**United Against Racism Conference**

**LIVING TOGETHER: Transform a Divided Past into Our Common Future**

**26-31 October 2016 in Struga, Macedonia**

**Aim and structure of the conference**

The second UNITED conference in 2016 took place in Macedonia with around 75 participants representing civil society organisations from over 25 European countries. The conference focused on national reconciliation processes, the role of civil society actors within them and which concrete measures conflicting groups can take to overcome past abuses. The conference provided added value through presentations by and discussions with experts working on reconciliation in Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cyprus. Participants were invited to draft a guide on the different steps of the reconciliation process and met local NGOs working on reconciliation.

**Plenary sessions**

**OSCE** [**Hate Crime Reporting**](http://www.osce.org/odihr/datacollectionguide) **Mechanism**

* Overall aim: recording cases, highlighting trends, providing expertise, trainings and tools
* Underreporting of hate crimes (shame + denial, lack of recognition, etc.) and under recording of hate crimes
* ODIHR hate crime data collection – questionnaire send to contact points in member states, data from civil society also included in data base
* Trainings with law-makers, prosecutors, police officials – peer to peer approach
* Trainings of CS actors on hate crimes – improving reporting, advocacy
* Hate crime reporting website: [hatecrime.osce.org](http://hatecrime.osce.org/) – new data available on 16.11.2016
* OSCE database strictly focuses on hate crime, not recording cases of hate speech
* Less reporting on cases targeting Roma, Muslims – amount of reporting also depends on organisational degree of communities
* Supporting the implementation of victimisation surveys to reveal the scale of unreported hate crime
* Differences between data reporting from state to state covered in gaps report

**Linking the reconciliation process to our local reality**

Crucial role of education:

* School lessons divided by ethnicity pose a challenge to reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina
* History is carried on through families – need to enable children to critically analyse sources themselves and have an understanding of the basic facts of the history of conflicts
* Need for reforms of the education sector (e.g. no classes in Macedonia on the history from 1991 onwards)
* However, reconciliation remains a life-long task and continuous learning process while working on it

Actors in reconciliation

* Educational institutions (schools, NGOs, authorities), families and the media as the most important actors
* Best practice of NGO involvement from Macedonia: Creating safe and attractive space for exchange and trust-building among citizens
* The involvement of political actors and governments is perceived as a contested issue by all speakers
* It is key to avoid simplified grouping and to recognise heterogeneity within ethnic/religious groups

**Workshops**

**Useful tools in reconciliation work: Dilemma Action**

**Two examples of successful dilemma actions**

1. Dreamer movement – undocumented youth movement in the US

* Marches to make invisible migrants visible
* Followed by Civil disobedience: Blood donation of undocumented – invisible minorities – in front of the Capitol building

-> If police removes them: public disagrees, since blood is needed, police will be blamed

-> if police doesn’t intervene: migrants share their blood, make a visible contribution

2. Two-tailed dog party campaign in Hungary

* Question before the referendum: To vote or not vote? absence would support government -> vote invalid
* To motivate people for an invalid vote, the party used the reversed fear logic, using similar posters as the government in a crowd-founded campaign, filling the frame with nonsense, e.g. ‘did you know that 42 people died through bear attacks in 1652?’ – could not be removed by government
* Whistling during Orban speech – whistlers beaten up by Orban supporters -> public opinion in support of whistlers - peaceful vs violent protest

Checklist for dilemma action

* Very well prepared team and long planning process to ensure positive public opinion
* Key to run risk assessment beforehand and to clearly inform participants about the risks
* Never ask for permission and ensure legal advice
* Ensure media coverage
* Surprise element, small groups, protected communication, not being predictable as answer to police oppression
* Using art as a weapon and communicating with humour (to communicate on a meta-level), ridiculing
* Be interesting, the worse the better it might be

**Working Manually - creating a reconciliation manual**

* Research – Main steps in the research process with a focus on ethics in research for reconciliation and how to support common ground for conflicting parties with evidence
* Building up relations – How to ensure trust between actors and convince schools, artists and European Networks to join
* Education – Ideas on how to address children, youth and adults through formal and non-formal education
* Selling it to the public – How to convince people of the value of peace and encounter actors that promote conflict
* Justice – Focus on education on justice to increase understanding of the judicial process among citizens to foster their involvement

**Further Actions by UNITED**

* 10th December Human Rights Day: [Human Rights Superheroes campaign](http://dayagainstfascism.eu/) (ENAR will share campaign and might participate with an own profile)
* 21 March - European Action Week Against Racism
* 20 June - International Refugee Day (#LifeSeekers, a [Europe-wide international campaign](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/campaigns/annual-campaigns/international-refugee-day-20-june/lifeseekers/) to challenge the narrative on migration in Europe)

No concrete campaign content or specific actions were developed during the conference.

**NB:** Banu Cennetoglu, an independent artist from Istanbul, has over the past 10 years worked to make [UNITED's List of Deaths](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/campaigns/refugee-campaign/working-with-the-list-of-deaths/) visible to the public. See the campaign [here](http://list-e.info/en/list-about.php).

**Conclusions**

The conference was enriching, first of all due to the exchange with activists from all over Europe and due to the insights into other organisations, challenges and priorities. Secondly, the choice of Struga in Macedonia did fit well to the frame of the conference. The input from Macedonian NGOs and the visit of local NGOs in Struga provided an understating of what reconciliation work means in practice. Without doubt that reconciliation remains an important task for civil society actors in Europe and that learning about reconciliation in different countries was interesting, the conference was detached from the current political developments in Europe and challenges that anti-racist organisations face. There was a missing link between the work done at the conference and the work that needs to be done to encounter the rising incidents of hate crime and speech, the increasing support for far right parties and policies that limit the space for civil society organisations. Future conferences should be more in line with pressing issues that need a coordinated response by European civil society.

During the conference, it has also become evident that participants need to reflect on how their use of language has hurt other participants. The conference was a reminder that reflecting stereotypes, the use of language and own privileges is a continuous task that has to be taken seriously by members of UNITED. In particular, in regard to the diverse backgrounds of participants and varying levels of awareness, future conferences might address topics such as critical whiteness, post-colonial theories and the mechanisms behind and impacts of stereotypes.