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**Interfaith Dialogue  
is (not) Necessary for Peace  
The Four-Pillar Model of Dialogue**

EWI Fellowship Programme



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*For your friendship, support, tough and just guidance, and patience above all, s. Rebeka thank you!  
Julianne, thank you for believing in me.*

## Abstract

This text will discuss the importance of interfaith dialogue and its relevance to peace-building at the local level. Having in mind general pervasive attitudes about the negative impact of faith on peace and reconciliation, it seems necessary to explore the meaning of local initiatives of dialogue among believers in the countries of former Yugoslavia affected by the recent war. These initiatives can be used as examples of good practices that can be applied to other levels of the society, enabling us to talk about faith also from the perspective of its positive impact. In this sense, the text will aim at exploring and discussing interfaith dialogue and its significance for the promotion of peace and stability (the functional side of interfaith dialogue) with the emphasis on activities supported by the Ecumenical Women's Initiative. This will be done by introducing a four-pillar model of interfaith dialogue. The author argues that the four-pillar method as an approach to interfaith dialogue increases knowledge and diminishes prejudice and stereotypes; increases capacities (skills) and enhances civil activism; encourages inclusion, acceptance and understanding; and leads to personal growth and positive change at the local level.

**Keywords:** *interfaith dialogue, the four-pillar model, stability, Ecumenical Women's Initiative, activism, change*

## INTRODUCTION

This text comes at a time when faith is seen as a phenomenon that has returned to the world arena as an important factor in inter-state and inter-national conflicts, as well as a factor of instability. However, research has also confirmed that faith is needed for reconciliation efforts, development of democracy and as a motivation for change at the personal, political, economic and social levels because religious beliefs create a framework for those values which provide the content and coherence required by human communities, cultures and societies (see: Moksnes & Melin, 2013; Witte & Van der Vyver, 1996; etc.). The potential of faith to influence individuals and society in general cannot be simply transferred to social reality and social practice. This focus demands a change of perspective of oneself, other people and reality, where faith is seen as a fundamental ontological requirement and epistemological tool, as well as a basis for building trust and nearness to others.

Having this in mind, this text will discuss the relevance of interfaith dialogue to stability at the local level in three war-affected countries of the former Yugoslavia. Without diminishing the significance of inter-religious dialogue, which is primarily focused on meetings and conversations between high representatives of various religious communities to achieve certain common goals (see the World Council of Churches), this paper will discuss the relevance of the dialogue of believers (laypersons). Two issues were considered of great importance while viewing the importance of the interfaith dialogue at local level: lack of trust and co-operation among believers of different faiths and an overwhelming presence of (negative) political rhetoric hindering collaboration and personal and societal growth. As a result, the author introduces a four-pillar model to interfaith dialogue, discussing its implications for positive change (at both personal and community levels) and as guiding principle fostering co-operation and activism. This four-pillar model was developed as a result of the empirical research conducted during Spring 2014 and supported by the Ecumenical Women's Initiative. Since the efforts of the Ecumenical Women's Initiative (EWI) have encouraged and promoted interfaith dialogue by civil society organizations (CSOs) and individuals, especially women believers in order to strengthen the positive role of women in the society, it was felt important to find out if these activities can present a model of good practice that should be further supported and developed. The model proposes and argues in favor of four pillars: (1) dialogue to know – which increases knowledge and diminishes prejudice and stereotypes; (2) dialogue to do –

which increases capacities (skills) and enhances civil activism; (3) dialogue to live together – which encourages inclusion, acceptance and understanding; and (4) dialogue to be – which leads to personal growth and positive change at a local level. The central argument is that if interfaith dialogue is to be successful in its task - to help people of different faiths relate to each other in a new and creative way as well to be the place of a historical encounter through which transformation occurs by the means of meeting others in a joint search for truth (*Panikkar, 1978, 63*) - then the four-pillar method should be at its core.

## I. Dialogue, faith, practice

Dialogue is *dialegomai* and *dialegesthai*, a meeting point between the logos and the language constituting the very essence of human existence and an epistemological tool and medium through which knowledge (truth) is known, defined, pre-contested and finalized (Matusov, 2011). Dialogue is central for understanding human existence. It is not only a means, but also an end in itself. Even more, dialogue is the focal point where being meets the action, is fulfilled by action: in this way, participants reveal themselves as well as discover the others (Bakhtin, 1973, 213). We learn this from Socrates too: dialogue is useful as a tool of (self)knowledge and right action. In Plato's works we can see the use of dialogue as a method that tears down the very assumption that "we know". The participant in Socrates' dialogue is forced to specify his own attitude and cope with its shortcomings (*aporias*). In this process the interlocutor actually learns that both his/her knowledge and speech are imperfect and broken, and learns to remain open and distinguish truth from illusion (See Plato's *The Symposium, Phaedo, Gorgias, Protagoras, etc.*)

In a joint document of Pontification Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Nations, "Dialogue and Proclamation", from 1991, the following three meanings of dialogue are mentioned: communication with reciprocity that leads to communion, the attitude of respect and friendship, and a positive and constructive relationship between different religions that leads to mutual understanding and enrichment, truth and freedom (Gioia, 1997, 611). These descriptions point to dialogue as a constitutive element of human nature, a learning tool and a tool for change at personal, inter-personal and wider-social levels. The main purpose of dialogue in this sense is to make us more aware of ourselves while remaining faithful to our core values; its aim is conversation, not conversion, mutual enrichment, truth and respect (Gioia, 1997, 611).

Christianity emphasizes that humanity is called to dialogue with God, having in mind that it is God who sets humankind free. Šagi-Bunić stresses that there is no dialogue without freedom and without mutual recognition of freedom. Dialogue is something to which Christian believers (and Roman Catholics in particular) are called to do by the Holy Spirit and through the Second Vatican Council<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, dialogue is an approach that recognizes others (in the spirit of co-existence) and actively involves others in cooperation, in the spirit of the realization of freedom given by God (Šagi-Bunić, 1993, 14-15; 1998, 111).

"The Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement" of the World Council of Churches from 2002 presents a view on the historical origins of interfaith dialogue in Christianity. Ariarajah here cites the Bible's books of Acts, the Epistles to the Corinthians 1 and 2 and the Epistle to the Romans and states that the apostle Paul provides theological guidelines for relations between Jews and gentiles, thus setting up the framework for a dialogue between faiths (*Ariarajah, 2002*). Although it can be

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<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, is remembered by historians as one of the most important and influential councils due to the number and diversity of its official members, expert theologians and observer delegates from all over the world as well as by the volume of its *acta* or teachings. Vatican II is also renowned for its development of a Catholic theology of (or towards other) religions. See more on: The Holy See – Archive, available at: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/)

said that the Bible does not speak explicitly about interfaith dialogue, we can cite several examples where the Greek word *dialeptomai* is used in the sense of reasoning and persuasion, meeting and communion with the representatives of other faiths. For instance, Acts 17:17 states, “so he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks” (or, similarly: 18:4 and 19:8-9, Acts 20:9, Acts 24:12, Hebrews 12:5). The four gospels present a number of descriptions of how Jesus sat down, spoke and explained different issues to people of different backgrounds (in particular in the encounter with the Samaritan Women, described in John 4). Interfaith dialogue may also be defined as an encounter of people of different faiths in an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance, requiring not a waiver of one’s own beliefs or conversion, but learning about the religious traditions of others. Jukić thus sees the aim of dialogue as a quest for communion that can help in overcoming the problems of modern extreme individualization, meaninglessness and indifference (1986, 237). In this sense, interfaith dialogue is a new and creative way of relating with people of different faiths as well as a historical encounter through which transformation occurs by means of meeting others in a joint search for truth (Panikkar, 1978, 63). Dialogue does not require syncretism, conversion or compromise, nor even the elimination of differences between the faiths involved; it offers a way by which the believers engaged can become both witnesses and servants of their own faiths. Therefore, Karl Lehmann says that dialogue is an authentic exposure of our own confession, and the radical otherness of the partner its precondition (Lehmann, 2009, 8).

*Apart from understanding the nature of the interfaith dialogue, what is important to see it work in practice is to view it as a useful tool for attaining knowledge about the different other, a means against prejudices and stereotypes, fear and aggression, an instrument for increasing participants’ capacities and skills for discussion and action based upon acceptance, understanding and inclusion, and an approach leading to personal growth and positive change at a local level.*

## **II. A model of dialogue based on “four pillars” and the Ecumenical Women’s Initiative**

The author is suggesting a model of dialogue based on “four pillars” for the arena of education as outlined by UNESCO in two publications, *Learning to Be* (1972) and *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996). The latter has been prepared by J. Delors, the former Chair of the UNESCO Commission on Education for the 21 Century (from 1993 to 1996) as a final report proposing “a renewed vision of learning”, where a paradigm of lifelong learning has developed four pillars underlying education and life (Tawil and Cougoureus, 2013, 3), namely: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together.

This approach has been proposed for this research, having in mind recent theories about learning that lay strong emphasis on dialogue. Namely, authors such as Vella, Siemens, Alexander, Dawes and Barnes<sup>2</sup> imply that dialogue is not only a method but the end result of learning. Namely, learners in dialogue are considered active subjects that work together to achieve set objectives. This paradigm is based upon the consideration that dialogue itself is an imperative of human existence (Rambachan, 1999, 56) where the very nature of the human being is seen as “being-in-dialogue”: the self and reality are inter-connected and in constant conversation (Swidler, 1990, vii).

The four pillars of UNESCO’s educational approach aim to contribute to social cohesion, intercultural, inter-ethnic and inter-national understanding and peaceful interchange that are “most lacking in our world today” as well as to “learning throughout life” (Delors, 1997, 86). They also

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<sup>2</sup> See: Vella, J. K. (2002), *Learning to listen, learning to teach: the power of dialogue in educating adults*. New York: Jossey-Bass; Siemens, G. (2005), “Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age”, *International journal of instructional technology and distance learning*, 2.1: [http://www.ingedewaard.net/papers/connectivism/2005\\_siemens\\_ALearningTheoryForTheDigitalAge.pdf](http://www.ingedewaard.net/papers/connectivism/2005_siemens_ALearningTheoryForTheDigitalAge.pdf); Alexander, R. (2004), *Towards Dialogic Teaching: Rethinking Classroom Talk*, Cambridge: Dialogos UK; Barnes, D. (1976), *From Communication to Curriculum*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

point to the link “between education and the world of work” (Nan-Zhao Z., 2013, 3-4). The proposed concept of learning through life is considered to be an integral and humanistic view of learning and a worthwhile “alternative to the dominant utilitarian and productivistic approach that dominated education and development discourse in the 1990s” (Tawil and Cougoureux, 2013, 10). And although there is a “lack of systematic follow-up on its impact, evidence suggests that the report has influenced education reform and curriculum development in a range of countries worldwide” (ibid).

Since interfaith dialogue involves extracurricular learning to different degrees and in different forms and in agreement with UNESCO’s recommendation that such learning is not only important within education, but also in other areas of society where learning-related activities are used and carried out (Delors et al., 1997, 16-17), the author has viewed it important to investigate the four pillars as a method for interfaith dialogue. This has been done through analyzing certain grassroots women’s projects supported by the Ecumenical Women’s Initiative. Such “re-contextualization” (Tawil and Cougoureux, 2013, 10) required additional defining of the four pillars of dialogue by the author where: (1) dialogue to know helps people to meet and establish relationships, increases knowledge and decrease prejudice and stereotypes; (2) dialogue to do increases the capacities (skills) of dialogue participants to see common values, visions and problems and ways of resolution, as well as empowering activism; (3) dialogue to live together encourage friendships, networking, inclusion, acceptance and understanding, as well as sensitivity for local needs; while (4) dialogue to be leads to personal growth and results in positive change at a broad level based upon understanding and acceptance of differences. The four-pillar model of dialogue can thus be seen as a tool to contribute to both global and national spheres, combining tradition and modernity, equality, inclusion, knowledge and action (Delors et al., 1997, 16-17).

Applying this model to interfaith dialogue, this article considers interfaith co-operation projects supported by the Ecumenical Women’s Initiative (EWI) in recent years in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. EWI is an organization that supports women’s rights, peace-building, reconciliation and interfaith dialogue, cooperation and networking (Tomasović, 2014). What makes EWI unique is that it supports such initiatives that have the potential to outgrow their initial frames and become creative spaces and media through which individuals participate in creating public policy (see: Kaldor et al., 2012, 2). This is done by promoting ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue and bottom-up approaches that contribute to creating trust and supporting a vibrant, active civil society (see: Putnam, 2000). Secondly, individuals are encouraged to spread activism by their own example. These activities in turn inspire faith organizations to support interfaith dialogue and play a more positive role in society (see: Moksnes and Melin, 2013). Finally, EWI insists on learning through action and networking between individuals and faith communities to make a positive impact to peace-building and reconciliation efforts within the communities in which they operate (EWI, 2014).

Based upon this and the author’s research findings (see below), the work of EWI can be characterized as promoting the four-pillar model of dialogue. By promoting tolerance, peaceful coexistence of individuals and groups of different faiths, as one of the fundamental postulates for the coexistence of different identities, EWI insists on activities that bring forth knowledge that is liberated of prejudice and founded upon the acceptance of and respect for the other, his/her personal dignity and human rights (Bižaca, 2009, 193). Could the activities supported by EWI, viewed through the four-pillar method be considered models of good practice? The European Union report on good practice and participatory citizenship uses the term “good practice” to imply access or method(s) that give good results and encourage further change. These actions or activities correspond to specific needs in the best possible way; their simplicity enables replication or copying at other levels of society. By the application of the principles of good practice, a certain activity becomes sensitive to the diversity of the environments within which it is implemented and the diversity of the participants who take

part in it. It also takes into account principles of equality, freedom, human rights, respect and non-violence, environmental awareness, etc. (see: Krek et al., 2012, 6). Therefore, interfaith dialogue activities supported by the EWI and based upon the four-pillar model can be models of a good practice if (a) they support sincere respect for human personality and freedom; (b) are focused on serving others, promoting human development and commitment to justice and peace (John Paul II in: Bižaca, 2009, 199); (c) encourage equal participation of all regardless of gender, faith, age and other differences; and (d) lead to positive change, empowerment and joint action for the benefit of the whole community.

### **III. The Research: “Interfaith Dialogue is (not) Necessary for Peace”**

The research “Interfaith Dialogue is (not) Necessary for Peace” was conducted from January to March 2014, with six civil society organizations (CSOs) - two from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Orašje and Grahovo), two from Serbia (Belgrade and Zemun) and two from Croatia (Osijek) engaged in interfaith dialogue from 2009 to 2012.

The CSOs were selected in accordance to the list of projects supported by EWI from 2007-2013 and the specified field of activities (ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue). The following associations and projects were selected:

1. The Inter-religious Council in BiH, Group for Women’s Committee for Inter-religious Cooperation (Orašje, Bosnia and Herzegovina) with the 2013 project “Interreligious Meetings and Parade of Traditional Costumes”
2. The Association of Women Citizens of Grahovo (Bosansko Grahovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) with their 2009 project “Interfaith Encounters and Pilgrimages”
3. The Center for Theological Research (Belgrade, Serbia) and its 2012 project “Conference of Women Theologians: Overcoming the Traditional Role of Women in Churches and Religious Communities of the Western Balkans”
4. MAH - Club of the Admirers of Time (Kairos) (Zemun, Serbia) with the 2009 project : “Forums: We are all part of Abraham’s/Ibrahim’s blessing”
5. The Community “Prayer and Word” (Osijek, Croatia) and their 2012 project “Interfaith Encounters and Prayer Meetings”
6. Agape – the Humanitarian Association of Evangelical Pentecostal Church in Croatia (Osijek, Croatia) and its 2012 project “Interfaith Dialogue of Youth Faith Leaders: Anticipating the Croatian Entry into the EU”

In the period of January and February, questionnaires were prepared and distributed to CSOs via e-mail with a request to pass them on to their members, project participants and local religious leaders. In this period, an itinerary of visits to the organizations was set up for March and April when focus groups and interviews were conducted, with the exception of the Osijek and the Community “Prayer and Word”, where only one questionnaire was completed due to their leader’s illness and no focus groups were held.

#### **3.1. Methodological framework of the research**

The main research question that this study addressed was whether interfaith dialogue at the local level can contribute to a positive approximation of different faith communities and enhance their cooperation.

## Definitions used:

- The term “faith” was used for determining one’s personal stance and acceptance of something as sacred or truthful based upon an intimate and conscience decision (Rebić, 2002, 1015);
- The term “dialogue” was used to determine a type of conversation that is focused on the recognition of similarities, differences and truths, an openness and willingness to listen and talk, and a desire to participate and respect the principle of equality (Bohn, 2009, 1-8);
- The term “interfaith dialogue” was used for the dialogue of believers within projects and activities carried out by the six selected organizations in their three states;
- The term “religion” was used for describing the system and institution of religious belief and practice;
- The term “interreligious dialogue” was used for the dialogue of high religious representatives and officials.

## Methods applied

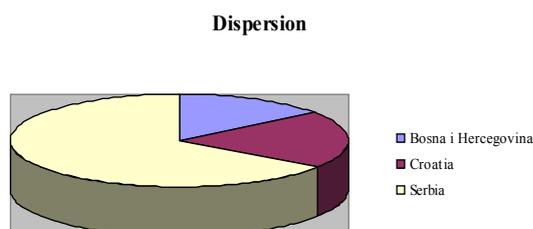
To provide responses to the research question, quantitative and qualitative methods were used, including questionnaires, focus groups and interviews, as well as analysis of the content. For that purpose, a questionnaire was created combining 11 open-ended and 13 closed questions. Closed questions used rankings and the Likert scale. The basic questionnaire was modified according to the three groups included in the study: CSO project members (‘Members’), CSO project participants (‘Participants’) and religious leaders (‘Leaders’).

Location		Questionnaires			Focus Groups		Interview
		Members	Participants	Leaders	Members	Participants	Leaders
1.	Orašje, BiH	2	8	2	2	1	1
2.	Grahovo, BiH	2	6	0	2	4	0
3.	Osijek (Agape), CRO	2	7	1	2	2	1
4.	Osijek (P&W), CRO	1	0	0	0	0	0
5.	Beograd, SRB	2	2	2	2	1	1
6.	Zemun, SRB	1	0	2	1	0	1
<b>Total:</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 1: CSOs involved in the research and methodology applied

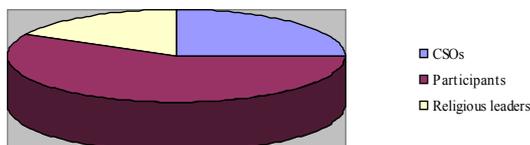
## Sample structure

Geographically, three areas/countries were covered: Bosna i Hercegovina with 20 participants taking part in the research followed by Croatia with 11 and Serbia with nine participants.



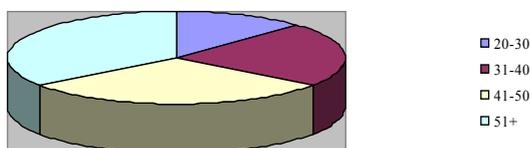
Out of 40 participants, ten were members of CSOs implementing project activities supported by the EWI, 23 were participants taking part in these activities in the three countries, while seven were religious leaders supporting and recommending the activities to their believers.

Sample structure



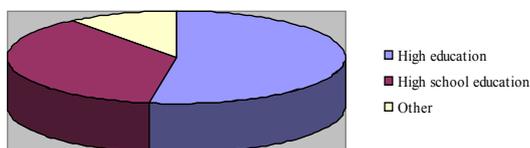
There were 25 female and 15 male participants, while the age dispersion was as follows: five participants were aged 20 to 30 years old, nine were 31 to 40 year of age, 12 were aged 41 to 50, while 14 were 51+ years old.

Age



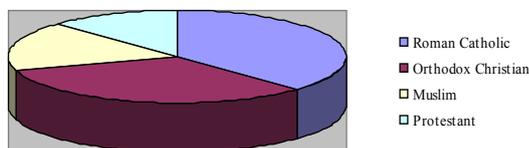
Regarding education, the majority of participants (20) had higher education (college or university degree), followed by 14 participants with high school degrees and four that stated they had “other” education but without explaining it further.

Education



Regarding religious affiliation, 39 out of 40 said they “believe” and only one participant stated that he/she is “agnostic”. 15 were Roman Catholics, 13 were Orthodox Christians, seven were Muslims and five were Protestants.

Religious affiliation



### 3.2. Questionnaire – structure and content

For the purposes of the research, three questionnaires were prepared: (1) a questionnaire for project implementers which contained 34 questions, five closed and 29 open-ended, (2) a questionnaire for participants in the projects containing 25 questions - three closed and 22 open-ended - and (3) a questionnaire for religious leaders with a total of 22 questions, three closed and 19 open-ended. A group of ten general questions was used in all questionnaires including: socio-demographic data

(name, gender, age), socio-cultural data (education, religious affiliation, ethnicity, data of association with and position in the CSO) and contact details.

Of the 50 questionnaires planned for data collection, 40 were returned, completed: the Women's Association of Orašje submitted 12, the Association of Women Citizens of Grahovo submitted eight, Agape from Osijek submitted 10, the Community "Prayer and Word" provided one, the Center for Theological Research from Belgrade gave six, and MAH from Zemun sent three. The reasons given for the lack of submission of the last ten questionnaires were "time passed since the project was implemented", "busyness", "inability to devote time to fill in the questionnaire", etc.

### 3.3. Presentation of the questionnaire responses

The question regarding evaluation of the respective projects by the respondents used a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest mark. Out of 40 respondents, 27 (67.5%) respondents evaluated their respective projects with the highest mark (5).

1. How do you evaluate the project you participated in?	1	2	3	4	5
a. Members	0	0	0	3	7
b. Participants	0	0	1	6	16
c. Leaders	0	0	0	3	4
<b>Total:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>

Table 2: Overall evaluation of interfaith dialogue projects by three groups surveyed

According to the questionnaire, most projects were initiated "because the CSO believes it is important to work on interfaith dialogue in our community" (36 respondents marked 5 and four marked 4). This means that inter-faith activities on the local level are organized due to the local CSO who see them as important, but also because of the local populace who regularly takes part in them. Compared with the rest of the answers, this question also indicates that (1) the CSOs involved in inter-faith dialogue on the local level are few and recognized for their activities; (2) religious communities are doubtful about the degree of support given to this activities; (3) EWI is the only institution providing funding for inter-faith activities; and (4) small funding is considered enough support for positive change, though greater funding might produce greater change.

2. Reasons for initiating the project	Roman Catholics					Orthodox Christ.					Muslims					Protestants					Other (Agnostic)				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
a. Because EWI funds these projects	1	2	2	1	9	0	0	0	1	7	5	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
b. Because the rel. community believes it is important to work on IF dialogue in our community	0	0	1	2	12	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1
c. Because funding for these projects is easy to get	0	2	5	8	0	0	0	8	4	1	0	1	1	1	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
d. Because religious communities in this area support interfaith activities	0	2	2	2	9	1	0	12	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
e. Because this CSO is the only one active in the field of interfaith dialogue	0	2	2	2	9	0	0	3	2	8	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0

Table 3: Breakdown of respondents' reasons for initiating their projects

A cross-table analysis confirms that respondents of different faiths respond similarly when asked about reasons for taking part in the project activities.

### CSO members and their answers to the questionnaire

For questions addressed to the project implementers (Members), the following answers were given:

State	BiH				Serbia			Croatia		
	Orašje (2)		Grahovo (2)		Beograd (2)		Zemun (1)	Osijek (A) (2)		Osijek (1)
CSOs and no. of members										
1. Project impact on participants	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4
Indicators:	“feedback from the participants”, “their active involvement”, “the project produced new initiatives and activities”, etc.									
2. Project impact on interfaith dialogue at the local level	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4
Indicators:	“A path to cooperation was found”, “neighbors are better connected”, “religious leaders began to focus on interfaith dialogue too”, etc.									
3. Project impact on society in general	4	2	2	4	4	3	3	4	3	4
Comments:	“Before there were no joint activities between people of different ethnicities, although there is still space for improvement”, “the impact on the local community was greater than on religious communities”, etc.									
4. Motivation to continue with similar activities in the future	“Because now the public expects it”, “because we want to improve the existing situation”, “because the youth are disunited and judge others on the basis of their elders’ beliefs”, etc.									

Table 4: Overview of CSO responses to questions regarding the impact of the project

### CSO members and event participants’ responses to the questionnaire

Asked about the reasons for being involved in the project, 12 out of 23 respondents (CSO members and event participants) agreed with this statement: “because I believe dialogue promotes the development of a democratic society”; this was followed in popularity by the answer “because I think it is important to work on interfaith dialogue in this community” with six responses; one responded “because with a small amount of money we can accomplish much”; another marked “because my religious community supports interfaith activities” and the last one choose “because my religious community recommended this to me”.

To the question “Does your religious community support activities related to interfaith dialogue and why”, 15 respondents answered positively (yes), three said no, while five said they did not know. The opportunity for better coexistence was emphasized as the most common reason given for why their religious community supports interfaith dialogue.

When asked “What does interfaith dialogue mean for you as a believer?”, the most common answer was “better coexistence with other people accompanied by respect and appreciation” (22), while only one person chose the answer: “something that is carried out only formally”.

To the question “Have you, by yourself or in collaboration with other communities, implemented similar projects/activities”, 12 respondents answered yes and nine answered no with two responses I don’t know.

To the question “Do you want to continue (in the future) to be involved in interfaith dialogue?”, all 23 respondents answered positively. Their reasons varied from personal growth, to a desire for better understanding of their own and other religions, etc.

“In which direction do you believe that interfaith dialogue should be developed in the future?” was the next question to which the following answers were given: “to involve more youth”, “greater focus should be put on practical skills such as nonviolent communication”, “we should focus more on the needs of the people in our local community”, etc.

To the question “Do you think that activities of interfaith dialogue are more often initiated and implemented by women believers?”, the majority of respondents (19) answered yes while only two responded with no and another two did not know. The reasons given were that women are more sensitive, easier to gather, bear with authorities more easily, etc.

For the question “Do you think it is important for women believers to be involved in the activities of interfaith dialogue?”, 19 respondents said yes, while four felt that men and women should be involved equally, and one person answered negatively, that women should not be involved in these activities.

A greater dispersion of responses was produced by the question, “Do you think that women’s involvement in activities of interfaith dialogue positively affects their position in religious communities?” 12 respondents answered yes and seven answered no. Three said they do not know and one person responded that positions should be equal for all.

### **Leaders’ responses to the questionnaire**

Religious leaders were mostly content with the activities carried out by local CSOs. Seven of them filled in the questionnaire: three Orthodox, two Catholic and two Muslim religious leaders.

To the question “Does your religious community support dialogue and why?”, they responded with the following free-form answers: “Because it is important to show a personal example what the Teacher demands of us!”, “The Serbian Orthodox Church supports all efforts that lead to dialogue, and are beneficial to all and not harming anyone”, “Religious leaders are not sufficiently open to this idea”.

To the question “In which sacred texts do you find the basis for your stance toward dialogue?”, such responses were received: “From the beginning ‘till the end, everything speaks about the One, the unity”, “the Bible, 2 Cor 13:11, Rom 12:10, Gal. 3:28 and 6:2, Rom 12:10...”, “the Qur’an, Surat *Al-Hujurat* and other places”.

In answer to the question “Do you think that the activities of interfaith dialogue are often initiated and implemented by women believers? Indicate why”, one of the answers given was that it is a “tendentious question”, while others wrote: “Because women are more affectionate and feel the pain of the separation better than men, especially after the war”, “It is natural for women to build and preserve communities”.

To the question “Do you believe that the involvement of women in interfaith dialogue activities affects their position in the religious communities and in what way?” such were their responses: “I think it is not necessary to ask a question in such a way!”, “In the Christian Orthodox and Catholic churches, the position of women is firmly defined, but their participation in dialogue cannot be the subject of condemnation”, “How much it influences their position depends on the women themselves and the type of activities.”

In relation to their future participation in interfaith dialogue, they responded that their faith communities as well as they themselves would like to be part of such activities because they “make a positive change”, “It is our duty as disciples of Christ”, “Experiences we have had so far have been very nice”, and “In accordance with my abilities”.

In answer to the question, “In what direction should interfaith dialogue go?”, leaders stressed interfaith meetings, theology lectures, cooperation between educational institutions, and also writing positively about the other side in the media.

### **3.4. Focus groups and interviews**

The aim for using this method was to meet the project implementers and project participants in order to gain a broader insight into their ideas about their projects and their realization, as well as

the context in which it was implemented. Focus groups were conducted in small groups of up to six subjects, while religious leaders were interviewed one-on-one. Content analysis was used for analyzing the data gathered. Conversations were guided by the researcher.

Structure of the questions: The questions were semi-structured and covered four general areas within which sub-questions were asked: 1. the meaning of interfaith dialogue for believers; 2. the meaning of interfaith dialogue for the religious communities and religious leaders; 3. the significance of interfaith dialogue for the status of women believers; and 4. the future of interfaith dialogue in their communities.

### **3.5. Presentation of the focus group responses**

The focus groups, much like the questionnaires, showed no major differences in the responses of participants based on religious affiliation.

**1. The meaning of interfaith dialogue for believers in the project implementation area.** This question discussed the reasons for initiating the project and the reasons for participating in interfaith dialogue. Participants mainly emphasized the need for joint meetings, especially after the war that caused mistrust and fear, as well as a need to organize activities for the population in a particular area to get to know each other (again). Regardless of the approach taken, all CSOs stressed the importance of inter-faith dialogue for the local communities and potential benefits that religious actors bring to partnerships including social networks and resources.

**2. The meaning of the interfaith dialogue for the religious community and religious leaders in the project implementation area.** Respondents pointed out that through the activities of interfaith dialogue they “learned about others”, “understood that there are similarities” and “could talk about their differences and that the differences can be understood”. However, how important the dialogue is to which religious community can be seen by the support given to the activities of interfaith dialogue. In Grahovo, it was emphasized that the Orthodox community is quite closed to the idea of interfaith dialogue, although it does not openly reject it. The experience of the Agape members was similar: they had troubles in motivating both Orthodox and Catholic Church members. Respondents in Zemun had the opinion that there is only declarative support for interfaith dialogue from the major churches (Orthodox and Roman Catholic). On the other hand, Orašje respondents shared the opinion that all religious communities were open to cooperation. Belgrade respondents had a similar experience: they were satisfied with the response of participants to their event.

**3. The meaning of interfaith dialogue for the status of women believers in the project implementation area.** Within this section, the question was raised whether women should be involved in interfaith dialogue and why. The respondents answered affirmatively pointing out that women are disregarded within their religious communities so that they have to take the initiative by themselves to change their position. “Women can agree more easily about the organization of projects” (according to a Roman Catholic, BiH); “Nothing but the gift of God can be bestowed; we have to fight for everything. A woman herself should set how she wants to be treated” (Muslim, BiH); “It seems that women do it naturally... and then we, men, follow” (Protestant, Croatia).

To the question whether there are changes within women believers themselves after participating in interfaith dialogue, responses were again positive: “Women see that they are not alone with their problems and solutions” (Orthodox, Serbia); “Encouraging each other they realize that they have gifts they can use to help others” (Protestant, Croatia); “In the previous system, women preserved faith in their own homes. Now we need to get out of our homes” (Catholic, BiH).

To the question whether women’s participation in interfaith dialogue affects the position of women in the faith community, the responses were less optimistic. Respondents said that in some

religious communities women are looked upon more positively (Protestant, Croatia), but the established male-female relations usually remain as they were before “because of the imposed internal church hierarchy” (Roman Catholic, BiH). Another added that “women have become more visible in society, which is sometimes a double-edged sword if they come from smaller communities” (Orthodox, Serbia).

**4. The future of interfaith dialogue in the project implementation area.** All the participants wanted to continue organizing or participating in interfaith dialogue. Some suggestions for future activities included: “sport and cultural charity activities”, “concerts of spiritual music”, “seminars on specific theological issues”, “activities for youth”, “activities to include the elderly, marginalized... to focus on the needs of our community”. The importance of continuing interfaith dialogue activities can be seen in how encouraging these events were to women “to get a perspective they did not have before” (Orthodox, Belgrade) and “new friendships that contribute to the creation of new initiatives” (Roman Catholic, Grahovo).

### **3.6. Presentation of the interview responses**

Religious leaders in the three communities were interviewed separately. Four religious leaders were interviewed: two Orthodox (from Belgrade and Orašje), one Catholic (Zemun) and one Muslim (Osijek). The interview followed questions 1-4 of the focus groups with sub-questions.

**1. The meaning of interfaith dialogue for believers in the project implementation area.** Religious leaders emphasized that the importance of interfaith dialogue is immense especially “in the sense of achieving better conditions for coexistence between all three nations” (Orthodox, Orašje), “because it enhances understanding, coexistence and peace in our land ravaged by war and distrust” (Orthodox, Belgrade),” in the sense of “living the religious teachings, the love of neighbor given to us through Jesus Christ.” (Catholic, Zemun), “because tolerance is the highest level of power, and the desire for revenge is the first sign of weakness” (Muslim, Osijek).

To the question, “What does interfaith dialogue mean for religious communities in particular?”, they said that this is more difficult to be accessed because “generally little is known about dialogue”. Respondents pointed out that when dialogue is mentioned, it usually refers to the relations between the Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, but less or not at all regarding the relations of these churches with other religious communities. Although interfaith dialogue is considered significant, it was viewed cautiously. As for the relative lack of openness of some religious communities regarding dialogue, a Roman Catholic from Zemun pointed out that dialogue initiatives are usually carried out “by individuals who see it as a part of God’s word”. The Muslim from Osijek said that minority religious communities are often more prone to dialogue than majority ones because they see it as a tool to improve their own position in society. All, however, emphasized the fact that the biggest obstacle to interfaith dialogue is not the lack of knowledge of each other, but ignorance related to one’s own religion.

**2. The meaning of the interfaith dialogue – sacred texts as a source for dialogue.** “The closest companions of Jesus Christ were women” said one leader, adding examples from the Bible (Orthodox, Orašje); “Islam as a religion of compassion. Muslims are obliged to respect all religions, be tolerant, selfless toward others” (Muslim, Osijek); “The Bible tells us that we are created in God’s image, we are called to the same communion, the communion of love ... This is testified by Jesus Christ, this is testified by his cross.” (Roman Catholic, Zemun).

**3. The meaning of interfaith dialogue for the status of women believers in the project implementation area:** “Through the cooperation of women, we see that coexistence and cooperation

are possible also on a larger scale”; “Women contribute to positive change, both in the religious community and among people who are unfortunately, due to a past events, now very far apart from each other” (Orthodox, Orašje); “Women in Islam are respected and protected. She is a believer, a wife, a mother, a sister, a pillar of the family and society!” (Muslim, Osijek); “There are interfaith activities in Belgrade, but it is hard to say what their impact is upon the Church... There are some positive changes in respect to how the woman is viewed today and a hundred years ago” (Orthodox, Belgrade).

**4. The future of interfaith dialogue in the project implementation area.** All respondents said they would be glad if these and similar initiatives continued. “I am lucky that I have in my parish an association called The Circle of Serbian Sisters, which is an extended arm of the parish and works on interfaith dialogue in the community” (Orthodox, Orašje); “In Belgrade, the Serbian Orthodox Church is dominant... Again, there are also other religious communities with whom cooperation is good and it should continue.” (Orthodox, Belgrade); “It’s very important to continue with interfaith dialogue because it teaches us about others and differences” (Roman Catholic, Zemun); “Islam is a religion of peace and promotes dialogue. We support any initiative of this type, and we will continue so in the future” (Muslim, Osijek).

#### IV. Findings

The analysis revealed the following things:

1. A high satisfaction with the interfaith projects and activities: 97,5% or 39 out of 40 respondents highlighted their personal satisfaction with the evaluated activities and projects of interfaith dialogue.
2. A high degree of active participation: all six CSOs stated they did not find it difficult to attract participants for their projects. An indicator of this statement is that almost all religious communities were represented in the activities. They also said that all participants were active during the activities, but more significantly, they remained connected and active even long after the project ended! Several new initiatives were launched by some of the participants who took part in the evaluated projects.
3. A positive perception of interfaith dialogue: as many as 95% of the respondents agreed that interfaith dialogue is useful because it means “better coexistence with others, understanding, appreciation and respect”.
4. Relative positive perception of the support faith communities give to the activities of interfaith dialogue: some 65% of respondents think their religious communities support activities of inter-religious dialogue, while 13% think the opposite. The rest (22%) are unsure whether their faith communities support interfaith dialogue or not. This perception correlates with the lack of openness on behalf of some faith communities for cooperation (point 5) and with the lack of clear message of support to the interfaith activities (point 6, second half of the answer).
5. Some religious communities are perceived by their believers and CSOs as less open to dialogue: respondents in Grahovo, Osijek and Zemun (a total of 27 out of 33 respondents, or 82%) said the Orthodox Church was the most closed to cooperation; respondents in Osijek stated the Catholic Church is also not so keen to cooperate (ten respondents, or 30%). Respondents in Orasje and Belgrade stated that they had no difficulty with any community in their area in regards to cooperation (13 or 43%).
6. Religious leaders who attended the interviews pointed out that they support cooperation

with civil society organizations and support activities of inter-religious dialogue. However, they said that interfaith dialogue is still viewed with caution on the higher decision-making levels of their faith communities for a variety of reasons (some theological and some political in nature). They also stressed that interfaith dialogue is continuing because of individuals within their communities who believe in dialogue and who support it personally.

7. The importance of continuity is also viewed high with greater focus on the needs of the local communities. All respondents said (100%) they would like to be part of similar activities in the future. This is a result of positive past experiences and the positive impact these activities had primarily for the believers/participants. They also proposed that more of these activities should joint activities related to the needs of the local community. Some examples: activities to help the poor or disadvantaged, education and empowering of women and other marginalized groups in society (long-term unemployed, minorities), activities for young believers and the elderly.

## V. Analysis

For this research, the author selected six CSOs from three countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia in order to analyze their activities supported by the Ecumenical Women's Initiative within the area of interfaith dialogue. Six projects of interfaith dialogue were consequently studied, separately and in comparison to each other, as well as in comparison to the four-pillar model, with an aim to check the applicability of the proposed model in practice, which is the innovation of this research.

The analysis has shown that four out of five CSOs<sup>3</sup> whose activities were compared and included in the analysis, combined all four elements of the four-pillar method (dialogue to know, dialogue to do, dialogue to live together and dialogue to be) while only one (the Center for Theological Research in Belgrade, Serbia) used only three out of four (dialogue to know, dialogue to live together and dialogue to be). The analysis has also shown that the use of the four-pillar method, in total or in a majority of its elements, has produced the outcomes desired by the CSOs.

	BiH		Serbia		Croatia
Four pillars of dialogue	Orašje	Grahovo	Beograd	Zemun	Osijek (A)
1. Dialogue to know	lectures by religious leaders	lectures by religious leaders	lectures by women theologians	lectures by women of faith & leaders	lectures by trainers
2. Dialogue to be together	meetings and discussions	meetings and discussions	meetings and discussions	meetings and discussions	meetings and discussions
3. Dialogue to do	festival, cooking together	shrines visit, travelling together	-	coffee in homes	lunches, visits to religious communities
4. Dialogue to be	friendships and joint activities	friendships and joint activities	friendships	friendships and joint activities	networking, new CSO to be established

Table 5: The four-pillar method and its application by the CSOs

As can be seen in Table 5, four of five CSOs effectively used the four-pillar method of dialogue, combining theoretical inputs (lectures and presentations by different experts) with meetings and

<sup>3</sup> Although six CSOs took part in the research by filling out questionnaires, only five took part in the focus groups and interviews and thus only these five were taken into account for the in-depth analysis of their use of the four-pillar method.

discussions between participants, fostering friendships, networking and practical joint activities for positive change on both personal and societal levels. The Center for Theological Research (Belgrade, Serbia) was the only CSOs that chose to hold its activity, a conference of women in theology, in Kosovo, in the city of Peć (Peja). The “Conference of Women Theologians: Overcoming the Traditional Role of Women in Churches and Religious Communities of the Western Balkans” showed its limitations in the use of the four-pillar method. Namely, only three out of four pillars were used during the three days of the event: dialogue to know, dialogue to be together and dialogue to be. Lack of dialogue to do, practical joint activities of the participants with additional gatherings to strengthen their relationships and provoke further change on a larger (community) level were absent. What was also absent was Kosovar Muslim women as conference participants, which puts into question the whole concept of the conference where there were no actual exchanges of opinions with Kosovo women. This was explained as being a product of negative politics and prejudice/fear of open cooperation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper was to discuss the relevance of the dialogue of believers (laypersons) viewed through the perspective of the past war in former Yugoslavia and the current lack of trust and cooperation between members of different groups as well as the overwhelming presence of (negative) political rhetoric hindering collaboration and personal and societal growth. The author applied a four-pillar model to interfaith dialogue, arguing that it enhances positive change at both personal and community levels and fosters cooperation and civil activism.

The four pillars were (implicitly) promoted by the EWI activities and increased knowledge, decreased prejudice and stereotypes, increased the capacities (skills) of CSO members and participants, empowered them for activism, encouraged inclusion, acceptance and understanding, as well as sensitivity for local needs, and led to personal growth which supports positive change at the local level. These activities support and require respect for differences and freedom; they promote human development and commitment to justice and peace, encourage equal participation of all regardless of gender, faith, age and other differences, and consequently lead to positive change, empowerment and joint action for greater benefit for the whole community.

The four-pillar model presented in this paper and promoted by the Ecumenical Women’s Initiative can be considered a good model of interfaith dialogue because it includes learning through dialogue as a prerequisite on at least two levels: as informative, procedural, declarative knowledge about the faiths of others involved in the dialogue, but most of all as an encounter or knowledge based on experience of being with the others, where intimacy and trust can grow and be transformative and inspiring for future action. Interfaith dialogue structured through the model of learning/knowing, doing/taking part, being together, and being the change enables participants not only to be successful in learning, but also in becoming more “responsible citizens, effective workers, caring community members, and life-long learners, in an increasingly interdependent world” (Nan-Zhao, 2013, 1).

The Ecumenical Women’s Initiative promotes, through the projects it funds, a model of interfaith dialogue that combines the personal encounter of believers, learning, experiencing other faiths and taking part in joint activities which (for some) becomes a platform for future networking and cooperation on actions for the benefit of the community as a whole. EWI also supports dialogue on theological themes, religious traditions and women’s human rights, through variety of events where skills necessary for quality interfaith dialogue are acquired apart from knowledge.

These findings have been confirmed by the research undertaken throughout the three months of Spring 2014 and pointed out the following five results: (1) a positive perception of the engagement and impact of interfaith dialogue was the primary initial motivator to engage across religious dif-

ference; (2) interfaith dialogue increased participants' knowledge about the religion of the others and increased clarity about their religion; (3) learning happened through experience and personal encounters with others that led to doing faith/dialogue: joint prayers, singing, visiting the shrines, cooking, participation at discussions, etc.; 4) although some faiths seem to be more prone to dialogue than others, in general, all religious communities view interfaith dialogue as a positive tool that can help restore broken relationship and foster cooperation for a better future; and (5) interfaith activities are more often initiated and coordinated by women and although this has no serious impact on their role within the community, it is viewed as positive effort that should be more acknowledged and more appreciated.

Analysis of the findings led the researcher to conclude that: (1) interfaith dialogue helps increase knowledge about other faiths and the different other and decreases prejudice and stereotypes; (2) through these activities, participants gained skills for dialogue, non-violent communication, open and active listening that fostered discussions and created an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding; (3) interfaith dialogue encourages inclusion: the religious other is a necessity for spiritual growth; and last, (4) participation led to personal growth, creating networks and alliances that bring positive change at a local level.

Finally, the study gives the following recommendations: (1) interfaith dialogue as a dialogue of laypersons in small, local communities should receive continuous support because it brings positive change on a personal as well as on a local level, enhancing cooperation across faiths and civil activism for the greater good of the whole community; (2) future initiatives should be supported to have all or a majority of the elements of the four-pillar model, which complement each other for the possible results; (3) women believers should continue be supported to lead and take part in such activities to support changes in their traditional roles within their faith communities; (4) faith communities should be induced to remain involved in interfaith activities having in mind the multiethnic and multifaith history, present and future of this region, and especially having in mind the role of the faith communities in the past war, and their current closeness to different (conservative, radical) political options.

Faith is an important factor of the development of democracy and civil society in the contemporary world. Inasmuch as a society is open to embrace different faiths on equal footing and support their open and inclusive dialogue, it can nurture a democratic culture within the faith communities, speeding up positive change and transition towards a more stable future.

## ANNEX

### Questionnaire 1

Interfaith dialogue is a simple concept: it means that people of different faiths talk about different issues and not just on one level (the highest/elite one), but also on all other levels, with a special emphasis on meetings of the laity. What makes this dialogue different as a method of meeting is that it is not and should not turn into a debate. In the dialogue, interlocutors listen and try to understand the other person's position, openly and as objectively as possible and with a sincere desire to find common points of connection and cooperation. Seen in this way, it is a precondition for peace-building in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in particular because it essentially contains the desire for co-existence and the common building of society. But is it really so? What is actually happening on the ground? Can activities that promote interfaith dialogue affect positive changes in relationships between people and in society?

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

*The aim of the questionnaire is to collect data for research on the significance of interfaith dialogue, which is carried out and supported by EWI from Omiš. The result of the study is an article that will be published by EWI, which may also be available to you. Your personal information is required in terms of simple data processing and will not be listed in the survey. Please answer all questions honestly and respectfully, and write your answers legibly.*

#### I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. First and last name			
2. Birth date and place, state			
3. Gender (circle the answer)	M	F	
4. Religious affiliation			
5. Nationality			
6. Education	a. SSE	b. UD	Other:
7. CSO / faith organization			
8. Your position			
9. Address, place, state			
10. Phone and e-mail	Phone:	e-mail:	

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

Please describe the activity supported by EWI that you have implemented to which this questionnaire refers.

1. Name of the activity and the implementer						
2. Activity's objective						
3. Place of implementation						
4. Time of implementation						
5. Target group						
6. Number of project participants						
7. Constitution of project participants						
8. Activities carried out within the project						
9. Your evaluation of the project (5 "excellent" - 1 "very poor")		5	4	3	2	1
10. Reasons for starting the project/activity (rate each answer; 1 is "least important" and 5 is "most important")						
a. Because EWI announced such a call		5	4	3	2	1
b. Because the faith community/CSO believes that it is important to work on interfaith dialogue in our community		5	4	3	2	1
c. Because funding for these projects/activities is easy to get		5	4	3	2	1
d. Because faith communities in this area support interfaith activities		5	4	3	2	1
e. Because this faith community/CSO is the only one active in the field of interfaith dialogue		5	4	3	2	1
11. Explain in your own words why you started this activity/project.						



## Questionnaire 2

Interfaith dialogue is a simple concept: it means that people of different faiths talk about different issues and not just on one level (the highest/elite one), but also on all other levels, with a special emphasis on meetings of the laity. What makes this dialogue different as a method of meeting is that it is not and should not turn into a debate. In the dialogue, interlocutors listen and try to understand the other person's position, openly and as objectively as possible and with a sincere desire to find common points of connection and cooperation. Seen in this way, it is a precondition for peace-building in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in particular because it essentially contains the desire for co-existence and the common building of society. But is it really so? What is actually happening on the ground? Can activities that promote interfaith dialogue affect positive changes in relationships between people and in society?

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

*Dear Sir/Madam,*

*The aim of the questionnaire is to collect data for research on the significance of interfaith dialogue, which is carried out and supported by EWI from Omiš. The result of the study is an article that will be published by EWI, which may also be available to you. Your personal information is required in terms of simple data processing and will not be listed in the survey. Please answer all questions honestly and respectfully, and write your answers legibly.*

#### I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. First and last name			
2. Birth date and place, state			
3. Gender (circle the answer)	M	F	
4. Religious affiliation			
5. Nationality			
6. Education	a. SSE	b. UD	Other:
7. CSO / faith community			
8. Your position			
9. Address, place, state			
10. Phone and e-mail	Phone:	e-mail:	

## II. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

*Please describe the activity supported by EWI that you participated in.*

1. Name of the association and activity/project that you participated in and date.					
2. Activity objective					
3. Can you name some of the activities and topics that were conducted in the project?					
4. Your evaluation of the project (5 "excellent" - 1 "very poor")					
	5	4	3	2	1
5. What do you think are the reasons for starting the project/activity by your association/organization? (rate each answer, where 1 is "least important" and 5 is "most important")					
a. Because EWI announced such a call	5	4	3	2	1
b. Because the religious community/association believes that it is important to work on interfaith dialogue in our community	5	4	3	2	1
c. Because funding for these activities is easy to get	5	4	3	2	1
d. Because religious communities in this area support interfaith activities	5	4	3	2	1
e. Because this community/association is the only one active in the field of interfaith dialogue	5	4	3	2	1
1. What are the reasons for your participation in this project/activity?					
a. Because my religious community recommended me to do so	5	4	3	2	1
b. Because I think it is important to work on an interfaith dialogue in this community	5	4	3	2	1
c. Because I believe that by dialogue, development of a democratic society can be achieved	5	4	3	2	1
d. Because my religious community supports the activities of interfaith dialogue	5	4	3	2	1
e. Because with a little amount of money you can achieve a lot	5	4	3	2	1

### III. IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE

7. Does your religious community support activities related to interfaith dialogue? To what extent and why?

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8. What does interfaith dialogue mean for you as a believer?

--

9. Have you by yourself or in collaboration with other communities already implemented similar projects / activities? If not, why? If yes, name some.

--

10. Do you want to be included (in the future) in interfaith dialogue? Explain why.

--

11. In which direction do you think that interfaith dialogue should be developed in the future?

--

12. Do you think that the activities of interfaith dialogue are more often initiated and implemented by women believers? Why?

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13. Do you think it is important for woman believers to be included in activities of interfaith dialogue? Why?

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14. Do you think that women's involvement in interfaith dialogue activities affects their position in religious communities? Why?

--

*Comment for the end?*

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*If you want to get the text of the research, please provide an e-mail address:*

THANK YOU!

### Questionnaire 3

Interfaith dialogue is a simple concept: it means that people of different faiths talk about different issues and not just on one level (the highest/elite one), but also on all other levels, with a special emphasis on meetings of the laity. What makes this dialogue different as a method of meeting is that it is not and should not turn into a debate. In the dialogue, interlocutors listen and try to understand the other person's position, openly and as objectively as possible and with a sincere desire to find common points of connection and cooperation. Seen in this way, it is a precondition for peace-building in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in particular because it essentially contains the desire for co-existence and the common building of society. But is it really so? What is actually happening on the ground? Can activities that promote interfaith dialogue affect positive changes in relationships between people and in society?

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

*The aim of the questionnaire is to collect data for research on the significance of interfaith dialogue, which is carried out and supported by EWI from Omiš. The result of the study is an article that will be published by EWI, which may also be available to you. Your personal information is required in terms of simple data processing and will not be listed in the survey. Please answer all questions honestly and respectfully, and write your answers legibly.*

#### I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. First and last name			
2. Birth date and place, state			
3. Gender (circle the answer)	M	F	
4. Religious affiliation			
5. Nationality			
6. Education	a. SSE	b. UD	Other:
7. Faith community / CSO			
8. Your position			
9. Address, place, state			
10. Phone and e-mail	Phone:	e-mail:	

## II. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

*Please provide your opinion about the activity, supported by EWI, in which representatives of your religious community participated.*

1. Your evaluation of the project (5 “excellent” - 1 “very poor”)	5	4	3	2	1
2. What do you think are the reasons for starting the project/activity by association/organization? (rate each answer, where 1 is “least important” and 5 is “most important”)					
a. Because EWI announced such a call	5	4	3	2	1
b. Because the faith community/CSO believes that it is important to work on interfaith dialogue in our community	5	4	3	2	1
c. Because funding for these projects/activities is easy to get	5	4	3	2	1
d. Because religious communities in this area support interfaith activities	5	4	3	2	1
e. Because this community/association is the only one active in the field of interfaith dialogue	5	4	3	2	1
2. What are the reasons for participation of representatives of your faith community in this project/activity?					
a. Because we recommended them to do it	5	4	3	2	1
b. Because our religious community believes it is important to work on interfaith dialogue in this area	5	4	3	2	1
c. Because it is useful for the image of our faith community to participate in these activities	5	4	3	2	1
d. Because all other faith communities support interfaith activities	5	4	3	2	1
e. Because implementers of the project are the only ones active in area of interfaith dialogue in our community	5	4	3	2	1
f. Because the members referred are open and interested in a dialogue	5	4	3	2	1
g. Because we believe that by dialogue, development of a democratic society can be achieved	5	4	3	2	1
h. Because with a little amount of money you can achieve a lot	5	4	3	2	1

### III. IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE

4. Does your religious community support activities related to interfaith dialogue? To what extent and why?
5. What does interfaith dialogue mean for you as a religious leader?
6. In which sacred text do you find a basis for interfaith dialogue?
7. Do you think that the activities of interfaith dialogue are more often initiated and implemented by women believers? Why is it so?
8. Do you think it is important for woman believers to be included in activities of interfaith dialogue? Why is it so?
9. Do you think that women's involvement in interfaith dialogue activities affects their position within the faith community? In what way?
10. Do you want to be included (in the future) in interfaith dialogue? Why?
11. In which direction do you think that interfaith dialogue should be developed in the future?
<i>Comment for the end?</i>

*If you want to get the text of the research, please provide an e-mail address:*

THANK YOU!

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