

Strengthening European
integration through the
analysis of conflict discourses
Revisiting the Past, Anticipating the Future

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Policy Recommendations for the EU

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CoE	Council of Europe
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EACEA	Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Union
EC	European Community/Communities
EEAS	European External Action Service
NRTN	National Radio and Television Networks

1 Introduction

According to the Grant Agreement (GA), **the objective of this deliverable is to develop policy recommendations that will serve as a concrete roadmap for the EU in its attempts to find strategies for overcoming troubled past(s) in European countries.** This deliverable shall be read in the context of a wider effort in WP6.6, which also produced eight sets of ‘national policy recommendations’ – one per each country under the investigation of the RePAST project.¹ If the aim of these eight sets of ‘national policy recommendations’ was proposing concrete, *country-specific* roadmaps for addressing the issues arising from the conflicting pasts in four different domains of the RePAST’s inquiry (history; media; politics; arts & culture), then this EU roadmap takes a different angle; it aims at offering a set of ideas that could be the EU’s future centres of gravity, when it comes to addressing the troubled past(s) throughout the European continent. This EU roadmap, thus, tries to answer **what the EU institutions can do to help European countries, both members and aspiring candidates for the membership, to foster the processes that would lead to the overcoming of troubled past(s) in respective countries.**

Firstly, this deliverable builds on *the earlier insights gained in previous working packages (WP) of the RePAST project, which inform eight national policy recommendations* developed individually by each partner within WP6.6 (Policy Recommendations).² These EU policy recommendations, thus, take into account the inputs obtained by several policy makers and stakeholders from “eight RePAST countries”, who are knowledgeable of the relations between the EU and a respective country (the nexus between the EU and the member state). Furthermore, another stream of expertise has been included in the preparation of this document; namely, *six relevant experts working in the EU institutions, or working in a close cooperation with them*, provided comments to our draft version of recommendations (see the section ‘Methodology’ for details; for the list of experts, see ‘References’). The rationale for including such a wide group of policy makers and stakeholders in the preparation of this report was, on the one hand, making the recommendations more realistic and, thus, perhaps, more implementable, and on the other hand, respecting the requirements of the Grant Agreement, which necessitates the inclusion of these interlocutors in the process of preparing policy recommendations.³

The EU roadmap is **structured** as follows: in *Section 2*, we explain the methodological approach undertaken to complete this deliverable; we explain how we, the researchers, engaged different policy makers and stakeholders at the EU and national level at various stages of the production of this document, and how we incorporated their insights into this final version of the EU policy recommendations. In *Section 3*, we analyse a few historic milestones after World War 2 (WW2) that ‘made’ the EU a peace project in itself, interested not only in maintaining its internal security,

¹ Ireland, Cyprus, Greece, Germany, Spain, Poland, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

² Writing of national policy recommendations stems from the methodological framework, which enabled a cross-country comparison of eight case studies investigated in the RePAST project.

³ Academics – including the researchers in the RePAST consortium – can be over-ambitious about what could be realistically achieved, as they tend to lack ‘the touch’ with ‘real politics’.

but also in becoming the actor aspiring to project peace outwards. We do so by contextualizing these developments from the perspective of the overall rationale of the RePAST project, namely, how has the EU's approach to addressing troubled past(s) in European countries evolved since the beginnings of the European integration until nowadays. *Section 4*, which stems from eight national policy recommendations, offers a synthesis of the EU approaches to the troubled past(s) in each state of inquiry; from a cross-country comparison, this section seeks similarities, differences and highest common denominators among national policy recommendations, and attempts to extrapolate them on the EU level. *Section 5* is devoted to the reflections from the policy-makers' and stakeholders' interviews regarding the EU approach in addressing the troubled past(s) in respective countries explored in this project. Based on Sections 4 and 5, in *Section 6* we then develop the most important part of this document: the policy recommendations that the EU as an institution could take in the future within each of the domains explored in the project (history, media, politics, arts & culture). As mentioned above, this section is enriched by the insights that experts from the EU and the RePAST countries offered to our draft version of recommendations (see next section for details).

2 Methodology

These policy recommendations for the EU stem from **eight national policy recommendations** that were written by the RePAST consortium partners, who all worked in line with the earlier agreed-upon approach.⁴ This first pool of data that has been gathered mostly in 2018 and 2019 within WP2 (Oral and Official History), WP3 (Journalistic and Citizen-led Media), WP4 (Arts & Culture) and WP5 (Political Discourses, Attitudes and Policies); all these WPs informed writing of national policy recommendations for each RePAST country under investigation.

The second pool of data used to produce this document were **the interviews that the RePAST partners conducted with national and EU policy makers and stakeholders in eight 'RePAST countries'**. Due to the situation with COVID-19, the majority of partners was not able to travel and conduct these interviews in person. Therefore, the partners had to rely on online interviews (Skype, Zoom etc.) in order to obtain policy makers' and stakeholders' comments on the draft versions of national policy recommendations.⁵ In the interviews, the consortium researchers also discussed with their interlocutors the EU's approach to support the countries in overcoming their

⁴ The agreement on the structure and methodology of WP6.6 pertaining to both national policy recommendations and these EU recommendations evolved gradually. First, the leader of this task (Rok Zupančič, University of Ljubljana) circulated the draft idea of the work plan to the consortium members, who have given their thoughts on the initial idea. Afterwards, the second, revised version of the work-plan was circulated to the consortium partners and again discussed at an online meeting. After the last revisions have been done by University of Ljubljana, the consortium partners approved the work-plan; the work-plan, entitled *Instructions for WP6.6 – Policy Recommendations*, is attached to the final submitted deliverable 6.16 (eight national policy recommendations and EU policy recommendations).

⁵ Selection criteria for engaging interviewees (which requirements should be met) were defined earlier in the Instructions for WP6.6.

particular troubled past(s).⁶ Between May and December 2020, the numbers of the interviews conducted by the consortium partners were as follows: 16 interviews with *national* policy-makers/representatives; 8 interviews with state and NGOs representatives; 13 interviews with EU policy-makers and stakeholders (the names of these interviewees are specified in each of the national policy recommendations). The data from these 37 interviews was used in the preparation of these recommendations.

Based on the previously explained steps, the researchers at University of Ljubljana prepared the first *draft* version of the EU Policy Recommendations and sent them for commenting to:

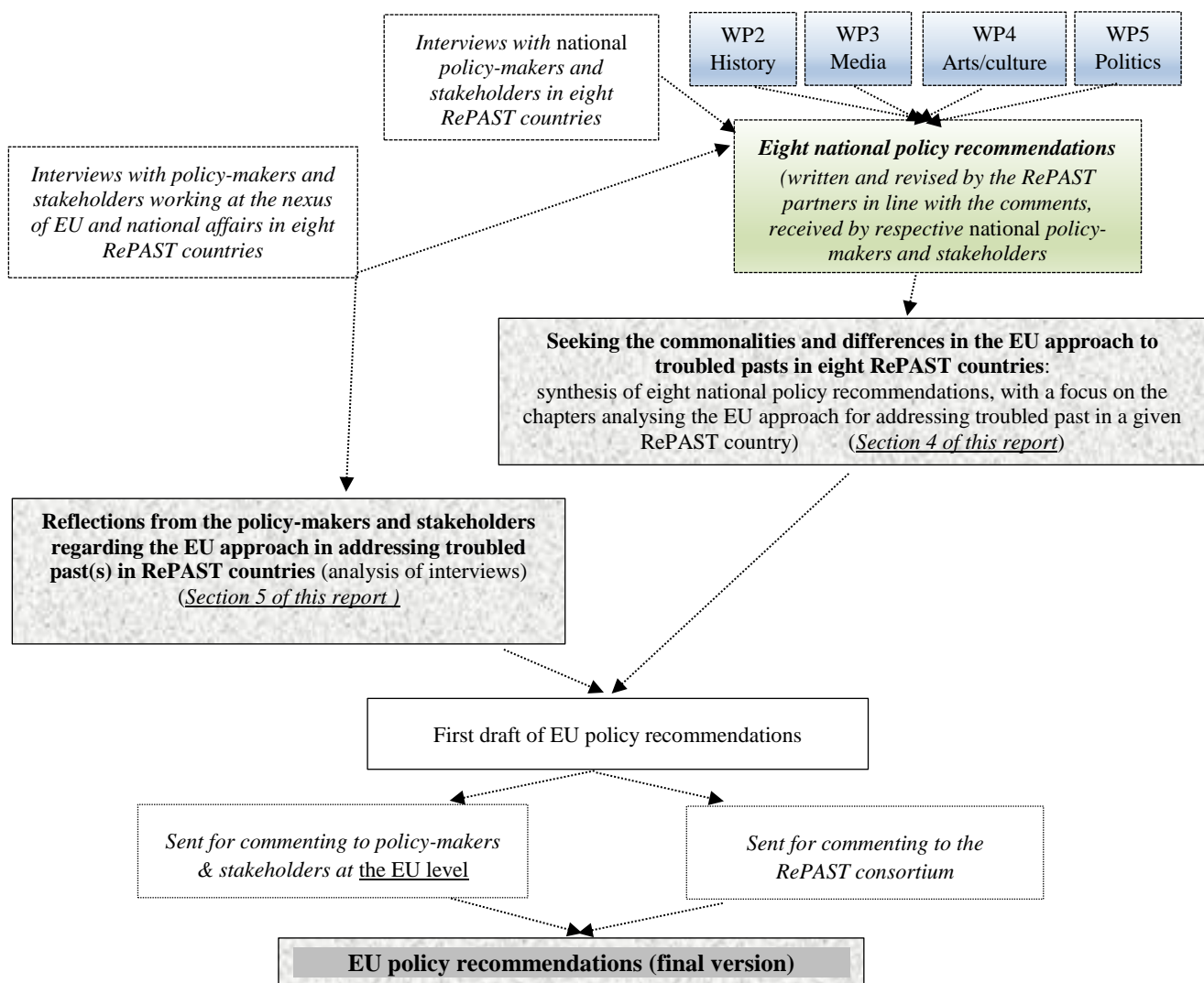
- (1) the RePAST consortium partners;
- (2) EU institutions that were identified as key stakeholders at the EU level in each of the four domains of the project; to obtain inputs from the EU level, the researchers asked the experts of the following institutions to provide comments on the draft recommendations:

- a) *DG for Education and Culture (DG EAC)*
- b) *DG for Communication (DG COMM)*
- c) *Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency of the EU (EACEA)*
- d) *House of European History.*

In November 2020, we sent out 34 requests for comments and managed to receive substantive feedback from six experts (their names and affiliations are available in the List of references at the end of this document). The last step, completed in late December 2020, was incorporating the comments of these six experts into the final version of recommendations.

⁶ These parts of interviews were transcribed and communicated to the task leader, who utilised these interviews in the preparation of the draft version of policy recommendations (see *Figure 1: Methodological Approach for EU Policy recommendations*).

Figure 1: Preparing the EU policy recommendations



3 EU as an internally- and externally-oriented peace project for overcoming troubled past(s): historical overview

A quick overview of the EU integration processes since the end of WW2 until nowadays, explained from the perspective of ‘the peace ideas’ that have been underpinning integration efforts in different times, is needed to understand how the EU developed as an actor that helps the countries to overcome their troubled pasts. If the European Community (EC) was, especially in the first decades after WW2, ‘security-oriented’ primarily inwards, the institution gradually evolved into an actor with stabilizing aspirations, which aims at projecting peace outside its borders. An understanding of the basics of this evolution would provide a sound basis that is needed to fulfil the main purpose of this document: to develop policy recommendations for the EU’s endeavours for fostering the processes leading to the overcoming of troubled past(s) in Europe.

We begin at the end, with one of the most remarkable events for the EU as a peace actor. In 2012, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU, justifying it with the following formulation:

“The EU’s most important result is the successful struggle for peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights. The stabilizing part played by the EU has helped to transform most of Europe from a continent of war to a continent of peace (Birchfield, Kringe and Young, 2017, p. 3).”

This prize – although widely contested, because the EU has still been lacking effective capabilities to build peace in conflict societies – was a result of decades-long endeavours. The ideational basis of European reconstruction after the WW2 was building such international order, which would reduce or even fully nullify the possibility that the European states would again resort to the use of armed force for “resolving” their disputes. The founding fathers of the European integration believed that this aim could be reached by, first, fostering cooperation among European states, and second, by intertwining them economically to the greatest possible extent. The first step in the direction of supra-nationalism, which would “make war not only unthinkable but materially impossible”, as the Schuman Declaration (1950) stipulated, concerned the two major WW2 enemies, France and Germany. The two countries were “bounded together” along with the four other original members⁷ in the framework of the European Coal and Steel Community (Birchfield, Kringe and Young, 2017, p. 6). While such logic of *functional economic cooperation* was one side of the coin, we should not neglect the then on-going attempts to address the different historical war memories and look for ways to achieve reconciliation through regional integration. This was, conceptually speaking, a peace process in itself (Schumacher, 2015) given the fact that peace, reconciliation and solidarity were central values in the starting phases of European integration processes (Laffan, 2004; Wiesner, 2008; Mäkinen, 2019).

However, such noble attempts, referred to as a ‘peace narrative’, soon lost their initial momentum as the oil crisis in 1970s brought the national interests again to the forefront. This led Leo Tindermans (1976) to highlight that “/the/ European citizen does not view the reasons for the construction of Europe in exactly the same way as in 1950” and that the “European idea is partly a victim of its own successes; the reconciliation between formerly hostile countries and the economic prosperity” (Manners and Murray, 2015, p. 189). However, the EC managed to retain the narrative that the European political and economic integration inherently is ‘a peace project’ and that, as such, is a conflict preventor *per se*. This optimistic narrative – together with the prospects of economic cooperation – apparently remained attractive for years and led to the second wave of enlargement, when Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (1986) joined the EC (Kronenberger and Wouters, 2004; Stråth and Pakier, 2010).

The disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s “firmly put a nail in the coffin of the peace narrative and the narrative of ‘Europe’ as saviour and solution to conflict” (Manners and Murray, 2015, p.

⁷ Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

190). With the Yugoslav wars, it became evident that the then integration of Europe, which did not encompass the whole continent, is not enough for projecting peace in the neighbouring regions of the EC/EU (the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East, northern Africa). Not only did the EC/EU⁸ required new policies due to its limited response during the Yugoslav wars, which left many rightfully wondering about its effectiveness, but also the institution needed new narratives in order to legitimise its advantages and *raison d'être*.

This was the time, when the EC – evolving into the EU in the 1990s – on the one hand decided that it would rely on the attractiveness of ‘the enlargement card’, in particular in dealing with the states belonging to the former Eastern and Non-Aligned blocs that aspired to join the institution. On the other hand, in the 1990s the EC/EU started sending signals that it is eager to engage geographically wider in providing assistance also to the states from all over the world. For that reason, the EU enlargement to the Central and Eastern Europe in 2004 was understood as the use of the trump card of the most important foreign policy instrument of the EU – a perspective of membership for non-members. In line with the arguments of Majstorović and Vučkovic (2016), the notion of the EU in Eastern Europe and the area of former Yugoslavia back then still contained the narrative of the EU as a peace project.

In the period around 2004, when the EU expanded to ten new countries, the wind of optimism “blew” also to Southeast Europe. A year before the mentioned enlargement, in 2003 at the Thessaloniki Summit, Albania and the former Yugoslav countries – then being labelled as the Western Balkans – received the EU commitment that they will be able to join the institution after they fulfil certain requirements. By promising them this ‘European perspective’, the EU further strengthened the idea that the EU integration is a way forward for them, as well. It was believed that adopting the so called ‘European standards’ and making these countries politically and economically part of the EU would bring not only economic prosperity, stability and democracy, but would also help the countries overcoming the troubled past.

To sum up, the notion of the EU as a security actor rests on two interconnected dimensions, namely:

- i) *the EU as an internally-oriented peace project*, primarily driven by the economic and political cooperation, which, via functional cooperation, brought also ‘the side product’ of overcoming the troubled past (thus the notion of overcoming the troubled past could not be understood as a final goal, but rather as an outcome);
- ii) *the EU as an externally-oriented actor*, with the mission of preventing and transforming conflicts in its neighbourhood. In this regard, we should emphasise that the understanding of the EU as a conflict preventor/stabilizing actor outside its borders did not prevail before the fundamental reforms of the institution took place in the 1990s.

⁸ The EU was formally established when the Maastricht Treaty entered into force on 1 November 1993.

The 1990s are thus perceived as ‘a benchmark’, because the EU started building its conflict prevention capabilities in a more systematic and coherent manner, which is reflected also in the Maastricht Treaty (Wouters and Naert, 2004, p. 60).

4 The EU approach to the troubled past(s) in the ‘RePAST countries’

The comparative analysis of eight RePAST national policy recommendations – particularly the chapters in these documents that deal with the question of how the EC/EU has tried to address the troubled past in a given country – has shown that the EC did not show much interest in resolving the troubled past(s) of its members during the Cold War period. This is particularly reflected in the case of Spain where membership in the EC was not explicitly associated with overcoming the troubled past in this country, but with economic progress, (cultural) modernisation and democracy (see Spain Policy Recommendations, 2020, which are also a part of this deliverable). While there are numerous reasons⁹ for the absence of such efforts in the 1970s and 1980s, when the enlargements occurred,¹⁰ the most relevant one – for the purpose of our policy recommendations – lies in the fact that the EC/EU mnemonic structures of World War II via condemnation of Nazism, Fascism and the Holocaust (without Communism) as a “negative founding myth” did not receive special attention/contestation by the existing member states (Sierp, 2020, p. 690; Spain Policy Recommendations, 2020; Greek Policy Recommendations, 2020).

In this regard, it can be also mentioned that the Irish national policy recommendations (2020, p. 5) insinuated that already early in the European integration process it was attempted to address the troubled past related to Northern Ireland via institution- and state-building efforts (so called constitutional approach in the period between 1973–1998), but the Haagerup report from 1984 showed that this was not successful (Irish Policy Recommendations, 2020). At that time, the vision of Europe in general and the EC in particular coincided with the idea of ‘imagining’ itself as a liberal-democratic geopolitical space – in contrast with the communist, economically backward East (Elias, 1994; Pocock, 2002). In line with this, we cannot talk about the EC/EU as an active actor in memory politics until 1989, when the former European Commission president Jacques Delors warned that the “European citizens cannot fall in love with a market” (Delors, 1998). From that moment on, the EC policy makers had started to invest in policies that had the power to develop the feeling of a common belonging to a supra-national European identity (Sierp, 2014; Milošević and Touquet, 2018). Such re-contextualisation was, for example, important for Greece, which searched for a solution in two major issues that have been hindering the progress of the country:

⁹ For example: i) the geopolitical context; ii) the logic of (exclusively) economic integration; iii) the lack of political instruments by the EC for pursuing such agenda.

¹⁰ The so-called First Enlargement occurred in 1973 when Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom joined the EC. The second wave of the enlargement, which occurred between 1981–1986, integrated Greece, Spain and Portugal into the EC.

the intense and deep cleavages resulting from political turbulences in the 20th century¹¹ and the question of belonging to West or East (Greece Policy Recommendations, 2020).

The most important institutional platform for achieving the above-mentioned feeling of a common legacy – a step towards the European identity – was the European Parliament (EP), which from the 1993 onwards adopted several resolutions that specifically addressed World War II and the Holocaust.¹² This period was also important beyond the internal-driven efforts to address the troubled past (e.g. 1998 Good Friday Agreement¹³) as this period saw the desire to strengthen EU's foreign policy capabilities in order to directly engage in ongoing Yugoslav war(s) and have an active role in 'designing' the post-conflict reality of post-Yugoslav states (Irish Policy Recommendations, 2020; BiH's Policy Recommendations, 2020; Kosovo Policy Recommendations, 2020; Cyprus Policy Recommendations, 2020). Even though the EU's role in the Yugoslav wars was limited and ineffective, the 'learning outcome' of this resulted in the development of rigid logic of conditionality via the Copenhagen criteria (1993) and the Stabilisation and Association Process – SAA (1999).

The SAA is for the purpose of these policy recommendations not important only due to the formal signalisation of the EU's commitment to the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and post-Yugoslav states, but also because it made the EU an actor able to engage in the attempts to resolve troubled pasts (Mälksoo, 2009; Reinprecht, 2017). In this regard, the RePAST Policy Recommendations for BiH, Kosovo and Poland show that these developments further consolidated two types of challenges in relation to the European integration and troubled past, namely:

- i) *'Freezing' memories* during the accession process, meaning that the critical discussion of the WW2 and the Cold-War legacy on the EU-level came only *after* the integration of Central and Eastern European countries in the EU in 2004;
- ii) *'Unfreezing' memories* during the accession process, meaning that the critical discussion of the Yugoslav wars entered both the EU memory arena and the accession process *before* the integration of post-Yugoslav countries in the EU (Mälksoo, 2009, pp. 653–654).

In that regard, the Eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004 can be understood as 'freezing memories', because the core EU countries tried to apply their mnemonic structures to new

¹¹ The Greece Policy Recommendations (2020) are grounding this argument on the question of the WW2 resistance fighters, the civil war and the legacy of the Greek military governments.

¹² Resolutions that touch upon the commemoration of the Holocaust and role of brutal ideologies that led to the World War II were adopted in 1993, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2006 and 2009 (Milošević and Touquet, 2018).

¹³ The role of the EU in ending the conflict in Northern Ireland by signing the Good Friday Agreement (also known as the Belfast Agreement) was at least twofold (Guardian, 2019). First, the shared future in Europe meant that the border *de facto* diminished in *significance*. Second, Ireland and the UK had started to put the old enmities behind as they started cooperating in Europe in economic domains (trade), which became a vital part of the Irish economy (ibid.).

members. This opened space in several countries of CEE, where the contesting of the WW2 remembrance commenced. Namely, the processes of advocating for 'counter-histories' to 'old Europe' began in these countries and started challenging the EU as an institution, which realised that the advocating for the creation of broader European historical consciousness can only happen after the accession of prospective candidates to the EU (Mälksoo, 2009, p. 657). By doing so, the idea of a unified European memory framework through the creation of common EU mnemonic structures intensified and reached its peak in 2009 when the EP Resolution on European conscience on totalitarianism was adopted. This resolution, for the first time in history, put the atrocities of Communism on the same level as those committed by Nazism and Fascism; it also labelled Communism an equally brutal totalitarian and authoritarian regime (European Parliament, 2009).¹⁴

Contrary to the Eastern logic of 'keeping a low profile' in reflecting on the historical sources of antagonistic relations with regard to troubled past during the EU accession process, the post-Yugoslav accession process followed a different trajectory (Mälksoo 2009, p. 660). The 'stabilisation before integration paradigm'¹⁵ not only paved the way towards 'unfreezing' the post-Yugoslav mnemonic space, but *de facto* prescribed the need to resolve the troubled past; thus, settling inter-ethnic relations was set as a precondition for the EU membership. If the 'normalisation'¹⁶ of inter-state relations can be observed on the general level through the EU Strategy for the Western Balkans,¹⁷ the reconciliation efforts on the national level are at least threefold:

- (1) The EU's efforts pursued the so-called transitional justice paradigm by demanding the full cooperation with the war tribunals (Kosovo Specialist Chambers and International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia) and supporting the reconciliation-aimed initiatives (ReCOM,¹⁸ the Berlin Process etc.).
- (2) The EU's efforts pursued institutional and security reforms in order to reduce the visibility of the division between the antagonistic sides and achieve sustainable peace (e.g. reform of security sectors in BiH and Kosovo, aimed at establishing professional services; reforms of judiciary via EULEX in Kosovo) (Kosovo Policy Recommendations, 2020).
- (3) The EU addresses the troubled past through the pre-established pattern of modelling the EU memory framework by European Parliament resolutions, as seen in the case study of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the resolutions on Srebrenica (BiH's Policy Recommendations, 2020).

¹⁴ Poland's Policy Recommendations (2020) conceptually framed it as the process of Europeanisation (cross-loading).

¹⁵ The 'stabilisation before integration paradigm' has its origins in the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) that was established in 1999 and aspired for the eventual admittance of prospective candidate countries to the EU. The SAA attempted to involve prospective candidates in a progressive partnership, hoping to stabilise the region of Western Balkans. Such logic insinuates that the integration in the EU will happen only after a certain degree of stabilisation is achieved in each of the Western Balkan countries.

¹⁶ One of the six flagship priorities of the latest Strategy for the Western Balkans is entitled "reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation" (European Commission, 2018, p. 6).

¹⁷ The strategy is entitled *A credible enlargement perspective for and enhance enlargement with the Western Balkans*.

¹⁸ Regional commission for the establishment of facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights committed in the former Yugoslavia.

Before turning to the prescription of future EU strategies in tackling the European troubled past, we should highlight the fact that four out of eight national policy recommendations reflected on the contemporary EU approach on managing the troubled past, which importantly resonates with the idea of supporting local “bottom-up” projects. The cases of Ireland, BiH, Kosovo and Poland thus show that EU programmes such as Erasmus+, Interreg, Horizon2020, Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC), Creative Europe and European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) finance bottom-up projects. A good example on the systemic level in this regard can be seen in the case of Ireland, where the Special EU Programmes Body was established to facilitate positive impact via European Regional Development Funding that directly derives from the Good Friday Agreement¹⁹ (Irish Policy Recommendations, 2020). Finally, we should also expose the findings of Bešić and Džuverović (2020, p. 455) who showed that in the period between 2002 and 2015, the EU had financed 146 reconciliation projects in the post-Yugoslav space. However, the results of those projects – as highlighted by Bešić and Džuverović (2020, pp. 463–466) – exposed that ‘truth-seeking’ efforts aiming at reconciliation in post-Yugoslav space were largely unsuccessful due to the various historical interpretations that are opposed to each other.

5 Reflections from the policy-makers and stakeholders on the EU’s approach to troubled past(s) in ‘the RePAST countries’: analysis of interviews

This section draws from the analysis of interviews with the policy-makers and stakeholders in eight “RePAST countries” that have been working at “the nexus of European and national level” (e.g. members of the European Parliament; members of committees dealing with EU issues in respective national parliaments; experts in think-tanks researching on the EU etc.).²⁰ As explained in the section on Methodology, we developed the questionnaire in the RePAST consortium in a collaborative manner. This was a precondition that the policy-makers and stakeholders in eight countries investigated in the RePAST project were asked the same questions, which later allowed for a cross-country comparison.

We sought to obtain stakeholders’ and policy-makers’ opinions on the questions related to the EU’s approach in addressing troubled past in respective countries and the role of EU policies, strategies and programmes that address the country’s troubled past etc.²¹ We also aimed at

¹⁹ Since 1998, the so-called PEACE funding has released four rounds (PEACE I, PEACE II, PEACE III, PEACE IV) of funding for a range of project from cross-community arts to combatant reform (Irish Policy Recommendations, 2020). Between 1995 and 2013, there were three PEACE programmes, with a financial contribution of 1.3 billion EUR (European Parliament, 2020).

²⁰ Audio-files of interviews are stored in the archives of each consortium partner, who conducted a specific interview. Only the (anonymised) transcriptions were sent to the University of Ljubljana team, which prepared this document.

²¹ The questions were the following:

disentangling the differences among approaches undertaken by the EU with regard to its endeavours for overcoming troubled past. Furthermore, we wanted to learn if there are any elements that speak in favour of the existence of a general agreed-upon approach of the EU for addressing troubled past in different countries.

A general observation, based on the analysis of interviews from the eight RePAST countries, is that the universal EU approach (policies, strategies, programmes) for addressing troubled past in the EU countries and the prospective candidates does not exist. However, there are important nuances that will be explained in the remainder of this section. We can still argue that the EU has been active in the field of troubled past throughout Europe; most of the interviewees stated that smaller steps were/are being made by the EU in this regard in the EU and candidate countries. Most of the interviewees said that the EU has had a role in fostering the rule of law, promotion of common values and shared identity and capacity-building funding – all fields that are indirectly connected to troubled past. As stated by one of the interviewees, “I think that the funding, the access to funding, especially in the social area and economic regeneration, has been absolutely essential. And that just needs to keep going. The access to the peace funds and those structural funds really needs to keep going” (Interview 1, 2020). In doing so, both the promotion and funding of economic and social progress is something that has seen most success in terms of reconciliation attempts by the EU. In other words, where people have the sense of personal or shared achievement, peacebuilding processes may have more positive impact (Interviews 1 and 3, 2020).

Along the same lines, EU cohesion policies have been reported to have a significant impact on the economic disparities in countries such as Germany – and this could contribute to overcoming troubled past to some extent: *“Although there are many disparities among Eastern territories (of Germany), there are also disparities among Western territories. But in general, there are broader regions /.../ that can be considered economically not so much advanced, so they can benefit from EU programs. /.../ So, in this regard the EU helped to overcome disparities which originate from the troubled past”* (Interview, 2, 2020).

On the other hand, a couple of interviewees from all RePAST countries reported the lack of action by the EU when it comes to troubled past. Primarily, the lack of intervention was regarded as one of the greatest failures from the EU; this especially pertains to the (ineffective) role of the EU in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war. According to one of our interlocutors: *“what the EU has done*

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- i. Is there a general agreed-upon approach in your country/your institution for addressing the issues arising from the troubled past (strategy, policy etc.)? Elaborate, please.*
 - ii. Can you explain if there was any evolution in your country/institution’s approach for addressing the troubled past (has the approach changed with the changes of government, certain developments in the country or in a wider international context etc.)*
 - iii. What would be needed – but is not available – at the national level to overcome the troubled past?*
 - iv. How – if, at all – do the EU policies, strategies and programmes help your country to overcome the troubled past?*
 - v. What would be needed from the EU – or other international actors – to assist in overcoming the troubled past?*

is look the other way" (Interview with an expert in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 3, 2020). In Kosovo – another example from a country that aspires to join the EU – the lack of intervention and ambivalence when it comes to finding diplomatic solutions is something that has been highly criticised by our interlocutors: *"From the outset of the Brussels dialogue, the EU has been ambivalent with its 'constructive ambiguity' that doesn't demand from Serbia the recognition for Kosovo. This has clouded the horizon of talks and the process has slowly glided toward cycles of aimless negotiations"* (Interview with an expert from Kosovo, 4, 2020).

When talking about the concrete national "needs" from the EU in terms of assistance in overcoming the troubled past, almost all interviewees in Cyprus, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo described the EU's interventionism as unfocused and almost futile. In Kosovo (Interview 5, 2020) – as noted by one of the claimants – the EU had not demonstrated any power in impacting the political elites or the judicial processes (for war crimes), which are significant parts of issues (this finding also resonates with other scholarly work).²² Along the same lines, Cypriot representatives have emphasized the need for EU's assistance: *"EU can no longer look the other way..."* (Interviewee from Cyprus, 2020).

Among Spanish interviewees (Interview, 10, 2020), EU's perceived role in resolving the troubled past is ignoring the obvious and looking the other way, evidently the most common statement throughout all interviews. This, in turn, not only deepens the distrust toward the EU, but presents an obstacle in the process of reconciliation. Similarly, the Bosnian example calls for an intervention of a somewhat different nature – funding projects that would motivate young people to participate in local politics in order to decrease the influence of ethno-political elites in BiH. As stated by one of the interviewees (11, 2020), *"There are excellent young Bosnian people but they are more likely to be involved in NGOs than in politics. /.../ One thing is sure; we have to support this young and much more open generation from BiH, but their problem is that it is much more difficult to be involved in politics than in the NGOs. The EU delegation should support more the young generation and also encourage such projects that would involve academics into the political debates as the latter in BiH is never about Europe"* (Interview 12, 2020).

Another suggestion for improvement is increased focus on creating positive discourse about the EU through integration processes: *"So whatever the EU does, framing the integration process in a positive sense and making it valuable for Germany – for Eastern Germany in particular – could contribute to overcoming the troubled past in Germany"* (Interview, 4, 2020). This issue was also mentioned in regard to Poland, as there is little public knowledge about EU's involvement in the country: *"It would be very important and would help build a new discourse about what the EU does, what issues are important and what should be done in the future"* (Interview, 13, 2020). For Ireland, the two primary points of concern are funding and protection of rights in light of Brexit. For people in Northern Ireland, Brexit had caused a high level of uncertainty concerning their relationship with the EU.

²² For example: Zupančič and Pejič (2018), Elbasani (2020).

6 Policy recommendations for the EU: proposing the strategies for mitigating the challenges arising from the troubled past

This, core part of the document builds on the previous sections and the findings of other working packages of the RePAST project (see Section 2 on Methodology for details). The rationale leading the researchers to propose these particular policy recommendations – and not others – was to offer the EU *a viable, but not over-ambitious* roadmap. Thus, the researchers have been pondering over two opposing sides of the spectrum; on the one hand, proposing an extensive list of very ambitious recommendations, which would fully reflect the values promoted by the EU (humanism, human rights for everyone, democracy, tolerance, rule-of-law etc.) and would bring, if implemented, a huge step forward in overcoming the troubled past(s); and, on the other hand, offering the ‘watered-down recommendations’, which do not touch the core issues of the countries with troubled past(s) and would have been – due to their inconsequential nature – easily accepted by the EU member states. These policy recommendations occupy middle ground; they are meant to be meaningful and bring about certain changes in approaching the troubled past(s), but at the same time it was sought not to create a document written by scholars with no touch with reality of daily politics in Europe.

The criteria of proposing policy recommendations to the EU followed the logic of finding the highest common denominator: the researchers explored the most frequently offered ideas proposed in ‘national policy recommendations’ (written by the researchers-specialists on a given RePAST country in all fields of inquiry: history, media, politics, arts & culture). By this, we attempted to establish common grounds that link all explored countries and could, as such, be proposed by the EU as an institution. Last, but not least, it has to be acknowledged that the EU institutional system is vast, hence, we had to select only a few of the institutions as the recipients of these recommendations – those that we consider the most important for addressing the issues arising from the troubled past.²³

6.1 History

The most frequently mentioned national policy recommendations that were proposed across the eight cases of RePAST’s inquiry regarding history were related to the eventual changes related to **education system(s)** (revising curricula, rewriting history textbooks etc.). Because the EU education

²³ Several institutions of the EU have a role in addressing troubled past, each from a specific perspective. We name only the most relevant: (1) DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), which proposes recommendations, develops legislation and gives funding; (2) Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), which is an executive agency managing certain parts of EU funding programmes in education; (3) Council of the EU, which negotiates and adopts EU laws, and coordinates member state policies; (4) European Parliament Committee for Culture and Education (CULT), which adopts and initiates reports, proposes amendments, negotiates with the Council of the EU etc.; (5) European External Action Service (EEAS), which as an external dimension of the EU deals with the third countries also from the perspective of troubled past; (6) the Commission’s Service for Foreign Policy Instruments; (7) DG for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (NEAR), which works with neighbourhood and enlargement countries, including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, which are explored in the RePAST project.

policy²⁴ is designed to support action at the national level – and cannot delve into national curricula –, we propose that the EU pursues the following strategies.

Recommendation 1. The European Commission (DG EAC) could form a **special task force of experts** with a mission:

- i. *to revisit “the EU memory framework” and **prepare an overview of the common mnemonic structures that already exist in the EU and serve as a some sort of cohesive mnemonic binding** (e.g. documents on troubled past adopted by the European Parliament that constitute it, such as the resolutions on genocide in Srebrenica) and **identify further elements that could fit in the common mnemonic structures of the EU**;*
- ii. *to establish **a history teaching toolbox** that would build on past successful experience in teaching on troubled past across the EU.²⁵ All relevant stakeholders (e.g. governmental representatives, education trade unions, NGOs etc. ...) should be included in devising the history teaching toolbox, as the participation of “influential actors” in this process would increase the chance of success.²⁶ The toolbox could also draw from the successful examples undertaken within numerous NGO initiatives.²⁷*

This recommendation stems mainly from the finding in the RePAST project, which shows that students in secondary and even tertiary education are relatively unaware of the main arguments that people not belonging to their social group have to interpret certain historic events. The deliverables produced by the proposed task force could later be distributed to the ministries of education in the EU member states and prospective candidate countries for the EU membership. Afterwards, the public debate on how to integrate the task force’s deliverables in the national curricula could be stimulated (by the DG EAC/the EU Delegations in member states, for example). Scaling up these deliverables could be fostered further via teacher exchanges, conferences, cross-border, interregional projects and other platforms that already exist at the EU level (e.g. the School Educational Gateway, eTwinning and alike). Our research in the project has shown that many teachers are still unaware of the schemes mentioned above; hence, it is of utmost importance to launch wider advertising campaigns, which would widely promote these opportunities.

²⁴ The EU focuses its efforts on creating policies and initiatives in the following areas: i) Early childhood education and care; ii) School policy; iii) Vocational Education and Training; iv) Adult learning; v) Higher education; vi) International cooperation and policy dialogue; vii) Multilingualism; viii) Education and migrants (European Commission, 2020b).

²⁵ An example that would fit in the toolbox could be the PEACE programme, which is also mentioned in the RePAST policy recommendations for Ireland. Several rounds of PEACE programmes aimed at fostering cohesion between the communities involved in the conflict in Northern Ireland and enhancing social stability (European Parliament, 2020).

²⁶ According to Martin RÖmer, one of the experts who reviewed the draft version of these recommendations (see References for details), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) was instrumental to the signature of the first and so far the only agreement between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots in the field of education. This demonstrates the importance of the inclusion of all influential actors in such processes.

²⁷ Education International, for example, which together with trade unions developed programs on peace education (Education International, 2011).

Recommendation 2. Many teachers, especially those from low-income countries lack or even never had a chance to visit other countries and to see *in vivo* how the troubled past(s) are approached and taught in other countries; this is one of the findings in the RePAST research on history (WP2). Going to, for example, the countries where the troubled pasts have been overcome fairly well might stimulate the teachers to reconsider whether they could include perhaps slightly different, less antagonistic interpretations of history in their courses back home (e.g. the narratives based on mutual understanding and explanation why certain social groups acted the way they acted during the conflict). Thus, the EU institutions (e.g. DG EAC, or EACEA) could consider how they could **financially, organisationally and logistically support seminars and study trips of teachers from conflict-ridden countries to the countries with a longer tradition of teaching history in a less conflictual way**. Building on that, EU institutions could suggest to certain EU member states establishing exchange programmes or organising short visits for teachers from other EU and non-EU countries.²⁸ Such initiatives could be financed via already existing countries' (national) schemes (e.g. public diplomacy programmes) and the existing EU schemes and frameworks (Erasmus+ etc.). The latter also increases the visibility and normative power of the EU, as the RePAST research has shown. The EU Delegations in the EU member- and non-member states should **prioritise the organisation of workshops and seminars, where applicants would be trained in applying for projects, and widely promote these opportunities**.

Recommendation 3. The EU institutions – most notably DG EAC and DG NEAR – could issue guidelines to the EU member states and non-EU members aspiring to join the EU **to foster peace education by shedding light, through various platforms, also on the cases of humanistic cooperation during the contested times**.²⁹ The topics of peace education, which demonstrate that supra-ethnic, supra-religious and other types of cooperation that transcend narrowly-defined identities could exist even in the most difficult times, are often deliberately ignored by the dominant narratives, but are of importance to give a more nuanced understanding of troubled past(s) and to increase the value of human(istic) ethos. The EU officials, thus, could scale up peace education in the dialogue with partner countries.³⁰ This recommendation should be embedded and pursued within the existing initiatives at the global level (the United Nations Development Goals, for example).

²⁸ Some attempts in this direction have already been made and a few programmes are being prepared at the time, when these recommendations were written. Erasmus Teachers Academies, for example, is one of such programmes scheduled for 2021. It is expected to be launched within the new Erasmus Programme to create networks of teacher education institutions and teacher associations (European Commission, 2020a).

²⁹ Such examples – e. g. inter-ethnic rescuing and help during the war, joint actions of various groups' representatives for peace, erecting monuments to *all victims* of violence, building *public sites of consciousness* in addition to the public places of remembrance that often 'belong' to one social group only – could make people more aware that groups are rarely cohesive in their acting and feelings, and that it was more an exception than the rule that only one group would suffer in the conflict. Understanding that social groups differ significantly, if scrutinised in depth, could lessen the antagonizing views of other social groups as unitary actors that are *per definitionem* against 'us'.

³⁰ Similar recommendation, although from a different angle, has been given also by the Quaker Council for European Affairs (2019, 35).

Recommendation 4. In addition to what is regarded as ‘official history’ (historic textbooks, national holidays etc.), the EU Delegations in the EU member- and non-member states could, via several schemes they have at disposal, **support the oral history projects that offer different interpretations of historic events** in respective countries. As the findings of the RePAST project have shown (WP2.1), oral history does provide a necessary space, where the exclusivist (state-driven) interpretations of history in a given country can be expanded in order to become more inclusive. Multi-perspectivity in interpreting historical narratives can lead to the softening of beliefs that only one, the elitist-led interpretation of ‘historic truths’, is correct.

Recommendation 5. The EU delegations in the EU member states and the candidate countries **should seek the opportunities in high schools to raise awareness about the possibilities of acquiring the EU funding for study trips to Brussels, where students would have a chance to visit The House of European History** (via Erasmus+ scheme, for example). The visit to this museum should be presented – and stimulated – in a similar fashion as school visits to national historic museums are currently understood in European states – as an event, which increases the feeling of common belonging (to the European family, in this case).

6.2 Media

When talking about the media, the common denominator of the eight national policy recommendations are: *the dubious standards of journalistic professionalism* when tackling the issues of troubled past, *the lack of independence of journalists* in their reporting or researching on the topics related to troubled past, and *a general lack of institutionalised platforms*, where journalists could exchange good practices, learn and develop professionally. Based on these findings, the recommendations are the following.

Recommendation 1. To establish a platform of (investigative) journalists that work on the questions of reconciliation, European cooperation, history and war reporting and **propose the EU MEDIA programme on troubled past and reconciliation**. The latter, which would be substantially financed within the Creative Europe programme and Europe for Citizens programme (new European Remembrance Programme), would offer trainings for investigative journalists³¹ that work in the most important national mainstream media outlets, alongside with the public National Radio and Television Networks (NRTN). Deriving from this, this programme could also offer an EU-driven agenda and offer to NRTN a 1-hour weekly programme that would cover the local/national/transnational EU projects devoted to fostering of solidarity, cooperation, inclusivity and tolerance. Similar EU-funded projects already exist throughout Europe.³² The idea of this new platform is, first, to increase the professionalism regarding reporting/researching on topics related

³¹ Here, one possibility for further practical training could also lie within the existing Erasmus Mundus Master Courses in the field of journalism, where the content is developed and delivered by an international consortium of universities.

³² See, for example, RTV Slovenija (2017).

to troubled past and, second, to increase awareness of audience how unresolved historic issues hinder the progress of countries. Here, the general idea is not (only) to produce new investigative journalism programmes, but **to guarantee the produced investigative journalism outputs to acquire good programming slots** in the national media in order to increase the ratings (outreach potential). The most appropriate platforms for such programmes are NRTNs due to their obligation to inform citizens on important public issues in an unbiased manner. Where such platforms do not exist, the EC delegations should promote the importance of quality and investigative journalism as an important pillar contributing to the rule of law.

Recommendation 2. Recommending that media outlets should gain more independence and break away from political influence is not innovative. However, in the countries with troubled past the European Commission could push the developments in this direction by, on the one hand, **funding local media via new "NEWS initiative"**³³ within the new EC 2020 Action Plan³⁴, which supports recovery and transformation of the media and audio-visual sectors. On the other hand, it could **additionally finance the news network channel Euronews**, which, among other things, reports on the issues related to troubled past(s) from a pan-European perspective. The EC already finances the Albanian version of Euronews (launched in 2019) and will finance the Serbian version of Euronews (initially planned to launch in 2020). By additionally funding the local versions of Euronews across Southeast Europe and Central and Eastern Europe, the EC should follow **the domestic ownership principle**, which necessitates the inclusion of local journalists in content production. This would give the journalists, who are also, in the countries with a troubled past, usually well educated, adequately experienced and aware of professional ethics, a much-needed platform for work. The journalists working within such platform would be less burdened with censorship, self-censorship and other forms of pressure (this is especially problematic in the countries with lower democratic standards).

Recommendation 3. If the previous recommendation is over-ambitious, then the EU could consider how it could in some other ways support development of professionalism in journalism. At the time being, there are a few institutions that contribute to the development of professionalism in journalistic work in EU member states and beyond the EU borders (e.g. European Journalism Centre); these institutions **should be further supported by the EU** (and should perhaps also be given a dedicated budget). Such budget could allow the organisation of trainings or providing fellowships to the journalists of the countries, where troubled past hinders the progress of a society. The journalists interviewed in the RePAST project – especially those working in low-income

³³ "NEWS" initiative is one of 10 concrete actions within the "Recover" sector in the latest 2020 EC Action Plan. The aim of the "NEWS" initiative is to fund projects with foundations and other private partners and/or secure loans to media outlets via InvestEU guarantee. Particular attention will be paid to local media outlets (European Commission, 2020c).

³⁴ On 3 December 2020, the EC adopted an Action Plan to support the recovery and transformation of the media and audiovisual sector. The Action Plan focuses on three areas of activity and 10 concrete actions, to help the media sector to recover from the crisis by facilitating and broadening access to finance, transform by stimulating investments to embrace the twin digital and green transitions while ensuring the sector's future resilience and empower European citizens and companies (European Commission, 2020c).

countries with troubled past – more or less agreed that such trainings would, first, contribute to their professionalism, and second, would serve as platforms to expand their peer networks.³⁵

Recommendation 4. The experiences from the past, supported with the findings in the RePAST WP on media, demonstrate that the examples of journalistic production, in which journalists of different countries work together on producing a joint work, often yield high quality results and are received well by the audience.³⁶ Based on this, the EU should – through the existing programmes, e.g. via the programme Creative Europe – **finance the projects where journalists of different ethnic, religious or cultural background work side by side with the aim of joint journalistic production related to troubled past** (documentary, newspaper reportage etc.), and showcase such examples widely. A good example of this kind of cooperation – although, comparing to our recommendation, significantly more long-term and institutionally embedded – is the establishment of the regional news exchange ERNO.³⁷ ERNO, which operates in the framework of the European Broadcasting Union, aims at overcoming an agonistic dialogue among the republics of former Yugoslavia in a factual and hate-free manner since 2000. Even though that the EU has failed to finance the network, ERNO is funded primarily by the membership fees of its members, which are mostly national public televisions. Certainly, such projects would be particularly welcomed in Southeast Europe, Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

Recommendation 5. Media literacy appears as an important problem in all countries, but especially in those that suffer from the legacy of troubled past; this is also what our research in the RePAST project has shown. Hence, **improving media literacy throughout Europe is another field, where the EU could invest resources effectively.** This should be done within the new EC 2020 Action to support the recovery and transformation of the media and audio-visual sectors and coupled by funding via Erasmus +, Europe for Citizens (new European Remembrance Programme), Creative Europe and Digital Europe. Thus, the EU could, through its institutions present in respective countries (EU Delegations, EU Information Offices etc.), support the trainings that educate people in this regard, ranging from primary schools to older generations. This would not only decrease the current domination of extremely simplistic (black-white) interpretations of history to a certain extent (e.g. that “our people” were always on the right side of the history, and that it is “them”, who are responsible for all wrong-doings), but also contribute to the policies of preventing hate speech discourse and hateful reconstruction of the past. By doing so, the EU programmes could make improvements in this area via **creation of “fake-news” detector cells within the media**

³⁵ Such networks are important also because the journalist in a given country can pass certain information to her/his colleague abroad, and then the journalists from abroad report on a certain issue in a country with troubled past and so trigger the pressure to investigate the issue (for example, certain misbehaviour of public officials).

³⁶ For example, two journalists that come from the countries that had fought the war on the opposing sides, but work together in the post-war period; see Lakic (2018).

³⁷ Eurovision News Exchange for Southeast Europe (ERNO) marked its 20th anniversary on 1 November 2020 and has Coordination Office in Sarajevo. ERNO members have exchanged more than 25.000 news stories so far (EBU, 2020).

literacy strategies (both online and social media), which is also defined as a priority by European Commission.³⁸

Recommendation 6. In certain countries, it is dangerous to provide incriminating evidence or publicly speak about certain wrongdoings related to troubled past, as the consequences that could follow would be dire for a person disclosing certain information. Thus, **the EU should further support institutions that protect whistle-blowers in respective states, or should consider establishing a platform at the EU level, where whistle-blowers from the countries with troubled past would be protected.** If such institution in a given country with troubled past does not exist yet, then the EU should look for the ways to support the establishment of such institutions.

Recommendation 7. Comparison across countries of the RePAST project also showed that many countries lack the balanced gender perspectives, when it comes to reporting on troubled past. Furthermore, the minority issues are also often not adequately reported on (LGBT movement, for example, which has been recently in some countries, such as Poland, facing serious pressure from the media outlets close to the conservative political spectrum; or the issues concerning ethnic minorities in some of the countries). Thus, **the EU could promote that reporting on troubled past should pay more attention to gender and minority issues.** This could also be reached, to a certain degree at least, by organising workshops in European countries, which would raise awareness on the problematics of gender sensitivity and minority-focused reporting.

6.3 Politics

The most exposed issues regarding the field of politics in national policy recommendations are *political polarisation*, which often results in the attempts to homogenise the views on the suffering of particular groups of people only (and present them as the only possible interpretation of collective memory), and the fact that in many states of inquiry *political elites do not necessarily base their opinions and actions on accurate information*, but rather on ‘half-truths’ or even misleading or incorrect information. Thus, we propose the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1. We suggest that the European Parliament (EP), as a ‘memory interlocutor’ working at the nexus of the supranational and national/local level, **forms a special committee on “EU’s troubled past” (co-)chaired by the representatives of all seven political groups in the EP.** Its aim would be to foster the preparation of the text for the *Resolution on the EU collective memory*, which should be based on the heterogeneity of voices and condemnation of all totalitarian regimes, while following the values of tolerance, non-discrimination, solidarity and mutual understanding. By doing this, this Resolution could become one of the prerequisites (reference points) to follow in all of the future EU projects that touch upon the troubled past. Here, the rationale is to achieve the so-called “deep Europeanisation” of the national public spheres via

³⁸ For more on tackling online disinformation, see European Commission (2020c; 2020d).

bottom-up actors (e.g. civil society actors, independent media outlets, etc.) and pave the way towards creating inclusive local environments that implement their projects on a shared understanding of the past.

Recommendation 2. With the rise of authoritarianism and illiberal democracies throughout Europe in recent years, verbal attacks on the EU as an institution – and on liberal values in general – increased. Furthermore, many scholars, experts, interviewees and other interlocutors that have been engaged in the RePAST project believe the EU has failed so far to respond adequately to these worrying trends in the RePAST countries (and in other countries, as well). Hence, the EU institutions – primarily DG EAC and EACEA – should in EU member states and non-members, through the existing programmes and schemes, **strengthen the support for the organisation of workshops, seminars, conferences and the work of institutions (e.g. NGOs, museums) that reject simplistic interpretations of historical narratives and aim at offering nuanced views of troubled past.** Several institutions of this kind, which offer a humanistic and non-partisan approach that transcends simplified ethno-religious/ethno-political understanding of history and people's place in it, already exist;³⁹ they should be further promoted as good examples and consequently, supported by the EU. In this regard, DG EAC and EACEA could **consider establishing a dedicated funding** for such activities within the existing schemes (Erasmus+, for example) and **further promote these opportunities** given the fact that, as the RePAST research has shown, several interlocutors engaged in the RePAST project were not aware of these opportunities.

Recommendation 3. It is recommended that the DG EAC and/or EACEA organise(s) **a set of seminars, workshops and study trips for young political leaders from the countries with troubled past to those EU member states that have a better outcome in resolving the historical issues.** DG EAC and/or EACEA could also **suggest the political parties in the EP and their youth wings to organise such activities.** At such events, political youth from the countries with troubled past could get acquainted with good practices on how reconciliation attempts and addressing troubled past have been pursued elsewhere. These events could focus on the issues, which are similar in most cases with troubled past (e.g. common suffering of ordinary people on all conflicting sides as a consequence of violence), and could come as an addition to the already-existing seminars and workshops organised in Brussels and Strasbourg, where youth learns about the EU institutions etc.

Recommendation 4. The EU institutions – DG EAC, EACEA and DG COMM, for example – could consider how to **support the initiatives and platforms, which fact-check the public statements of politicians on troubled past and media reports linked to it.** Similar platforms – with different aim in terms of content – already exist in the EU and serve as the only possible counterbalance to the disinformation campaigns and the spread of fake news related to troubled past.⁴⁰ Thus, this

³⁹ A good example is *The War Childhood Museum (Muzej ratnog djetinstva)* in Sarajevo, which documents war experiences of children from their perspective. As such, it has no ethno-political connotation, but seeks to present the brutality of the war through a child's eyes. In 2018, the museum received the Council of Europe Museum Prize.

⁴⁰ For example, FactCheckEU and East StratCom Task Force.

approach could be expanded by the EU institutions for checking the accuracy of public statements the politicians make with regard to troubled past and media reporting linked to it. Such initiatives, if supported and financed by EU schemes, could be embedded in the existing media services and would perhaps contribute to an increase of the overall trust in state institutions and the media.

Recommendation 5. In some of “the RePAST countries”, the research has shown that the dominant, identity-based and exclusivist narratives promoted by the political elites often prevail over other (dissenting) voices, which have lower access to power structures and media and have, therefore, less opportunity to influence the public debate. Thus, the EU should further develop the strategies to empower the voices, which offer different interpretations of the historic events in comparison with the existing centres of power. Therefore, the EU Delegations in the EU member- and non-member states **should identify the institutions that in respective societies strive for greater civic engagement in addressing troubled past, offer the training programmes for applying in the existing EU schemes and launch public campaigns for enhancing awareness how the EU funding could be used to support bottom-up initiatives** that attempt to overcome troubled past in a given country.

6.4 Arts and culture

In the domain of arts and culture, all of the analysed national policy recommendations have primarily focused on two issues, namely: 1) *the importance and role of museums as socio-cultural actors*; 2) *the impact of ‘popular arts’* for addressing troubled past. If the former builds on the practical need of museums to educate and raise awareness about the complexity of the troubled past in an informative and factual manner, the latter builds on the fact that ‘popular arts’ can reach (and influence) more people than ‘high arts’.⁴¹ In line with this, we propose the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1. DG EAC should, in cooperation with the House of European History, form a special group of historians and curators, who would **prepare a permanent ‘travelling exhibition’ that reflects the inclusiveness of mnemonic structure(s) of the whole EU area through artistic expression**. This travelling exhibition should be free of charge and could ‘travel’ around the EU member states and perhaps even to the EU candidate countries (the EU delegations in respective countries should serve as focal points). By doing this, the troubled past of the EU would be exposed to people of the countries with troubled past in an informative and factual manner, inclusive of all the difficulties of the post-World War 2 period, which despite strong conflicting narratives did manage to get many European countries working together for the common aim (preventing future

⁴¹ We use this problematic and somehow artificial distinction between popular and high arts, which can be rightly criticised, for explaining what kind of art pieces could be utilised by the EU in its attempts to overcome troubled past and enhance cohesiveness of the EU area. A research study done with Bosnian-Herzegovinian students by Zupančič, Kočan and Vuga (forthcoming in the journal *Southeast Europe and Black Sea Studies*, 2021) *insinuate* that this can be the case as people tend to affiliate more with ‘popular’ than ‘high’ arts.

wars and increasing solidarity among nations and well-being).⁴² The idea is to focus more on supra-ethnic/humanistic pieces of art that would reflect on the above-mentioned values.

Recommendation 2. Relevant institutions (DG EAC and EACEA), in collaboration with the EU Delegations in the EU member states and the candidate countries, could **increase support for the artistic and cultural events and projects that in the countries with troubled past address the difficult historic legacies from the perspectives of humanism, empathy, common belonging and the notion of the common (European) heritage**. Although the recommendation to present troubled past in artistic and cultural expressions in its multiple dimensions may sound superficial at the first sight, these values are the EU's important sources of normative and soft power. Hence, the EU should not shy away from supporting the values it deems important for a better future. The EU Delegations **should launch public campaigns and run workshops**, where artists and cultural workers would be informed of these opportunities and acquire skills in applying for projects that reflect the above-mentioned values.

Recommendation 3. With regard to the previous recommendation, **the EU (EAC and EACEA) could consider the possibility of establishing a dedicated scheme of visiting fellowships for artists and cultural workers**, who want to work with the topics related to troubled past abroad, but do not get support from their countries. The lack of support is often a result of the fact that artists and cultural workers, with their work, challenge the dominant (official) narratives, which is not perceived positive by the structures of power in a given state. In this respect, the EU could reinforce the programmes for international exchange and intra-state mobility of cultural workers and artists.⁴³ Such opportunities would provide artists and cultural workers with the chance to improve their skills and competences from various angles (including grant writing, for example). In this regard, the EU should launch several campaigns to raise awareness among artists and cultural workers on the opportunities to receive financial and other support by the EU.

Recommendation 4. This recommendation concerns the possible EU role in the field of arts and culture, but pervades also the recommendations in other fields of these policy recommendations. DG EAC and EACEA should **reinforce support for collaborative artistic and cultural projects, which require cooperation beyond national, ethnic, religious, cultural, gender and other differences**. This would not only make artists with different ethnic, religious etc. identities and backgrounds working together, but could have a wider impact (spill-over effect) in societies in terms of fostering tolerance, cohesion, human rights and other values that bind the EU.⁴⁴

⁴² This would enhance transnational solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance not only among the European nations, but also among different social groups in general.

⁴³ According to the information we received from one of the reviewer, the future programme Creative Europe 2021-2027 would include such activities. It is yet to be determined to what extent given the fact that the EU funding for culture is small.

⁴⁴ Namely, 'consumers' of art-works produced within such collaborative frameworks would be able to give a second thought regarding their own (self-perceived or attributed) identities, might start wondering about their pre-fixed identity stability and the narratives surrounding it and would have a chance to see that working 'beyond identities' can

Recommendation 5. The programme Creative Europe already offers several opportunities that concern the recommendations 1-4, but, comparing to some other fields, receives relatively modest funding. Therefore, **the question of how to increase the funding for arts and culture in the next financial scheme** is a topic that should be widely debated. Therefore, DG EAC and EACEA could organise a set of meetings, where the strategy for eventual increasing of the budget for culture and arts would be discussed.

Recommendation 6. The EU institutions – not only DG EAC and EACEA, but wider – **should offer unscrupulous support to the artists and cultural workers, who are subject to censorship or threats** because of their work. As it often happens, it is exactly the artistic and cultural expression on troubled past that triggers aggressive, also violent responses of people, who perceive themselves as the protectors of the national heritage and national identity. The EU should voice its opinion on such intimidations in an unhesitant manner, and protect the freedom of artistic expression by all means.

7 Conclusion

Several policy recommendations on how to overcome the troubled past have been proposed in the past by various actors – some being more, and other less realistic to be implemented. The process of writing these policy recommendations for the EU, namely, what the EU could do to assist its member states and the prospective members to overcome the troubled past, followed the middle ground approach. On the one hand, these recommendations offer several meaningful possibilities that the EU could introduce in order to contribute to the overcoming of troubled past within and outside the EU. On the other hand, the document tries not to be over-ambitious by offering a set of ideas that would be immediately rejected. The EU as an institution can hardly go beyond the will of its member states; especially with the developments in the last few years, when it seems that the core values of the EU are being questioned by some of its member states, policy recommendations should reflect the current ‘spirit of the times’.

The value-added of the project of RePAST – as seen by the consortium members – is that it attempts at disentangling the troubled pasts in four, perhaps the most important inter-related domains of social life, when it comes to troubled past: history, media, politics and arts & culture. This is also the approach followed by the authors in writing of this document; the policy recommendations should be read in an integrative manner and should be implemented as comprehensively as possible despite the authors acknowledge the fact that this would be difficult.

yield significant advances of aesthetics. Consequently, empathy and tolerance between different social groups could be reinforced, and the fixations on the uniqueness of (national) suffering and (national) ‘martyrology’ – often promoted by exclusivistically-oriented ‘national-building projects’ – softened, if not prevented.

Regardless of that, even a few small steps - implementing or even thoroughly considering a few of the recommendations – would be an important policy-related impact of the RePAST project.

The EU of “different speeds” has become a reality in various fields (the Schengen area; Common Security and Defence Policy; Eurozone etc.). From an internal viewpoint, the EU member states are everything but static actors, and the political priorities – including those related to the EU affairs – change with different governments. Perhaps also in the field of troubled past the need for the multi-speed EU should be acknowledged. Therefore, given the fact that certain recommendations might encounter reluctance in some of the EU member states, the EU institutions could anyway pursue some of the proposed ideas and support only those member states that feel comfortable with them. However, the EU institutions mentioned in this report should not shy away from the attempt to stimulate also less eager member states to support certain ideas. The political orientation in any of the member states is not permanent, and even at this point a certain member state does not support a particular idea for overcoming the troubled past, the recommendation, if ‘floated’, could garner support in years to come.

Last, but not least, we acknowledge that these recommendations do not cover several fields that would be beneficial for addressing the troubled past (e.g. opportunities related to the digitalisation and the future EU’s attempts in this regard; multilingualism as an important glue that keeps the EU together etc.). The reason for not going beyond the results of the RePAST project is, on the one hand, the fact that the list of recommendations is already extensive, and on the other, because the authors wanted to ground their recommendations on the research that has been done in the project (original and new data). Nevertheless, the countries of the EU and the prospective member states – from the latter, this project focuses on Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina only – are so different from the perspective of troubled pasts that any kind of further, all-encompassing and over ambitious solutions might ‘water down’ the meaningfulness of these recommendations.

8 References

List of experts commenting the draft version of policy recommendations

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