Multiculturalism in a (Post)Crisological Society: From Wrong Acception to a New Pluralistic Sociey-Building Approach

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Abstract
In the last few decades, multiculturalism, in Western countries, and in Macedonia since 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement, has been frequently used in theoretical and public debates in the field of cultural policies in terms of whether there should be a stratification of cultures (dominant and secondary) or cultural relativism (every culture is important and deserves equal treatment). This paper, which comprises of a descriptive-analytical and empirical-quantitative part, aims at producing an objective overview of the perceptions of citizens of Kumanovo in relation to plural identities in this town, to the relations with the others, the otherness, communication, mutual trust, socio-economic conditions, the impact of indicators such as the media, politicians, education, family, etc., upon the ethnical cohabitation-frustration.The results of our field research (surveys, interviews) show that it is necessary to invest a lot more in building cultural bridges, in making citizens with liberal approach and tolerant life philosophy, which would help in having a more active cohabitation and minimization of the current static coexistence of the type one next to the other as well as prevention of the establishment of concentric circles based on ethnicity and/or religiosity and their replacement with active multiculturalism.

Keywords: *post-conflictual context, multiculturalism, diversity, interculturalist thelos, Macedonia, Kumanovo*

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Multiculturalism: Theoretical Approach

Among the most frequently used expressions-syntagms in today's postmodern societies are those referring to interculturalism, multiculturalism, recognition policies, diversity, understanding "the other", varieties, etc. Multiculturalism, in fact, is a type of public policy, which refers to cultural diversity in multiethnic societies, namely ways how diversities should be treated, managed in the society and the country, i.e. in the political and social context. It is a notion, which can be related to cultural relativism versus cultural absolutism or domination of a single cultural, ethnic or religious element – a reality which is very problematic in establishing a functional society (Pajaziti, 2009: 431-432).

Today, in almost every democratic country or in those in the process of democratization, including our country as well, there have been debates about whether and how public institutions should recognize the identities of different communities and groups (Тејлор, 2004: 3). The issue of multiculturalism, which originates from the western social and political anthropology, primarily from the Anglo-American, is a problem of communication among different cultures, ethnicities and religions. Multiculturalism favors diversities by emphasizing the need for tolerance and uniqueness of groups, which ask for identity and protection within a *tolerant and rational society*. This actually means recognition of equal value of all cultures, not only by letting them survive, but rather stress their meaning. In other words, all cultures should be at the same level without any of them being excluded or marginalized. Multiculturalism is in fact against dominant cultures establishing their hegemony over the demographically smaller groups and imposing on them the feeling of inferiority (Тејлор, 59). In sociological literature, one of the definitions of multiculturalism is the following: "A policy with which public relations among different cultures in a given society are regulated, including the way of usage of languages and symbols."According to Prelić, multiculturalism is a synonym for the processes of hybridization of cultures and identities in the modern globalized world, where cultures are in permanent contact and interaction (Prelić, 2012:139-149).

The topic on multiculturalism represents an important part of political programs across the globe and impacts the encouragement of revision of public policies with the aim of finding a modus, which is the most appropriate for meeting the requests of different groups and identities. The well-known world scholar, Charles Taylor, says that multiculturalism is a policy of recognition, an antipode of rejection or wrong acceptance, which can be very dangerous for the society; they can involve ways of humiliation and isolate man in a false, deformed and reduced form of existence. Since most people tend to get tied to their own culture, the thesis of multicultural countries implies the idea that specific cultural-ethnical communities should enjoy their rights, whereas the institutionalization of those rights is the best way to achieve the *thelos* and completeness in every society.

Multiculturalism is a project, which in essence deals with the inclusion of citizens with different cultural backgrounds in the society and tries to eliminate the power of domination of one group over the other. Multiculturalism aims at termination or at least enervation of the exclusion mechanism, namely enforcement of the inclusion mechanism.

According to Kymlicka, the state is multicultural if its members belong to different nations (multinational state) or migrated from different nations and if this fact represents an important element of personal identity and political life (Kymlicka, 2001). However, in our opinion, if a society is a cultural mosaic,it does not mean that it is also multicultural, because the most important components of the real multiculturalism are

acceptance, closeness, and active communication with the others, not living by each other, which unfortunately is the case with our country. Ethnically inhabited neighborhoods and municipalities, which have been largely encouraged and built in recent years, speak about destructive policies and the climate, which is their result. This spirit of division in our country can be felt in many spheres of social life, including education. In the post-Ohrid educational system, primary and secondary school instruction is realized in the mother tongue of respective communities, which areadequately represented and not being able to learn the language of the other, creates linguistic barriers in the youth, and this very fact "divides" them instead of bringing them together.

Kumanovo: An Intercultural depiction

Republic of Macedonia represents a historic, political, economic and cultural reality in the Balkans. It is a part of this geographic region and distinguished for its ethnical and cultural diversity. Some authors have characterized it as the epicenter or the heart of the Balkans (Davutoglu, 2010). The territory of Macedonia has always been part of great empires and civilizations. The end of the "2001 conflict" resulted in a new social agreement with the help of the mediation by the international community, which was signed on August 13, 2001. Its main objective was to establish peace and a new framework for the improvement of relations between entities, which cohabitate in the Republic of Macedonia. It was a project of building inlclusive, cohesive, intercultural society and political entity (state).

Kumanovo, a town in the north-eastern part of the country, at an altitude of 340 meters, is located on the crossroads of the two most important corridors in our country (Corridors 8 and 10), and only 40km away from the capital city – Skopje. Kumanovo is the largest municipality in Macedonia, with 509.48 km^2. In terms of the demographic composition of the area, we can say that it has quite a dynamic development of the population, which is a very important element for the development of this part of the country. The natural-geographic peculiarities have been the main factors for the population of this area since prehistoric times, proven by many findings from that period. The settlement of Slavs in the Balkans in the 6th century changed the composition of the population, whereas the intrusion of Turks in the 14th century and their five-century indwelling highly influenced the structure of the population.

The first facts on the inhabited Kumanovo area date back to 1519, whereas the source of the data comes from the archives in Istanbul, Turkey. At the beginning, this area was inhabited by 52 families and 300 people. The most detailed information derives from Evlija Chelebija, who had travelled across this region and had noticed the following: "The inhabited area of Kumanovo is situated within the territory of the Skopje sanjak. The town has a lot of rivers and about 600 houses covered in roof tiles. The mosque, which is situated in the market area, is beautiful and has a school (madrasah), hamam, and a trade center, whereas the climate in the town is mild. There are a lot of vine fields and orchards with many different types of fruit."

Kumanovo became an urban area with an administrative center in the late 16th century or the beginning of the 17th century. After the Karposhian Uprising in 1689, Kumanovo entered a period of stagnation and remained a Turkish kasaba (small town) until the end of the 18th century. By the end of the 19th century, the town experienced economic upswing (in agriculture, artisanship, trade), but did not undergo any significant industrial development until the end of World War Two. After 1945, Kumanovo experienced a rapid economic, administrative and cultural development, which deflated

in the period after the fall of communism, i.e. during the two and a half decades of transition, when many people left their households in search of better living and working conditions abroad, including Afghanistan. Today's borders of the municipality of Kumanovo have been defined by the new territorial division of the country arranged in August 2004. The structure of the population in the municipality of Kumanovo is heterogeneous not only in the town itself but also in rural areas, where citizens of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds reside. According to the 2002 census, the number of inhabitants in Kumanovo is 105.484. 63,746 are Macedonians, 27,290 – Albanians, 292 – Turks, 4,256 – Roma, 147 – Wlachos, 9,062 – Serbs, 20 – Bosniaks and 671 – other. (stat.gov.mk, 2005: 35) According to these data, we can say that Kumanovo represents a real natural multiethnic environment, i.e. "Macedonia in miniature". Kumanovo is a town with a long multicultural tradition, which is still being nurtured. There is a special kind of intercultural relations, respect and cohabitation. Since education is the main component, which influences the building and preservation of authentic differences and the spirit of plurality, in the last few years, especially after the OFA, with the support of international organizations, there have been organized many cultural events, whose main objective is the preservation and further affirmation of this active multiculturalism.

One of those events is the Street Festival, which has been held since 2008 – a peace building action in a post-conflict area such as Kumanovo, and whose aim is to bring together Macedonian, Albanian and Serbian youngsters in the town square for a common intra-national and intercultural music experience. In 2011, this event was called "Plug-in Diversity", supported by UNDP, as part of the common program "Enhancing the interethnic dialogue and communication among communities". This aim of this project was to unite youngsters and make them part in the establishment of an inclusive and tolerant society through music and arts. All of this was done through the exchange and merge of ideas of young people and local authorities in order to increase the multiethnic awareness in the cultural life in Kumanovo. Within the framework of the project, a video-competition "Media for diversity", which promoted education in the languages of communities, was also organized. In 2010, in Kumanovo the *Multi-culti youth center* supported by UNICEF, was officially opened in Kumanovo; it was one of the three centers opened in ethnically mixed communities in the country. Through youth programs and extra-curricular activities, the *Multi-culti youth center* offers additional opportunities for socialization and familiarization with others outside their ethnic groups. These activities include after-school projects, leadership, photography, journalism, animation, film and English language courses, as well as many other activities designed to promote tolerance and better communication among the youngsters in Kumanovo.

In 2013, the Center for Intercultural Dialogue and the Committee for relations among communities, took part in the project "A model of active citizenship in a multicultural society", realized by USAID. The project supported by Open Society Foundationundertook an initiative for creating a local printed medium in six languages, through which the citizens of Kumanovo would be informed about local events. The motto "It needs to be said, citizen of Kumanovo" was promoted in this project. It is very important to point out that cohabitation and multicultural approach in the Kumanovo context are dynamic phenomena and after the event of May 9, 2015 (police action in which an armed group in one of the neighborhoods of Kumanovo was neutralised) when aggravation of interethnic relations was expected, many citizens and representatives of local authorities gathered together to call for coldness and reason at those very critical

moments. The case of the reasonable citizen, Avdi Avdiu, who appeared on the mediaand gained a lot of support, is the best example for this. A similar message was delivered by the mayor of Kumanovo, Damjanovski, who said that Kumanovo is known for its interethnic tolerance and multiculturalism, which should be further nurtured and promoted. Another very impressive example for building cohabitation, was the recent collective 'Iftar' on July 5, 2015, during the month of Ramadan, which went beyond religious and national boundaries, even though it is an Islamic ritual. The Islamic Youth Forum in Kumanovo organized the 8th joint dinner – Iftar in the town square, in which more than 1,000 Muslim and Christian believers took part.

Field research: Analysis and interpretation of quantitative results:

In this study there were more research methods and the most significant part is the empirical one, which has to provide a study picture about the perceptions of the citizens of Kumanovo in relation to the different reflections of multiculturalism policies in this town. The empirical part of this study is based on a survey consisting of 25 questions carried out in April 2015 with 310 respondents, divided according to different indicators, such as sex, age, ethnic background, education, etc. The main hypothesis was the conclusion that even after the formal steps for the implementation of multicultural policies through the OFA, entities that gravitate to the municipality of Kumanovo live in *parallel worlds* and have psychological and practical barriers in terms of their relations with the members of other different communities in their everyday lives. The auxiliary hypothesis says that the ethnic element is closely related to the religious one and this produces a dichotomy of the type Macedonian-Serb orthodox and Albanian-Turk Muslim. The analysis begins with the categorization of the sample by age, whereupon we wanted to detect the differences in perception among generations. If we take into consideration the above-mentioned indicator, we will see that 65% of respondents belong to the young generation, i.e. the perspective, the future and the most creative part of a society, although other age groups have been represented as well. This means that the stances, which are part of this analysis, have the capacity to reflect those of the population living in Kumanovo. The ethnic code in our society is a very important factor and denominator of interpersonal and inter-group relations. The sample of this research has been constructed in that way to correspond to the demographic picture of the municipality of Kumanovo. According to the ethnic background, half of the respondents were ethnic-Macedonian (51%), 35% Albanians, 7% Serbs, 2% Turks, 2% Bosnians, 1% Roma and 2% of the respondents did not state their ethnic identity at all. According to the religious background, most of the respondents were orthodox Christians and Muslims, whereas an insignificant portion belongs to other religions such as Catholics, and other religions and sects.

As an important indicator of every social trend is the level of education of the individual or the group. Most of the respondents in this study had university education (54.8%), a third (34.2%) were with completed secondary education, 4.2% were with completed primary education, 0.5% were without any official educational degree, 0.5% did not respond and 5.8% had academic titles. This element of the level of education of the respondents was considered significant because the higher the educational level is, the more open-minded the person may become which in turn makes them more tolerant and positive. Religion in recent years has become quite and incumbent element of modern societies. Sociologists speak about the revitalization of spiritual values, for the revival of one's own after the deep crisis in which modern society has fallen. This is also reflected in our society in which all social entitiesfrom the masses to political leadership very often

utilize religious symbols. State religious holidays, public service congregations, and ceremonialopenings of secular institutions with the presence of priests, the construction of religious buildings by the state (St. Elena and Constantine), debates on religious education (*pro* et *contra*), the three international conferences on inter-religious dialogue (Ohrid and Skopje), debates on religious extremism, Wahabism, youngsters who go to fight in Syria and Iraq, pompous Ramadan iftars sponsored by politicians, etc. are all reflections of the religious expansion in the 25 yearsof the long-lasting transition of our country. Republic of Macedonia represents a religious mosaic and even though religiosity is something which is intimate to people, it can often be manifested in social relations. The fifth question was aimed at the quantitative categorization of religiosity among the citizens of Kumanovo. The overall picture is that they consider themselves to be believers (81%); atheism is a very minor category represented with only 4% of the population and 10% are strong believers, closely related to spirituality. In our society "strong religiosity" has sometimes been trivialized through the absurd competition of construction of huge religious symbols, such as the 71-meter tall Millennium Cross, 53-meter tall cross in front of the towers in Aerodrom, the 75-meter tall minaret of the mosque in Arachinovo, etc. Since the beginning of the transition period, Macedonia has mainly lived in peace and cohabitation, though from time to time there have also been tense situations in terms of interethnic relations between the two largest entities in Macedonia, i.e. Macedonians and Albanians.

Even though cohabitation is formally present in the public discourse and programs of political parties, the social reality provides a completely different empirical picture. Figures from our research reveal that 53% of citizens of Kumanovo consider interethnic relations as unsatisfactory, bad or even terrible. If we take into consideration that field research was carried out before the Case of Kumanovo (police action on May 9, 2015), the negative trend would probably show greater percentages, which is an alarming signal for the whole society, especially elites, which are responsible for building a stable multicultural society. Based on the informal conversations with citizens during the realization of this study, we concluded that division and gravitation to respective ethnic groups is present almost everywhere, such as neighborhoods, cafés, bars, playgrounds, etc.

Figure 1. How would you evaluate interethnic relations in Macedonia?
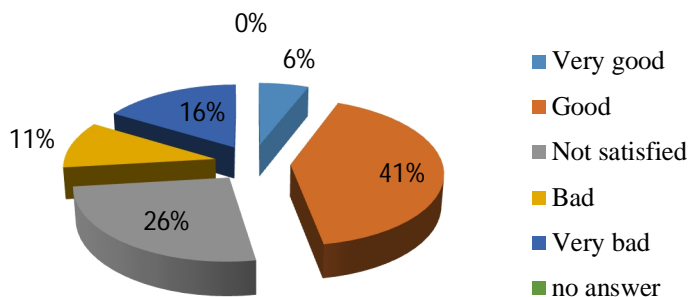
Source: Authors' own compilation

The division, especially on ethnic grounds is present in the perception of ethnic situations in Macedonia in general. Macedonians have a much more positive attitude towards current interethnic relations - in Macedonia - than Albanians, who are quite doubtful about the current situation and the future of this country. 65% of Macedonian respondents said that interethnic relations are good and 10% said they were very good, whereas the picture in the Albanian block is much different. Compared to 1% Macedonians who consider the situation as very bad, this number in the Albanian population is drastically larger – 39%. 81% of Albanian ethnic group () considers that interethnic relations are negative. When it comes to smaller communities, the data analysis shows that dissatisfaction is also present in these groups. 45% of the Serb respondents consider that the trend in terms of the improvement of interethnic relations is unsatisfactory. Apart from only one Turkish respondent, all other representatives of smaller communities (seven out of eight Turks, Bosnians and Roma) have a negative attitude towards this question.

Egalitarian societies represent a type of socio-utopia. Stratification is an omnipresent phenomenon globally, but in democratic societies the socialelevator is active, horizontal and vertical mobility is functional.

The tenth question *(Put the following in the order from 1 to 6 (1-the most acceptable, 6-the least acceptable) depending on who you think should be the Prime Minister of Macedonia)* of our questionnaire targeted the measurement of the perceptions in relation to a very important state position, such as that of the prime minister, which has traditionally been considered as "reserved", which seems quite absurd for open liberal societies. The ethnocentrism which has been a dominant factor in the Balkans for more than 25 years is present in country as well. However, it is more than necessary to overcome these perception barriers and mythological viewpoints so that meritocracy replaces the ethnic criteria. Stereotype perceptions are evident in both major ethnic communities in Macedonia. 72% of Macedonian and 75% of Albanian respondents said that a person from their respective background would be the most suitable for the position of the country's prime minister. The picture is similar with other smaller communities, which would also prefer their "own" (ethnic) prime minister.

The trust among people is crucial for the cohabitation. This rule applies to the building of relations among different ethnic groups – communities. Sociological analyses show that the equidistance between the individual or the group and the otherness is almost impossible and that both individuals and groups have their preferences about establishing communication with the others. This study makes us face with the psychology of egocentrism and ethnocentrism. In their relationships with others, Macedonians mostly trust Serbs (11%), then Albanians (9%), whereas Albanians mostly trust Turks (4%). These little percentages of trusting others are due to the great percentages of trusting only people within ones' own community. hese data match those of another study carried out by USAID and FOOM ("Open Society" Foundation Macedonia), according to which youngsters in Kumanovo, generally, have frequent contacts with Macedonians, whereas minimal contacts with Wlachos and Bosnians. The ethnic structure of perceptions revealed that apart from Albanians, all others maintain frequent contacts with Macedonians. The opposite also applies in this case: Macedonians and other smaller community members rarely keep contacts with Albanians. Because of this, most probably, young Macedonians see their Albanians peers as most distant and their Serbian peers as the closest. On the other hand, young Albanians feel the closest to Turks (and then Macedonians) whereas the most distant to Serbs and Wlachos (Mladenovski, 2015). According to our analyses,

religion is another important factor that influences these kinds of relations among members of different communities in our country. Seen from the aspect of citizens' attitudes towards the religiosity of the others, the chart shows that it is more emphatic in the Albanian community. Almost half of Macedonian respondents (49%) said the Albanian community is the most religious in Macedonia.

The 5th illustrationclearly shows the citizens' opinions about their own status and the status of members of other communities with whom they cohabitate. The mere fact that 55% of respondents say that there is a privileged community in our country, speaks about the dilemmas which individuals have in terms of their own social position. This means that there should be more attempts towards the introduction of inclusive and integrative policies and projects aimed at building and developing a real multicultural society. Economic transactions are an important part of our everyday lives and they make us establish contacts with members of different ethnic communities. Shopping is an activity, which has recently been faced with global capitalism, even though the spirit of our society has somehow helped us maintain the traditionalmode of economic communication. When it comes to the material dimension in life, i.e. money and welfare, people usually tend to ignore ethnic barriers in search for cheaper yet more qualitative products and services. This thesis can be confirmed by the analysis of the data from our study, whereupon 67% of respondents did not consider at all the ethnic criterion when it comes to their economic affairs. (Compared to the UNDP study "People Centred Analyses", from 2009, the percentage of people who buy in shops owned by people from other nationalities, has decreased (71 %) (Malevska, 2010).

Figure 2. Whith regard to your daily activities in terms of purchasing food and other necessary items, do you mind the owner's ethnical background?
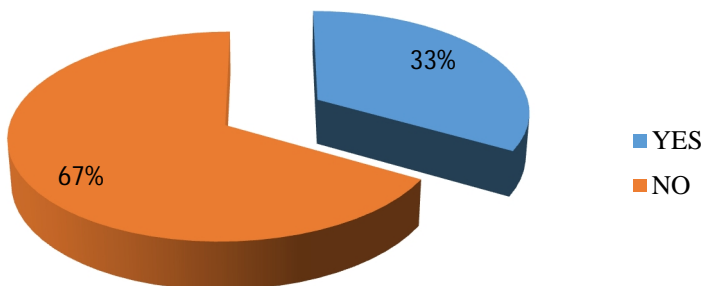
Source: Authors' own compilation

A completely different situation occurs when it comes to investing in real estate, i.e. apartments, houses or shops in neighborhoods in which the investor would be "a minority" (63% of citizens in Kumanovo say that they would not buy a house or a flat in a neighborhood where the majority is from another ethnic community). The general empirical fact that education does not influence the elimination of prejudices is somewhat contradictory; this means that even well-educated respondents belong to the category of citizens who would rather live within their own communities. The 17th question regarding the ethnic profile of the most wanted first neighbor generates a confirmation of the above-stated results. People want to live in ethnic camps and possibly close to those with the same or similar religious background. Ethnic Macedonians would primarily cohabitate with other members of their own ethnic background (62%), followed by the Serbs (20%) and only 8% with Albanians and 3% with Turks. On the other hand, 83% of ethnic Albanians prefer to cohabitate within their own ethnic camp, 8% with Turks and only 3% with Macedonians.

The distance in interethnic relations is obvious in the sphere of marriages as well. Respondents from all ethnic groups prefer marriages with partners from the same ethnic group. Only 2.97% (8 of 269) of the respondents from the two major ethnic communities, i.e. Macedonians and Albanians said that they would conclude a marriage with a partner from another ethnicity/religiosity. In terms of the development of interethnic relations, the citizens' perceptions in Kumanovo in the last 12 months indicate that they have either worsened (48%) or have remained static/unchanged (33%). Only a small group of citizens think that interethnic relations in this town have actually improved (16%). The ethnic component or differentiation is a characteristic of the results of this question too. Namely, if we analyze the opinions of the two biggest ethnic groups, we will notice very different perceptions. Ethnic Albanians consider that interethnic relations have become worse in the last 12 months (63%), whereas 43% of ethnic Macedonians think that interethnic relations have not undergone any major changes in the last year. Only 7% of the Albanian respondents and 23% of Macedonian ones think that interethnic relations have improved in the last 12 months.

Education is a crucial component of every sound and rational society. In our context, the divided society generates divided schools and other educational institutions on ethnic grounds. The latest developments in several schools in Macedonia include two different shifts – Macedonian and Albanian, separately. The perceptions of citizens of Kumanovo are much more different from this negative national trend. ¾ consider that multicultural environment is the most appropriate for purposes of their own education as well as their children's. Positive examples of this approach in Kumanovo include two secondary schools (Pero Nakov and Nake Buzoni) and one primary school (Toli Zurdumis) in which pupils from different ethnic communities attend classes in the same shift.

One of the important questions that illustrate the factual situation regarding multiculturalism is knowing the language of the other, which is a way to overcome barriers among people and get them closer together. The fact that francophone people in different countries across the globe are closely connected to the French culture even though they live and work thousands of miles away speaks enough in favor this situation. In Macedonia, the second largest community – the Albanian, can speak Macedonian quite well. However, on the other hand, the commodity of having the status of a dominant community has had its consequences. The Macedonian population does not know the languages of other communities in the country, including Albanian, and probably do not

find it necessary to do so. Experiences show that older generations were much more realistic and active in this respect. However, there have been some positive trends recently in terms of attendance of Albanian language courses by Macedonians. There are several Macedonian students studying at the Department of Albanian Language and Literature at the Ss Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, as well as some journalists in Alsat-M who present the news in a fluent Albanian language.

The 21st question of the questionnaire was as follows: *"Do you think that learning the language of other ethnic communities is an asset for your future?"* 81% of respondents from Kumanovo think that knowing the language of the other is a comparative advantagein every aspect, from daily communication to greater employment opportunities. However, in reality this perception cannot be confirmed as such. This is why greater attempts are needed towards the formation of more multilingual individuals. In this respect, there are several subjects that can help, including schools, NGOs, organized social events, youth camps, etc. It is obvious that the feeling of a dominant language is slowly disappearing; people have started to understand the truth and the saying that "The number of languages you speak is the number of times you are human." The data show that the better the education, the greater the awareness about the importance of knowing other languages is.

For purposes of development of multiculturalism in a society, other factors/institutions such as media, politicians, educational system, family, religious associations, intellectuals etc. are very important too.

Table 1. In your opinion, how much do the following institutions influence the development of interethnic relations?

	Positively	Negatively	Does not influence	no answer
media	22%	50%	23%	5%
politicians	13%	60%	22%	5%
politicians in local level	33%	34%	27%	6%
education	48%	17%	30%	5%
family	63%	10%	22%	5%
religious communities	42%	20%	33%	5%
university (scientists)	57%	8%	30%	5%

Source: Authors' own compilation

Based on the above-presented chart, we can clearly see that the greatest destructors of interethnic relations and multiculturalism are politicians (60% of respondents said that they exercise negative influence on these developments) and the media (50% of respondents said that they negatively reflect on the improvement of interethnic relations and multiculturalism in general). On the other hand, the most constructive factor in creating good interethnic relations is the family (63%), then universities/scholars (57%), the educational system* (48%) and religious communities (42%). The already negative image of politicians in this region was degraded even further after the scandalous affair related to "wiretapping 2015" full of discriminating

declarations, segregation attitudes, corruptive affairs, etc. The media enjoy an identical reputation in this country. International reports say that the media are politically affiliated (including the public service) and they have no objective, critical, transparent and research-based approach. It is very important that citizens believe at least in their own families as facilitators of the culture of tolerance and mutual understanding.

Conclusions

Republic of Macedonia is multicultural society, with a diversity of its ethnic and religious composition, an environment, where for centuries are situated components of different ethnicities, complex identities, different civilizations, ancient cultures, Byzantine, Ottoman, Slavic, Albanian, Macedonian, Turkish, Serbian, Bosnian, Vlahos' etc. In addition, Macedonia is a multiethnic society, multi-religious, grouped in distinctive systems of values.

Multiculturalism is a policy which is debated at global level, including our country, especially after the OFA, which was supposed to change the philosophy of political organization and increase the awareness and the perception of others, so that it could become the real *Unitas multiplex.*

Based on this study, we have come to the following conclusions: interethnic relations are far from what they are expected to be for a multicultural society such as ours; stereotype viewpoints are obvious in both major communities. They both prefer to see people from their ethnic affiliation in higher institutional bodies; the trust in others in the context of Kumanovo depends on both the ethnic and religious aspect (Macedonians trust Serbs more whereas Albanians trust the Turks more); a great deal of respondents (55%) say that in Macedonia there is a privileged community, which means that citizens do not think they have equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities in terms of the functioning of the political system; citizens of Kumanovo consider that the economic dimension is beyond ethnic (and even religious) boundaries, being constantly in search for a qualitative but cheap products or services; it is interesting to note that when it comes to long-term investments in real estate or similar undertakings, the same people tend to favor ethnic elements more than others; citizens think that interethnic relations in the last 12 months have deteriorated; the most appropriate educational institution was considered that which was multicultural and they considered that knowing the language of the other was an advantage; the media and politicians are the two categories, which were evaluated as the most negative in terms of the improvement and development of multiculturalism and interethnic relations.

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