



Public Views in Macedonia

“Global Leadership, Neighbourhood and
Relations with Bulgaria”

“The Name Dispute- 2013”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES
&
CONCLUSIONS

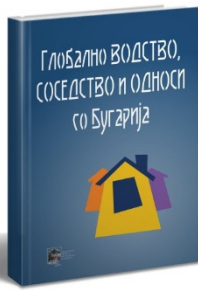
INTRODUCTION

Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) and the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” – Skopje (IDSCS), for the first time conducted the survey “Global leadership, neighbourhood and relations with Bulgaria” and for the third time the survey on the name dispute. The surveys and the reports aim to serve for an informed public debate about the challenges Macedonia faces in the Euro-Atlantic integrations.

The research used a combination of public opinion survey, online survey with informed persons and literature review. The public opinion survey was conducted by face-to-face interviews in households by M-Prospect from 15 November to 1 December 2013, on a representative sample of 1,000 respondents with a +/-3% margin of error. The online survey was conducted with 15 i.e. 17 public and informed persons.

On January 16, 2014 a public debate was organised by MCIC and IDSCS, where more than 100 representatives from media, civil society, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and foreign embassies in Macedonia took active part.

The reports are published in Macedonian language. The publishers understand the need of broadening the debate to the public across the borders and translated the executive summaries and conclusions in English.



GLOBAL LEADERSHIP, NEIGHBORHOOD AND RELATIONS WITH BULGARIA

The report Global Leadership, Neighbourhood and relations with Bulgaria was published in December 2013 and it is available on the following link <http://www.mcms.org.mk/images/docs/2013/globalno-vodstvo-2013.pdf>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report is composed of sections on global leadership, relations with the neighboring countries and relations with Bulgaria.

In terms of global politics, the citizens hold the best opinion towards Germany and U.S., followed by Switzerland, Turkey and Albania. Turkey, Serbia, USA, Germany and Albania are the five friendliest countries to Macedonia. China ranks as sixth, while Russia as ninth. Among the first 15 ranks are all Macedonia's neighbouring countries. Turkey, Serbia, USA, Germany and Slovenia are the five best allies of Macedonia. Majority of the citizens, as a country for which they hold most positive attitude or consider as Macedonia's best ally, have chosen NATO-member states, which is a confirmation for the Euro-Atlantic orientation.

Great majority of the citizens consider the relations with the neighbouring countries as important for Macedonia. The current relations are evaluated with a positive zero i.e. 0.11 on a scale of -5 to 5. Out of the five Macedonia's neighbouring countries, citizens perceive Serbia as a friendliest neighbour, followed by Albania, while Greece is perceived as the most unfriendly neighbour. One out of five respondents thinks that there are no friendliest country among the neighbouring countries. Views on Serbia and Albania as friendliest neighbour differ between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. Asked about each neighbour separately, Macedonian citizens have the following perception on the friendly or neutral behaviour: Serbia (87.1%), Albania (71.3%), Kosovo (64.4%), Bulgaria (53.4%) and Greece (7.95%).

Citizens perceive that in the last five years there has been greatest improvement in the relations with Serbia and Albania while one out of five respondents thinks that there is no improvements in the relations with any neighbour. Ethnic Macedonians have best personal experiences with Serbia, most knowledge about Serbian history and culture and most positive attitude towards Serbia (52%), while ethnic Albanians for Albania. Majority of citizens wish for equally good relations with all neighbouring countries, followed by a desire for closest relations with Serbia and Albania.

Respondents perceive history (30%) and its different interpretation (20.9%), followed by national politicians (12%) and their petty political interests, as greatest obstacles for more intensive cooperation between Macedonia and Bulgaria. Public and informed persons find the bad infrastructural connection as an equal obstacle, while ethnic Albanians stress the cultural differences (21.5%). Great majority find that is important that the relations/cooperation with Bulgaria is improved.

For improving the relations between Macedonia and Bulgaria, citizens consider the following three areas to be of greatest importance: cooperation in culture, entertainment and sports; improvements in the infrastructure and border crossings and access to the media in both countries. There is a low perception for common historical figures. The citizens consider as Macedonians many historical figures who are also placed by Bulgaria in its historical heritage; such are St. Cyril and Methodius, St. Clement, Goce Delchev, Jane Sandanski etc. Higher perception for common figures have the public and informed persons who consider St. Cyril and Methodius and King Samuel as such.

Great majority support reciprocal solution for the issue of the appropriate minorities in Macedonia and the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria through a good-neighbourly relation agreement. Concluding an agreement for good-neighbourly relations is of great importance for Macedonian citizens and they wish it could be done in very near future, still they expect that this could happen in a medium term. Great majority of the citizens of Macedonia expect Bulgaria to support Macedonia in its EU integrations.

CONCLUSIONS

I Global Leadership

Best opinion towards Germany and USA in terms of global politics

In terms of global politics, respondents hold the best opinion towards Germany (14.5%) and USA (11.2 %), followed by Switzerland, Turkey, Albania and Serbia. Up to the tenth rank follow Sweden, Australia, Russia and Slovenia. 7.1% citizens, do not hold good opinion towards any country. Citizens' views on which is the best country are relatively homogeneous regarding ethnicity and political party affiliation, especially for the first four ranked countries on the list. For the other countries, Albania, Sweden and Australia, there are quite some noticeable differences based on the ethnicity.

Turkey, Serbia, USA and Germany on the top as friendliest countries and Macedonia's best allies, Albania as fifth friendliest country and Slovenia fifth best ally

Turkey, Serbia, USA, Germany and Albania are the five friendliest countries to Macedonia. China is on the sixth rank, while Russia on the ninth. Among first 15 ranks are all neighbouring countries of Macedonia. Turkey, Serbia, USA, Germany and Slovenia are the five best alliances of Macedonia.

Euro-Atlantic orientation of the citizens and perception towards NATO member states as Macedonia's best allies

Despite the fact that citizens hold the best opinion about Germany and U.S., the sum of countries for which citizens show positive attitude and which are NATO member states is 56,5% compared to 24,5% of non-members countries.

NATO member's countries are also perceived as Macedonia's best allies, the sum for this is 42.3% compared to 18.9% for non-members countries.

There is a certain national consensus in regards to global leadership and alliance

Attitudes of the citizens on best country, friendliest country and country best ally of Macedonia are relatively homogeneous regarding ethnicity and political party affiliation. Thus 11% of ethnic Macedonians and 11.3% ethnic Albanians, as well as 10.4% of VMRO-DPMNE affiliates and 11.5% of SDUM affiliates, consider U.S. as best ally of Macedonia.

The differences based on ethnicity and political party affiliation are not significant, with the exception of attitudes on Albania, for which there are large differences along the ethnic lines between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians.

Another ethnically based difference requires some attention, this being the difference in the attitude that there is no particular country which is the friendliest country and best ally to Macedonia; 20% of the ethnic Macedonians hold this position, compared to 10% among ethnic Albanians.

II Neighbouring Countries

The relations with the neighbouring countries are important, the score is positive zero

The attitude that relations with the neighbouring countries are important is shared by great majority of citizens. The current relations with the neighbours are evaluated as a positive zero i.e. 0.11 on a scale of -5 to 5. Ethnic Macedonians evaluate these relations more positively, while ethnic Albanians and the public and informed persons more negatively.

Serbia is the friendliest neighbour, Greece the most unfriendly neighbour, while every fifth citizen thinks no neighbour can be considered as the friendliest

Citizens perceive Serbia as a friendliest neighbouring country (42.5%), followed by Albania (18.5%) and Kosovo (5.4%). One out of five respondents (22.8%) thinks that no friendliest country among the neighbouring countries. Views on Serbia and Albania as the friendliest neighbour differ between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians.

Great majority (81.2%), regardless the ethnicity and party affiliation, consider Greece as most unfriendly neighbour.

Macedonian citizens make the following ranking (based on friendly attitude, including neutral) of friendly to unfriendly neighbour country: Serbia (87.1%), Albania (71.3%), Kosovo (64.4%), Bulgaria (53.4%) and Greece (7.95%).

In the last five years, relations with Serbia, Albania and Kosovo have been improved, while every fifth citizen thinks that there no improvements in the relations with any neighbour

Citizens perceive improvement in the relations with Serbia (20.6%), Albania (19.6%) and Kosovo (16.7%) in the last five years. One out of five respondents (21.7%) believes that there is no improvements in the relations with any neighbour.

Best personal experiences, most knowledge of the history and culture and most positive opinion ethnic Macedonians have towards Serbia while ethnic Albanians towards Albania

Ethnic Macedonians have best personal experiences with Serbia (52%), most knowledge of Serbian history and culture (51.9%) and most positive attitude towards Serbia (63.7%). Ethnic Albanians have best personal experiences with Albania (44.3%), most knowledge of Albanian history and culture (64.8%) and most positive attitude towards Albania (71.9%). Almost every fifth respondent considers that s/he has not had good personal experiences (14.8%) and that s/he does not know the history and culture, or hold a good opinion about any of the neighbours (17%).

It is evident that citizens show differences in views about friendliest country and best personal experiences. For example, Bulgaria is perceived as the friendliest country by 3.3% of the respondents, while 10.9% of the citizens share best personal experiences with Bulgaria, 15.1% among the ethnic Macedonians. Such difference points out to different way in which politics is experienced (friendliest neighbour) compared to everyday communications (best personal experiences).

Majority of citizens wish for equally good relations with all neighbouring countries

Majority of citizens (39.3%) desire equally good relations with all neighbour countries, followed by desire for closest relations with Serbia – 19.6%, Albania – 12.8% and with Bulgaria – 8.9 % while less close with Greece (6.7%).

III Relations with Bulgaria

The history and its interpretation – greatest obstacle for more intensive cooperation between Macedonia and Bulgaria

Respondents perceive history and its different interpretation, followed by national politicians and their own political interests, as an obstacle for more intensive cooperation between Macedonia and Bulgaria. Some of the public and informed persons, alongside with the history and national politicians, find the bad infrastructural connection as an equal obstacle. Ethnic Albanians also stress the cultural differences.

In a public opinion survey in Bulgaria, as greatest disagreements between Bulgaria and Macedonia are seen those related with the historical heritage. Citizens also believe that there are not enough meetings of the leaderships of the two countries.

It is important to improve relations with Bulgaria, and for this, several elements are necessary

Great majority (87.8%) finds that it is important that the relations/cooperation between Macedonia and Bulgaria improve. For improving the relations between Macedonia and Bulgaria, 32.8% respondents think that cooperation in culture, entertainment and sport between the two countries is needed, 18.5% are for improving the infrastructure and the border crossings, 12.4% for access to media of both countries, 10.6% consider common history books, 6.5% are celebration of common events and heroes (6.5%), while every fifth citizen (19.2%) does not know or does not have an answer.

The informed persons consider improvement of the infrastructure and access to media of both countries as main elements (from one country to the other).

Common history books and celebration of common events and heroes is more acceptable for ethnic Albanians compared to ethnic Macedonians. These two statements are acceptable for one out of three ethnic Albanians and for one out of ten ethnic Macedonians.

Low perception for common historical figures

Macedonian citizens consider as Macedonian many historical figures for whom Bulgaria also places them in its historical heritage, such as St. Cyril and Methodius, St. Clement, Goce Delchev, Jane Sandanski etc. Higher perception for common figures have the public and informed persons who consider as mutual: St. Cyril and Methodius, King Samoil and Todor Aleksandrov.

Reciprocity on the minority issues

The minority issue is an issue mentioned in media when they report on the agreement on good-neighbourly relations between Macedonia and Bulgaria. Large majority (74.7%) supports the reciprocity principle in solving this issue, while the position that Macedonia should give up on its minority in Bulgaria is supported by insignificant minority (4.2%).

Accomplishing an agreement on good-neighbourly relations is of great importance, it is desired to be accomplished soon, while the expectation is that it will be done in medium term

For majority of citizens (85.4%) it is important that an agreement on good-neighbourly relations between Macedonia and Bulgaria is reached. Citizens of Macedonia, regardless of their ethnicity or party affiliation, would personally wish that Macedonia and Bulgaria accomplish such agreement in very near future.

While majority wish for good-neighbourly agreement in the very near future (within one year), small minority of 27.5% believes that this will be achieved, while one out three (31.5%) thinks that this is achievable within two to five years.

Great expectations for Bulgarian support in EU integrations

Large majority of the citizens of Macedonia (87.5%) expect that Bulgaria would support Macedonia in its further EU integrations.



THE NAME DISPUTE- 2013

The report Name Dispute - 2013 was published in January 2015 and it is available from <http://www.mcms.mk/images/docs/2014/sporot-za-imeto-makedonija-2013.pdf>.

Executive Summary

Public opinion against any change of the name is getting stronger. The majority of the citizens (62.4%) are against any name change (compared to 48.4 % in 2010 and 45.3 % in 2011). It is also emphasized with the opinion of majority of the citizens (70.3%) who would not accept any geographic reference, as well as with the position that in a referendum 62.7% would vote against any agreed *erga omnes* formulation of the name. Furthermore, 58.4% of the citizens would still remain against this agreement even if the agreement would enter into force when Macedonia would become member state of the EU. The majority of those who are against any changes belong to the Macedonian ethnic group (79.7%).

Unlike, the approximation of the attitudes between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in 2011, there is certain divergence in 2013. The attitudes of the ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanians in 2011 converged in regards to the resolution of the dispute and support on a referendum. In 2013, again, most of the views remain in the same direction, such as for example the attitude “no changes” is supported by 23.4% of the ethnic Albanians, being also the most prevailing attitude. However, because of the increase of this position among ethnic Macedonians, from 57% to 79.7%, the attitude gap between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians widens.

The distancing is most apparent in the attitudes of “maintaining the name” despite “Euro-Atlantic integrations”, the latter being of mutual importance, but when choosing a priority, 64.9% of ethnic Macedonians would rather “maintain the name”, while 68% of the ethnic Albanians would choose “Euro-Atlantic integrations”.

The identity continues to be the red line, which can also be seen in the attitude against any change of the name, but also in the denial of defining the nationality/citizenship (71.5%) and the Macedonian language in the UN (73.6%). The identity is a key factor in the name dispute, and 53.8% of the citizens perceive the Greek rejection of the factual existence of Macedonia, Macedonians and the Macedonian language as a main obstacle for resolving the dispute with Greece, and to 32.9% of the citizens the greatest concern is that even if the name dispute is to be resolved, Greece would still ask for new concessions concerning the identity and the language.

Citizens perceive a need for reaching a wide agreement and they find the Macedonian Government as being most responsible for this. Majority of the citizens (66.3%) of all ethnic and political affiliates support a referendum for the name agreement. The support for referendum has been increasing since 2010 - 54.4% to 64% in 2011 and 66.3% in 2013.

On a referendum – against agreement on *erga omnes* formulation. Majority of citizens (62.7%) would vote against the proposal “Upper Republic of Macedonia” as *erga omnes*, and a slightly lower majority (58.4%) would still remain against this proposal even in the times when Macedonia would become an EU member.

Euro-Atlantic integrations and maintaining the name, along with the associated threats are the main factors which influence the name dispute. Approximately, 15% of the citizens do not perceive

threats or risks even in a standstill in the Euro-Atlantic integrations, nor even in reaching an agreement with Greece. In the first case, not resolving the dispute, standstill in EU integrations, stagnation in the economy and deterioration of interethnic relations are perceived as main threats. In case of resolving the name dispute, Greek requests for new concessions in the identity, schism and tensions between traitors and patriots, as well as that EU would leave Macedonia out due to standstill in its enlargement, are perceived as main threats. It seems that the perception of these threats as threats to the survival of the nation are the main engine in rejecting any agreement with Greece.

While in 2011 little hope for creating a small window towards agreement still existed, partly related to the expectation from the proceedings before the International Court of Justice, in 2013 it becomes clear that this window is closing. Despite the personal wishes for finding a solution in a short term, the optimism for finding a quick solution is decreasing. An indicator for the grown pessimism is the increase in the attitude that such agreement will never be accomplished and also the decrease of the expectations for resolving the dispute in the near future. Regardless of certain differences, citizens share the view that a greater portion of the guilt for the unresolved situation falls on the Greek side and the country's lack of commitment. The increase of the opposition to any changes of the name (no change), as well as an increase of the position for keeping the name, could be associated with Greek blockade of the Euro-Atlantic integrations, i.e. it is most likely that the blockade is the reason for increased resistance towards a solution. As a result, 44.9% of the citizens consider that negotiations under the auspices of UN should be suspended or terminated.

For reaching an agreement, it is necessary that the prime ministers of both countries get involved along with a third party, such as the USA, EU or Germany.

CONCLUSIONS

The public opinion against any changes of the name is getting stronger

A majority of citizens (62.4%) are against any changes of the name, representing an increase as compared to 48.4% in 2010 and 45.3% in 2011. This is further confirmed by the opinion of a large majority of the citizens (70.3%) who would not accept any geographic reference, as well as with the opinion that a referendum would result in 62.7% of respondents being against any agreed *erga omnes* formulation. Furthermore, 58.4% of the citizens would still remain against any changes even if Macedonia was to become EU member state. In addition, most of the majority which is against any changes belongs to the Macedonian ethnic group (79.7%).

After the convergence of the views between the ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanians in 2011, there is certain distancing in present times

The opinions of ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, regarding the name dispute and the support for the idea for a referendum, were somewhat convergent in 2011. In 2013 most of the views remain in the same direction – for example, the “no changes” attitude shared by 23.4% of the ethnic Albanians is also a prevailing attitude, but the increase of the “no changes” position among ethnic Macedonians from 57% to 79.7% widens the attitude gap between the two ethnic groups.

The ethnic gap is most apparent in the attitude of “maintaining the name” compared to the attitude towards “Euro-Atlantic integrations”, the latter being of mutual importance, but when choosing a priority, 64.9% of ethnic Macedonians would rather “maintain the name”, while 68% of the ethnic Albanians would choose “Euro-Atlantic integrations”.

This gap is most probably perceived as an increase in the risk of deterioration of the interethnic relations, the perception of this risk has increased to to current 23.7% as compared to 13.8% measured in 2011.

On the other hand, the ethnic Albanians have aligned views with the ethnic Macedonians regarding the reasons of the unresolved name dispute. The denial of the existence of Macedonia by the Greek side (32.8%) and lack of interest for this issue among great powers (21.9%) are the most frequently identified reasons. As a result, only 0.8% of ethnic Albanians hold an opinion that only Greece is interested and active in finding a solution. Ethnic Albanians share the perception that the name dispute cannot be resolved in short terms; however they do not share the perception that negotiations with Greece should be suspended or terminated. Most of the ethnic Albanians (44.1%) expect negotiations at higher level with the Prime Ministers of both countries engaging into talks. Thus, it could be concluded that the greatest expectations of ethnic Albanians in direction of the Euro-Atlantic integrations are increased activities into finding a solution of the name dispute at higher political level.

The identity continues to be the red line

The identity continues to be the red line and this can be seen in the attitude against any change of the name, but also in the refusal of re-defining the nationality/citizenship (71.5%) and the Macedonian language in the UN (73.6%).

The identity is a key factor in the name dispute, and 53.8% of the population perceives the rejection of the factual existence of Macedonia, the Macedonians and the Macedonian language from the Greek side as a main obstacle for resolving the dispute, while to 32.9% of the citizens the greatest concern is that even when the name dispute is to be resolved, Greece would still ask for new concessions concerning the identity and the language.

Expectation for reaching a wide agreement

Citizens perceive the need for creating a wide agreement and they find the Government of the Republic of Macedonia as being most responsible for that.

A majority of citizens (66.3%) of all ethnic and political affiliates support the idea of a referendum for the name agreement. The support for a referendum has been increasing from 54.4%, in 2010, to 64% in 2011 and 66.3% in 2013.

Going on a referendum – against agreement on *erga omnes* formulation

A majority of citizens (62.7%) would vote against the proposal “Upper Republic of Macedonia” as *erga omnes*, and a slightly lower majority (58.4%) would remain against this proposal even if Macedonia would become an EU member.

EU/NATO Integrations and threats associated with maintaining the name are the main factors in the name dispute

“Maintaining the name” against “Euro-Atlantic integrations” which are of importance for all, as well as associated threats are the main factors influencing the dispute. Approximately 15% of the citizens do not perceive threats or risks even in situation of freezing the Euro-Atlantic integrations and even in achieving an agreement with Greece. In case of not finding a solution to the name dispute the main perceived threats are lagging behind in the EU integration process, economic lag and deterioration of interethnic relations. In case of resolving the dispute, the main perceived threats are possible Greek requests for new concessions in the identity, gaps and tensions between traitors and patriots, and that the EU would leave Macedonia out due to standstill in its enlargement. It seems like perceiving these conditions as threatening the nation’s existence are main engine in refusing any agreement with Greece. The fear of additional requests by Greece is based on the

experience so far, Greece has made trade and political blockades three times (1991/92; 1994/95 and 2008) in order to pressure Macedonia for change of the Constitution, flag change etc., but this fears are also justified with the fact that Greece has broken the Interim agreement and has not respected the judgment of the International Court of Justice.

The small window towards an agreement is being closed, Greek blockade increases the citizens' resistance

While in 2011 some hope existed for creation of a small window towards an agreement, partly related to the expectation related to the decision of the International Court of Justice, in 2013 it becomes clearer that this window is closing. In spite of the personal wishes for finding a solution in a short term, the optimism for finding a quick solution is going down. An indicator for the increased pessimism is the increased fear that such agreement would never be accomplished and also the decrease of the expectations for resolving the dispute in the near future.

Citizens, regardless of certain differences, share the view that a greater portion of the fault for unresolved situation falls to the Greek side and the country's lack of commitment.

Increasing the opposition to any changes of the name, as well as an increase in the position for keeping the name, could be associated with Greek blockade of the Euro-Atlantic integrations, i.e. it is most likely that the blockade is the reason for increased resistance towards finding a solution. As a result, 44.9% of the citizens consider that negotiations under the auspices of UN should be suspended or terminated.

For finding an agreement, an involvement of Prime Ministers of both countries by including a third party such as U.S., EU or Germany is necessary

Dealing with the two threats, the first being the possible new concessions and the second the possible internal divisions, are a precondition for straightening the support for finding an agreement.

The fear of new and additional requests for concessions by Greece (because it is hard to expect that Greece would directly recognize the Macedonian nation, identity, culture and language), could be resolved by the proposal of Gerald Knaus of the European Stability Initiative (ESI). The solution would be that the agreement between Greece and Macedonia could come into effect on the day when Macedonia would enter EU (NATO would use provision reference). This way, Greece instead of an inhibitor of the membership would actually become its promoter, and Macedonia would know that there are no further obstacles for entering EU, no matter whether these obstacles would come from Greece or other countries which are against enlargement (a possible referendum in France or vetoes of countries influenced by extreme right-winged parties).

The second fear of disruption could be overcome by using the "framework model", i.e. the possible agreement with Greece to be approved by all major political parties.

For finding an agreement with Greece, involvement of the Prime Ministers of both countries and a third party such as U.S., EU or Germany, is a necessity.

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MCIC List of Publications and Research: <http://www.mcms.mk/mk/za-nasata-rabota/istrazuvana-i-publikacij/lista-na-istrazuvana-i-publikacij.html>

IDSCS List of Publications and Research:

http://idscs.org.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=205&Itemid=93&lang=mk

Previous survey reports on Macedonia name dispute:

<http://www.mcms.mk/images/docs/2011/sporot-za-imeto-makedonija-2011.pdf>

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