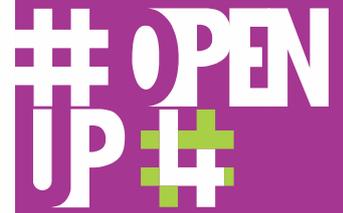




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GoDialogue- OpenUp4 Kick Off days in Prague

In January 2019, eighteen participants, comprising people from Serbia and Kosovo, were invited to Prague to take part in an OpenUp4- kick off meeting of the EU funded project GoDialogue. Over four days they discussed the Dialogue and communication campaign and shared their personal views both as a group and also anonymously. Some of these quotations have been included in this text. This event acted as an icebreaker between two communities: Serbia and Kosovo.

In short, I think 1. it is super important to talk, and to communicate with each other. 2. To be honest, I don't believe in countries, only in people. 3. Maybe I'm foolish, but I want to give a chance to anybody. 4. People are people, right?' (Anonymous)

Participants discussed how relationships with people, whether business or personal, depends on the nature, needs and opportunities of any given situation and not on geography or politics alone..

With the internet is an increasingly popular form of communication participants point out that they are more likely to talk about private events culture, art, travel, social activities than they do about politics. The relationships that grow are naturally made based on shared interests, similar life values and outlook on life, rather than consideration of where they are from, this is particularly true with young people.



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Regular communication is of utmost importance for comprehending Dialogue

Identifying Similarities and differences

'Personally, I felt people need to communicate but not based on what politicians say. We would succeed if there were a way not to be brainwashed by media and politicians. We should comprehend dialogue as a process of dealing with the past. Tackling transitional justice and coming to terms with guilt, memory and mutual understanding.' (Anonymous)

Participants see that culturally they share an affinity with music, fashion, gastronomy and nutrition. They share a belief in the importance and maintaining of their cultural heritage with 'family' being at the heart of life. Likewise, participants identified and discussed mutual challenges; standard of living, low employment, the brain drain as people leave the country and take their expertise with them, corruption and even traffic congestion.

Areas of life that were less well known between the groups was the interpretation of recent history and how this is presented to people. They wanted to know what everyday life was like in Kosovo and Serbia, what value people placed on things, how the education system worked, how state institutions and legislative systems operated for example. Participants of all ages benefited from frank and open dialogue in this four day workshop, where at state level these conversations are not being heard. Everyone acknowledged that differences remain between them in the form of religion, language, the perception of both historical and current events.



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Solutions to improve Dialogue and mutual understanding.

Looking for positive dialogue between the Kosovo and Serbia, the participants suggest a number of initiatives to improve mutual understanding and Dialogue. Organising sports camps and Art Workshops for children and young people as an opportunity to meet new people and form friendships. Cooperating with influencers from Serbia and Kosovo to amplify similarities between the communities. Joint film projects with film personalities and characters that people can relate to regardless of where they are from. Organising cultural exchanges for people to understand and appreciate the different cultural heritage, customs and values. There was also a suggestion of raising and discussing the topic of coexistence of Serbians and Albanians on Kosovo.

Without exception, all participants are against involving state bodies or representatives in any of the communication initiatives. Firstly, the need to depoliticise is vital to earn the respect and credibility of all citizens, in both Serbia and Kosovo. Secondly, any communication, being independent of any party, country or political power, means that should an impasse arrive on a state level, that participants would be willing and able to continue with the Dialogue initiatives despite any escalation of tensions at states' level. Participants all agreed any one of the proposed solutions would need to be impartial and maintain equality of language and representation at all times. Finally participants from Kosovo and Serbia are happy to be involved, communicate in any way possible the importance of this initiative. Many believe that Youtube and Instagram will be essential platforms to seed these conversations.

OpenUp4 i slogan and visuals

Feedback was generally positive with the group liking the style choice of colours and font. The campaign slogan is clear and decisive in its message for cooperation and openness of peoples.

'In my opinion, this dialogue will help the people of Serbia and Kosovo to meet each other and our culture. Also, we have to eliminate prejudices that we have had in our communities for a long time, so young generations like us have to show more love and respect for each other. (Anonymous)

