is no sincere reconciliation in the region as interlocutors said in their previous speeches, it means a clean imposed solution, and I think that there is no genuine reconciliation.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

But for me, reconciliation is a necessary process for the normalization of our lives in the society of the Western Balkans.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, PRISTINA)

In the Balkans, fierce history is among us, almost constant wars, unstoppable, someone dominating, someone is a slave, there is a moment of great 'historical subscription'. We should not forget the past, but it should be worked on the future in order us to be together.

(CITIZENS, PRISTINA)

The analysis of the focus groups findings determined that the most interested in the conceptualization of the reconciliation process were representatives of civil society in the sample. Respondents of this sector are coherent in their views, and there is no major difference between those in the capital and those in the post-conflict area. Representatives of other sectors participate in the dominant discourses to a lesser extent and their answers are mainly based on generally accepted, very general, thinking.

National and regional level

After conceptualization of reconciliation, we were interested in actual situation of the same matter at national and regional level. The respondents were asked about the actors and factors contributing to the reconciliation process, and, on the basis of their responses, several discourses have been created. Of particular

importance are the factors that overlap, so that the respondents consider them to be important for both, reconciliation at the national and regional level.

As regards the national level, two complementary discourses prevail. It is a necessity for the consolidation of democracy, which includes ensuring stability and security.

First of all, there is a need to establish a democracy in practice, not just on paper. All of these countries are democratic countries, but, all that, I mean; democracy cannot be headed by a man who was until recently a radical. It is simply impossible. And, then, people realize that it is not sincere, it is not a democracy.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

The second discourse relates to the importance of formal and informal education, especially in terms of consensus around a common history that, as a school subject, should teach agreed content to all students regardless of nationality. Civil society representatives in Pristina clearly summed up the thinking of other participants, representatives of the sector, explaining:

The other thing of importance for me is the education and the reform of institutions, when it comes to education; I mean specifically the history books. If we do not interpret the same events together, then, I think, the idea of reconciliation should not be forced.

The findings of the focus groups, in particular those of the civil society, it has seen a noticeable discrepancy between the perceptions of existing documents and carried out in practice. Respondents believe that the normative framework is perhaps good, but the implementation of the same does not function. Thereby they confirmed the findings of the first part of this research which, by summarizing various research reports, warns about that manifestation in Kosovo.

If we start towards the institutional rights, the state has completed its job as far as the legal side; the legislation which has been built is a community issue.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

Participants consider it necessary to ensure appropriate mechanisms for prevention and appropriate reaction to discrimination, and, the institutions, in this regard, need to work more efficiently. It is underlined the necessity of free and democratic elections, as well as cooperation between different stakeholders to ensure a stable and sustainable peace. In addition, the role of the state and politics, first and foremost, is to ensure peace and security for all citizens, regardless of ethnic origin and/or belongings. Also, they believe that the reconciliation process conducted at the national level is alienated from citizens, which prevents their participation, but also a kind of control over the reconciliation process itself.

Each side interprets as it like, and the rest of us are not involved in the process. If you ask questions important for the Serbs in Kosovo, I think, both the Serbian and the Kosovo governments should involve them, both parties need to have the Serbs, and, if we are to part of that process and be asked about our survival, I think, it would be much different. Thus, they are only pushing the things they advocate, conduct secretly the Brussels' agreement and, then, everything is imposed on us and it is not sustainable.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

The role of education and youth has already been mentioned when respondents were asked to conceptualize reconciliation. Since it is here mentioned as a factor, it can be concluded that the respondents have faith in education and its role in education. In addition to formal education, the participants emphasize the informal organization of various meetings or events involving representatives of both Serbs and Albanians. Mutual communication increases the level of acceptance and work for reconciliation on a personal level.

The role of economy which should be stronger at the national level is highlighted. A stronger economy, according to participants, would reduce poverty, but also employed population that would have not been subject to manipulations that are not uncommon by the media.

Yes, strengthen economically all countries. Only the economy and mutual cooperation in economic terms, beat poverty, all of these countries are very poor. When people are poor they watch what is happening on the political scene, when they are not poor, when they work, when they have money, then they think about nothing. First of all, establish economic co-operation and eliminate hate speech from all countries.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

The economy is mentioned as a promising sector for peace building in the region as well. By exchanging goods, it is entered into contacts with the other nations, which can result in reconciliation. This statement, although desirable from the perspective of reconciliation, should be taken with a grain of salt. Conducting further analysis we came to the conclusion that the discourse in which economy helps reconciliation is kind of desirable response. In other words, respondents in answering to other questions highlighted clearly and unequivocally the national protectionism product as a value to strive for while answering other questions. Members of the majority population, thus Albanians, are very averse to buying Serbian products because they believe that the products of Albania cannot be found in Serbia. In other words, the lack of reciprocity in trade is identified between national economies. It is particularly interesting that the same participants believe that the economic exchange contributes to the process of reconciliation.

The products coming from Serbia and Macedonia are set at lower prices compared with domestic products. It is extremely ironic, I do not know

the policy, and what should the country do, but priority should be given to local products. While, from a various reasons we cannot sell our products in Serbia, Serbian products are available on our markets. And me, despite the fact I like the youth of ours and from Belgrade are mentally open, have a different approach to the future, but I will not buy Serbian products, even if they are the best, because we are not free to operate on their market as them are operating here.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PRISTINA)

When asked what they observe as an obstacle of the products of Albanian producers to be found on the shelves in Serbia, the answer we got - politics. Special resentment is evident in the non-involvement of citizens in processes that could improve the economic well-being.

I agree with the interlocutor, the citizens are asked the least, everything starts from the politics and some important figures in the policy world, and, simply, such is the reality, we cannot reach a real reconciliation until our politicians do not agree on some things and until they start asking people i.e. the citizenship, guess the policy should listen to that people to use their power, but it is very poorly applied in our region.

(CITIZENS, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

However, the policy is not only important for the economy. A factor that explains part of the regional level is the freedom of movement. The respondents, both Serbs and Albanians believe that the free movement is of unquestionable value and that policy should invest more efforts to strengthen the mobility of people. In addition, focus groups emphasized the factor of emotions of fear and hatred.

I am most sorry for the young Serbs who live in Kosovo, they are so isolated, who in fact do not believe that the situation, especially in Pristina, is not wild them not being able to move freely. I would like to do something so that they can move freely.

Moderator: Why don't they move freely?

Because of fear, it is probably interpreted differently from Belgrade. They still hate us, and they still cannot accept the fact that we live together. They should try.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PRISTINA)

A particularly interesting finding with the focus group of citizens and representatives of private sector is the one that suggests that art is a very good medium for spreading the message of reconciliation. Respondents in the focus groups gave several examples of how the cooperation between Serbs and Albanians in the field of culture was successful. Providing arguments that the idea of culture and art knows no boundaries, and there are no national art that are exclusive, the participants believe that exactly the examples of good practice can teach how such modus of interethnic cooperation can be transferred to some other segments of society.

I indeed would agree with XY saying that culture, artistic level, novels, theatre, film, etc., are torches, avant-garde, which encourage reconciliation.

(CITIZENS, PRISTINA)

The role of the civil sector

It is generally accepted the thesis that the civil sector in the area of Balkan is an important actor in the process of reconciliation. Numerous initiatives, of which the most famous one is RECOM, show orientation of the civil sector towards these themes. Focus group participants generally view positively about the efforts and initiatives of the civil society regarding reconciliation. Citizens perceive CSOs as entities that throughout projects (which are mainly funded by international donors) are working to raise awareness:

Well, these are mostly projects on raising awareness about tolerance, about cultural differences, religious differences, and the like.

(CITIZENS, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

The civil sector is a driver of all things when it comes to reconciliation. They first started with reconciliation, they first thought about these things, they first connected the Serbs and Albanians, and they first led them to the southern part and those from the southern part, they brought here. Actually, the first thing that happened actually started from the initiative of civil society. It started totally spontaneously and perhaps without any infrastructure, without political sign therefore with more enthusiasm for people, they performed various experiments under different projects.

(CITIZENS, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

Particularly emphasised are the local projects and initiatives that have contributed to better understanding of diversity and, indirectly, their acceptance. However, some respondents doubt the intentions of these organizations, and wondering whether their motives are driven by genuine desire to help the community or those are requirements set by donors. It is also mentioned a problem of the establishment of civil society organizations, and/or community needs. Some respondents resolutely list the names of a very small number of organizations that have been established precisely in order to fix a problem in the community in which they operate. As in the foregoing part, again have been mentioned examples of good practice projects that successfully respond to the needs of the community among the three groups of respondents (public and civil sector and citizens) to be those from the artistic fields.

Furthermore, representatives of the civil sector highlight the lack of interest of the citizens, especially the elderly, for the inter-ethnic gatherings and projects that promote the necessity of quality coexistence.

I would agree with XY, he said before that the uninterested society ... NGOs have a lot of good ideas, the older generation of Mitrovica have particular difficulties to accept them, because they think "when you say the NGOs, they imagine anything thereabout, it is an institution that works for certain their interests ... at least I heard so and so I was told, when you say the NGOs, there are for example two or three employees and only work for their benefit.... So, the problem that NGOs are facing is that society just will not take part in it.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

All of the above mentioned leads to the conclusion that the role of civil society is perceived important, whereby is assessed of having a limited impact on society. Without cooperation with other sectors (as discussed below), it is impossible to implement social change.

Like in the part of conceptualization, the reconciliation as well as the presentation of national and regional levels – it again appears the phenomenon of differentiation of individual and collective. Respondents believe that CSOs are most successful at the micro level, but they do not have power for a greater impact on the level of the whole society. Regarding sectors, it is not surprising that representatives of civil society have the most positive view of the civil sector (although in some focus groups they express criticism introspectively on the scope and range of their own actions), not much behind them is the public sector which accepts the role of civil society in the positive processes of encouraging reconciliation in Kosovo. The representatives of the private sector and citizens, although generally positive in assessing the role of civil society, have the most reservations.

It can be concluded that as civil initiatives dealing with peace building and encouraging reconciliation are very well quoted in the Kosovo society. Findings of focus groups show that the representatives of different sectors are aware of the efforts of CSOs and other initiatives, and they see their role in promoting stability and coexistence as a positive. In addition, it should be noted that numerous participants pointed out a series of examples of good practices of civil society, especially those relating to youth exchanges and artistic projects.

Intersectoral cooperation

One of the starting assumptions of the project, and thus the research was to explore the potential, opportunities and incidence of co-operation between the private, public and civil sector. Participants in the focus groups recognized such a model as useful, but expressed scepticism with regard to past experience. They worry about the troubles related to the potential economic fraud, administrative barriers, and the lack of information.

The practice so far has shown that there is cooperation between the three sectors at somewhat extent. The representatives of private sector pointed out that they cooperate with the representatives of civil society, mainly on the issues of education and culture. In addition, the cooperation of municipalities and CSOs has been recognized. Although participants were not detailed in providing responses in relation to concrete cooperation, one gets the impression that it existed, also the room for improvement.

We asked participants about their readiness of involvement in the regional initiative for peace building in which the representatives of different sectors would participate. It is optimistic that this is one of the few responses that caused the consensus among everyone. Participants welcomed this initiative and they considered good catalyst for reconciliation in the region. This is consistent with other findings of focus groups where it was clearly visible that the economic factor is relevant to explain, encourage and accelerate the process of reconciliation for the citizens of Kosovo. The participants, especially representatives of the private sector, are willing to be involved in the project of a regional hub while they deemed necessary prerequisite of information and a high level of transparency.

I would get involved, but with a lot of caution. Until I see the whole idea, some transparency, honesty, I think ... but not without that. Simple saying, I would talk with people firstly.

I would previously get some information, what is happening, at what level, under which circumstances, what it would be.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

An interesting was a finding about initiation of such a model of cooperation. Although no question was directed towards the detection of specific actors who should initiate such institutional network cooperation, intuitively, representatives of all sectors assumed that this role would be taken over by civil society. This is evident because after having expressed their readiness for such cooperation, subject to mentioned reservations, they began to talk about various examples of regional cooperation initiated by civil society organizations.

We have different projects with different organizations, in which we cooperate with them. I think that the cooperation is concerning education, culture. In most of the cases the initiatives originated from organizations or institutions in Kosovo, which invite us to cooperate.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PRISTINA)

Furthermore, the question was put on social entrepreneurship and the incidence of this type of business. It can be concluded that the concept of social entrepreneurship is unknown to participants of the focus groups. Only one person had slightly more detailed information for the reason that he/she tried to register a social enterprise independently, but due to administrative difficulties imposed by the state that was not possible. This clearly showed that there is a huge space for

development, firstly with ideas, and then the incidence of social entrepreneurship since representatives of all sectors are not aware of the potential and benefits of the said.

Other recommendations for reconciliation

In addition to the above, there are three factors that sporadically appear in different focus groups as an obstacle to the reconciliation process.

One of them is the language. Kosovo has two official languages, Albanian and Serbian, but bilingualism in public institutions is often not carried out. The refusal to use the Serbian language is noticable and it is not rare that the legal acts are not translated into Serbian. In this regard, a language barrier is beginning to be perceived. It is important to say that the Serbs build their national identity on the basis of language, as well as Albanians. Some participants in focus groups of Albanian decent express contempt for not using the Albanian language, especially if the interlocur speaks the same.

The other relevant factor is the policy or political culture. The focus group participants emphasize that Kosovo has a problem with political corruption, and that it affects all aspects of society. The discourse of alienation of society from politics is particularly interesting. It is clear that citizens are skeptical about official policy because they suspect the motives of politicians. However, they even pointed out that at the individual level, many Serbs and Albanians accepted coexistence, but the official policy advocates conflict and slows down the negotiations. Although we did not get the answer to the question why they would do that, it is particularly interesting that mentioned perception that the political sphere is separated from the everyday reality.

This very clearly points out that citizens do not have ownership over the political processes that are taking place which shows that democracy is not sufficiently consolidated in Kosovo.

I fully agree with the previous speaker, people did what was a must, but in the end they found a way to reconcile. Politicians are the ones who spoiled all.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, PRIŠTINA)

Asked whether some reconciliation started or have been reached, I would not mention political impression because politicians always have an agenda that they have to follow that are not natural, and they do not follow the opinion of the citizens.

(CITIZENS, PRIŠTINA)

Focus group participants emphasized that life in the past, especially of older generations, is an obstacle to reconciliation.

Well, yes, we return to the problem that people, preferable older, of the region live in the past, most of them have images of the past and find it difficult to go forward, and to forget all those things so that it is difficult for ordinary citizens to observe the overall image of reconciliation because many people have undergone all sorts of things, and lost their property, a house, friends, relatives and it is very difficult for us to handle it.

(CIVIL SECTOR, KOSOVSKA MITROVICA)

In contrast to the above are young people and various initiatives that try to bring closer young Serbs and Albanians, which is still the exception rather than the rule. Generally, the consensus is that the past should not be forgotten, and to view forward towards the future.

Economic development can lead to reconciliation, education goes hand in hand with economic development, and culture as well. We should not forget the past, but we have to come back to the future. The future must not turn to hatred.

(CITIZENS, PRIŠTINA)

Conclusion and recommendations

Achieving reconciliation and building sustainable positive peace are important components of Kosovo today. The country that is both historically and today marked by ethnic conflicts between Albanians and Serbs, an issue of reconciliation and finding appropriate modes of coexistence between these (and other) social groups should be one of the main priorities if it wants quality and progressive society. Although numerous official documents and authorities are committed to achieve reconciliation and resolution of the Kosovo-Serbian issue, findings of focus groups show that the perception of the respondents is such that they are suspicious of their effectiveness and quality. That discrepancy between the stipulated objectives of public policies and the actual implementation is becoming one of the key determinants of Kosovo's minority policy. It is this gap between the proclaimed and committed an important prism through which the reconciliation process in Kosovo should be observed.

There is no doubt that the concept of reconciliation can not be defined unilaterally, and/or that it is necessary to view it from different perspectives. So does the focus group participants look at this process multidimensionally. Using words like arrangement or compromise, but at the same time also stressing that the reconciliation is a process, it is made evident an eclecticism of understanding of this construct. The difference between static and process like categories of reconcili-

ation is visible in the relevant literature and tells us that not only reconciliation is the term that is difficult to put within the terminology limits, but the situation in practice is complementary to theoretical uncertainties.

What is particularly noteworthy, speaking of reconciliation in the context of Kosovo, is the strong ethnic coloration construction of reconciliation. Almost all respondents directly or indirectly linked the reconciliation to ethnic tensions and conflicts, primarily those conditioned by the past. Emphasizing the ethnic tensions arising from the past that affect everyday life, it is shown clearly that it is necessary to intensify and enrich the policy of reconciliation in Kosovo with better quality. This finding is particularly important because it reveals that it was a question of dealing with past the topics on which Kosovo as a state should work on. Although youth is perceived as a group that should be the bearer of changes and catalysts of reconciliation, there is skepticism in their competence with respect to the examples of intolerance which respondents stated. For this reason, the state must invest more effort in the development of educational programs that will equip young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes for a better coexistence. What is for a concern is a high degree of doubt as to the intentions of the country by its citizens.

Respondents have very clearly pointed out that they have no sufficient confidence in the state, and that they do not believe that the state authorities view reconciliation as a priority process. The discourse of distinguishing the importance of reconciliation among individuals in relation to the collective further supports the thesis that Kosovo needs a constant reminder of the commitments made by signing international documents which guarantee the rights of minorities and quality coexistence and sustainable peace to all its citizens.

Speaking of the international community, the respondents do not believe that reconciliation is inherent in Kosovo, but it is an imposed concept. Indeed, this is the perception which may be the essential problem of insufficiently efficient approach to solving the problem of reconciliation. Although the imposition of public policy which are not complimentary to the cultural set of a State certainly always doomed to fail, there is no way to explain to society the importance of reconciliation. It is a process of conflict transformation, appealing to the co-existence which is characteristic of this area have always and investment in information and education about the benefits of intercultural approach to creating communities. Country same time must make a big effort that targets the reconciliation process adjusts the cultural and social context.

While respondents believe that CSOs are an important factor of reconciliation, one should be careful about excessive enthusiasm with civil society. In fact, despite the fact that many CSOs adequately respond to the needs of the community by providing them projects and programs that this community needs in order to create an enabling environment for reconciliation, respondents warn us about CSOs that carry out particular projects which are not community need-based.

Such organizations are funded by the (mostly foreign) donors and they implement activities that have no real positive social impact. Ambivalence of citizens towards the role of civil society in the democratic process is not a specificum of Kosovo, but it is an important indicator of two things. On the one hand, it shows insufficient public articulation or profiling of CSOs regarding the social role in the reconciliation process. On the other hand, it shows that the responsibility for the construction of quality reconciliation goes beyond the state, citizens and civil society and it is necessary to work also with donors who obviously have the power to create the agenda and co-creation of outcomes. All this leads to the last important findings of this study, and it is the role of the economic dimension in the processes of reconciliation.

Respondents believe that the economy and economic development is a very good channel for the transmission of values of reconciliation. They find that members of different ethnic groups come into contact by mutual exchange and a kind of cultural transmission happens automatically. Marked for the whole project is quite plausible to conclude that in Kosovo there is a potential of support from the citizens for regional common place in which different sectors would meet and exchange their products. Respondents, in particular those from the private sector in post-conflict areas, are expressing readiness for involvement in such a venture, while expressing caution. Concerned about corruption in their own country, they address the issue of safety and the implementation of such a project.

One solution is the involvement of citizens (particularly representatives of the private sector) in the process of creating such a regional hubs. It is to be assumed that the involvement of citizens in the early stages of the establishment of such a hub should contribute to the sense of control and influence on the process development that will result in greater confidence and pronounced desire for more concrete involvement in the activity of such an area.

Concerning the differences by sectors, it is possible to notice that the representatives of the civil and private sector show greater interest and more substantial responses in relation to the representatives of the citizens and public sector. More specifically, it has been noticed a tendency of progressivity of the civil sector (especially in the post-conflict zone) and the private sector in finding solutions to improve the process of reconciliation in Kosovo. It is much greater stake of representatives of civil society organisations from Kosovska Mitrovica in offering new narratives related to stability, consolidation of democracy, preventing the division and the necessity of economic cooperation for the process of reconciliation. It is not surprising that representatives of civil society from both geographical areas show a much higher degree of interest, knowledge and understanding of the role of civil society in the process of building sustainable peace. Precisely these respondents offered information rich in content about positive examples of civil society, as well as challenges related to civil society which the Kosovo society must face. Representatives of the private sector and

citizens, although generally positive in their assessment of the role of civil society, have the most reservations thereto.

Regarding the contribution of citizens to the reconciliation process, it is clear them to view their own role as a submissive. The discourse of victims, powerlessness and fatalism, but the criticism and dissatisfaction with the social situation in general is frequently found. Replies of citizens are often too general, and in relation to other sectors, even and it can be said even sloppy. The focus groups on the public sector results led to the conclusion that the public sector is more benevolent towards the situation in Kosovo with regard to reconciliation, and they somewhat more advocate "the Albanian side", and the responsibility for conflicts are often transferred to the Serbian minority. In addition, it is this sector to be the most articulated when it comes to the role of education in the process of reconciliation.

Serbia

IN SERBIA, THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF SERBIA WON IN THE FIRST MULTI-PARTY ELECTIONS in 1990, and its president, Slobodan Milošević, became the President of the Republic, and remained in office until 1997 when he became the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which Serbia, together with Montenegro, proclaimed in 1992. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia reorganized and renamed into the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2003, however Montenegro, and then Serbia proclaimed independence in 2006. At the beginning of the 2000s, there were mass protests in Belgrade, and shortly thereafter (2001), S. Milošević was extradited to the Hague Tribunal. After the elections in Serbia in 2012, the leading political parties became the Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia, and in the extraordinary parliamentary elections in 2016, the majority of seats were won by the coalition Serbia wins, led by Aleksandar Vučić. Since 2012, the President of the State was Tomislav Nikolić and in the presidential elections in 2017, Aleksandar Vučić won a candidate of the Serbian Progressive Party.

Serbia (FR Yugoslavia) was under international sanctions from 1992 to 1995 because of help it provided to the Serbs during the war in Croatia and B&H. Serbia signed special agreements with the Republic Srpska (B&H) as a member of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1997, and then in 2006.

The Serbs clashed with Kosovo Albanians in Kosovo in 1996. Due to the situation and conflict in Kosovo in 1999, Serbia was attacked by NATO and the same year Kosovo came under UN administration. Kosovo is certainly a breakpoint in the development of contemporary Serbia in a political and democratic sense, because this territory is a longstanding subject of a dispute between the Republic of Serbia and the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo. Kosovo proclaimed independence in 2008, Serbia did not recognize it officially neither UN, but a large number of UN member states did. Normalization of relations with Kosovo is one of the EU pre-conditions for the membership of Serbia.

In early 2007, there was a confrontation between the Serbs and Bosniaks in the south of Serbia, in the southern municipalities of Bujanovac, Preševo and Medveđa, in which the majority of the population are Albanians. As of 2001, they have

been placed under a special government program as prevention from the possible joining of Kosovo.

According to the Constitution of 2006, Serbia is a parliamentary republic. Beside a president, there is an executive power that the government conducts. The highest legislative power has a one-chamber parliament i.e. the National Assembly. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia regulates by its various articles the protection of minorities, human and minority rights and freedoms, the prohibition of discrimination, the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and other freedoms and rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

Serbia has passed a number of laws dealing with the protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities, discrimination, war crimes, civilian war invalids, etc. Such as: the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, the Law on Organization and Competence of Government Authorities in War Crimes Proceedings, the Law on the Rights of Civilian Invalids of War, the Law on Cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991. It also adopted the National Strategy for the Prosecution of War Crimes for the period 2016-2020 and the subject of the Strategy is an analysis of the current situation and defining goals and necessary measures for improving the normative framework as well as institutional and administrative capacities for more efficient processing of war crimes while the goal the Strategy is creating the conditions for significantly improving the efficiency of the investigation and prosecution of war crimes in the Republic of Serbia.

There is a very strong scene of non-governmental organizations and he/she activists dealing with reconciliation in Serbia. The Humanitarian Law Centre (established in 1992) is helping post-Yugoslav societies in establishing the rule of law and accepting the legacy of massive human rights violations, in order to establish criminal responsibility for the perpetrators, satisfy justice and prevent the recurrence of crimes. The organization was founded by Nataša Kandić³⁷ with the aim of documenting the human rights violations that were massively committed throughout the former Yugoslavia during armed conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. The transitional justice program is implemented through program units: Documentation; Justice and Institutional reform; Education; the Initiative for RECOM; Memorialisation and Outreach. The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations granted a special consultative status on the ECOSOC to the Humanitarian Law Centre.

The Initiative for RECOM³⁸ advocates the establishment of RECOM - a Regional Commission for Establishing the Facts about War Crimes and other Serious

37 Source: http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?page_id=14390

38 Source: <http://www.recom.link/hr/>

Human Rights Violations Yugoslavia Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia in the period from 1 January 1991 to 31 December 2001. The RECOM Process was launched by a debate on instruments for truth-telling and for disclosure of the truth about the past in 2006, at the First Regional Forum for Transitional Justice, organized by the Humanitarian Law Centre (Serbia), the Research and Documentation Centre (B&H) and Documenta (Croatia). The Intergovernmental Commission, according to the Statute, should, as an independent body, investigate allegations of all war crimes and other serious human rights violations in connection with the war, list all war victims, gather data on camps and other places of forced imprisonment.

In Serbia, the Forum for Transitional Justice³⁹ was launched, which deals with the challenges, problems and aspects important for transitional justice in the post-conflict societies of the Western Balkans.

The Belgrade Centre for Human Rights⁴⁰ has carried out several projects related to the improvement of the rule of law in Serbia, improvement of the position and raising the level of knowledge about the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, promotion of responsible and professional reporting on the fight against organized crime, war crimes, discrimination and domestic violence.

Of the civil society organizations related to reconciliation, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans (RYCO)⁴¹ should be highlighted. It is an independent international organization aimed at promoting reconciliation, mobilizing participation, active citizenship and intercultural learning. Participants are Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo. Support for the establishment of this organization was provided by the Franco-German Youth Office, which, as a mechanism of reconciliation, was established after the Second World War. The Youth Initiative for Human Rights was involved in the idea, advocacy and establishment of the Regional Office.

Furthermore, a number of civil society organizations deal with youth reconciliation through intensive study programs, peer education, discussions on topics important for reconciliation in the countries of the Former Yugoslavia (e.g. the Institute of European Affairs, the Network of Young Politicians).

A number of researches were conducted on the topic of reconciliation in Serbia.

In Serbia, there is an unstable political situation with a strong nationalist discourse, and the state is not doing well in tackling interethnic problems/conflicts (Nikolić-Ristanović et al., 2014). The study concludes that the state avoids responsibility for interethnic conflicts and it does not talk about its role in the 1990s conflicts. Inter-ethnic conflicts are mainly observed through the

39 Source: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?cat=226>

40 Source: <http://www.bgcentar.org.rs/>

41 Source: <http://www.yihr.rs/bhs/tag/regionalna-kancelarija-za-saradnju-mladih/>

focus of legal mechanisms. Also, repression is being intensified in the name of protecting victims, but such a policy has no effect on reducing the rate of interethnic conflicts. When it comes to the role of civil society organizations, the same research shows that they significantly contributed to dealing with the past, but they failed to communicate their messages to the citizens of Serbia (Nikolić-Ristanović et al., 2014). It is not visible enough that restoration activities of civil society and state and recognized its relation to the lack of understanding of the concept of restorative justice and its potential. Therefore, it is recommended to educate not only representatives of civil society, but also officials of state institutions regarding the possibilities and application of restorative justice (Nikolić-Ristanović et al., 2014).

When it comes to the attitudes of citizens towards the work of the Hague Tribunal (Attitudes towards war crimes, the ICTY and the national judiciary, 2011), it is interesting to point out that the majority of respondents (71%) consider that the Hague Tribunal does not contribute to reconciliation in the region, and half of them does not consider that the Tribunal contributes to the discovery of truth about the wars in the territory of the Former Yugoslavia. In addition, it can be said that its functioning is considered unfair because 71% of the respondents consider the Hague Tribunal treat differently the defendants depending on their nationality.

The Belgrade Centre for Human Rights publishes a report on the state of human rights in Serbia every year, using a complex methodology based on the analysis of all available sources (this also applies to media sources) that point to the state of human rights. In the 2015 Report (Petrović, Pokuševski, 2016), it is claimed that there has been an increase in the media titles referenced to the past (8.9%), which includes the rehabilitation of political prisoners and associates of WWII fascists. Texts on discrimination (2.4%), trafficking in human beings (1.5%), and minority rights (0.8%) are poorly represented. The summary of the report shows how processes in Serbia will begin to affect the new minority policy. The Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government has formed working groups for amendments to the Law on the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities and the Law on National Councils for National Minorities. The concerning date is that civil society organizations are practically not involved in formulating a new, minority policy (Petrović, Pokuševski, 2016:300). The Protector of Citizens and the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality play an important role in the protection of the rights of national minorities: reports of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality show that discrimination based on ethnic or national affiliation is the most common form of discrimination in Serbia.

The system of education is often addressed in the discussions on the suppression of discrimination and the promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue. Thus, the study

of textbooks of history and literature in Albanian (used in Kosovo and Metohija) and the Serbian language showed that textbooks convey values that, through national myths and ethnic stereotypes, determine ethnic groups (Serbs and Albanians) negatively (Tepšić et al., 2015).

Findings of empirical research

Reconciliation Concept

In this thematic unit, we have explored different concepts of reconciliation, and we asked the respondents to define reconciliation and determine the elements of acceptance of reconciliation or the obstacle to reconciliation.

Respondents conceptualize reconciliation differently: meaning of reconciliation, for them, is related to reality but it also has a future dimension. Out of more interesting findings, the following discourses should be mentioned: as to the dimension of the situation analysis in reality, reconciliation is associated with war crimes, the re-examination of guilt and responsibility, and the confrontation with the past. It also emerged a discourse in which the reconciliation is imposed. One series of narratives also points to a discourse of indifference toward the process of reconciliation.

Reconciliation has a future dimension because it ensures long-term peace in the region and communication among people, especially young people.

For example, networking of the younger forces of the region to be able to function together again and create something new without the heavy burden left by the past.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

After the war on the territory of the Former Yugoslavia, the connotation of reconciliation for some respondents is completely negative. Reconciliation is associated with major crimes committed during the war.

For me, unfortunately, the first association is not something normal, it is not something human. Two men argued about a certain thing, and they reconciled, which may have been an association of reconciliation once. The first thing that immediately crosses my mind when someone mentions reconciliation is the former Yugoslavia, and, of course, Bosnia and Croatia, and Serbia and Kosovo ... I firstly recall war crimes, and many people who participated in those wars, and now, we have to reconcile.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Reconciliation is the same as the joint action that is being realized after the war. The respondent believes that reconciliation should not include the re-examina-

tion of guilt and responsibility, but war damage should have been perceived, and then jointly work on the recovery from the effects of war.

I think, since the whole problem arises mainly because of the wars, when talking about reconciliation, the main question should not be the distribution of responsibilities in the war - who is guilty and who is not, as it is most commonly stated in the media, but actually the question is what the war has brought and what can be done by acting jointly. Not in terms of politics, but I repeat, the main question is what the war has brought ... to reflect negatively on what has happened and what can be drawn from it, and not to always give emphasis on finding those responsible in the war.

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

Completely contrary to the past discourse is the following one which reconciles binding to the acceptance of truth and dealing with the past, but also the harmonization of both sides about the truth. It is considered that reconciliation is not over, but it is a long-term process.

It always reminds me of the 1990s wars and everything that happened in this region, although I do not like to use that syntagm. So, reconciliation certainly did not happen, and it did not happen because we did not do the some other process first, and this is called, I think, confronting the past. Well, we did not view, on the right manner, everything that happened and the reasons and consequences of all these wars. There are some minor initiatives and I think that they are primarily seen in some, let's say, in business mergers, maybe a bit in the culture where, it seems to me, it actually started firstly, but there is not, in all other segments and especially in what is called the "public policy" of each of these countries, it seems to me, even the traces thereof. So, this process of reconciliation is certainly a long-lasting one for many years ahead before it happens.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Reconciliation can also be associated with the word "farce". Discourse indicates that reconciliation has not occurred and that it is trying to be imposed through "various pressures". People are still in conflict, and if provided with a chance they would be even worse than they were in the last war.

That word "reconciliation" for me, especially in recent years, means a bit more, like, some kind of farce because these reconciliations are either under pressure, in fact people are still in quarrel, relationships are even worse in some segments, only if they are given a chance. Especially when there is no name and surname, then we are ready.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Citizens should be asked, in the first place, about reconciliation. Initiatives for reconciliation that insist on a predefined scenario are not necessary because people reconcile spontaneously and not through imposed solutions.

A number of initiatives for reconciliation until now and a reconciliation process and organizations for reconciliation, all of them are trying to somehow make a scenario or opportunity or to make something that will work out to reconcile warring parties, at the top of course. Well, whether the state top, or national top or religious groups, whoever. And nobody thought about whether the citizens were ready or whether the citizens wanted or whether the citizens had already forgotten about such a problem, and whether there was a need for such reconciliation between, for example, Serbia and Bosnia, if the people had forgotten about it, overcome, forgiven, or similar, or remembered, but it is no longer counted as a problem, and someone from the top of power has been trying to impose certain reconciliation that, at least in my opinion, is not necessary at all.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The following discourse warns that reconciliation does not concern Serbia, but the association for reconciliation is primarily related to the region. Such a politically “naive” look at reconciliation is supported by an attitude that claims that among “ordinary people” there is no conflict, but only between those people who were politically or war-exposed.

There is actually no conflict between ordinary people, there is only a matter of getting to know ... ignorance among people, I think that it is the point of the story. In fact, there is no conflict between people who have not been exposed politically or in the war.

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

Similarly, it can also be recognized in the next narrative that talks about the indifference of the respondents towards the focus topic. The respondent points out that there were no conflicts in Novi Pazar, although it was a town dominated by Bosniaks.

I am indifferent towards that reconciliation, since reconciliation does not associate me to my city at all. Who lived in Pazar in the previous years knows that we did not even argue, nor did we reconcile. We lived. The very reconciliation as reconciliation, it is a way of life ... What does a reconciliation associate me with? - The quarrels around the border, around the marriage inheritance and so on.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Association to reconciliation can be culture or sport. Culture and sport are powerful tools that are considered the transmitter of reconciliation in the next discourse. Culture and sport are available and penetrating activities, and they allow

the interaction of a large number of people who would otherwise not communicate. Culture and sport are related to all activities related to communication among citizens. All of them can contribute to peace.

I think that reconciliation should be viewed at a slightly lower level than it is used in terms of politics. It can have much more success in terms of sports events, music manifestations and participants from the region, different theatre tours with their performances, where people will simply do things they enjoy in, love and interact with participants from other countries, and in that way, actually establish contact and see that differences are not so great in the things that surround us on a daily basis.

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

Acceptance of reconciliation and obstacles to reconciliation are the following focus topics.

A large number of respondents consider that the peace achieved is purely of declarative character, and that reconciliation is being told because of the accomplishment of the interest of somebody else.

Respondent: Only declaratively and in some political interest, current, this-that, any interest ... only declarative.

Moderator: When you say declaratively, do you consider it being abused, then?

Respondent: I think everyone is worried because they have to, because someone has told them, not because they want to. Literally, because they were told that. Especially, who controls whom, who is dependent on us as we are in the Balkans, we have no money, we are poor and when they tell us to calm down, we calm down until the help lasts.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Reconciliation can come, but only at the micro level and/or in the processes initiated by the people towards politics. Reconciliation should be facilitated by the fact that people in the countries of the former Yugoslavia are interconnected by family ties, and many have previously had a lot of socializing and communication.

I do not think that there can be any reconciliation between states. Perhaps locally, [because] we are all connected with family, travels. For years we have been connected in this area and we will not admit it ... This is a main problem.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The present situation of reconciliation in the Balkans is viewed critically in the next narrative. The respondent believes that it was easier before, but that there is a "fear from others" today. Education and seminars are not effective enough and have no long-term effects on behaviour change.

I have the impression that we have taken it lightly about five years ago, somehow at that time, the topic of reconciliation was somewhat more optimistic to me, and I think that there was less fear and less claustrophobia than today. I think that this has been provoked somewhat by the fact that many people are talking about what they should think, and in fact the period when we were the most sensitive, those formative years - we then remembered all the hatred that surrounded us and which is really difficult to overcome in essence. When we meet at the seminar, for example, OK, we are all "cool" and we know what we should think and say, but when we return to our environment, the question is whether we will stick to it.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Reconciliation is a process that is actually happening *per se*, naturally, by the shift of generations. Only when new generations emerge that do not have the experience of suffering and war, and then there can be reconciliation. This means that reconciliation is unattainable for many years to come.

As long as male witnesses and female witnesses live of what was happening and war ... Of course, as long as they are alive, the wounds are still fresh, they can never heal, and it will be difficult to achieve the process of reconciliation. Perhaps some third, fourth generation, where the memory of all that was happening fade away, will be ready for it.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Politics disables reconciliation because it represents interests that are separated from other people. The next narrative suggests that once warring parties politically do not evaluate the same thing in a similar way.

If we look through the prism of politics - there is no point, there will never be reconciliation. Simply, we cannot think in the same way about some things like in Croatia, it should not be a topic at all.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The following discourse focuses on the manipulation of truth that is not only about events during the last war, but also of manipulating the truth about the Second World War. Manipulating the truth does not happen because of national interest, but because of the strengthening of the political power of those in power with the support of high international politics. Narrative, in addition, describes the process in which Serbia, although many people are not informed about it, started the process of recognizing Kosovo.

We need every male citizen and female citizen in the Balkans to know what really happened. ... I have the impression that most male citizens and female citizens are ready to self-deception that they themselves will not recognize some facts, and on the other hand, I absolutely have opinion in

relation to hypocrisy of political peaks, which, of course, manipulate with these war events. I mean, we are still manipulating with the Second World War, we, in the Balkans, we do not easily forget. So, manipulation exists absolutely for ground reasons, one's position, power, finance, interests, or something else. It is not about the national interest or anything else ... In other words, in my opinion, the substance of hypocrisy, where I would include the international community, because that is my attitude and no one else can convince me that the international community still provided our dear mandatar (Aleksandar Vučić - Prim. Moderator) with free hands to do what he wants in Serbia! That they will not intervene here until he obeys orders, which are more important to the EU, America and the rest of the international community, and that is international politics. He must recognize Kosovo ... We are now, since recently, male citizens and female citizens of Serbia, primarily the Serbs, do not know, we already started to have forms containing just "Kosovo", without a star, without Metohija, without Autonomous regions. So, Kosovo in official documents begins to be recognized. Unfortunately, citizens, or most of Serbia, do not know because the power by various means, manipulations, various media, incidents in Sandžak, in the south of Serbia, covers up various things, making a smokescreen, so that the Serbs would not, that "the Vlachs do not figure out" that we, in fact, are recognizing Kosovo.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The main driver of reconciliation is the economy. If the economy was sufficiently developed in the countries of the region, there would be no problems. The crisis experienced by the majority of countries cannot generate good economic prospects.

Something that will be, in my opinion, the main driver of reconciliation is exactly what has already been said, that is it - the economy. It seems to me that the countries in the region would one day, when they are rich, when the people have a high standard, only then this people will be ready ... So you cannot do well, and have an economically developed country if the country is in crisis, is that clear.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

At the individual level, reconciliation is achieved through family ties but also in everyday contact. However, reconciliation at the level of institutions has not been achieved, and the narrative points to the problems of ethnic minorities in Serbia.

Outside guests, of any religion, nationality, environment, city, state, irrelevant, here in our country, I think that they are all "wide-hearted for all". And it is not true, I can say, my brother's best men are all Orthodox, it is not just interest, there is a lot of love here among this people. My best friends are of one and other nationality; it is true that it is a little different

in institutions, very divisions and felt. I, as a Bosniak, as a Muslim, I did felt so.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

In order to accept reconciliation, it is necessary to establish individual responsibility for crimes because the interpretation of war is necessarily different. However, there are many historical examples in which reconciliation has taken place (the narrative refers to Germany and France).

So, we will not solve the problem by persuading each other's e.g. the 1995 "Storm" was a legitimate action, and we say that there was expulsion. So, the essence - we have many examples in Europe, big conflicts in history and how they are overcome e.g. Germany and France - the best friends after so many wars, they simply left those things behind, individual responsibility is determined if possible, and goes on.

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

The civil sector warns that there should be awareness of who is talking about reconciliation. If it is the case of civil society organizations, the perspective is different from the citizens' perspective.

I would agree that we are in a circle of people who are perceived as more conscious every day and have the impression that we are working on reconciliation and that we are moving ahead, and, in fact, it is a small percentage of population.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The following narrative also speaks about similar experiences in the civil sector. Civil society organizations are called a "patter on the shoulder" as they try to establish communication and values that are not recognized in the wider society. Young people involved in the education program experience disadvantages on social networks. Apparently, the environment has no tolerance for student exchange.

Respondent: That some "NGO circle of patters on the shoulder" - "you are great ... No, you are great ... No, you are a little better" ... My strongest impression was, for example, when I was leading the group to Priština for the first time, the "Study Visit" program under the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, the exchange Belgrade - Pristina ... They are completely beyond every story, completely uninformed, not only uninformed in the situation in Kosovo, but uninformed in the events in the former Yugoslavia They went (to Pristina) and watched the whole process - firstly they realized that they could walk there, to talk freely, then to get to know institutions, etc. All of them were kind of afraid to go there, but once they came back, then the same conclusion came - "It's not terrible to go there at all, it is terrible to go back," because they return to an environment that

has not seen it, did not experience it, and who does not know anything about it. I went back two or three days ago, it is literally "cyber-bullying" what they are experiencing, just because they have uploaded a photo on Facebook from Pristina or whom they had met with and/or that they had met with representatives of institutions. For three days I have been sitting and watching, and realising "well, yes, I took them there, it is my fault ..." I am pressing myself some sense of guilt, although I know it is the best thing that happened to them ...

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Moderator: They do not have the opportunity to try to fight against prejudices!?

Respondent: They do not have! They do not have that space, it is not the same when they come back and when I come back - because we already have some knowledge and resources and we are networked and so on, so it is not the same when some group provoke harassment and when they have at a student of the second year of the Faculty of Political Science. It is completely different.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Respondents locate the obstacles to reconciliation in the area of values of religious and political elites, the behaviour of the media, the existence of a culture of violence and the apathy of citizens.

The political and religious elites are judged as hypocritical, so as long as the citizens become aware themselves that reconciliation is necessary, it will not happen.

As regards the leaders both, religious leaders and those who lead the countries in the region, they all speak of reconciliation, but somewhere we all feel hypocrisy, as if somebody from somewhere orders them to talk about it. Thus, as long as there is no good will and people themselves wanted to reconcile, the words of our presidents, prime ministers, religious leaders will not reach the people, I think, because the words in their statements have attached hypocrisy to their meaning which is felt, and we do not feel sincerity, at least not me.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The media are perceived as one of the obstacles to reconciliation because they do not report positive events and activities - such opinion the following respondent has not only about the media in Serbia, but also about the media throughout the region. A series of narratives, furthermore, indicates that the role of the media is not unambiguous and that, depending on the country in question, their influence has been of varying intensity in the past.

The media are reaching the mass, for example, in the present time, some kind of "mass" are comments on the portal, public - where, for example,

more than three hundred comments and where, when a negative one (story) goes, they simply complement one another, this psychology of mass is accurately reflected in the sense that no one thinks rationally any more, but then everyone tends to the average. In addition, I think that the media are quite abusive, for what reason I do not know, but not only in Serbia but in the whole region, I think there are less positive texts when it comes to the crisis, and so on, among the peoples of the Balkans.

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

The narrative below points to the wrongful media interpretation of the events in Novi Pazar. The respondent believes that the media have negative effects on the lives of people in the region.

Well, in Pazar, if a firecracker is dropped, we see the B92 reporters who are in front of the municipality and say, "In Pazar tonight peacefully." We live completely normally, function and we are the witness that all of our friends who visit us from the outside are a little surprised when they come, because they are provided with such information them to arrive in an environment, which is in tension. We cannot speak statistically, but the vast majority do not carry that ballast of nationalism. Yet, these wars are not mine. I divide people to normal and those others. Those wars are not mine, whoever led them, they were not led in my name, or in the name of any of you. I do not have the need to apologize to anyone, nor ask for someone's apology ... Now, that part of the negative effect has caught us; it cannot be bypassed, so we must also give our contribution to reconciliation.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The micro culture of society is one of burdens to the process of reconciliation. Respondents warn that in areas where people have learned to solve problems by conflicts, it is not easy to make changes and influence on changing behaviour patterns.

I would add that the environment has an enormous influence on it, in fact the society in which we grew up, because it is normal for us to be in conflict with someone. While we were growing up, there were always some problems with some neighbours, or even when it was a more peaceful period, you were just following some conflicts via the media. It is simply an integral part of life.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The following narratives warn of the apathy and apolitically of citizens, and warn of the problem of the existence of a "silent majority" and/or refraining of citizens from (political and wider social) acting which can have a special impact on thinking and acting towards reconciliation.

No one has nerves any more to deal with others at a deeper level, not to mention thinking of the causes for that situation, but people are literally concentrated on a day-to-day survival.

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

I would always add, to face both what we did and what we did not. There is one term "a silent majority", that in the 1990s, and I think it has been nicely shown up to date, a huge group, a social group that is actually in silence, which is a sympathizer of what is happening for one moment, and in the other, it would react, but it cannot or would not ... So, in my opinion, perhaps it is more important facing the fact what we, as individuals, did not do, and we could or should have done.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

One of the obstacles to reconciliation is certainly the values and attitudes of people who are often burdened with prejudice. A member of a national minority (Bosniak) claims to have encountered prejudices that burden her everyday life.

Let me tell you about this example. In Belgrade, I took the children to the park, Tašmajdan, the children played and I called them by their names, I cannot call him Marko - when his name is Faris ... A man from the amusement park listened, and when he wanted (a son) to get in the miniature train, a small child about 5-6 years old ... he told me "You are not in Afghanistan". I mean, by looking at me, in person, my outfit - he could not conclude that I was a Bosniak, only by the name of the children he did ... I only looked at him and said "Unfortunately, this is Serbia", those were my only words, I picked up the kids and left.

(CITIZENS, NOVI PAZAR)

National and regional level of reconciliation

National level of reconciliation

The analysis of reconciliation at the national level has shown that the economy and the economic crisis have a relatively more prominent place than other topics. Economic integration and entry into the markets of the former region could help the economy development and growth of standards of citizens who are no longer interested only in "national romanticism". The international community should continue influence at the national level, as it is estimated that citizens themselves possess no capacity to communicate and connect with other nations.

Several selected discourses suggest that regional co-operation should be established in order to survive on the global market.

First of all, I think that the European Union demands making a regional policy here, primarily in some commercial and economic sense. And I think that it is getting clear in every country more and more, that such small countries cannot survive alone and that they have to establish some form of regional cooperation. So, it needs to be insisted on that, and it will be achieved when people get directly networked.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The economic and political crisis is linked, and in the long run, they burden relations of private sector with potential regional associates. The economic crisis can, in particular, affect the development of inter-ethnic tensions, but it also has serious consequences at the individual level, where every individual brings a series of daily, private and business decisions and choices.

The political and overall economic situation is inter-related. Even if an entrepreneur or whoever has a vision of possibly entering into a "relationship" with someone from a neighbouring country - and today is heard and seen on the news something he/she does not want to hear - maybe some of his cousin or friend has been injured ... this affects a lot, and may result in a change of the opinion ...

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The economic crisis, both individually and on a general level, causes frustration, and thus leads to deterioration of the region's relations, because as soon as there is less resources and as soon as the level of trade is reduced, as soon as shortages are experienced by all sides, it automatically leads to dissatisfaction and thereby precisely marginalized layers in societies are being activated which bring about some negative trends, nationalism, hatred, again the speech and rhetoric from the 1990s ... The deterioration of the economic situation and economic relations among the countries of the region necessarily leads to the deterioration of interethnic relations.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Reconciliation has not been achieved and some respondents even believe that the situation in Serbia is sharpening. In Serbia, there is no unique attitude towards events in the past, among other things, towards NATO bombing.

It is logical that relations are such because they are insincere, because members of elites occupy all positions, people who are from these "nineties".

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

Young generations engaged through civil society are those that can be influenced and "shaped" in the direction of peace building. Visiting others, primarily European countries, the youth acquire experience and knowledge about the importance

of tolerance and become aware that they face more or less similar problems with young people in other communities.

I think that, among the younger people, it is understood in a different manner and more relaxed.

(CITIZENS, BEOGRAD)

A comparison of the two polarized levels of reconciliation, individual and political, is well described in the following narrative that claims that individual reconciliation can always be more easily accomplished than political. Nevertheless, the individual level of reconciliation is also burdened with the reluctance to speak openly about war events with other nationalities, but carefully and twisted, and true opinions are not expressed. Political parties use information from the local community in a different way and formulate them in accordance with their policies, which often does not correspond to the way in which these events occurred in reality.

This is the story I always say when asked about the interethnic relations in Pazar, Sandžak. I am very convinced, and I have arguments, that we have interethnic relations in two levels. At the level of an individual, family, neighbourhood. There were no problems even in the '92s and '93s. I have not heard of Serbs and Bosniaks, whether men or females, or families – the Serbs and the Bosniaks who were in family-friendly relations, being involved in politics. That level was 99.9% without any problems. One of the reasons that, since the 1990's, we have been very careful about whom we are talking to, if I am a Bosniak and you are a Serb, we will avoid some topics, we may say something (inappropriate), never mind. But there is 'a', I call it a kind of historical wisdom of ours, where we have been living together for centuries, my great-grandfather - your grandfather, my grandfather - your grandfather, my father - your father, .. However, the second level is a political level. The level of political parties, the level of national movements, the level of the Bosniak National Council ... where we are "blood fought". We got into a quarrel; we cannot live with each other! When you hear the reports of political parties, the Bosniak National Council, unfortunately in the media - "cafes are divided in our country, schools divided ..." and, in reality, there is really no such thing. There are problems; I cannot say that there are no problems at that level, at the national level. There are problems, but it's just like that. Unfortunately, when those in power act like that, the elite of one side, the elite of the other side, it can significantly influence this lower level. Well, that's what's dangerous; we need to work here to avoid it.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The ICTY judgments have an impact on the state of national reconciliation, but the work of the Court is predominantly assessed in a negative context, although it can be said that citizens are very much interested in the content of the indictments of their former leaders.

Respondent 1: *The first thing is that Slobodan Milošević died as an innocent man. He was not released, so let's say he died as an innocent man. The process was in progress. In our legislation, if a person dies during the proceedings against him - no judgment can be issued. Simply saying, deceased persons cannot be prosecuted.*

Respondent 2: *I know that he cannot ... But, somehow, I felt that he got out, for me, because my generation was deprived of certain things, and in the end it turned out that he is not guilty. Officially, he will not be guilty!*

Respondent 1: *I know, but there is political and there is legal responsibility ... it is now a wider topic. Things that he (Slobodan Milošević) deprived you are not related to what he was charged with in Hague. That is completely another topic.*

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

Regional level of reconciliation

The regional level of reconciliation is marked by discourses on the recognition of guilt for crimes. The recognition of the guilt of all warring parties and the necessity of national reconciliation on the role of states in conflicts is important. The respondents note that at the regional level there is a polarization between politicians and peoples, and it can be said that such a split is not only the specificity of today's Serbia. Natural disasters and passage of refugees are considered factors that influence the occurrence of regional solidarity and indirectly have an impact on the process of reconciliation.

The recognition of the guilt for crimes by all sides and not only by Serbia appears as a discourse that affects regional reconciliation. The respondent points out those crimes should be recognized not only by Serbs, but also by Croats and Bosniaks in order to face mutual confrontation with the truth.

As long as all the parties do not recognize their crimes, the emphasis is constantly on Serbia, of course, the greatest number of crimes has been committed by Serbia, but also by other parties. Unless all parties honestly acknowledge the crimes, it will be difficult to reconcile. Therefore, Croats have to admit and Bosniaks and Serbs as well. We all have to face it, not just one side. As long as it is expected only on one side, there will be no reconciliation. I repeat all sides.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Reconciliation could be achieved if there would be national homogeneity about the role of a particular nation in the war, however, national homogeneity, that is, internal reconciliation or agreement on this, is absent. When all the countries in

the region could reach an internal consensus on their roles, the respondents said, regional reconciliation could take place.

One of these major problems of reconciliation in the region is the lack of this internal agreement or consensus on these problems or issues concerning reconciliation, within nations or ethnic groups, or whatever we call them. So, among the Bosniaks, among the Serbs and among the Croats themselves, there is no common understanding of their role in those wars, and as long as this is not achieved, it will be difficult for the three sides, i.e. Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia, to reconcile ... to agree on anything, any issue - if one does not understand its role.

(CITIZENS, NOVI PAZAR)

Some narratives, unlike the previous ones, suggest that the national level of reconciliation has been achieved because Serbia is an open and democratic country, tolerant towards all nations. At the same time, countries in the region are considered less tolerant, making it difficult to travel and visit for the citizens from Serbia. A particularly negative attitude was expressed in terms of travel to Croatia and even Bosnia and Herzegovina. Respondents prefer to travel to the countries of the Balkans that have not been drawn into the last conflicts.

Respondent: Since '91 I was not in Bosnia, I do not believe that I will ever go. In Croatia, I was twice; I do not believe that I will go there again. I'd rather go to Albania, it's more interesting in Albania, and I'll probably go to Albania. In Slovenia, if I am to go up there, it does not matter.

Moderator: What about Bosnia and Croatia?

Respondent: No. You know why? I am one of these people, I remember it well. I will not allow it at all, that some fool spoils my good memories, and that's why I'm not going. I do not go to Montenegro, that's my attitude. Not that it will not be nice, as a rule, it's always good for me.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The regional level of reconciliation is affected by sudden events such as natural catastrophes (floods)⁴² and the passing of refugees through Serbia. These events are considered a test of solidarity and it is estimated that people in Serbia who have a refugee experience positively look at the passage of refugees through Serbia, unlike younger citizens who do not have such an experience. Positive assessments are the cooperation between rescue teams from Croatia and Serbia, although the media did not report on this.

As much as the flood was a negative phenomenon - this caused a positive impact, the refugee crisis again, and especially among young people, who did not experience refuge, causes a kind of negative effect. People who have an experience of being a refugee respond differently to the refugee

⁴² Considering floods that hit the countries in the region in 2014.

crisis and understand it differently. We are all in touch, especially civil society organizations, with many who develop programs dealing with migrants. At least, we instinctively feel that the interest, especially the young people who had nothing to do with either family or refugee, simply have a very negative attitude towards the refugees. While those who have had experiences react differently ... Somehow, the flood is perceived as a natural disaster - a "common enemy", so let's put the joint efforts to solve it, while the refugee crisis is experienced somehow, as an attack on anything. .. national identity.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

When floods occurred, you had the situation that the floods were in the territory of the states that used to live together. For example, you had teams coming from Croatia, and not a single media - nothing has been published.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Reconciliation has its own cultural dimension. Culture, especially music, can unite people within a regional area, but respondents think that culture is a unifying factor primarily of younger generations.

Depending on the generation, if I can say, groups of people who accept reconciliation as one fact are classified. Older generations need a longer time to change their thinking about it. While I think the younger generations is streaming towards a higher grade, if we take the scale from 1 to 10 ... many of the music performers have tried to do it, for example, because music is one of the "resources" in our region of upbringing our youth.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The topic of Kosovo has inevitably emerged in the focus of reconciliation. Many citizens of Novi Pazar declare that they are reluctant to travel to Kosovo or communicate with Kosovo Albanians. In this case the generational dimension can easily be noticed, because the respondents assume that younger generations can make contact easier.

It is not pleasant to me in Kosovo, any direction I go. There are also Orthodox and Albanian people, it is not pleasant, I'm not comfortable, and I do not feel secure, safe at any moment.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

But I think that young people are more willing to communicate with each other, on any platform. It should be worked on that now, to bring them closer to each other, because they live in ignorance - "I have never been to Kosovo, but I will say that Kosovo is the heart of Serbia, because that's how I heard, why not, other people would not lie to me".

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Regional reconciliation is better achievable among citizens rather than among regional political elites. Citizens are seen as holders of reconciliation, while reconciliation among politicians is only declarative, because they are not really interested in reconciliation.

There is no reconciliation, but where there is, there is most among the ordinary people ... because life makes them accept their neighbours, and neighbours and neighbouring countries. And it is paradoxical that it is not there among them, and it is still "with" politicians, and that is now another paradox – it exists in words, and not in reality, and I will best explain it to you in providing you with an example of Kosovo.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

"You, politicians should go to work, receive salaries, and do nothing. Your achievement would be the best on that way. "... Whenever they get together, the Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, there is no conflict.

(CITIZENS, NOVI PAZAR)

The civil sector has only truly engaged in reconciliation and facing the past in the region and it is its merit for the achieved so far.

[Reconciliation] is at a very low level, and what has been achieved so far at that level is, in fact, the result of the work of several non-governmental organizations. We cannot talk about this differently, that is, the "Humanitarian Law Centre", the "Women in Black", the "Youth Initiative for Human Rights" ... These are organizations that work, literally, to deal with the past and I understand it.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Kosovska Mitrovica in the next discourse is an example based on which it can be concluded that the truth is manipulated and how international peacekeeping forces are involved in these manipulations. Some respondents have the impression that the process of reconciliation has become a sort of (international) business and an opportunity for good earnings.

The whole world knows about the bridge that divides Mitrovica into two parts, and nobody, but literally nobody, even many of us who go to Mitrovica regularly, or more or less regularly, do not know that, 100 meters from that bridge that shares Mitrovica, there is a normal, perhaps even a wider bridge that connects Mitrovica and where all, and cars and trucks and pedestrians, pass quite normally. Nobody knows, not even in Serbia, nor in Kosovo, let alone in the whole world. It's pure manipulation! And this is the criminal act of the two authorities, Priština and Belgrade, with the very large, huge support of KFOR⁴³, or what is called ... people who absolutely suit being there, receive "big" money, nothing to do, do not have any

43 Kosovo Force, NATO led forces in charge of maintaining law and order in Kosovo.

risk for life and health, instead of being in Afghanistan where they can die on a daily basis either in Pakistan or elsewhere in the world. So this is the conspiracy of local authorities, Pristina and Belgrade and the international community, to extend such a situation in Kosovo.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The role of the Hague Tribunal in a regional context is, like in the national context, characterized by very critical narratives. The first narrative shows a conciliatory attitude towards the work of the Court, as it is claimed that the Court only determines the facts, although its role is misrepresented in public.

Furthermore, the actions of the Hague Tribunal are even linked to the conspiracy theories, and the Hague Tribunal is regarded as a political entity because some expected judgments did not occur, as the third narrative in this series suggests.

It's a court, it's a legal category. The job of this institution is to establish some facts, to condemn some people, well, regarding the size of work, how it judged, how much it was politically or not, let's leave it completely "ad acta", but it did a very important thing, and that is establishing the facts ... I think that the role of the ICTY has been presented totally wrong, and if we could actually present it in the right way, we could actually use what the Tribunal brought to us, and it brought us a lot, regardless of anyone else opinion on this topic.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

I, personally, feel that there is a theory of conspiracy, some conspiracy or something that is deliberately done for some reason, which I cannot figure out. But I feel that I cannot get an answer to some questions, because it goes beyond my own, I say "political education" or whatever.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

In many cases it turned out that this was, in fact, a political court. And after all, the case of Šešelj. Not all Serbs are convicted; this one was released for whom we thought that there was no chance to release him. (Civil Sector, Novi Pazar)

Respondent: Really, Šešelj ... it's inhumane how long he has been kept, although I "admire" him.

Moderator: Do you think the process before the tribunal is...

Respondent: Unrealistic, show trial ... The Hague is an equivalent to Guantanamo, except it does not torture likewise.

(CITIZENS, NOVI PAZAR)

Regarding the impact of the economic crisis on reconciliation, it has been observed that respondents often talk about poverty. Poverty affects the polariza-

tion of the people in a way that some accepts nationalism because of it while the others become critics of political power.

In a crisis, people on a "hungry stomach" somehow easily are fed up with the story of nationalism, and again, a hungry man is fed up with everything ... so it polarizes people - the hungry see that this story, lasted in the past years is false, that the same people are "rotating", those who advocate for something until yesterday, no longer think the same ... Specifically for Vucic - he was for Russia, now for Europe and Russia and Kosovo ... and there are again those whose "stomach" are empty "that" start believing in this story (about nationalism) ... A hungry man is not a free man.

(CITIZENS, NOVI PAZAR)

Perspectives of reconciliation

National Perspective

The results of the analysis of the national reconciliation perspective bring a series of diversified discourses. It is to highlight the importance of establishing responsibility for war victims, respecting other and different interpretations of war, working with young people, a positive assessment of the work of civil society and the accession of Serbia into the European Union.

The perspectives of reconciliation cannot contribute the unrealistic counting of the victims because they all deserve a piety. The next narrative warns that nationalist competition on this topic should be stopped.

I think it's ugly that general, counting, playing with numbers ... Why is it less scary if there were 5,000 of victims or if there were 200 on our side or why any life was less important than the others. I think that the main problem is the cause thereof, how come that someone thinks that anyone can be got out of the house, raped or hang.

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

At the level of personal relationships, there is still caution in communicating with members of other nationalities. Communication is held on a notable amount of dishonesty, especially if war issues are discussed. It is noted that in the multi-ethnic environments the prospect of reconciliation has gained new contours, it has become acceptable to talk with people of other nationalities with respect, but also a kind of "reserve" in presenting their own attitudes.

For example, in the Pazar, it is noteworthy ... there are those old Serbian families that are in the centre of the city, and only by name, not any more by an accent, you can distinguish between "us" and "them". But there are some families whom we talk "with reserve", we can never be 100% honest

– and likewise ... Let me be understood as anyone suits him/her, but I have never felt about Bosnia - Sarajevo is not “closer” to me than Belgrade – that is the point. Although Muslims live here, Bosniaks – Belgrade is in my heart.

(CITIZENS, NOVI PAZAR)

National reconciliation can contribute to youth work. Young people, however, do not have enough knowledge and are burdened with prejudices and stereotypes, and they cannot get impartial information from history textbooks. The following discourse shows the refusal of young people being aware of the fact that they have been fighting with a certain nation in the past to contact their peers of other nationalities. The exchange of young people between the countries of the region is important, but only if they could learn something during these meetings.

Working with young people, I somehow always turn to them, it's a target group that has nothing to do with what was going on before, and it is very important to work with them, just because they grow with prejudice, not knowledge.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

It is also with hatred towards other nations, if I meet the Albanians, for example, who, as I can see, live the same as me, live a similar life, then I will see that we are the same.

(CIVIL SECTOR BELGRADE)

The reconciliation process should be based on openness and tolerance towards different opinions, as in the history of education, primarily facts should be taken into account. Forgetting about the war is not a solution that can contribute to peace building.

I think that finally “fama” i.e. fake news has to be removed from the process of reconciliation, that it is something that must be done and that we begin to “indoctrinate” people. I think that this is the biggest problem, people understand this process of reconciliation as “now, we must forget that it was war, forget that my grandfather was killed or my house was burnt”.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The Germans have textbooks that have a facts based text, only the facts are listed, and then at the end of the text they have tasks for essays, so that they can express how they understood it ... This is the right way and this will not happen in our country for another 20 years.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The civil sector has a special significance for the perspectives on peace, but only if it acts locally. In some areas, its work is evident, but it is not involved in some civil society activities, and it should. In its activities, the civil sector is faced with

various problems, and in particular its activities in Kosovo are marked by many obstacles, the most important of which is that Serbia has not recognized Kosovo and official co-operation has been disabled.

I miss the local level of the NGO sector; there are many non-governmental organizations in different parts of Serbia ... In the south of Serbia in the early 2000s there were inter-ethnic problems. I have not heard anything about an NGO working there on the reconciliation of Serbs and Albanians living there in Bujanovac and Preševo

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

We have a problem because Serbia officially does not recognize Kosovo, so the Serbian Ministry of Education cannot cooperate with the Ministry of Education of Kosovo, because it is not recognized, it does not exist for us. And that's a big problem. Unfortunately, still, I hope that this will soon change, only civil society organizations have access to Kosovo and work on these issues [as well as] and informal groups, such as, for example, a parliamentary group of women from the Assembly of Serbia and the Assembly of Kosovo, who literally meet in secrecy and mutually discuss, agree. Of course they disagree on many issues, but they talk, go through both Kosovo and Serbia and talk to people.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The next narrative warns about the importance of the quality of civil society programs. Quality is essential for the programs to realize the goal of intercultural understanding that will be devoid of ideologies.

We all agreed that the exchange of young people is the key to reconciliation, but it can be a "double-edged sword". In the sense that, the exchange of young people to a great extent, and I will say why I think it is happening, they lead to the intensification of stereotypes rather than reconciliation - because they are not well organized, because they are organized by associations that look the project-like into things, so let it be "done". It is not enough to gather people in one place, for a certain number of days, from different countries to make a certain exchange, which again brings us back to the civic rudeness and the lack of capacity of civil society organizations ... Youth exchange within civil society organizations, supported by institutions, but not institution-led in any way - I think it is important to underline it. Plastic example - working actions, those were also the exchanges of young people created by the state, to achieve some reconciliation after the war, but they carried a certain ideology that was transmitted through working actions. While other youth exchanges, through civil society organizations, allow "open doors" for different thinking. Especially through the European Voluntary Service program, the "Youth in Action", and ERASMUS plus ... it is the European Commission that allows civil society organizations to work on something, has a certain impact, gives some

substantial resources, but those organizations are the one that have absolute freedom to eventually organize exchanges, to tell what they want.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, BELGRADE)

Work with citizens, especially those who participated in the war, could contribute to reconciliation through various projects. If former soldiers talked about their experiences to citizens and advocated reconciliation, it would have been easier to sustain the reconciliation.

Regarding the reconciliation process, we may not have touched upon the need to work with people directly involved in the war; I think it is very important ... [as well as] connecting people who participated in the war on different sides. Of course, I'm not talking here about the people who committed the crimes, there is a place meant for them, but there were such initiatives, which is very good. I forgot the name of the organisation we cooperated with from Novi Sad, we had a panel discussion in which a Croatian defence attorney participated, a member of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a member of the Serbian volunteer forces [who] all spoke about their experiences during the war and the process of their own reconciliation, ... Such things should be promoted, such things should be organized, such things should be broadcast on television.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The media could help improve peace, but should completely change the discourse of reporting on events, which ultimately depends on the views of the political option in power.

Political will, do something with the media - they are a "fantastic" creation that produces extreme nationalism and all the accompanying elements.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

In the business sphere, reconciliation has already happened. There are many examples of how companies from Croatia and Serbia cooperate. Citizens believe that the process of globalization that is based on multinational companies is not consistent with the existence of small, autonomous companies and that, as such, they cannot survive in the global environment. It is therefore natural to develop cooperation between Serbian companies and those in the region.

I would like to quote a "small" example. My company, in which I work, the seat is in Zagreb, a private company, they came seven years ago to Serbia and developed a lot ... we often travel to Zagreb and Rijeka ... there are gatherings of our workers from Serbia in Croatia and vice versa, whether business-private matters in substance, nothing past-related ever happens. We are all bound together by the same goal - business.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Among the other actors that could contribute to reconciliation is the European Union, which should show interest for the citizens of Serbia, and not only for its own, geopolitical interests.

One of the steps, in my opinion, extremely important is that the international community, first of all the EU, starts to take care of citizens of Serbia, which is not happening now ... When Serbia becomes part of the EU ... Only then will it worry, and now they do not care! Only then they will worry about Vučić obeying orders, period. To “part” from Russia, to recognize Kosovo ... I think that this is a very important step towards reconciliation.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Regional Perspective

Two discourses point to the polarization of thinking about regional reconciliation perspectives. On the one hand, there is a discourse based on the position on the importance of adopting European values by Serbia, which should positively influence the outcome of reconciliation. Positive outcomes would also contribute to the individualisation of guilt for crimes committed in the region. However, a series of narratives points to a negative discourse on the work of civil society and its reach in the region. Also, the separation of people from politics in a regional perspective puts negative light to the peoples of the region who do not want to accept reconciliation and block its process.

The regional perspective of the reconciliation process is a long-lasting and necessary process in which the value framework of the European Union should be adopted, and the adoption of this framework should be real and convincing.

It is a permanent process that is not terrible, but necessary. Only one thing remained there, that we did not touch – it is the influence of the international factor, the EU's influence, etc. So, the European Union, that is now where we need to join and reach to some value framework they have ... However, what is going on, I have the feeling that the EU as such has ... this process of reconciliation. But they have a limited corpus of things that matter to them. For example, by looking at Croatia, especially now, I have the feeling that it's all so packaged that it looks right and it's so disclosed, they have entered the EU and now nobody asks them anything. Well, I'm just afraid of it, because a lot of changes have been launched under an international “umbrella” here, conditionally said.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Regional reconciliation could contribute to the removal of symbols (e.g. graffiti) in neighbouring countries highlighting the collective guilt of the Serbs. It should be insisted on individual responsibility because the citizens of Serbia are

barred from crimes committed in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and they do not consider themselves responsible for them, but asking for individual guilt to be established.

This insistence on collective responsibility - it says here "Serbs have killed", like in Dubrovnik it is written "the old town was damaged after the aggression of the Serbs ..." This is the emphasis on collective responsibility. How to overcome the conflict? Theoretically speaking - establishing individual responsibility and turning the future, this is the only way.

(CITIZENS, BELGRADE)

Naming, personalizing of crimes, as well as on the other hand, it would greatly help to personalize the victims. These victims are not numbers, they are people, and they are somebody's brothers, somebody's mothers, somebody's sisters.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

The totally opposite discourse claims that reconciliation cannot be substantially improved except on a formal level. Unlike the discourse expressed in certain focus issues, which is based on the polarization of politics and people, whereby people are the bearers of the policy of reconciliation, the next narrative, represented by the citizens of Novi Pazar, argues that politics works in favour of achieving peace but the people does not accept reconciliation.

I mean, there was a dialogue between Serbia and Bosnia and Croatia, but as far as politicians or presidents and prime ministers are talking, they cannot force the people to reconcile ... The states can reconcile themselves and sign, "seal and archive" and that's it, but the situation in the states will remain the same - at least as far as that so called reconciliation is concerned.

(CITIZENS, NOVI PAZAR)

A similar, pessimistic reflection is also the next narrative that draws the idea that the newly established Regional Office (RYCO) will foster the cooperation of the civil sector, but essential reconciliation will not be achieved, because hatred among nations is too strong – the only possible outcome is mutual tolerance and coexistence.

I think that the aforementioned Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) will also directly encourage the cooperation of the civil sector by means of a condition if someone is applying for bigger funds; the requirement is to have a partner organization from other countries ... Let's get back to - why we really need it. .. Now, Žižek (Slavoj Žižek, prim. moderator) crosses my mind, with his "What reconciliation, no chance us to share love, we need to admit that we hate each other, but yes, we need to stand each other and end up with it". It's very pessimistic to me, but let's not, at least sweep

the hatred under the carpet - as much as we do not want to see it - it exists.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Civil sector

A very wide spectrum of narratives describes the activities of civil society organizations. Respondents perceive the civil sector as being very important in establishing reconciliation, so it can be said that a positive discourse is recognized in evaluating the work of the civil sector. However, the activities of civil society organizations are burdened with various difficulties to slow down its operations, and which in small environments impedes its work. Stigmatization of civil society activists is another important discourse that points to the effectiveness of civil society.

Respondents, based on their own experience, assess that civil sector can help raise awareness of stereotypes and prejudices. Communication among citizens organized through intercultural, educational trainings is evaluated as significant. However, an important function of the civil sector is “the correction of the state” as well as the improvement of the system, and not only the achievement of project goals aimed at the mobility of young people.

I think that [civil society] plays an extremely important role and I speak from my personal experience because I had prejudice towards other nations, so I think that young people can visit other countries through, for example, international trainings and some forms of volunteering, acquiring friends in other countries – it is that much important.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Civil society organizations operate in a social context, so it can be said that the realization of their programs depends on the success of balancing between different interests. Political interests can manipulate civil society organizations in their favour that the respondents with the experience of working in the civil sector consider bad.

Respondent 1: It cannot be put “on paper” to what extent does this experience from the NGO sector, non-formal education mean to a person ... I have to praise about a 2004 – 2009 project realised by a group of 7-8 of us, a Canadian project of a regional character, in which were included Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia, so we went through a “huge” million valued project and in the end, through some workshops, we launched the idea to establish a Youth Office ... well, we did make the Office 2008 and it is still active today.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Moderator: In Novi Pazar?

Respondent 1: Yes ... We, our team came out (of this) 2011-2012 when the Office began to be used for political purposes.

Respondent 2: For political purposes!

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Civil society has a stigma of “foreign mercenaries” and even “national traitors”. This discourse can be linked to citizens’ lack of information about the existence of civil associations and their role in the building of democracy. From this aspect of ignorance of the work of civil society organizations and the low level of network development of these organizations, it is estimated that the power of the civil sector is small compared to other social actors.

I wanted to say about the civil sector, I think that generally civil society, as a notion, is something that is so young and yet it is to be recognized in this region. Not only on the subject of reconciliation, but in general. This demonization, while civil society was being built in this country, and in the end... “foreign mercenaries, domestic traitors and the rest”.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Public sector respondents said that civil society organizations cooperate with the public sector and are consulted when drafting strategies, documents, etc., so it can be said that they are involved in some form in public policy. However, they are not included in all stages of cooperation, but most often in the implementation of the program. Civil society organizations should also be included in the evaluation and monitoring of the results of public policy implementation.

I would add to this story about the level of involvement of non-governmental organizations in public policies. It seems to me that this is significantly better and that it is much more intense than it was before and that it will go on its upward path. However, my impression is that, as far as the Office (for Kosovo and Metohija) is concerned, that civil society organizations are most involved in this phase of implementation and/or work on the field, they are much less involved in the project planning phase, and in the smallest extent in the monitoring phase or evaluation and the results achieved. So, I think, if something should change, and of course it should, absolutely, it is to hear the voice of civil society, that they need to be much more involved in the planning stage of the budget itself and the distribution of the state budget, to hear also the opinion of the experts.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Regional civil society cooperation has similar shortcomings as the civil society organizations themselves. There is competition between them, and they should actually cooperate as much as possible. Many organizations behave as “companies” who are only interested in meeting the “project goal”.

There is an "eternal" Initiative for RECOM, if nothing else ... Well, it's a matter that is not being talked about, but there is some sort of mutual "quarrel" among the civil sector members. So, even within the civil sector itself, there are organizations that are "created", I mean "manifest" tells them that they would have to cooperate - and they do not cooperate ... I think it is especially important for us to bridge some of these things and really start cooperation.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Regional umbrella organizations are rare, and even when they act, citizens do not know anything about their activities. Cooperation is lacking due to lack of financial resources and weak internal capacities, and the under-capacitate of regional civil society cooperation is most evident at national level. States should give full support to such initiatives, which is often only declarative. The biggest problem is that the citizens of the region are not familiar with the content and the end-result of regional initiatives.

There are very few of these regional initiatives, we have the "Igman Initiative", which is really, I believe, the biggest and with the best results ever achieved. I just wanted to say, we have "RECOM" which, frankly, I was familiar with the work of RECOM, had many internal problems, relations between the organizations of RECOM members, etc. They have achieved that some representatives of states in the region sign a Declaration of Readiness for reconciliation, or have I already forgotten the proper title, but again, frankly, it is nothing. First, for RECOM, neither in Serbia nor in Bosnia (well, maybe in Bosnia a little more), neither in Croatia, the vast majority of ordinary people, conditionally referred to as "ordinary people" do not know, nor have heard, in particular, that Stipe Mesic signed this Declaration. We have some which can be very important, now, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is formed, which can potentially play a very important role, among other things, in solving many problems with young people ... And secondly, if it is going to work in a similar way as previous attempts here, I am sincerely afraid that they will not succeed much, that is, only those people personally involved will succeed.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Difficulties in the cooperation of civil society arise due to unequal development of the civil sector in different countries. Also, individual respondents consider that the problem of reconciliation belongs to the past and civil society should deal with contemporary, recent topics. In addition, the theme of reconciliation is, as one of the respondents says is "hot potatoes" while topics such as gender equality or the problems of the Roma population and the like, are more propulsive in terms of obtaining funds from donors.

Civil society has played a huge role or will play, but projects implemented by civil society have little to do with this topic. We co-operate with each

other, for example, on the subject of diversity, the "Roma" theme gathers a lot, then LGBT themes, culture, etc. But this topic - the past, what we did or did not, where we are ... I hear it for the first time, not the very first time, but one of the rare projects to specifically address this topic, and to bring together the region.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Civil society should be redefined from the aspect of possible cooperation. Small organizations cannot have as much significance as large one, and which, at the same time, have higher capacities but also influence. The consolidation of the civil sector could also occur at the regional level. It is assumed that the cooperation of organizations will occur in the future in connection with various global processes, such as, for example, influx of migrants.

Somehow, from the aspect of this work in the Ministry responsible for youth affairs, it seems to me that prior to serious redefinition of the civil sector in our country, slowly it will enter into a more mature phase, that the component of interest-organizing of citizens will be strengthened, it will not necessarily be small groups of citizens with a common narrow target with touch points with a general goal and some public interest. But in this consolidation of the civil sector, when it start representing interests of a larger number of citizens, not as a lawyer - but as a member of associations advocating the articulation of a common position - that there will be much better regional integration.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Organizations gathering young people have the advantage of being able to quickly connect and activate after the conflict, but such organizations are usually not visible and not accessible to all, and citizens are not sufficiently informed about their activities.

In my opinion, civil society organizations do have an interest in breaking down these barriers, in terms of political and ethnically unsolved relations, and that certainly affects the creation of a better and broader picture of relations between people. In particular, this is the case with small and youth organizations that are easily connected and quickly activated after the conflict and did not have a problem, nor they are talking about the past and events in the past ... but it is a big problem that their work is not really visible and not publicly available to everyone, in the sense that, although some smaller organizations have a large number of such projects linking young people, connecting people from the region, this is not known enough, or heard, the media deal only with certain topics and are closed to such positive things, such as the work of non-governmental organizations and the things that they are changing for better.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Furthermore, it is important to see the human potential within the civil society organizations and what is the quality of such HR potential and their proper education. Insufficient, as it is stated in the next narrative; the first one starts to deal with a topic, but it is necessary to assess the capacities of the organizations well; otherwise, the organization and its representatives may be insufficiently expert and even dilettantes during the realization of a program, which affects their reputation and destroy confidence as regards the quality of the designed program.

Again ... without diminishing the importance for the courage of early beginning to deal with it. However, if a process starts, it has to be tackled properly and, depending on the development phase, some activities are adapted, expanded ... It is sometimes comical when someone who is very poorly or not educated starts to use some terms, for example, for an auditorium composed of professors of philosophy, even if wanted to take over an agenda, what they could do. It is not the same everywhere, it used to happen for a "grasp" of money often organizations that are not in the capacity, allowed themselves luxury to deal with things that are far beyond their capabilities or because of the representativeness of the sample, etc. I also think that in the youth sector this works much better and easier, precisely because of clearly articulated attitudes to establish cooperation at the youth level. But, I also think that this is the most sensitive indicator of any repetition or return to some earlier conditions that these are the most sensitive processes because they are fragile, and if they are not sufficiently supported and if there is at least some state of reconciliation, they cannot continue.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The following narrative speaks of the kind of limitation of the influence and inability to work at the local level. The problems that the civil sector has on the local level are also related to the stigmatization of those who deal with reconciliation, which was already discussed. Many publicly exposed persons from the peace sector are considered traitors instead of peacekeepers, which makes it more difficult for civil society organizations to operate in small environments.

I think that civil society organizations are doing a good job, but that they generally have "poor reputation", for example, we will have some excellent seminar that will be created by the Humanitarian Law Centre - which works extensively on education about the past, and which can do it at the local level, and just because they have no access, they can do nothing because the Humanitarian Law Centre connects associates with Natasa Kandic, and Natasa Kandic is "the ultimate Serbian traitor" and that's it, the story ends. And the one who comes to this (seminar) is already somehow aware and you lose the target group that was important at the beginning.

(CIVIL SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Intersectoral cooperation

The main bearer of reconciliation can be culture and cultural cooperation between the countries in the region. However, the state usually does not have enough financial resources for culture, despite its importance. The state, according to public sector respondents, should co-finance cultural events to a greater extent because cultural cooperation is more important than the economic one.

I think that cultural institutions, a sector that we did not worked out, and I think they are more crucial than the business sector. The business sector, as the colleague says, works for its own interests and does not have much emotion. But in this part, I think that the economic crisis and weak budgets also prevent this level of cooperation of cultural exchange, for which objectively there are no obstacles. There is a possibility for greater exchange, but there is no money and that is the main limiting factor.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Cooperation of the civil sector and the public exists, it is a common character and it is regulated by the laws. By contrast, connectivity of all three sectors (civil, public, and economic) is not very common and well-known practice for all. The reason for this is seen in the structural, different functioning of sectors. Obstacles to cooperation are not addressed, so public sector respondents assume that cooperation between all three sectors could be achieved.

[Cooperation between] public administration and the civil sector surely [exists], it is regulated both institutionally and legally, but connectivity with the third, the business sector? It seems to me that there are few such initiatives.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

I think they work differently. The business sector functions in one way, the institutions on the other, civil society at some third, but I do not see any particularly big obstacle to working together - if wanted.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

Cooperation of the civil sector with public institutions is successful especially from the perspective of public institutions which believe that the successfully cooperate especially with youth organizations. However, there are difficulties in implementing programs because civil organizations do not have sufficient capacities for the implementation of certain programs. It is not only a problem in under-capacity, but also in the impossibility of engaging professionals, which is related to the distribution of the budget of the Republic of Serbia (as contained in the narrative). Because of the economic crisis, civil society organizations cannot count on receiving grants from citizens, which additionally complicates their financial situation. It can certainly be concluded that project budgeted civil organizations with a strictly defined allocation of program resources cannot be flexible if no

budgetary expense is specified. This problem could also arise if there would be possible co-operation between the private, public and economic sectors.

In the youth sector, we have a lot of participation, from planning public policies, planning normative activities, implementation and evaluation; we are fully working in cooperation with civil society.... Unfortunately, in practice, what I have to state as inevitable that civil society will quite vitally survive one transformation, because this is the last phase of a period, which it seems to me, was oriented differently. Suddenly, organizations are no longer able to understand the state administration activities in order to be involved in them, as it turns out that after the fifth or sixth call for participation in public policies concerning different areas, one and the same participant always appears or some participants appear who simply, physically, are in delay [to realize the program]. I am not saying that this is only a lack of personnel capacities, but the problem is related to the economic situation and those are associations largely disabled to engage professionals, precisely because of that item line 481 (classification in the budget of the Republic of Serbia: 481 - grants for non-governmental organizations and restrictive budgets, etc.). Also, because of the impossibility of giving grants, because, they are, let's say, all some program budgets. And again, due to bad economic conditions, membership donation is also missing ... So that, the organizations come to one point when they practically start rehearsing stories to that of a certain period ago, that they are not involved enough, and, at the moment, they are given the opportunity, they simply do not come up with a sufficiently active approach, but it is still some sort of polemical tone. We were fortunate that in the youth sector we have this rather developed and regulated - representativeness or umbrella federation. This umbrella alliance can still "follow" ... The Law on Youth, the Law on Sports, and the Law on Volunteering - in which we participate, and we invite them. Then, the Law on Public Procurement, if concerned the civil society organizations, then, in cooperation with the Office (for cooperation with civil society), we tried to find a solution, again in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance. I want to return to the previous topic - the connectivity of all sectors, I believe that not only for the issue of reconciliation, but generally the participation of civil society organizations in public policies, I think that it is not only connectivity with public administration bodies, but also directly linked to the real sector (economy).

(PUBLIC SECTOR, BELGRADE)

The advantage of forming clusters of private producers is in the access to funds and the improvement of production, etc. The next respondent speaks about an attempt to co-operate within the private sector whose association would allow for the improvement of production. In this regard, cooperation with the public sector should be achieved.

I am trying to form a cluster, but I have gathered several companies, several related businesses ... I am looking at my economic interest, I have to start from it, we cannot all live from socializing - I conditioned them to join my accounting, we will talk about clusters further ... because this kind of association creates opportunities for participation in fairs, that is, access to funds that finance participation at fairs abroad, obtaining export certificates, product improvement, packaging, etc. So, this is a great opportunity provided by the Government of the Republic of Serbia and foreign funds, EU funds.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

Respondents positively declare about the eventual network that would emerge based on the connection of all three sectors.

One respondent stated experiences in organizing education that included representatives of all three sectors. Experiences are not particularly positive in the first work due to the lack of interest of young people and the suspicion of employees who are employed in the public sector.

Respondent: I'm doing finances for [citing the name of a civil society organization], I am engaged by project. I had the opportunity to get to know a lot of people from that sector; first of all, they were some "strange" people for me, a "strange" language - I did not understand anything about what they were saying - everything is up in the air, in the clouds ... In one project we had education (representatives) of the municipality, the business sector and the youth sector - we tied it all together, we taught them how to make business plans, their projects.

Moderator: What is your experience after that?

Respondent: Young people are not interested, municipalities look down on it, but they will come to every education we organize outside of Pazar - transport, food and all when you pay it - they will come, naturally.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

In relation to theme of social entrepreneurship, respondents point out that there is no legal regulation in Serbia that would regulate it. In the following narrative, private sector official explain why social entrepreneurship is not interesting to investors without the interest of the state.

Respondent: We do not have a law at all, so the benefits that are used by a company usually use this ... For example, benefits from the National Employment Service or taxation policy are the same for an ordinary enterprise and a social enterprise, and then who opens a company is interested in that profit in the end, he/she will not hire marginalized groups, people with disabilities, because he has to invest more, in personal assistants, to provide space, and that's all ... and no benefits by comparison with "usual"

enterprise. Then, he/she will register an ordinary enterprise, take profit eventually and pay salaries.

Moderator: And you, don't you find interest in it?

Respondent: Not now. The proposal of the Law ensured it, but it was "expelled" from the procedure, because those funds that were supposed to be allocated - that profit, some Fund that was supposed to be established, and again, the Fund was again supposed to employ marginalized groups, for opening up social enterprises - it did not work out.... Currently, there is no difference, in our country ... while abroad this is a bit different. Even volunteers and young people when they finish college abroad, they first begin to work in social enterprises, where they get some practice for a small salary, but when they continue to work in some companies and firms it is much valued.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, BELGRADE)

A similar perspective is also provided by a civil sector respondent who managed to register such a company.

A legal framework is needed. It took us a lot of time; we did not know how to register, of course, as a social enterprise. We were limited with regard to the source from which we obtained funds, that is, the National Employment Service, where only individuals can benefit, so a lot of time and knowledge of errors and returns were needed so that we could register an economic activity, under the name of a social enterprise, although as such, what we are going to do, is far from being recognized by someone. Our goal is to hire these socially vulnerable categories, and when the legal framework is adopted, and then we will be a true social enterprise.

(CIVIL SECTOR, NOVI PAZAR)

In Serbia, there are organizations trying to deal with social entrepreneurship focused on vulnerable groups (women victims of violence, single mothers etc.), but, generally regardless of these examples, civil society, the public sector and private as well as the citizens as a whole poorly, if at all, know the idea of social entrepreneurship.

Conclusions and recommendations

In the context of the research topic of contemporary situation in Serbia, the analyses point to an unstable internal regional political context and a nationalistic discourse of power within the state and in relation to neighbouring states. From the framework thus defined, it is understandable that there is a lack of political will to deal with the responsibility for inter-ethnic conflicts, and that the theme of reconciliation is viewed by the authorities with a high degree of

suspicion concerning the role of the state and individuals involved in the war conflicts.

Conceptualization peace related conclusions show that the dimensions of the perception of reconciliation can be divided into the axis of reality - the future. The realistic dimension suggests that take a number of serious activities should be undertaken for peace building such as confronting and accepting the past, and re-examining guilt and responsibility for conflict-of-war crimes. In multi-ethnic environments that have passed relatively intactly with regard to conflicts (Novi Pazar), the discourse of indifference appeared among respondents "there was no quarrel, so there is no need for conciliation", but also with suspicion and caution in communicating with members of other nationalities. The future dimension is mostly linked to the younger generation, and in its background there is a discourse of optimism with regard to the young people regional connectivity. This dimension testifies to potential rather than reality, and counts on human resources that should now, but above all in the future, be peace stabilizers in Serbia and the region.

Reconciliation is also a process that implies common communication and action, and in order to develop as a process, certain positions appear that the guilt and responsibility should not be reconsidered, but should concentrate on the repair of war damages. There is also a discourse that considers reconciliation a pathetic and fake one thereby it alludes to how deeply entangled it is in political (national and international) interests.

The general impression of respondents is that reconciliation in Serbia has not been accepted. This is best confirmed by the discord of the separation of people from politics. Explanations of this separation are polarized; on the one hand, it is warned that reconciliation is not accepted in the political milieu but it is among citizens, and on the other hand, that reconciliation is politically accepted but not functioning on a daily basis. The separation of citizens from political elites also indicates the manipulation of politicians with the "truth"; they unambiguously interpret history and historical facts regardless of whether they are related to the conflict in the 1990s or the Second World War. Concerning the crimes committed, reconciliation could be achieved if individualised the guilt and accountability because the interpretation of the war by the warriors was different and multifaceted. Furthermore, there is another interesting discourse that leads to manipulation by the international community, which is related to the idea that Serbia's reconciliation has been imposed by the international community. According to this view, political leadership does not make decisions independently.

From the aspect of accepting reconciliation in Serbia, members of civil society declare that they have problems in action; their perspective is different from the perspective of citizens and they think that they advocate values that are not recognized by the wider society. In addition, young people involved in civilian

exchange programs experience various disadvantages from their surroundings. Many younger generations spent their formative years in being indoctrinating with hatred towards others, so the capabilities of civil society from the aspect of action are limited. It is likely that new generations, unencumbered by immediate war experiences will be more tolerant, so that reconciliation as a process will be prolonged and postponed for many years.

Barriers to reconciliation are seen in the values of political and religious elites that act "hypocritically". Respondents believe that political and religious elites listen to "someone" who orders them. The media are perceived to be the bearers of bad news, negativity, and greyness. Media processing of some cases (example of Novi Pazar) was oversized, whereby national tensions are raised artificially. One of the obstacles to reconciliation is also found in a culture that encourages violence as a way of solving problems in everyday life, which points to the need to explore the culture of violence in the Western Balkans. The obstacle to reconciliation is also seen in the lack of interest of citizens in politics. On the one hand, there is the apathy and apolitically of the citizens, and on the other hand, stereotypes and prejudices against national minorities are perpetuated, as evidenced by the experiences of Bosniaks from Novi Pazar.

The national level of reconciliation was estimated to be very low. Progress in the economy and the way out of crisis would improve relations among nations and had a positive impact on politics. Given the longevity of crisis, more and more citizens are led by the thesis of "national romanticism" and, in order to improve the process of reconciliation, they believe that the influence of international community is still needed. In assessing the level of national reconciliation, the special place holds the interest of respondents in proving the importance of economy and economic cooperation because "small Balkan countries" will not be able to survive in the global market if they do not cooperate. The economic crisis and its consequences for the economy are high, but respondents consider that the economy is a healthy driver of reconciliation.

Politically speaking, there are developed contacts among nations of different nationalities in Novi Pazar. It is recognized that certain political parties deliberately use the inter-ethnic incidents that exist, but do not endanger more serious coexistence, for their particular interests of fostering their political programs.

The regional level of reconciliation is burdened by (not) recognizing the guilt for crimes, that should be done by all parties that participated in the war conflicts, including Croats and Bosnians. This should be preceded by the process of national harmonization or internal consensus as conditions for regional reconciliation. The assessment of the work of the Hague Tribunal is critically intoned and it is generally negative because the Tribunal does not, in the opinion of the respondents, give confidence in the fairness of the judgments delivered.

At the regional level, there is also a polarization between politics and the people, and it is claimed, mostly, that (regional) political elites are not interested in reconciliation.

In order to improve the national perspective of reconciliation, it is necessary to work on the individualisation of guilt in order to overcome nationalist tendencies over this topic. As young people perceive the bearers of the future, the importance of history textbooks is emphasized, because from the existing textbooks they cannot obtain true and objective information. The level of national reconciliation should still be assessed with regard to the situation in Kosovo in which the civil society associations were engaged in the process of reconciliation.

Entering the European Union is one of the thematic patterns that determine the regional perspective. However, Serbia will not be able to join the European Union unless it adopts a series of European values. In this process, politics should work together with civil society to make this transition successful. In terms of regional reconciliation, there is the advocacy of pessimistic attitudes that already put into doubt the success of the newly established regional peace-keeping organizations.

The role of the civil sector in Serbia is vast and diverse, but at the same time, the civil sector is subjected to criticism. Precisely on this critique the recommendations for the work of civil society in Serbia could be based. Citizens are not sufficiently informed about the national and regional achievements of civil society. Civil society is important for the exchange of young people, but it is also shown that the quality of civil organizations and their capacities in the implementation of intercultural programs is also important. For the realization of individual programs, the civil sector has been shown to be under-capacitated and sometimes insufficiently specialized. There is often competition among similar organizations, so it might be recommended at the national level to consolidate similar, small organizations that do not otherwise have a great power of action. The civil sector should be more engaged at the local level, primarily in smaller communities, although some warn that there is a risk of vulnerability to the influence of local political parties. The power of the civil sector in small environments can be low if members of civil society at the local level question the ruling political and moral values, which can produce its stigmatization. A similar process occurs with exposed persons who deal with reconciliation at the regional level.

At the regional level, the problem of competition of civil organizations is also recognized, and if they are working on the same topic, they should cooperate. Civil society is not equally developed and the theme of reconciliation is complex and, in fact, unattractive from the viewpoint of financiers and donors. Dealing with it requires the adoption of a wide range of knowledge and expertise in order to avoid the appearance of dilettantism in the implementation of the program. It can be concluded that various processes, and in the first place a lack of international funding for civil society programs, could encourage the consolidation of civil society at both the national and regional levels.

Inter-sectoral cooperation exists to a certain extent. Public policies are deficient, so the private sector (economy) and cultural (in view of the spread of universal values) appear as real and potential bearers of reconciliation and improvement of the quality of life, and the interest of citizens of Serbia is bottom-placed. However, cooperation between civil organizations and the private sector is not satisfactory. The obstacle is primarily seen in the different way of functioning of these sectors, which is especially complicated if the public sector would also be included in the cooperation. In this regard, in order to establish cooperation, civil society organizations should apply a communication strategy that is receptive to entrepreneurs. Furthermore, efforts should be made to raise the awareness of private sector representatives about their social role in the process of reconciliation and the importance of socially responsible business through some kind of education, in order to start a partnership with the civil sector.

Macedonia

THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, AS A FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC, ACHIEVED ITS independence in 1991 by peacefully. Its European path was largely determined by the relationship with Greece, and although Macedonia was granted the candidate status for EU accession in 2005, the negotiations have not yet begun due to a dispute with Greece with regard to the name “Macedonia”. Although the inclusion of Macedonia in the NATO Alliance was considered in 2008, this process has not far removed due to the Greek blockade.

When it comes to the internal political situation⁴⁴, it can be said that it is complex, whereby the complexity is conditioned by socio-historical circumstances. Here is a brief overview of recent events that determine the current political situation in the country.

After the last early elections held in 2014, the mandate for forming a new government was won by VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity), a right nationalist Macedonian party and DUI (Democratic Union for Integration), a left-wing party with a majority vote of Albanian voters.

SDSM (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia) was the main opposition party since 2006. In addition to the 2014 Parliamentary elections, Presidential elections were held and Gjorje Ivanov was re-elected. His candidacy was supported by VMRO-DPMNE, however, DUI did not since they boycotted the presidential election, claiming that Ivanov did not gain the legitimacy of Albanian voters given the lack of their support. The OSCE assessed the elections as effectively administered, however the report did not say that the elections were conducted fairly and regularly.

Voting based on ethnicity and the division of ethnic groups is reflected in the work of government and state institutions. In a picturesque and simplified way, there are “two governments under the same roof” (Macedonian and Albanian) in Macedonia. Such a situation negatively affects interethnic relations primarily

⁴⁴ It should be noted that the research, for the needs of this project, was done in the spring of 2016, and all these results should be viewed through the prism of the then political and social context.

on enhanced ethnic segregation of communities⁴⁵. Ethnic discrimination was accompanied by increased discrimination based on political affiliation, which was also noted in the EU's progress reports (Krzalovski et al., 2010). The report also highlights the extent of political discrimination that is manifested in employment policies in public administration, whereby individuals who are close to the ruling parties are preferred.

After Macedonia's repetitive blockade by Greece regarding the name of the country when considering Macedonia's accession to NATO in 2008, it can be said that democratic development in Macedonia is experiencing stagnation, and to some extent regression. In the period from 2008 to 2016, Macedonia was hit by two powerful political crises that had a negative impact on the rule of law, as well as interethnic relations and reconciliation.

The first crises occurred in December 2012, when journalists and parliamentary representatives of the opposition were forcefully expelled from the parliamentary sitting ahead of the adoption of the 2013 budget. Opposition MPs tried to obstruct the adoption of the national budget by proposing numerous amendments and opening up numerous discussions that resulted in their removal from parliament. After that, the opposition boycotted the work of the Assembly, organized protests across the country, and demanded early parliamentary elections, placing an ultimatum that, if that request was not met, it would boycott the local elections planned for 2013. The crisis was supervised by the EU and was soon solved.

Shortly thereafter, another, it happened perhaps the biggest crisis in the country's political history. In 2015, SDSM began publishing footage of illegally eavesdropped talks that uncovered corruption, interfering with the work of the judiciary, the illegal monitoring of 20,000 people including ministers, electoral fraud and manipulation of electoral lists, suppressing the killing of political activists, obstructing the judicial process called the "Monster" case and the suspicious circumstances of the arrest of the former minister of interior for allegedly illegally funding his political campaign. There was a political blunder of the ruling parties with the opposition, and numerous demonstrations in the country broke out, all of which contributed to the destabilization of the political situation in Macedonia. This crisis also was eventually resolved through the mediation of the EU and the US Embassy and the signing of the Agreement in Przino between the leaders of the four major political parties (VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, DUI, and DPA). Upon signing the agreement, after a 16-month boycott, the opposition returned to Parliament on 1 September 2015. The agreement envisaged numerous activities for resolving the political crisis, with the main aim being to prepare the path for the organization of early, free and fair elections, but also

45 In the elections in the autumn of 2016, the SDSM attracted tens of thousands of votes of the Albanian minority for the first time, inviting them to a joint struggle "against authoritarian rule VMRO-DPMNE" (<http://www.Balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-albanians-mull-joint-platform-for-government-12-22-2016#sthash.zqN3XV6Y.dpuf>).

to step up efforts to establish the rule of law and reforms that the EU requires in the area of the independent functioning of relevant state bodies and the freedom of the media.

When it comes to the freedom of the media, it is quite limited, as is evidenced by the fact that Macedonia in 2016, according to the World Press Freedom Index of 180 countries is in 118th place⁴⁶.

The complex political situation is related to the complex ethnic relations in Macedonia. Macedonia is a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state with a majority of 64% of the population comprising Macedonians, followed by Albanians (25.17%), then Turks (3.85%), Roma (2.66%), Serbs (1.78%), Vlachs (0.48%) and others (1.88%). One of the most significant events since the independence of Macedonia happened in 2001 when an Albanian armed rebellion (led by the National Liberation Army) erupted in Kumanovo, Skopje, Tetovo and Gostivar (north-western and north-eastern parts of Macedonia). The reasons for the rebellion stemmed from the demands of the Albanian minority to extend the right to use the Albanian language and to more actively involve members of the Albanian minority in state structures. The conflict was resolved through international intervention and the signing of the Ohrid Agreement on 13 August 2001 between representatives of political leaders of the largest Macedonian and Albanian political parties. On that occasion, the National Liberation Army was reformed into a political subject and a DUI was established, which was in the period from 2002 to 2016 a part of the ruling coalition.

The Ohrid Agreement is based on three pillars. The first pillar refers to the change of the Macedonian Constitution which, after the Ohrid Agreement, recognizes the possibility of using the minority language as official in the units of local self-government where the majority population is Albanian. In addition, a rule was introduced that all laws related to ethnic communities require the majority of the ethnic community's votes in order to be adopted. The first pillar of the Ohrid Agreement also refers to increasing the representation of minorities in public administration.

The second pillar of the Ohrid Agreement includes the decentralization of a state that places greater emphasis on the responsibility of local self-government units in terms of education, fiscal decentralization, social protection, urbanism, health, etc.

The third pillar refers to building of mutual trust between Albanians and Macedonians, which, unlike the first two pillars, proved to be the most problematic for implementation. In this sense, the goal of creating a very multi-ethnic society from a Macedonian society and multicultural democracy has not been reached.

Macedonia has received satisfactory legislative legislation on the minority issue via the powerful mediation of the international community, primarily the USA and

46 <https://rsf.org/en/ranking> - Reporters Without Borders (2016) World Press Freedom Index.

the EU, but new problems have also been reported. In relation thereof, the most controversial law is the one about the amnesty of all participants in the armed conflict in 2001 was made in 2002 according to which the participants of armed conflicts in 2001 will not be prosecuted. In the meantime, the amnesty does not apply to those individuals against whom criminal proceedings were instituted before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Hague. However, in 2011, the DUI requested a credible interpretation of the 2002 Amnesty Law from the government and the Assembly. From the credible interpretation of this law, a conclusion was drawn on the application of the clemency to those who were indicted by the International Court of Justice in the Hague, and, based on such an interpretation, legal cases were returned to Macedonian courts. This interpretation was condemned by Amnesty International, qualifying it as a violation of international humanitarian law, in particular, as a violation of victims' rights to truth and justice⁴⁷.

One of the biggest challenges is working on reconciliation and building trust between the two ethnically largest groups in contemporary Macedonia. Research on ethnic distance after the Ohrid Agreement shows contradictory tendencies to some extent. On the one hand, most, or 79% of respondents, assess personal experiences with members of other ethnic communities good, while the minority (9.4%) are bad. In this respect, good personal experience in this respect is mostly expressed by ethnic Serbs (92.3%), followed by Albanians (76.5%) (Klekoski, 2011). On the other hand, mixed marriages are acceptable to a quarter of citizens (25.6%), while the majority (70.3%) oppose the establishment of such close relations with members of another ethnic community. When it comes to friendly relations, 35.6% of Macedonians and 27.7% of Albanians do not have friends among members of other ethnic groups (Klekoski, 2011).

This certainly speaks of the closeness of ethnic groups and significant ethnic distance, regardless of the fact that Macedonians (84.1%) and Albanians (78.5%) most often live in ethnically homogeneous neighbourhoods (Klekoski, 2011). Although the majority expresses the need for multi-ethnic political parties (Macedonians 65%, Albanians 60.2%), 61.7% of citizens should not give their vote to a candidate who does not belong to their ethnic community.

Although only part of the research results is mentioned, it can be said that it gives a relatively worrying picture concerning the state of the reconciliation process. However, since 2001, numerous reconciliation projects have been implemented in Macedonia, and their main holders are civil society organizations. Most projects focus on raising awareness of human rights, specifically on the promotion of positive values in the context of interethnic relations. A good part of the projects is focused on post-conflict and other areas in Macedonia, in the sphere of (integrated) education, whereby project activities were often covered by students, teachers and parents⁴⁸.

47 Amnesty International, 'Macedonia: Time to Deliver Justice to the Victims of War Crimes', 1 September 2011, at www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/macedonia-time-deliver-justice-victims-warcrimes-2011-09-01

48 <http://www.brima.com.mk/Press-release-BRIMA/Percepcijata%20na%20evroperspektivite%20>

Grass-root activities in the field of education resulted in the adoption of the Strategy for Integrated Education in 2010 by the Government. The goals of the Strategy included promotion of integration through joint activities of students from different ethnic groups, integration through the learning of the languages of other communities, development of educational plans and programs that contribute to integration, work on developing competencies of teachers to implement integrated education and establishing school management in the context of the decentralization process. However, the implementation of the Strategy has been evaluated defective and deficient in many things (Barbieri et al., 2013).

Although the process of reconciliation in Macedonia has progressed to a certain extent since 2001, there is room for further more serious and more systematic work. Identity (political and ethnic) and spatial separation lines (according to the ethnic line) are expressed among citizens, and real politics has no systematic influence on the process of reconciliation.

Moreover, the political scene in the last years in Macedonia is unstable and, it can be said, a generator of a kind of chaos, which as a consequence can further deepen the discriminatory and segregation practices in Macedonian society.

Empirical Research Findings

Reconciliation Concept

Focus groups participants in empirical research demonstrated familiarity with the concept of reconciliation. The findings of focus groups in the field of conceptualization of reconciliation will be divided into three dimensions. The first discursive dimension refers to the understanding of the reconciliation construct itself, the other to the prerequisites, i.e. factors that catalyse it at the general level, while the third dimension of the perception of reconciliation relates to the delay in that process. All three discursive dimensions outline the concept of reconciliation among representatives of the private, business and public sectors, as well as citizens, and in the continuation, we put the entire story of reconciliation into the Macedonian context that we framed in a regional perspective.

It can be said that participants in the focus groups see the concept of reconciliation as a conglomerate of the three most important factors: coexistence, agreement and acceptance of diversity. Respondents believe that reconciliation implies a normal way of (co)habitation in which everyday activities take place. Thus, a public sector representative says:

oktomvri%202009.pdf;
<http://www.mcms.org.mk/za-nasata-rabota/jaknene-svest-i-kampani/za-kampanite/324-celo-e-koga-ima-se.html>;
<http://www.ndc.net.mk/index.php/en/>;
<http://www.nmie.org/index.php/mk/nansen-model/za-nansen-modelot>; <http://sorsafoundation.fi/en/supporting-democracy-in-multi-ethnic-macedonia-dialogue-and-cooperation-2013-2014/>

Reconciliation today means coexistence between Macedonians and other ethnic group that live in Macedonia. To work together, the students to go to schools without any problems.

The perspective of mutual acceptance and appreciation of cultural and identity diversity proves to be important for understanding reconciliation. Also, there is a need for existence of desire and intentions for a common life in spite of previous conflicts.

In my opinion, the concept of reconciliation means accepting people on a national and religious basis, I believe that people should live together and that cohabitation will help to better working of its constituent's parts, parties and the whole community.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

To respect the culture of the others; to be considered as a whole or unity; not to make differences between each other; to be able to participate in common activities such as competitions between classes as they are divided in our schools where teaching is conducted.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

Reconciliation means to accept the fact that each of us as individual is different; to accept the diversity among us which are emerging in the social life and first of all the desire to live together with others accepting them as they are in their diversity. With different cultures and customs; to respect their opinions and attitudes.

(PUBLIC SECTOR, SKOPJE)

However, certain preconditions must be met for the successfulness of the reconciliation process. Regarding the reconciliation process prerequisites, respondents cite several of them. The majority of respondents believe that the recognition of an error for committed (non) acts in the past is a necessary condition for a quality common future. Recognition of (own) errors is understood as a way of learning that can avoid future behaviour that leads to conflict.

I think that the first thing that needs to be done is that we Macedonians and Albanians recognize the mistakes we have made and that is of crucial importance of us to move on. It is the same as the Germans admitted what they did in World War II and they are coping with it. So, we did sin. So, we need to acknowledge the mistakes we have made and deal with it, in order to calm down and continue on.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Non-compliance in this factor prevails about the need for individualisation of guilt. While some consider that individual crime perpetrators in a conflict should be prosecuted, others feel that the individualization of responsibility is unneces-

sary - the society (ethnic collective) needs to take responsibility for conflicts and committed wrongdoing during the conflict. Below we bring two contradictory narratives from which it can be seen that it is precisely collectivization and/or individualization of guilt an important aspect of the conceptualization of reconciliation among the respondents.

Narrative of individualization of guilt:

I completely agree with my colleague that reconciliation is in a way admitting e.g. the malevolent, bad or good things, or whatever happened in the past, and to recognize that this conflict is at identity level, in some way. It is not to be generalized as an ethnic one, but to put a special emphasis on individuals, for example reconciliation in our case, specifically in Macedonia, or the 2001 conflict, to view the guilty party from that aspect, without generalizing that the Albanians were terrorists or, on the other hand, that Macedonians were violent in this conflict. The perpetrator has a name and surname, in my opinion. They are not people, religion, colour etc. Reconciliation cannot be done without being acknowledged in some way of guilt, in which one is guilty as an individual, and not as a nation.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SKOPJE)

Narrative of collectivization of guilt:

I agree that it is so, but we cannot go forward thinking like that. Mistakes must be acknowledged. Both Macedonians and Albanians made mistakes in 2001 and everyone should cope with it. It should not be the guilt of Ali Ahmeti or Ljupco Gorgievski, but everyone should admit mistakes and we should try to fix things.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Although we do not have a more detailed insight into the structure of this discourse, the prevailing thought is that the establishment of individual responsibility is more important than the one that is collective for the process of reconciliation in Macedonia.

Beside assuming responsibility and acknowledging the guilt for conflicts, there are three additional factors that precede reconciliation: information, professionalism and economic development and cooperation. The first refers to the need for a better and higher level of information, as well as establishing contacts between members of the opposing sides.

Reconciliation is the friendship that we're still keeping; sufficient knowledge of the other; I would rather go in direction for reconciliation primary with getting information for the other because here we can mention that people that have more contact with the other side can easily accept to work and cooperate against people in smaller areas that have not enough

information or where that information is abused from certain group of people e.g. Western Macedonia...

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

In addition to being informed, professionalism is mentioned in the everyday work of individuals and the strengthening of the principles of expertise in the functioning of institutions.

I would associate the concept of reconciliation with professionalism. The greater work professionalism is, the less will be that diversity. I have Albanian patients and I adapt to them, I have many of them from Tetovo, my home is famous for it. I respect each and every holiday of theirs, we respect them as persons. Professionalism will overcome all differences.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

The only way to get things fixed is that the laws apply equally to all and that the institutions are professional, it will be when the democratic model is rectified or when we burn the parliament or we start voting for someone who will meet our expectations.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, KUMANOVO)

From the last narrative, there is a strong dislike towards the institutions in Macedonia. This finding appears for the first time in this context, but in the continuation of the report we will explain this tendency in more detail. Furthermore, respondents express the need to promote common values based on humanistic orientation shared by members of all ethnic groups in order to facilitate the process of reconciliation.

The problem is so deep that we cannot only look at it at the ethnic level. First of all, we need to solve the problem of value because they are so ruined that everything else will be settled, differences do not exist because we are all people.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

The last factor that, in the opinion of the respondents, influences the conceptualization and improvement of the reconciliation process is economic development and cooperation. The exchange of goods at the local, national or regional level enhances the intensity and quality of the contact, which leads to better understanding and, ultimately, to a greater degree of acceptance of whoever is the Second and Different. Respondents believe that the economic sector should not care about ethnicity, but because of its nature it can ling diversities. Below we bring an overview of the perceived economic factor of private sector representative from Skopje:

From the aspect of the business sector, it is important to ignore the prejudices of the type that the owner of the company is an Albanian and that there should

be no cooperation with him. For example, I am the owner, I have my own company, and cooperation with people of other nationalities is very good. In my opinion, it is important to start from the business sector. All the changes are contained therein.

The last discursive dimension that has proven important in the conceptualization of the reconciliation of focus group respondents is a kind of delay towards it. On several occasions, the respondents said that reconciliation is a concept promoted by the international community and that they have the feeling that they are strongly advocating it in Macedonia. Also, the influence of the US, the EU and the Hague on the internal reconciliation policy is recognized, but they also doubt the structured and profound approach of this process, i.e. believe that it is more formal than a real intent.

Everyone has their own interests but in general America has the biggest role for peace in the Balkan. For example in Macedonia when there is any conflict, then certainly America's embassy intervened to stabilize the situation.

(CITIZENS, KUMANOVO)

In my opinion, at the regional level, I think that these are games from the European Union and the US.

(CIVIL SECTOR, KUMANOVO)

The Hague tribunal, although not every time judged rightly, has always viewed to stabilize the situation doing injustice.

(CITIZENS, KUMANOVO)

National and regional level

After identifying the main trends in the conceptualization of reconciliation, we wanted to explore in more detail what is the situation with reconciliation at the national level in Macedonia. From the research findings, it can be concluded that the opinion prevails that coexistence in Macedonia does not exist and the process of reconciliation is slow or non-existent. This is evident from the allegations of discrimination and ghettoization of minorities. Although the Ohrid Agreement tried to normalize the relations between Macedonians and Albanians, it did not fulfil its role and the mutual trust is low or non-existent. The reason for all this is seen in politics and a system that does not care much about reconciliation itself, more often it is used by nationalist rhetoric in order to maintain the existing constellation of power. Some focus group participants acknowledge that the circumstances become more favourable, but they think that this is insufficient and that they need help in overcoming ethnic problems. Below we examine in greater detail the dimensions of these findings and we support them with the related narratives.

One of the basic findings in this part of the research is the prevailing pessimism about acceptance and the existence of reconciliation at the national level in Macedonia. Respondents show very illustratively that the concepts of coexistence, interculturalism, reconciliation and trust are just empty words and/or the overall situation related to reconciliation in the field is extremely poor. Respondents believe that the whole story about reconciling is the farce. A civil society representative from Skopje summed it up in the following way:

We do not have a process of reconciliation, we have a process of acquiring, we are still at that stage to meeting, eating baklava, and we do not know what that means, we are acting reconciliation. We do not have an open process at the state level, we have no characters that can be the representatives thereof.

Representatives of other sectors also agrees with the said, so a private sector interviewee from the capital city depicts the lack of confidence in an example of the education of his daughters:

I can conclude that this notion today does not exist. I have two daughters going to school and when I was told by them that they were told at school they should build some relationships with other schools from Aracin, with children of other nationalities, I was very surprised. It turns out that for these twenty years, relationships have become so bad that they need to be improved again, I was not aware that it exists.

Respondents further criticize the work of institutions on the process of reconciliation. Discrimination and ghettoization according to nationality were highlighted as two indicators that obstructed the process of reconciliation. The situation is so serious that official bodies mark the parts of the city that are Albanian and those of Macedonian.

The biggest problem in Kumanovo that disturbs me is that the municipality has made the line a demarcation that is official. One school is destroyed where I live. When the Albanians are concerned, there is no illegal construction, and Macedonians do, I do not know how it is possible. Out of all the buildings that were built only my house is not legalized. There is a problem that we feel.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, KUMANOVO)

That the situation with ghettoization and the lack of quality coexistence is not an exception is confirmed by another example:

The third reason of the current situation and how to improve it a bit is to have ghettoization by the place of residence. Albanians from Radisana are leaving, Macedonians from Cair are going because more Albanians are around. I will mention two examples: In Kumanovo there are Macedonians living on one side of the street and across it are Albanians. The bridge is a symbol, but to remind us only of bad because it shares Macedonians and

Albanians, although there are Macedonians in the bazaar, and Albanians in the centre. The second case, in Kicevo, I was very concerned that I could not enter every cafe just because of nationality. We have to work on these things to get the situation fixed. In Skopje, we have a pool called 'Biser' where until recently the Albanians could not enter in it, but after a series of reactions, they relaxed.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SKOPJE)

In spite of the fact that minority legislation prohibits discrimination, it is present every day in Macedonian society. Albanian respondents claim that they personally experience it every day.

It is very difficult to get rid of all discrimination, it is somehow a mental structure in our country. It cannot be changed, but it can be brought to some negligible level.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, KUMANOVO)

The problem of normative optimism is especially highlighted in which the proliferation of different legal, strategic and other acts occurs, which in the end have no impact on real life.

We cannot allow the labelling situation that you are an Albanian, you are a Roma, you are a Macedonian, you cannot do this, you cannot do that, you are not this and so on. We must admit that discrimination exists, but not only on paper, we must work in a real way on preventing and opposing discrimination, not just to note it in some reports and to be just proclaiming, we have to work in practice, to eliminate discrimination.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, KUMANOVO)

This said we come to the famous Ohrid Agreement. It is the best example of illusion of coexistence. As the public sector representative says:

The perception in Tetovo is that Macedonians succeeded to win and the Albanians got what they wanted.

According to the attitude of the respondents, the Ohrid Agreement is only formally positive, but it is actually used to camouflage corruption and ethno-business.

In my opinion, the contract at the level of the law is only formally positive, and it is only realistically used by the communities that entered into the text of the contract, and these ethnic communities benefited in some way from this contract, employment on ethnic and partisan basis, division of the voting body on ethnic basis, etc.

The coexistence of Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia is, therefore, burdened with divisions, distrust, dissension and indignation. The question is who or

what is responsible for such a worrying situation in terms of reconciliation and inter-ethnic dialogue. The answer to that question, almost unanimously imposed one factor - politics and political institutions whose lack of interest in working on the process of reconciliation creates an atmosphere that deepens the division of society.

Below we list a few narratives that clearly depict the seriousness of the situation:

It does not matter to me who belongs where, I do my job and I only want to work. The only problem is that there are no institutions, judiciary. I see this inequality there because I go there as a citizen. System does not work.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

But we should not blame people as individuals, we should seek for the culprits, and we know who the culprit is, the culprits are at the power top. They are guilty, not an Albanian or a Macedonian. While initiating this question of reconciliation, such things will happen between people. It is not known the basis of this hatred, this non-unity, how it was decided if it was decided at all, we do not know.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, KUMANOVO)

In my opinion, the institutions are the biggest culprits of this, they do not function, if someone is fighting, whether a Macedonian or an Albanian whoever, the guilty one should go to prison. People should not be divided, if the Albanians were arrested then the Albanians went to the protest. Institutions are the ones that start the problem.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, KUMANOVO)

I think institutions do not have understanding and delay some processes, for example, it happened many times in our organization if wanted to organize a workshop or any kind of event in a high school, upon sending an official request to the director or municipality under which competence falls such school, the answer we either did not receive or it took much time to get the answer or they would refuse us without any comment/explanation. Often it happened if wanted to proceed a certain issue and ask for information of a public nature, they are buying time and saving our energy by negating, postponing. And they do not meet our needs. These are often institutional barriers.

(CIVIL SECTOR, KUMANOVO)

We can conclude that there is a lack of political will and greater involvement of the state and invited institutions in implementing these types of projects and facilitating the process of cooperation.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

So we can conclude that the political will and greater involvement of the state and the invited institutions in implementing in this type of projects and facilitating the process of cooperation are missing.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

Something particularly worrying is the use of nationalism for the purpose of inflating ethnic tensions. Respondents very often pointed out in focus groups that nationalism is just in the function of dissociation. Some go so far as to consider that the entire Macedonian state system was built on nationalistic grounds.

The system was built on the basis of nationalism and I think soon it will be in collapse.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Nationalism is mostly used for political purposes with the aim of gaining political points without taking into account the fatal consequences it has on the social fabric of a multinational state such as Macedonia.

More often, the leaders of political parties advocate nationalism by one's own, or the other's policy, one is ruling with different policies, you cannot see that the Albanian party is submitting amendments to Macedonian parties because in the rural environment with an ethnically mixed population the road needs to be built.

(CITIZENS, SKOPJE)

Nationalism is present in all spheres of society, and ethnic tensions, distrust and the impossibility of coexistence are reflected in everyday life. For example:

The main problem for our perception is the following, if the Albanian inspector punishes me, I will think that this is so because he is an Albanian and I am a Macedonian (although I am acting wrongly). We are such. Problems that arise we create ourselves because we are divided by nationality, party or other reasons.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

The respondents thus recognize the kind of hypocrisy of the leadership of the (ethnic) political parties who, at the pre-election time, radicalized the masses with nationalistic rhetoric and, after the election, co-operate with political parties whose policy was harshly criticized until then.

Secondly, there must be the reform of political parties. They propagate what they propagate, and at the same time they make coalitions, it's the biggest paradox for me, they are together, they lead politics, and when they go to Debar, they say they are fighting for rights to Albanians, and the VMRO works the same way as they go there, they use the same policy, the same tool just to attract a mass of the people, and then they are

working on a coalition. It is not clear to people that they are co-operating for something they have said they will not co-operate. This is because they are uneducated, illiterate. If they have a greater awareness, they will not take for granted whatever their leaders say.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

In spite of everything stated, there is a glimpse of hope, a positive discourse that claims that things change slowly after the Ohrid Agreement.

I can see with optimism, after that date, I do not see that there was any division, especially on a national basis. Many nice things happened after that date, although the parties served with nationalism for malversations, a spark for coexistence was born, the party started to positively influence on education, schools opened

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Some advocate a cynical approach, believing that ethnic tension is as such a problem, as functioning of the entire system.

The system does not work with us regardless of whether you are a Macedonian or an Albanian.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

From all of the above, it is not surprising that in Macedonia there is a discourse that the situation is too complex to be unilaterally resolved, and therefore the intervention of the West is expected and desirable.

Respondents believe that impoverished society is burdened with ethnic conflicts and corruptive elements in the state, forced to seek help for the international community because it is unable to independently solve its own accumulated problems.

I want to point out that it is very important for Macedonia that the international community help the state. We make each other going downhill, they need to open the roads a little, and for other reasons they are late with the funds. I do not know if this is good for the state, whether it is short-term for achieving certain goals. The state needs some logistical support in order to finally set ourselves higher goals, then knowledge will be imperative.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SKOPJE)

Despite expectations from the international community to help the state and society, focus groups participants are aware that change and progress starts just from them. Thus they point out that it is necessary that the change, in the form of reconciliation, coexistence, trust and consolidated democracy, comes from the bottom, i.e. from citizens.

The European Union is working hard, but we cannot expect it to solve our problems. We have to solve our problems. Change should come from the bottom, from the people, not from above. If it continues to be dictated, if there is any reconciliation on paper, some Dayton, New York Treaty – we did nothing. It must begin with us, the European Union will begin to punish us, if it goes on like this. Macedonia will be punished as an example that will be punished, and perhaps removed from the process of EU integration.

Concerning perception of reconciliation at the regional level, participants in the focus groups assess that it is not at a satisfactory level, and that the variation from state to state regarding the stage of the reconciliation process is minimal. Respondents believe that there is no cooperation policy between states, and a civil society representative from Kumanovo describes this as follows:

If I can estimate the level of reconciliation regionally from 1 to 5, I think that we are somewhere 2.5 or 3. Personally, with the migration crisis it turned out that there is no reconciliation between us. One returns the migrants to another border, the other returns to the previous one, and so on, and no one crossed his/her mind that all countries together, from the region, help in some way in this situation, to try to solve this problem if it can be solved or mutually agreed by all the countries of the region from Greece and on can no longer pass.

Also, the Balkans' eternal burden of conflicts is emphasized, which have never been resolved completely, but, further, two factors of the situation in the Balkans are highlighted, the size of the state, its power, as well as the existence of progressive elites in the region.

In historical view the Balkans was always full of conflicts and the bigger countries were always dominant. Hegemony of big countries, Serbia, Croatia, and in this case Albania where smaller populations like Macedonians are always the victims. We don't know what's coming next but there were periods where the solutions were found by creating alliances of new states, Yugoslavia was one of them.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

My impression is that the countries in the region have their own progressive elite that pushes things forward, it would be good to have it, but it needs to concentrate and push things to save energy, to start functioning beyond the state, to move things forward. Other countries, apart from Bosnia because of its division, are already on that path, we are a lot behind. Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro ... are part of it, they also have problems, people emigrate, but that's because they are looking for better living conditions. They have other types of problems, but their standards and living conditions are far better than ours.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Respondents generally believe that Macedonians are positively perceived at the regional level:

We have great luck at the regional level that everyone accepts us because we are Macedonians.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Likewise, despite all its problems, there is a reflection that Macedonia, of all the countries of the former Yugoslavia, is the most developed in the field of coexistence and multiculturalism.

If a comparison is made between Macedonia and other countries in the region, I think that we are the best example of coexistence and multiculturalism in society.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

In conclusion, the respondents do not consider that the state of reconciliation at the regional level is ideal, but they believe that it is necessary to put much effort in building a sustainable peace. The discourse that prevails is a kind of historical determinism, but also fatalism that says things in the Balkans are bad because they have always been such. Perhaps the best (certainly the most humorous) was summed up by a representative of the private sector from Kumanovo:

There was one proverb saying: When it will be stabilization in Yugoslavia? When a Macedonian pays for his drink, when a Montenegrin gets caught in a job, when the Serbs and Croats reconcile and when all of the said is understood by a Bosnian. Translated in our language it means 'never'.

The role of the civil sector

When it comes to the role of civil society in the processes of peace building, reconciliation and confidence in Macedonia, it can be said that four main discourses prevail. Positive discourse consists of the allegations of various projects, and in particular the exchange of young people that contribute to reconciliation. Civil society, the area of self-organization of citizens without the need to institutionalize an organization into a civil society organization, is a phenomenon that has an increasing importance in Macedonian society and, therefore, crystallized as a second discourse.

On the other hand, a negative discourse on civil society organizations involves distrust of their intentions, efficiency and effectiveness. Finally, the communication aspect is the fourth discourse in which the lack of communication between civil society and citizens is highlighted, and especially in this part, the role of the media is emphasized.

Respondents see the civil sector as a key player in the process of reconciliation. They consider that civil society encourages citizens who belong to different ethnic groups to cooperate and intercultural dialogue to build their social capital, and especially trust. All this ultimately influences reconstruction. Citizens' representative described this in this way:

Currently I think that Non-governmental Organizations are playing the leading role, for reconciliation between the ethnicities. When these NGOs organize different sorts of seminars, in which the main goal is to unite the two ethnic groups and more.

It is interesting that the public sector has almost complete positive perception of the civil sector:

I can conclude that all sectors are important ...I would give priority to NGOs because it has the most impact and built relationships and communication.

One of the positive prominent activities of civil society is certainly the exchange of young people. Specifically, participants in focus groups who have participated in such activities or know some of the participants, consider this to be the best way of building reconciliation. They believe that civil society organizations through just such a powerful tool can have a positive impact on the community.

The first to see to notice at the training are Macedonians and Albanians sleeping in the same room, making parties, socializing and staying in communication through social networks. A kind of cohabitation exists, lectures are held, and something that is good is heard. I cannot completely change society and most of the society is willing to do it for money, but if there are no donors, there will be no training.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Beside civil sector, awareness emerged on the importance of civil society in Macedonia. The colourful revolution that took place during the first half of 2016, raised awareness of active civic participation, and civic initiatives began to become more popular and better perceived.

I will add that we have formal and informal associations of civil society, the Colourful Revolution is an informal association or, more precisely, a civil movement. All the demands of the people who are protesting are for coexistence, human rights. They do not see ethnicity and thus contribute to reconciliation.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Lately, a moment of reconciliation is noted at protests; people of different nationalities are there, stand side by side, see that they do not differ and they start socializing. In this way, they form a section on both sides, this is not a strategy, but great progress in the process of reconciliation, and

if it continues, we will have a multi-ethnic society in the true sense of the word.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

These narratives once again showed that participation in informal forms of political participation greatly contributes not only to the stability and development of democracy, but also to the development of the civic and political competencies of those participating in such activities.

On the other hand, civil society and Macedonia also have negative connotations. Respondents suspect not only in motives, but also in the effectiveness of programs and projects implemented by civil society organizations. Money emerged as a major factor within the negative discourse. Namely, respondents consider that the impact of civil society on reconciliation is not proportional to the financial resources they have. Moreover, apart from doubting the legality of the work of the association, they believe that the non-governmental sector should contribute to the society on voluntary principles.

These are money laundering shops, they have a certain budget for spending, and create different workshops for the implementation of interethnic relations, interpersonal relations, education of illiterate people. They are so registered. It has some influence, but it does not have any concrete effect. The conflict is a fictitious category of 5 people, we are not in quarrel but let's reconcile. That's the basic part.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, KUMANOVO)

No one who has been working for 12 years in the non-governmental sector and takes 2,000 euros tells me what democracy is, what economic rights are. When we sit down to talk it over and agree without taking money for it, then the deal will be made.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, KUMANOVO)

This line of reasoning is confirmed by representatives of the civil sector, who in a self-critical manner speak about the civil sector itself. According to them, the values on which the civil sector should rest such as democracy, pluralism, inclusiveness, are blurred by particular interests and the desire to acquire personal gain. This is what the representative of the civil sector from Skopje describes:

It may sound self-critical, but I would evaluate bad seeing personal benefit and promotion of individuals instead of true values. I'm not talking about organizations here because there are organizations that really work, they work hard, while most people only see money.

A potential reason for this negative perception of civil society is the lack of communication between associations and population. Respondents believe that citizens do not really have enough information about the civil sector. Insufficiently

developed civic competence thus greatly influences the perception of civil society.

Many people do not believe and do not know the way and mechanisms for acting. They need to be simplified so that an average person can understand any topic. Articulating the original civic thought to do something is crucial, because there are people who want to do something, have an idea, but they do not know how. They do not know how a civic association can act to achieve something.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

As a reason for ignorance of the way of functioning of civil society organizations, the factor of inadequate communication was imposed. Respondents believe that the civil sector do not know how to communicate with citizens in a way that would be acceptable to them and understandable. Likewise, they consider that many do not even try to explain their actions.

We must somehow find strategies to improve the way to access the public, let those return to old models, publish some posters. If a target group are students, let them contact the schools and let them choose a way of selection. It is necessary to find a better and more efficient approach to the public.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Despite the political side, the other side of the story is that not many people reach civil society herein lies the problem. I do not believe that many tried.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

In relation to communication, the role of the media has also emerged as a discursive element. Specifically, according to the findings of the research, the media in Macedonia are not inclined towards civil society, which makes it difficult for organizations to publicly present their own work. Media not only do not ease civil society, they are perceived as an instrument in the hands of politicians to raise ethnic tensions. The role of the media in the democratic process is a very important topic, and it seems, in this case, that representatives of all sectors recognize it as negative.

Another thing that affects reconciliation is that you can never hear a positive example of coexistence in the media.

(CITIZENS, SKOPJE)

I wanted to mention the media as a tool of the politicians as one of the main reasons for not complementing the reconciliation.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

Currently, citizens' associations play a very important role if the media opens for citizen' associations, because in the last three years there is media darkness, because civic organizations have no place to promote themselves.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Intersectoral cooperation

As regards intersectoral cooperation in the process of reconciliation, respondents' responses are relatively consistent. It is considered that civil society is the one that regularly participates in such cooperation, if they exist. Cross-sectoral cooperation, however, is not frequent enough, and in that sense there is room for progress. A public sector representative says:

If I can conclude with regard to the sectors mentioned, there is absence of greater involvement of business with the municipalities and civil society organizations, and cooperation between civil society organizations and municipalities and the state is on a level which is not satisfactory, but generally the impact is positive.

It is positive that respondents see the benefits of cooperation between different sectors, but they think that there is not enough.

I think that now there are concrete initiatives for this question, we can mention here the cooperation between the public and civil society sectors, for the regional meetings which are happening every two-three months, but I think that there should be more initiatives and they should be supported. The reason behind such initiatives is to approach all the youngsters from the Balkan and to see that it's not important which is our nationality but above all we are human being. And also if we will see back in the past we can see that we are all the same, we can mention here the weddings which all the Balkan music is almost the same, also the traditions are similar, and we have the same music. And I fully support these initiatives.

(CITIZENS, KUMANOVO)

At the regional level, the situation is similar, in spite of some positive examples of cooperation, it is more an exception than a rule. If co-operation is realized, civil society organizations from the region that are involved in projects that aim to work on the process of reconciliation play a major role.

I can praise that cooperation with other organizations at the regional level is excellent. Our projects are always organized at the regional level including the countries of the former Yugoslavia. But that's all. There are

no initiatives to help me reconcile the region and do something about it. Everyone starts from own home and thereafter spreads at the regional level. We do not have aspiration to improve the situation in Serbia or Kosovo, we simply are not interested.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SKOPJE)

Regarding cooperation, respondents commented on the idea of establishing a regional *hub* that would bring together representatives from different sectors in order to cooperate and consequently promote reconciliation.

In the Citizens, representatives of the private and public sector support this idea, but they emphasize two aspects that are important to them. On the one hand, it is important for them to include a business sector that could, with the promotion of reconciliation, bring some kind of economic prosperity.

There should be formed a regional economic forum, where important businesses from all the world would participate. Except theirs benefits they also can help the reconciliation process. And also from the earnings of the companies a small percent should go to the NGOs which work on the reconciliation process among nations.

(CITIZENS, KUMANOVO)

Another important aspect is the transparency of the process and the availability of information. Namely, representatives of the private sector are benevolent towards this idea if they were guaranteed that the whole idea would not be spoiled by fraud and corruption. The next two narratives clearly show it:

Nevertheless, I put emphasis on the selection of people, associations, business, transparency of work and access to information.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

I think that this set of civic associations, the business sector would be great, but the choice of people, associations, institutions, businesses that participate in something like that is very important. Everyone would have an interest if we consider that this information is important not only locally but also regionally, as this will lead to better mutual cooperation and overcoming the problem.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Finally, respondents expressed their views on social entrepreneurship. While some do not know this concept, one part considers that citizens are mostly familiar with the idea of social entrepreneurship, but its application is flawed.

I am fully familiarized, but it is still not applied sufficiently, except for the legal framework for the exemption of employed persons with disabilities, it is functional, but social entrepreneurship is much more. In terms of

business, the half model has a social and commercial part of the business model. The commercial part that earns money to cover the social part does not exist. I have not seen it yet. In my company, it has something in the style of Tom Shoes, which sells expensive shoes in rich countries, and gives free shoes for the poor countries. If you collect expensive shoes for the rich, you allow a child to wear shoes, socially aware people will pay another euro more to help the socially vulnerable. We do not have such a model.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, KUMANOVO)

I think they know what social entrepreneurship is, but it is not so popular with regard to the political situation in our country.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Everyone familiar with the idea considered it an excellent model.

When a state is unable to respond, it should create social society that will solve a social problem herein lies the beauty of social entrepreneurship.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, SKOPJE)

Other obstacles to reconciliation

Finally, there are two factors that should be emphasized in the context of reconciliation in Macedonia, which our respondents have recognized as important. The first is the language, and the other is education.

Culturally speaking, the issue of a national language is closely linked to the question of building a nation. Language is used by political elites as a political tool that emphasizes national differences. In this sense, language is not only one of the fundamental determinants of cultural identity, it is also a boundary of national separation.

I would like give you an example about studying the Albanian language. For example, 40 Albanians who are fluent in French, Albanian and Macedonian are employed by the French Embassy. Macedonians do not know Albanian, no matter what they have a perfect background and speak French. They do not know Albanian and therefore are not suitable for this position. We need to look at achievements and a little bit open minded and not to observe reconciliation in the sense that you are Albanian and Macedonian, so we sit together and talk, but to think openly for each other.

At the national level, the right to use one's own language and alphabet is a key point of the minority issue. Respondents believe that both for the majority and

for the minority population it is necessary to have the opportunity to learn both Albanian and Macedonian. It is precisely the possibility of optional learning of a minority language, at least at the symbolic level, would reveal an intention of the majority of the population to make a step towards building coexistence.

If I were some decision maker, I would make the decision to optional learning of the Albanian language in schools, it's not just a matter of reconciliation but there are other benefits.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, KUMANOVO)

Beside language, an important factor in improving the process of reconciliation in Macedonia, according to our respondents, is education.

Education and economics are a very important chain of co-existence, provided that politics has no impact on people. People should consciously do it, politicians to stay out of it, it depends on them whether employment will be entered on an educational or political basis.

(CITIZENS, SKOPJE)

Respondents are generally not satisfied with the quality of education, and they believe that the policy has failed again in particular in terms of implementation of measures for the establishment of integrated education.

In addition, the assessment is that education is not in the service of reconciliation, given that key elements are missing that would enable students to adopt the skills of intercultural dialogue.

The second is integrated education. In our country, we have a non-functional strategy for integrated education. From 2010-2016 we have only had one example where this strategy functioned. At the Tetovo school, integrated education functions only for one generation, Macedonians and Albanians study together, this generation ends up gradually and that is it. Out of many schools in Macedonia, integrated education has functioned in only one class. Efforts were made in some schools, but I do not think they even started, they did not contribute to improvement, and the intent and goal of the strategy is the integrity of different citizens.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

We have to work on the education system. Education is a key system that does not teach and educates how to move on, and it stimulates hatred, how to become an obedient and respect what is said. The very poor educational quality of young people results from elementary and secondary education and when you are at faculty level, you have already built personality, programmed, limited.

(CIVIL SECTOR, SKOPJE)

Conclusion and recommendations

Reconciliation between the Albanian and Macedonian ethnic groups is fragile and a process marked by discontinuity. Although reconciliation is the concept that citizens face every day and understand it as coexistence, accepting diversity, assuming responsibility for the conflict in the past and reaching an agreement, its everyday life implementation proved unsuccessful. The Ohrid Agreement, although it enabled the end of armed conflicts between the National Liberation Army and the Macedonian police and army, did not contribute enough to building trust and reducing the high degree of ethnic distance. Although the third pillar of the Ohrid Agreement exactly insists on building a community on the basis of coexistence and interculturality, the situation in Macedonia does not confirm that this is so. Perhaps the reason for this is also one of the findings of this research - a discursive difference in understanding the responsibility for conflict and wrongdoing committed during the conflict. While one part of the respondents argues that the condition of reconciliation is the collective recognition of responsibility for the conflict, the other stream believes that responsibility should be individualized.

When reconciliation concept problematization is reduced to the everyday life level, the image of ethnically divided Macedonia becomes even more complex. Wide spread ethnic discrimination, spatial ghettoization as per ethnic lines, as well as complete negation of the existence of reconciliation have emerged as important discursive elements. Respondents tend to transfer guilt to the system, political parties, local self-government units, and the state as a whole. In their opinion, it is precisely these institutions that do not work enough on the process of reconciliation, but even hinder it, and most of them use nationalist rhetoric. Respondents call for help from the international community because they are aware that their political elites have no interest, nor intentions to change the situation. Although they believe the help of the West is necessary, they are aware that the change must be initiated by themselves, citizens, including political parties.

Respondents do not think the situation at the regional level is anything better. Citing numerous examples of conflicts among other nations of the former Yugoslavia, they consider that the historical impact of centuries-old turmoil in these areas should be credited for insufficiently good reception of the idea of reconciliation at the regional level.

As for intersectoral cooperation that would strengthen the process of reconciliation, it is perceived as weak. It is mainly about civil society as the main player that cooperates both at national and regional level. In spite of this, respondents recognize the importance of such a model of cooperation. They have positive thinking about social entrepreneurship, but in their opinion, this type of model is insufficiently popularized in Macedonia. Their perception of the potential intersectoral regional hub was also examined, where representatives of different

sectors confirmed their own preference for this idea, with the requirement of transparency and obtaining all important information.

Civil society is characterized in different ways. While negative discourse highlights their inefficiency and excessive disproportion of invested resources and real impact, positive discourse highlights projects that civil society implements as a mechanism for accelerating the reconciliation process. In addition, there is much more trust in civic initiatives that are perceived as channelled dissatisfaction with the system and the true energy of citizenship. It is problematic that the perception of the media among the respondents was bad. They evaluate them as biased hooligans that make the process of reconciliation more difficult, at the same time limiting the civil society access to public.

Respondents emphasize the right to national language and common education as mechanisms for fostering the reconciliation process, but they believe that the current situation regarding the difficult learning of Albanian in schools and the ethnic division of schools is slowing down the process of reconciliation. Besides, economic development is one of the most important factors for reconciliation, given the assumption that the reduction of unemployment and the increase in market contacts between formerly conflicting ethnic communities will, on the one hand, help reduce the spread of stereotypes and prejudices and, on the other hand, contribute to building mutual trust.

The issue of differentiating opinions depending on sectors is a particularly interesting aspect in Macedonia. Research findings show that the consideration of the reconciliation concept by the representatives of all sectors, however certain tendencies can be observed. Civil society is more focused on interpreting reconciliation through assuming and recognition of responsibility for conflicts encompassing discourses of collective and individual guilt. On the other hand, the representatives of the private sector and the citizens understand reconciliation somewhat more through an economic prism and/or primarily economic convergence. Citizens are most inclined to criticize reconciliation as not being authentic for Macedonian society, while the public sector interprets the process of reconciliation with coexistence and acceptance of diversity. As far as civil society perceptions are concerned, all sectors, except for the private sector, show a tendency towards the civil sector and assess its role in the process of reconciliation as positive. Private sector representatives believe that citizens do not understand the role and way of civil society work and that it is separate from the needs of communities. They argue that the work of civil society is partly motivated by the financial benefits resulting in reduced confidence in the real intentions of that sector. Representatives of the civil sector agree that it is necessary to improve communication about their work with citizens. In this regard, efforts should be made to design strategic communication with representatives of the private sector and other sectors in order to create more favourable circumstances (mutual trust) for mutual cooperation.

The finding that encourages is that all sectors show interest in organized regional cooperation and respond positively to joining an initiative of that kind, and building upon that trail it can be concluded that there are potentials for intersectoral cooperation on issues of reconciliation, but pre-steps would certainly have to be done transparently and the ideas clearly discussed with all partners.

Albania

POST-COMMUNIST ALBANIA WAS NOT AN ARENA OF A MORE SERIOUS ETHNIC OR ARMED conflict. Although some sources claim that the Kosovo War may be considered an important factor affecting Albania since a large number of members of the Albanian nationality from Kosovo immigrated to Albania, it did not have a greater impact on the minority policy of the country. Exactly for this reason, reconciliation related situation in Albania cannot be viewed from the perspective of reconciliation with the past, but the story of minority should be viewed from the perspective of coexistence and multi-ethnicity. In relation thereto, this report provides an overview of the situation regarding the relationship of the majority Albanian population and recognized ethnic and linguistic minorities. Although the problems of inter-ethnic relations that Albania faces may seem somewhat less serious than those in the Balkan region, they are certainly not. Daily problems faced by members of minorities are an important factor in the democratization of Albanian society. The situation in Albania is interesting because it is a relatively low proportion of minority members who, however, face a wide range of problems in the attempt to protect their own rights, autonomy and diversity.

In Albania, two groups of minorities are recognized - linguistic and ethnic. While the first category includes the Vlachs and the Roma, officially, ethnic minorities in Albania are Greeks, Macedonians and Montenegrins. It is estimated that the share of recognized minorities in the Albanian society is around 2%. Although there are other minorities in addition to recognized minorities, primarily the Bosniaks, it is not officially recognized, and the problems and perspectives of members of that minority group are not included in any national report or document. Since Albania has chosen the path to European integration and strong cooperation with other European countries, and it has signed an association agreement with the European Union and ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as the Convention on the National Minorities of the Council of Europe, it can be said the legislative framework is relatively well elaborated.

As in other Western Balkan countries, despite the legal incentive environment, the biggest problem of national minority issues in Albania remains the implementation of measures and the achievement of the stipulated goals.

In the continuation of the chapter, we bring an overview of the most important legal and other acts related to minorities, the presentation of the bodies responsible for the implementation of minority policies and the findings of important researches in this area.

As previously mentioned, Albania is a signatory to several international declarations and resolutions on human and minority rights, and the Albanian Constitution is clear when it says that any discrimination (and so on, based on ethnicity, language and race) is prohibited.

The lower normative acts stipulate the legal provisions on non-discrimination, for example the Code of Administrative Procedures clearly determines the legal equality of all citizens regardless of ethnicity, and the Criminal Code explicitly states that Albania will not tolerate discrimination, hate speech or any other discriminatory practice directed towards minorities. The legal framework also allows the use of the mother tongue of minorities at all levels of the court procedure, while the Law on Pre-University Education System defines the availability of education to all citizens apart from the social state, nationality, language, sex, religion, race, political beliefs, health's condition and economic level. The Anti-Discrimination Law contains articles on the protection of the rights of national minorities, and provides for the existence of the commissioner for protection from discrimination in order to implement the national non-discrimination policy.

As regards bodies established to ensure the equality of all Albanian citizens before the law, as in many other countries, the Ombudsman is an institution that protects the human and civil rights of all citizens of Albania. It is also important to mention the State Committee for Minorities, as a separate institution established to protect and promote the interests of minorities in Albania. This body is a representative of minorities in Albania and its goal is to promote and encourage the development of standards related to minority rights, as well as to strengthen the participation of minorities in the public life of the state.

Based on the aforementioned it follows that the legislative framework of Albania is well established and that the state has opted for the protection and promotion of minority autonomy within the Albanian society. Despite the relatively elaborated normative framework, there is still room for improvement. Critics primarily point out that the absence of a special law on minority rights is one of the major shortcomings of the minority policy of Albania. Moreover, without a single law that would prescribe rights and obligations from the minority repertoire, the protection of minorities is fragmented and incomplete. This is particularly noticeable in an example of an educational system that still does not recognize the need for all recognized minorities to be educated in their own language and alphabet. In addition, Albania has not adopted the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, although it is being announced.

Several studies have shown a different level of minority protection and the exercise of rights. Written Comments by the European Roma Rights Centre, 2016

have shown that there is a significant discrepancy in official data on the number of Roma and their actual number. Roma are the politically, economically and socially the most neglected social group in Albania, and they face numerous challenges, ranging from housing care, through unregistered birth to low levels of Albanian language skills, lower education and high unemployment. In line with the recommendations of the European Commission, the promotion of the status of Roma (in the context of improving the protection of human rights) is one of the five key recommendations Albania has to take if it wants to start accession negotiations with the EU.

In addition to Roma, the ethnic minorities of Egyptians and Greeks face problems at the daily level in local communities. Although the Greeks are officially recognized as a national minority, their status, especially in the south of Albania, is the subject of dispute. The Greeks are the largest and most organized national minority with significant social, economic and political influence, and their representatives, acting within the national political party, cooperate with the Albanian parties and thus participate in making political decisions. Until 2011, the practice of automatic birth right citizenship to new-born Greeks and Macedonians, without the possibility to choose, was abolished at the insistence of the Council of Europe.

A research conducted by the Council of Europe and the European Commission on Human and Minority Rights in Southeast Europe⁴⁹ has shown that awareness of human and minority rights is relatively low. This applies particularly to minority groups, and it is specific to younger generations, but also those of a weaker educational status. This research has shown that fostering linguistic tradition, culture and education in their language is especially important for achieving equality. The variety of a problem faced by minorities in Albanian society is especially important. While Roma and Egyptians have priority in employment and housing, the Greeks emphasize the problem of being not allowed to enter national belongings into the birth certificates, as well as the inability to use and apply their own national language and alphabet. Bosniaks and Montenegrins consider that they have not been provided with the right to use their own language, especially within the educational system, as well as fostering a minority national culture. This is in line with the Annual Report on the Activity of the People's Advocate, 2016, which emphasizes the gap between normative solutions and implementation, the problem of education in the language and alphabet of the national minority, insufficient funding of minority media and other media promoting minority culture.

In conclusion, it can be said that Albania is only partially successful in guaranteeing minority rights and that it is necessary to work on developing mechanisms that would facilitate it.

⁴⁹ For more details on the very project, as well as the recommendations therefrom, see <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/minority-rights/home>

Given that Albania has not had a direct conflict in recent history, as was the case with the majority of Balkan states, the report below brings an overview of the most interesting findings as regards thinking of Albanians and members of minorities about the process of reconciliation and coexistence. These findings, due to the nature of the conflict, diverge somewhat from other countries, but there are patterns that are repeated, which relate to cohabitation and intercultural communication between ethnically and/or linguistically different citizens.

Findings of empirical research

Reconciliation Concept

For respondents, the process of reconciliation is a multi-complex and multifaceted process involving several dimensions. Most respondents view reconciliation as a construct indivisible from the agreement concept. Focus groups participants therefore consider that a prerequisite for reconciliation is a conflict that needs to be solved exactly by agreement. Respondents are aware that reconciliation is a process characterized by a conflict in strength & scope which affects its temporal dynamics. It is clear to them that reconciliation is a complex and potentially lengthy process, and that commitment of all stakeholders in reaching an agreement is necessary. It was highlighted that reconciliation should bring as little damage to all stakeholders of the process as possible, and result in the bringing the conflicting parties closer to each other in order to come closer to the position where making compromise is possible and manage to find a conflict resolution agreement. In addition, the interrupted relationships metaphors that need to be rebuilt, as well as the values of humanism as a fundamental motive in this activity are used, but still understanding the reconciliation as a solution or ultimate goal is particularly frequent. The goal of reconciliation, at least as the focus group participants say, should be creating a stimulating environment for coexistence, i.e. quality life for all citizens.

Reconciliation means to me, that there are people or a group of people or nations who find a common ground and agree on having lived together properly, without sacrificing and cooperating with each other's culture.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

It is especially interesting that in a few narratives the concept of a "third party" appears as a facilitator in the process of reconciliation. In the context of a third party, the concepts of mediation, interventions by public authorities and neutrality are mentioned. The citizen of Tirana conceptualizes reconciliation in the following way:

Two persons or two societies, or two nations are in conflict with each other for a reason, and we need the intervene of a third part, so that they can create an agreement, and to reduce the tension and solve the problem.

We have an accordance through a process where a third pair should bring both conflict in this kind of reconciliation.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, GJIROKASTRA)

Exactly the understanding of reconciliation as a process facilitated by a third party is particularly interesting because it outposts a kind of responsibility for the whole process from the focus of the entities directly affected by the conflict to an external factor. On the other hand, conceptualization through a third party can be interpreted as a faith and a desire for a quality, professional and successful process.

Out of other factors relevant to understanding reconciliation, forgiveness is also mentioned that is not equated with forgetfulness. Namely, respondents believe that conflicts should not be forgotten, but for reconciliation it is important to forgive the injustice from the past. They also say that it is easier to forgive foreigners than fellow-citizens, and they are quite self-critical towards co-nationalist, and in several places they emphasize how Albanians do not forgive so easily.

Speaking about the importance of individual factors for reconciliation processes, the most common response is that a strong and developed economic sector is crucial in the process.

Economy is all.

(CITIZENS, TIRANA)

So it's all economic issues, more than anger or religious issues, is all economic.

(CITIZENS, TIRANA)

Respondents believe that economic growth leads to political and social stability, i.e. believe that the creation of new jobs will significantly shift the focus of citizens from the division as per national lines into socially more constructive topics. The respondents claim that economics has the power to strengthen communication between different groups of people and increase the level of information. It is to be assumed that by increasing informing, the basis for successful reconciliation will be created.

The youth has been identified as a social group as important one for the process of reconciliation. Respondents believe that the young population is very important for creating a quality and stimulating social climate in which the reconciliation process will play an important role. Although spears are broken (*lomiti koplja* lit. break spears 'engage in heated debate') whether young people are more or less tolerant of older generations, the opinion prevails that it is necessary to invest in young people. Such observation of young people as a social resource is important from the perspective of the development of democratic relations based on participativeness, especially of young generations. In addition, several respon-

dents pointed out that it is necessary to invest in young people because they are the drivers of development. Investing in young people, the respondents said, is reflected in the improvement of the education system, but also in encouraging youth exchanges. Focus group participants believe that education should transfer values of tolerance and coexistence. They believe that the current educational system does not contribute to the fulfilment of these goals to a sufficient extent, but they believe that education is the channel for opening the minds and hearts of young people.

Perhaps if we increase the quality of education of the younger generation, most urge hatred, it has a role, maybe not very big one, but I think it affects.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, TIRANA)

The education plays an important role, the system of education should completely change.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

In addition to formal education, the respondents also recognized the necessity of non-formal education, and especially the exchange of young people. The participants view this type of activity as an excellent opportunity for insight into different cultures and ways of life that will enrich them for life in multicultural communities. Several participants highlighted the Erasmus (plus) program and emphasized its importance for achieving co-existence and co-operation in society.

The Erasmus program, which gives the opportunity to young people to participate in trainings or youth exchanges, has played a very important role for cooperating and cooperation allows get to know each other better and create a spirit of coexistence in peace, calms the aggressive character of stereotypes.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, TIRANA)

In addition to the exchange of young people, art and culture have proven to be very good transmitters of values that imply therein the concept of reconciliation. Participants believe that art helps suppress stereotypes and that it is a great way to get to know individuals and groups with different ways of life in a fun and educational way.

The art has also led to the reduction of stereotypes for us when we say the word Serb, always have in mind an enemy of the other back and forth over these 10 years are the instruments that you said especially those who are part of the civil society.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, GJIROKASTRA)

Asked how the process of reconciliation can be improved, a considerable number of respondents highlighted campaigns to raise awareness about the impor-

tance of the process. Such types of activities, whether civilian-social, conducted by a state or a third entity, are considered by respondents, spread information and educate the public on a topic that is not sufficiently present in public discourse.

I think that a big awareness campaign will affect more areas of Albania, in areas where the despite can be touched, it would also aware about what reconciliation really is, which are the issues and what the process involves.

(CITIZENS, TIRANA)

The aforementioned made it visible that, unlike citizens of other states, the citizens of Albania neither relate reconciliation with armed conflicts, nor necessarily with the past. Given the Albanian history, this finding is not surprising, but what is interesting is the insistence on the agreement that appears at the highest frequency. It can be concluded that consiliarity and the desire for coexistence are important factors in understanding reconciliation in Albania, and that the young, and indirectly, the educational system are important factors for a successful process of reconciliation. Apart from art and awareness campaigns, participants believe that reconciliation is important, not *per se*, but for the sake of achieving quality cohabitation in one's own community. In order to find out the perceptions of the participants on the state of reconciliation at the level of Albania and compare it with their understanding of reconciliation at the level of the region, we asked them to see these processes at the two above mentioned levels.

National and regional level

In order to get a more detailed insight into the acceptance and general situation related to reconciliation in Albania, we asked participants about how they view reconciliation in their own country. The two dominant discourses proved to be prevailing. The first discourse refers to the acceptance of reconciliation in relation to the resident status. It was pointed out that there is a noticeable difference between the inhabitants of the city and the rural areas. While reconciliation is one of the first relatively clear constructs that are mostly implemented, the situation with the inhabitants of rural and remote areas is different. They mostly have poor understating of the very concept because of the lack of information, and therefore do not practice it. In addition, it is interesting to think in the context of the North-South.

I think that we do not have a clear answer if it is accepted or not, but in our city it is 90% accepted, but to accept the reconciliation you must have to do with people with culture who knows the cultural diversity that has its own culture, the fact is that in the south there is the element subscriber such as exists in the north, it means that reconciliation is very close

to finding the way among the people, or it is an institution, it might be a court, or some activities from the civil society.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, GJIROKRASTRA)

The acceptance of reconciliation, as participants say, is also determined by cultural preconditions. Defining the attitude of the Albanian society towards reconciliation, the respondents consider that this process may have been accepted at the principle level, but the question is whether the resulted values are internalized.

Given that our society is a hothead, it can be accepted, but somehow, even if it is accepted, I think that it will be stretched, because everyone will see their interest. Again I think that it will be somewhat not be enough.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, TIRANA)

One of the respondents conjures up illustratively to what extent and how Albania is insufficiently intercultural in terms of school contents.

For example: during high school we have not read any Serbian, Macedonian, Montenegrin author, only the ancient Greek literature. This has negatively impacted me, because while I know I can not know their literature, their art, history, the way they how they are expressed in the books, praising neighbors as barbaric. Somehow, we are not given the opportunity to know the culture, and a positive history of coexistence. If we do not share this, we will have negative feelings towards each other, that in a certain moment can become more serious towards each other.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, TIRANA)

Although Albania does not have such serious minority issues as in some other countries, respondents acknowledge that minorities are not fully integrated into society and still face discrimination. They point out that shortcomings are evident, on the one hand, in the legislative sense, but on the other, in social capital that hampers quality coexistence. When asked which minorities are facing the most discriminatory practices, the respondents answered: Roma, Greeks and Macedonians. Likewise, focus group participants believe that these problems need to be addressed, because otherwise, Albanian society will face ethnic and religious problems.

Regarding the issue of reconciliation at the regional level, a part of the respondents believe that the process is at an advanced stage. They believe that great progress has been made in the Balkans in the relations between different nations and peoples, and that there are examples of very good co-operation between the once-conflicted peoples.

Now, as he said it is very political, I met someone from Mitrovica, Kosovo and I asked how are the issues with Serbia or with the people there, this youngster were my age. He said that they did not have any quarrels or any-

thing of this kind, he said that they have working relations nothing more, there were no racism, no bad histories of Serb Kosovars and Albanians, and the Serbian friend said, I think to some extent that we have gained an accordance with Serb, Greece and Montenegro with Macedonia.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, HIMARA)

On the other hand, there are those who are not satisfied with the achieved. They believe that the process of reconciliation in the region is weak and that it does not encourage coexistence, nor does it provide a quality life for members of different nations. A representative of the private sector summarized the problems in the region in the following way:

I think that there is much to be done in the region, considering Greece and Macedonia have issue for the name and it is not resolved and pending yet, Serbia and Kosovo also have pending issues, Kosovo with Montenegro, Bosnia with Serbia as well. Practically Balkans is a hot area and there are many issues to be resolved and these issues show that there is much work to be done, in terms of reconciliation, as well as Albania with Greece on the issue of Chameria and Greek claims to Northern Epirus, more or less all the countries which are bordering each other, they have all outstanding issues. Such an issue that does not allow Macedonia to join the EU is Greece's Veto to Macedonia's name issue.

It seems that the consensus is that the European Union is a factor of stability in the region. Focus group participants are very clear when they say that the EU uses different mechanisms to encourage a process of reconciliation in the Balkans, from youth exchanges, political conditioning to training, workshops and conferences. The EU is so aware of the turbulent history and the diverse cultures of peoples living in the Balkans and uses its influence to keep the situation under control, although the latent conflict in the background is constantly "warming up".

With the regional countries in Balkans reconciles us more the Europe, because in fact there is always a silent war that continues almost always and I do not see that we have a reconciliation among us, except for the fact that Europe keeps us under pressure. Europe keeps all parties under pressure.

It is especially interesting how the Albanians see others and vice versa. On the one hand, they believe that Albania as a country has a bad reputation, while among all the countries in the region, the most negative image is on the Serbs. Although they do not give coherent arguments why this is so, some respondents are very clear in antagonism towards Serbs:

There was a lot of foreign invaders, who arrived here in Albania, there have been Italian, German, Greek, but the older people said that the Serbs were terrible!

Such lump sum appraisals are particularly dangerous because they incite the development of stereotypes, and patterns of intolerance and difficult coexistence

are perpetuated. For this reason, it is important to note such patterns and develop a structured approach to addressing them.

The role of the civil sector

Like in other Balkan states, civil society is perceived as an important player in the process of reconciliation. There are two dominant discourses that prevail in the answers of respondents about the role of civil society in the processes of achieving quality coexistence and reconciliation. On the one hand, the one is positive (which prevails with regard to the frequency of the narrative on the topic), but the other part of the respondents shows the tendency to label civil society organizations as the particular and interest-oriented entities that implement foreign agendas in Albania. Below we make the key determinants of each of these discourses in order to get a fuller picture of the perception of civil society organizations in the process of reconciliation building in Albania.

The ability to communicate between different social groups, which contribute to the development of reconciliation, is seen as the most important role of civil society organizations. The terms of mediation, mediation and facilitations are mentioned as ways of acting of civil society organizations in this area. The discourse of positive attitude towards civil society is determined by examples of regional cooperation, youth exchanges and raising awareness about the importance of reconciliation. In addition, civil society organizations are assigned a high level of organization, consolidation of ideas, ability to raise funds for projects that contribute to coexistence, and frequent concentration on rural areas.

The role that civil society had always remains positive, as long as always remain uncorrupted, but there are also very good organization, which indirectly affect, even with education campaigns, or in the field of health, because it teaches and awareness people towards reconciliation. This is a very good thing that the civil societies do and plays a key role.

(CITIZENS, TIRANA)

When respondents talk about the civil sector, they often put it in contrast to politics. Civil society is seen among respondents as an antipode to politics, an entity that corrects policy errors and provides services that the state is not capable (or willing) to offer. In addition, it is often emphasized that the work of civil society organizations is by nature more free from the work of public institutions. However, although they are struggling for nominally the same things, there are still restrictions imposed by politics. In other words, at the level of perception, there are qualitative differences between the action of politics and civil society where civil society organizations seem to be more competent and more interested in topics of inter-culturalism, reconciliation, trust and coexistence. It is especially interesting to find that public sector representatives unanimously consider the

role of civil society as positive and admit that they often seek help from civil society organizations in order to protect and promote human rights. For example, they say:

Civil society makes more than what the state does in terms of restarts and the process of reconciliation, and they are those who write a project and seek funding and trying at all costs to achieve because they arise from a cause set and then attend with specific job and now we can say that they are expert in this field and we are a public institution that experience, often we ask them to help us to build bridges of contact with civil society to neighboring countries.

Similar to most other topics, this one is not monolithic as well. The other side of the civil society story highlights that civil society organizations are not independent. This discourse is determined by components such as the politicization of activities and goals under the influence of foreign donors and/or national politics. A bond between politics and civil society is highlighted by explaining that some civil society organizations have betrayed their ideals and have become an extended arm of the authorities.

Organizations can do more, until it does not interfere with politics. We see today that many organizations do not lobby for what they were created, but they have the politics influence and give to the people the information they need people to know. They can do more if they work for the goal that they started at the beginning.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, TIRANA)

Depends on how you use these organizations, we have seen that these organizations then become as political at the end, for example, these 2 or 3 years they work as an organization and then they turn into political interests.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, HIMARA)

Furthermore, this discourse, besides distrust in civil society organizations, also implies questioning whether the civil society is really an entity that should be the flagship of the process of reconciliation, or it is still the role of the state. Negative discourse towards civil society, in comparative terms, is somewhat less elaborated than positive, and there are somewhat less narratives within this category. It follows therefrom that it is plausible to conclude that civil society organizations are perceived as the dominantly positive entities of Albanian society in the context of reconciliation. Given the high frequency of bringing civil society organizations in concert with politicians, it is necessary to examine this relationship in more details, not only at the level of perception, like it has been done in this research, but the real relationship of these two sectors. Thereby a more complete picture will be given to the role of civil society in contemporary Albanian society aimed to understanding the process of reconciliation.

Intersectoral cooperation

Focus group participants unanimously believe that the idea of intersectoral cooperation is very good and useful for the development of Albanian society. The synergy of the activities of the private, public and civil sectors was emphasized, and the advantage of such cooperation was illustrated by a private sector representative from Tirana:

I think that, if the business has the support of the public sector, to create international relations, it increases the possibility for cooperation. Business will come first, then the civil society.

Although participants believe in the importance of such cooperation, in practice it is not so common. Due to administrative complicity and organizational culture that does not promote intersectoral cooperation; it is more an exception than a rule.

As a ministry we have some cooperation with businesses for certain activities, we have cooperation with civil society on certain projects, until now there is not a trilateral collaboration meeting between these actors there, but of course this does not mean that we will not have, because while two actor can reached an agreement between them, why not three.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

It would be wrong to claim that intersectoral cooperation does not exist, because it is, however, limited to individual projects. Likewise, in the evaluation of intersectoral co-operation, the diversity of the resources should also be taken into account. This was very clearly seen in the example of the public sector where a representative of a department pointed out to something more developed and continuous cooperation, while the representative of some other sector very clearly showed that her department does not cooperate with, for example, private sector:

Although the Law on Protection from Discrimination says that we should collaborate with the private sector, but in fact it is non-existent, when we had to work with other private sectors the times we were told you have nothing to do with us, this is what makes wonder why, because I cover the part of the courts, and the impression that the court thinks the same thing in all the courts where we are indicted by private sector decisions discrimination and reemployment of persons who are fired from their work because they are Roma, the court's said the decision but I know that it does not allow them to interfere in the private sector, even when the court is saying that, it is another thing.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

Such variations show us that the practices of intersectoral cooperation in Albania (especially as regards cooperation between more than two sectors on the same project) have not been sufficiently developed. In addition, it should be em-

phasized that there are institutional prerequisites for cooperation, but awareness thereabout need to be encouraged.

As regards the potential regional cooperation between different sectors, the respondents answering was incomplete, as almost everyone agreed that such an idea would, in their perspective, be useful.

Very difficult, but it would be the absolute best.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, TIRANA)

Although we do not have enough information on the ways in which they would regulate such cooperation, it is clear that they believe the private sector should be the leader of such an organized institutional regional cooperation.

I think that, if the business has the support of the public sector, to create international relations, it increases the possibility for cooperation. Business will come first, then the civil society.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, TIRANA)

The cooperation of business and civil society brings positive results. Because the problems that Albania has in the region, it is not something that only us have, there are other developed countries. eg. Sweden and Denmark, which had major conflicts and overcome them with the economic cooperation with each other. So we can do this in the region.

(CIVIL SOCIETY, TIRANA)

Other obstacles to reconciliation

For the purpose of recognizing obstacles to accepting reconciliation in Albania, we have abstracted the answers with the highest frequency and obtained several interesting factors.

There is an apparent discrepancy between the perception of the interests of a society and policy interests in Albania like in all Western Balkan countries. Although, in democracy, policy should work for citizens and general interests, respondents believe that this is not always the case. Thus, one representative of citizens from Tirana explicitly explains:

Problem is: people are peace loving, with each other they are very good and approachable, but then politics is what destroys everything, and then they try do adjust what they did.

There are several explanations for the reasons of such notion of differentiation of politics/state and society. First of all, the development of democracy in Albania is

still in the beginning and in line with this, awareness of citizens as less well-developed as the outcome of the democratic process. In addition, the possible explanation is that political elites, precisely by antagonizing the situation related to minorities, want to achieve a state of uncertainty in order to create a perception of their own importance and irreplaceableness. It should be borne in mind that even if an objective discrepancy between politics and society is not so great (which cannot be deduced from this data with regard to the nature of the research), the mere fact that citizens consider that there is a gap between the interests of society and politics is a sign of an alert, and it is necessary to examine in more details the scope and reasons for such perception.

The economic dimension of reconciliation as an important factor in explaining the process of building has been previously mentioned, however, the consequences thereof have not been elaborated. Structurally, in line with the responses of our participants, poverty is also a problem in Albania. Weakening of the middle class, which is not only a kind of factor of stability and development in democracy, but also the deepening gap between the rich and the poor, has weakened the social fabric. Moreover, the phenomenon of poverty, according to the research findings, is a serious problem encountered by a part of the Albanian population. If a particular social group does not meet basic living needs, it is unlikely to give importance to the process of reconciliation and coexistence since it will have to focus on securing existential security.

A big problem here in Albania is that the population, whether it is the middle class, upper class or the poor, what has lost the majority, which is the layer of poor, they lost the things with which they mentioned the essential, food, and it's very difficult to go through reconciliation, because at the end of the month, they will not have money to pay the energy.

(CITIZENS, TIRANA)

If we add nationalism to the variable of poverty as a factor, as some respondents of this research do, the size of the spectrum of the obstacles facing the Albanian society in the process of reconciliation becomes even clearer. Nationalists, seen as extremists who do not observe society in a realistic way, as considered by respondents, encourage conflicts. Particularly prominent is the phenomenon of right wing nationalism that is dangerous to coexistence and indirectly leads to the weakening of social capital, as it negates the need to build trust among members of different ethnic groups.

We just need to pass through these racism, national calls, the right-side extremist needs to be eliminated, to be nationalist but not to harm the other, but again it is difficult in our society.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, TIRANA)

Respondents emphasize that nationalist outbursts can be seen on various events, of which football matches are particularly prominent as risky places.

Exaggerated nationalism brings conflicts and increases contradictions. At the moment we have contradictions even within, then I think that is one reason of the difficulty of reconciliation. Eg the football match brought on the surface the excessive nationalism.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, TIRANA)

A particularly interesting discourse is related to the specifics of the Albanian culture. Respondents have repeatedly said that the process of reconciliation is not so much embedded in Albanian customs and that it is a concept that is greatly promoted by the Western powers and the European Union. The argument that supports this is the reference to the phenomenon of blood feud that is characteristic of the Albanian society. Although legally prohibited, it is not unusual that in smaller places, as a reaction to injustice, there is a need for blood feud, which is, however, fundamentally opposite to the philosophy of reconciliation. This is also related to the finding that we have previously pointed out that the Albanians are hard to forgive. In other words, a specific element of Albanian culture has been recognized as an obstacle to reconciliation. A civil society representative from Gjirokastra, on the question of the aggravating circumstances of reconciliation, explained the appearance of blood feud as an argument why reconciliation is not inherent in Albanian society:

Talking here about blood feuds which is a phenomenon which I see now that it is coming back, this part of revenge that is problematic for the Albanian society.

Conclusion and recommendations

The issue of reconciliation in Albania in the context of this research should be seen through the prism of specific contexts. Albania is a country that did not have a direct ethnic conflict in its territories, thus diverging from other examples selected in this research. Analysing the findings of the Albanian focus groups, the problem is somewhat more recognized in the realization of policies towards minorities, and less in the classical understanding of reconciliation. In addition, for Albania, the concept of reconciliation with the past is somewhat less important than other observed cases in the Balkan region. For this reason, focus group participants often talk about coexistence and cooperation. Reconciliation between different groups to ensure quality coexistence and enhanced cooperation is a common denominator that characterizes the Albanian understanding of this issue. All this influences the conceptualization of the topics that covered this research, which is important for understanding the conclusions.

Several aspects have to be taken into account for the purposes of understanding the perception of building a positive peace in Albania. The concept of reconciliation, as arising from the findings of focus groups, is generally accepted as important, but the differences in its interpretation are visible. How-

ever, the most interesting consideration is that reconciliation as a kind of sociocultural process is not inherent in Albanian society and that it is actually imposed by the West. Elaborating the peculiarities of Albanian society, respondents show that the issue of reconciliation is relatively frivolous, in a way that it is accepted at the nominal level, but that its values are not actually so embedded in Albanian culture. This is supported by the discourse that reconciliation requires the so-called a third party that through its expertise or experience can facilitate this process. Reconciliation is closely linked to economic growth. This is probably an aspect that is most often emphasized in the elaboration of the conditions necessary for quality cohabitation. Numerous respondents highlighted also poverty and differences in the development of the north and south of Albania and it is not surprising how economic prosperity is perceived as a way out of relative deprivation and the mode of resolving relationships between different groups. In addition, the participants highlighted the role of youth and education in reconciliation processes. They think that new generations can contribute to social development, but they need to be educated in relation thereto. It is exactly the enlightening moment of education that prevails in the conceptualization of all the topics that are being examined through this research. The respondents pointed out that different campaigns, youth exchanges, education system and informal education greatly contribute to a higher level of awareness and informing of topics of reconciliation, coexistence and interculturalism. This finding is particularly important for both, the public and the civil sector, as it shows in which direction efforts must be made to build a sustainable and positive peace.

On the other hand, the question of sincerity of politics in these intentions is raised. The prevalence of the discourse of “us” (citizens) against “them” (politicians) is particularly worrying. From the review of acts, documents, bodies and research, as well as public perceptions, it is evident that Albania is marked by a discrepancy between the proclaimed and the current one. Numerous legal documents that correctly regulate the issue of minority relations have not been properly implemented. The attitude of the respondents is that the state does not think seriously when it proclaims the values of coexistence, and that the creations of conditions for carrying out activities that are consistent with the processes of reconciliation are simply not on the list of political priorities. It is precisely for this reason that there is a polarization between society and the state, which potentially threatens democracy.

As in some other countries, there is a noticeable gap between social expectations and official Albanian politics. Such phenomena indicate that in Albania, it is necessary to work more seriously on the consolidation of democracy, in order to increase the degree of co-ordination between political decisions and desires i.e. the interests of citizens. The civil sector factor should be explained in more details in the context of this discourse. Civil society is perceived as a kind of opposition to the state, and its perception is not entirely positive. While one side perceives it as

a state branch, others mind the insufficient criticism against “hidden” intentions and donor interests. In other words, they doubt the intention of civil society to organize activities that truly help the community and respond to its needs. In that sense, it would be necessary for civil society to provide a clearer representation of its work to the general public, which would certainly increase the potential for cooperation with other sectors.

Although the establishment of a regional centre that would institutionalize cooperation between different sectors will not solve the problem of distance society from the state, it can have an enlightening role. Participants in focus groups recognize the importance of cooperation and express their readiness for the same, at the national level, but on the question of whether they practice it, we receive opposing answers. Moreover, at the national level, this cooperation is not clearly defined and, as it seems with regard to the results of the research, is more declarative than real.

Concerning regional cooperation, there is a consensus that it is important, and that the economic sector should have a primacy in it. However, it is believed that by establishing trade and encouraging exports, a greater degree of acceptance of diversity will be achieved, which will create an incentive environment for the cooperation of other sectors. Furthermore, the findings of this research sent a very clear message to the civil sector that Albanian citizens want civil society activities to be based on the needs of the community. Likewise, given the tendency of the population towards education and culture, which are actually agents for the dissemination of reconciliation, the civil sector should direct its own projects using the precisely mentioned mechanisms. In addition, it turned out that the participants find the idea of cooperation both at national and regional level attractive and acceptable and that there is a fertile soil for the realization of initiatives that contain the idea of the sectoral cross-cooperation.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized for sector related differences and specificities that there is no significant difference in the quality or the substance of the conceptualization of reconciliation. The representatives of the private, public and civil sectors, as well as citizens understand trust as accord and harmony, and citizens speak more about forgiveness as an essential determinant of reconciliation. The same thing is related to the difficulties of reconciliation where representatives of all sectors provide equally substantive answers, which is also true for discussions about education and youth. An identical situation is when it comes to the economic aspect of reconciliation where citizens and the private sector dominate in the number of original narratives. We find discrepancy in perception only in answers related to civil society. As explained earlier, respondents were much clearer in explaining the positive role of civil society organizations in the process of reconciliation, although not too detailed, tendencies, within the negative discourse, can be identified depending on the sector. The private sector has an average worse opinion on the role of civil society in the processes of

reconciliation, and emphasizes the particularity and politicization as the problems of its acting in the processes of reconciliation. Together with the public sector, the private sector shows a higher degree of articulation and interest in the issue of intersectoral cooperation in relation to the remaining two sectors, and it can be understood that both sectors understand the importance of the other, at the same time being not satisfied with the current situation. In their responses, public sector representatives address the private, and vice versa, but jointly state that intersectoral cooperation (in particular, trilateral, which means they included the civil sector) is an exception rather than a rule. Civil society should be more engaged in the private and public sector. Access to the private sector should be more proactive and targeted towards raising awareness of companies about their social role in the process of reconciliation. It would be important to take into account the establishment of a partnership relationship in which the private sector is accessed in a flexible manner (consider the adjustment of the communication strategy).

Recommendations for accessing the public sector include strengthening advocacy activities to create a culture of transparency of institutions in the field of minority policies. If wanted a trilateral cooperation to function, it is necessary to create a stimulating environment for involving different stakeholders in joint decision-making processes with the aim of creating responsive and adequate public policies.

Turkey

ACCORDING TO THE 1982 CONSTITUTION, TURKEY IS A UNITARY REPUBLIC WITH A parliamentary system of government. The president is the head of the Republic and the supreme commander of armed forces. Since 2014, the head of the state is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a politician of conservative options and pro-Islamic orientation. It should be noted that Turkey is a secular, unitary, democratic and constitutional republic since the time of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, after the First World War. Although the Turkish constitution of 1982 does not explicitly mention the rights of religious minorities, they are incorporated into national jurisdiction through Article 90(5) which regulates obligations under international treaties. There are several ethnic groups living in Turkey, so 70-75% of the population is Turkish, Kurds make up 18% of the population and other 7-12%. The religious affiliation of Turkish citizens is 99.8% Islamic, and others are mainly Christian and Jewish⁵⁰.

Ever more increasing turning of Turkey towards the West is reflected in the fact that it is a member of the Council of Europe, NATO, the OECD and the OSCE, and has also begun negotiations for EU membership.

Turkey has had turbulent relations with members of ethnic minorities in its territory, but also in surrounding countries. It can be said that Turkey has such a specific relationship that lasts for more than a century with Armenia and an Armenian autochthon ethnic minority within Turkey. The conflicts, therefore, last for more than a century, and one of the main events dated back to 1915, when a conflict broke out between the Armenians and the Ottoman army within the Ottoman Empire resulting in one and a half million lost lives, with a significant proportion of surviving Armenians having to move to Armenia (which was then part of Russia) and to other countries in Europe and the world. Armenian interpretation of this event marks systematic extermination or genocide, while Turkey strongly denies such an interpretation of historical events. Moreover, there has been a silence concerning that event in Turkey for many years, and if the Turkish-Armenian conflict was mentioned in public in the context of genocide by 2008, it was considered as the category of embarrassment and insults of the

50 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html?>

Turkish nation, for which there were severe court sentences. Since 2008, researchers who use the notion of “genocide” referring to those bloody events are exempted from legal prosecution under Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code.

Events from the beginning of the 20th century still burden Turkish-Armenian relations and pose a great challenge to the process of reconciliation between these two nations. Since 1914, when there were 1 204 000 members of the Armenian ethnic group, out of which was registered 50,000 of them in 2005, largest number of whom live in Istanbul now. There is an estimate that 300,000 Armenians live in Turkey, if included those who have Islamized their names and accepted Islam as their religion (Religious Freedom in Turkey, 2008). Also, one should be cautious in estimates of the number of Armenians in Turkey, since different sources show different data. For example, Muradyan (2015) very conservatively claims that there are about 10,000 Armenians in Turkey now, and estimates are based on the assumption that approximately 1.3 million Armenians left Armenia since it became independent with some data that only 0.4% of them headed to Turkey.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia became an independent republic in 1991. Although Turkey has recognized Armenia, the official diplomatic ties of the two countries do not exist. In 1993, Turkey reacted to the war in Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan and closed the border with Armenia. In order to normalize the relationship between Turkey and Armenia, as a result of the Swiss facilitated process in 2009, a “Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations” and the “Protocol on the Development of Bilateral Relations” were established.

However, to date, both protocols that provide a framework for the normalization of bilateral relations have not been confirmed by the competent authorities of both republics⁵¹. The lack of diplomatic relations negatively reflects on the citizens of both countries, especially the Armenians, who are coming to Turkey to work in searching for a better life. Since they do not have Turkish citizenship, and diplomatic ties are practically do not exist, Turkish law do not recognize them, whereby they are actually deprived of almost all of their rights while residing in Turkey (the rights applicable to migrants do not apply, as they are not recognized as such). Although the number of illegal migrants from Armenia is not officially known, it is speculated that around 25,000 of them stay in Istanbul⁵². The ethnic Armenians, as Turkish citizens, share all rights with other fellow citizens, yet the dynamics and direction of the development of relations between these two countries reflects on the sense of security of Armenians in Turkey (Religious Freedom in Turkey, 2008).

The last two decades in Turkey have been crucial for Armenian-Turkish relations at all levels. Several positive steps have been made by the Turkish authorities

51 <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-armenia.en.mfa>

52 <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64116>

between 2008 and 2014 given that the topics of the relations between the two countries were discussed in the media and politics. In addition, then President Abdullah Gül in 2008 ratified the Minority Foundations Law (No. 5737) which gave non-Muslim minority communities the property rights and the possibility of transferring the ownership of a property, which they have not been entitled to for many years. However, this Law proved ineffective in terms of compensations for confiscated properties that were in the meantime transferred or sold to a third party.

On the other hand, a positive story is about the camp of Armen, the former summer camp located in the Istanbul district of Tuzla, which the Turkish state returned to the Gedikpasha Armenian Protestant Church Foundation after it had been seized in early 2015. This move of returning the camp after a long-standing Armenian protest is also an important symbolic act because it is a place of great identity importance for the Armenian population.

In spite of non-existing formal relations between the two countries, informal contacts and mutual activities have their dynamics especially in the field of cooperation between civil society organizations. From the mid-1990s to 2010, the common mutual activities of civil society in these two countries were interactive workshops and joint working groups (23.8%), exchange programs and dialogue groups (19%), cultural projects (17.5%) and academic seminars and conferences (17, 5%) (Çuhadar & Punsmann, 2012). Young people, artists and representatives of civil society organizations (32%) participated the most in the activities. The holders of the largest share of projects on reconciliation are located in Yerevan and Istanbul, with relatively low connections with the periphery. Financial support to this type of projects is mainly foreign (47% comes from the US, 26% from the EU) and the smaller share is partly local (17%), which in fact leads to the conclusion that the theme of reconciliation between these two ethnic groups is not a priority for the existing policies in Turkey (Çuhadar & Punsmann, 2012). The result of political inertia and lack of awareness on reconciliation is evident in the widespread extent of ethnic prejudice and the serious lack of knowledge and information of members of both ethnic groups of one another (Görgülü, 2008).

Findings of empirical research

Reconciliation Concept

The concept of reconciliation in contemporary Turkey is publicly present and it is frequently heard in the public sphere. In spite of its presence, it was not easy to explain it in a uniform way to our respondents. Although, due to the very nature of the language, it is difficult to translate into Turkish, the greater problem has caused the complete inability to separate the reconciliation from the Armenian issue. Despite the efforts of facilitators, the notion of reconciliation could not have been explained to the respondents since they related it to the Armenian-Turkish

conflict. Draft idea of a research was to obtain a greater quantity of data by splitting the issue of the concept of reconciliation and reconciliation at the national level was somewhat more difficult to achieve in the case of Turkey than in other case studies. In spite of this, the findings of focus groups reveal several elements that make up the discourse of understanding of reconciliation. Four different discourses of understanding reconciliation emerged from the research findings. Grading of discourses was done in terms of intensity and intention: negotiations, normalization, peace building and coexistence.

The first discourse is about negotiations. Namely, the respondents consider that after the conflict, a dialogue about the situation that has taken place and that, as such, it is connected with reconciliation. Negotiations, talks and discussions about the problem that led to the conflict, and the potential finding of a joint solution leads to reconciliation. By this, in fact, respondents do not equate reconciliation with the negotiations, but they consider that negotiations are a precondition which precedes reconciliation.

I think of the word 'negotiation' when I hear reconciliation. Reconciliation, from the beginning, means there is a certain problem to be reconciled on. There should be a problem that two states, two nations or two neighbours try to negotiate on or reconcile with.

It should be emphasized that in explaining this discourse element, respondents mainly use examples of conflict between Turkey and Armenia, i.e. Turks and Armenians.

The term 'reconciliation' reminds me of 'dialogue'. First of all, I believe people were used for the events [of 1915]. As a Turkish Armenian, I think we are both disliked here in Turkey and outside, by other Armenians. Because we are still here and we defend here, the Diaspora does not accept us. We need to decide on some issues before we work to finish the hatred in Turkey. If there will be a dialogue, it should be between the two states.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

Another way of understanding reconciliation involves normalizing the situation, which means recognizing and identifying the source of the conflict, and then the need for working together to remove the cause of the problem.

I would translate the word as 'normalization' because that is the fit for the situation. We need to acknowledge that there is a problem abnormal and negotiable to normalize it.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

There should be a conflict before reconciliation. Then, there needs to be a common decision for the two sides, not to harm both of their interests. The conflict is the one that leads to a necessary reconciliation process.

Both parts of the conflict need to work collaboratively in order to minimize the negative causes that could affect them.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

Understanding reconciliation as a normalization of the situation suggests the relatively modest desires of the social group, which in this way conceptualizes reconciliation, since normalization does not have the necessary intention to create coexistence, nor intercultural society. It is precisely thereon that another way of understanding or translating the concept of “reconciliation” is through the establishment of peace. Although the respondents did not elaborate their own meaning of peace, they mostly used the syntagma “establishment of peace” in the context of interpreting reconciliation.

I agree with your idea on emphasizing the process. The term ‘reconciliation’ is maybe not bad in English. Yet, I would translate into Turkish as ‘peacemaking’.

(CIVIL SOCIETY)

The last discourse of understanding the concept of reconciliation is coexistence. This discourse involves communion and sharing as an important determinant of the relations of the once confronted sides.

Reconciliation reminds me of finding a way to live together. For instance, having to neighboring countries accept each other and try to solve their problems would be a step towards reconciliation.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

I think it means sharing something common. The word ‘common’ comes to my mind. Common feelings, common interests.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

As aforementioned, all reconciliation discourses refer to the contextualization of the Turkish-Armenian conflict. Such a mental picture of respondents clearly shows that the Armenian-Turkish conflict is one of the determinants of to construct the term ‘reconciliation’.

Especially interesting is the smallest variety depending on the sector. In other words, the conceptualization of the notion of reconciliation through the prism of the Armenian issue in Turkey was unanimously expressed by representatives of the public sector. Although representatives of other sectors also contextualize reconciliation through the Armenian issue, in the case of the public sector it is absolute.

I perceive the term ‘reconciliation’ as ‘meeting’ for Turkey and Armenia.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

In order to get a more detailed insight into the state of reconciliation at the national and regional level from the perspective of representatives of different sectors, below we bring results that reveal the scope and seriousness of this problem, first at the national and then at the regional level.

National and regional level

The story of reconciliation at the national and regional level in Turkey, according to research results, consists of five parts. In the first part, we present the perception of the status quo, which is very pessimistic and unfavourable for reconciliation. Then, we analyse the reasons for the unfavourable situation through examining the discourse of dealing with the past primarily the Kurdish and Armenian issues and the role of politics i.e. authorities in the processes of reconciliation. The fourth part is dedicated to the regional context, and for the end we have left a somewhat more positive dimension of the current situation. In other words, a plausible analysis of the social context of contemporary Turkey can be presented from the findings of the focus groups and explained the situation related to the building of coexistence between ethnic groups in the conflict.

The respondents are very pessimistic in their answers about the assessment of the state of reconciliation at the national level, a discourse that reconciliation is not accepted prevails dominantly and, that is, despite rhetoric, reconciliation is not a social reality. Certainly, due to the frequent use of concepts such as reconciliation and the establishment of peace and their non-implementation, they become empty markers and create a sort of aversion towards them.

Terms like dialogue, reconciliation or peacemaking are perceived shallowly in this society. They are not internalized and do not translate into action. Therefore, they lose their actual meanings. Since we do not do self-criticism, these terms only seem to be accepted in our society.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

These terms have positive meanings to them in Turkish. Yet, their practices in society are not positive. I grew up in Southeastern Turkey. That is the only place where I heard the word 'peace' being used sincerely. Old mothers want peace genuinely. Again, at the parliament of five hundred MPs only one party uses the word sincerely. These words bring anxiety instead of peace, unfortunately. The term 'peace' enhances people's pain instead of solving problems and soothing them.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

These terms are meaningless in Turkey, though they are often used. No improvements are made, using these terms.

(CITIZENS, ANKARA)

Respondents believe that a true dialogue between members of the Turkish and Armenian people does not exist. This is contributed by the spread of negative stereotypes and hate speech that, according to the experiences of the respondents, are practically part of everyday communication. Armenian is a derogatory word from a Turkish perspective, and it is not uncommon to hear statements in the public sphere such as “Yes, we did it and we would do it again,” or “The best Armenian is a dead Armenian.”

Words like ‘Greek’, ‘Armenian’, ‘Kurdish’ and ‘Alevi’ are used to curse someone. Getting rid of hateful discourse could be the first step for reconciliation.

(CITIZENS, ANKARA)

Even more horrible is that the denial coexists with a discourse, saying: “Yes we did it, we would do it again.” This paralyses all the reconciliation, approaching, and peacemaking processes.

(CIVIL SOCIETY)

We knew that the reconciliation programs, organized starting from 2009, do not correspond to the reality in Turkey. This year, the Turkish protesters chanted slogans in front of the German Consulate, saying “The best Armenian is dead Armenian.”

(CIVIL SOCIETY)

It is precisely the mutual hatred between the two peoples that prevents a quality dialogue from which coexistence could emerge. The lack of dialogue goes to those limits that members of one organization (Gray Wolves) physically attack members of minority nations. One of the most memorable narratives is the Armenian who lives in Turkey but conveys the experience of staying in Armenia:

I think it is the unresolved history as well as the hatred that both sides are feeling for each other. When I went to Armenia, I encountered hatred, as if I was a Turk. I am an Armenian. People cannot stand hearing Turkish there. I got on a taxi with my friends whom I was talking to in Turkish. The driver did not speak a word with us. He did not even say what the price was. I do not think Turkish people in Turkey cannot handle hearing Armenian language. They must have drummed hatred into his head. I see there is a wall that is impossible to pass here. The hatred makes it impossible to build a dialogue.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

The lack of dialogue, as well as the high degree of spread of stereotypes and prejudices, prevents the development of reconciliation and building cooperation and trust. Although the Armenians are the most frequent victims of verbal and non-verbal violence in Turkey, they are not the only ones, since the intolerance

towards the LGBTIQ population, Kurds or non-Muslims is also present. In addition, it should be noted that the situation is by no means one-sided, i.e. that non-understanding and intolerance are expressed by the Armenians towards the Turks, but also by the Kurds towards the Turks. All this creates an insecure situation in which coexistence between different ethnic groups is extremely difficult or almost impossible.

We lose because we do not build a dialogue in the first place. Neighbors, school friends or many other people hold prejudices against each other. There is a lack of dialogue not only between ethnic groups, but also between genders. Because there is prejudice. Where ever dialogue is missing, reconciliation and peacemaking are absent. We do not build a dialogue. A Turk holds prejudice against an Armenian, an Armenian has the same against a Kurd. A Kurd treats similarly an Alevi. An Alevi has a prejudice against a homosexual person. Another person criticizes people for not being modern and progressive enough. This goes on in a circular motion. And all of these processes are created by the lack of dialogue in society.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

Then, the question was raised about the relationship between society and the state in the context of reconciliation. In other words, there is a contradiction between the two directions of empowering reconciliation - from top to bottom and from bottom to top. On the one hand, respondents give priority to society, that is to say, citizens and civil society when it comes to reconciliation, while the other streams believe that both the Turkish and Armenian states are so powerful that they are able to impose values and thereby reconcile. Representatives of two opposing narratives are presented below.

The role of the state in the process of reconciliation is more important:

I can only speak about my observations in 2000s. Turkey does not make any attempts for reconciliation with Armenia because it does not see Armenia as a country that is necessary to be negotiated. That is why, only from time to time Turkey does something positive on this issue to solidify its politics. Therefore, no improvements are made.

(CIVIL SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

The role of the society in the process of reconciliation is more important:

First, I do not believe in a reconciliation between states. I find the idea of reconciling the states very hegemonic. I have faith in the efforts of societies and people. (Civil sector, Istanbul)

Reconciliation should happen between Armenia and Turkey, regardless of the words of Germany, France, Azerbaijan etc. Both countries should speak to each other and confiscation problems should be solved. Yes, so-

cieties may understand each other's pain and reconcile but without the peace between states there cannot be a total reconciliation.

(CIVIL SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

After the presentation of interethnic relations, we wanted to see what the respondents of the focus groups consider as the cause of interethnic distrust. The analysis has abstracted three factors: ignoring the confrontation with the past, primarily the issue of genocide against the Armenians, the lack of information and the current political situation, i.e. a system that does not ease the process of reconciliation.

The question of (negating) the genocide against the Armenians in 1915 is one of the national taboos in Turkey. The state has unambiguously opted for a policy of denying genocide and even punishes individuals who qualify this event as such, which is recognized as a social fact.

The denial of the genocide is the dominant opinion in Turkey

(CIVIL SECTOR).

Facing the crimes committed in the past and, in analogy, the need for justice that would satisfy the victims are almost not part of the public discourse in Turkey. The official Turkish history does not mention genocide, nor does it teach anything about the Armenian issue at school, and it can be said that a policy of denial and oblivion is being implemented. On the other hand, the Armenians living in Turkey do not forget the suffering of their own people. The two opposing collective memories are in constant latent conflict since they are not discussed and confronted at the manifold level.

New history publications are mostly about the Armenian Genocide recently in Turkey. But I do not remember any word about Armenians in our history textbooks for primary school, high school and university. The problem is history does not mention anything. No information about how many Armenians were massacred in the First World War. People can only hear about Armenians through the hearsays of the elderly, grandmothers and so on. My knowledge is restricted with things I heard from such people. I do not have any other source to communicate and learn from, as the number of Armenian is small in this country. I guess, that is why Turkish society does not care about the reconciliation. They do not focus on things they are unaware of.

(CITIZENS, ANKARA)

I think the problem is the genocide. Turks do not remember and Armenians do not forget. That is obvious. Indeed, Turks do not know and remember anything. On the other hand, Armenians identify themselves with it. It is unfortunate that the genocide happened, especially during World War I because it disappears within the wartime in Turks' minds. When Turks

hear about the Armenian Genocide, they say: "We were the real genocided ones." Because they feel unaccepted by the Western world, they talk about the genocides committed by them. They say: "The Spinards and Americans also committed genocide. Why are we always blamed?" I think this psychological process keeps them away from a possible reconciliation.

(CITIZENS, ANKARA)

As it is evident from the last narrative, another factor is important for understanding the unfavourable situation related to the process of reconciliation - the lack of information among citizens. Respondents consider that Turkish citizens are deliberately uninformed and disinclined to self-criticism and have major problems in re-examining their own role in potential non-democratic practices that have violated or still violate human rights. Such an approach, in fact, derives from cultural norms that give a strong primacy to a national identity, yet a symbol of strength, superiority and power. In that sense, the critical questioning of Turkey's role in the past may be a sign of national weakness or, nevertheless, a sign of renunciation of the Turkish nation, which is not in line with the dominant value system.

I agree that these terms are not accepted in the society. Yet, we cannot reveal that this is the case either. These terms are perceived to be signs of weakness. If you act according to these terms, it means you do not have the power to get people accept your power.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

People often perceive reconciling and negotiating as giving up on their own interests. Therefore, these terms have negative meanings to them.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

Turkishness, national feelings keep people away from having a reconciliatory perception, as they make them feel they are stabbing the nation behind.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ANKARA)

Since state structures, through the agents of socialization, do not deconstruct such thoughts, it is not surprising that society is reluctant to reconcile. Thus, the combination of widespread prejudices and stereotypes and the avoidance of the dissolution of state myths create a situation in which the common social progress of different ethnic groups is difficult or almost impossible. In this regard, just like in other countries in this research, education is an indispensable factor.

Respondents in this research place great hopes on the role of the education system in the process of building reconciliation, encouraging coexistence and creating an intercultural society, but the current education system, instead of encouraging it, perpetuates the ethnic distance.

Education is highly essential. The educator's knowledge is also important. People who can think universally should be educators. The educational system needs to be completely changed in Turkey. The information we were thought in high school history books disappeared now.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

The perception is that the education system, like the media, is in the service of a state apparatus that is not overly aware of issues of reconciliation and coexistence. It is precisely for this reason that the younger generations that should bring freshness into the social life of Turkey and change the petrified differences between ethnic groups cannot do this because they are not competent for such ventures. The education system for young people, at least according to the respondents in this research, does not offer a historically founded truth, but distorts facts in order to protect state proclaimed policies.

Firstly, the educational system brings negative effects. Students are taught history courses that see Armenians with hatred. These perceptions must be changed. Only then, we can speak of positive steps.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

This may sound like a classic answer but there need to be a rise on reading rate, specifically on objective readings. As I said before, relations are worsened by fixed historical knowledge and nationalistic feelings. If people do more objective readings and treat the other more tolerantly, the process could be improved.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ANKARA)

Focus group participants highlight another factor worth mentioning, the so-called Armenian 'introvertiveness' and Turkish 'closeness'. The respondents believe that the Armenian community is introverted and self-sufficient, and the Turkish society is closed to dissimilarities and different. The combination of these two factors which make the reconciliation path anyhow difficult to be even more difficult.

I think the process is also procrastinated because the community is introvert. As an LGBT member, I believe the Turkish state want them to be like that and encourage ghettoization with exclusionist policies. We attempt to fight back. Maybe the Armenian community could have done the same thing?

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

In addition, it must be emphasized that such a general climate corresponds to the ruling elite because it enables easier governance.

I think Turkish people can be easily led. In the last couple of months, Russia was the biggest enemy of Turkey. People used to say Russians and the Russian government are the worst weeks ago. Now they think Putin

brings the West into line. People are not very opinionated about Armenians. For instance, had I not known Varduhi, I would not have any information about this issue. I would not have come here either. The only thing I would have heard would be the opinion of a political party leader in Turkey. I remember my childhood years. What did we know about Greece anyway? It was a neighbor who was unknown to us, and a dangerous enemy. We were told that they stole our Turkish baklava. We are just learning that they also make sarma and baklava. We have just come to know them and their cousin. The same problem is experienced with Armenia and Turkey or Syria and Turkey. The problem in all of them is that we do not get familiarized.

(CITIZENS, ANKARA)

Ethno nationalism, which is visible in the last narrative, has been further analysed taking into account the Kurdish issue. According to respondents in focus groups, today the Armenians are what Kurds once used to be - a group that was deprived, marginalized and discriminated by the system. Although the situation with the Kurds improved, as the respondents claim, it still remains unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, they are in a better position than the Armenians.

Not long ago, the situation with Kurds and Kurdish language was similar to the Armenians'. There is some softening in the attitudes towards them now. Maybe it would be useful to analyse that process.

(CITIZENS, ANKARA)

In all the above narratives, the significant role of the state can be indirectly read i.e. slowing down, braking and boycotting the reconciliation process by current political structures. Focus group participants believe that it is precisely the official policy of Turkey that is responsible for low level of interculturality and slowing processes of reconciliation in society. Similarly, the respondents doubt the sincerity of the Turkish government's intention when it says it wants to solve the problems with the Armenians and the Kurds, since their everyday political moves are in opposite direction. They also believe that without the change of the current government, it will not be possible to achieve reconciliation between different social groups in Turkey.

Unless the current government changes, I do not think there will be positive steps to be taken. The Turkish government is powerful because it is hateful towards certain groups. Unfortunately, Armenians are among them.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

I believe Turkey does not want to solve problems related to many things including its neighbors or education. Turkey stays away from making steps towards resolutions of problems. You do not need to be an expert on politics to say this. I do not find Turkey's stance constructive on the recon-

ciliation issue at which there needs to be price paid. There will not be an improvement in case the problem remains at the hands of politicians and the peaceful stance of the new generation is ignored.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

The whole situation should be seen in the context of regional cooperation and relations between neighbouring countries. Mainstream reflection is that international political relations of Turkey affect the attitude of the state towards the ethnic minority in Turkey. More specifically, if there is a cooling down of relations between Turkey and another country, the ethnic group of related country will feel the negative consequences of this disturbed relationship. For example:

There is something that irritates me in Turkish politics. The way that governments use domestic affairs as a trump card for international affairs, or the vice versa. For instance, if the relations with Israel are bad, Turkish Jews are badly treated in Turkey. After Germany's recognition of the Armenian Genocide, Erdoğan threatened to send Armenians from Republic of Armenia back to their countries. This situation also causes a pressure on Turkish Armenians. That is why I do not see anything positive in the process. Sometime ago, there has been a football diplomacy between the two countries which both sides gave positive statements about each other.

(CIVIL SECTOR)

This shows that power is voluntaristic and/or it is inclined to play a trick on the conventional democratic principles. Although part of the research was conducted after a coup attempt in Turkey, in the summer of 2016, respondents did not bring this event to the process of reconciliation and stability of democracy.

In the context of regional cooperation and international relations, especially with Armenia, the situation is extremely demanding. Diplomatic relations do not exist, and the borders between these two states are closed. Although during the President Gül there was a kind of normalization of relations, and with his departure the situation became complicated again. An entire story with the Armenians is being observed by some of the respondents through foreign policy strategy of Turkey called neo-Ottomanism. Such a public policy doctrine has very little understanding of the processes of reconciliation, and it is focused on the expansion and gross protection of its own economic and political interests.

In 2000s, there had been essential steps taken for the Armenian Turkish reconciliation. The president at the time [Abdullah Gül] met the Armenian president for a football match. It was perceived to be a big improvement by then. Later, both countries mutually lifted visa procedures and allowed flights. I think these were essential steps taken. Yet, maybe they were not sincere, as there was no continuation of such policies. Unfortunately, there is a huge population of nationalists in this country which fosters the government's policies. Exactly like in Armenia. Therefore, there are no genu-

ine steps taken. The border is still closed. I do not think Turkey stands at a good place in normalization and reconciliation. I find neo-Ottomanism as the roots of all international problems of Turkey. Even the reconciliatory stance on the Armenian Turkish issue has a mindset of "Turkey is so great that it could feed [help] 3 million Armenians in Armenia." The backbone of this reconciliation idea is neo-Ottomanism which is expanding the empire.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

Armenia is not an economic power compared to Turkey, and, therefore, it does not represent the primary foreign policy interest of Turkey. For this reason, if we accept the doctrine of neo-Ottomanism, the official Ankara is not in a position to invest in the establishment of better relations with Armenia nor to work on encouraging the process of reconciliation with the Armenians in the territory of Turkey.

I honestly do not think it has a significant impact on Turkish economy. Turkey has a lot of options, unlike Armenia which has a few open borders with its neighbors. The borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan are closed. The only option in Iran, then. Armenia is a low budget country with a small population which is approximately around the population of a city in Turkey. Opening the borders could possibly affect regional Turkish economy positively but I do not think it would make a huge difference.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

Despite the lack of cooperation between the official Ankara and the official Yerevan, as well as the very limited cooperation between other Turkish and Armenian entities, respondents believe that the solution to this situation is cooperation. Hrant Dink, who devoted (and lost) his life in the processes of building a sustainable peace between the Turks and the Armenians, was a hint of hope in catalysing the reconciliation process. Respondents believe that the political murder of Hrant Dink even worsened the situation between the Turks and the Armenians. Respondents point out that writing of Dink for the newspapers 'Agos' encouraged members of both nations to think about coexistence and encouraged them to communicate, to dialogue and negotiate with the goal of building normal peaceful relations. Hrant Dink is also responsible for the fact that some Armenian institutions within the Turkish society have become more visible, and opened up for members of other ethnic groups, which has been very well reasoned in society.

The first person I can think of is Hrant Dink. The turning point for Turkey was his assassination. I would never think thousands of people would protest with placards, saying "We are all Armenians!" I think Hrant Dink was a very important figure.

(CITIZENS, ANKARA)

On the other hand, thanks to Hrant and Agos Newspaper, the Armenian community is more visible now. Hrant spoke the language of the society.

That language was touched people. No previous Armenian institution opened its doors to people other than Armenians. That is why Hrant was a crucial figure.

(CIVIL SECTOR)

I wish Hrant could live. It is him who we owe a lot because we are able to talk about these things now. His assassination was a turning point for the Armenian community to be more politicized. That incident also helped people of Turkey understand the problems. This political murder infused people's everyday lives. That is why, I think we can divide this process into two: before Hrant and after Hrant. After his death, it has been possible to talk about these issues and organize protests.

(PUBLIC SECTOR)

Exactly the legacy of Hrant Dinka, for some of our respondents, was a breakpoint in the beginning of better communication between members of the Armenian community and the Turks. Although we have made it very clear that the situation regarding reconciliation is not satisfactory, progress is visible. In the first place, today, unlike 30 years ago, there are no talks that in 1915 the Armenians wanted to kill the Turks, but it was recognized that there were also Armenian victims. In addition, due to the pressure of the international community, commemorations are also organized for the victims of genocide, although it is not recognized by official Ankara. Furthermore, society is slowly sensitized for dealing with issues with the past, and the Armenians are opening up and encouraged. The number of young Armenians who want to learn the Armenian language is growing, and there are more and more scientific and artistic works on the topic of the Armenian-Turkish conflict.

The situation is better than thirty years ago, I think. The narrative of the state has changed a bit. Thirty years ago, the discourse was completely denialist, arguing that it was Armenians who slaughtered Turks. This discourse has shifted now. The argument is that the intention was not to kill, but to deport Armenians but deportations culminated in their deaths. Now, the numbers are also discussed. The Turkish state argues that around four hundred thousand people died, while Armenians argue one and a half million died. We should acknowledge that there have been some transformations.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

Some people could not even spot Armenia on the map in the past. Or they used to look at an Armenian as if they saw an alien. Now it is different. In our high school, which was an Armenian school, we were not taught that Armenians were killed. Things were told much more ambiguously. Now, we are talking about these issues more comfortably. Young people have started to learn Armenian now. We have reached to an extent where masters

or doctoral students speak Armenian more fluently than native speakers. I find these things hopeful.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

The society has changed its stance on the genocide. Twenty-five years ago, when I told my family that I will be doing my PhD research on the Armenian Genocide, they thought it was madness even though they were leftists. Not one among them said: "You could do such a research." Today, everyone around me recognizes the genocide. This means there is an improvement. The German recognition of the Armenian Genocide was rarely protested against in Turkey. Few people gathered in front of the consulate, chanting a couple of slogans and then leaving the place. The stance of the society today is not completely denialist. Instead, the rhetoric is: "There had been bad things happening but let's not talk about them." On the other hand, I think the youth is quite curious about the topic. Last year we organized a project named "Acting Together" to bring Armenian and Turkish youth together. Though we did not advertise much, the number of applicants were much higher than we expected. A hundred people applied for ten positions. And none of them had written their motivation letters in a denialist way. I found hope in those letters. The difficulty we have now is that the Armenian side is not open to debates.

(CIVIL SECTOR)

Intersectoral cooperation

Intersectoral cooperation aimed at, or in some of its parts is focused on reconciliation in Turkey, from perspective participants in focus groups, has relatively narrow limits. The situation is the same on the regional level with Armenian entities (public, civil and private sector). Representatives of the private sector have so far mostly had no opportunity to cooperate with other sectors on such topics, but there are examples of private sector and civil society cooperation, although they are very rare. We present two contradictory narratives of cooperation with the civil sector. The first is a public sector representative:

As the Department of Societal Equality, we organized many events with civil society organizations. We had eight meetings in total. One of them was about minorities. Sixteen participants from fifteen organizations came. Among them, there were Kara Kutu and Anadolu Kültür Foundation working on multi-culturality. There is still demands from civils society organziations to continue these meetings.

The private sector representative from Istanbul, on the other hand, argues that cooperation with civil society is present, focusing on issues that have nothing to do with reconciliation, as confirmed by another private sector representative.

NGOs are not successful because the civil society culture is weak in this country. There need to be more volunteers and projects. The state tries to eliminate the power of NGOs; therefore, I cannot blame them solely on their failure. They cannot act independently. My workplace cooperates with NGOs from time to time but not on political or social issues. There is no mention on the reconciliation we are talking about here, for instance.

My workplace also cooperates with NGOs. We especially organize co-projects with Society Volunteers Foundation on health issues, like how to fight cancer.

The respondents answered affirmatively the question if they would join a regional initiative of cooperation between different sectors aimed to reconciliation in the region, but non-elaborately.

I would want to work with business sektor. I would not say no to public sektor but would be a bit more suspicious. Now that I think though, we should be working with public sektor more than other because they need to change.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

One of the most devastating results is the one on social entrepreneurship that shows that out of all of those who are asked whether they are familiar with this concept, only one answered affirmatively.

The role of the civil sector

Since the civil society proved to be an entity that could facilitate the process of reconciliation in the previous part, we were interested how respondents see the role of civil society in contemporary Turkey. Two opposing discourses can be read from the research findings. On the one hand, the discourse is positive because the civil society is seen as a bridge of joining and encouraging dialogue, while the other discourse is focused on the limitations of civil society's reach in the processes of reconciliation in Turkey. Below, we split these two discourses and show the understanding of the civil sector in the processes of sustainable and positive peace building in Turkey.

The situation related to civil society in Turkey is quite limiting. Civil society is not so visible, nor is the culture of association strong. In addition, the state does not see civil society as a partner in the building of modern democracy, but tries to control it and limit its impact. Civil society organizations have problems with action and mobilization. On the other hand, civil society is somewhat stronger. The various protests that have taken place in Turkey in the last decade show that self-organization of citizens strengthens i.e. citizens are standing up against the self-will of national and/or local authorities. Although these tendencies did not

spread over, they show that there is a critical mass that is ready to fight for certain values that are incompatible with the views of the current government. The Hrant Dink Foundation has the largest frequency in research out of civil society organizations. This foundation is perceived as effective and efficient and serves as an example of a quality civil society organization.

I know Hrant Dink Foundation as an institution making positive steps. They sent students, academics or other people who are interested in visiting Armenia. I was granted a scholarship by them to go to Armenia and conduct oral history interviews.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

I have not attended any of these collaborative projects of NGOs. But from our conversations now, I gather that the Turkish state will not make any moves towards reconciliation. The responsibility belongs to civil society, then. There is no other actor.

(CITIZENS, ANKARA)

In spite of the positive discourse, the opinion of the limited impact of the civil sector prevails among the respondents. Civil society organizations hardly reach the population, and they also recognize the problem of communicating their attitudes and values to the broader strata of society. The civil society is weak, and the additional problem is that public institutions of public administration hardly ever cooperate with associations on projects related to human rights and democratization. All this makes civil society in limbo between the needs of the community and their activities, which results in an impasse in which the impact of the civil sector is severely limited. If we add media to the whole story being not excessively prone to the activities of civil society, we get a number of unfavourable sociocultural and structural barriers faced by the civil society.

I find NGO projects on reconciliation very restricted. One reason for that is that consciousness for civil society is weak among people. Yes, maybe there are NGOs like Hrant Dink Foundation but generally civil society organizations' effect on people is not high. They cannot reach many people. I work at the association of manufacturers which does co-projects with civil society organizations on certain problems relating to businessmen, or exported goods and so on. These projects are periodical. They stop the projects when problems are solved on those particular issues.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

The uncertainty and the limitations of financial resources hinder the continuous, structured and systematic work on one social topic. More often, changing focus is dependent on funding that does not meet the needs of the community. In other words, the civil sector cannot afford long-term engagement with a particular topic, although the circumstances may require it. All this creates an environment in

which citizens do not have much confidence in the civil sector, which is strengthened by the approach of a state that does not cooperate with associations sufficiently.

Civil society is generally weak in Turkey. Only few NGOs are working on human rights, especially on the rights of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. The other problem is that projects are carried out through short term grants. We work on a topic for a year, then switch to another because there is not enough funding. Almost no NGO work on an issue for a longer period like ten or twenty years. So, NGOs end up not being very effective in civil society. The other problem is that public institutions do not work with NGOs collaboratively. In case there is a collaboration between the two, public institutions remain hierarchically above NGOs, not trusting them or giving space to them. The state blocks the canals with civil society. Only there are few positive cases.

Other factors

In addition to above described, another factor has proved to be important in the analysis remains to be mentioned. It is about the media. It has already been pointed out in the part about civil society that the media are not benevolent to the associations, but the respondents believe that the media are not benevolent to the whole process of reconciliation *per se*. The impression is that the media perpetuate intolerance and prejudice, thus creating not only non-incentive environment, but also strengthen ethnic tensions.

On the other hand, I can think of the Turkish media for its negative impacts on the reconciliation process. The media fosters negative feelings towards Armenians and shows them as the perpetrators of certain violent events.

(PRIVATE SECTOR, ISTANBUL)

In the media context, a particular emphasis is placed on the relationship between the state and themselves. Respondents doubt the independence of the media; they consider them to be the advertising tools of the ruling elite who follow the instructions of the official Ankara.

Also, the media and state should change their discourses about the issue. When the state approaches the issue with statements like 'the so called genocide', the media follows that. When it is mentioned as 'deportation', too, the media speaks with that headline. That means the media does not have much space to act independently from the state, if we do not count a few newspapers with low circulation.

(CITIZENS, ISTANBUL)

Conclusions and recommendations

A syntagma *Complicated history - complicated present* is the one that can describe the situation related to the process of reconciliation in Turkey. This large country rich in history today is at a breaking point. Either it will go to the direction of contemporary consolidated democracies, in which the respect human and minority rights is one of the highest values, or it will follow some other patterns that suppress and limit members of minority groups to live in coexistence and tolerance with the majority population. The current situation regarding reconciliation in Turkey is certainly not ideal, but some of the recent examples give hope that the situation will be better. The very venture of the conceptualization of reconciliation is challenging. Although some see it as a cohabitation of various groups, discourses based only on the normalization of relations or negotiations reveal the distance of Turkish society from reconciliation.

What can be said with certainty is that reconciliation is the concept of a process dimension, and/or the respondents consider that reconciliation is something to be worked on and put efforts in developing it.

From the research findings and illustrative examples offered by the respondents in this research, it can be concluded that in Turkey reconciliation was not internalized or accepted as such by society. Although the whole concept is discursively placed in the relationship of Turkish-Armenian relations, the research has shown that the situation related to reconciliation is much more complex than the Turkish-Armenian story itself. The very narrative that the path of reconciliation is a sign of weakness and that “the true Turk” will not agree on concessions because it will be interpreted as a departure from the determinants of the Turks identity shows the seriousness of institutions and organizations in dealing with reconciliation. In addition, reconciliation with the Armenians is just one of a series of endeavours that need to be tackled. Research findings have shown that other minorities, especially Kurds and members of the LGBT community, also face prejudice and discrimination.

Beside cultural reasons and mentality, there are several factors that influence the high level of unacceptability of reconciliation. One of them is the negation of parts of one’s own role in the past and the general glorification of one’s own history. The negation of the genocide against the Armenians became a question of national determination in Turkey, and the whole system was directed at imposing such a discourse on society. The conglomerate of non-critical education, insufficient information for limited free media and all the way to an official policy that is often used by nationalist rhetoric, minimizes the importance of the issue of reconciliation. Limited intersectoral cooperation, poor civil society and a strong state additionally weaken the efforts of more progressive forces in society to bring reconciliation to the political agenda.

Although described situation is rather disturbing from the perspective of reconciliation, positive examples are still there. The most prominent discourse in this

regard is the one about journalist Harat Dinka who struggled for reconciliation. His murder only further encouraged both Armenians and the Turks eager for co-existence and interculturalism to open up to each other. Although the steps in this direction are small, they are not negligible. This has been supplemented by an ever-increasing awakening of civic awareness in Turkey. Thus, protests and civic actions are increasingly frequent on Turkish streets.

Two important findings of this research need to be highlighted. The first refers to a very high level of competence of respondents on topics. Namely, the respondents showed an enviable level of political competence and familiarity with the social context in terms of reconciliation, and in particular the issue of the Turkish-Armenian issue. There is not only the knowledge of historical facts, but also a critical overview of the past and the connection of the same to the current situation.

On the other hand, they are much less elaborated when it comes to the role of civil society, and very little about cross-sectoral cooperation. Information provided by representatives of all sectors on these two topics is frivolous and insufficiently analytical. Regarding the different sectors, research has shown that representatives of all strata of the society (civil, public, private and citizens) actually want reconciliation, but they are frustrated with the current situation. Of course, the level of frustration in this sense is more pronounced among the Armenian population.

Particularly surprising is the articulation, interest, awareness and elaboration of the private sector. Specifically, private sector representatives have proved to be the most progressive in providing solutions to current social problems. The public sector is also open to reconciliation processes, but its role depends on the political elite who hold the monopoly over it. Representatives of the civil sector are generally open and progressive, but to a lesser degree elaborated in relation to most of the other countries observed in this research. As far as citizens are concerned, they show a high level of criticism towards the current political set and the media.

The conclusion resulted from above mentioned is that the civil society in Turkey is confronted with narrowed possibilities of action in the field of reconciliation. Although participants in the focus groups proved to be informed and have knowledge about the topic of Turkish-Armenian relations, research shows that people are swayed by information and knowledge about each other. In this sense, there is a serious space for the work of civil society organizations to contribute primarily to the suppression of prejudices and stereotypes, primarily through education, by using social innovations. One should be aware of a number of serious structural and cultural challenges that undermine the stronger impact of civil society, as well as the intersectoral cooperation related to reconciliation to Turkish society. In such circumstances, civil society organizations working on peace building should establish as closely as possible networks of cooperation and exchange of knowledge and ideas both within Turkey and the Balkans.

Conclusion and recommendations

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH WERE TO DETERMINE THE OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES of representatives of four sectors (public, private, civil, civic) on peace building and the process of reconciliation in seven countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and Turkey). The research began from the general assumption that reconciliation is a positive process developed by society and social institutions.

A varied sample of selected countries for this analysis suggests that it should be extremely complex in nature if it were to seek a common denominator characterized by these countries in the context of reconciliation. However, due to the specificity of the social context of each of them, the length of the conflict or the absence of conflicts, attitudes towards ethnic minorities, the achieved level of democracy and tolerance, the characteristics of the political system, etc. It is not possible nor was it the task of this research.

Common and not so ancient history as well as the state framework, a sort of traditional heritage and connections established among the population can certainly assemble the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia) into the first analytical framework. These are ultimately the countries that were politically or militarily in the 1990s more or less directly involved in deciding on the former common state and the war conflict in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and/or on the territory of their own state. Therefore, the first analytical framework can also be called the framework of post-conflict countries.

Special, another analytical framework certainly deserves Albania (which has not been in the wartime conflict in the recent years and has a very low percentage of recognized national minorities) and Turkey, which, unlike Albania, is a country with a very historical and modern complex situation regarding the relationship with Armenians.

The first research question raised in this research in relation to the nature of the research participants' attitudes towards the process of reconciliation and its progress, we provided answers in the individual reports on each country.

We have presented a number of themes and thematic forms grouped in several parts: conceptualization of peace, national and regional level of reconciliation and their actors, national and regional perspectives of reconciliation, attitude towards civil society, importance of economy and intersectoral cooperation.

The most important conclusions have been drawn based on the observed social levels of research.

- Reconciliation process is affected by the desire to join European integrations and the demands of international institutions regarding the adoption of European standards, recommendations and values related to accession to the EU as a member.
- Legal regulations of all the observed countries (constitutions, laws, strategies, documents) have been adopted and accepted (specificity is stated in the report). However, there is a clear disagreement between legal regulations and the implementation of reconciliation policies, especially when opening the issue of war crimes and processing them, which is rounded by political decisions and interests.
- States have not fully accepted the responsibility for their role in the conflicts, and thus, in the observed societies, there is no national consensus on accountability. The great importance in the process of accepting responsibility is noted by the international community and the Hague Tribunal whose decisions in societies affected by its influence are not accepted.
- Post-conflict state building is far more difficult because it requires a wider reconstruction of political, economic and cultural relations, and from this perspective it can be said that reconciliation is not accepted, but rather that it is a matter of an intermittent process initiated by the state, but not brought to an end, and the result did not achieve mutual trust among ethnic groups.
- In those countries where the continuity of political power is retained in the post-conflict period, the process of reconciliation is most often marked by the nationalist discourse of political elites who want to remain in the positions of power.
- The most important actor of reconciliation is in opposition to society and its understanding of reconciliation. In all analysed countries, respondents believe that the state hinders reconciliation processes in order to protect particular interests (interests of political elites, over-

all state interests, interests of the international community). The behaviour of states and politicians is perceived with a high degree of suspicion and distrust.

Recommendations:

- Strengthening the policy of peace is a general recommendation regarding the political level, given that the state is the most important reconciliation factor in the observed countries. This implies further development of democracy, liberal understanding of human rights, market values, the development of a secular state, and openness towards globalization flows. The development of consolidated democracy would reduce the possibility for the authorities to request solutions for problems with the help of the armed forces in the future, as this would jeopardize the established political and market (economic) relations with other countries.
- The establishment of structural equality and the strengthening of human and civil rights should be accompanied by the establishment or reform of institutions.
- Strengthening and cooperation of the civil sector in the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities should continue to be in the interests of both the states and the international community. This would contribute to the further development of civil society that plays a very important role in the processes of reconciliation.
- States should be interested in providing relevant and open information on all relevant social spheres (economy, politics, and culture) in the context of reconciliation in order to gradually create preconditions for citizens' support.
- Equal interest of the state for all the above sectors should encourage their interdependence and connectivity in order to prevent further conflicts.
- The most important middle-level actors so called "peace-strengtheners" are in the economic, civil and educational and cultural sectors (Serbia, Kosovo, Albania), because the realisation of reconciliation requires broad consensus and support, mutual recognition and appreciation. Individuals who are active in these sectors have a good insight into the social context, as well as power relations at the highest social level.

Given that the economic sector is subject to a specific analysis, the conclusions and recommendations for this level are as follows:

- For post-conflict countries and Albania (the exception is Turkey due to more favourable economic opportunities than other countries observed), the economy is an important factor of reconciliation, which builds and strengthens the links between the formerly conflicted parties.
- In the post-conflict countries of the region (and Albania), the economic sector has been ruined, and due to the transition process many people have lost their jobs. The economic sector is weakened and poorly responsive to cooperation with civil society, although there is awareness that development is linked to the process of reconciliation.
- The members of the economic sector are not recognized as holders of reconciliation neither by the state nor by themselves. Not even civil society has motivated or interested them enough to cooperate. Inter-sector cooperation (public, private, civil sector) is not sufficiently represented. Both sectors, civil and private, are more oriented towards the public sector than on mutual cooperation.
- Social responsibility of the economic sector includes the relation of equality and equal access to (potential) workers, regardless of their ethnic/religious affiliation.
- Regional co-operation is established as a means and objective for improving the reconciliation process. The most important actors are seen in civil society and the economic sector, which would thereby revise their current (client-donor) relationship.
- On social entrepreneurship, respondents in the vast majority are not even informed at all or have minimal knowledge about it.
- Respondents from all countries would join a regional initiative that would bring together different sectors and facilitate reconciliation, but they do not know how this initiative should look like and what should it include. Factors for informing and involving a wide circle of stakeholders in the processes of planning such an initiative as a condition for inclusion in subsequent steps are highlighted in all countries. Because of distrust of institutions in their own country, one such process is expected to be transparent.
- Cultural cooperation in the countries of the region is considered extremely significant.
- The media, as part of the cultural sector, are heavily influenced by politics and are blamed in the post-conflict countries for disseminating negative information or for avoiding the treatment of the topic of peace and reconciliation.

- The education factor has been recognized as one of the key in the processes of reconciliation. Although respondents are not satisfied with the current education system, nor the matter of reconciliation and history transmitted to students, the idea is that education is a factor that has the greatest power in reducing ethnic prejudices.

Recommendations:

- Locating and creating networks of cooperation with quality organizations that are widely recognized as credible and expert in the field of peace building and reconciliation
- Locating quality individuals from small and medium-sized enterprises that would be willing to cooperate
- Encouraging local networking of small and medium-sized enterprises through innovative approaches to expand their social impact
- Raising awareness (information and education, thematic discussions) of small and medium-sized entrepreneurship about their role in establishing reconciliation and the fact that in specific environments profit is not the only framework of their actions.
- Educate entrepreneurs and members of civil society organizations on new forms of entrepreneurship (e.g. social entrepreneurship and its role in the community)
- Encouraging regional cooperation among economic entities (exchange of knowledge and experiences).
- Informing about the importance and enhancing the recognition of the role of the private sector in the process of reconciliation.
- Motivating and educating entrepreneurs on the possibilities of cooperation with the civil sector
- Encouraging cultural events and exchanges
- Conducting research on the contamination of textbooks with national stereotypes and prejudices
- Inclusion of students in non-formal education in the organization of civil society.
- Encouraging the education of journalists on the work of civil society and on the theme of reconciliation

Strengthening structural elements is not a sufficient condition for reconciliation to take place and prevent new conflicts. Researches suggest the necessity of facilitating a psychological process that supports peace and/or building social beliefs that are contrary to those that have led to the conflict. The individual or individual (citizens) attitudes at analysis-level on reconciliation revealed the following:

- The respondents' conceptualization of reconciliation confirmed previously stated theoretical insights on the existence of different value forms and personal perspectives of respondents inseparable from their individual and collective identities and cultures to which they belong.
- Notions such as justice, fairness, truth, and forgiveness that appear in the conceptualization of reconciliation are necessary to establish restorative justice in which the emphasis is on the victim's side, given that the citizens are not satisfied with the way courts work and feel their work has not contributed the justice to be served. The International Court of Justice in Hague is considered a political tribunal under the influence of policy which implemented selective trials.
- Citizens emphasize that individual perpetrators of crime should be punished and individualized guilt (achieving retributive justice) so that they would not be the owners of collective guilt.
- Learning about the past and the adoption of collective, national myths is largely adopted at a family level that is difficult to influence.
- It is noticeable generational polarization of citizens who, in the process of peace building, are benefiting young generations. In all countries, young people are mentioned as an important social group. Likewise, there is no consensus on whether young people are more open or not, but the idea is, that they should be the leaders of a stronger interconnectivity and a process of reconciliation as such.
- Reliance on old national myths and rhetoric leaves no room for individuals to build confidence towards other ethnicities.
- Citizens of post-conflict countries are interested in increasing the quality of life for which they consider to be significantly improved if there is regional cooperation (including border opening and population mobility)

Recommendations:

- Education and stereotypes & prejudices awareness of citizens with similar socioeconomic status and cultural capital; awareness of self-criticism and objectivity in assessing behaviour during conflict

- Impact on reducing feelings of fear, hatred or revenge directed towards psychosocial programs
- Encouraging cultural and youth exchanges
- Encourage the participation of citizens (especially young people) in civil society organizations
- Creating new symbols that will connect and reinforce social trust
- The second research objective was to obtain information on how respondents evaluate and perceive the role of civil society in the process of reconciliation and peace building.

In each country, there is a positive discourse on civil society in the process of reconciliation, but also the different intensities of negative attitudes about the purpose and the manner of work of civil society organizations. Negative discourse on civil society is not monolithic. Although questioned about the role of civil society in reconciliation, the theme has often moved to fundamental issues of civil society i.e. civil society organizations did not talk about the process of reconciliation, but criticized civil society itself. The critics pointed to the work of the civil society can, and need not, have an impact on its role in the reconciliation process, but not being shown herein.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen internal professional capacities (improving knowledge about the importance of peace building)
- Specialize human resources to deal with reconciliation
- Consolidation of similar organizations into thematic networks and platforms (greater visibility and efficiency in program implementation)
- Networking and collaborating exclusively with quality, civil organizations at the local level
- Use technologically innovative ways to communicate with target groups, especially young people
- Establish programmatic and strategic communication (targeted) towards all sectors presented until now (political, economic, cultural)
- Ensure transparent reporting to the public about achievements in the field of reconciliation through the media, and if not applicable, find innovative ways of promoting their own activities (social networks,

public events and activities). Include different sectors in promoting their work

- Focus programs on young people (intercultural learning and networking), but also to other generations
- Permanently work with citizens to interested them in the work of civil society and expand the base of action
- Ensure continuing dealing with the topic of reconciliation, and not only the project-like inclusion of young people, volunteers, etc.
- Recommendations for programs directed towards the economic sector:
- Strengthen the internal capacities of civil society organizations with professional individuals
- Launch programs in cooperation with quality individuals and companies with a reputation in the community
- Networking regionally with strong civil society organizations having enough capacities to carry out the programs
- Use professional potentials in the economic sector to understand how this sector works to ensure efficient and clear communication and understandability
- In the approach to the private sector, explain and educate the importance of their action in the community from the peace point of view
- Educate entrepreneurs about new forms of entrepreneurship that are benefiting from the social inclusion of discriminated groups even if there is no legal regulation
- Local networking of businesses, taking into account that they are by their basic characteristics of “equal rank”
- Highlight to potential partners clearly and openly the advantages and disadvantages of joining the regional linking programs
- Use new technologies (web site, social networks, applications) so that the work in relation to programs is transparent and open to the public.

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Contributions

Focus Group Questions

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS – *public sector*

1. What is the meaning of the term reconciliation from your perspective?
 - a. Do you have the impression that reconciliation is generally accepted in your society?
 - b. How would you assess the achieved level of reconciliation in the region?
2. What institutions, individuals and events were the most influential in achieving this level? (*comment for moderator – special attention should be paid to recent events such as refugee crisis and economic crisis as drivers of reconciliation process*)
 - a. In what way? (*comment for moderator – let participants explain how is it positive or negative influence*)
3. What, according to you, has to be undertaken to improve the process of reconciliation at the national level?
 - a. And regional level?
4. How is the reconciliation process related to the economic sector in your society?
 - a. Did the process of reconciliation reflect on your business? In what way?
5. What do you think of the role that civil society organizations had in process of reconciliation?
6. Have you been cooperating with civil society organizations as part of your business activities?
 - a. If no, have you thought about cooperation with CSOs?
 - b. If yes, how did you cooperate?
 - c. If yes, what were the factors that influenced your decision to cooperate with CSOs?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS – *public sector*

7. If there was an organized cooperation among different sectors (public, private and civil) on a regional level that would help your products/services be competitive, would you be interested to be part of that cross-sectoral cooperation?

a. Please, describe your idea of this type of organized multi-sectoral cooperation.

8. Are you familiar with the idea of social entrepreneurship?

a. What do you think of social entrepreneurship?

9. Is there anything that you feel it should be added to the topic of reconciliation process and its relation to business sector?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS – *civil society*

1. What is the meaning of the term reconciliation from your perspective?

a. Do you have the impression that reconciliation is generally accepted in your society?

b. How would you assess the achieved level of reconciliation in the region?

2. What institutions, individuals and events were the most influential in achieving this level? (*comment for moderator – special attention should be paid to recent events such as refugee crisis and economic crisis as drivers of reconciliation process*)

3. In what way? (*comment for moderator – let participants explain how is it positive or negative influence*)

4. How would you describe the role of CSOs in the reconciliation process in your society?

a. what are the greatest obstacles for better/greater influence of the civil sector in the reconciliation process?

5. Could you describe regional cooperation between civil society organization on reconciliation?

a. What did it influence that the cooperation looks like that?

6. What would be the next steps to enhance the reconciliation process at national level?

a. and the regional level?

7. Are CSOs familiar with the idea of social entrepreneurship? Do they practice it? Please explain.

8. Is there anything that you feel it should be added to the topic of reconciliation process and its relation to civil society sector?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS – public administration

1. What is the meaning of the term reconciliation from your perspective?
2. Do you have the impression that reconciliation is generally accepted in your society?
 - a. What are the factors that influence achieved level of reconciliation? (*comment for moderator – special attention should be paid to recent events such as refugee crisis and economic crisis as drivers of reconciliation process*)
 - b. Please specify what are the biggest obstacles in process of reconciliation?
 - c. Besides state institutions, who or what is the carrier of reconciliation process? (*comment for facilitator – educational system, CSO, religion institutions, economic sector*)
 - d. How would you assess the achieved level of reconciliation in the region?
3. What, according to you, has to be undertaken to improve the process of reconciliation at the national level?
 - a. And regional level?
4. What do you think of the role that civil society organizations had in process of reconciliation in your society?
 - a. On regional level?
5. Have you been cooperating with civil society organizations as part of your regular professional activities?
 - a. If no, have you thought about cooperation with CSOs?
 - b. If yes, how did you cooperate?
 - c. If yes, what were the factors that influenced your decision to cooperate with CSOs?
6. What do you think about cooperation of various sectors (business, civil society, public sector) in reconciliation process in your society?
 - a. Are you familiar with any of that kind of cooperation in your country?
7. Do formal politics support institutional cooperation of different sectors (business, civil sector, public sector) with the aim of working on process of reconciliation?
 - a. Is that type of cross-sectoral cooperation followed by formal documents (strategies, recommendations, directives etc)? If yes, please tell us more.
 - b. Do you see any obstacles to such cross-sectoral cooperation? What would it be? Explain it please.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS - citizens

1. What is the meaning of the term reconciliation from your perspective?
 - a. Do you have the impression that reconciliation is generally accepted in your society?
 - b. What aggravates the acceptance of reconciliation the most?
 - c. How would you assess the achieved level of reconciliation in the region?
2. What institutions, individuals and events were the most influential in achieving this level? (*comment for moderator – special attention should be paid to recent events such as refugee crisis and economic crisis as drivers of reconciliation process*)
 - a. In what way? (*comment for moderator – let participants explain how is it positive or negative influence*)
3. What, according to you, has to be undertaken to improve the process of reconciliation at the national level?
 - a. And on a regional level?
4. How did the process of reconciliation reflect in the economic situation in your society?
 - a. Can economic sector contribute to the process of reconciliation and how?
5. What do you think of the role that civil society organizations had in process of reconciliation in your society?
 - a. On a regional level?
6. Was there any cooperation of different social sectors (economic, civil, public) that were working on reconciliation process in your society?
 - a. If yes, how do you assess it?
 - b. Which social sector (civil, public, business) has the most important role in reconciliation process?
7. If there was an organized cooperation of different social sectors (civil, public and private) on a regional level that would work of process of reconciliation would you support it? What do you think about this initiative?
8. Is there anything that you feel it should be added to the topic of reconciliation process in our country?

Sample structure

	Sector	Geografic area	Gender	Age	Educational level	Socioprofessional status	Settlement size	Nationality	Religion
Albania (N=44)	P (13) CD (10) J (4) G (17)	GG (26) PP (18)	M (22) Ž (22)	1 (10) 2 (11) 3 (9) 4 (9) 5 (2)	OŠ SŠ (9) VŠŠ (22) VSS (13) DR	Z (35) N (3) S (1) U (4)	1 2 (12) 3 (8) 4 5 (24)	A (31) G (12)	I (8) PK (16) KK (1) AT (6) K (5)
Bosnia and Herzegovina (N=49)	P (12) CD (16) J (8) G (13)	GG (32) PP (17)	M (28) Ž (21)	1 (3) 2 (20) 3 (13) 4 (9) 5 (4)	OŠ SŠ (3) VŠŠ (7) VSS (39) DR (0)	Z (36) N (7) S (4) U (2)	1 (1) 2 (2) 3 (18) 4 (2) 5 (24)	B (17) H (6) S (11) C (1) BiH (6) DR (2)	I (19) KK (4) PK (9) AT (11)
Montenegro (N=42)	P (12) CD (15) J (5) G (11)	GG (24) PP (18)	M (22) Ž (20)	1 (3) 2 (15) 3 (11) 4 (10) 5 (3)	OŠ SŠ (10) VŠŠ (4) VSS (27) DR	Z (37) N (2) S (1) U (2)	1 (2) 2 (19) 3 (17) 4 (3) 5	C (17) B (15) A (4) S (1) DR (2)	PK (12) I (23) AT (4)
Kosovo (N=53)	P (14) CD (15) J (8) G (16)	GG (30) PP (22)	M (24) Ž (29)	1 (9) 2 (11) 3 (6) 4 (11) 5 (2)	OŠ SŠ (7) VŠŠ (19) VSS (24) DR (3)	Z (39) N (6) S (4) U (2)	1 2 (13) 3 (16) 4 (9) 5 (15)	A (22) K (6) S (22) M (1)	I (22) PK (22) KK (1) AT (1)
Macedonia (N=52)	P (15) CD (14) J (8) G (15)	GG (30) PP (22)	M (35) Ž (17)	1 (16) 2 (16) 3 (11) 4 (8) 5 (1)	OŠ SŠ (14) VŠŠ (4) VSS (29) DR (5)	Z (34) N (4) S (14) U	1 (1) 2 (4) 3 (24) 4 (4) 5 (19)	M (40) A (9) V (1) S (1)	I (9) PK (20) AT (5) K (15)
Serbia (N=37)	P (10) CD (11) J (5) G (11)	GG (22) PP (15)	M (15) Ž (22)	1 (1) 2 (18) 3 (7) 4 (9) 5 (2)	OŠ SŠ (11) VŠŠ (2) VSS (24) DR	Z (31) N (4) S (1) U (1)	1 2 3 (1) 4 (13) 5 (22)	S (22) B (12) A (1)	I (13) PK (18)
Turkey (N=31)	P (7) CD (8) J (3) G (13)		M (14) Ž (15)	1 (8) 2 (12) 3 (5) 4 (2) 5 (1)	OŠ (1) SŠ (5) VŠŠ VSS (21) DR (3)	Z (19) N (3) S (6) U	1 2 3 4 5 (30)	T (17) AR (9) DR (1)	I (3) AT (5) K (6) DR (3)

1. *Abbreviations for: sector - P (private), CD (civil society), J (public), G (citizens); Gender - M (male), Ž (Female); educational level - OŠ (primary school completed), SŠ (high school completed), VŠS (higher school completed), VSS (tertiary education completed/faculty), DR (PhD completed); socioprofessional status - Z (employed), N (unemployed), S (student), U (retired); settlement size - 1 (<2000 inhabitants), 2 (2000 do 10 000 inhabitants), 3 (10 000 do 100 000 inhabitants), 4 (100 000 do 250 000 inhabitants), 5 (more than 250 000 inhabitants); nationality - A (Albanian), AR (Armenian), B (Bosniaks), C (Montenegrin), K (Kosovar), S (Serbs), T (Turks), V (Vlach), BiH (Bosnian); DR (other); religion - I (Islam), PK (Orthodox), KK (Catholic), K (Christian), AT (Atheist/agnostic)

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316.4
327(497+560)

ADAMOVIĆ, Mirjana

Process of Reconciliation in the Western Balkans and Turkey : A
Qualitative Study [Elektronski izvor] / Mirjana Adamović, Anja
Gvozdanić, Marko Kovačić ; [Translator Zorica Škoflek]. - Banja Luka
: Compex ; Zagreb : Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, 2017

Način pristupa (URL): http://jointfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Proces-of-Reconciliation_Study.pdf. - Na
nasl. str.: Divided Past - Joint Future. - Napomene i bibliografske
reference uz tekst.

ISBN 978-99955-621-8-2 (Compex)(pdf)

ISBN 978-99955-621-7-5 (Compex)(pbk)

ISBN 978-953-6218-77-6 (Institute for Social Research in Zagreb)(pdf)

ISBN 978-953-6218-75-2 (Institute for Social Research in Zagreb)(pbk)

1. Gvozdanić, Anja [аутор] 2. Kovačić, Marko [аутор]

COBISS.RS-ID 7016728



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