

COOPERATION IN EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND CIVIL SOCIETY AFTER THE PRESPA AGREEMENT: HOW TO MOVE FORWARD



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PREFACE

This study is prepared in the framework of “Support implementation of the Prespa Agreement, specifically the chapter on cooperation in the fields of research and education by establishing functional framework for cooperation” project, funded by the Government of Sweden, and implemented jointly by Analytica in Skopje and ELIAMEP in Athens.

Analytica is the leading think tank organisation from North Macedonia working on issues of foreign and security policy. ELIAMEP is one of the oldest and largest social sciences research institutes in Greece and a leading European think tank in foreign policy and public policy analysis.

Already a positive cooperation was established within the civil society in the period of 2016-2018 in the framework of “Confidence Building Measures, a view from civil-society” projects, implemented jointly by Analytica in Skopje and ELIAMEP in Athens. In the framework of these projects, in 2017 Analytica and ELIAMEP worked on assessing cross-border cooperation in the field of education and science as areas where cooperation is driven by civil societies and local authorities and where the effects of cooperation are more tangible and visible not only to those that are directly involved but also to the perception of public in general. In 2018 Analytica and ELIAMEP worked on assessment of cooperation under the “Confidence Building Measures in the fields of justice and home affairs” initiative defined as “consultations between representatives of the competent ministries of interior, border police, and customs administration in order to exchange information and strengthen the fight against organized crime, corruption, terrorism, illegal migration, and drug trafficking.” This assessment study identified main bureaucratic challenges in advancing good neighbourly relations and provided sound recommendations for the future of relations between the two countries.

This study, which comes as the third phase of the joint cooperation between Analytica and ELIAMEP aims to build upon existing cooperation between the two institutions while extending the joint research activities in identifying potential areas of further cooperation in the fields of research, education, civil society and culture as specified under the Prespa Agreement^[1]. The aim is to continue to facilitate connections and networking among civil society organizations from both sides of the border, mapping out potential obstacles for intensification of cooperation, and investigating how the lessons learned from the previous cooperation within the project can be replicated into future intensified cooperation between the two nations. In that context, the purpose of this study is to continue with the contribution of the building of good neighbourly relations between Greece and North Macedonia by joint actions of two civil society organizations and facilitating the implementation of the Prespa Agreement through evidence-based research, promotion of good practices and lessons learned and providing policy recommendations. More specifically, the objectives of the present study are to support the implementation of the Prespa Agreement and specifically chapter six on cooperation in the fields of research and education by establishing a functional framework of cooperation.

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The authors gratefully acknowledge the contribution of our interviewees and informants as well as to all those who provided their knowledge and observations, constructive feedback, information and ideas during the process of data collection and analysis. Without their insight this study report will be incomplete. It goes without saying that the research assistantship provided during the study was immense and the authors would sincerely acknowledge research assistants contribution in this regard. The authors would also like to thank Julianne Funk for her editorial work in the draft text of the report.

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CONTENTS

▶ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	10
▶ KEY FINDINGS	14
▶ ABSTRACT	15
▶ 1. INTRODUCTION	16
▶ 2. METHODOLOGY	17
▶ 3. A NEW ERA: THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF COOPERATION	19
▶ 3.1. THE PRESPA AGREEMENT	19
▶ 4. MOVING BEYOND CONFRONTATION: THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION	24
▶ 5. STARTING OFF: COOPERATION UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES	26
▶ 6. WHAT & HOW: THE BASICS OF COOPERATION	29
▶ 7. DOING IT: THE KEY ELEMENTS OF AND THE CHALLENGES TO COOPERATION	35
▶ 8. MOVING BEYOND: THE COOPERATION DIVIDEND OF THE PRESPA AGREEMENT	45
▶ 9. UNDERSTANDING A COMPLEX CASE: ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS ON A DIFFICULT COOPERATION	52
▶ 10. LOOKING FORWARD: FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORKS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN GREECE AND NORTH MACEDONIA	56
▶ 11. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	63
▶ REFERENCES	67
▶ LIST OF INTERVIEWS PER FIELD OF RESEARCH (CIVIL SOCIETY, CULTURE AND EDUCATION/RESEARCH) IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER	69

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

) GENERAL

This report is the fruit of a research conducted jointly in the course of 2019 by the South-East Europe Programme of the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) from Athens, Greece and the think tank Analytika from Skopje, North Macedonia, as part of a project funded by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The main purpose of the report is to provide a comprehensive overview and an analysis on the current state of affairs when it comes to cooperation between Greece and North Macedonia in the fields of Education/ Research, Culture and Civil Society/ NGOs. Following the signing (June 2018) and the ratification (North Macedonia: June 2018, Greece: January 2019) of the Prespa Agreement the two countries signed a series of bilateral Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding in order to enhance cooperation in fields such as economy, defense, transports, telecommunications and cross-border crossings. They also signed an “Action Plan” in order to enrich and intensify their cooperation in the fields of education, research, culture and youth. Therefore, our report aims to map out the dynamics of cooperation in these fields in past periods but also in the light of the recent landmark agreements between the two countries.

) OBJECTIVE OF THE REPORT

The objectives of the research are three-fold:

a) to provide a detailed outline of the political framework (national, regional and international), the difficulties in past periods and all the recent developments that led to the Prespa Agreement and the subsequent bilateral Agreements that inaugurated a new era for cooperation.

b) to provide empirical data on the assessment of the cooperation in the three distinct areas of education/ research, culture and civil society/ NGOs through a series of interviews with an important number of relevant stakeholders from both countries. These interviews contain an assessment of cooperation in the pre-Prespa period but also the assessment of the impact of the Prespa Agreement on further cooperation.

c) to contribute at the level of policy recommendations with specific policy themes and suggestions stemming from the interviews with the stakeholders and more generally with an elaborate discussion and analysis of the conditions under which the Prespa Agreement could indeed become a functional framework for cooperation.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured in 11 chapters. Chapter 1 (Introduction) presents the general subject of this report which includes both the assessment of cooperation in the fields of education/ research, culture and civil society/ NGOs as well as the mapping out of the potential for furthering and strengthening bilateral cooperation on the basis of a functional and effective Prespa framework.

Chapter 2 (“Methodology”) presents the two key methodological components of this research: a) the semi- structured interviews conducted with the stakeholders (36 in total, Civil Society/ NGOs: 14, Culture: 10, Education/ Research: 12) and the literature review combined with a collection of relevant data and documents.

Chapter 3 (“A new era: the political context of cooperation”) begins with a reference to the historical framework and the impact that the three-decade long “name dispute” had on bilateral cooperation. Subsequently, it focuses on the political framework leading to the signing of the Prespa Agreement with elements of analysis from the national (Greece, North Macedonia), regional (Balkans) and international level (EU, NATO, key actors). It also, highlights the significance of the Prespa Agreement as a landmark with political and cultural implications.

Chapter 4 (“Moving beyond confrontation: the spirit of cooperation”) takes a closer look at the immediate aftermath of the Prespa Agreement when it comes to strengthening bilateral cooperation. Though it may be early to formulate definite answers as to the impact of the Agreement, the chapter argues that already, in the post- Prespa period, the paradigm for cooperation has already shifted to patterns emphasizing bilateral cooperation and not only multilateral.

Chapters 5 to 8 contain the presentation of the main findings from the interviews.

Chapter 5 (“Starting off: Cooperation under difficult circumstances”) focuses on determining the timeframe for the beginning of cooperation in the three fields of interest.

Chapter 6 (“What and How: The basic of cooperation”) deals with the typologies of cooperation with the fields studied and also with the general framework for cooperation (bilateral, multilateral)

Chapter 7 (“Doing it: The key elements of and Challenges to Cooperation”) provides the findings from the interviews with the stakeholders when it comes to more qualitative aspects of cooperation and in particular the following: a) whether cooperation with either Greece or North Macedonia was different from experiences with other Balkan countries, b) the evaluation of cooperation, c) obstacles to cooperation and d) the reaction of the media and the general public to cooperation.

Chapter 8 (“Moving Beyond: the Cooperation Dividend of Prespa Agreement”) also focuses on more qualitative aspects and in concrete terms with the two following questions: a) the assessment of the impact of the Prespa Agreement on cooperation and b) the suggestions and ideas of the stakeholders for improving cooperation in their respective fields.

Chapter 9 (“Understanding a Complex Case: Analysis and Observations on a Difficult Cooperation”) summarizes the key findings stemming from the interviews and also provides concluding remarks for each of the three distinct fields, education/research, civil society/NGO’s and culture.

Chapter 10 (“Forward Looking Perspective: A functional framework of cooperation between Greece and North Macedonia”) provides comprehensive insights with regard to the desired characteristics of a functional framework of cooperation between the two countries. In particular, it proposes a series of components of such a framework and also the challenges and the factors which will be determinant for its function. This chapter provides elements of a theoretical conceptualization of existing patterns of cooperation between Greece and North Macedonia and also outlines key factors that need to be taken into account so that the potential to enhance and improve cooperation in the light of the Prespa Agreement becomes fully exploited.

Given that certain conditions are met, the two countries can move towards establishing and developing solid foundations for cooperation that fit the pattern of “intended” (purposeful and targeted) and not simply “responsive” (response to pressure or financial incentives) cooperation.

Such a framework must aim at upgrading bilateral cooperation and this will depend on a series of factors including: political support, track two dialogue, norms- focused cooperation, focus on real problems, peer-to-peer learning and partnerships and a well- designed Prespa Fund which can channel state and EU funds to cooperation initiatives in the areas of education, research, culture and civil society with an emphasis on youth NGOs.

A number of possible challenges to the development of this framework must also be taken into account such as: governance, resources, infrastructure, capacity, domestic politics, the process of North Macedonia’s EU accession as well as personal contacts.

Chapter 11 (“Policy Recommendations”) contains a series of policy recommendations destined to various key actors and stakeholders at four levels: a) the governments of Greece and North Macedonia, b) the EU Commission c) actors in the civil society, education, research and culture and d) to local governments.

To the governments of Greece and North Macedonia

- The Prespa Agreement: it is imperative that implementation of the Agreement should continue as expected and without serious delays; prevarications or/and delays in implementation are undermining bilateral rapprochement and cooperation and by implication run counter to the interest of the two countries.

- Prespa Fund and/or Greece-North Macedonia Youth Office: There is significant potential for the development of bilateral cooperation, for example in higher education, that has to be encouraged and actively supported, including with the provision of financial support. The governments of the two countries should consider setting up a fund and an office that will be dedicated to the cooperation among Greece and North Macedonia, as also agreed in the Action Plan of 2 April 2019.

- Cross-border infrastructure: The two governments should continue investing in road, rail, and air connections between the two countries.

- Twinning among local governments: The governments of Greece and North Macedonia should encourage local governments and municipalities to seek partnerships and possibilities of signing twinning agreements across the border.

- Prespa Park euro-region: The two governments should encourage and facilitate the engagement of municipalities bordering the Prespa Lake in the Prespa Park euro-region; municipalities should internalize the plans as regards the Prespa Park euro-region in their own municipal plans and ensure that the earlier adopted plans and measures are implemented.

To the European Commission

- Accession talks for North Macedonia: Delay in the start of accession talks hampers the cooperation between the two countries. Therefore, the accession talks should be ensured that it is launched as soon as possible in order to maintain the momentum established by the Prespa Agreement.

- Increasing and adapting Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) funds: The European Commission should consider increasing funds dedicated to CBC between the two countries; the European Commission should also aim to adapt existing financing planning to match the objectives of implementing the positive agenda of the Prespa Agreement.

To actors in civil society, education, research and culture

- Institutional capacities: Actors in these fields should invest in their staff (e.g. training) in order to increase absorption capacity of programs allowing for greater cooperation.

- People to people contacts: introduce initiatives that will aim to increase people to people contacts across the border, and if possible establish permanent links that will create continuity and reduce dependency upon the role of personalities.

- Track two dialogue: civil society actors should consider establishing loose mechanisms such as civic coalitions.

KEY FINDINGS

) IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION/RESEARCH:

- There is an overwhelmingly positive disposition in stakeholders from both countries when it comes to the need for furthering and strengthening cooperation.
- In their description and assessment of past experiences of cooperation, stakeholders from both countries stressed that in this field cooperation took place mainly at a multilateral level (EU funded programmes) and less at a direct and bilateral level. Thus, one of their main suggestions for improving cooperation is the development of a bilateral “Greece- North Macedonia” framework.
- This trait affected the nature and the form of cooperation (more examples of an “ad hoc” cooperation rather than an effective and continuous cooperation including important components such as student and academic staff mobility, common curricula and joint implementation of research projects.
- In their assessment of the impact of the Prespa Agreement, many stakeholders point out to factors such as the government support and funding for enhancing cooperation and also factors such as the progress of the EU accession of North Macedonia.

) IN THE FIELD OF CULTURE:

- Most stakeholders from both countries evaluated in positive manner their experience of cooperation and they expressed the desire for furthering cooperation.
- In their assessment of past experiences, they highlighted the fact that cooperation in the field of culture is very recent (2010’s) and that is very sporadic. Furthermore, it very rarely takes place in the context of the EU funded programmes, something which implies a lack of resources and opportunities. Accordingly, one of their main suggestions is the need to drastically increase the examples of cooperation.
- In their assessment of the impact of the Prespa Agreement they appear to be optimistic, with some of them stressing, however, that a number of conditions must be fulfilled in order for the Agreement to yield important results.

) IN THE FIELD OF CIVIL SOCIETY/NGOs:

- In their vast majority, stakeholders from both countries evaluated in a very positive manner their cooperation and expressed the need to further and enhance this cooperation.
- In a way similar to what has taken place in Education/Research, it seems that the EU- multilateral framework has been the main channel and platform sustaining cooperation.
- From that perspective, many stakeholders stressed the need for the creation of networks in order to multiply the contacts at the level of the civil society. This can lead to the multiplication of cases of cooperation.
- The impact of the Prespa Agreement is clearly seen as positive.

ABSTRACT

For decades, the relations between Greece and North Macedonia were clouded by the existence of a controversial name dispute that hampered the development of good neighbourly relations. The signing of the Prespa Agreement has opened window of opportunity for the government and non-governmental actors to engage on furthering the cooperation between the two societies. The Prespa Agreement has established a new momentum for transforming relations, particularly as regards cooperation in the fields of civil society, culture, education and research. However, the current level of cooperation in these fields is not satisfactory and current frameworks at the national, regional and international levels for bilateral relations do not provide a comprehensive framework for realizing the potential of a strategic partnership as set in the Prespa Agreement. The transformation of relations is still at a surface level with high potential for intensification depending on developments within internal political challenges. Thus, for strong and sustainable cooperation there is a need for rethinking and rearranging some of the available instruments for cooperation.

Key words: Prespa agreement, Greece, North Macedonia, research, education, civil society, culture

1. INTRODUCTION

What is the level of cooperation between Greece and North Macedonia in the fields of research, education, civil society and culture? What form can a functional framework of cooperation take in order to enhance bilateral cooperation? Ideas around furthering cooperation across the border between Greece and North Macedonia have gained ground recently, particularly following the signature of the Prespa Agreement in 2018 that ended the three-decade name dispute between these two countries. The Agreement ended the name dispute and envisioned a strategic partnership between the two countries with a dedicated chapter on cooperation in the fields of research, education, civil society and culture^[2]. The potential for strong bilateral cooperation has emerged as complementary to the existing forms of cooperation at the regional and European frameworks.

This study maps and analyses the existing cooperation between the two countries in the fields of research, education, civil society and culture and proposes a functional framework for future cooperation modalities in these fields. The study takes stock of the current status and trends of cooperation, seeks to identify factors that encourage or hinder the cooperation and reflects on a possible new cooperation agenda in the new era of relationship between the two countries as promoted by the 2018 Prespa Agreement^[3].

The study is guided by what has been achieved so far, specifically in the work of the governmental and non-governmental stakeholders from both Greece and North Macedonia and other key stakeholders. The discussion below includes concrete cases of cooperation, presents the various types of institutions involved and the use of different mechanisms and modalities used for cooperation. It provides evidence on how, when and why the cooperation has worked.

The study also proposes a potentially functional framework of cooperation as an opportunity to intensify and to strengthen cooperation. From the Prespa Agreement and discussions thereafter in both Greece and North Macedonia, it has become clear that a broad consensus is developing on the importance of good cooperation. However, it is also clear that many questions about bilateral cooperation remain unresolved, such as the political uncertainties and willingness or unwillingness for more cooperation, readiness of relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders for cooperation, resources and funds available, and how some of the past or current cases of successful cooperation can be scaled up. The issue of trust in building sustainable cooperation seems not being fully conceded. By addressing some of these questions, the study aims to critically point out issues of importance in strengthening and further intensifying and enriching bilateral cooperation in the wake of the Prespa Agreement.

2. METHODOLOGY

Some recent studies on the Prespa Agreement have examined its historical and political implications. However, the sectorial analysis of the agreement and its broader political implications are lacking. Hence, analysis and mapping of bilateral relations in specific sectors such as civil society, culture, research and education are important. For example, what cooperation is there already between the two countries in the fields of civil society, culture, research and education and how do the relevant actors position themselves as regards the Prespa Agreement? Has the agreement triggered a change in the behaviour of relevant actors towards cooperation? In this light, the study looks to map and to reveal the content of the cooperation and tap on potential for furthering cooperation in these related fields.

The study focuses on analysis of cooperation in the following sectors: civil society, culture, education and research. These fields of cooperation have been chosen for this study due to the fact that they have been explicitly mentioned in the Prespa Agreement of 2018 as well as in the Action Plan of 2019 for intensification of bilateral cooperation. While the term civil society may encompass all other sectors as well, here the civil society relates only to institutions that are organized in the form of non-governmental organizations. In the sector of education and research, the focus has been on the higher education institutions, universities and research institutes such as research centres and think tanks. The cooperation at the lower level of education such as primary, secondary and vocational education has not been subject to analysis in this study. In the field of culture, the main attention has been given to museums and to civil society organizations active in the field of cultural exchange.

The study was accomplished by identifying the cases of bilateral cooperation projects and initiatives as well as related actors leading the initiatives. The study is based on field research in the form of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from both Greece and North Macedonia in the sectors identified as pillars of social change, such as civil society, culture, universities and research centres. 40 detailed interviews were conducted with organizations known to have had cooperation across the border in both Greece and North Macedonia in the period of September to November 2019, the list of which is found in the references of this study.

All interviews aimed to find answers to a series of questions that were agreed in the inception workshop of the project held in Skopje on 5-6 September 2019. The questions included the following:

1. When did the cooperation begin to take place between the two countries in the fields of civil society, culture, research and education?
2. What was the content of such cooperation?

3. Did the cooperation take place in the context of the EU and other regional/ multi-lateral frameworks or was it bilateral?
4. Was the cooperation with organizations from Greece or North Macedonia similar to that with other Balkan countries or different?
5. How would you evaluate this cooperation? Was the cooperation a positive or a negative experience?
6. What was the response of the local society and the media towards this cooperation?
7. How could this cooperation be enhanced and improved?
8. What was the effect of the Prespa Agreement upon bilateral cooperation?
9. What could be the restraints or obstacles, if any, on the development of bilateral cooperation?

The study also builds upon existing literature and findings that are of relevance to this study, such as project documents. Desk research as well as the information provided by the interviews identified a series of documents and other material related to bilateral cooperation between the two countries. By means of a qualitative approach, this data facilitated the assessment of cooperation between the two countries. It also enabled the proposition of recommendations with a view to establishing a functional framework for future cooperation in the fields of civil society, culture, research and education.

The study is structured in the following sections. After the introductory remarks (Chapter 1) and the description of the methodology (Chapter 2), the study describes the context of cooperation with a particular focus on the Prespa Agreement (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 describes how the Prespa Agreement has facilitated the emergence of a new spirit of cooperation between the two countries. Chapter 5 provides a map of cooperation practices in the fields of civil society, culture, research and education with emphasis on the chronology of cooperation. Chapter 6 describes the typologies of cooperation in the fields of civil society, culture, research and education with a particular interest on the content of cooperation initiatives. Chapter 7 deals with the challenges affecting the potential for cooperation in the fields of civil society, culture, research and education by highlighting the lessons learned from past experiences and identifying a series of obstacles. Chapter 8 provides an assessment of the impact of the Prespa Agreement and suggestions on how to improve cooperation on the basis of a functional framework of cooperation in the fields of civil society, culture, research and education. Chapter 9 offers a more elaborate analysis on the basis of the key findings of this research. Chapter 10 outlines and explores the perspectives of a functional framework of cooperation between the two countries while Chapter 11 proposes a series of policy recommendations to the relevant stakeholders, including the governments of Greece and North Macedonia, municipal authorities, the Eu-

ropean Commission and actors in civil society, culture, education and research.

3. A NEW ERA: THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF COOPERATION

In order to be able to understand the current cooperation and to elaborate a future framework of cooperation in the fields of civil society, culture, research and education between Greece and North Macedonia, we have to take a closer look at the context that has affected this cooperation.

Following the diplomatic standoff, caused by the so-called “name dispute” at the beginning of the 1990s, a first step for the normalization of bilateral relations between Greece and North Macedonia was taken in September 1995, with the signing of the Interim Agreement of New York that regulated significant aspects of bilateral relations, but leaving the name dispute unresolved. And although bilateral relations developed and in some areas, like the economy, flourished, during the subsequent years the name dispute cast a long shadow on other crucial aspects of relations, affecting negatively both institutional, state to state relations and mutual public perceptions. What could be described as stagnation in bilateral relations and even actual deterioration after 2008 began to change only with the signing and implementation of the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in June 2015. The CBMs allowed for a noticeable improvement of bilateral relations in crucial areas like Home Affairs (Christidis and Paschalidis, 2018). However, the most impactful development in bilateral relations was the signing of the Prespa Agreement in 2018 that ended the three-decade name dispute between the two countries. Thus, it is important to consider the Prespa Agreement as a determining factor and as a framework for current and future cooperation.

) 3.1.THE PRESPA AGREEMENT

Greece and North Macedonia agreed on 12 June 2019 and signed on 17 June 2019 a deal known as the Prespa Agreement ending the name dispute. The Agreement was named after the place where it was signed, the village of Psarades in Prespes, Greece, on the shores of Lake Prespa, which spans the countries' borders (Reuters, 2018). The official name of the agreement signed by the two sides is: ‘Final Agreement for the settlement of the differences as described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the establishment of a Strategic Partnership between the Parties’. The deal gave the name ‘Republic of North Macedonia’ or in short ‘North Macedonia’, to the country which since the break-up of former Yugoslavia called itself the Republic of Macedonia and was recognized by the United Nations as ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’. In Macedonian, the new name is

“Severna Makedonija” written in the Cyrillic alphabet. Under the agreement, the name Republic of North Macedonia will be used internationally and domestically (Balkan Insight 2018a). The country’s language will be called Macedonian and its people will be known as Macedonians/citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia^[4]. Greece had objected to the name, fearing territorial claims on its eponymous northern region. The northern province of Greece is also called Macedonia.

Since 1991, Greece opposed the new state’s use of the name Macedonia, which it saw as a territorial and cultural claim against Greece (Brown, 2019; Christopoulou and Roumeliotou, 2014). Since 1994, UN mediator Matthew Nimetz sought common ground through shuttle diplomacy, which eventually led to the deal (BBC, 2018). Following the signing of the Prespa Agreement, Greece sent a letter to both the EU, withdrawing its objection to accession talks for North Macedonia, and NATO. This was followed by the adoption of conclusions on the EU-Western Balkans stabilisation and association process by the EU General Affairs Council on 26 June 2018, in which it agreed to respond positively to the progress made by North Macedonia and set out the path towards opening accession negotiations in June 2019. Then at the Brussels summit of 11 July 2018, NATO heads of state and government decided to invite North Macedonia to begin accession talks to join the Alliance.

In this spirit of positive developments, a referendum was held in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on its name change, which failed to reach the necessary threshold, though 90% of those who took part favoured the change (BBC, 2018). The new name was approved by the Parliament of North Macedonia and the constitution was changed on 11 January 2019 (Armakolas et al. 2019). The Greek Parliament then ratified the Prespa Agreement and the Protocol on the Accession of Macedonia to NATO with a narrow majority (Brown 2019). North Macedonia signed the Accession protocol with NATO on 6 February 2019, which will help the country become NATO’s 30th member (Armakolas et al., 2019). On 8 February 2019, Greece became the first NATO member to ratify the protocol (Garding, 2018). The Prespa Agreement entered into force on 12 February 2019. In April 2019, the European Commission outlined plans to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia, only to fail to do so in the June and October 2019 summits of the EU leaders. The NATO membership process was nearing its completion at the time of preparation of this study.

As a result of these events, the new name can now be seen on all government buildings including border crossings. A commission was also set up to look at the two countries’ history textbooks to ensure that there is an objective interpretation of the past (BBC, 2019).

News of the eagerly-awaited breakthrough came after Zoran Zaev’s Social Democratic Union (SDSM), took power in 2017 when it toppled the decade-long authoritarian government of the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE party, which had pursued a policy of so-called antiquisation, which claimed ancient historic symbols and figures such as Philip II and King Alexander the Great in its historical and cultural heritage (Satanakis, 2018). In the context

of this policy, it erected a massive equestrian statue of Alexander the Great and of Philip II in the central square of the capital Skopje, renamed Skopje's airport and the motorway from Skopje to the Greek border after Alexander the Great and Skopje's main stadium after Philip II, all of which were considered to be provocations, further deteriorating unstable relations with Greece in the aftermath of Bucharest Summit in 2008. However, at the January 2018 Davos Economic Forum, Zoran Zaev of North Macedonia and Alexis Tsipras of Greece spoke at length, agreeing that the time had come for a serious attempt to resolve the dispute. The Zaev government set the stage for a deal in February 2018 when it dropped the name of Alexander the Great from Skopje's airport, renaming it "International airport Skopje", as well as and from the motorway linking the two countries, renaming it "Friendship" (Balkan Insight, 2018b).

The Prespa deal was the end of one of the toughest bilateral disputes in Europe's recent history (Balkan Insight, 2018b). Among the many disputes that have cast dark clouds over the Western Balkan region, none has been more symbolic of the toxic mixture of history and nationalism than the longstanding name dispute between Greece and North Macedonia (Brown, 2019). The relations between the two neighbours were strained for decades, with Greece constantly blocking the country's European integration process and imposing a trade embargo against it and the latter repeatedly provoking Greece, which only added more tension to the situation (Satanakis, 2018). Regardless of hostile rhetoric by some parts of the population in both countries, the significance of the Prespa Agreement and its heavy symbolism is not to be underestimated. It should be interpreted as a rare moment of success for the European Union but also for the Republic of North Macedonia, whose people are ready to see their country officially join the rest of the Western world. As for Greece, the government's efforts and determination to reach a compromise with its neighbour after almost 30 years is notable.

Although the Prespa Agreement is regarded as the key that could open the door to permanent peace and reconciliation in this troubled region, one process deserves special attention: changing the hearts and mindsets of Greek and Macedonian citizens alike will be quite difficult due to linkages with ethnic and cultural identity but also national pride, and thus will undoubtedly take some time. It is therefore particularly important that the Prespa Agreement survives and is continuously supported by both countries in the future (Satanakis, 2018). The process leading towards the Prespa Agreement was wearisome, politically exhausting and at times highly controversial, but ultimately it was a process that proved successful, despite opposition or even hostility on both sides.

The Prespa Agreement defies historical determinism in the Balkans. After almost three decades of mistrust, perceived provocations and international power games between two neighbouring countries, the new agreement sends a positive message of compromise, cooperation and a strong desire for European integration coming from the Western Balkans. Amidst pending bilateral disputes in the region, such as the one between Serbia and

Kosovo or the constant ethnopolitical fragmentation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Greece demonstrated that the appeal of the European project can prevail in the Balkans. Crucial to the agreement is its role as a framework for settling difficult questions linked with identity and heritage. The Prespa Agreement established a space for coexistence and cooperation despite disagreements.

Confident and assertive political leadership was a key prerequisite for settling the name dispute. Strong leadership in both countries was essential for the resolution of the dispute. In North Macedonia, the Colourful Revolution, launched in 2015, and its aftermath facilitated the negotiations and increased the preparedness to accept a compromise. The society of North Macedonia was not enthusiastic about the agreement, but accepted it in order to lift the deadlock and the frustrating lack of alternatives. Both Zaev and Tsipras had strategic considerations when negotiating and implementing the Prespa Agreement. They both used the settlement of the name dispute to reshape the political landscape and transform the ideological field. Zaev used the agreement to confront the political legacy of the Gruevski era, to undermine nationalist hegemony in the country and to open the path for NATO and EU membership, which is the most obvious policy goal that unites ethnic Macedonians and Albanians in the country (the 'One Society for All' doctrine).

In both countries, Russia exerted its influence in the direction of sabotaging the agreement. However, the Russian 'spoiling' influence was no match for the strong push by the two governments and the support of Western governments and officials. When it comes to relations between North Macedonia and Greece, all diplomatic breakthroughs in the past took place in the context of increased international interest in the region with a view to promoting regional stability. The lifting of the Greek embargo, the Interim Accord, the rapprochement from the early 2000s – all happened in the context of security crises, either as an initiative to create a buffer zone towards Serbia or as an effort to stabilize North Macedonia. Similarly, the Prespa Agreement came against the backdrop of increased interest in resolving the Kosovo dispute and securing peace in the Balkans in the light of Russian interference in the region. Strong domestic democratic agency coupled with the geopolitical interests of the West were key ingredients in the recipe for the Prespa Agreement.

However, the Prespa Agreement has also demonstrated that international pressure is insufficient for bold foreign policy readjustments. Strong domestic agency backed by European/Western support can achieve significant foreign policy objectives even when these are opposed by other powerful outside actors, such as Russia. The latter's 'spoiling' capacity could be neutralised given the right mix of domestic agency and foreign support (Armakolas and Petkovski, 2019). The Prespa Agreement itself is a genuine compromise; it has delivered an adequate resolution and transformed the two countries from neighbours into allies bound by a treaty (Friedman, 2019). The Prespa Agreement turned out to be a landmark for a region trapped in the politics of animosity for almost thirty years

(Satanakis, 2018). According to the UN Secretary General, it demonstrates that even seemingly intractable issues can be resolved through dialogue and political will (UN, 2019). The Agreement was hailed by EU officials, who praised both countries for setting 'an example of reconciliation for Europe' (BBC, 2019). In the words of Zaeu, the Prespa Agreement 'brings us a friend that many said was an irreconcilable enemy' (Balkan Insight, 2018b). Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov of North Macedonia stated that the deal can 'be the beginning of a long friendship between Greece and North Macedonia. ... We can't change our past, but we can and we will shape our future of friendship, partnership and cooperation' (AP, 2019). Thus, a new mood has emerged between the governments to leave the days of dispute behind and lay the foundations for sound cooperation. Thus, the Prespa Agreement became a driver of bilateral cooperation.

On 2 April 2019, the two governments signed the Action Plan on the intensification and enrichment of cooperation, as provided for in the Prespa Agreement^[9]. The Action Plan has dedicated a section on cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, and research. In the field of education and science, the parties agreed to explore ways of enhancing their cooperation by promoting synergies at all educational levels between schools, universities and research institutions, by providing scholarships and by supporting the participation of academics and students in bilateral and international scientific conferences. For this purpose, the parties will examine the possibility to work on finalizing an Agreement on education. In the field of culture, the parties placed special emphasis on the development of their cultural relations and people to people contacts, with a particular attention to arts, dance, cinematography, music and theatre. In the field of research, the parties will explore ways of enhancing their cooperation in the field of research, technology and innovation, joint research projects in the field of science and technology, exchange of scientists and experts, contacts and cooperation on innovative technologies among academic teams, research centres, institutes and other scientific organizations. In the field of youth, the parties will invest efforts to establish a Greece – North Macedonia Youth Office as a body that will work on improving ties between young people in both countries, strengthen their mutual understanding and promote, encourage and facilitate meetings and exchanges between young people.

4. MOVING BEYOND CONFRONTATION: THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

This chapter provides a general overview of the immediate effects of the Prespa Agreement when it comes to shifting the paradigm of cooperation between the countries towards a more proactive disposition at both the bilateral and multilateral level.

In the period following the signing of the Prespa Agreement, the efforts to establish bilateral cooperation were considerably expanded and intensified. This cooperation took many forms: bilateral agreements^[6], regular meetings among country officials at the political and expert level and intensified cooperation among the businesses and civil society actors. The Prespa Agreement also played a significant role in raising awareness in both countries for the need to upgrade cooperation.

The ‘Prespa factor’ has functioned in two ways: as an instrument for confidence building and as a means for furthering actual cooperation by providing a roadmap. A major change that occurred with the Prespa Agreement was the gradual restructuring of the role of North Macedonia. The country’s record, particularly in the period between 2006 and 2016, was populist and authoritarian, with negative implications for bilateral cooperation. Steps were taken then in the direction of obstructing rather than facilitating the resolution. However, the situation changed drastically with the arrival of Zaev’s government in 2017. The populist legacy left by the previous government was reversed and efforts and energy were directed towards a swift resolution of the name dispute and the improvement of bilateral cooperation with Greece.

Although short of full accession to the EU, the Prespa Agreement has proved its importance in many different aspects. Despite the initial perception that the Prespa Agreement will be purely of technical character, it has shown the potential of becoming an engine for providing new vision and strategy for the future of North Macedonia through strengthening bilateral relations with Greece. It has provided an avenue for establishing and nurturing good neighbourly relations without which strategic objective of Euro Atlantic integration cannot be reachable. At the domestic level in North Macedonia, the government, in power since 2017, has set among its top priorities the deepening of democracy and an extroverted foreign policy that could speed up the country’s EU accession. This government managed to end the name dispute and has been pursuing to enhance cooperation with neighbouring Greece.

Thus, since 2018, Greece - North Macedonia relations have moved from crisis to cooperation. History has taught Greeks and Macedonians alike the need for good neighbourly relations. Some of that optimism has re-emerged with the Prespa Agreement. With the Prespa Agreement, bilateral cooperation should be seen as an opportunity for establishing more effective bonds at many levels. Civil society actors in both countries are notably more outward-oriented than previously, as evidenced in several proposals for further cooperation re-

ported in this study's interviews. These proposals are discussed in subsequent chapters, below.

Prior to the Prespa Agreement, the overwhelming tendency on both sides was to cooperate mainly via multilateral or regional cooperation frameworks such as the EU's framework for Cross Border Cooperation (Interreg IIIA, IPA-CBC, South-East Europe/ Balkan and Western Balkan initiatives). With the Prespa Agreement, the need for cooperation including in the fields of education, research, civil society and culture has been revalued. While there is now an increase in contact between organizations on both sides of the border, this inter-organizational networking - mainly developed through prior personal acquaintances- is based on contact existing prior to the Prespa Agreement. Nevertheless, the agreement has shifted the paradigm for stakeholders in the sense that they can now more easily view their counterparts as close neighbours or partners for projects of common interests. The current cooperation culture can be regarded as more positive with increased levels of trust. While both countries do face genuine political problems, the current cooperation spirit tends to incorporate optimism in its outlook. This mindset can help both sides to preserve the current momentum for reforms and initiatives and eventually upgrading cooperation.

It was under the Greek presidency of the EU in 2003 that the perspective for EU membership was offered to North Macedonia and to other Western Balkan countries. Greece did not oppose North Macedonia's EU candidate status, gained in December 2005 and visa liberalization gained in December 2009. It also did not oppose its Membership Action Plan status with NATO adopted in April 1999. It was Greece that played a prominent role in supporting NATO's engagement in North Macedonia. Greece contributed a large number of troops to the NATO Military Missions in North Macedonia and has preserved strong bilateral defense and economic cooperation (Kofos and Vlasidis, 2005). However, the current, improved political climate for bilateral cooperation and regional interaction must be capitalized on by both sides. This applies to all levels and fields of interest and particularly to educational institutions and research institutes that already have a positive record of cooperation at the multilateral level.

In the light of the resolution of the name dispute with the signing of the Prespa Agreement, there is now an even greater need to sustain and strengthen trust and cooperation between the two countries. The implementation of the Prespa Agreement requires a substantial involvement from many sectors of the two societies, including the government, the business sector as well as civil society. The role of the civil society in upgrading bilateral cooperation has become of the utmost importance. Hence, a key priority must be to keep investing in the building of good and strong relationships between non-governmental organizations across the border. This will substantially assist the state institutions in the successful implementation of the provisions of the agreement and the effort to promote good neighbourly relations.

It will be important to assess the expectations and the challenges for cooperation: How can it be maximized instead of being insufficient and hesitant?

5. STARTING OFF: COOPERATION UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

On the basis of the information provided by the stakeholders interviewed in both countries, this chapter aims at offering a comprehensive view on the timeframe in which the contacts and more generally the cooperation between the two countries began and intensified in the three fields studied.

) 5.1. CIVIL SOCIETY/NGOS

Our findings suggest that cooperation between NGOs intensified in the early and mid-2000s, although there are also examples from the 1990s.

In the case of North Macedonia, an increase of cooperation between NGOs started to appear after 2001 when the number of NGOs began increasing in North Macedonia. Occasionally, there have been examples of cooperation even during the 1990s. Initial contact has been through individual networking. International organizations or institutions have been pioneers in providing frameworks for cooperation. According to information provided in our interviews, the East-West Institute of New York and the OSCE have provided support for the beginning of closer cooperation mainly focusing on building economic links through entrepreneurs in the border region during the 1990s. The majority of joint cooperation has been ad-hoc, initiated by Greek partners and exclusively through individual connections. Also, some NGOs from North Macedonia have not yet had some cooperation with Greek NGOs, but hope to establish cooperation in the wake of the Prespa Agreement. For some NGOs, particularly those in the border regions such as Bitola, the cooperation has been more regular and intensive. One particular area of cooperation in the field of youth has been running very effectively for many years with support from the international community's funding. Another area of intensive cooperation has been the establishment of the euro-region around Prespa Lake.

In the case of Greece, although the first example of cooperation among four Greek NGOs – studied in this research - with stakeholders from North Macedonia took place in 2005 (ten years after the Interim Agreement) thus generating scepticism regarding an obvious time-lapse, it is remarkable that all four Greek NGOs under examination in this study started their cooperation with stakeholders from North Macedonia quite soon after their establishment, while partners from North Macedonia were among the first partners they cooperated with abroad. As it is also remarkable that once initiated, cooperation with stakeholders from North Macedonia continued on a regular basis.

) 5.2. CULTURE

The interviews with stakeholders from both countries indicated that cooperation in this field became more intense and effective in the course of the 2010s though examples of cooperation in earlier periods, particularly the 1990s and the 2000s, also occurred.

However, actual cooperation among stakeholders in the field of culture examined for this study began with a considerable delay: the first such cooperation took place in 1999 four years following the signing the Interim Agreement of New York (September 1995) that opened the way for the normalization of bilateral relations. A time-lapse that could be explained in terms of the ‘continued shadow’ of the name-dispute upon bilateral relations, both in the sense of concern on the part of stakeholders vis-à-vis a public opinion that wasn’t positively inclined towards bilateral cooperation and of the lack of a state policy encouraging such a cooperation, given the virtual dependency for the plurality of stakeholders involved on state funding. In most of the cases under examination, stakeholders initiated cooperation in the 2000s, while in four of the seven cases studied for this purpose the cooperation was initiated quite recently, after 2013.

) 5.3. EDUCATION/RESEARCH

The interviews conducted with institutions of higher education and research suggest that cooperation in this field has been rather sporadic though it is not recent. They do not provide enough evidence that would enable one to specifically point out the timeframe of intensification of cooperation.

In the case of North Macedonia, the interviewees stressed the fact that willingness to cooperate has existed for practical reasons and that it has mostly been unstructured or ‘ad hoc’. Out of interviewees, St. Kliment Ohridski University in Bitola, Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies had the very first university cooperation in partnership with the municipality of Bitola in building a ‘Development of Internet Information Server’ in May 2000. In other cases, there were only some initial contacts or the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding but no follow up or a plan for activities which could indicate a longstanding cooperation experience. Furthermore, it seems that despite the establishment of cooperation activities, there were few commitments for continuation. Despite a limited commitment, a readiness to cooperate does seem to exist. Moreover, almost all interviewees are very optimistic that the post Prespa period will gradually change universities’ approaches to cooperation by intensifying contacts in partnering with Greek universities in competition for EU-funded research projects. A few interviewees did mention their expectations of increasing the number of student exchanges although this could take a while until it is fully utilized, given the low number of student exchanges in North Macedonia in general.

In the case of Greece, most interviewees referred to the most recent period (2010s) as the main timeframe concerning their cooperation with similar institutions of North Macedonia. It should be noted, however, that some interviewees were aware of the fact that their institutions did cooperate in previous periods (2000s), as was the case with the Department of Regional Development and Cross Border Cooperation of the University of Western Macedonia and the Hellenic Institute of Transport. It is noteworthy that only one interviewee provided a timeframe for the beginning of cooperation prior to the period of the 2000s - the Institute for Balkan Studies of Thessaloniki. In its case, cooperation with similar institutions in North Macedonia began already in the 1960s, long before the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (with the then Socialist Republic of Macedonia).

Indeed, these findings appear to be in accordance with the ones of a previous study on the evolution of cooperation between the two countries in the field of education (Christidis, Paschalidis, 2017). In particular, it was suggested, in previous studies, that cooperation in the field of education began in the 2000s (i.e. students from North Macedonia studying in private higher education institutions in Greece, the implementation of projects funded by the EU multilateral frameworks (Interreg IIIA, Phare, Tempus), which intensified in the 2010s, mainly in multilateral EU frameworks.

A new and significant finding stemming from this research is the existence of cooperation between institutions, such as the Institute for Balkan Studies, during the 1990s. At a more general level, it is once more confirmed that the period of the 1990s has been the most difficult in terms of cooperation in the field of education and research as it was for many other areas of interest.

6. WHAT & HOW: THE BASICS OF COOPERATION

The objective of this chapter is to determine the content of the cooperation between the two countries as well as the framework and platform in which it most commonly took place. In particular, one finds in this chapter elements of typologies of cooperation and indications of whether this cooperation took place at a bilateral and/or at the multilateral level.

) 6.1. CIVIL SOCIETY/NGOS

The interviews in both countries provided evidence that EU funded programmes designed for youth have played a crucial role in establishing and promoting cooperation. The intensity of cooperation focused on youth - reflected in number of exchange of visits, the focus of organizations or events, building partnerships, and its sustainability - proves to be by far more structured and functional than cooperation in other fields.

Interviewees from North Macedonia referred to the most common areas of cooperation, such as business and economic development, education and training, exchange of experiences, study visits, capacity building trainings for youth and the formation of a border euro-region around Prespa lake. The interviewees have mentioned that the increase in economic activity is of great importance for the sustainability of cooperation, therefore, special attention has been given to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship activities such as business to business (BtoB) meetings, the organization of fairs, mayor to mayor meetings, and active participation in joint projects.

EU funded programs have guided the cross-county cooperation, but they were not the only framework. Other bilateral or international funds involved have promoted diversity in the cooperation. According to the interviewees, the projects under the EU's Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) programmes have usually been designed and developed by Greek authorities or partners and delivered to their partners in North Macedonia ready for signature. North Macedonia partners participating in CBC projects are appreciative of this but they do mention the lack of engagement in the actual project development and limited communication. Although there is enough time to create a solid project application after its call for applications is published, most of the work is done at the last minute, with the work on the North Macedonia side work mainly amounting to providing documentation or simple administrative work. However, NGOs with sustainable relations tend to generate ideas for joint cooperation. Again, youth organizations simply prove to be practical in establishing functional cooperation frameworks.

The interviewees from Greek NGOs emphasized the youth mobility exchange programs as the main type of cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders from North Macedonia. In addition, programs concerning professional exchanges, social entrepre-

neurship, democratization and EU 'Interreg' programs have also been used. As noted earlier, cooperation with stakeholders has been characterized by regularity and consistency, probably facilitated by the geographical proximity between Greece and North Macedonia. Another feature concerning cooperation between Greek NGOs and stakeholders from North Macedonia is the presence of EU programs, like Erasmus plus, where such cooperation materialises. The EU programs have been the main supporter of youth mobility programs in Europe; other EU programs, like those supporting social entrepreneurship, have also been used. Additionally, two programs by the German political foundation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, supporting professional exchanges and democratization, were also implemented.

Box 1: Prespa Park, an example of good practice of cooperation.

Prespa Park: It is an initiative launched by the civil society organizations from Greece and North Macedonia aiming at establishing the transboundary park in the region surrounding the lake of Prespa, which is shared by Greece and North Macedonia and Albania as well. It was established in 2000. The Park aimed for establishing the transboundary cooperation that would focus on the conservation and sustainable development priorities of Prespa. The Park initiative demonstrates that even when a region is surrounded by uncertainty and political tension, the potential for cooperation can emerge in other fields of policy that are considered 'de-politicized' such as conservation and sustainable development. On the Macedonian side, an alliance of 25 small local NGOs has been participating in the Prespa Park process; and on the Greek side have been Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP) and WWF-Greece. The initiative has been funded by the two governments, WWF-Greece, as well as German GTZ and MedWet Initiative. This effort paid off as the Prespa municipalities started to have direct communication among them, hold cross-border meetings, and mutually attend events (Christopoulou and Roumeliotou, 2014).

6.2. CULTURE

The types of cooperation mainly evoked by the stakeholders in the field of culture have been festivals, cultural exchanges and exhibitions. Direct contact between the stakeholders across the border appears to have played a minor role in cultural cooperation.

Examining the features of the cooperation itself, the findings of the research point first of all, to cooperation patterns that are characterized mainly by a lack of institutional, regular contacts and cooperation, underlining an existing, weak framework of cooperation. Thus, there are three main features concerning the type of cooperation that has developed between stakeholders in Greece and North Macedonia: cooperation between individual artists from North Macedonia and Greece (five cases, including in the case of Thessaloniki Film Festival), that in most cases is unsystematic and sporadic (limited); limited, one-off cases of cooperation with counterpart institutions (four cases); and only one case of institutional cooperation that continued after it was initiated (the Museums of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki and Skopje). The last case is the only one where the potential for continued, institutional cooperation can be discerned, an outcome due largely to the personal determination shown by the director of the museum in Thessaloniki.

Two patterns of cooperation have emerged in the cases examined: the majority of the cases involved bilateral cooperation schemes with national resources (five), and two cases of participation in multilateral initiatives organized and financed by international organizations (like UNESCO) and a European NGO (Centropa). EU programs featured only in one minor case of a theatrical laboratory (National Theatre of Northern Greece). The case of cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO revealed challenges that emerged right from the beginning. As noted by the curator of the Greek National Historical Museum in Athens:

“The initial idea for the project came in 2010. There was a conference in Thessaloniki (organized by the Archaeological and also the Byzantine Museum) with numerous participants from the Balkans and bigger countries like Italy. There, the idea was born for the museums of the Balkan countries to co-organize an exhibition for such an important subject for the region like identities. A group was created from 12 Balkan countries, including Turkey. Turkey decided to withdraw itself from the project judging that it was very nationalist. We agreed that there would be coordination (information and material) and that all countries could remark on the content that would be presented by the others. There would be freedom to express doubts about the content but the majority would decide in final analysis. The exhibition took place from 2013 to 2015 and it was presented in rotation in all countries. A catalogue was also published” (*National Historical Museum, 5 November 2019*).

Box 2: Thessaloniki Film Festival, an example of good practice of cooperation.

Thessaloniki Film Festival: The festival is among the leading players in Balkan cinema. To that effect, since 1994, it has maintained non-competitive section Balkan Survey which has aimed to showcase films from all ex-communist Balkan countries including North Macedonia. The Balkan section of the festival has helped bring international attention to the cinema of the region. A 'Balkan Forum' also has been organized in the framework of the Festival, which is a meeting among Balkan filmmakers and producers that later led to the formation of the Balkan Film Board. The Festival has also launched a 'Balkan Fund', which focused on script development for Balkan projects. The Festival has been supported by the EU's MEDIA and Eurimages programmes, among others (Papadimitriou, 2016).

6.3. EDUCATION/RESEARCH

The interviewees from both countries indicated that the direct, bilateral framework for cooperation in the fields of education and research is lacking and that it is still in the making when it comes to public institutions. On the contrary, EU multilateral frameworks have proven to be a more consistent, offering several opportunities for cooperation.

The input provided by the interviewees from North Macedonia indicates that it is hard to establish specific areas of cooperation, as these initiatives have ranged from the topics of employment opportunities to health care and social services for children and the elderly population. In the context of universities, it seems that cooperation activities are initiated with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding or through personal contacts at the professional academic level without establishing lasting systems of cooperation. Exchanging staff and students was identified as an interest and focus of cooperation: the universities have slowly shifted their interest in establishing closer academic cooperation to the safe step of signing a bilateral Erasmus+ charter which very much depends on student or staff selection priorities. The general perception in North Macedonia is that university cooperation has been limited due to the name issue but expectations are that now more and more opportunities will emerge which the universities will hopefully use for their interests while also furthering cooperation. Universities and research institutes in North Macedonia exclusively point out that cooperation with Greece has been and should continue within EU programs since universities and research institutes in North Macedonia have no financial capacity to support any potential projects with their own resources.

According to the answers provided by most stakeholders in Greece, the most common feature of cooperation in this field is the EU framework for cross-border cooperation between Greece and North Macedonia and in particular the implementation of corresponding projects with various partners from Greece and North Macedonia. Four out of six institutions referred to this type of cooperation as the most frequent. In other words, four out of six examples relate clearly to this multilateral framework of cooperation. The other two examples pertain to bilateral frameworks but with important specificities and differences. In the case of the School of Economic and Regional Studies, of the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, the recently signed Memoranda of Understanding (one with the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities and another with the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, both in Skopje) refer to types of cooperation such as ‘research and academic exchange’, which will now be applied for the first time. In the case of the Institute for Balkan Studies, a bilateral framework of cooperation existed since the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and, apparently, it was subsequently renewed. It included and still includes forms of cooperation such as contact between libraries, exchange of published books and also donations as well as invitations to scholars from North Macedonia to participate in conferences organized by the Institute.

These findings indicate and confirm the assumption that the EU multilateral framework has been, since the early 2000s and until today, the most common framework for cooperation between the two countries. The Memorandum of Understanding recently signed by the School of Economic and Regional Studies appears to be very similar, with regard to content, to the ones signed by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in the mid 2010s (in 2016 with the University of St Kliment Ohridski at Bitola and concluded in September 2019^[7] and in 2013 with the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje [renewed until 2022]). All three Memoranda refer to types of cooperation such as student exchanges (i.e. Erasmus Programme), academic staff exchanges (i.e. professors), common research programmes and publications as well as collaboration in EU funded projects.^[8] However, as noted in a previous study (Christidis, Paschalidis 2017), the Memoranda signed by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki were never implemented because of the pending resolution of the name dispute. Therefore, it seems that the two major public academic institutions in northern Greece, Aristotle University and the University of Macedonia, will in all probability implement various features of cooperation with North Macedonia in the context of a bilateral framework in 2020. On the basis of the information provided by the Institute for Balkan Studies, its cooperation with similar institutions in North Macedonia was mainly focused on promoting and facilitating research capacity (exchange of publications and donations). Nevertheless, one has to note that there has been continuous cooperation related to both research and publication (conferences). More importantly, such forms were taking place at the bilateral level also during the 1990s, which was the most difficult period for cooperation.

We found that four out of the six Greek institutions have implemented or are in the pro-

cess of implementing an EU project from the IPA/CBC framework 'Greece - North Macedonia', which falls under the category of multilateral cooperation. In contrast, two institutions indicated that they have not implemented any EU-funded projects, which means that their main framework of cooperation is bilateral. A rather interesting finding therefore is that no interviewee referred to working with both multilateral and bilateral frameworks either in the past or in current projects.

The dominance of the EU's multilateral framework, both in the 2000s and 2010s, and particularly in the public sector, was noted already in a previous study (Christidis, Paschalidis, 2017), while other examples also engage multilateral frameworks.^[9]As such, particularly in the 2000s, most frameworks of cooperation were multilateral. At a general level, the findings demonstrate that the EU multilateral framework of cooperation managed to function despite a long-lasting dispute between the two countries.

Box 3: Program for Rapprochement between North Macedonia and Greece, an example of good practice of cooperation.

Program for Rapprochement between North Macedonia and Greece: It is an initiative implemented by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Skopje and Athens, EUROTHINK – Skopje and ELIAMEP – Athens. It includes activities that involve academics, journalists, diplomats, think-tank professionals and youth representatives from North Macedonia and Greece. It started in March 2018 and is ongoing (Armakolas & Petkovski, 2019).

7. DOING IT: THE KEY ELEMENTS OF AND THE CHALLENGES TO COOPERATION

This chapter aims to outline how stakeholders in both countries evaluate cooperation in their respective fields and also which obstacles could potentially affect the development of cooperation. The stakeholders' understandings of the differences in cooperation between North Macedonia and Greece compared to cooperation with other Balkan countries are also presented, as well as the media's attention to and social reactions to cooperation.

7.1. CIVIL SOCIETY/NGOS

In North Macedonia, NGO interviewees provided a mixed picture when comparing their cooperation with Greece to that with other Balkan countries. An equal number regarded these two forms of cooperation as similar versus different. Some stated that the cooperation with Greece has been particularly positive, while others claimed that the cooperation with Greece was not devoid of political argument. The name issue with Greece was present as a factor in at least some cooperation and therefore may have limited further development of cooperation. It is also possible that civil society could have played a greater role in cooperation but did not due to the general political climate. As one Macedonian interviewee with long experience in civil society cooperation put it:

"our partners, friends in Greece are somehow slow in furthering our cooperative efforts. I believe this is due to political establishment and government versus civil society relations in Greece."

(Youth Alliance-Krushevo, 25 November 2019)

From the Greek NGOs, the overwhelming perception was that cooperation with partners from North Macedonia has been 'different', for reasons ranging from the 'particular background' of the bilateral relations, to a greater cultural affinity with North Macedonia. Thus, three NGOs described it as 'different' for various reasons:

a) Due to a concern for 'becoming a target':

"The two initial cases of cooperation (with Youth Alliance – Krusevo) were different, because we were aware that there was a big chance for someone to be targeted. This was something that, however, did not worry us too much since when we implement a program we do it with transparency, dignity, based on principles, so we knew that we did not have any intention to nor did we pretend that we are going to solve a national question; we were very clear on what we were doing".

(UNESCO Youth Club of Thessaloniki, 1 October 2019)

b) because of an observed ‘gap’ between European/Greek and Macedonian program participants’ views:

“...with Albania, but also with FYROM or now North Macedonia, there is a gap concerning views. You can see young people that have a totally European orientation and avoid touching upon political issues, in any way that it could generate a conflict, and there are young people who [come]... with their flags, their hymn, they would tell you stories: about Albania, North Macedonia, various such problems... From our side there was neutrality...”

(Alter Ego, 2 October 2019)

On the other hand, this difference of cooperating with North Macedonia was also perceived as being better ‘Because we are alike, as border regions, thus access is easier and we have many common points concerning social and cultural contacts’, Interview with ‘Όμιλος Ενεργών Νέων Φλώρινας, 18 October 2019). Only one NGO described cooperating with North Macedonia as “no different than with other Balkan countries” (United Societies of the Balkans).

With regard to the **media’s attention and societal reactions**, the stakeholders from North Macedonia referred to positive, neutral and almost no reaction, while the stakeholders from Greece provided a more mixed picture, both negative and positive, particularly in society.

As the stakeholders from North Macedonia pointed out, from time to time a few journalists will make a point of improper use of the constitutional name in the dissemination activities of CBC projects or will discredit individuals who are participating in such projects. But given that CBC projects mean financial benefits to partner institutions, this was reflected positively in people’s attitudes. The internal political climate in relation to a formerly unfriendly country toward today’s partner country has considerably affected perceptions of society transmitted by media. Therefore, the practice of joint journalism in which reporting is performed by a journalist from Skopje and from Athens-Kristine Ozime and Alexia Kalaitzi- on challenges facing two neighbouring countries is one mentioned by interviewee as one of positive developments. Previous commitments of the media to work with its neighbours, led to an increased awareness of the issues that has been reflected in very recent activity organized in Skopje-CBC between journalists between two neighbouring countries is seldom.^[10]

In the case of Greece, no cases of negative media reporting were mentioned related to any of the cooperation cases. With respect to social responses, however, the responses were split: two NGOs (UNESCO Youth Club of Thessaloniki, Όμιλος Ενεργών Νέων Φλώρινας) mentioned ‘no negative reactions’, while two others said they had experienced negative reactions on an individual level from those who did not approve of cooperation with the neighbouring country. In the first case, the interviewee commented:

“Sometimes we would hear “what are you going to do there”, that old-style [reaction]... but generally, the people we know are not nationalists such that they would tell us “don’t go to them, they wish to do you harm” and other stupidities that we would hear in the news”.

(Alter Ego, 2 October 2019)

A second NGO representative explained:

“During the first three years we had a library with various books, maps, encyclopaedic works, e-books and movies either from Balkan directors and writers or concerning the Balkans. We also had a collection with various objects from the Balkans, including objects from North Macedonia. More than a few times people coming to my office threatened to smash them or offer me money in order to have it removed. I had a wall full of flags from the Balkans and individuals asked for the flag of North Macedonia to be removed...”.

(United Societies of the Balkans, 14 October 2019)

It is noticeable however, that even when there were individual instances of hostility they never ‘dented’ the willingness of the Greek NGOs to cooperate bilaterally.

The evaluations of stakeholders in both countries regarding cooperation were overwhelmingly positive. In North Macedonia, cooperation was described by all NGOs as ‘positive’, with some pointing specifically to the remaining problem of a lack of trust; individuals with long experience and commitment to working with Greek partners, had developed strong friendships that made it less difficult to resolve issues (which very often arose from factors unrelated to the projects). Greek NGOs also described cooperation with stakeholders from North Macedonia as ‘positive’. Three of them were categorical in their positive assessment: the representative of Όμιλος Ενεργών Νέων Φλώρινας claimed it was ‘Positive, very positive’; someone from UNESCO’s Youth Club of Thessaloniki said ‘only positive, in no way negative’; while a representative of the United Societies of the Balkans stated the cooperation was “Quite positive. Good kids, they love us, they are positively inclined, they see Greece as their home, not in the negative sense of the word. They have made many friendships...” The fourth NGO described cooperation with NGOs from North Macedonia as ‘positive while also negative’ due to the way NGOs operate in North Macedonia:

“I believe there are many positive elements, but also some negative, from the point of view that not every organization has access to European programs. (That is) you must be “in harmony” with the local or central government... (also) they participate in programs mainly because of the economic benefit with the result, sometimes, the balance between quality and quantity does not reflect the program’s targets...”.

(Alter Ego, 2 October 2019)

In identifying obstacles to further cooperation, the stakeholders from North Macedonia appeared most sceptical of their institutional setting, which has an effect upon this type of cooperation. While the Prespa Agreement brought a new spirit of cooperation, Macedonian NGOs see obstacles in the lack of funds for cooperation, but also in lack of contacts and communications directly between the two societies. They also mentioned the lack of institutional capacity to generate ideas for joint projects as well as the non-existence of formal channels of communication to pave the way to stronger relations. The active role of institutions is missing or is replaced by individual motivation or contacts for furthering cooperation. One interviewee pointed to Government institutions' reluctance to take further steps in completion of or opening and furthering implementation of the Prespa Agreement action plan points. Also, the lack of media interest to report news about North Macedonia with positive connotations -news on North Macedonia is still not within the top ten news [items] in Greece - except when sensational news with negative connotation is in question."(Youth Alliance-Krushevo, 25 November 2019).

For Greek NGOs, following the solution to the name-dispute, respondents mentioned no serious obstacles to further cooperation with stakeholders from North Macedonia. Thus, two of the four NGOs (Όμιλος Ενεργών Νέων Φλώρινας and UNESCO Youth Club of Thessaloniki) responded that they do not expect any obstacles to further cooperation, including any difficulties arising from the stated negative view of the Prespa Agreement by the current Greek government:

"...our government has a more reserved stance.... However, I personally feel that it does not seek to make any cooperation that some would like to develop harder. I think the intention of the new government is clear, even if it disagrees on certain issues, to respect an international agreement. That's why I believe that there will be no particular difficulty or change in the political scene between the two countries or... some obstacles put to non-governmental agencies like ourselves, on how we should develop our activities".

(UNESCO Youth Club of Thessaloniki, 1 October 2019)

One NGO said that while it did not expect any obstacles from the Greek side, it did expect some from North Macedonia:

"I don't think that from our side there are any obstacles. In general, North Macedonia's society is open, many (Greek) businesses are there... If we say there are some small obstacles, it is from their side, because they also have their political differences and society has been split into two".

(Alter Ego, 2 October 2019)

However, another NGO has experienced stricter bureaucratic procedures following the signing of the Prespa Agreement, although it was not in a position to explain the reason for it:

“...[before] it took us three months for a kid to get a visa... The procedure was simpler. Now, they asked from us numerous papers, certificates, signatures, phone calls (to have a residence permit). It was the first time that we struggled so much...”
(United Societies of the Balkans, 14 October 2019)

7.2. CULTURE

In comparing their cooperation with Greece to that with other Balkan countries, stakeholders from North Macedonia did not point out any particular differences. In the case of Greek cultural institutions, however, the research findings show a generally limited level of cooperation between Greece and other Balkan countries, underlining the dominant pattern of cooperation in Greece with institutions from Western Europe, a consequence of the post-Second World War division of Europe that to a large extent continued even after the collapse of Communism and the end of geopolitical division on the peninsula. Why this happened, can only be a matter of speculation – potentially arising from “institutional habits of cooperation” in Greece, a difficult first-decade of transition in many post-Communist Balkan states (violent disintegration of ex-Yugoslavia, recession, emergence of organized crime, etc) that affected their image in Greece and the potential for actual cooperation) - and needs further research.

In the cases examined, both similarities and differences in cooperation with North Macedonia as compared to other Balkan countries were cited and a variety of answers were given. Two Greek cultural institution representatives pointed to differences in the sense of increased potential to cooperate with North Macedonia or of the stronger will and systematization of cooperation between the two stakeholders experienced until now (Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki and Museum of Contemporary Art, respectively). Two other institutional respondents stated that cooperation is basically ‘similar’ (Filoproodos Sillogos Edessas Megas Alexandros and the Greek National Historical Museum), while one respondent (from the Museum of Photography) argued that although ‘it was similar, it was different at the same time,’ referring to the difficulties experienced in finding a partner from North Macedonia. In another case (the Benaki Museum) the stakeholder pointed to insufficient experience of cooperation with institutions from other Balkan countries for drawing any conclusions, something noted in the majority of answers given.

Regarding the cultural institutions’ impressions of media and the society to their cooperation with Greece, stakeholders from North Macedonia indicated that what limited media attention existed had been positive. In the case of Greek cultural institutions and the attitudes of local society, mixed responses were recorded, i.e. both positive and negative. One finding may correspond to attitudes towards North Macedonia among the Greek public before the Prespa Agreement, when the name dispute was still present, but also following the signing of the Agreement: that there is no consensus.

While sections of Greek society were likely hostile towards a country seen as ‘usurping’ part of its cultural heritage, others displayed a keen interest in North Macedonia (for business, shopping trips, holidays, etc.), an open, even positively inclined response to bilateral cooperation. Negative attitudes mentioned by the Greek cultural institutions interviewed in this research included ‘reservation’ and ‘scepticism’ directed towards cooperation (National Theater of Northern Greece and Filoproodos Sillogos Edessas Megas Alexandros, respectively), negativity regarding individuals from North Macedonia (Museum of Contemporary Art) and, more threateningly, a demand by an official institution - the Greek Foreign Ministry - for clarifications on the use of the term ‘Macedonia’ at an event hosted by the Greek National Historical Museum. Among the positive attitudes mentioned was the strong public interest in attendance at two cultural cooperation events (by the National Theatre of Northern Greece and the Benaki Museum). Finally, the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki mentioned no negative responses while the Museum of Photography said there was ‘no positive or negative response’.

Regarding media coverage, no cases of negative reporting were mentioned, while the lack of interest among the media was also conspicuous, something that is puzzling and demands further research, exactly because of the divisive nature of cooperation with North Macedonia. In one case, however, director Slobodan Unkovski’s collaboration with the National Theatre of Northern Greece raised ‘intense’ local and national Greek media interest.

Regarding cultural institutions’ evaluations of cooperation, all stakeholders from both countries assessed cooperation as positive. Greek stakeholders unanimously described their cooperation as ‘positive’: ‘one of the best’ (Museum of Contemporary Art); ‘exceptional, positive’ (National Historical Museum); ‘a very positive experience, with no particular problems. It was very smooth’ (Benaki Museum). This positivity remained despite some difficulties faced: ‘... because of the language, [which makes] it very hard for someone to teach actors...’ (National Theatre of Northern Greece); especially at the level of the local society (Filoproodos Sillogos Edessas Megas Alexandros); related to the use of the official terminology at the time concerning North Macedonia (Museum of Photography).

In identifying obstacles to cooperation, cultural institutions’ stakeholders from North Macedonia were concerned with insufficient opportunities and in general the lack of experience with cooperative efforts. Four of the seven Greek stakeholders interviewed also cited various obstacles that can be grouped in two broad categories. The first was ideological, from collective ‘ways of thinking’ and ‘nationalist perception... that does not allow them to be open to cooperation (Museum of Contemporary Art, 24 October 2019) to a lack of openness to the outside world that characterizes not only Thessaloniki, but also the rest of Greece:

“I think that the city of Thessaloniki, and wider the country itself, is not an example of openness, despite its past that brought together many ethnicities and religions. That multiculturalism has been lost...”

(National Theater of Northern Greece, 30 September 2019)

Second, there are institutional obstacles, claim Greek cultural stakeholders, from the necessity of time in order for cooperation initiatives to come to fruition (Filoproodos Sillogos Edessas Megas Alexandros) to the absence of a bilateral, permanent framework of cooperation, and the current reliance on multilateral frameworks, despite the important cultural affinities between Greece and the other Balkan countries (National Historical Museum). It is noticeable that three out of the seven stakeholders interviewed did not see any particular problems obstructing further cooperation between the two countries.

7.3. EDUCATION/RESEARCH

At a general level, educational and research stakeholders from North Macedonia and Greece provided few elements of differentiation in their comparison of cooperation with one another versus other Balkan countries. Interviewees from North Macedonia varied in their reactions by explaining their standard approaches to cooperating with institutions from Greece. Some made comparisons with their experiences specifically with Bulgaria while others mentioned Albania. When conversation fell to the reciprocity of behaviour, reactions varied depending on (very) limited experience versus long standing experience. Those with long and rich experience claimed:

“have come to accept the fact that partners, friends, colleagues from Greece can be very difficult in cooperation due to their internal social and political environment. We are more open and face less government control when it comes to whom we are cooperating with and so on. But I am not sure if this is true for my friends”.

(St. Kliment Ohridski University-Bitola, Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies, 22 November 2019)

The general perception is that universities are very open for cooperation with Greece but there must be a driving force behind it such as faculty research interests, joint project applications, establishing joint study programs. The cooperation must be tangible with expected products at the end of such activities.

In the case of Greek education and research institutions, the interviewees indicated that the cooperation with North Macedonia is very similar and comparable to that experienced with other Balkan countries (Institute for Balkan Studies, International Hellenic University and University of Macedonia). In the case of the Research Institute of Animal Science ‘Demeter’, they have had one experience of cooperation with North Macedonia as well as with any other Balkan country. Notable differentiations were provided by the University of Western Macedonia where the cooperation with North Macedonia was described as

'sometimes better' than with other Balkan countries due to the professionalism of its institutions. Another important differentiation was provided by the Hellenic Institute of Transport in reference to the different capacities and the difficulties that North Macedonia faces when it comes to implementing EU programs in comparison to countries such as Bulgaria and Romania, which were strongly supported by the EU after they became its members. Thus, the predominant view that cooperation with the institutions of North Macedonia is very comparable to that with other countries (three out of six of the institutions in our sample) and sometimes better (one of six) suggest a rather functional level of cooperation

When it comes to the reaction of the media and the wider society, most stakeholders in both countries referred to the little interest paid by the media to cooperation in education and research. It is noteworthy that Greek stakeholders tend to evaluate the media coverage and the reactions of the public in North Macedonia as more positive than in Greece.

In North Macedonia, the universities, especially state sponsored institutions, seem uninterested in publicizing cooperation. Media is after sensation and perhaps this is because there is not much sensation in signing a Memorandum of Understanding or the starting of a three-year project. However, there have been instances when journalists questioned the credibility of personalities involved in such projects and whether actions really helped improve cooperation with an 'unfriendly neighbour'. The interviewees did mention that since the Prespa Agreement there has not been any such public reaction.

In Greece, various parameters were pointed out by the interviewees of our sample. Three institutions (the University of Western Macedonia, the International Hellenic University and the University of Macedonia) claimed media attention in North Macedonia was more important than in Greece:

"The reactions were positive. Particularly in the media of North Macedonia there were more extensive and frequent references and coverage, especially in online media. The coverage was similar in Greece but less frequent and extensive. One could find it mainly in local blogs".

(International Hellenic University, 7 November 2019)

Responses varied from 'positive' (International Hellenic University and University of Macedonia) to 'rather superficial' (University of Western Macedonia and the Institute for Balkan Studies) regarding the Greek media's reactions to cooperation. Lastly, one interviewee implicitly related the little interest paid by the media to the dissemination policy of the institution itself (the Hellenic Institute of Transport). In general, the reactions of both the general public and the media in Greece vary, according to our interviewees, from neutral to positive while there is a perception that the media in North Macedonia is much more positive and elaborate in their coverage.

The vast majority of stakeholders from both countries provided a positive evaluation of cooperation both at the multilateral (EU) level, which is the most frequent, as well as at the

bilateral level, which is still in the process of development. A number of stakeholders also welcomed the fact that in recent periods, cooperation through EU programs has become even more effective.

According to the findings from the interviews with educational and research institutions from North Macedonia, the experience is overall positive, though there is not much to evaluate. Cross Border Cooperation projects are quite structured and no cases of bilateral or direct cooperation could be assessed. However, the majority of interviewees mentioned the fact that this is well below the potential for cooperation from both sides, but somehow the synergy is missing. 'It is hard to say what exactly is missing but it just doesn't fit-like a missing sound in an orchestra' (St. Kliment and Ohridski-Bitola, 22 November 2019).

All interviewees from Greek educational and research institutions used adjectives that attest to a positive evaluation of the experience of cooperation with institutions and colleagues from North Macedonia. One notes only one differentiation (the International Hellenic University) where the negative characteristics are linked to the (perceived) indifference of certain institutions from North Macedonia to cooperate more actively. Four out of the six interviewees linked their positive evaluation to the experience of cooperation in the context of a specific EU project. Two among those (the University of Western Macedonia and the Institute of Animal Science) expressed their satisfaction for the fact that in the most recent IPA/CBC project (2014-2020) there is effectively joint implementation of certain deliverables. Two interviewees (from the University of Macedonia and the Institute for Balkan Studies) associated their positive evaluation to the general political climate between the two countries - the difficulties or the animosities - and expressed their satisfaction that cooperation endured despite the adversities.

Overall, our findings indicate that cooperation is evaluated in a clearly positive manner in both for multilateral frameworks of cooperation as well as bilateral. When it comes to the IPA/CBC multilateral frameworks, it is important to note the high degree of satisfaction of all stakeholders, another indication of both the functional level of cooperation between the two countries as well as the design of the framework by the Managing Authority of the EU's IPA/CBC program. At the bilateral level, it is also important to note the satisfaction of the stakeholders despite adversities such as negative reactions or the charged political climate:

"I would evaluate our cooperation as positive. (...) I could not refer to anything negative. I cannot describe our relations as extremely close, at a more interpersonal level for instance, but the important element to consider is that our cooperation has carried on without interruption, regardless of the political context. (...) Furthermore, our invitees were always very cautious. (...) Our discussions always took place in a very productive manner without excessive remarks. I could describe the people that have visited us as exceptional. We were very happy to receive them".

(Institute for Balkan Studies, 2 October 2019)

The input from the stakeholders of the bilateral level provides further confirmation of the difficult evolution of cooperation and in particular the vulnerable character of this form of cooperation since it lacked the umbrella and the comprehensive design of EU programs.

When identifying obstacles, educational and research stakeholders from both countries pointed out a series of elements, among which the political climate and eventual nationalist reactions stand out. In the case of the universities and research institutes from North Macedonia, while there were comments that they were comfortable to cooperate, some they had had very limited cooperation experiences and consider this as something to watch as it evolves. These stakeholders mentioned many factors that could influence motivation for cooperation, citing specifically nationalistic discourse. The majority of interviewees showed less enthusiasm to make strong positive predictions on overcoming obstacles; they were also reserved with their statements, indicating that they cannot identify other obstacles for now.

The answers provided by the Greek educational and research stakeholders can be divided into four categories. The first one was related to the delayed EU accession process for North Macedonia (University of Western Macedonia and Hellenic Institute of Transport):

“I honestly believe that the basic obstacle for the cooperation between the two countries could be delays in the EU accession process of North Macedonia. The climate is rather heavy now when it comes to our colleagues, it reminds one of preceding periods. But this has nothing to do with Greece. It is the discontent with the uncertainty of the EU accession process. Of course, we continue to cooperate with our colleagues but the uncertainty is there and it is affecting them. They are thinking about the elections and what will happen and so on...”

(University of Western Macedonia, 5 November 2019)

The second category links obstacles to Greek politics, either at the government level and the lack of its support for the Prespa Agreement (University of Macedonia) or more general reactions against the rapprochement between the two countries (Institute for Balkan Studies). The third category of obstacles regards bureaucracy in both countries (the International Hellenic University) while the fourth type stressed the absence of obstacles, taking into account the very effective and functional implementation of EU projects (IPA/CBC 2014-2020). As such, potential obstacles to further cooperation exist at two levels, according to this research: political and technical.

8. MOVING BEYOND: THE COOPERATION DIVIDEND OF THE PRESPA AGREEMENT

This chapter highlights the stakeholders' views and assessments of the impact of the Prespa Agreement on cooperation as well as their suggestions for how to improve cooperation.

) 8.1. CIVIL SOCIETY/ NGOS

In their **assessment of the Prespa Agreement**, interviewed stakeholders from both countries were positive. While NGOs from North Macedonia are sceptical of the agreement's capacity to bring immediate results, they see it as a positive boost to cooperation. They feel expectations are higher than what reality may offer; that for some, the agreement may not further the existing cooperation. It is interesting that the stakeholders noted how the Prespa Agreement has not yet directly led to concrete cooperation and the warning not to expect that one agreement can make this possible. A few interviewees with a strong background and long experience with the EU's CBC projects and other joint projects with Greece made a point of saying that CBC projects have been going on for more than twenty years without having an impact on the sustainability of cooperation or on developing an institutional approach to cooperation. Rather, it will take some time until all feel that the agreement has set the situation on a different path that avoids conflict and provides a positive connotation to cooperation. There are, however, some positive indicators. One interviewee from North Macedonia mentioned the fact that when travelling to Greece, people were more welcomed by the border police officers and questions, such as 'pou pas' (Greek: Where are you going?) were not asked anymore. On the other hand, 'politics' may hinder such positive effects or delay its effects.

Some indicators show that the younger generation in North Macedonia sees an economic opportunity to invest in Greece due to proximity and return of investments. But it is still on insignificant level or the financial benefits of the Prespa Agreement are still to be realized. As an interviewee pointed out, the agreement will certainly help foster relations but substantial improvement is yet to be seen. For example the Youth Alliance-Krushevo has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia for establishing a 'Greece - North Macedonia Youth Office' as specified in the action plan for intensifying cooperation (section 6, point d) though its partner in Thessaloniki, the Youth Club for UNESCO, is still negotiating of signing similar MoU, which delays implementation of the action plan points in the area of Youth (Interview with Youth Alliance-Krushevo, 25 November, 2019). Overall, a positive assessment is the structure the agreement brings to move on and build confidence in resolving more complex issues yet to come.

The Prespa Agreement was unanimously seen by the Greek stakeholders interviewed as having a positive effect on cooperation, as it removes the thorny issue of the name dispute:

“I believe that if there is a positive element from the Prespes Agreement... is that in a way dialogue ceases to be under suspicion, whether between civil societies, or between government agencies”.

(UNESCO Youth Club of Thessaloniki, 1 October 2019)

“I believe that any steps taken in the direction of solving problems are positive... The issue (the name-dispute) had to be solved”.

(Alter Ego, 2 October 2019)

“the agreement makes things easier as far as bureaucracy is concerned. Because now we don't have to have two different formulations or the clarification that the country is recognized by Greece as the “Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, nor will we have friction when in programs some mention the country as ‘Macedonia’ while Greeks say ‘the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’.

(Όμιλος Ενεργών Νέων Φλώρινας, 18 October 2019)

Several **suggestions and remarks** were provided by stakeholders from both countries regarding how to improve cooperation. NGOs from North Macedonia emphasized the need for better organizational structures in their country, whilst Greek NGOs highlighted the necessity for an increase in contact and dialogue with counterparts from North Macedonia as well as for North Macedonia's EU Accession.

It is interesting that there is some consensus with Macedonian stakeholders that the needed support should be geared towards establishing initial contacts. All joint projects, whether CBC or bilateral ones, have been initiated through personal contacts. However, this has been to some extent by necessity rather than a choice. In addition, most of the initiatives have come from Greek partners with ready projects. Therefore, North Macedonia's institutions plan to develop this further by identifying areas of mutual interest, work together on project ideas, look for good practices in Europe, organize regular meetings with well-defined agenda items, organize regular mayor to mayor meetings to build trust and trigger cooperation among businesses, civil society, education and cultural institutions.

A variety of ideas were suggested by the Greek NGO stakeholders on how to improve cooperation. They pointed to a necessity for ‘more discussion’ on how cooperation can be advanced: ‘based on our experience, seeing how things were at the beginning and where

we are now, we need time, we need discussion. Thus, the more (cooperation) evolves, the more we see common issues that need to be managed, to be resolved, coming to the surface' (UNESCO Youth Club of Thessaloniki); Establishing a youth register on program participation was also recommended: 'they could establish a youth register of those involved in European programs, or in cross-cultural meetings, so that we don't see the same people from the neighbouring country participating.... 80-90% of those participating are the same persons, their friends, their acquaintances' (Alter Ego); Another Greek NGO suggested working to change people's mindsets, to realize cross-border relations have moved forward:

"We must realize... that this thing (i.e. the name dispute) has been resolved. That in our daily life, especially here in northern Greece, we must have direct cooperation with this country, whether we travel, shop, buy petrol, and play in the casinos, or they contribute to our tourism and leave their money here, sending their kids to study in Thessaloniki's private colleges and using the airport".

(United Societies of the Balkans, 14 October 2019)

Finally, Greek NGOs insist on the need for North Macedonia to join the EU: 'If the country was an EU member state, then clearly issues relating to youth mobility would be much easier' (Όμιλος Ενεργών Νέων Φλώρινας).

8.2. CULTURE

In an overwhelming majority, stakeholders from both countries' fields of culture provided a **positive assessment** of the Prespa Agreement and its potential impact. Most of them were of the opinion that it will facilitate bilateral cooperation, since the name-dispute was 'a big obstacle, creating problems at every step' (according to the Greek National Historical Museum). Cooperation is expected to become easier now. At the same time, in one response, the lack of 'any effects until now' was noted, adding that

"it was received in a negative way in both countries, possibly causing fear, insecurity and awkwardness. I think that if an Artistic Director would say that 'based on the Prespes Agreement' I would do that', he would not receive positive criticism, it will not be seen as a progressive step... Because very few people here in Greece and in Thessaloniki read the Agreement..."

(National Theater of Northern Greece, 30 September 2019)

With regard to **ideas and suggestions on improving cooperation**, stakeholders from North Macedonia proposed an increase in cooperation, emphasizing particular types such as cultural exchanges and festivals as well as artisanal work for cultural workers. One interviewee suggested that:

“cooperation can be promoted in the traditions and customs of the population; there are great similarities in lifestyles, from birth customs, weddings[, etc.]... A concrete example and suggestion would be that a meeting can be held between residents living in the Prespa region.... At such meetings that would be thematic, the population living there would get to know each other and deepen their mutual cooperation and communication. The theme would be to get to know each others’ customs”

(Kulturna Riznica, 30 September 2019)

Greek cultural stakeholders suggested elements such as:

a) an active state policy of support, especially funding and the establishment of permanent links that will create continuity and reduce dependency upon the role of personalities:

“I would like to believe that culture (πολιτισμός) can play its own role in politics and that the state should not only encourage it but also support it financially.... What is needed in a policy of international contacts is continuity, stable links. In our case, (existing) links go through a personal level National Theatre of Northern Greece”.

(National Theater of Northern Greece, 30 September 2019)

b) addressing domestic issues relating to ‘which institution has priority’:

“Our problem is internal. The Jewish Museum of Greece is an older museum...There are some things that to happen properly have to go through the Ministry of Education, that has a supervisory role over the Jewish communities (in Greece). Since (things) happen through the Ministry, the Jewish Museum of Greece has a priority. Consequently, in order to initialize collaboration with the... museum in Skopje, it would be better to begin by the Jewish Museum of Greece, with the approval of the Ministry”.

(Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, 3 October 2019)

c) establishing networks between institutions (Filoproodos Sillogos Edessas Megas Alexandros);

d) establishing ‘task forces, small groups of people who speak a common language’:

“... we need to have task forces, small groups from both sides who speak a common language and who can support projects of cooperation in each country”

(Museum of Photography, 16 October 2019)

e) increased financial support by the state, continuity in cooperation:

“It might sound a bit cynical, but it has to do with money. One way to improve cooperation is to have the requirements to proceed. Thus, that has also to do with the support by the state that is there must be an established aim. Because we, as a museum, as a cultural organization, we have suffered from the lack of continuity and systematization in state policy concerning culture (πολιτισμός). When someone works with consistency, and irrespective of the domestic politics of each country, he can work in depth and (when) his work is supported financially by the state, then things can improve”.

(Museum of Contemporary Art, 24 October 2019)

8.3. EDUCATION/RESEARCH

In both countries, the **assessment** provided by the stakeholders from educational and research institutions on the impact of the Prespa Agreement is marked, on the one side, by the recognition of the potential for a positive impact and, on the other side, by a cautious and pragmatic approach which stresses that the agreement will have an impact only if certain conditions are met.

In North Macedonia, educational and research institutions expressed a high expectation for the effects of the Prespa Agreement, but almost all interviewees did mention conditionality: it ‘will depend on discourse very much.’ One interviewee also said that implementation will be a great challenge due to identity issues. Two interviewees believe that it is too early to identify its effects. One reflection was: ‘We have not seen any visible changes and should not expect that one agreement will change the discourse overnight.’ But it has changed perceptions that there is an opportunity and tools need to be provided to seize these opportunities. Overall, all stakeholders from North Macedonia in this field welcome the Prespa Agreement while there are also some unanswered questions or even doubts on its implementation.

Half of the Greek interviewees employed the term ‘positive’ when evaluating the impact of the Prespa Agreement in education and research or in more general terms (University of Western Macedonia, Institute of Animal Science ‘Demeter’ and the Institute of Balkan Studies). The International Hellenic University was ‘indifferent’, whereas the University of Macedonia described the agreement as ‘a new chapter in bilateral cooperation and education ... but with deficits’ when it comes to providing a specific framework for facilitating cooperation through funding. Lastly, two interviewees (from the University of Western Macedonia and the Hellenic Institute of Transport) indicated that one of the determinant factors for the cooperation between the two countries in the post-Prespa period is the successful EU accession of North Macedonia:

“The impact of the Prespes Agreement will definitely be in a positive direction. However, at present, this impact is not very apparent. In the period right after the signing of the agreement there were expectations that things will progress in a very dynamic manner. I think that the climate is somewhat frozen, particularly in Skopje and the latest developments with regard to the country's EU accession negotiations”.

(University of Western Macedonia, 5 November 2019)

It is noteworthy that all answers contain elements of uncertainty when it comes to assessing the impact of the Prespa Agreement ('frozen climate in Greece', 'uncertainty of North Macedonia's EU accession', 'the question of the policies of the Greek side'). The findings suggest a mixed picture when it comes to the potential impact of the Prespa Agreement on cooperation between the two countries in the field of education and research. The predominantly positive evaluation seems to be overshadowed by uncertainties of a mainly political character as well as by the lack of specific provisions for implementing cooperation, such as framework of funding:

“The Prespes Agreement has a whole chapter on bilateral cooperation, including educational issues. Probably it refers to universities, but I cannot see [anything], beyond the issue of school textbooks, where there is a committee... Now, concerning universities... its regulatory content does not force the states to implement it, one could ask for money based on the specific provision, however there is no obligation by the state to provide a sum to materialize that cooperation, it's a deficit of the main agreement”.

(School of Economic and Regional Studies, University of Macedonia, 15 October 2019)

When it comes to making suggestions and giving ideas, interviewees in both countries stressed the need for effectively upgrading bilateral cooperation at specific levels, including frequent contact, creation of an institutional framework for cooperation, less bureaucracy, simplified procedures and jointly offered curricula.

The majority of interviewees in North Macedonia made note of limited sharing and content-rich meetings structured with mutually agreed-upon agenda items. Poorly defined or communicated common interest results in a lack of interest for both parties. For this reason private sector practices must be implemented (e.g. business to business meetings) and high-level management meetings should focus on what have been agreed upon and follow up actions. One interviewee was very critical of how we treat such cooperation, saying that it does not receive needed importance¹.

All interviewees in Greece acknowledged the important potential for enhancing the existing cooperation between the two countries. All six institutions (the University of Western Macedonia, the University of Macedonia, the Research Institute of Animal Science and the Institute for Balkan Studies as well as the International Hellenic University and the Hellenic

Institute of Transport) emphasized particular elements such as: 'more permanent forms of cooperation and frameworks' (i.e. common Master's Programs), 'more funding', 'less bureaucracy, more simplified procedures', 'networking-twinning between institutions of the two countries', 'creation of a distinct programme for bilateral cooperation ... on the basis of the EU one' and 'common actions and initiatives, exchanging of expertise and upgrading of infrastructures'. Apart from the strengthening of the bilateral framework for cooperation, a very decisive factor that was again mentioned as improving cooperation is the EU accession of North Macedonia:

"Further cooperation, especially when it comes to the direct, bilateral level between the two countries necessitates a precise and well prepared framework which will facilitate the function of Institutes and Research Centres such as ours. Personally, as a researcher, I need this framework in order to be able to refer to all of my activities according to its guidelines. Another possibility would simply be to model such frameworks on existing and rather effective ones as the IPA/CBC program and more specifically the function of the Managing Authority as a node connecting many different institutions, agencies and actors from different fields. ... I think that the conditions are ripe for starting to strengthen the direct, bilateral level of cooperation. When we reach the point to create the bilateral framework Greece-North Macedonia- not the already existing one at IPA/CBC- this would be exceptional. A second factor that will boost cooperation will be the progress of North Macedonia's EU accession."

(Hellenic Institute of Transport, 16 October 2019)

These findings indicate the Greek stakeholders' overwhelmingly positive disposition towards improving cooperation between the two countries. The specific character of their input epitomizes this general disposition. This applies particularly in the case of the proposition to create a bilateral framework for cooperation 'Greece-North Macedonia' on the basis of the existing EU one. There seems to be the suggestion that unless the two countries claim ownership for their bilateral cooperation, things will not improve drastically. This idea was provided by interviewees coming from universities and research centres but it obviously refers also more widely and to various fields of cooperation. For instance, it is only on the basis of such a detailed bilateral framework in the area of education that the potential for jointly offering Master's curricula can materialize.

9. UNDERSTANDING A COMPLEX CASE: ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS ON A DIFFICULT COOPERATION

This chapter provides concluding remarks and an aggregate assessment of the state of affairs in the three fields according to the interviewees and also summarizes the key findings from the interviews with stakeholders from both countries.

9.1. CIVIL SOCIETY/NGOS

In both countries, civil society stakeholders stressed the importance of multilateral, EU and other international, frameworks plus initiatives for facilitating cooperation among Youth NGOs. Inversely, they indicated the lack of direct and bilateral cooperation.

From the perspectives of both countries, the existing record of cooperation is considered to be very positive. However, it is evident that the two countries experienced this differently. For instance, Greek NGOs consider cooperation with their counterparts from North Macedonia to be regular and consistent. On the other side, NGOs from North Macedonia note with displeasure the lack of people to people contacts and the absence of platforms bringing together civil society actors from the two countries.

Another element of differentiation concerns the expectations from cooperation itself. Greek NGOs are very satisfied that cooperation in their field was sustained because of an important cultural affinity with North Macedonia; they were also satisfied that the 'particular background of [poor] bilateral relations' did not hamper cooperation. Stakeholders from North Macedonia, on the other hand, acknowledge that they do not benefit from this cooperation as much as they would like, mainly due to structural differences. They described their cooperation with Greek partners as asymmetric since, Greek NGOs seem generally to have more experience and better readiness for benefiting from EU Cross Border Cooperation projects. Thus, according to the stakeholders from North Macedonia, cooperation seems to be conditioned by the absorption capacities of the civil society organizations in the two countries.

The Prespa Agreement's current impact is seen as clearly positive, particularly by Greek stakeholders. Despite the fact that Greek stakeholders see few obstacles when it comes to furthering cooperation, they do, however, highlight the importance of the EU accession process for North Macedonia. In other words, a common perception seems to exist, even if it is formulated in different terms, that upgrading cooperation in this field will not only depend on strengthening bilateral initiatives and multiplying existing contact, but also will depend on the many benefits that EU membership will bring to North Macedonia.

) 9.2. CULTURE

In their vast majority, the stakeholders in the field of culture from both countries described their cooperation in positive terms. This majority considered that there is an important potential for intensifying cooperation and they also provided a series of ideas and suggestions of what should be done so that this improvement materializes.

As indicated by the interviewees, cooperation in the field of culture, particularly when it comes to institutions such as museums, was initially delayed. All interviewees associated with museums in our research referred to the 2010s as the period marking the beginning of cooperation and they also indicated that theirs were the only cases of cooperation.

According to this research, therefore, it seems cooperation patterns are characterized mainly by a lack of regular institutional contact and cooperation, underlining the existing, weak framework of cooperation. As the interviewees pointed out, EU programs have not played a prominent role in providing the necessary financial support upon which cooperation between stakeholders has developed; the majority of the cases examined, involved bilateral cooperation schemes based on national resources. However, as stakeholders from North Macedonia pointed out, it seems that cooperation initiatives are heavily based on personal contacts or on networking established within professional association membership as well as regional and international networks and associations (i.e. UNESCO, the International Council of Museums/ICOM Regional Alliance of South East Europe countries, the South Eastern Europe Cinema Network). Dependence on personal contacts can explain the sporadic and incidental nature of cooperation in the field of culture, particularly when it comes to museums or theatres. This lack of greater cooperation was deplored, particularly by stakeholders from North Macedonia, who consider that the record of cooperation stands way below its real potential.

There appears to be an overwhelmingly positive assessment of the probable future impact of the Prespa Agreement by the stakeholders interviewed. At a general level, the obstacles and challenges to cooperation indicated could be grouped into two broad categories: ideological ('nationalist mind sets' and a 'lack of openness') and institutional (the absence of a bilateral, permanent framework of cooperation and, instead, reliance on multilateral frameworks). A variety of ideas were suggested on how to improve cooperation, including an active state policy of support, especially the provision of funding, and the establishment of permanent links that will create continuity and reduce dependency upon the role of personalities; the need for an increase of cultural exchanges and festivals as well as for seminars dedicated to artisan work for cultural workers were also suggested.

) 9.3. EDUCATION/RESEARCH

In a pattern similar to the fields of civil society/ NGOs and culture, the findings from interviews with stakeholders from education and research suggested that although the experience of cooperation is considered to be very positive, it also seems to be very limited, despite the important potential based on existing records and contact.

For most institutions, cooperation in the field of education and research began in the 2000s but became more intense in the 2010s. The most common type of cooperation is the implementation of projects in a multilateral framework and, in particular, EU-funded cross-border cooperation frameworks (Interreg IIIA, IPA/CBC 2007-2013, IPA/CBC 2014-2020). According to the stakeholders there is a considerable lack of cooperation at the bilateral level in the field of education and research. In concrete terms, interviewees from North Macedonia classified this form of cooperation as ad hoc, in the sense that once an initiative is concluded, there are few possibilities for expanding or building upon it.

For most of the stakeholders, the Prespa Agreement is expected to have a positive impact on cooperation between the two countries. However, many of them point to certain conditions under which the agreement could affect cooperation (i.e. government support, a friendly political climate, the EU accession of North Macedonia). Several types of obstacles to further cooperation were pointed out. They appear to be either of a political character (i.e. reactions against the Prespa Agreement in Greece or a more general lack of support for the Prespa Agreement as well as delays in the EU Accession Process of North Macedonia) or a more technical character (bureaucracy in both countries). When it comes to suggestions and ideas for improving cooperation, stakeholders from both countries emphasized the following: i) strengthening the bilateral framework of cooperation and ii) providing necessary guarantees that it will function effectively (government support, necessary funding, permanence) and iii) development and implementation of joint programs (common programs at the postgraduate level, cooperation in joint research programs, intensification of student and academic staff mobility).

It is noteworthy that many interviewees from both countries were well aware that such agreements had already been signed in previous years between institutions and particularly universities. Their suggestions could be, therefore, interpreted as a recommendation that they begin to be fully, effectively implemented and supported by governments in both countries, so that bilateral cooperation can deepen and intensify.

9.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS PERTAINING TO ALL THREE CATEGORIES

Timeframe

In all three fields, cooperation seems to have become more intense and frequent in the 2010s. This is most notable in the field of culture, since examples of civil society/ NGO and education/research cooperation were also present in the 2000s.

Frameworks

In all three fields there is a remarkable lack of bilateral cooperation. In the fields of civil society/NGOs and education/research, cooperation was ad hoc, but it benefitted from the EU multilateral framework. Cooperation in the field of culture has depended primarily on personal contacts and networking.

Evaluation

Cooperation between these three sectors in Greece and North Macedonia's has been evaluated as overwhelmingly positive. However, the vast majority of stakeholders acknowledge that there is great potential for expanding and intensifying the existing cooperation, and that the existing record is a small fraction of this potential.

Assessment of the impact of the Prespa Agreement

The potential impact of the Prespa Agreement on improving cooperation is seen by most stakeholders as positive. However, a series of conditions and factors were indicated for this to take place: government support and funding, emphasis on bilateral framework and a favorable political climate

Obstacles and challenges

Many stakeholders could not see particular obstacles to furthering cooperation. Others emphasized political factors, such as the negative reactions towards the Prespa Agreement. It is important that many stakeholders, particularly from Greece, focused on the importance of a successful EU integration process for North Macedonia. In their understanding, further delay could negatively affect cooperation, whilst progress will boost and upgrade it.

Ideas/suggestions on improving cooperation

Most of the ideas and suggestions for improving cooperation included the common denominator of a functional bilateral framework for cooperation. This applies to all fields, while it seems most urgent in the field of education and research, which has had bilateral agreements pre- Prespa, but these have not been functionally implemented.

10. LOOKING FORWARD: FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORKS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN GREECE AND NORTH MACEDONIA

The Prespa Agreement has played a significant role in shaping the political agenda of each country and has led to change in the spirit of cooperation. The most effective tool of the Agreement has been its emphasis on building a close, strategic relationship between the two countries.

The existing examples of cooperation between the two countries have certainly been driven by two logics: the 'logic of consequences', i.e. cooperation rewards that change the cost-benefit calculations of the cooperation sides (for example, there is increasing attention of donor agencies to support the initiatives that aim to implement the Prespa Agreement that in turn shape the incentives for cooperation), and the 'logic of appropriateness', i.e. when certain values and norms are used to persuade the parties to cooperate (for example, for many stakeholders the Prespa Agreement as a negotiated solution represents a 'norm' that is driven by European values) (March & Olsen, 2006). Both logics have been in play in the existing cooperation.

Cooperation has been experienced differently by North Macedonia and differently by Greece due to factors such as institutional capacities, access to funds, and political climate. While the Greek organizations have been acting as leaders, the Macedonian partners have usually been partners or beneficiaries of the cooperation. Rarely was the opposite the case. Nevertheless, increasingly there are examples of cooperation that includes genuine partnership between the organizations on both sides of the border where the stakeholders from North Macedonia find themselves in a leading position.

The cooperation has also been 'responsive' in some cases and 'intended' in others (Iokimidis, 2000). Responsive cooperation refers to cases where little or no conscious effort has been made by the actors to cooperate, but rather the cooperation developed in response to pressure or a financial incentive. The cases of intended cooperation, on the other hand, have arisen from purposefully framed schemes for cooperation. While cooperation

prior to Prespa has been responsive, there is evidence that cooperation in the wake of Prespa includes aspects of intended cooperation. Some of stakeholders interviewed have expressed their suggestions to establish coalitions among the civil society organizations with the aim to increase people to people contacts. The existent cases of cooperation have nevertheless facilitated socialization between the stakeholders from the two countries, which may have empowered them to undertake other initiatives for cooperation.

The cases of cooperation prior to the Prespa Agreement focused on improving cross border infrastructure and communication, the exchange of information and experience, and attendance at events organized in either country. This was the reflection of selective and limited nature of cooperation between the two countries prior to Prespa Agreement. The cooperation with the Prespa Agreement is geared towards achieving joint goals in the fields of civil society, culture, education and research, but also goals for sustainable economic recovery and social development.

A commitment to cooperate is evidenced in the stakeholders' discourse. There have also been a number of cooperation initiatives by both governmental and non-governmental agencies in the fields of civil society, culture, education and research. However, the cases of cooperation seem to be limited and unsatisfactory that requires further action considering the potential for strong cooperation. One thing is clear and that it is that there are many initiatives on cooperation, but no one has produced a desired level of cooperation between these two countries. Except for a few initiatives, cooperation to date has been generally based on multilateral policy frameworks rather than the policy of these two countries themselves.

Following the ratification of the Prespa Agreement, both countries witnessed intensive new commitments by both governments to foster bilateral cooperation and to enhance the joint efforts aimed towards common priorities. Bilateral cooperation underwent transformation: new initiatives were launched and some of the existing cooperative structures were enhanced or transformed in order to respond effectively to the changes on the ground. The bilateral relationship began to move from being tense and conflictual to that of rapprochement and even to what could be described as 'dynamic cooperation'. After all, the Prespa Agreement, particularly its Part 2, explicitly refers to an 'intensification and enrichment of cooperation between the two parties', and the establishment of 'strategic cooperation' in many areas. The level however of bilateral cooperation has noticeably subsided since June 2019 and the formation of the new Greek government; possibly as a result of the awkwardness by which it approached bilateral cooperation due to its well known negative view of the Prespa Agreement.

Cooperation however is a necessary part in the whole process of rapprochement as it increases the stability and security, democracy and prosperity, it facilitates the effective management of tensions and it can act as an important confidence building measure. There is also an ever-growing awareness in the two countries that cooperation has im-

plications for its overall prosperity. The stakeholders in this research highlighted the lost opportunities due to unrealized potential of greater cooperation and essentially call upon their institutions to set this into policy and then implement it, supporting these sectors of culture, civil society and education/research.

The Prespa Agreement has led to a new momentum for enhancing cooperation giving it a new content and dimension. The snowball effects of benefits seen in other European countries encouraged the two countries to follow suit and institutionalize cooperation. Based on the comments of stakeholders in this research, the Prespa Agreement, by removing a degree of hostility or distrust from each country's politics, seems to have added a key turning point for this observation to be applied. Good neighbourly relations is an important dimension of aspiring to become a member of the EU and close cooperation with Greece is the backbone for North Macedonia's integration into the EU. While future decisions about accession are as likely to depend upon the individual country's readiness level as on its readiness to cooperate with its neighbours, as EU member states do.

The preceding shows that cooperation has had its impact on strengthening the bilateral cooperation. The future of cooperation will depend on wider developments as regards the implementation of the Prespa Agreement and in the prospects of integrating North Macedonia to the EU. Whether the cooperation will have new forms, will depend on the successes of the existing cooperation initiatives.

The phenomenon of inter-state cooperation is mostly about how states relate to each other in terms of dangers and risks, opportunities and strengths. Greece and North Macedonia are enmeshed in a web of interdependencies in terms of opportunities and challenges. Given Greece and North Macedonia's geographic location, the two countries' major challenges tend to be so interlinked that facing them requires each other's involvement.

For the successful cooperation, a favorable environment now exists and the sentiment among local actors on both sides of the border, as seen in this research, is that cooperation is important and they wish to identify initiatives of common and mutual interest, which may translate to common projects. As such, inter-state relations can benefit from the perspective and motivation of these sectors and fields in cooperation.

) PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION

While the foundations of cooperation have been laid with the Prespa Agreement and the potential exists as noted by the stakeholders in this research, a specific framework for cooperation is needed to facilitate the cooperation goals in the fields of research and education, civil society and culture.

In this context, this study proposes to establish a functional framework of cooperation composed of the following elements:

1. **Political support:** The cooperation to date has been driven mostly from the bottom-up, by “heroes” in both societies who set up cooperation initiatives during the period when the situation on both sides of the borders was antagonistic. This cooperation now calls for a structured, institutional approach.
2. **Track two dialogue:** Bilateral, track two dialogue—an exchange between a wide range of non-governmental, civil society networks and intellectuals from both countries - also needs to be developed. The rationale is that such dialogue will lead to an appreciation of the others’ concerns, interests and perceptions, enhancing mutual understanding and trust. Track two activities may also gauge the possibility of track one (political track) openness and even facilitate openness to dialogue on a wide range of topics. Track two dialogue can come in various guises and capacities. Official cooperation tends to focus mainly on heads of state, government, ministers, high-ranking officials, heads of governmental agencies or mayors. This ignores, however, the agency and facilitation of cooperation by less visible actors, specialized bureaucratic units, consultants or other experts with the capacity to give key input to ways of cooperating, thus pre-structuring the field of bilateral cooperation in relevant ways. Certainly the stakeholders interviewed in this research could play important facilitation roles for cooperation emerging in their fields.
3. **Norms-focused cooperation.** Cooperation should understand and integrate social norms and political sensitivities, but at the same time it should conceptualize, persuasively communicate and deliver a value-driven vision for bilateral cooperation between Greece and North Macedonia. The track two actors questioned in this research could provide important envisioning for their specific fields. Increased norm-focused cooperation between the two countries can reinforce shared liberal values in the Balkans and thwart other visions and agendas (e.g. of third countries) (Satanakis, 2018).
4. **Focus on real problems.** The focus of cooperation should look beyond structures and institutions, to practical cases. Initiatives such as Prespa Park may well identify real problems and challenges facing communities across the border and suggest ways to resolve them jointly.

5. Peer-to-peer learning and partnerships. Peer-to-peer learning and partnerships can link people and experts between the two countries, heightening the sustainability of cooperation initiatives. There is an increasing demand for cooperation to use applied approaches, considering each context specifically. By involving partners who face similar challenges and by fostering capacity development taking local circumstances into account, peer learning can contribute to national frameworks for achieving sustainable cooperation.
6. A Prespa Fund and/or a Prespa Youth Office. Governmental and EU funds should be established that will be dedicated to Greek–North Macedonia cooperation in the fields of education, research, culture and civil society. This research pointed out the current prevalence of youth initiatives in the field of civil society cooperation, which is also relevant to education, research and culture. The Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO), the Regional Youth Cooperation Office for the Western Balkans (RYCO), the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) and the Western Balkans Fund (WBF) are excellent models for establishing a similar Prespa Fund and/or a Greece-North Macedonia Youth Office, as agreed in the Action Plan of 2 April 2019. The Fund could be based in the Prespa lake region, provide financing for projects linking the two countries, and could be geared towards implementing the framework proposals, above.

) RETHINKING INSTRUMENTS FOR COOPERATION

While there is a commitment for cooperation, difficulties in realizing it in practice persist. There are some challenges that have to be overcome for genuine cooperation. Therefore, the available instruments for cooperation should be reconsidered.

1. **Governance.** A number of Prespa Agreement's provisions still require implementation so as to offer the full benefits of cooperation. These gaps in implementation leave space for uncertainty that can damage the cooperation and parties' commitment to it.
2. **Resources.** The lack of resources of their own restricts the ability of the stakeholders in the two countries to adapt and upgrade their cooperation to the new environment, as mentioned in the research. The actors do not possess the necessary financial and institutional capacities to deal with trans-border cooperation opportunities without the support of the international community/EU.
3. **Infrastructure.** The roads connecting the two countries have improved substantially. Corridor 10, including a highway connection between the two countries is completed. A direct airline connection between Athens and Skopje has been established following the Prespa Agreement. Nevertheless, the regional roads that connect the border regions of Dojran, Bitola and Prespa still require investments. There is also still no scheduled direct bus connecting the two countries. Improvements in cross border roads, railway and air infrastructure will certainly allow enhancing the cooperation.
4. **Capacity.** Challenges faced in initiating and implementing the cooperation arrangements of Prespa have also included absorption difficulties: institutions have limited staff and funds available for bilateral cooperation. Universities, research institutes and other educational institutions on the Macedonian side are still in political, military, economic, human, social, environmental, informational, and other transition.
5. **Domestic politics:** Domestic political dynamics of both Greece and North Macedonia could negatively affect the cooperation. Change in the government in Greece and absence of EU accession talks for North Macedonia have led to debates in both countries on the prospects of fully implementing the Prespa Agreement. The potential of political instability can have spiral effect on the implementation of the Prespa Agreement that could negatively affect the sustainability of current bilateral cooperation and the prospects for further cooperation. The agreement also remains vulnerable to the nationalist backlash on both sides of the border. Polls after the signing of the Prespa Agreement showed that a large majority of Greeks reject it and are against any compromise on the name dispute (Armakolas et al, 2019). North Macedonia's April 2020 elections could mean a change of government and possible return of the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE to power that could further complicate the process.

6. North Macedonia's EU accession. At the end of June and beginning of July 2018, both the European Union and NATO made crucial decisions on the Euro-Atlantic integration of North Macedonia. On 26 June 2018, the EU's General Affairs Council set North Macedonia on the path toward opening accession negotiations in 2019; on 11 July 2018, NATO invited the country to begin accession negotiations. Both decisions were based on rewarding North Macedonia for the signing of the Prespa Agreement on 17 June 2018 and the peaceful regime change that took place in 2017, returning the country to a path of democratic transformation, after a decade of state capture by the VMRO-DPMNE party. In April 2019, an assessment by the European Commission stated that North Macedonia had made sufficient progress and was ready for the start of accession talks. While the EU decision on opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia were scheduled for the 28-20 June 2019 EU Council meeting, it faced French, Danish and Dutch resistance. French President Macron's unwillingness to compromise mirrored his political position—presented at the EU-Western Balkans Summit in May 2018 in Bulgaria—that there should be no further enlargement before a deepening of the union (Armakolas et al, 2019). Another attempt at opening negotiations took place at the meeting of the EU Council in October 2019 but the decision was delayed until the Spring 2020 Zagreb Summit.
7. Personal contacts. The need for cooperation with citizens of the other country is not particularly salient in public life in either Greece or North Macedonia. The level of each society's understanding of its own country's presence in the other's public debate was and continues to be very limited. Moreover, very few people and only a handful of opinion makers from Greece or North Macedonia know about the domestic situation, politics, and mentality in North Macedonia or Greece.

In order to maintain the Prespa momentum and to alleviate the implications of the above-mentioned challenges, there is a need for establishing a practical and functional framework of cooperation in the fields of education, research, civil society and culture, with the elements as suggested above.

11. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

) TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF GREECE AND NORTH MACEDONIA

- The Prespa Agreement: it is imperative that implementation of the Agreement should continue as expected and without serious delays; prevarications or/and delays in implementation are undermining bilateral rapprochement and cooperation and by implication run counter to the interest of the two countries.
- Prespa Fund and/or Greece-North Macedonia Youth Office: There is significant potential for the development of bilateral cooperation, for example in higher education, that has to be encouraged and actively supported, including with the provision of financial support. The governments of the two countries should consider setting up a fund and an office that will be dedicated to the cooperation among Greece and North Macedonia, as also agreed in the Action Plan of 2 April 2019.
- Cross-border infrastructure: The two governments should continue investing in road, rail, and air connections between the two countries.
- Twinning among local governments: The governments of Greece and North Macedonia should encourage local governments and municipalities to seek partnerships and possibilities of signing twinning agreements across the border.
- Prespa Park euro-region: The two governments should encourage and facilitate the engagement of municipalities bordering the Prespa Lake in the Prespa Park euro-region; municipalities should internalize the plans as regards the Prespa Park euro-region in their own municipal plans and ensure that the earlier adopted plans and measures are implemented.

) TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- Accession talks for North Macedonia: Delay in the start of accession talks hampers the cooperation between the two countries. Therefore, the accession talks should be ensured that it is launched as soon as possible in order to maintain the momentum established by the Prespa Agreement.
- Increasing and adapting Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) funds: The European Commission should consider increasing funds dedicated to CBC between the two countries; the European Commission should also aim to adapt existing financing planning to match the objectives of implementing the positive agenda of the Prespa Agreement.

) TO ACTORS IN CIVIL SOCIETY, EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND CULTURE

- Institutional capacities: Actors in these fields should invest in their staff (e.g. training) in order to increase absorption capacity of programs allowing for greater cooperation.
- People to people contacts: introduce initiatives that will aim to increase people to people contacts across the border, and if possible establish permanent links that will create continuity and reduce dependency upon the role of personalities.
- Track two dialogue: civil society actors should consider establishing loose mechanisms such as civic coalitions.

ENDNOTES

[1] More specifically explained in the Action Plan on the intensification and enrichment of cooperation between the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia under cooperation priorities chapter six titled: Cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, research, technology, health and sports.

[2] Ibid.

[3] The Prespa Agreement available at http://mfa.gov.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2780:konechen-dogovor-za-reshavanje-na-makedonsko-grchki-ot-spor-za-imeto-i-za-strateshko-partnerstvo&catid=52&Itemid=684&lang=en

[4] More guidelines on the usage can be found here http://mfa.gov.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2976:q-a-on-prespa-agreement&catid=52&Itemid=684&lang=mk

[5] 'Plan on the intensification and enrichment of cooperation between the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia as provided in the Prespa Agreement', Skopje, 2 April 2019. All relevant provisions on the fields of education/ research, culture and civil society can be found in Section 6 of the Action Plan. In particular:

a. Education, science. The Parties will explore ways of enhancing their cooperation in the field of education by promoting synergies (at all educational levels) between Schools, Universities and Research Institutions, by providing scholarships and by supporting the participation of academics and students in bilateral and international scientific conferences. To this purpose, the Parties will examine the possibility to work on finalizing an Agreement on education.

b. Culture. Acknowledging that culture is a major contributor to our societies' rapprochement and to improving their mutual understanding, the Parties will place special emphasis on the development of their cultural relations and people to people contacts, having particular regard to arts, dance, cinematography, music and theatre. The Parties will join efforts, in the framework of UNESCO, to counter illicit trafficking in cultural property.

c. Research, technology and innovation. The Parties will explore ways of enhancing their cooperation in the field of research, technology and innovation; Joint research work on the basis of jointly agreed projects in the field of science and technology, i.e. climate change, precision medicine in oncology etc.; Exchange of scientists and experts in various areas of common interest; Exchange of scientific and technological information, i.e. for the management of a portfolio of natural hazards, seismic, climate data and the climate change in the region. Contacts and cooperation on innovative technologies among academic teams, research centers, institutes and other scientific organizations from the Republic of North Macedonia and the Hellenic Republic.

d. Youth. The Parties shall support all forms of youth cooperation in order to tighten the bonds and foster relations between young people in both countries. To this effect, both Parties will invest efforts to establish a “Greece – North Macedonia Youth Office” as a body/platform that will work on improving ties between young people in both countries, strengthen their mutual understanding and promote, encourage and facilitate meetings and exchanges between young people

[6] A detailed list of all bilateral Agreements and Memoranda signed between North Macedonia and Greece in 2019 can be found in Annex p.

[7] In a communication with the Department of International Relations of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Τμήμα Διεθνών Σχέσεων ΑΠΘ), we were informed that the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the University of St Kliment Ohridski at Bitola that expired in September 2019 will be renewed in the course of autumn or winter 2019-2020. To date (late November 2019), it is still marked as concluded.

[8] See in that respect the two Memoranda signed by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (1. The 2016 Agreement for Academic Cooperation between the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece and St Kliment Ohridski University, Bitola’ and 2.the 2013-2019 Memorandum of Understanding between Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki’). Both Memoranda are available in full text: <http://international-relations.auth.gr/el/active-agreements>

[9] We are referring to a USAID-funded program for numerous countries including the Balkan region and an international program funded by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

[10] A session organized within the program of the Investigative Film Festival in Skopje in November 2019. Click here for more information <https://2019.iffs.mk/event/cross-border-cooperation-of-journalists-from-greece-and-north-macedonia/>

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS PER FIELD OF RESEARCH (CIVIL SOCIETY, CULTURE AND EDUCATION/RESEARCH) IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

I. CIVIL SOCIETY/NGOs

1. Association of Business Women (ABW), interview with Valentina Disoska, Director, on 29 September 2019, Skopje.
2. Macedonian Translation Association (MATA), interview with Radomir Trajkovik, Director, on 29 September 2019, Skopje.
3. UNESCO Youth Club of Thessaloniki - Όμιλος για την UNESCO Νέων Θεσσαλονίκης interview with Stefanos Katsoulis, Director of UNESCO Youth Club of Thessaloniki, on 1 October 2019 at the University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki.
4. Poddrska Gevgelija, interview with Violeta Hristova, Director, on 2 October 2019, Gevgelija.
5. Alter Ego – Ο Άλλος μου Εαυτός, Thessaloniki; interview with Dimitris, Alter Ego, on 2 October 2019 at the offices of the NGO
6. Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC), interview with Aleksandar Krzalovski, Director, on 4 October 2019, Skopje.
7. United Societies of the Balkans, Thessaloniki; interview with Aris Parashos, founder and Director of United Societies of the Balkans, on 14 October 2019 at the offices of the NGO.
8. Όμιλος Ενεργών Νέων Φλώρινας, OENEΦ; interview with Kostas Fillipidis, founder and Head of OENEΦ on 18 October 2019, at the offices of the NGO in the city of Florina.
9. Macedonian Association for Quality in the foreign language teaching (MAKS), interview with Vesna Buzalkovska, Director, on 24 October 2019, Skopje.
10. NVO Kalidus – Bitola, interview in writing with the NGO over the email, on 24 October 2019.
11. Centre for Sustainability and Advanced Education - Bitola, interview in writing with the NGO over the email, on 26 October 2019.
12. Association Global – Bitola, interview with Tome Krstevski, Director, on 26 October 2019, Skopje.
13. Foundation for development of entrepreneurship, regional and cross border cooperation – Bitola, interview with Dragan Damjanovski, Director, over the phone, on 26 October 2019 and face to face interview on 22 November 2019, Bitola.
14. Youth Alliance Krushevo, 25 November 2019, Skopje.

II. CULTURE

1. Kulturna Riznica, interview with Vlado Golcev, Director, on 30 September 2019, Skopje.
2. National Theater of Northern Greece - Κρατικό Μουσείο Βορείου Ελλάδος, Thessaloniki; interview with Amalia Kontogianni, Head of the Department of Artistic Work of the National Theater on 30 September 2019 at the premises of the National Theater.
3. KUD Goce Delcev - Delcevo, interview with Zenil Redzepov-Srucni, on 30 September 2019.
4. Jewish Museum – Εβραϊκό Μουσείο, Thessaloniki; interview with Evangello Hekimoglou, Curator of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki on 3 October 2019 at the premises of the museum.
5. Filoproodos Sillogos Edessa Megas Alexandros - Φιλοπρόοδος Σύλλογος Έδεσσα Μέγας Αλέξανδρος; interview with a former executive officer of Filoproodos Sillogos Edessas Megas Alexandros, on 10 October 2019, in Edessa.
6. Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, interview with Elizabeta Koneska, Adviser, on 15 October 2019, Skopje.
7. Thessaloniki Museum of Photography - Μουσείο Φωτογραφίας Θεσσαλονίκης; interview with a scientific advisor and curator of the Museum of Photography of Thessaloniki, on 16 October 2019 at the premises of the museum.
8. Museum of Contemporary Art – Μουσείο Σύγχρονης Τέχνης, Thessaloniki; interview with Syrago Tsiara, Vice Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, on 24 October 2019 at the premises of the museum.
9. National Historical Museum - Εθνικό Ιστορικό Μουσείο, Athens; interview with a scientific advisor and curator at the National Historical Museum through a Skype call, on 5 November 2019.
10. Benaki Museum - Μουσείο Μπενάκη, Athens; interview with a scientific advisor and curator at the Benaki Museum, through a Skype call, on 6 November 2019.

III. EDUCATION/RESEARCH

1. Research Institute of Animal Science “Demeter”-Ινστιτούτο Επιστήμης Ζωικής Παραγωγής «Δήμητρα», interview with a researcher on 2 October 2019 at the premises of the Institute at Paralimni Pellas, Greece.
2. Institute for Balkan Studies- Ίδρυμα Μελετών Χερσονήσου Αίμου (IMXA), Thessaloniki; interview with an officer on 2 October 2019 at the premises of the Institute.
3. ZIP Institute, Executive Director, Agim Selami. The interview responses received via email on 7 October 2019.
4. School of Economic and Regional Studies, University of Macedonia- Σχολή Οικονομικών και Περιφερειακών Σπουδών, Πανεπιστήμιο Μακεδονίας, Thessaloniki; interview conducted with Professor Konstantinos Tsitselikis, Dean of the School of Economic and Regional Studies on 15 October 2019 at the premises of the University of Macedonia.
5. Hellenic Institute of Transport- Centre for Research and Technology Hellas- Ινστιτούτο Βιώσιμης Κινητικότητας και Δικτύων Μεταφορών- Εθνικό Κέντρο Έρευνας και Τεχνολογικής Ανάπτυξης, Thessaloniki; interview conducted with a Senior Researcher at the Hellenic Institute of Transport on 16 October 2019.
6. University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Faculty of Law & Institute for Strategic Research and Education, Prof. Miso Dokmanovic & Director. The interview responses received via email on 21 October 2019.
7. University of Tetova, International Project Office Coordinator, Shefik Shehu, PhD. The interview responses received via email on 21 October 2019.
8. University of Western Macedonia- Department of Regional Development and Cross Border Cooperation- Πανεπιστήμιο Δυτικής Μακεδονίας, Τμήμα Περιφερειακής Ανάπτυξης και Διασυνοριακής Συνεργασίας, Kozani; interview conducted with a Professor the Department of Regional Development and Cross Border Cooperation. The interview was conducted through a Skype call on 5 November 2019.
9. International Hellenic University- Department of Production Engineering and Management- Διεθνές Πανεπιστήμιο Ελλάδας- Τμήμα Μηχανικών Παραγωγής και Διοίκησης, Sindos- Thessaloniki; A Professor of the department submitted written answers to our questionnaire on 7 November 2019.
10. Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities of Skopje, Higher Education Institution and Research Center, Viktorija Borovska, Program Director. The interview responses received via email on 20 November 2019.

11. Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Faculty of Philosophy, Professor and UNESCO Chair for Intercultural Studies and Research. The interview held in the Faculty building, 21 November 2019.
12. St. Kliment Ohridski University-Bitola, Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies. Interview with Prof. Igor Nedelkovski, Vice Rector for Science and Project Coordinator for IPA-CBC:2014-2020-Project; Cross4all & IPA-CBC:2014-2020-Project EMPLOYOUTH; also, Professor Nedelkovski is Director of GAUSS Institute working on CBC projects since 1999. The interview held in the Rectorate building, 22 November 2019, Skopje.

LIST OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS AND MEMORANDA SIGNED BETWEEN NORTH MACEDONIA AND GREECE IN 2018 AND 2019 IN A CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1. “Final Agreement for the settlement of the differences as described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the establishment of a strategic partnership between the parties”.
2. “Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media of the Hellenic Republic and the Ministry of Information Society and Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia on Reduction of International Roaming Tariffs for Telecommunication Services”, 19 February 2019
3. “Agreement between the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia on the Establishment of one Border-Crossing point in the Prespa Lake Area”, Skopje, 8 March 2019.
4. “Action Plan on the intensification and enrichment of cooperation between the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia as provided for in the Prespa Agreement”, Skopje, 2 April 2019
5. “Agreement on Defense Cooperation between the Ministry of National Defence of the Hellenic Republic and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of North Macedonia”, Skopje, 2 April 2019
6. “Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic and the Secretariat for European Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia on the Acceleration of the Integration Process of the Republic of North Macedonia into the European Union”, Skopje, 2 April 2019
7. “Memorandum of Understanding on the development of the “Thessaloniki- Skopje-Tabanovce” Road and Railway Connection between the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia (“Road and Rail Project”)”, Skopje, 2 April 2019
8. “Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia concerning the establishment of a Steering Committee for Economic Cooperation”, Skopje, 2 April 2019
9. “Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport of the Hellenic Republic and the Ministry of Transport and Communication of the Republic of North Macedonia”, Skopje, 2 April 2019
10. “Agreement between the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of North Macedonia on the establishment of a new Border-Crossing Point between the two countries, connecting Promachoi, in the Hellenic Republic and Majden, in the Republic of North Macedonia”, Skopje, 2 April 2019.

COOPERATION IN EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND CIVIL SOCIETY AFTER THE PRESPA AGREEMENT: HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

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