



Balkan Public Agenda

Focus Group Study
serbia

February 2001
KEY FINDINGS

Realized by
SMMRI Group

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INTRODUCTION

Objectives of the research

The qualitative approach was designed to deliver information needed for developing a questionnaire inquiry to be implemented in all Southeast European countries. The goal of the qualitative research was to monitor the public agenda in the Balkan area.

The results of the focus group-based research are not to be considered representative for the population of a country. They have an intrinsic value and provide an understanding on how people motivate their stand with respect to the situation of the country.

The group interviews were conducted according to the interview guide designed by IMAS in collaboration with IDEA International and with the network of research institutes in all the countries involved in the project. SMMRI qualitative research director Svetlana Logar have moderated the groups.

Recruiting and group composition

Persons belonging to the majority ethnic group and people belonging to Hungarians as the minority ethnic group were invited to attend the focus group sessions.

Participants were selected through quasi random sampling procedure, so that typical members of the population were included. The findings can only be considered as typical for population, but can not be used in any way for the assessments of their quantitative distribution in the population, (proportion of the typical attitudes). Due to quasi random sampling procedure or/and small sample, the sampling error cannot be identified.

Structure of the groups

	Date	Place	No. subjects	Group composition
Group 1	03.02	Belgrade	9	Urban Age: 19-31 Sex: 5 F, 4 M Occupation: 7 students, 1 Small enterpriser, 1 Unemployed Nationality: Serbian
Group 2	03.02	Belgrade – neighbouring villages	8	Rural Age: 21-56 Sex: 4 F, 4 M Occupation: 2 Clerks, 1 worker, 1 retired, 1 mechanical technician, 3 students Nationality: Serbian
Group 3	03.02	Belgrade	9	Urban Age: 36-50 Sex: 4 F, 4 M Occupation: 3 Clerks, 1 Accountant, 1 worker, 1 retired, 1 driver, 1 Worker (unemployed), 1 refused to say Nationality: Serbian
Group 4	04.02	Belgrade: Participants from Kikinda, Novi Sad, Pancevo and Zemun	8	Urban Age: Sex: 5 F, 4 M Occupation: 1 Journalist, 1 Seamstress, 2 students, 1 retired, 2 workers, 1 technician 1 private firm owner Nationality: Hungarian

SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

- ♦ **The most important issues the country was facing at the present time were perceived to be in a whole variety of aspects of the state and society: Politics, Economy, Public services, Moral values, National issues, Low credibility of media, Ecology – depleted uranium pollution.**
- ♦ **The problems were found to be tightly connected, but problems in economy and politics were believed to be of the highest gravity.**
- ♦ **A lot of importance was given to relations with International community, especially with relation to the problem of the former president Milosevic's potential trial in Hague.**
- ♦ **Hungarians put much more emphases on the economic problems, national tensions, and need for cooperation with the western countries as the major issues in the country. The problems of Kosovo and crises with relations to Montenegro were hardly mentioned.**
- ♦ **The problem of the relation between Serbia and Montenegro was evaluated to be the issue the easiest to achieve in the nearest future. People generally expect the problem to be peacefully resolved, no matter the outcome of the referendum.**
- ♦ **The economic problems, and Kosovo problem were perceived by most of the people as the most difficult to achieve.**
- ♦ **The causes of poor economic situation were believed to be closely related to politics: Long lasting wrong policy (starting with communism), reaching its peak with the former regime who led the country to wars, sanctions, and financial manipulations.**
- ♦ **The main obstacles for improving the economic situation were mainly believed to be in: Constant political crises (Kosovo, Montenegro) which discourage the interest of foreign investors, lack of full cooperation with Hague Crime Tribunal, unresolved ownership transformation.**
- ♦ **Establishing the rule of laws, cooperation with International community, fair privatization, and investment in the agriculture was believed to be the main factors of accelerating the economic prosperity.**
- ♦ **People feel that changes towards democracy were started with the change of the regime. In comparison to previous regimes, people feel freedom from political pressures. However, the political situation was found still to be chaotic: the rules of laws is not yet established, there is too much straggling for power among the political parties.**

- ♦ **In general, people were rather reserved in their judgments of political institutions. They were rather ready to give some time to the new government before making their judgments. The hopes for promises given at the election to be kept were quite contaminated with general doubts in dependability of the politicians.**
- ♦ **The president of FRY, Kostunica was most often mentioned as the one trusted the most. The Republic Prime minister, Zoran Djindjic, was the second most trusted political leader.**
- ♦ **People were found to be rather reluctant towards any kind of political engagement beside voting. The idea of engagement was mainly connected with being engaged through the membership in political parties, and reluctance towards it was based on negative attitudes towards the politics in general.**
- ♦ **Two major attitudes were found towards the credibility of media: 1) Credibility of the media was based on the reputation achieved during the previous regime. Independent media were perceived to be still most trustworthy; 2) Not a single media could be trusted. One should find the truth for himself/herself by comparing different sources of information.**
- ♦ **The role of non –governmental organizations was perceived to be very important and attitudes were highly positive. Professional organization were found to be almost non existent. However, their potential role was thought to be of great importance in bringing the changes in society.**
- ♦ **The role of religion with Serbs was more connected to issue of national identity than religious values, while for Hungarians, Church was more connected to spiritual values than national identity.**
- ♦ **A lot of importance was attached to the role of religious organizations, and the state of affairs was found to be quite unsatisfactory.**
- ♦ **In general, people felt quite discontent with public services. The worst evaluated public services were public transportation, social assistance, and health. Military was evaluated with slightly higher rates than the other public services.**
- ♦ **Lack of money and corruption (especially in health care services) were believed to be the main reasons for most of the problems in public services.**
- ♦ **People believe that the influence of International institutions to the country public agenda is huge and inevitable.**

- ♦ **There was a lot of suspicion with relation to the intentions and interests of International community in the region, but they were more related to NATO than EU or Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.**
- ♦ **The role of EU was more connected with financial help and solving the economic crises in general, while the Stability Pact was more connected with pecekeeping and its role was believed to be very important in helping the integration of FRY in Europe.**
- ♦ **People named four factors as the keys of the security in the region: Peace, definition of the states borders, democracy, and united Europe.**
- ♦ **In general, people were quite optimistic about the future life in the region. They expect progress, slow but consistent.**
- ♦ **People feel emotionally attached to their community, but majority would be ready to leave the country for two main reasons: Poor living standard, low salaries, unemployment, constant political crises, intolerance among the political opponent opinions among the citizens.**
- ♦ **The attitudes towards the SEE countries were based mainly on taking parts in political division and interests. The attitudes towards the countries perceived to be in the same block of political interests were positive. The perceptions of the countries from the former Yugoslavia involved in the latest conflicts were rather emotional than rational.**
- ♦ **Perception of the relations with ethnic minority groups was found to be quite complex. The rational acceptance of the ethnic minorities as the citizens with equal rights was mixed with the sense of disbelieve and conflict of interests.**
- ♦ **Main hopes and worries for the future were related to economic problems. In general, people just hope for normal life.**

Economic prosperity, and becoming a part of EU were the main hopes for the future. Fears of new conflicts and wars were mainly related to Kosovo crises and new NATO intervention. Fear of ecological problems due to depleted uranium from NATO intervention was mentioned as well.

KEY FINDINGS

1. ASPIRATIONS, FEARS AND CONCERNS REGARDING THE SITUATION IN SERBIA

1.1 What is the most important problem, people in the country are facing now days?

- ◆ **The most important issues the country was facing at the present time were perceived to be in a whole variety of aspects of the state and society:**
 - **Politics:**
 - Tensions between Montenegro and Serbia,
 - Kosovo crises,
 - Relations with international community (Extradition of former president of Yugoslavia to Hague crime tribunal),
 - The attitudes of people towards politics.
 - **Economy,**
 - Low living standard,
 - Unemployment,
 - Housing problem
 - Ownership transformation
 - Uncertainty for the future.
 - **Public services**
 - Social assistance,
 - Pension funds
 - Health care
 - **Moral values**
 - Aggression and intolerance
 - Crime
 - Degraded family values
 - **National issues**
 - The lack of national identity
 - National tensions
 - **Low credibility of media**

- **Ecology – depleted uranium pollution.**

1.2 Problems most difficult to solve

- ◆ **The problems were found to be tightly connected, but problems in economy and politics were believed to be of the highest gravity.**

There was a lot of differences and confusion in the opinions of how politics and economy do influence each other, but a lot of consent that they are so interconnected that cannot be resolved one without the other.

The constant Kosovo crises was perceived to be the major and most difficult political problem.

- ◆ **Younger people were also found to be quite irritated with the people's attitudes towards the new government, especially towards the new elected president of FRY. The support was found to be irrationally exaggerated and quite similar to one towards the previous regime at the beginning of the political power.**

Illustrative statements:

- *-I am talking about narrow-mindedness, ferociousness, superficial attitude towards everything, the lack of rational thinking. (M1, G1)*
- *-The attitude towards the president Kostunica. People found new Milosevic, they worship him without any rational logic. Some opinion polls show that Kostunica has 91% support. (M5, G1)*
- *-All the problems stem from the economic situation, if it got better they will pay less attention to idolatry. Our biggest problem at the moment is the crises in South Serbia, in Bujanovac. (M9, G1)*

- ◆ **A lot of importance was given to relations with International community, especially with relation to the problem of the former president Milosevic's potential trial in Hague.**

The importance of good relations with the western countries in order to accomplish the resolution of the political and economic crises was the prevalent attitude of most of the people.

Just a few of the participants were against the Cooperation with Hague crime Tribunal, feeling it to be just one of the steps towards loosing the political independence.

Illustrative statements:

- *The Hague is just the beginning, they will ask for one thing now and then keep asking for more. (M3, G3)*

- *Nobody should be extradited to The Hague, they should stand trial here. (M3, G3)*
 - *There should be precise convictions what they are charged with and the trial should be held here. (F2, G3)*
 - *We will have to make compromises unless we want to have the sanctions again. (F1, G3)*
 - *We can't go in the opposite direction of the whole world. I don't care whether he is brought to justice here or over there, we all know how serious his crimes are. (M4, G3)*
- ♦ **People from rural area emphasized the problems of the relation with refugees from Kosovo, perceiving them to have privileged position, especially with relation to job opportunities.**

Illustrative statements:

- *I live in Obrenovac, there are two power plants there, I am an electrical technician and I couldn't find a job while at the same time people from other parts of the country, Kosovo, Bosnia, Montenegro didn't have a problem in finding work. (F8, G2)*
 - *The Serbs sold their houses to Albanians, came here and bought flats and houses, even jobs. It's a public secret that you can buy a job for a few thousand marks. (M6, G2)*
 - *-We have the same problem in the mines in Kolubara. People who are not locals have an advantage, people from Kosovo for example are privileged because they have been driven out of Kosovo and I agree that they have the financial means to get a job. (F1, G2)*
- ♦ **Hungarians put much more emphases on the economic problems, national tensions, and need for cooperation with the western countries as the major issues in the country. The problems of Kosovo and crises with relations to Montenegro were hardly mentioned.**

Illustrative statements:

- *-I would like our country to return to Europe, we are still shut off from the rest of the world. I would like young people who left the country to return. (F8, G4)*
- *-My biggest problem is the unsolved housing issue. Another thing is unemployment. We also have a problem with relicts of the past, primarily in the way of thinking. National pressure was very big, I expect that to be better. For 10 years we've had tension on that level. I expect a calmer life in that segment. (M2, G4)*
- *The most important thing is that there are no more wars, that our kids, no matter which nationality or minority they belong to, can be equal in terms of education and finding employment and that our general standard is raised. (F3, G4)*

- *All problems must be dealt with simultaneously and with a new approach. Take the issue of The Hague Tribunal, everyone is talking about it, I think we have already decided that we want to cooperate with that institution and now we should leave that subject over to those who are in charge of passing the laws about that cooperation, there is no need for us, ordinary citizens, to discuss that matter any further. (M5, G4)*

1.3 Problems having the greatest chance to be solved in the near future

- ♦ **The problem of the relation between Serbia and Montenegro was evaluated to be the issue the easiest to achieve in the nearest future.**

People generally expect the problem to be peacefully resolved, no matter the outcome of the referendum.

- ♦ **The economic problems, and Kosovo problem were perceived by most of the people as the most difficult to achieve.**

The obstacles to the solution of the problem were mainly found to be twofold:

- **The conflict of the interests between Serbia and western countries,**
- **The attitudes of Serbian people towards Kosovo.**

Illustrative statements:

- *We have exhausted ourselves in this futile struggle, mentally, economically and physically. I would give Kosovo independence so that they can deal with their own problems. (F7, G3)*
- *It won't be solved soon, not in the next 15 or 20 years. It could be dealt in two possible ways, either acknowledge its independence or populate the territory with the people who used to live there, but the second solution is rather difficult to put into practice since nobody wants to return to Kosovo. (M4, G3)*
- *The conflict of spheres of interest. American, west European, Albanian, ours. Our influence is very low and this problem will be present for the next ten years, that's for sure. Perhaps there will be attempts to solve it but the status will not improve significantly. (M1, G1)*
- *People should change the way they are thinking; they should come to terms with reality and stop blaming each other for what happened and who had more victims. (M9, G1)*
- *Big forces can and should have an influence on that problem, if they left it over to us we'd be solving them for the next ten years. (M5, G1)*

2. ECONOMIC ISSUES

2.1 The causes of the economic problems

- ♦ **The causes of poor economic situation were believed to be closely related to politics: Long lasting wrong policy, starting with communism, and reaching its peak with the former regime who led the country to wars, sanctions, and financial manipulations.**

2.2 Obstacles to solving economic problems

- ♦ **The main obstacles for improving the economic situation were mainly believed to be in:**
 - **Constant political crises (Kosovo, Montenegro) which discourage the interest of foreign investors,**
 - **Lack of full cooperation with Hague Crime Tribunal,**
 - **Unresolved ownership transformation.**

Illustrative examples:

- *Our economy depends on foreign investments. I am definitely certain that the improvement will be felt in a very short period of time, when our people become aware that they have a responsibility, that their salaries depend on their work. (M9, G1)*
- *First of all we have to stabilize the situation here so that foreign investors can be sure their investment will be safe. We need to establish the rule of law in economy, monetary spheres. In order to do that we need to know who is to be held responsible if things don't go the planned way. (M1, G1)*
- *Until the political tensions calm down, nobody will be investing in our country. (M6, G1)*
- *In order for the economy to start improving our authorities will have to find a way of negotiating with the Albanians from Kosovo. (F8, G1)*
- *The transformation of state owned companies into private. A lot of companies are just fictional, people receive some miserable salaries, nobody knows what their work is supposed to be, that will have to be sorted out. (M5, G1)*
- *It should be our priority-we should open up towards the world. It means cooperation with foreigners, competitive production, import and export. I remember the time when we were able to do that. It was the time of prosperity. Market economy should be our priority. (F4, G2)*
- *This raises the question of our contacts with the West. They have their principles and ultimatums. First of all, the cooperation with The Hague Tribunal and the extradition of Milosevic, that is the first condition we have to fulfill in order to get aid. (M6, G2)*

2.3 The role of international community in solving the economic problems

- ♦ **People believe that International institutions could have a crucial role in helping the country's economy to be recovered by their financial help through investments and credits.**

Somewhat more help was expected from European Union than from American institutions.

Illustrative examples:

- *We belong in Europe. It should not tolerate American tutorship, it automatically leads to economic and political dependence. (M3, G3)*
- *Economy and politics go hand in hand. (F8, G3)*
- *WE should copy the example of the Czech Republic, they joined Europe in great style. (M3, G3)*

2.4 Factors that could help solving economic problems

- ♦ **Establishing the rule of laws, cooperation with International community, fair privatization, and investment in the agriculture was believed to be the main factors of accelerating the economic prosperity.**

The problem of the pollution with depleted uranium from NATO intervention was mentioned, however, as an obstacle to agriculture development.

Illustrative statements:

- *-The major thing that should be done is ownership transformation. The firms should be owned by someone who will be held responsible for what goes on in that firm. (M2, G4)*
- *We are all in some kind of chaos. I would make people return to agriculture, a lot of farmers left and now live in the cities. I would restore the agriculture. (F4, G4)*
- *Villages are deserted because of the wrong politics. Now we have a lot of unemployed people and the villages are deserted, nobody wants to tend the soil. (F3, G4)*
- *Our country has great potential in the agricultural sector, that sector should be paid more attention to. We have great areas of very good quality soil. Our industrial technology is old fashioned and that's why we should focus on agriculture. (F7, G3)*
- *The potential of this country is not the industry but the production of healthy food, but with the uranium problem we don't have that any more. (F2, G3)*

2.5 Expectations for the economic situation in the year 2001

- ♦ **In general, people were quite realistic in their expectations of the changes in economy in the next year.**

The optimism, as well as understanding for the difficulties the new government was facing in economy, were the prevalent feelings. People expect improvements, but slight and slow.

Illustrative statements:

- *I am an optimist. I don't think the improvement will be quick but I have high expectations for the new authorities. They are already changing a lot of laws and it means a lot. (M3, G2)*
- *I have high expectations since the regime was replaced. I know the changes can't happen overnight but there will be foreign investments and it will get better since it can't get any worse. (F1, G3)*
- *It started with prices going up, I'm afraid the situation will not change. (F4, G4)*
- *Each new government always finds excuses, the lack of money, the bad state of economy, I know these are the facts but we are very impatient although we know the changes take time. (F7, G4)*

2.6 The understanding of the market economy

- ♦ **Market economy was found to be one of the priority preconditions of the economy prosperity.**

Illustrative statements:

- *It should be our priority-we should open up towards the world. It means cooperation with foreigners, competitive production, import and export. I remember the time when we were able to do that. It was the time of prosperity. Market economy should be our priority. (F4, G2)*

3. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

3.1 Perception of democracy

- ♦ **People feel that changes towards democracy were started with the change of the regime. In comparison to previous regimes, people feel freedom from political pressures.**

Democracy was basically comprehended for citizens to having the freedom of expressing opinion and having the influence on decision making.

People feel the political situation still to be chaotic in order to say that there is democracy: the rules of laws is not yet established, there is too much straggling for power among the political parties.

Illustrative statements:

- Perhaps it's too early to feel democracy. (Democracy will be)

If we were all equal, if our children were given equal opportunities in employment. (F4, G4)

- Democracy means life without a fear, the rule of the people. People should be given the opportunity to criticize different public services, even the police. I still fear the police; my attitude towards them hasn't changed. They had wide authority, they were corrupted. Perhaps my attitude will change when the police force is under the authority of the local government. On the other hand, that creates a danger of local little gods and even bigger corruption. (M5, G4)

-Democracy is the idea which implies the freedom of choice, the freedom of expression, thinking, press, the fact that all authorities are replaceable, the respect of human rights. (F8, G1)

- If this government is responsible and replaceable, and they promised so many things in their pre election campaigns, if they don't live up to their promises, then we should be able to replace them and hold them responsible. We need to make sure what is whose responsibility, formally. (F8, G1)

--Democracy exists only on the Election Day, after than there is nothing you can do to change things. (M6, G1)

- We should be able to influence things we are interested in be it economy, agriculture or something else. Now we cannot. It should be possible (F8, G1)

3.2 Confidence in political institutions and political leaders

- ♦ **In general, people were rather reserved in their judgments of political institutions. They were rather ready to give some time to the new government before making their judgments.**
- ♦ **The hopes for promises given at the election to be kept were quite contaminated with general doubts in dependability of the politicians.**
- ♦ **But a lot of mistrust was found with some people as well, and they were mainly based on people from former regimes (communistic and Milosevic's) to still having the important roles in the new government.**
- ♦ **The president of FRY, Kostunica was most often mentioned as the one trusted the most. The Republic Prime minister, Zoran Djindjic, was the second most trusted political leader.**
- ♦ **Kostunica was believed to be an honest and consistent politician, but Djindjic was perceived to be more efficient (operative) in his policy.**

- ♦ **Younger participants showed much more preferences for Djindjic than Kostunica.**
- ♦ **The least trusted was the President of the Republic, since he belonged to the former regime.**

Illustrative statements:

-I would like to explain why I trust nobody on this list. Our president, who you said you trusted the most, has an advisor who used to be the advisor of Stipe Mesic before he decided to destroy old Yugoslavia. How can I trust a man like that? Our new foreign minister, Svilanovic, has an advisor who has been working in the diplomacy for the past 20 years, it means he was engaged in politics during all the previous regimes, so the politics hasn't changed one bit. (M5, F3)

- I'm not too happy about all the members of the government, there are too many ex communists in it, it's still better than it was, and it will be better. (M1, G1)

- I trust Kostunica, from what I know about him is the most moral and principled. Prime Minister Djindjic is the most capable and practical and he could do most. I don't see them as idols, but instruments to achieving a certain aim. Theoretically, I trust Kostunica but practically I trust Djindjic. I need to see some action which will make my life better. (M1, G1)

- We need to have good local governments, I don't need Kostunica to make things work in my city, I need the local government. The local government is made of incapable, lying people, I don't see what principle they followed when they elected them. I don't know a single normal person who joined any of the political parties in the last ten years, people who did, were after their personal interest, especially in smaller towns. We, ordinary citizens have to trust the local government most. (F2, G1)

3.3 Readiness for personal engagement in order to influence the change in society

- ♦ **People were found to be rather reluctant towards any kind of political engagement beside voting.**

The idea of engagement was mainly connected with being engaged through the membership in political parties, and reluctance towards it was based on negative attitudes towards the politics in general.

The lack of time due to the necessity of extra work in order to earn money for existence was also named as a barrier to be more engaged in the activities related to society issues.

Just a few of the participants were of the opposite opinion, and were become the members of political parties finding it to be the most efficient way to influence the changes in society.

In general people would be more ready to engage themselves through some non governmental, or professional organization.

Illustrative statements:

- *I wouldn't be a party member, that's terrible, a bunch of people gathering around one single idea. I could be engaged in some kind of organization and help them with my services. (F2, G1)*
- *I wouldn't get involved. It's too complicated. It's all about politics. (M6, G1)*
- *I would like to help if I could but political parties are not appealing, I don't like to be limited. In my field, as an economist I would like to help. We have some experts, like Mr. Djelic, who don't belong to any parties but are there to help in their professional field. (M1, G1)*
- *It's important to have a strong public opinion, independent media and to criticize the moves of the government. (F8, G1)*
- *People we voted for should do that for us. (M5, G1)*
- *I don't have the courage for it. There's always some doubt whether I would be able to define my goals correctly and whether my activities will be abused for some other purposes by some of the parties or organizations. (M5, G4)*
- *There should be a promotion of citizens' organizations or some new, reformed syndicates. I could get engaged in that kind of activity. (M2, G4)*
- *If we had some kind of citizens' initiative, citizens could express their views regardless of their party membership. (M5, G4)*
- *I am prepared to give my small contribution. (F4, G2)*
- *I am a member of Democratic Party and I think that we can have some influence. We still have to deal with the remains of socialist party. (M6, G2)*
- *Now we can have some influence, in a passive way if we are not members of any parties. I am a member of Democratic Party. (M3, G2)*
- *Volunteer actions, I am helping the Red Cross. (F4, G2)*
- *Someone will have to offer something to me and then I will decide. (F1, G2)*
- *I took part in some anti-drug campaign. (M6, G2)*
- *So far people were used for narrow party interest; their votes or presence was needed. I hope we will be given a chance for different kind of engagement. I am a member of independent syndicate, that would be my contribution. (M2, G4)*

4. CIVIL SOCIETY

4.1 Sources of information and their credibility

- ◆ **Two major attitudes were found towards the credibility of media:**
 - **Credibility of the media was based on the reputation achieved during the previous regime. Independent media were perceived to be still most trustworthy.**
 - **Not a single media could be trusted. One should find the truth for himself/herself by comparing different sources of information.**
- ◆ **People had different attitudes towards the media supporting previous**

regime: While some people found them to become more credible, the other found them just to change the authority they unconditionally support.

Illustrative statements:

- Whether the source can be trusted and has good reputation. If the information comes from B-92 radio, which was highly appreciated, in the previous years it proved to be reliable and valid. (F8, G1)

-I find it funny when they say a paper or TV station is independent. It doesn't really exist. (M4, G3)

-Even until October 5th we had excellent sources, the point was to accept the information as opposite to what was being said in the state media. A lot of things have changed after October 5th, all media institutions that supported the old regime now support the present authorities, they transformed too quickly. (M3, G2)

-I need to have some reassurance about what I hear and read. (F8, G4)

-I trust "Politika", it is reformed now, it has changed. I trust B-92, they have a credit from the previous times. (M2, G4)

-Another thing about the media is that now all those who criticized the old regime are automatically given the priority, Mrs. Susa for example. It doesn't necessarily mean that these journalists are the most qualified. (F2, G3)

--Now all the journalists are glorifying the new government too much, it's still the same. What I don't like is that all TV stations have some of the party members on their boards, why shouldn't our public enterprises have people who are qualified, professionals. The journalists are too servile, they never seem to ask the right questions if they are in a chance to talk to the officials. We seem to ask more sensitive questions here than they do on state TV. On the whole, I'd say we are a very badly informed society, the only thing functioning well is the word of mouth. (F7, G3)

4.2 The role of NGOs

- ♦ **The role of non –governmental organizations was perceived to be very important and attitudes were highly positive.**
- ♦ **People were aware of several NGOs, (The Center for Human Rights, Anti War Center, Soros, Otpor, Cesid, G17) and found the whole spread of their activities to be of extreme importance: From organizing citizens' initiative to offering training programs in different area.**
- ♦ **Just a few of the participants found to be lacking more information on the NGOs activities, especially after the negative connotation attached to these organizations by the previous regime.**

Illustrative statements:

- They are not very present in the media, their marketing should be better. Previously they were always mentioned in the negative context, Soros foundation, for instance. I would like to know more about them. (M2, G4)

- Their role could be in the sector of citizens' initiative, in enabling contacts between

people, passing on their experiences. (M5, G4)

- To make contacts, to form networks, to attract people, to be active in solving some local problems like respect of human rights, the rights of women. (F8, G1)

-They have a lot of actions, that's good. (F2, G1)

- G-17 Plus is one of the NGOs and they were the most active in awakening people and making them aware of the changes. This organization bore the heaviest burden and were in the first line. Their role was very important. (M9, G1)

- If we look at G-17 Plus as one of NGOs, their role was crucial and they should be trusted. I don't have a particularly good opinion of other NGOs, for example the one that Mrs. Kandic leads. I listened to her a couple of times, I disapprove of her national orientation, she is always stressing the misfortune of others, not Serbs. (M5, G2)

-OTPOR had an important role in making people aware of the situation and the necessary changes. (F2, G2)

4.3 The role of professional organizations

- ◆ **Professional organization were found to be almost non existent. However, their potential role was thought to be of great importance in bringing the changes in society. With this respect the labor unions were expected to be more active in the future.**

Illustrative statements:

-Syndicates are necessary for workers as a kind of competition between different ideas, they should become parts of firms along with "state" syndicates in order to improve working conditions. (M5, G2)

-The independent syndicates can have an important role. I am a member of independent media syndicate. (M2, G4)

-They could get things moving, improve the status of workers' rights, and establish contact between workers and employers. (M9, G4)

-There were different professional associations of doctors, lawyers, and so on, but this way of organizing people was neglected and their role was minor. (F8, G1)

-In the west they are some of the strongest associations. In our country they were either suppressed or closed down. (M6, G1)

4.4 The role of religious organizations

- ◆ **The role of religion with Serbs was more connected to issue of national identity than religious values.**
- ◆ **A lot of importance was attached to the role of religious organizations, and the state of affairs was found to be quite unsatisfactory:**
 - **On one side, the participants found that a whole variety of religious sects was present and were quite suspicious towards their activities.**
 - **On the other side, the Orthodox church was found not active**

enough.

- ♦ **The role of the Orthodox church was believed to be important for several issues:**
 - **National identity and homogenization of the nation,**
 - **Restoring the moral values**
 - **Fighting against the influence of religious sects.**
- ♦ **The point of agreement was that church should be completely independent of politics.**
- ♦ **The point of disagreement was on the issue if the religious education should be introduced in schools.**
- ♦ **Younger participants were less enthusiastic on the role of whichever religious organizations.**

Illustrative statements:

- *They could have the role of homogenizing the people. Everybody should have a personal attitude towards religion, it's individual choice, you either feel it or not. The Orthodox Church could have an important role. (M1, G1)*
- *The Orthodox Church had a role in supporting Milosevic but now they have changed. The church should not have an influence on the state. (F8, G1)*
- *I can't define the concept of religious organizations, the whole idea is rather unclear to me. (F2, G1)*
- *The religion was neglected because of politics, it should be more active. Our church is not as active as some sects and similar groups. (F1, G2)*
- *We were not allowed to go to church or celebrate religious holidays, now, even people who were communists are turning to religion. (F8, G2)*
- *It's important for our national identity. I would include religion in education program, because of our spiritual heritage, so that people can tell the difference between the sects and the religion. (M5, G2)*
- *Religion is part of modern education. We should all know a bit about different religions. (F2, G2)*
- *Introducing religion at schools, hospitals and the army can mean only one thing- religious fanaticism. (M4, G3)*
- *I disagree. Why shouldn't religion be part of schools? (F2, G3)*
- *We are surrounded by religious fanaticism, Catholic, Moslem, why shouldn't we be the same? (M6, G3)*

- ♦ **For Hungarians, Church was more connected to spiritual values than national identity.**

Illustrative statements:

-The church doesn't have such a great impact. I go to church occasionally but it doesn't have a great impact on my beliefs. I'd say that Islam has a much greater influence than Christian church. (M5, G4)

--I also go to church, orthodox church. (F8, G4)

--I go to the catholic church. (F7, G4)

--If you believe in something, you feel different, calm. (F7, G4)

5. PUBLIC SERVICES

- ◆ **In general, people felt quite discontent with public services.**

Grades percentages

Grades	Health	Education	Social Assistance	Transport	Heating	Electricity	Water	Military
1	40.0	22.9	45.7	48.6	21.2	17.1	23.5	11.4
2	11.4	20.0	22.9	8.6	15.2	17.1	2.9	5.7
3	20.0	5.7	17.1	20.0	9.1	5.7	2.9	22.9
4	8.6	17.1	11.4		12.1	14.3	11.8	8.6
5	8.6	11.4		17.1	9.1	22.9	14.7	17.1
6	5.7	8.6			3.0	5.7	8.8	2.9
7	2.9	5.7			9.1	8.6	11.8	8.6
8	2.9	8.6	2.9	5.7	12.1	2.9	8.8	11.4
9					3.0	2.9	14.7	2.9
10					6.1	2.9		8.6
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Mean grades by groups

GROUP	Health	Education	Social Assistance	Transport	Heating	Electricity	Water	Military
1	2.44	3.44	2.00	3.00	4.11	4.33	6.44	3.77
2	1.44	2.33	1.55	1.88	2.66	2.55	2.88	4.44
3	4.50	5.25	2.37	2.75	6.12	4.87	5.12	5.62
4	2.88	3.77	2.55	2.66	5.00	4.77	5.50	5.88
Total	2.77	3.65	2.11	2.57	4.39	4.11	4.97	4.91

- ◆ **The worst evaluated public services were public transportation, social assistance, and health. Military was evaluated with slightly higher rates than the other public services.**
- ◆ **Lack of money and corruption (especially in health care services) were believed to be the main reasons for most of the problems in public services.**

- ♦ **Downfall of all values and lack of motivation were perceived to further reduce the quality in education and health care.**
- ♦ **Basically, people do believe that privatization is a way to solve the problems in public services. However, a lot of doubts with relation to privatization to be efficient in the next future were expressed. The rationales for doubts were mainly twofold:**
 - **People fear that this would be just another way of powerful people to abuse the situation for personal benefits, by taking monopoly,**
 - **Due to low living standards, people would hardly be able to afford services which are not subsidized by the state.**
- ♦ **People were most reluctant towards the privatization of health care, while the attitudes were most positive towards the privatization of the public transportation service.**

Illustrative statements:

- *Financial situation is the core of all the problems. (M5, G4)*
- *Privatization of health care would make other great problems; the solution is in organizing the health care differently, and in establishing a sense of personal responsibility of those employed in health care. (M1, G4)*
- *Privatization can succeed if our standard improves and if we can afford to pay for the services (F4, G2)*
 - *We have all contributed from our salaries to the health insurance funds and now they are empty. The problem is that the state is not functioning the way it should. (M4, G3)*
 - *The health care shouldn't be privatized because we don't have the financial means to afford private health care. Most of it should remain under state authority. The same goes for education. (M1, G1)*
 - *It's a common in the world. Public transport is usually privatized. It's important to increase the number of busses. If they privatize it, I expect higher prices and also better service. There's danger of creating monopolies, that's why all the problems should be dealt simultaneously. (F8, G4)*

6. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

6.1 The influence of the International institutions

- ♦ **People believe that the influence of International institutions to the country public agenda is huge and inevitable.**
- ♦ **There was a lot of suspicion with some people with relation to the intentions and interests of International community in the region, but they were more related to NATO than EU or Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.**

- ♦ **Most of the people found the cooperation with the western countries to be one of the most important condition of solving the economic and political crises in FRY.**

Illustrative statements:

- *The international rules of the game exist, we should adapt to them and find our place in all this. Their influence is great. (M3, G2)*
- *Their influence is all – important. We need the sanctions to be lifted, we need their donation. (F8, G1)*
- *Our authorities will be more responsible because they will have connections with the rest of the world and will have to do their job right. (M1, G1)*
- *They don't have to direct us anywhere, we can draw on their conclusions and make use of those which are relevant for our country. (F3, G3)*
- *We want them to help us but not to command us what we can and can't do. (F1, G3)*
- *They have an interest in investing in economy and developing the market. They can do a lot to help, but the help should not be conditioned by any political or economic demands. (M2, G4)*

6.2 The role of International Institutions (European Union, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, and NATO)

- ♦ **In general, people trust more to European than American institutions.**

EU and Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe were trusted more than NATO. NATO was perceived as an American Institution.

- ♦ **The role of EU was more connected with financial help and solving the economic crises in general, while the Stability Pact was more connected with pecekeeping and its role was believed to be very important in helping the integration of FRY in Europe.**

Illustrative statements:

- *Stability Pact could be important, it will lead to stability in the region but it has only just began. (F8, G1)*
- *They can make us stop quarrel with others. It has to make it clear to political leaders that Europe will not tolerate the formation of any new European countries. (M5, G2)*
- *It's a regional program which could distract us from the main aim, which should be European market. It has a ring of something old, the Balkans. (M2, G4)*
- *EU don't support the idea of Greater Albania, or instability in the Balkans, we are their neighbors, and their interest is to help us be a developed country. We should orient ourselves towards the EU. (M5, G1)*
- *Our country can serve as an example of how decisive the influence of EU can be as opposed to the influence of USA. (M9, G1)*

- ◆ **In general, the attitudes towards NATO were mainly negative. NATO was perceived as bringing problems not only to FRY but to Europe as a whole, as well.**

Illustrative statements:

- Our orientation is Europe, my opinion is that NATO and America should be expelled from Europe. NATO has a very negative connotation in this region. From strategic point of view, I think that Europe has an intention of driving NATO out of Europe. NATO is absolutely controlled by America. They brought the biggest problems. I see that Europe has an intention of forming the European military forces; I wouldn't oppose their presence in the region. (M2, G4)
- NATO was supposed to be a peace keeping force, to help calm down the hotspots, not to ignite them. (M4, G3)
- America and UK are dictating other member countries within NATO. (M3, G3)

- ◆ **Most of the people were of the opinion that joining NATO would bring more negative than positive consequences for FRY.**

However, the arguments for negative consequences were mainly emotional, except for some ideas that joining NATO would be expensive and would lead to the further decay of economy.

Positive aspects were perceived to be the security of the country in the long run.

Illustrative statements:

- They can help us in their own way, but their influence has a negative connotation. (F3, G1)
- It's a still sensitive subject. I don't think that idea would be approved of. They are welcome only if they decide to give us war reparation. (F2, G2)
- I would be against it if I had a chance to oppose them, but rationally thinking, if Russia joined Partnership for Peace, perhaps we could think about something like that. I am not sure which form of cooperation we should choose, but we could have some benefit from it in the long run, not only financial but political, too. We could have some security. (M1, G1)
- It would cost us a fortune. All members must invest some money into their membership. It would be more harmful than beneficial for us, we would have to get rid of all the armament we have and buy theirs. (M5, G3)
- They can contribute, if they go home. (M6, G2)
- They should stay away from us. (F4, G2)
- It would be a paradox to see our army in Kosovo cooperating with NATO. (F8, G1)
- If we had been members of NATO we wouldn't have been bombed. It was a big mistake, we were offered that membership and we should accept it. (M3, G2)

6.3 The key security in the region

- ◆ **People named four factors as the keys of the security in the region:**

- **Peace,**
- **Definition of the states borders,**
- **Democracy, and**
- **United Europe**

Illustrative statements:

- *The key is in united Europe. (M1, G4)*
- *The key is to feel we have a state, and to make it clear what that state is, Serbia or Yugoslavia, with clearly defined borders. We need to trust that state and to feel proud and satisfied that we are its citizens. (F2, G3)*
- *Security means that the borders don't change. The problem is that Europe can't oppose America, they are too influential. Until the day someone says "enough with Albanian separatism" we will have no peace in this region. If Kosovo becomes independent there will be no more stability. (M5, G2)*
- *It means people are not getting killed any more. (F8, G1)*
- *That the trouble spots calm down. (M5, G1)*
- *The war can be fought by arms or economic means. (M6, G1)*

7. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS AND FEELINGS

7.1 Perception of the people's lives in South Eastern Europe in the next years

- ◆ **In general, people were quite optimistic about the future life in the region. They expect progress, slow but consistent.**

Illustrative statements:

"The average citizen will live better", "I expect progress but not too noticeable", "I hope that we will return to the stage of 1990s and move forward."

7.2 Belonging to the community and readiness to leave the region

- ◆ **People feel emotionally attached to their community, but majority would be ready to leave the country for two main reasons:**
 - **Poor living standard, low salaries, unemployment**
 - **Constant political crises, intolerance among the political opponent opinions among the citizens.**

Illustrative statements:

- *I would leave in order to work abroad but I couldn't really stand to live without my friends and family. (F6, G4)*
- *I thought about leaving very often. I started hating my country because of politics. Now I feel better. I wouldn't like to leave my roots. (M1, G4)*

-I wouldn't miss the opportunity to take part in growth and improvements that we will have in our country. Now I don't feel like leaving. (M2, G4)

I feel I belong here, but sometimes, when I'm angry and helpless I do think of leaving. When people treat each other abusively. That's when I think I would feel better in some other country, Germany for example, where I would just work and mind my own business. (F1, G2)

-I thought about leaving because of the political situation. (F2, G2)

-I thought about it because I am unemployed, I can't afford some basic things. (F8, G2)

7.3 Attitudes towards the SEE countries

- ♦ **The attitudes towards the SEE countries were based mainly on taking parts in political division and interests. The attitudes towards the countries perceived to be in the same block of political interests were positive. The perceptions of the countries from the former Yugoslavia involved in the latest conflicts were rather emotional than rational.**

Croatia

A lot of mixed feelings with all groups, from sentimental towards the former Yugoslavia, to strong negative emotions. In general, people perceived Croatians to have stronger negative attitudes towards Serbs, than Serbs towards Croatians:

They hate us more than we hatred them, Ante Pavelic, I feel aversion towards them, Dubrovnik, The sea, Sentimental feelings, I wish we could be a part of the same country, Negative.

On average, Hungarians attitudes were more neutral, rather nostalgic than hostile.

Slovenia

Rather neutral attitudes, appreciation of supposed discipline, working habits, economic prosperity:

Neutral, Different mentality, Developed country, Lucky them, Hard working and disciplined, It is another world.

Macedonia

Rather indifferent, but sympathizing:

The people with the same religion ours, My attitude is neutral, They are minority in comparison to Albanians who live in their country, They let NATO planes fly from their territory, "Zulu tribe", They divorced from us in a civilized way, Nice songs, I'd like us to have no borders separating us.

Bosnia & Herzegovina

For Serbs, this is a strong emotional issue. Bosnia and Herzegovina is perceived as two different countries: Republic of Srpska, and Federation. Serbs feel to be the same nation with the Serbs from Republic of Srpska, and see it quite artificially separated from FRY:

Republic of Srpska: Serbs that live across the Drina, They are still Yugoslavs, Officially they are divided, but I personally see it as one area,

Federation: Moslem country, War, victims.

Some people from rural area were extremely emotional on the issue.

- I see Republic of Srpska as one of our territories. The people there, get up every morning, turn in the direction of Serbia and cross themselves. They should be able to live with us. (F1, G2)

- I think of Bosnia as a Moslem country and Republic of Srpska as ours. Sometimes I think they like Serbia more than we do. (F4, G2)

Hungarians were more neutral, showed mainly positive attitudes towards the country as a whole.

Bulgaria

Serbs have mainly negative attitudes, Hungarians were much more positive.

Serbs: "Yak", "Not a friendly country", "Gypsies with orthodox religion", "They could be even worse than us."

Hungarians: "Our neighbors, we should have good contacts with them", "The road from the east to the west".

Romania

Serbs attitudes were mainly positive and sympathizing. Hungarians' attitudes were negative mainly because of the feeling that Hungarian minority in Romania was mistreated.

Serbs: *I sympathize with them, they went through similar problems, Poor like us, They suffered the same way we did, They are no better or worse than we are.*

Hungarians: *"I don't like their attitude towards the Hungarian minority, they are trying to force them to become Romanians".*

Greece

Mainly positive attitudes, tradition, culture, prosperity.

They made great improvements in the last ten years, It's great combination of tradition and modern things, I'm not sure the people support us as much as we think.

Turkey

Serbs attitudes were mostly negative.

"Dirty", "Osman empire", "We had a bad experience with them through history", "Great coast, cities".

Table 7.3 Attributes associated to the perception of SEE countries

Country	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Slovenia	Neutral, hard working, disciplined, different mentality	Another world, worth respect, we should trade with them	Different mentality, close to west, they took advantage of former Yu, they disrespect Serbs and Bosnians	Developed country, culture, order
Croatia	Still some hatred, hatred is from propaganda, sea	Dubrovnik, sea, we are the same but we hate each other, aversion, reserve, we forgive, they don't	Ante Pavelic, extremists, sea cost, aversion, I don't think of them any more	Ethnically clean state, sentimental feelings, sailing, holidays, we could be part of the same country again
Macedonia	Big problems, big % of Albanians, managed to separate from Yu without conflicts	Same religion as our, minority in their own country, nostalgic	They let NATO fly from their territory, Zulu tribe,	Divorced in the civilized way, positive, I would like no border between us
Republic of Srpska	Serbs that live across Drina EU patronage, too close to us to live in different country	Serbia, Crazy war, unnecessary victims, our territory, unsolved problem	Divided country, all of them lost in the conflict, undefined territory	It is one territory, influence of International community, artificial solution, national differences, good people, positive feelings
Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina	Mixed marriages, a phenomenon to be able to still live together	Multi ethnical, Muslims' part of Bosnia, Muslim country, "the green transversal"		

Country	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Bulgaria	Worse than us, some improvements	Gypsies with orthodox religion, not friendly country	Yak, I can't think of Balkan federation	our neighbors, some threat historically speaking, possibility of cooperation
Romania	Poverty	Poor like us, similar destiny like ours,	Suffered the same we did, same as we are	Nice country, bad attitudes towards the Hungarian minority
Greece	Great, reality without conflicts	Friends, positive feelings, tradition and culture	A bit sleazy, wonderful sea	
Turkey	Dirty, great cost, big differences between poor and reach	Bad experience with them through history	Nothing	

7.4 Perception of the relations between the ethnic groups

- ♦ **Perception of the relations with ethnic minority groups was found to be quite complex. The rational acceptance of the ethnic minorities as the citizens with equal rights was mixed with the sense of disbelief and conflict of interests.**
- ♦ **The attitudes towards ethnic groups belonging to nations FRY was in conflict with were more negative:**
 - **The best relation was perceived to be with Hungarians: Hungarians living in Serbia were perceived as accepting Serbia as their own country and being closer by their mentality to Serbs than Hungarians living in Hungary.**
 - **People start feeling Montenegrins as the minority ethnic group, and found the relation with Montenegrins to be the most problematic at the moment.**
- ♦ **The general point of agreement was the feeling that ethnic minority groups Hungarians, Croats, and Muslims, have better position in Serbia than Serbs in Hungary, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.**
- ♦ **In general, people thought the ethnic minorities to have equal rights as Serbs, and relations to depend primarily on the attitude of the ethnic minorities' members towards Serbia.**
- ♦ **Differences in the level of tolerance were found. People with more extreme, less tolerant attitudes perceived the minority ethnic groups to have privileged position in Serbia.**

Illustrative statements:

- I think ethnic minorities have bigger rights here than Serbs in other countries. (M9, G1)

- The relation between the Serbs and Hungarians is fantastic. (M5, G1)

-The situation is a bit more tense between the Serbs and Moslems than the Serbs and Hungarians. (M5, G1)

-If they want to live and work in this country they should declare themselves Serb nationals. It functions like that in the whole world. (M6, G1)

-I disagree, if he is a citizen of this country, it is his right to be of different nationality, that doesn't bother me. (F2, G1)

-The Montenegrins are privileged. It doesn't go for Croats and Moslems. (F8, G1)

- ♦ **One point of consent between the Hungarians' and Serbs' perceptions of the relations between Serbs and ethnic minorities was that relations between Serbs and Hungarians were much better than the ones between Serbs and Croats and Serbs and Muslims.**

- ◆ **However, Hungarians stated that tensions were present between Serbs and Hungarians during the previous regime, but lowering down after the elections.**
- ◆ **There were differences in the opinions, some of the people still feeling threatened, and deprived of equal rights.**

Illustrative statements:

- The hatred was emitted over TV, the constant instance on nationality, people of different nationalities, other than Serbians could not exercise their rights. (M2, G4)

- In Serbia I have never felt any problems. In the north, in Subotica I felt that there was a strong Hungarian feeling among the Hungarians, I don't see the reason for that, I don't really know much about it, but I'd say there could be some conflicts. (M5, G4)

(Hungarian) As for the number of Hungarians who left, a lot of them left before the wars, to avoid conscription. (M5, G4)

-Ethnic minorities were always conscripted to the army more often than Serbs. I am a Hungarian and I was often sneered at by children because I was different and spoke differently. It was really hard at the beginning, now I got used to it, they probably got used to me. (F6, G4)

-I feel relieved now, I think the situation will calm down. I think we should all respect our own culture but we shouldn't neglect the culture of others. We are all what we are. (F6, G4)

-I have always thought that there is no possibility of conflicts between Serbs and Hungarians. I don't feel any pressure. (M5, G4)

8. FINAL COMMENTS

8.1 Most significant fears and hopes with respect to the future of the country

- ◆ **Main hopes and worries for the future were related to economic problems.**

In general, people just hope for normal life.

Economic prosperity, and becoming a part of EU were the main hopes for the future.

Some fears of new conflicts and wars were present as well, mainly related to Kosovo crises and new NATO intervention.

Fear of ecological problems due to depleted uranium from NATO intervention was mentioned as well.

Illustrative statements:

"I hope that this government will start solving the problems", "To become a member state of EU in ten years", "Economic prosperity and stability in terms of wars and conflicts", "I wish we could travel, have a holiday".

“Kosovo is main fear”, “The fear of possible war”, “I still that NATO will come to our country again”, “The crime, economic worries, poverty”, “I worry whether we have qualified people to make changes happen”.

Table 8.1 Major fears and hopes

	Fears	Hopes
Group 1	Economic insecurity. Political insecurity, the idea that as of tomorrow we will have to put on helmets again. The possibility of yet another war. Depleted uranium, ecological disaster.	To become a member state of EU in ten years. To have a normal life. The way of thinking to change, the people’s consciousness, the system of values. The prevalence of the best professional people
Group 2	Kosovo is my main fear. Uncertainty, intolerance.	I only hope that things will move from words to actions. I hope we will have stability and peace so that we can return to work. I hope that we will return to the stage of 1990s and move forwards.
Group 3	The crime. Our children and their future. Economic worries, poverty. I worry whether we have qualified people to make the changes happen.	Our personal security to be on a higher level. Our country to be defined and affirmed. I wish we could travel, have holidays.
Group 4	I have a fear of diseases, because of the depleted uranium, I worry about the ecological problems. The fear of possible bombing. We experienced it once. I fear that conflicts will expand. I still fear that NATO will come to our country again America will try to prevent Europe from uniting so that they can have a leading role and domination.	I hope that the problem of Kosovo will be solved in the shortest period of time. Economic growth, better life based on our own work. I hope for better life and a higher standard of living.