

## **Interethnic relations in Macedonia: People Centred Analyses**



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### **Abstract**

This analyses is a result of a large empirical research, held at early September 2009. The respondents, 943 of them, answered to the questions about several aspects of their life and the life of their household. Interethnic relations, analysed here, are one aspect of the survey “People Centred Analyses”, supported by UNDP.

The main finding in these fact-finding analyses is that, while it is dangerous for social cohesion and stability of the country when a minority is dissatisfied, it is even more dangerous when the majority is dissatisfied. According to this research, that is the situation in the Republic of Macedonia. The majority of Macedonians, who work in large scale industry and in the public sector, have been adversely affected by the economic crisis, and feel economically insecure. Dissatisfaction or pessimism among middle-lower class people can negatively affect inter-ethnic relations because this class group will instinctively demand a better status, more by pushing aside people from different ethnic backgrounds. Such people are susceptible to political manipulation, and social conflicts can easily turn into interethnic conflicts.

**Key words:** ethnic groups, ethnic communities, interethnic conflict; consociational democracy, Ohrid Framework Agreement

Conflicts between ethnic groups or between the states in which they reside present a serious and growing challenge to domestic and international security. Such conflicts are often brutal and violent (Gurr 1998), and as Horowitz (1985) noted, “ethnicity has fought and bled and

burned its way into public consciousness". Moynihan (1993) observed that the interest in ethnicity has sprung not from rational analysis by armchair philosophers, but from the desperate search for solutions to end the acute ethnic conflicts which began with the end of the Cold War. In political theory, there are several explanations for ethno-political conflicts, which are sometimes called "internal conflicts". Some authors focus on security issues, in which fear and mistrust between ethnic groups can develop into armed conflict (Posen, 1983). Others emphasize the role of "domestic factors", such as the economy, the capacity of the state, nationalism, or the immaturity of the democratic process (Brown 1993). Yet others locate the basic reason for the outbreak of conflicts in the exclusion of minorities from accessing the instruments of power (Lijphart, 1984). We should also mention the socio-psychological approach, which draws attention to false history or myths that are transmitted from one generation to the next, because they play a significant role in the creation of ethnic identity (Horowitz, 1985). William Zartman (1995) summarized the problem of excluding minorities, saying that "national conflicts ... may be summed up in two related categories – negligence and discrimination, or problem of distribution and problem of identity."

In the Republic of Macedonia, separatist ethno-territorial demands have been accommodated through the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). The OFA was aimed at including ethnic Albanians and other minorities in the government through power-sharing, and at broadening their group and individual rights. Yet even now, after the eighth anniversary of the agreement, there are still many institutional gaps in the extent of decentralization of power in relation to curriculum reform in education, in improved social services to support social integration, in public debate over decisions that affect different ethnic groups and in many other areas. Moreover, according to the OFA principle of equitable representation, the percentage of ethnic Albanians employed in the public institutions should eventually reach over 25%, but as yet many institutions still do not fulfil this stipulation.

Macedonian society can be described as simultaneously multiethnic, multinational, plural and multicultural. In such societies the risk of ethnic conflicts is especially high if the government neglects or discriminates against minority groups.<sup>1</sup> In 2001 the country experienced

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<sup>1</sup> Macedonian society is composed of ethnic Macedonians, who are a majority, and to whom the term *people* in the Constitution refers. *Communities* (or *members of communities*) are terms reserved for the ethnic Albanians, Turks, Roma, Serbs, Vlachs and Bosnians. In order to avoid the term *minority*, which suggests discrimination, the

an armed conflict between the central government and ethnic Albanian guerrilla fighters. The conflict ended in August 2001 with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). However, the internal relations between the ethnic Macedonians, ethnic Albanians and other ethnic minorities have remained the most sensitive issue that affects the stability and security of the country, as well as its perspective for integration into the European Union. After the signing of the OFA, ethnic tensions diminished for a while. However, the laws for the use of the Albanian language, and the law for using national symbols have proved to be controversial. Many have argued that there is a greater need for public access to information, and for more public debate on these issues.

After a brief review of the structure of ethnic affiliation associated with the survey findings, the chapter will be organized around four interrelated factors. The first of these is the economic problems and discriminatory consequences of the economic system and the widening of the so-called *frustration gap*; the second is the redistribution of public resources and political power through equitable representation, decentralization and other non-discriminatory policies; the third is the role of political parties and leaders; and the fourth is the perception of interethnic relations through fear, mistrust, and prejudice.

## **Ethnic Affiliation**

The distribution of respondents according to the ethnic affiliation in the sample broadly follows the distribution of ethnic affiliation in the society as a whole (see Table 1).<sup>2</sup>

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euphemism *communities not in the majority* is used.

<sup>2</sup> According to the 2002 census, Macedonia has a population of just over two million people. Broken down into ethnic groups: 64.2% (or 1,297,981) are Macedonians, 25.2% (or 509,083) are Albanians, 3.9% are Turks, 2.7% are Roma , 1.8% are Serbs, 0.8% are Bosnians, 0.5% are Vlachs, and 1.0% are “others”. The country's two major religions are Orthodox Christianity and Islam. There is a general correlation between ethnicity and religious affiliation – the majority of Orthodox believers are ethnic Macedonian, and the majority of Muslim believers are ethnic Albanians and Turks. Approximately 65% of the population is Macedonian Orthodox, and 32% is Muslim. Other groups include Roman Catholics, members of various Protestant denominations, and Jews.

**Table 1: Ethnic affiliation**

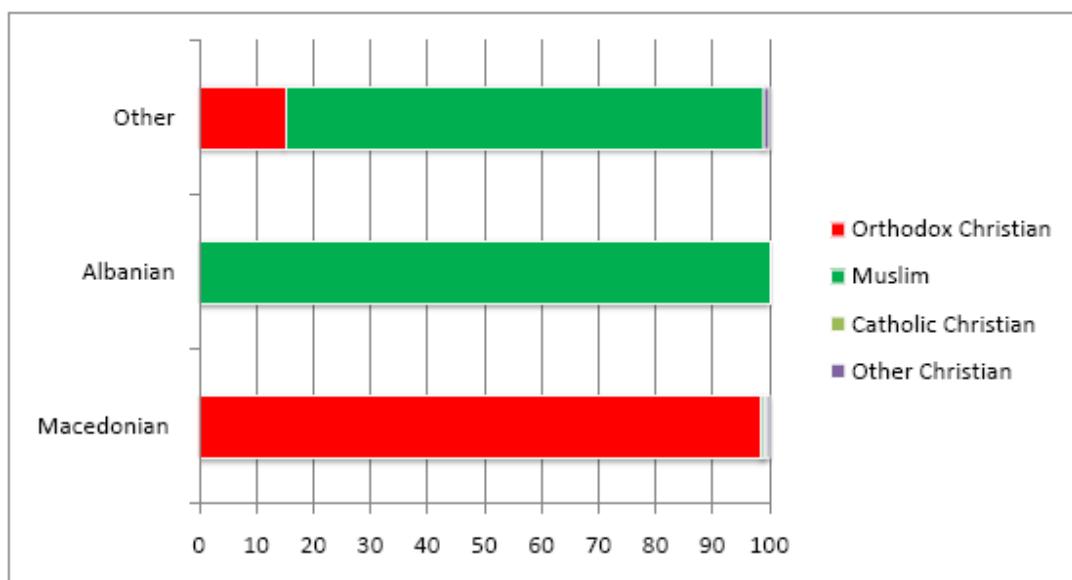
Ethnic affiliation	Frequency	Percent
Macedonians	637	67.5
Albanians	210	22.2
Other*	96	10.2
Total	943	100.0

Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

\*"Other" includes: Turks-3.8%; Roma-3.7%; Serbs-1.3% and Vlachos-0.1%. In the analysis, we will especially focus on the socio-political exclusion of the Roma as the most disadvantaged minority. (The Roma sample, separated and calculated as a separate booster, has a frequency of 106.)

Religion is an important part of ethnic affiliation, and Figure 1 presents the breakdown of ethnicity by religion. There is a clear association between ethnicity and religious faith. Almost all the ethnic Macedonians in the sample hold the orthodox Christian faith, while all the ethnic Albanians in the sample hold the Muslim faith. Among other ethnic groups the majority declare their faith as Muslim.

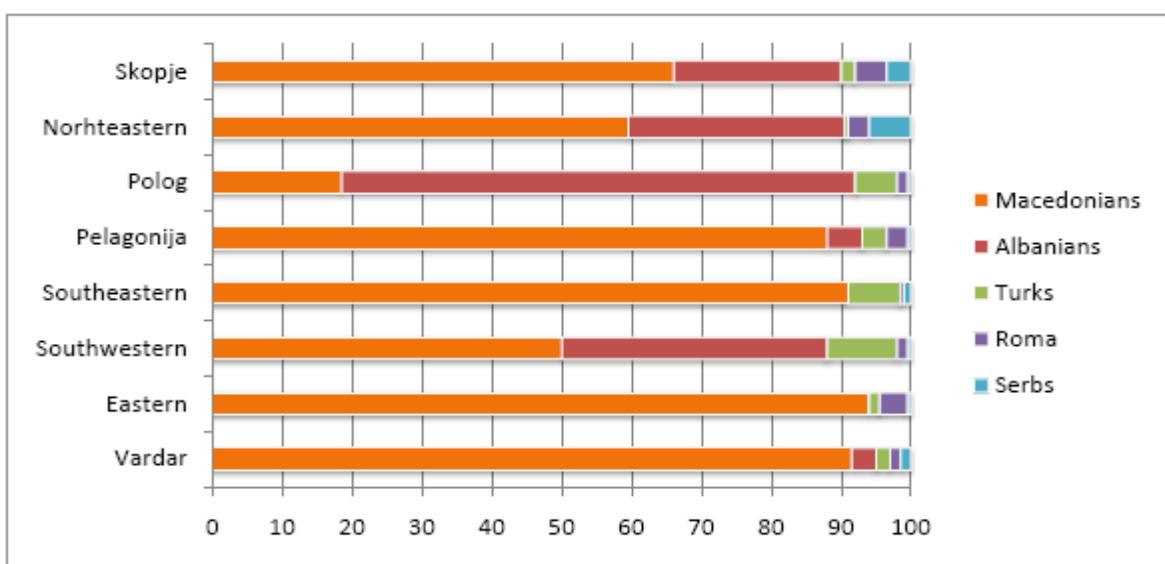
**Figure 1: Ethnicity by religious affiliation**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

In terms of the regions they populate, ethnic Macedonians mostly inhabit the Vardar, Eastern, Southeastern, Pelagonia and Skopje regions. Ethnic Albanians are concentrated in the Polog region, and there are significant numbers in the Southwestern and Northeastern regions, as well as in the Skopje region. Turks mainly inhabit the Southwestern, Southeastern, Polog and Pelagonia regions. The largest Roma concentration is in the Skopje and Eastern regions, while Serbs are mostly concentrated in the Northeastern and Skopje regions (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Ethnicity by region**



\*Source: State Statistical Office.

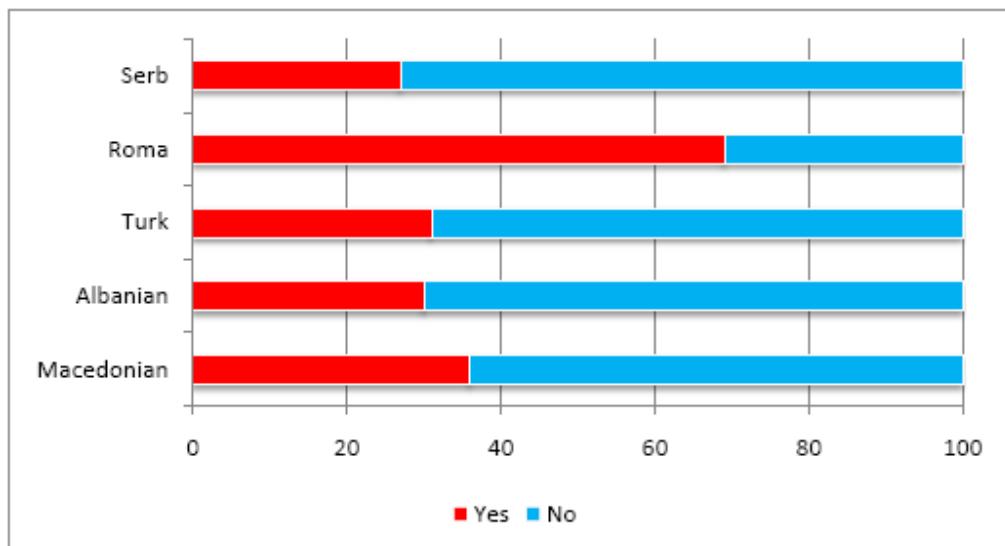
The calculation does not include the 43,000 Vlachs, Bosniaks and others because of lack of data, but this does not effect on the breakdown of the listed groups by regions (Figure 2).

### Frustration gap

Ethnic conflicts are more likely to happen in plural societies in which there is a discrepancy between people's needs and the ability of the state to satisfy those needs through the provision of public services of various sorts. The starting point of this analysis is that mounting economic and social problems, income disparities and poverty, as well as people's low

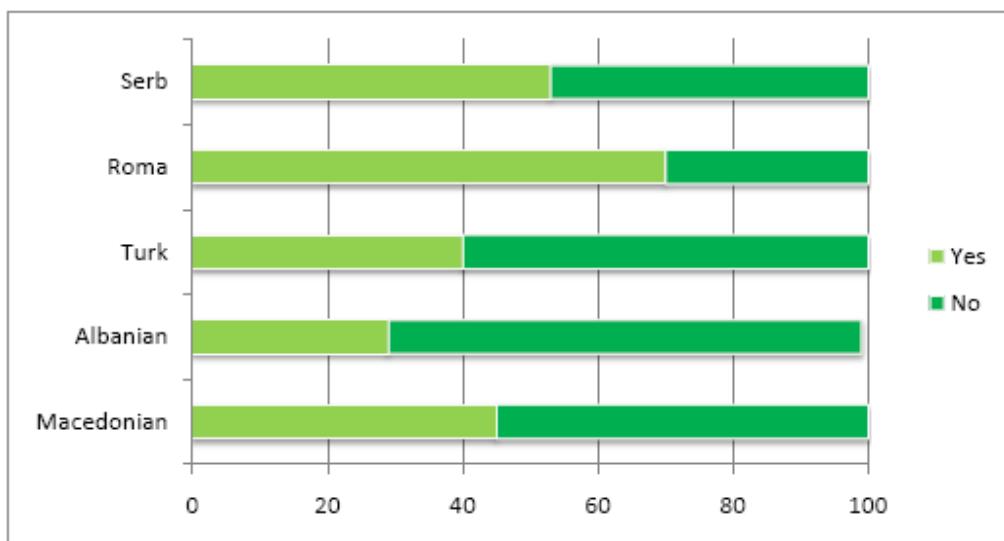
expectations, have created what can be called a *frustration gap*, which is a social as well as a psychological phenomenon. As shown elsewhere in this report, the Roma have the most severe level of poverty among all ethnic groups, while ethnic Macedonians have the least sever level. On the other side, ethnic Macedonians are the most unsatisfied, even the most frustrated group, as shown by the findings from this year's PCA survey concerning issues such as job security, incomes, and personal assessments of expectations about the future. Figure 3, shows that more Roma people are looking for work than among other ethnicities. A greater proportion of ethnic Macedonians are looking for work compared to ethnic Albanians.

**Figure 3: Job search by ethnicity**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

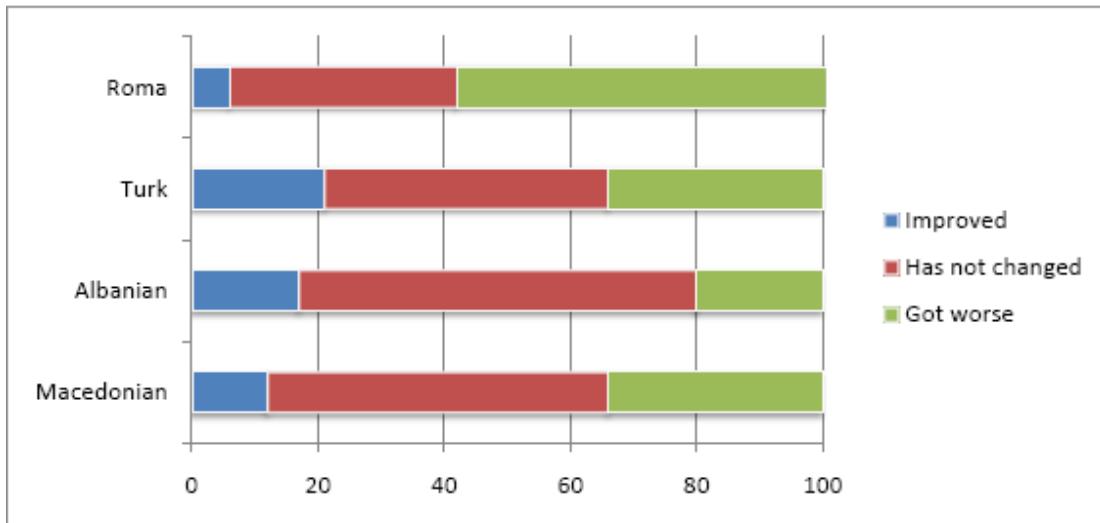
**Figure 4: Job insecurity: likelihood of losing one's job in the six months following the survey**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

Insecurity is measured in Figure 4 by the likelihood of losing one's job in the six months following the survey. Over two thirds of Roma consider that there is a risk of losing their job, indicating that this ethnic group has the highest degree of economic insecurity. Just under a half of ethnic Macedonians respondents consider there is a chance of losing their job compared to over one quarter of ethnic Albanians. These data indicate that the ethnic Macedonian population experiences greater economic insecurity than the ethnic Albanian population. Moreover, this conclusion is also supported by other findings from the survey. For example, over half of the Roma respondents (59%) consider that their life "got worse" over the twelve months prior to the survey, compared to one third (34%) of ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Turks (also 34%), while just one fifth (20%) of ethnic Albanians experienced a worsening of the life situation (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: How respondents' life had changed in the 12 months prior to the survey**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

Table 2 shows responses to the question “Thinking of your household’s total monthly income, is your household able to make ends meet”. It shows that over half of people from all ethnic groups are only able make ends meet with difficulty. As in other dimensions of economic insecurity the Roma stand out as being in the worst position, followed by ethnic Turks, ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians respectively.

**Table 2: Whether the household able to make ends meet**

Ethnicity	easily	Neither easy nor difficult	With difficulty
Macedonians	11.1%	31.5%	57.3%
Albanians	16.7%	29.9%	53.4%
Turks	14.3%	24.5%	61.2%
Roma	4.8%	6.7%	88.5%

Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

The comparison of the data demonstrates that large proportions of people in all ethnic groups suffer from unemployment, economic insecurity, dissatisfaction with their personal lives,

and difficulties in making ends meet. The most vulnerable and disadvantage group in this regards are the Roma. But in the context of interethnic relations, the situation of ethnic Macedonians should be stressed here. It is very dangerous when the minorities are discontented, but it is even more dangerous when the majority is discontented. The dissatisfaction among ethnic Macedonians comes from several sources: the loss of privileged status when most previously worked in the state-owned sector; the reform of the public sector where a large proportion of them also work (28% of ethnic Macedonians in comparison with 11.5% ethnic Albanians work in the public sector); the perception of ‘equitable representation’ as a zero-sum-game; the global economic crisis which has hit the larger companies, where ethnic Macedonians predominate (27% ethnic Macedonians work in large companies in comparison with just 13% of ethnic Albanians). At the same time, ethnic Macedonians are on average better educated than are members of other ethnic communities (45% of ethnic Macedonians have four-year secondary education, in comparison with just 29% of ethnic Albanians); they are more likely to be skilled workers (31% of ethnic Macedonians are skilled manual workers, in comparison with just 15% of ethnic Albanians). Moreover, almost half of the ethnic Macedonians who are in work expected to lose their job in the six months following the survey (45%) and believed that they were not well paid for the work that they do (49% of ethnic Macedonians compared with 30.5% of ethnic Albanians). Such a high level of dissatisfaction of the majority ethnic group, despite the relatively favourable social position in terms of educations and skills might easily lead to political radicalisation. The next sections identify some indicators to justify the view that a social layer of ethnic Macedonians with higher education, and that are employed as skilled workers, feel badly paid and insecure. This “generation 300 Euro” (referring to the unrests in Greece, led by the so-called, “generation 700 Euro”) perceive inter-ethnic relations to be far worse than do members of other ethnic groups.

### **Power-sharing model**

There are many examples of countries in which social inequalities have divided disadvantaged minorities from advantaged or dominant groups. Building a modern national state at the expense of weaker and less fortunate social groups is a common phenomenon (Gurr,

1998). The Republic of Macedonia is no exception in opting to build its own nation-state based on a fear for survival, in the context of the raging nationalisms that tore the Yugoslav federation apart along ethnic lines in the early 1990s. The Ohrid Framework Agreement changed this course. The political model that was implemented through the constitutional amendments is based on power-sharing and the redistribution of public resources and political power between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. The small minorities have also advanced their status, although grievances persist. The key provisions of the OFA were: the right to double majority voting (minority veto); a proportional electoral model; decentralization; equitable representation of citizens belonging to all communities in state bodies and other public institutions on all levels, as well as the constitutional guarantees of this, very much like a consociational or power-sharing arrangement. Apart from that, since 1991 the country has been ruled by coalition governments made up of both ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian parties. Although the OFA placed the country on the right track, new problems have since appeared. Since we cannot analyze separately all political and institutional implications arising from OFA, we will turn to the policy that mostly affects people's perceptions: equitable representation.

### **Equitable representation**

Equitable representation is an important instrument of political and social inclusion of minorities in the society. In the course of the last few years there has been a significant increase of equitable representation in the administration, army, police and judicial system, although the quota has not yet been reached.<sup>3</sup> According to the latest data on the ethnic composition, 22% of

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<sup>3</sup> Out of a total of 65,500 people employed in the state and public administration in 2006, the latest year for which data are available, as well as in the judiciary and court bodies, 84% are Macedonians and 10% are Albanians. Turks are represented with 1%, whereas Roma – with 0.7%. Out of 636 court presidents and judges, 82% are Macedonians, 15% are Albanians, 3% are Turks, and none are Roma<sup>3</sup>. There are two thousand civil servants on the local level of which 82% are Macedonians, 13% are Albanians, 2% are Turks, 1% are Roma and 1% are Serbs.

the professional army representatives are ethnic Albanians, 2.3% are Turks, 1.3% are Roma and 2.4% are Serbs (UNDP 2007: 59).

The slow pace of engagement of people from ethnic communities in the administration is due to a combination of factors including a lack of sufficiently educated candidates from the smaller minority communities, a reported lack of enthusiasm among the ruling majority, and the need to decrease the overall number of administrative workers due to economic crisis conditions. Currently, the public administration employs about 120,000 people, which is a large number compared to the neighbouring countries (Bulgaria, with a population of eight million employs 140,000 people in its administration).<sup>4</sup> The pace of recruitment according to the principle of equitable representation in the public administration has been speeding up recently, but this has caused new problems. In October 2009, about 230 employees that were employed on the basis of equitable representation had been receiving salaries for three months, even though they had not actually been to work.<sup>5</sup> Another 330 civil servants had received employment contracts on the same basis, and were due to start working in 2010. The most difficult issue is the “party-ization” of the state administration. According to the statement of a member of the European Court of Auditors, the failure of the European projects for institutional strengthening is due, among other things, to the “unstable administration”, i.e. party changes in the administration after each election.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, the politics of equitable representation, decentralization, minority veto, and the power-sharing coalition government have all had positive effects on the perceptions of respondents concerning inter-ethnic tensions, which are perceived as less dangerous than the tensions between rich and poor, and the tensions between managers and workers (see Figure 6).

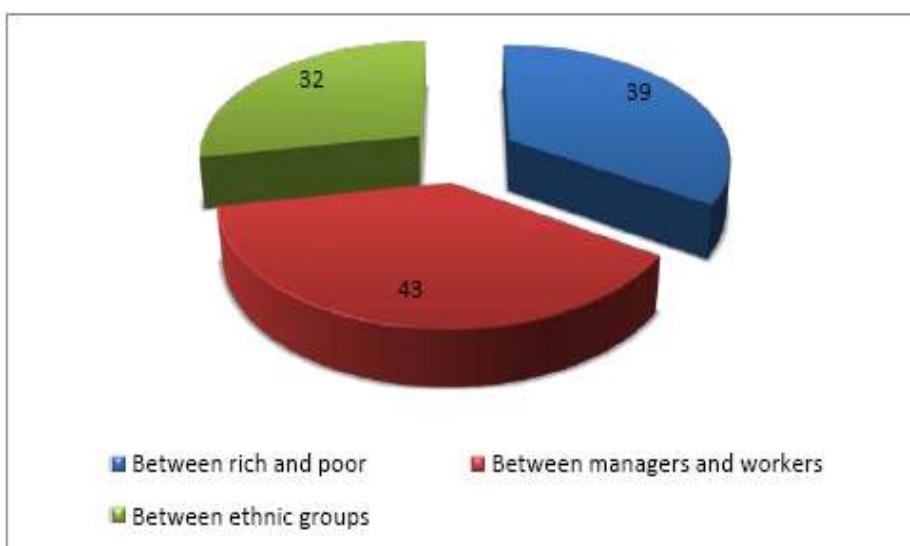
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<sup>4</sup> *Dnevnik*, 8 October, 2009

<sup>5</sup> *Dnevnik*, 15 October 2009

<sup>6</sup> *Dnevnik*, 10 October, 2009

**Figure 6: ‘A lot of tension’ between the groups**

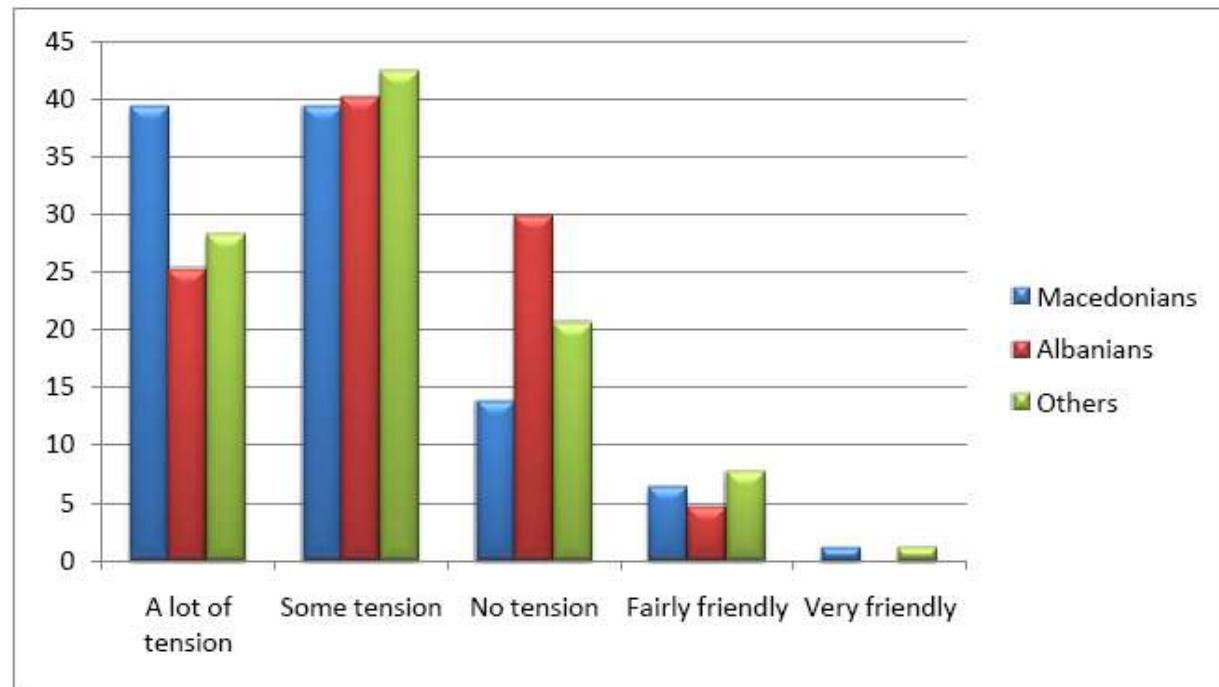


Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

The small minorities (Turks, Roma) are mainly affected by the tensions between the rich and the poor, mainly due to their unfavourable socio-economic situation. Among the Roma, 48% estimate that the relations between rich and poor have a “lot of tensions”; just under a half of ethnic Macedonians (44%), and only a fifth of Albanians hold this view.

Figure 7 shows that ethnic Albanians and other minority ethnic groups are more optimistic concerning relations between the ethnic groups than the ethnic Macedonians. Almost two fifths of the latter group perceive that there is a lot of tension between ethnic groups, compared to just one quarter of ethnic Albanians. The explanation may be found in the implementation of the principles of equitable representation, minority veto, decentralization, power-sharing and other minority rights. On the other side, it seems that ethnic Macedonians still look upon those rights as “zero-sum-game”. However, the fact that only very few respondents described interethnic relations as “fairly friendly” or “very friendly” is a source of concern.

**Figure 7: Quality of the relations between ethnic groups**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

From the aspect of the regions, the majority of respondents who consider that there are “a lot of tensions” between different ethnic groups are from Skopje region. This is probably a result of several factors: the density of the population, the ratio between the ethnic Macedonians who are a majority and ethnic Albanians who are a minority, as well as the fact that this region is the wealthiest and the struggle over the allocation of social resources is the fiercest. In addition, according to the findings of the previous survey the “Northeast and Skopje regions have the most highly vulnerable people (with 23% and 21% respectively of people living in these two regions meet 3-5 of the vulnerability criteria)” (UNDP, 2009: 40).

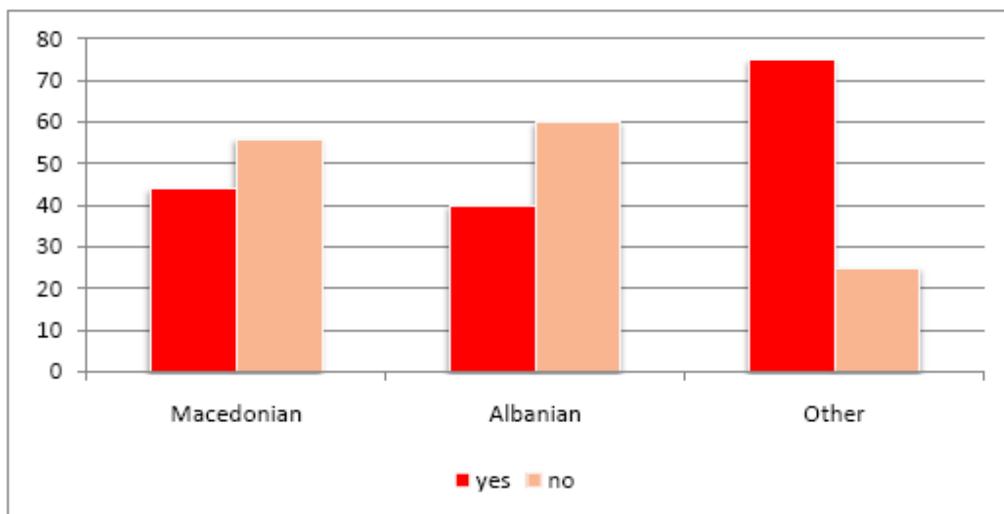
The data show a positive trend of decreasing tensions between the ethnic communities in the country, especially in comparison to the social tensions. Ethnic Albanians and other minorities are more satisfied with the social and political changes since 2001 than are ethnic Macedonians. However, if the general socio-economic situation of the population does not progress, the social tensions may turn into ethnic tensions, and even into ethnic conflicts. The statement of the president of the association of workers from bankrupt companies, given on 21

October 2009 on Radio Skopje, is indicative. Announcing upcoming protests, she stated that she was irritated by the fact that new civil servants are employed in the state administration according to the principle of equitable representation. “I am not against this principle, but why isn’t anyone concerned about the workers from bankrupt companies? It turns out that only the Macedonians do not have rights in this country”.

### **Political parties and their leaders**

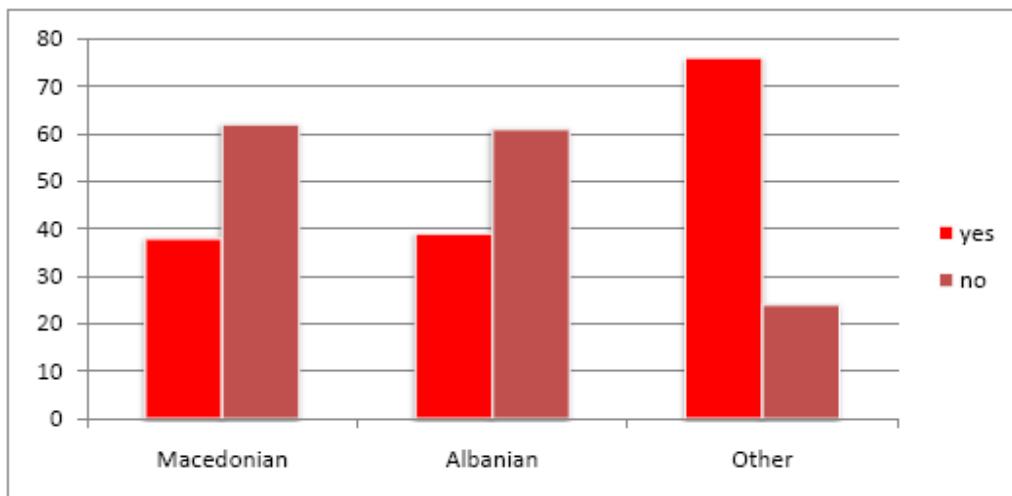
The most serious criticism of the consociational arrangements, such as the OFA, is that the divisions in society become institutionalized, and that the political process is reduced to agreements between political elites (see Bieber 2008). What if they have a hidden agenda, opposite to that which they state publicly? The data from the survey confirm that the model favours ethnic voting, as about a half (51%) of respondents say they would not vote for a political candidate from another party, whereas only two fifths (40%) answer they would. Ethnic Macedonians from Pelagonia, urban males, young people between 25-34 years old with a paid job and higher education and an acceptable standard of living, are more prepared to vote for a candidate from another ethnic community than the others from the same group (see Figures 8 and 9). Members of the small minorities (Turks, Roma, Vlachs and Serbs) show a greater readiness to bridge ethnic lines, as three quarters of respondents from these minorities would vote for a candidate from another ethnic community. This is understandable, because they must make a coalition with larger parties if they want to play role in the political system. The data regarding the behaviour of the voters at the local elections are similar to those for parliamentary elections.

**Figure 8: Whether respondent would vote for a candidate from a different ethnic group in local elections**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

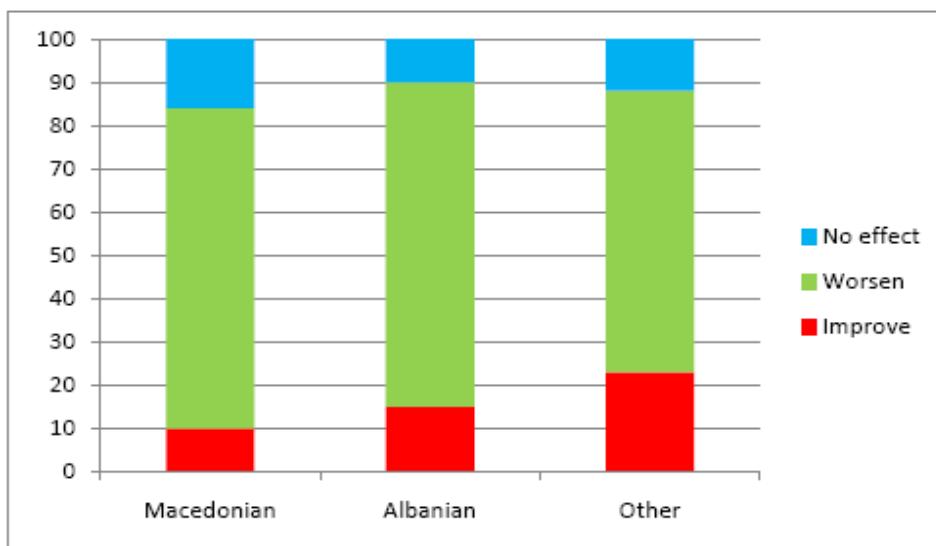
**Figure 9: Whether respondent would vote for a candidate from a different ethnic group in parliamentary elections**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

The fact that most ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians would not vote for the candidate from a different ethnic group is not simply a matter of prejudice or ethnocentrism, but is also due to the negative role of the party leaders in the political process. Power struggles among competing elites are the most common type of internally-driven, elite-triggered conflict (Brown, 1993). This is also confirmed by the experience that, usually, parties in opposition are much more radical than when they are in government. Their political leaders frequently use nationalistic rhetoric in order to attract votes. In the perception of the survey respondents, the political parties play an especially negative role in interethnic relations. Compared to previous surveys, this trend of negative perception is growing. In 2008, 44% of respondents perceived that politicians at all national levels worsen interethnic relations, whereas in 2009 this proportion increased to 71%. In contrast, at a local level only 51% of respondents consider that local politicians worsen interethnic relations. Compared to other factors such as the media, schools, the family and the local mayor, the worst assessment is reserved for the effect of the political parties on interethnic relations. Ethnic Macedonians are much more critical in their assessments at both national and local level. Also highly critical are those between 45-64 years old, with higher education and a paid job and an income between 12,000-21,000 denars,(200-300EU) whose household are able easier to make ends meet and with acceptable standard of leaving.

**Figure 10: How politicians at national level influence ethnic relations by ethnic group**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

If the trend of perceiving political parties as a factor that worsens interethnic relations continues to increase, then the trend towards greater tolerance may begin to move in the opposite direction, so that even fewer people who would vote for a candidate of another ethnic party. In these circumstances, greater moderation in political rhetoric by national politicians could increase the confidence of ethnic groups. The party leaders are responsible for that, since their role is extremely influential in a situation in which democratic consolidation is still fragile.

Few respondents had given their views on social services, or on issues that affected them in the twelve months prior to the survey. Similarly very few had sent a letter about issues that concern them, or attended a meeting of their municipal council. It seems that few people engage in the institutions of local governance, NGO's, trade unions or tenant associations, and this reduces the chances that people may meet in these institutions and social situations and build effective cooperation across ethnic lines.<sup>7</sup> The low level of confidence that people have in politicians, as well as the widely held perception that politicians, especially at national level, tend to worsen interethnic relations, are probably among the principal reasons that most people are unwilling to vote for a candidate from another ethnic community.

### **Assessment of the interethnic relations**

The majority of respondents (58%) saw no change in the state of the interethnic relations in the country over the 12 months prior to the survey, while about a quarter (26%) thought they had worsened, and a tenth (11%) though they had improved (see Table 3). If we also take into consideration the regions, over a third of the respondents from the Skopje region, where ethnic Macedonians predominate, consider the interethnic relations have worsened (39%).

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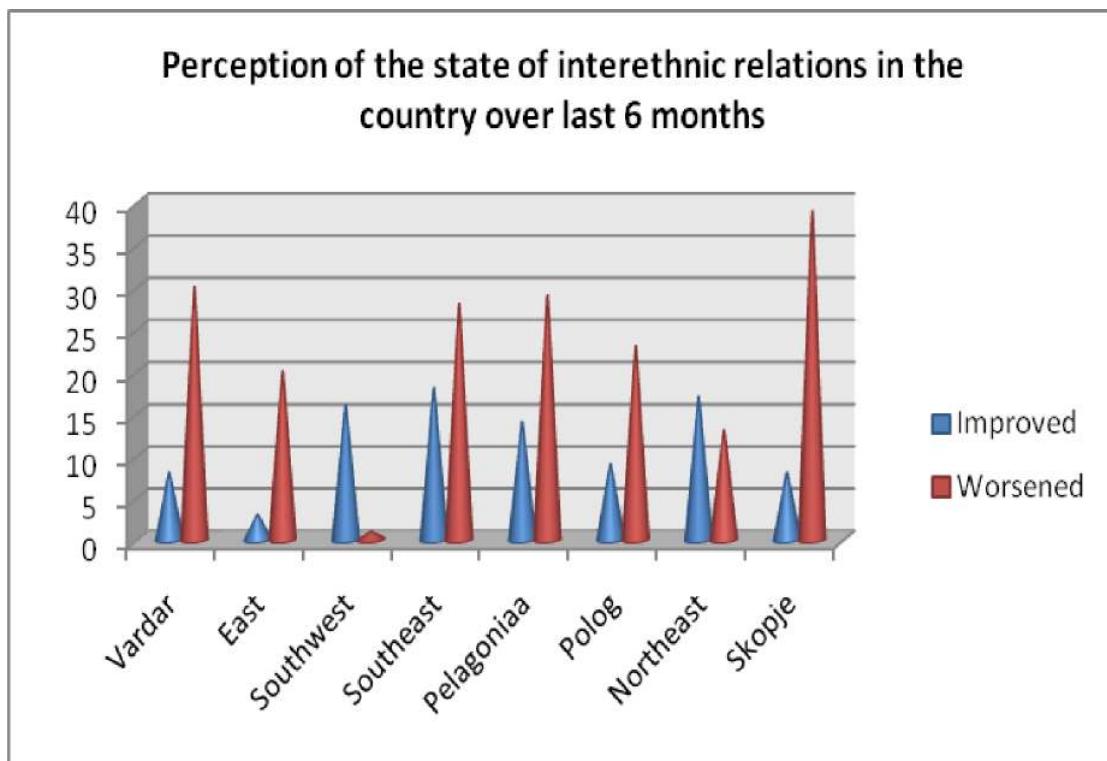
<sup>7</sup> More than 90% of the respondents are not member of any of the following organizations: municipal council, resident association, NGO's, any voluntary organization, business association, trade union and didn't attend any meeting of those organizations.

**Table 3: How do you assess the state of inter-ethnic relations in the country over the last 12 months?**

Improvement	11.0%
No change	57.6%
Worsening	25.8%
Refuse to answer	5.6%

Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

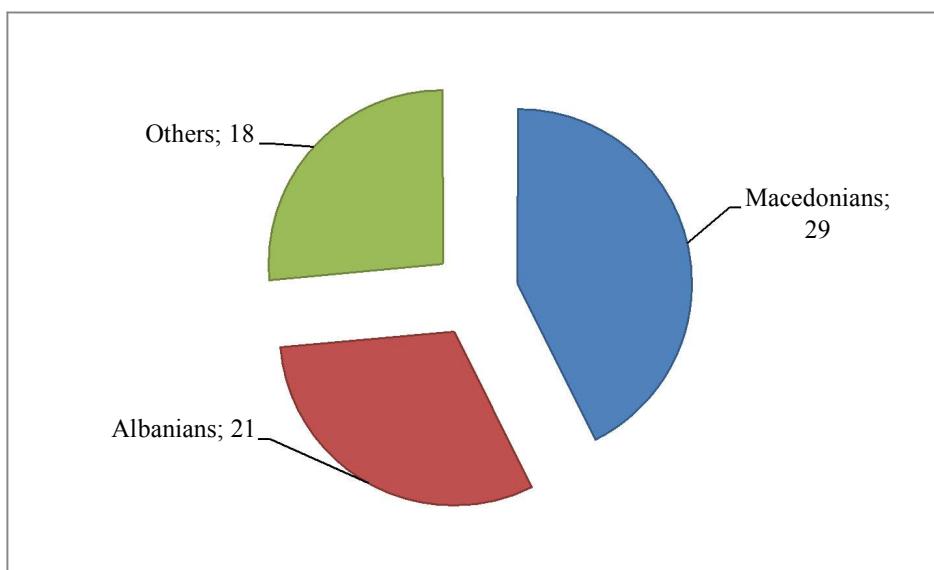
**Figure 11: Quality of inter-ethnic relations over the twelve months prior to the survey**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

Ethnic Macedonians, more so than the ethnic Albanians or members of other ethnic groups, believe that the interethnic relations have deteriorated in the last 12 months (see Figure 12). Over a quarter of ethnic Macedonians perceive a worsening of ethnic relations compared to just one fifth of ethnic Albanians.

**Figure 12: Proportion who say ethnic relations have worsened in the previous 12 months by ethnicity**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

Who are those ethnic Macedonians who believe that ethnic relations in the country worsened over previous 12 months? Considering educational level, respondents with high school education most frequently considered that interethnic relations had worsened. In terms of age, younger as well as older people, think the same way, as do those with paid jobs whose income is between 12,000 and 21,000 denars, and those whose households barely make ends meet.

Asked how they assess the situation in the upcoming 12 months, half of the respondents answer that there will be no change, while almost a quarter (23%) consider that inter-ethnic relations will worsen and only 15% consider that there will be an improvement (see Table 4).

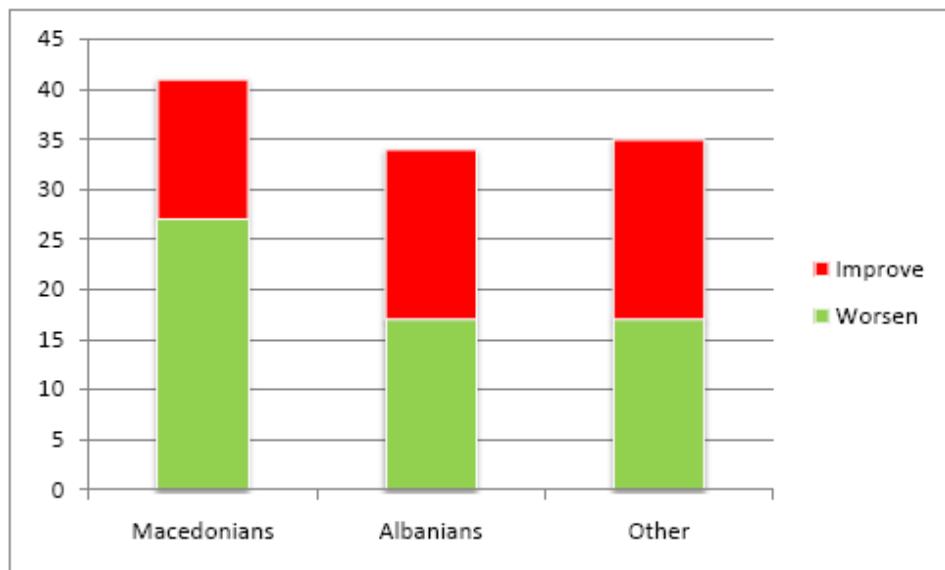
**Table 4: How do you assess the state of inter-ethnic relations over the next 12 months?**

Improvement	15.3%
No change	49.5%
Worsening	23.3%
Refuse to answer	11.9%

Source: PCA Survey 2009

If we take into consideration the regions, again the majority of the respondents from the Skopje region, where ethnic Macedonians predominate, consider that the situation will worsen in the upcoming 12 months (33%). More than a quarter of ethnic Macedonians consider that ethnic relations would worsen over the twelve months following the survey, compared to just one sixth of ethnic Albanians and members of other ethnic groups (see Figure 13). Among the ethnic Macedonians who consider that the interethnic relations will worsen, the majority is again the same category of people with high school education, who have paid jobs, with an income between 12,001 and 21,000 denars, and whose families have difficulties making ends meet, and have a low standard of living.

**Figure 13: Expectations of change in inter-ethnic relations over the subsequent 12 months**

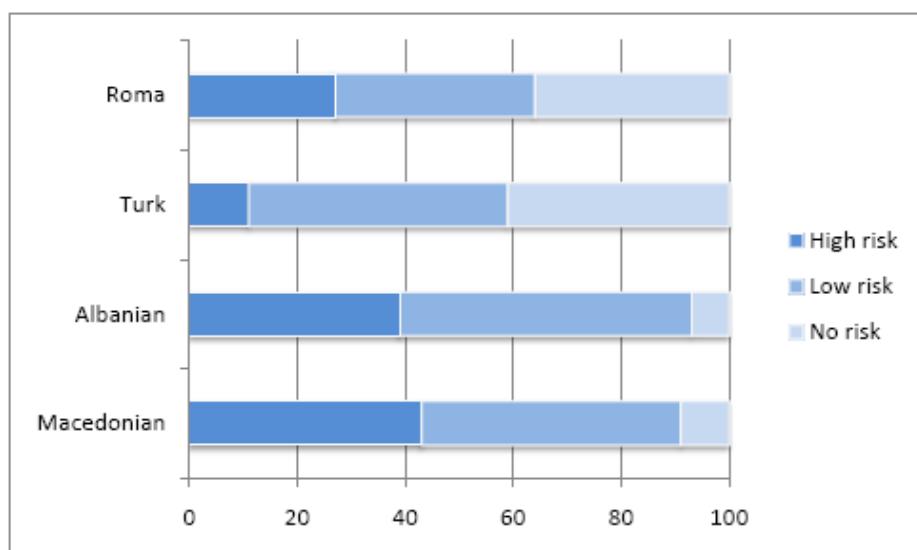


Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

### **Assessment of violent ethnic conflict**

Asked how they assess the risk of violent ethnic conflict, most of the respondents answer that “there is no risk” (8.9%) or that the risk is low (45.5%). We were interested in the group that assessed that there was a “high risk” (35.3%). This proportion is far lower when the issue refers to assessment of the risk of violent ethnic conflict in the municipality. More than two fifths of ethnic Macedonians consider that there is a high risk of violent ethnic conflict. A similar, but slightly lower, proportion of ethnic Albanians hold the same assessment while among Roma and Turks relatively few hold this view.

**Figure 14: Perceptions of the risk of violent ethnic conflict**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

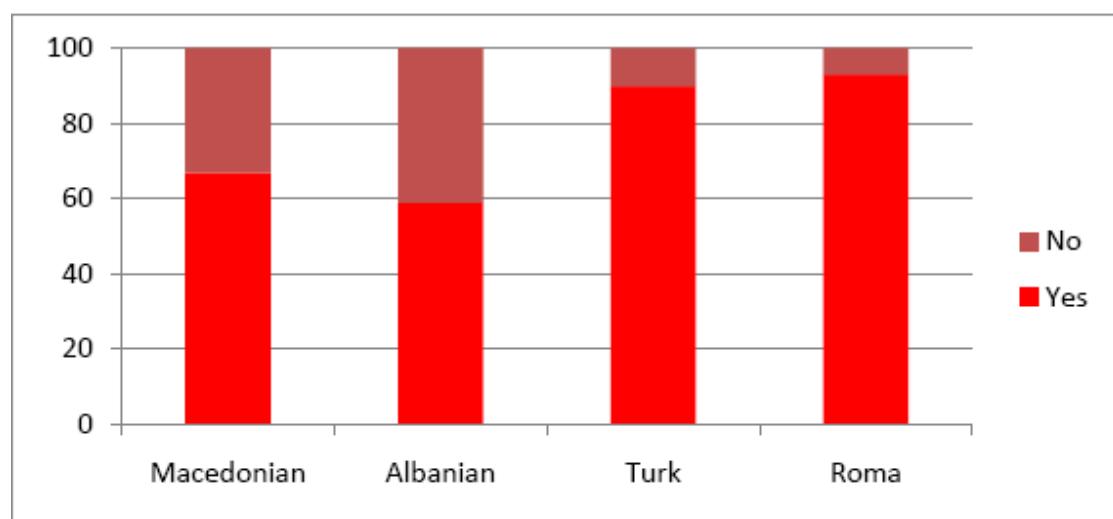
Almost half of the respondents (48%) in the Skopje region consider that the risk of violent ethnic conflict is high. The proportion that holds this view is far lower in the Southwest region (9%). Two-fifths of the urban population (40%) considers there is a high risk of ethnic conflict compared to less than one third of the rural population (30%). More men than women consider there is a high risk (37% against 34%). Those aged between 35-44, and those with a

monthly income between 12,000 and 21,000, and those whose families find it difficult to make ends meet also assess the risk of violent ethnic conflict to be high.

### Crossing ethnic bridges

Some social relationships cut through ethnic divisions, such as friendly and professional contacts, participation in civic and non-governmental organizations, and membership of trade unions. Many people have friends from other nationalities, go to restaurants or coffee bars owned by people from other nationalities and have business contacts with members of other ethnic groups.

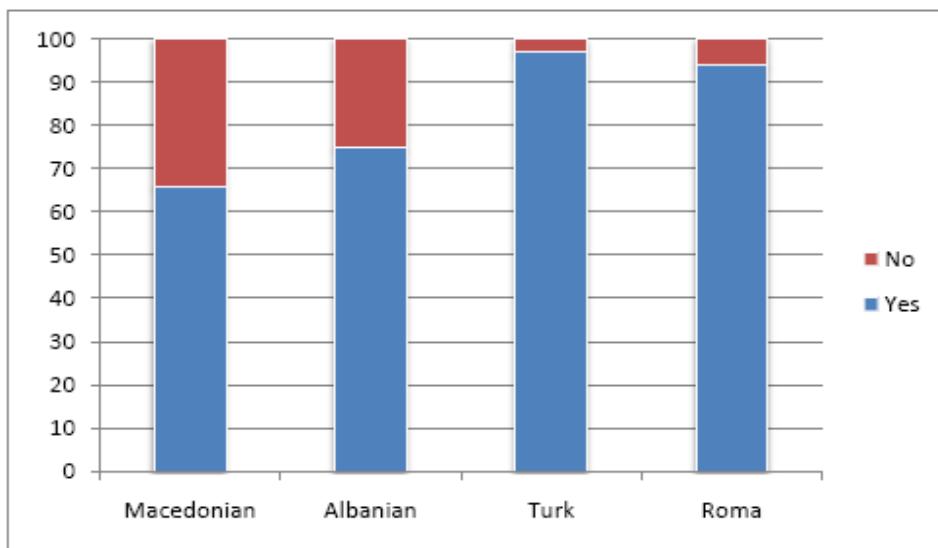
**Figure 15: Whether respondent has friends from different ethnic groups, by ethnicity of respondent**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

Most respondents who have answered that they have friends from another ethnic community come from the southwest region, from urban areas, are men with higher education, aged 18-24 and 55-64. These are people who have paid jobs and who have a good standard of living, with income of over 60,000 denars and between 21,001-30,000 denars. Almost three quarters (71%) of people frequent shops that are owned by people from another ethnic group.

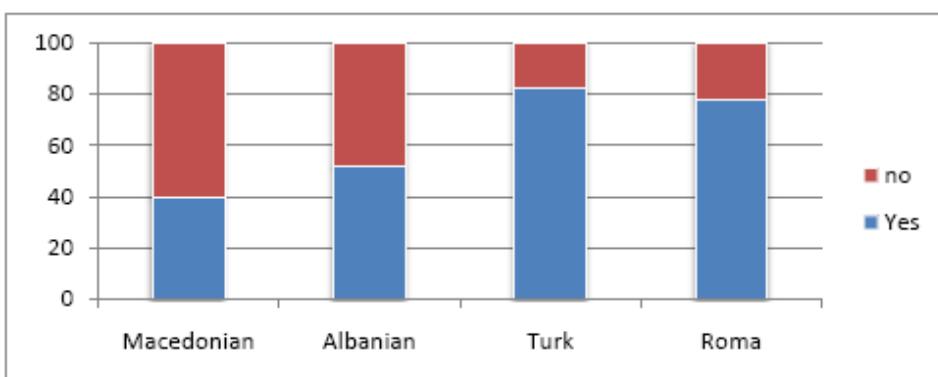
**Figure 16: Whether respondent shops in stores owned by members of different ethnic groups, by ethnicity of respondent**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

About half of the respondents frequently go to restaurants or coffee bars owned by persons from a different ethnic group. The majority of those who do not do so are ethnic Macedonians (see Figure 17), live in rural areas, are older women (57%) with primary school education and with an income up to 6,000 denars, whose households barely make ends meet, who have “poor standard, dilapidated housing” (61%) and are from the East or Southeast region.

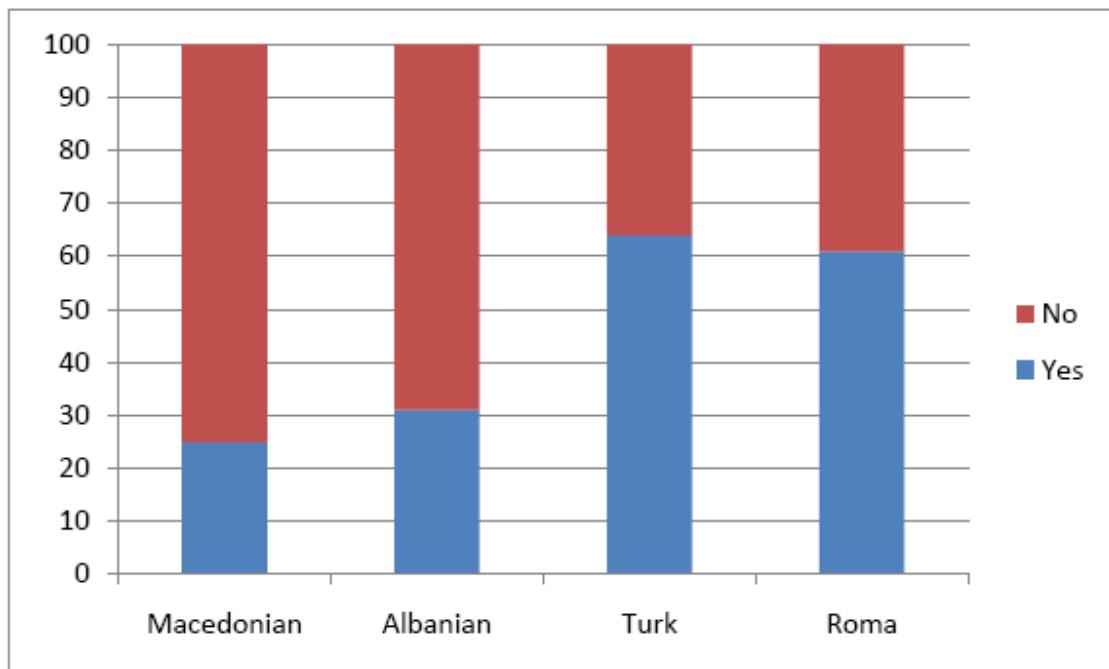
**Figure 17: Whether respondent patronises restaurants owned by members of different ethnic groups, by ethnicity of respondent**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

The most problematic situation is the relative lack of business relations between members of different ethnic groups. Over two thirds (68%) of respondents do not have business relations with persons from a different ethnic group. The situation regarding ethnic groups is shown in Figure 18. On average, people of Albanian ethnicity are more likely to trade across ethnic groups than those of Macedonian ethnicity.

**Figure 18: Whether respondent does business with members of different ethnic groups, by ethnicity of respondent**



*Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009*

It is not surprising that there are no significant opportunities for business relations in the regions that are ethnically more homogeneous. For example, in the East region, where the majority are ethnic Macedonians, only 15% have business relations with members of other ethnic groups. In Polog, where the majority are Albanians, almost one third (32%) have business relations with members of other ethnic groups. In the Southwest, where the population is ethnically mixed, almost a half of respondents (48%) have business relations with people from another ethnic group.

The profile of those who have business relations with people from another ethnic community consists mainly of men from urban centres; younger people; members of the

Turkish nationality; with higher education and income; who have paid jobs and whose families easily make ends meet and who consider they have a good standard of living.

In short, the data show that gender, ethnicity, employment, education, living standard, and the place of residence affect perceptions of interethnic relations. People with higher education, with paid jobs, with better income, with better standard are more tolerant. It is understandable that these are mainly men from urban areas because rural Macedonian society is still a traditional society. The greatest source of concern is that inter-ethnic business relations are not well developed, and they are mostly found in the southwest region, where there is a mixed ethnic population.

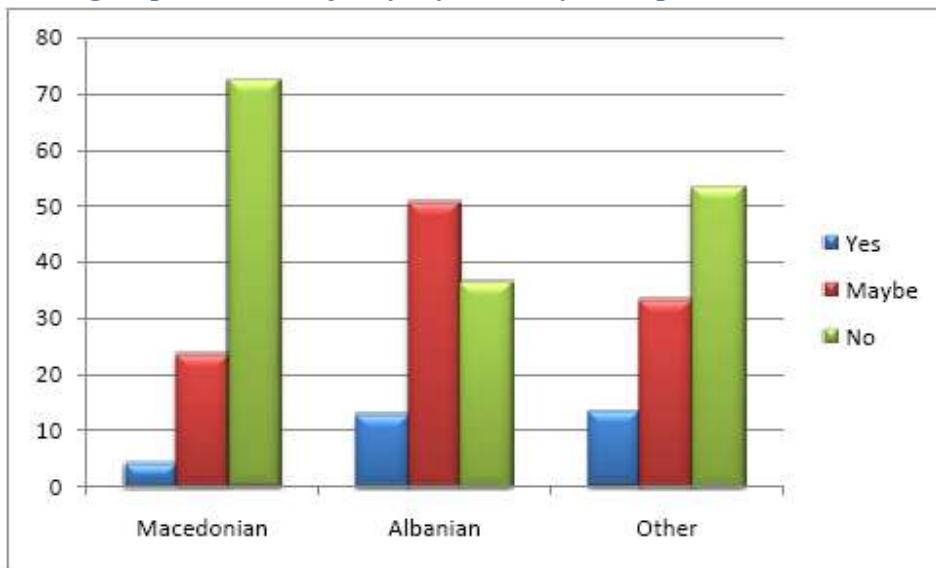
## **Prejudice**

Ethnic prejudice is an antipathy based on beliefs of cultural superiority of one group over another. Well over one half of people (55%) would not send their children to a school where another ethnic group is in the majority.<sup>8</sup> More ethnic Macedonians than ethnic Albanians, Turks, Roma, or Serbs hold this view. In comparison to the previous PCA report in 2008, it is encouraging that there has been a slight increase of the readiness to send children in school where another group is in the majority. At that time, well over two thirds (69%) of ethnic Macedonians said that they would not send their children to a school where another ethnic group is in the majority (see Figure 19).

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<sup>8</sup> These data are taken from our survey findings.

**Figure 19: Whether respondent would send children to a school where another ethnic group is in the majority, by ethnicity of respondent**



*Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009*

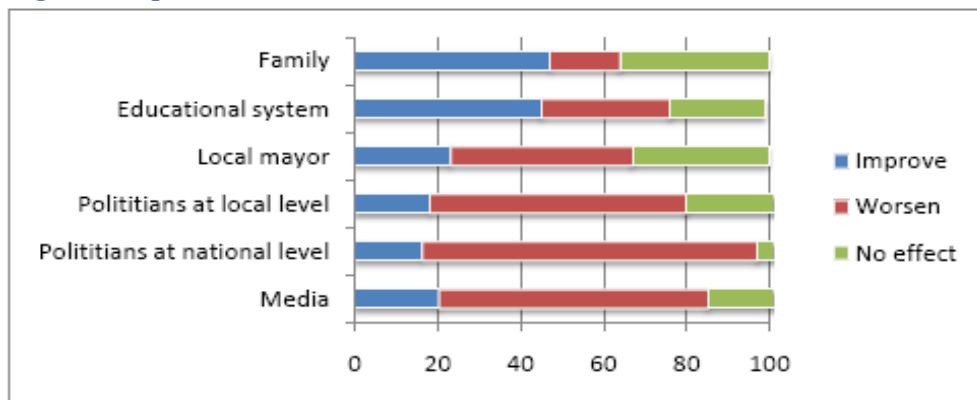
The regions where more than half the respondents stated that they would not send their children to a school where children from another nationality are in the majority are those in which ethnic Macedonians predominate: Vardar, East, Southeast, Pelagonia and the Skopje region. Similar views are held by a majority of women, those aged between 35 and 44, as well as those above 63 years old, those with lower level of education, those employed, those with low income (up to 6,000 and 6,000-12,000 denars), those whose families have difficulties making ends meet and those who live in dilapidated housing. On the other hand, the respondents who would send their children to school where the majority of the pupils are of another ethnic group are mostly in the Southeast with mixed ethnic society, women with higher education, better income, whose families have a better standard.

### **The effect of the institutions on ethnic relations**

The family and the education system are thought by a large proportion of people to be social institutions which are responsible for improved inter-ethnic relations (see Figure 20). Politicians at national level are considered to be responsible for worsening inter-ethnic

relations by a large proportion of people, as are politicians at the local level and the media by slightly lower proportions.

**Figure 20: perceived effect of different institutions of ethnic relations**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

Among ethnic Albanians and the smaller minorities, education is considered to have a greater positive influence on inter-ethnic relations than is the case among ethnic Macedonians: almost a half (47%) of the ethnic Albanians consider that education improves the interethnic relations, while only just over one third (36%) of the smaller minorities, and just under one third (32%) of ethnic Macedonians hold the same view.

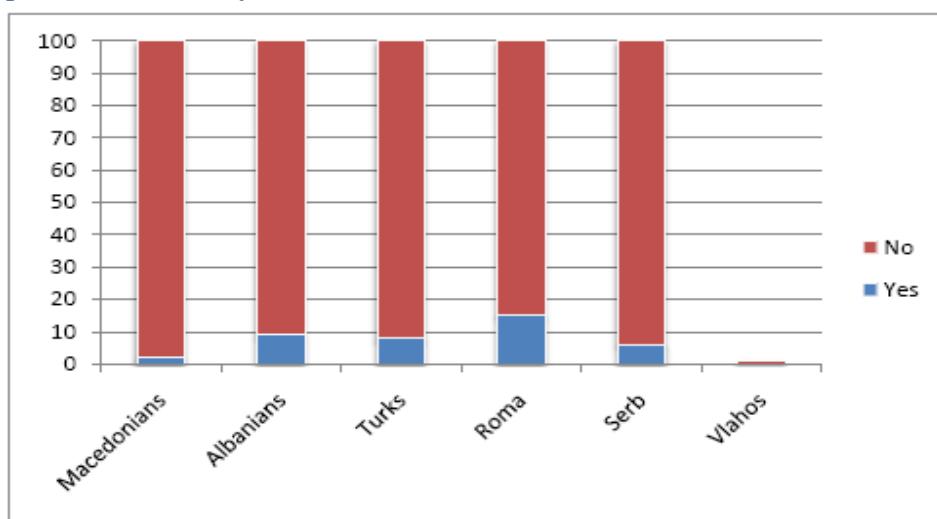
There are more positive views about the family among all ethnicities, with over one half of ethnic Albanians holding the view that the family is a factor in improving the inter-ethnic relations, and similarly among smaller minorities (53%), while among ethnic Macedonians just over two fifths (44%) consider that the family improves inter-ethnic relations.

Professional associations, union organizations, various non-governmental organizations and voluntary initiatives and activities contribute little to promoting social contacts of people from different ethnic communities. Social capital is weak in the Republic of Macedonia and there is a parochial political culture. Most respondents (95%) do not participate in social groups such as tenants or resident associations, NGOs, voluntary organizations, business associations or trade unions. This creates a low level of confidence in the governing institutions, the media, and politicians. It turns out that the family is, above all, a shelter and the main place of social contacts.

**Facing discrimination**

Discrimination, whether economic, political or cultural, is considered to be one of the basic reasons for ethnic conflict. It involves all types of exclusions, limitations or refusals of equal rights for all. Some more serious forms of institutionalized political and cultural discrimination have been greatly reduced through the parallel education in the Macedonian language and in the languages of the smaller communities. Other positive developments have been the use of Albanian as an official language in the state, and the use of the languages of the other minorities as official languages alongside Macedonian in communities where minority ethnic groups comprise more than 20% of the population. Equally the development of culture, journalism and publication in minority languages, as well as extending the political rights of the smaller communities, has had similarly positive effects. Most people (90%) consider that they are not discriminated as a result of their nationality and religion in employment, career advancement, changing the place of residence, when applying at educational institutions, when using social services or social insurance. The Roma face the greatest degree of discrimination as a result of religious affiliation or nationality during employment, career advancement, education or using social services (see Figure 21).

**Figure 21: Whether experienced job discrimination based on ethnicity in the 12 months prior to the survey**



Source: PCA Household Survey September 2009

### **Conclusions and policy recommendations**

The most worrying finding from the above analysis is that the social capital of Macedonian society is very weak, and this affects social cohesion within the society and its political stability, as well as inter-ethnic relations. Few people belong to any civic, professional or union organizations, which create the network of social cohesion in society. As a result of the lack of engagement, people rarely address the competent institutions by sending letters or emails regarding their problems, nor do they go to meetings, and few of those who live in flats are not members of the Residents' Council. There is little civic tradition in the country, and there are few initiatives or networks of social or professional contacts. In such a social context it is difficult to change the organization of social life along ethnic lines. In brief, if people do not engage in civil life and in professional organizations, how they will meet each other and cooperate across ethnic lines?

The political culture is more parochial than participatory, and consequently most people have a high level of mistrust in the political institutions, the mayor, the local government and the media. Only the family and the education system enjoy a higher level of confidence as a factor that positively affects interethnic relations.

The decentralization of power, especially the law on new municipal borders, as a result of the OFA has localized the interethnic tensions in some municipalities, such as Struga. Weak local governance may incite latent interethnic conflicts. Even where minority ethnic groups run the local council, there are problems. For example, the respondents from Polog are the most dissatisfied, where 73% of the population are from the Albanian ethnic group.

There is a gap between the people and their political representatives, which is mainly filled with conflicting ethnic politics. Political parties are divided along ethnic lines, and their leaders compete for the distribution of privileges associated with their public functions. While some people say they would vote for politicians from another nationality, if the undemocratic behaviour of the parties continues, this trend will most likely go into reverse. Party affiliation in administration is a problem which is constantly referred to by those who

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monitor the domestic reform process. The parties in the opposition are always radical, inciting inter-ethnic intolerance to collect political points. Small wonder, then, that politicians are seen as a factor that worsens inter-ethnic relations the most.

The consociational institutional arrangements, as well as the minority rights, have enabled greater political stability in the country, and have improved inter-ethnic relations. It seems that this is the reason that most people do not consider that they are discriminated as a result of their nationality and religion. Among those who meet discrimination, are mainly Roma.

When asked to assess the most dangerous tensions, most people view inter-ethnic tensions as less dangerous than those between the rich and the poor, and between employees and managers. Most also consider that the inter-ethnic relations did not worsen in 2009, and they do not expect them to worsen in the future. Asked whether they expect a violent ethnic conflict, the majority answered that there was no such risk or that it is very low. Those who consider that the inter-ethnic relations have deteriorated and will deteriorate in the future are mostly ethnic Macedonians, who, according to age, education, income and standard belong to the middle or the lower middle class. Educated, but with low income, and insecure about the future, we can identify a “generation 300 Euros”, who can become easily radicalized.

The friendships between ethnicities are increasing, and even the prejudices are smaller in comparison to the results from previous surveys. However, the fact that life is basically taking place in the frame of separate ethnic communities generates negative stereotypes and prejudices. Asked whether they would send their child to school where the majority of pupils belong to another nationality, the ethnic Macedonian women from the rural areas, with lower level education, with small income and low standard of life have more prejudices than others. Factors such as lower educational level, rural location, and low social-economic status are predictors of prejudices of all sorts.

It should be emphasized that the parallel educational system, which was introduced long ago in response to the needs of the smaller ethnic communities to learn using their mother tongue, has weakened social cohesion in the society. Now is the moment to promote projects that will strengthen the contacts between pupils from different nationalities, even more so since education has been assessed as a factor that has the most positive effects on interethnic relations. This conviction is especially widespread among ethnic Albanians and

other smaller communities.

Mounting economic problems and inequality in incomes create a frustration gap which the country cannot easily deal with. The worsening economic situation, noticed in the previous reports, continues: 80% of the people felt that the situation has worsened since 1989, “a proportion higher than in any other transition country apart from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a higher proportion even then in transition countries of Central Asia”(PCA, 2009, p.12). The inequality in revenues affects ethnic relations even more negatively, especially with regard to discrimination towards the Roma.

It should be stated that, from the aspect of interethnic relations, it is dangerous for social cohesion and stability of the country when the minority is dissatisfied, but it is even more dangerous when the majority is frustrated and dissatisfied. According to this research, that is the situation in the Republic of Macedonia. The majority of Macedonians, who work in industry and in the public sector, are mostly affected by the two decades-long transition and the present economic crisis, and do not feel economically safe. What is worse is the feeling of lost hope that anything may change for the better. Dissatisfaction or pessimism among middle-lower class people can negatively affect inter-ethnic relations because this class group will instinctively demand a better status, more by pushing aside people from different ethnic backgrounds. Such people are susceptible to political manipulation. The feeling of social insecurity and frustration is a favourable environment for abusing national feelings. In such a situation, each social conflict can end up as an interethnic conflict.

To make the society more stable, cohesive and inclusive, to improve interethnic relations and to lower the level of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination two-track strategy could help:

- Long-term efforts of the governmental policies, *aimed at reducing* the underlying conditions that make interethnic conflicts more likely, conditions such as the high level of unemployment, poverty, inequality and discrimination, especially against the Roma population. Policy-makers should be aware that the dissatisfaction or frustration of younger skilful people, who have high education qualifications but low income, in a situation of crisis could be misused or manipulated by nationalists. Their dissatisfaction with the social situation can easily be transformed into enmity toward people from the other ethnic groups.
- To address the causes of ethnic conflicts, policy-makers, as well as activists from

civil society, should affirm the stabilizing effects of implementing the OFA to create a more tolerant multiethnic society.

- Political parties and leaders are responsible for the atmosphere of tolerance in the society, but the most responsible for the functioning of a multiethnic society is the coalition government and the ruling party of the majority.
- Governmental policies, as well as the NGOs should focus on the improvement of the quality of public and private education, because education is seen by most people as a factor of ethnic cohesion more than any other social institution apart from the family.
- The parallel system of education has created separate communities of people who do not understand each other very well and therefore do not trust each other. State institutions should develop and support projects of common learning and activities as well as learning of the official languages and the languages of small minorities.
- Better overall knowledge of both the Albanian and Macedonian languages in the public administration is needed.
- The constitutional rule, according to which parties that provoke interethnic hatred could be banned, should be made more effective.
- The development and sustainability of civil society, includes NGOs, trade unions and professional organizations, organised on the basis of the cooperation of ethnically mixed organizations, should be supported.
- Initiatives coming from Turkish and Roma communities for more equitable access to the instruments of power should be supported.