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## **Education in divided societies: Developing and researching shared education in the Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia**

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## GCRF strategic networks final report

Strategic networks were an important short-term, foundational ESRC investment to build towards and inform future GCRF activity, both at ESRC and RCUK levels. Their aims were to:

- develop interdisciplinary relationships within and beyond the social sciences around key global research challenges
- build strong collaborations with UK and international non-academic stakeholders to identify these challenges
- co-produce substantive and innovative research agendas in readiness for future GCRF calls and provide input to inform the future direction of GCRF funding.

ESRC GCRF strategic networks were expected to bring together novel combinations of perspectives to identify key challenges for future research, inform thinking on how these challenges might be addressed, and build the capacities and relationships required to support them. **This final report supplements the Researchfish reporting process, in order to capture these elements.**

All ESRC grant holders are required to update the Researchfish outcomes collection system as soon as an outcome is generated. This includes:

- publications (for example journal articles, consultancy reports, conference papers, books or systematic reviews)
- collaborations and partnerships
- further funding, next destinations and skills
- engagement activities
- influences on policy
- research tools and methods
- research databases and models
- intellectual property and licensing
- spinouts
- awards and recognitions
- other outputs or future steps.

This can be done on the Researchfish system at any time; however, you are required to confirm outcome information on Researchfish is accurate and up-to-date once a year during an annual submission period. See the ESRC [Researchfish](#) website page for further information. In addition to this requirement you must also complete this final report.

**Once completed, please email this report to: [esrcnetworks@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:esrcnetworks@esrc.ac.uk) within three months after the end date of your grant.**

Grant Reference No: <b>ES/P006655/1</b>	PI name: Professor Joanne Hughes
Research organisation: Queen’s University Belfast	
Grant title: Education in divided societies: Developing and researching shared education in the Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia	

**1. Please provide concise details of the composition of your network and the roles members had within the network to support the development and delivery of meaningful future research agendas [maximum 400 words]**

Interdisciplinarity and innovation are key elements in GCRF and were considered central to successful networks; the composition of your network was required to reflect this. Your network was expected to have included researchers from more than one academic discipline (both within the social sciences and from non-social science disciplinary traditions); researchers based in OECD DAC list countries; and UK or international non-academic stakeholders from the public, private or third sectors (we also strongly encouraged the inclusion of non-academic stakeholders based in OECD DAC list countries).

The ESRC GCRF Shared Education project has been led by an interdisciplinary team of academics from the Centre for Shared Education and the Centre for Identity and Intergroup Relations both at Queen’s University Belfast (Northern Ireland), the Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution and the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (Macedonia), Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Department of Psychology at the University of Zagreb (Croatia). Subsequently, an academic from Rochester Institute of Technology in Kosovo extended the inclusion of OECD DAC countries. This core academic team comprised interdisciplinary researchers across the Social Sciences (education, psychology and human rights) with track records in research on education in divided societies, intergroup contact and intercultural dialogue.

Extending out from this core academic team, the project successfully developed a strategic network of key educational stakeholders at political, policy, and practice levels in each of the five jurisdictions thereby ensuring breadth and depth of discussion on education based contact initiatives at each in-country meeting.

At policy level, key representatives from Department of Education and the Education Authority NI, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Macedonia’s Ministry of Education and Science, Croatia’s Ministry of Science, Education and Sport and Agency for Education with a member of the Croatian Parliament from the Serbian minority and other minority representatives attending the final in-country event, and the Municipality of Prishtina in Kosovo. At the political level, representatives from relevant political parties from across the jurisdictions, a former Minister of Education and a Parliament Representative. The British Ambassador to BiH, representatives from the American Embassy as well as OSCE Education Experts operating in BiH attended meetings. In addition, important and relevant civil society stakeholders attended the meeting held in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a primary goal of sharing practices and experiences in operating in divisive education settings (such as in BiH) whilst promoting inclusion.

School principals and local practitioners from primary and post-primary schools currently involved, or who are in the process of initiating shared education initiatives attended all events and were key in ensuring tours of school for delegates and opportunities to fully debate practical considerations associated with rolling out shared education. Members from national and international NGOs (and donors) who support inclusive education initiatives, such as European House Vukovar, Nansen Dialog Center Sarajevo and Croatia, UNESCO, USAID, UNDP, and UNICEF also assured non-academic supportive contributions.

In total, an average core network delegation of 37 participants attended each in-country and this included 10 from Northern Ireland, 10 from Macedonia, 10 from Croatia, 4 from BiH and later 3 from Kosovo.



**2. Please provide concise details of the thematic focus of your network [maximum 400 words]**

Please provide evidence of the thematic focus of your network, and how social science research (working in conjunction with other disciplines) has made a substantial contribution to achieving the aims of GCRF. This may have included a focus on a particular policy area or development challenge, a regional or geographic focus, or a methodological or data challenge.

As inter-sectoral collaboration is key to the implementation of shared education in NI, and has been a significant factor in the delivery of shared education initiatives in Macedonia and Israel, we saw clear potential for the promotion of a similar approach in BiH, Croatia, and other Balkan states.

The value of the network in respect of responding to GCRF aims was four-fold:

1. All countries in our network are post-conflict and share similar challenges in respect of building relationships between different ethno/religious groups. Whilst all have policy frameworks in place for the promotion of more harmonious inter-group relations, policy delivery to date has been challenging and, as was the case in NI for many years, interventions in Balkan states have often been piecemeal, one off and 'add on'. Shared Education accepts the reality of separate education within post-conflict jurisdictions, and aims to generate an alternative space within separated systems where cross-group relationships and opportunity to address divisive issues can be facilitated and nurtured. The model also affords educational and economic outcomes in respect of maximizing limited resources through school collaborations and shared curriculum-based activities. In this respect, a wide range of stakeholders could see value in the approach and were willing to engage with it. In highly entrenched divisive societies with institutional but also psychological separation, any integration-oriented attempt is perceived as threatening to identity. Shared Education approach is unique in this regard as it offers an identity non-threatening solutions to overcoming division in a step-wise process.
2. The BiH and Croatian networks were able to engage with and learn from the experiences of previously established shared education initiatives in NI and Macedonia. An important dimension of this was the significance attached to collaborations between academic and other educational stakeholders with respect to both building an evidence base for shared education and adopting a critical multi-sectoral approach to its delivery.
3. A direct outcome of network activity is the further development of shared education initiatives in Croatia within the minority education context and the identification of opportunities in BiH and Kosovo. The BiH team composed of academics and key civil society and political representatives who have been working and advocating for education reform practices have developed a three -year proposal of implementing shared education practices in 12 divided communities across the country. The proposal has received direct support from the British embassy, EU Education Representatives, and the OSCE. Juxtaposed with interventions already in place in NI and Macedonia, this represents a clear opportunity for the establishment of an international comparative research project that can explore the operationalization and delivery of shared education in a range of political and social settings.
4. Although not initially involved in our 4-country network, we were able to find matched funding to support participation of a smaller network from Kosovo. As with the other participating states, Kosovo has a post war legacy of division. One outcome of involvement in the project is the establishment of an in-country network.
5. Connections established within and through the network offered an opportunity to feed into wider political/policy debates on inter-group relations in diverse and divided societies, for example, one direct outcome of our network activity was the presentation of shared

education as a model for relationship building in the Balkan region at the Balkan summit in London (July 2018). We also presented a seminar relating to our network at UNESCO's International Office in Paris and have also been afforded an opportunity through the UNESCO Chair platform to deliver a seminar to a wider UNESCO audience.

**3. Please provide concise details of your strategic network activities [maximum 400 words]**

To deliver their aims, networks were expected to engage in a wide range of activities, with network activities also taking place in developing countries. Please provide details of activities, highlighting any innovative approaches used.

We undertook strategic network activities in four stages across the project.

**Stage 1:** Members of the core research team established a network of academics and key educational stakeholders. An online internal communication system and a shared space for file sharing were set up to enable sharing of information, expertise, and experiences across the network. An assessment of local literature on contact-based education initiatives was completed in each jurisdiction, which informed subsequent stages of the project.

**Stage 2:** A 3-day knowledge exchange seminar was undertaken in Northern Ireland, attended by the full network. Day 1 focused on theoretical underpinnings and evaluation methods and the presentation of the literature reviews from each jurisdiction. Day 2 involved tours of shared education partnerships and discussions with school officials. Day 3 involved the sharing of learning and discussions of how the model might be adapted for each jurisdiction, as well as the identification of capacity building needs and activities in advance of the in-country seminars.

**Stage 3:** In-country seminars took place in Macedonia (21-23 September, 2017), BiH (13 April, 2018), and Croatia (16-17 April 2018). These included members of the network from each jurisdiction and additional stakeholders identified in the country hosting the seminar. In *Macedonia*, the seminar day provided an overview of Shared Education in NI and Macedonia and discussions around, structures, training, and advocacy delivered by academics, the NI Education Authority, NI Department for Education, and the Fermanagh Trust. The following day, the network visited model shared education schools observing shared classes and engaging in discussions with students and teachers. In *BiH*, seminars regarding structures, education, and advocacy for Shared Education in NI, a talk from the BiH Nansen Dialogue Centre on building trans-ethnic spaces were delivered, and a strategic meeting was held with Mr Edward Ferguson, British Ambassador to BiH and members of the core network to help him prepare a bid at the fifth Western Balkans Summit to be held with the UK government. In *Croatia* the seminar involved visits to several schools in Vukovar attended by Serb and Croat students, including a school which practices shared extra-curricular activities. The in-country group presented findings from the research study on majority-minority relations in Croatia and other network members presented relevant research and experience. This was followed by an extended question and answer session.

**Stage 4:** The core members of the network met in Zagreb (14-15 September 2018) to consolidate learning outcomes, identify next steps, and prepare the final report.

The innovation of these activities lies in bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders involved in peace building through promotion of intergroup contact and intercultural dialogue in education, in countries at different stages of engagement with Shared Education. In doing so, we have built capacity in jurisdictions with limited infrastructure, and maximized the potential for knowledge exchange and collaboration, working together to address a common set of problems. Ultimately, this network has helped us to develop an agenda to implement, promote, and undertake research into the efficacy of Shared Education in Northern Ireland and across the Balkans.

**4. Please provide concise details of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) compliance of your project**

Provide evidence that the primary purpose of your strategic network was to promote the economic development and welfare of a developing country or countries on the DAC list. Please confirm:

- which country or countries on the DAC list directly benefited from this network
- how your network was directly relevant to the development challenges of these countries
- how the outcomes of your proposed activities have and will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list.

For further ODA guidelines see the ESRC [ODA](#) website page and the OECD website

(<http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm>).

Of the five jurisdictions in the network, three are on the DAC list: BiH, Macedonia, and Kosovo. In the wake of interethnic conflicts that led to the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, BiH has seen the demise of a formerly integrated school system, in Macedonia pre-existing divisions have moved towards full separation, and in Kosovo a parallel system of education exists with state and Serbia run systems. In each case, children and young people belonging to different communities are now educated separately, offering few opportunities to interact or form friendships, explore issues of difference and diversity, and/or learn each other's language, culture and common history.

The project has afforded the generation of distinctive insights and perspectives to inform a broader discussion around the role of education in divided societies to act as a vehicle for improving intergroup relations. The infrastructure has led to the matching of schools in Macedonia and NI and the creation of a communication platform for engagement within and between teachers and pupils in Macedonia and NI on identity and diversity issues. This initiative is being supported by the Department of Education and Education Authority in NI. The matched schools model has the potential to extend to other jurisdictions.

Within BiH, a strategic meeting was held between Mr Edward Ferguson, British Ambassador to BiH and members of the core network to help him prepare a bid at the fifth Western Balkans Summit to be held with the UK government. The bid was in respect of financial support for a pilot initiative for schools in BiH to engage in shared education initiatives. In this project with the Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo as the key implementing partner the BiH team aims to apply the Shared Education Model during 3 years long project, 2018-2021. The project will be implemented in 12 communities from both entities, covering 24 schools, 1200 pupils, 240 teachers and 240 parents as direct beneficiaries and at least 7200 pupils, 480 teachers and 720 parents as indirect beneficiaries. The project goals are improving intergroup relations through implementation of shared activities using non-threatening and common-oriented approached which will develop cross-group friendships and reducing intergroup anxiety

The implementation will be monitored and evaluated during the whole course of the project duration by a M&E team led by Dr Sabina Cehajic-Clancy from Sarajevo School of Science and Technology. Boris Divkovic Foundation (BDF) will be responsible for development of policy and legislation proposal on Shared Education. In particular, BDF will analyze and prepare amendments for changes to legislative framework at various state level based on the SE Act of 2016 adopted in Northern Ireland. BDF will conduct advocacy activities with MPs and policy makers in ministries at all levels of government

In Kosovo, being part of the network has led to the identification key education stakeholders who are willing to pilot of shared education programme. This includes the head of an ethnically mixed municipality in East Kosovo (Kamenica) and the Department of Education within Kamenica who have recruited two schools to participate in the pilot. The former President of Kosovo Atifete

Jahjaga (Jahjaga Foundation) has been approached and expressed support for the adaptation and implementation of the shared education model in Kosovo.

The role of education is central to a reconstruction and peace-building agenda in BiH, Macedonia, and Kosovo, and schools are potentially key delivery agents (Gallagher, 2004; Salmi, 2000). Education systems that avoid the replication of existing structures of division and introduce mechanisms to promote social cohesion are paramount to supporting not only peace building efforts (UNESCO, 2000; EFA Monitoring Report, 2002), but also economic functioning. Ultimately, the network has the capacity to be socially transformative as the model has the capability of fostering more harmonious intergroup relations and transmute the social landscape of these divided societies.

**5. Please provide concise details of the capacity development opportunities your network generated**

An important aspect of GCRF is capacity development. Please provide evidence of this from your project, including opportunities taken to build research capacity. For further information regarding GCRF capacity development see the ESRC GCRF [capacity development](#) website page.

The objectives for capacity building in the project were met in the following ways,

**Needs assessment:** Through the project we facilitated, developed, and promoted models of shared education in societies divided by conflict and/or intergroup hostilities by undertaking a needs analysis to identify key capacity building activities to inform the in-country seminars and workshops. Between the jurisdictions there were overlapping challenges (funding; political, practitioner and statutory engagement, and linguistic differences). There were, however, specific priorities within each. For Macedonia the main concern was the mainstreaming and sustainability of shared education. In BiH, the emphasis was on how to engage statutory bodies, political supporters, and key funders. In Croatia the main issue was how to incorporate the concept of shared education into the minority education framework. In Kosovo the focus was on the identification of advocates and the creation of an in-country network.

**Network development:** The internal capacity within each jurisdiction to effectively develop, design, implement, and evaluate shared education was enhanced by establishing a network to capitalise on the expertise within and between each jurisdiction and to facilitate the engagement between academics and other educational stakeholders. In particular, the composition of the full and ongoing network facilitated a two-way process whereby knowledge gained in one jurisdiction (through each in-country event) built upon, informed and extended critical reflection and strengthened practice in the others. Furthermore, through the project, and the availability of some additional resource, the network was extended to include Kosovo.

**Advocacy:** The role of evidence-based knowledge in the development and delivery of shared education was explored with a view to encourage critical advocates across sectors within each of the jurisdictions. This was realised in multiple ways: the sharing of academic and practice-based knowledge and research evidence, the development of local level champions to endorse and promote shared education at different levels within the education system, and highlighting mechanisms for the engagement of practitioners, parents, and young people.

**Virtual Sharing:** Use of a series of online platforms (Dropbox, Slack, Twitter, project website [ESRCeducation.wordpress.com](http://ESRCeducation.wordpress.com), ResearchFish) for engagement between network participants and the sharing of resources (presentations, photographs, videos, literature reviews, in-country reports, academic publications and reports, educational resources, and practitioner toolkits). Throughout the course of the project network members have communicated via email frequently; it is anticipated that this will continue as we explore the potential for future projects.

**Policy Oriented Approach to Dissemination:** The network activity has been disseminated to a range of policy forums, including a delegation of British diplomats with appointments in a range of conflict and post-conflict regions including the Balkans (March 2018); Salzburg Global Seminar on Climate Change, Conflict, Health and Education: Targeting Interdisciplinary Research to meet the SDGs (March 2018); UNESCO Headquarters in Paris (June 2018); and the West Balkan Summit, London (July 2018).

## 6. Please provide concise details of the learning that has emerged from your network

Please share the learning emerging from your network on challenges and effective ways of working to deliver the future GCRF research agenda. This should include, for example, identifying any capacity-building needs your network raised, and the appropriate next steps proposed as outcomes from your network.

The project has afforded an opportunity to critically reflect on the theoretical elements that underpin shared education initiatives, through consideration of how the shared education model can be applied in a range of post-conflict societies. The project confirmed that stakeholders recognise the importance of intergroup contact between young people in divided societies and that there are clear opportunities and challenges across these diverse settings for shared opportunities to bring young people together. At the network level, in considering how we progress in respect of operationalising and delivering school based contact initiatives, a range of effective working practices and challenges were identified.

### Effective ways of working

- The global challenge dimension of the GCRF network call has been critical to the effectiveness of our project. By facilitating jurisdictions with similar post-conflict challenges this has led to the development of collaborative working partnerships to explore the potential for school-based contact initiatives that tackle ongoing issues of division and intergroup hostilities.
- The unique interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international aspect of the network created a safe space for sustained discussions around this global challenge. Traditionally these different sectors and discipline often work in silos, so in creating a knowledge-exchange forum members of the network were better able to understand both the potential and challenges of different stakeholders. This allowed for the generation of creative ideas about how to take the school-based initiatives forward in each jurisdiction.
- The composition of in-country networks included representatives from different ethno-religious groups. This and the nature of activities undertaken (in-country events, virtual environment, etc.) offered opportunities for critical reflection on contentious issues relating to on-going divisions. These dynamics were mirrored at the full network level where different stakeholders felt comfortable to share their experiences and aspirations.
- Adopting a full-cycle, policy-oriented strategy permitted consideration of a more creative, multi-faceted and holistic approach in responding to the challenge of divisions within post-conflict societies. From an academic perspective, this underlines the importance of a more flexible approach to methodology where research questions emerge organically.

### Challenges/moving forward

- Current national research funding arrangements tend to create unequal partnerships where the host country has financial control. This is exasperated by the privileging of income generation by UK universities. In our view, and based on the network experience, national research foundations need to work together to determine strategies for elevating opportunities for DAC partners to engage as equal members.
- A project such as ours, which focused on capacity building and intersectoral engagement (both of which are fundamental to addressing global challenges) is in tension with the current emphasis on REF and peer-review publication output as a measure of research success. The time and effort required to support this type should also be recognised as a measure of research endeavour.
- Moving forward a consideration for our project is how we will disseminate lessons learned to facilitate a broader discussion on how to address division within post-conflict societies. A related consideration for research councils is how they can support the dissemination of

best or next practice to address global challenges. For example, global network events/fora that promote interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international knowledge exchange.

- Our project generated ideas for spin-off and innovative activities and we have been able to find through the network limited resource and funding to support these, including school matching across jurisdictions (Macedonia and Northern Ireland) and the development of related teaching materials. However, there is risk in raising expectations about the delivery and sustainability of such activities in the longer term. There needs to be a more strategic and joined up approach at the national and international levels where key government agencies and research councils work collaboratively to effectively address global challenges.

A body of research supports the value of shared education and this project has identified avenues for the model to be adapted to different societal contexts. The network has generated new understandings, research questions, and innovative approaches for taking school-based contact initiatives forward. An innovative funding call, which recognises the value of intersectoral collaboration and a full-cycle approach, would make this possible.