

ETHNIC DISTANCE IN MONTENEGRO

» Empirical research «

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Introduction

The issue of interethnic relations is a particularly sensitive issue in multinational environments. Montenegro is a multi-ethnic society with every fifth citizen belongs to a minority group. This problem is also particularly complex at the national plane due to the fact that at the historical plane there is serious discrepancy in terms of the dominant ethnic group. More specifically, the conflict is more political than ethnic and it particularly concerns Montenegrin and Serbian identities. This conflict, which concerns the self-definition and the identity of Montenegrins and Serbs, has been persistently repeating itself in the important historical periods, producing tensions at the political plane that destabilise Montenegrin society. Also, it must be borne in mind that exactly this very conflict constituted a key element of political divisions in recent Montenegrin history that led to referendum in 2006 and to the separation of Montenegro from the State Union with Serbia. Furthermore, one must keep in mind political developments in former Yugoslavia that were being accompanied by armed conflicts on ethnic grounds during the breakup of the country. They did not bypass Montenegro either, and they were particularly intense at the initial transition period, during the early '90-ies, when Montenegro followed the national matrix of Serbian identity. This caused a number of problems in terms of the relations between the two nations which still cannot be ignored. In Montenegro, these problems were reflected in the form of the conflict between the majority, i.e. Montenegrin-Serbian corpus, and all other ethnic groups, particularly Bosniaks and Muslims.

Understandably, after nearly 25 years of transition and turbulent developments in the political landscape of entire former Yugoslavia, including Montenegro, and considering the traces of the recent, but also distant past, the question of stability of a multinational society became largely dependent on inter-ethnic relations. One of the tasks of empirical social science is to use scientific instruments to monitor the relations between ethnic communities. That was exactly the aim of our research. The research is aimed at determining the level of inter-ethnic distancing in Montenegro, through proven, valid and verified measurement tools. Back in 2004 CEDEM conducted the first study of this kind, followed by the second one after the referendum - in 2007. As far as it is known, these have

been the only studies on ethnic distance in Montenegro, carried out in the period after the break-up of Yugoslavia. Thus, this study is useful in the sense that it leaves significant traces for the future which can show, from the point of view of long-term trends, to what extent have citizens become ethnically distanced in relation to one another in this historical period.

The survey was being conducted from 12th to 30th November 2013, and the data were being collected using a survey method. As in 2004 and 2007, the research was being carried out on a two-stage stratified sample with random selection of respondents within the enumeration areas totalling 790 respondents. The sample is representative for the whole of Montenegro, with a ‘reinforced’ total number of Albanians and Bosniaks, in order to achieve representative data on the attitudes of the members of these ethnic groups.

Ethnic Distance Research

Ethnic distance is only one form of social distance. Namely, ethnic distance is a social distance in a situation where reference social groups are ethnic communities. In a multi-ethnic society, ethnic distance is particularly important because its measurement can determine the level of social cohesion and the possibility of potential conflicts on the national basis. Measuring ethnic distance is not of recent date. As a research platform, the first measuring of ethnic distance was performed by the American sociologist Bogardus¹, while the concept and operational platform he suggested has essentially remained the same. Methodologically, the key idea of ethnic distance measurement system uses divalent questions, where each subsequent question constitutes greater degree of ‘closeness’ from the point of view of potential relationships between individuals belonging to different social (ethnic) groups. The examination of several factors was systematically conducted in a way that in several questions (7-9) the members of one social group express ‘closeness’ or ‘distance’ with/from the members of other social groups. The principle is that the respondents in the survey accept or reject social relationships with the members of other ethnic groups. In this way, all the elements of the research compile

¹Bogardus, Emory S. (1925b). Measuring Social Distances. *Journal of Applied Sociology*, 9, 299-308.

the unique (Bogardus) scale, which expresses cumulative relationship between different ethnic groups. In the original version, Bogardus scale contained 7 questions². Later on, many researchers modified Bogardus scale by introducing new or different elements. The modification of Bogardus scale was necessary because every society is culturally specific, i.e. social relations that define ‘closeness’ may be different for cultural reasons. In the territory of former Yugoslavia, ethnic distance research was first implemented by Rot and Havelka (1973)³, and they used a modified Bogardus scale consisting of the following elements:

1. To live permanently in my Republic;
2. To live in my neighbourhood, in the same building or street;
3. To hang out with him/her as a friend;
4. My sister (brother) to marry him/her;
5. Me to get married to her/him;
6. He/she to be my superior at work;
7. To have managerial or some other important position in my Republic.

Ethnic distance in Montenegro has been measured several times. The results of the research conducted in November 2013⁴, present the latest measurement of ethnic distance. For this purpose, we used a modified Bogardus’ scale of nine elements⁵:

1. To permanently live in my state;
2. To live in my neighbourhood, in the same building or street;

²(1) Close kinship by marriage, (2) membership in the club, (3) a neighbour in the street, (4) work in the same profession, (5) citizenship, (6) only as a visitor to the country, (7) expulsion from the country. Bogardus measured the distance of Americans toward four ethnic groups.

³Rot, N. and Havelka, N. (1973): National context and values of high school students, Institute of Psychology and Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade.

⁴Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, Ethnic distance in Montenegro, December 2013, Podgorica

⁵Kuzmanovic B was the first who applied this scale in Montenegro (2001), Ethnic distance in Djukanovic, B, Kuzmanovic B, Lazic, M, Besic, M, Nation and State, CID, Podgorica

3. To be my fellow colleague at work;
4. To be my superior at work;
5. To be a teacher to my children;
6. To associate with him/her and pay mutual visits;
7. Him or her to be appointed at a leading position in my country;
8. To be my in-law;
9. To be closely related through personal marriage ties or marriage of our children.

The same scale was applied in 2004 and 2007. In all three studies we used the same sample design. Therefore, all data obtained in this study are comparable with those of 2004, and 2007 thus allowing us to follow the trends of ethnic distance.

Ethnic distance measurement results in Montenegro

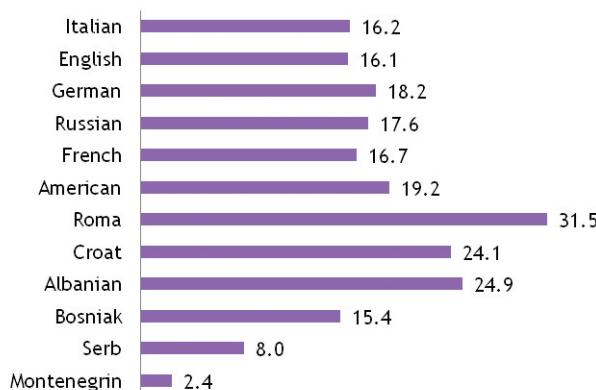
The first item measures the distance in relation to different ethnic groups that live in the same state (Figure 1). Minimum distance is, of course, from the Montenegrins who are the majority group in Montenegro. Hence, only 2 % of respondents within the total variance said they didn't want to live in a common state with the Montenegrins. However, when it comes to the Serbs, the distance by this factor increases to 6.5 %. Furthermore, 12.7% of all respondents in the sample do not want to live in the same state with the Bosniaks. The distance toward Albanians increases to 18.7%, while every fifth citizen of Montenegro would not want members of the Croatian ethnic group living with him/her in the same state. The distance greatly increases when it comes to the Roma; in fact, 22.5% of respondents do not want to live with the Roma in the same state. When it comes to foreign nations, the values are fairly consistent. Comparatively, the majority of respondents would not like Americans as their fellow citizens, but it should be noted that even here the value is lower than the distance from Roma, and about the same level of distance from the Croats and Albanians.

Figure 1 – To permanently live in my state %



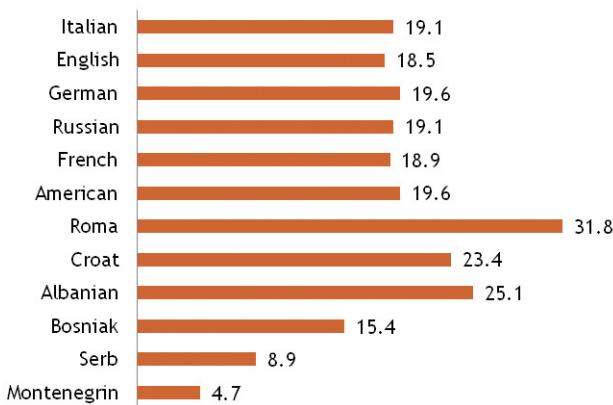
The second item concerning living in the neighbourhood, same building or street (Figure 2), shows slight increase in distance values. Significantly high distance value is measured with regards to the Roma; more accurately, almost every third citizen of Montenegro would not want to be a neighbour to the members of Roma ethnic community. It is also interesting that the distancing from Albanians and Croats differs with respect to the previous question. Specifically, in terms of the tolerance of co-existence in the neighbourhood, higher distance value was measured towards the Albanians rather than in relation to the Croats. When it comes to nations that do not live in Montenegro, the values are as in the previous case, uniformed and only slightly higher compared to the previous element. Comparatively, the greatest degree of distance is shown in relation to Americans.

Figure 2 – To live in my neighbourhood, in the same building or street %



The third factor relates to the examination of the attitudes about the members of different ethnic groups as co-workers. Measurement results show proportionally low distance to the Montenegrins and Serbs in this regard. However, when it comes to the Bosniaks, over 15% of respondents do not want the members of this group as co-workers, while a little less than $\frac{1}{4}$ expressed the distance from the Croats and over $\frac{1}{4}$ from Albanians. Over 31% of respondents show distance relation to Roma, while distance values to other nations that do not live in Montenegro is uniform and goes below 20%.

Figure 3 – To be my fellow colleague at work %



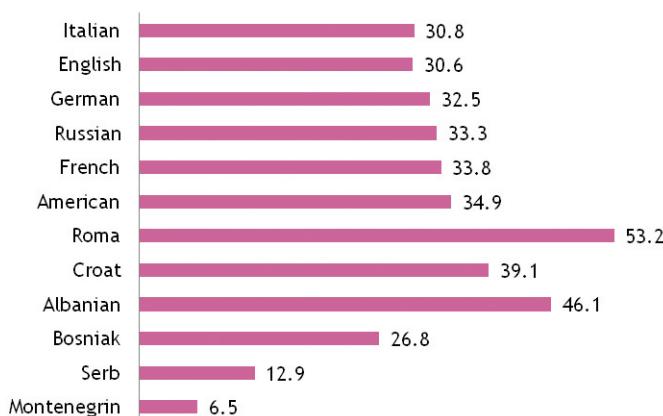
Next question measures the distance in relation to the attitude towards the members of different ethnic groups as superiors at work, where the distance, understandably, increases (Figure 4). Even the distance value for the largest ethnic group - Montenegrins, shows increases to 7.3%, while the distance from Serbs is 12.5%. Every fourth citizen of Montenegro does not want a member of the Bosniak ethnic group as his/her superior at work, while the measured distance from Croats exceeds 31%. Albanians as superiors are not wanted for more than 36.8% respondents, while this figure reaches 43.5% in relation to the Roma. It is interesting to see relatively high values in relation to the members of foreign ethnic groups. The attitudes are very uniform for all nations in this category, and range from 24.8% to 27%.

Figure 4 – To be my superior at work %



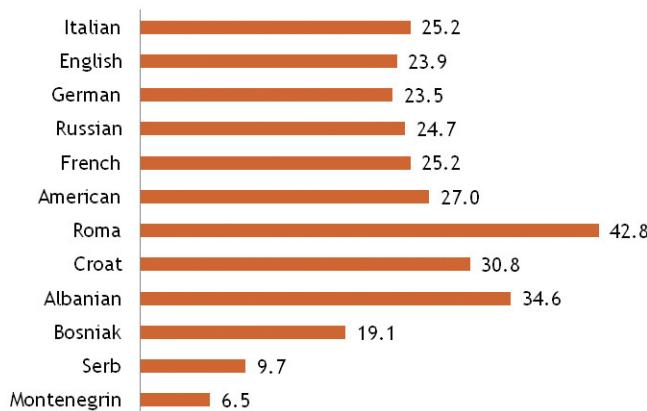
Measuring the distance in relation to the possibility for other nationals to educate respondents' children (Figure 5) indicates no significant changes in values in relation to Montenegrins and Serbs (where distance is even somewhat lower). This distance increases in relation to all other ethnic groups. Thus, almost 40% of respondents, at the level of the overall variance, do not want a Croat teaching his/her children, while the value in case of Albanians is at the worrying 46.1%. Over 53% express the distance in relation to the issue of having their children educated by a member of the Roma community. Distancing by this factor also increases in relation to the members of all ethnic groups that have their own national states, but even in that respect, the values still remain proportionally consistent, ranging from 30.6% to 34.9%.

Figure 5 – To teach my children %



Given the experience of the research from 2004 and 2007, it was expected, that the distancing in relation to socialising and visiting will be less pronounced than in the case of children education. However, it is interesting that the value in this case is, on average, even lower than in relation to the attitude towards the members of an ethnic group as »superiors at work« (Figure 6). This, in fact, tells a lot about the specificity of ethnic tolerance in traditional sense which characterizes the culture of Montenegrin society. In other words, ethnic tolerance is largely interpreted through direct social contact, and in this respect there is a relatively high level of ethnic tolerance. Thus, although the distancing on this issue in relation to the Montenegrins and Serbs is at a low level, every fifth respondent expressed the distance in social communication with Bosniaks. Distancing from Croats in this case is present with over 30% of respondents. The distance from Albanians is over 34%. As in previous cases, the greatest distance exists in relation to Roma people, and in terms of socialising and mutual visiting it is over 42%. As before, all values for foreign nations are relatively uniform, and at this point, they range between 23.5% and 27 %.

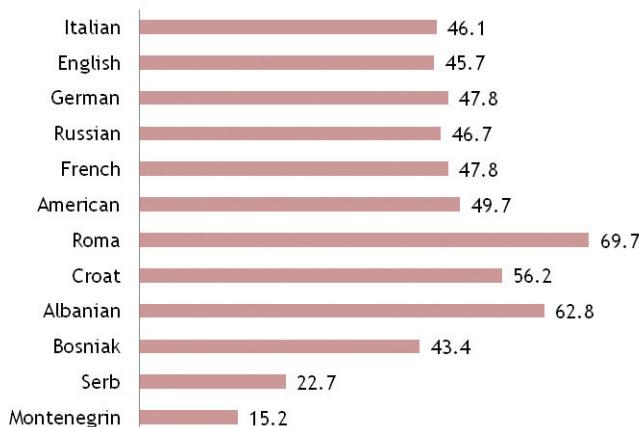
Figure 6 – To associate with him/her and pay mutual visits %



The following question is of political character in the narrow sense. Namely, it measures the distance in relation to the possibility for the members of different ethnic communities to have a leading position in the country (Figure 7). The distance in this respect has showed significant increase. Thus, even in comparison to the majority ethnic group (Montenegrins) every tenth respondent expresses the distance, and in relation to the Serbs

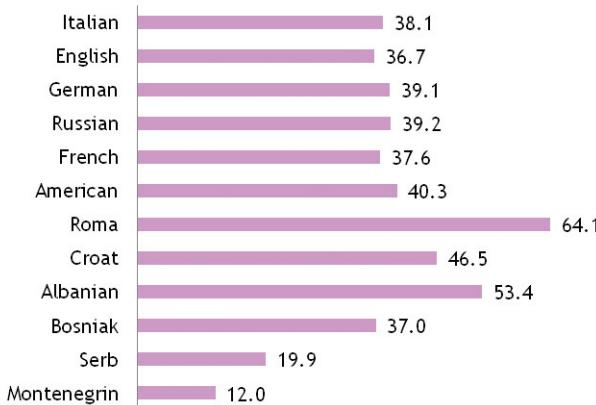
the distance value is almost 18%. Slightly less than 50% of the respondents expressed the distance to Croats and Albanians in this regard. In relation to Roma people, the distancing is at the level of 58.4%. In relation to the representatives of foreign nations, the distance is again uniform, but proportionally very prominent, ranging from 46.1% to 48%.

Figure 7 – To be appointed to leading position in my country %



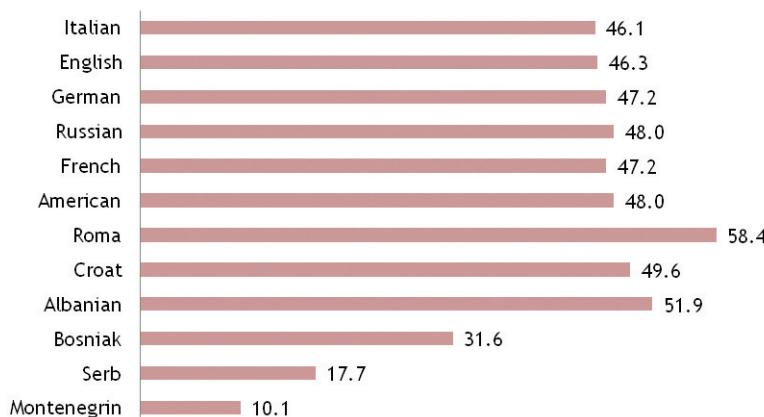
The question of establishing kinship with members of different nationalities is particularly sensitive because it involves particular level of closeness (Figure 8). However, it is interesting that even this distancing is, on average, lower than in relation to the possibility for the members of different groups to have a leading position in the country. To clarify, on average, Montenegrin citizens more readily accept for the members of different ethnic groups, they do not belong to, to become related to them, than to have a leading position in the country. This finding speaks a lot about the political character of Montenegrin society, and the sensitivity of the issue of ruling and governing the country. In terms of distancing through distant kinship, the distance value for Montenegrins is 12%, almost 20% in case of Serbs, 37% for Bosniaks, while the value in the cases of Croats and Albanians it reaches 46.5 % and 53.4 % respectively. Traditionally, the greatest degree of distance was measured in relation to Roma people (over 64 %). Again, under the same pattern, the values are relatively high and consistent in relation to the members of foreign nations, and range from 36.7 % to 40.3%.

Figure 8 – To be my in-law %



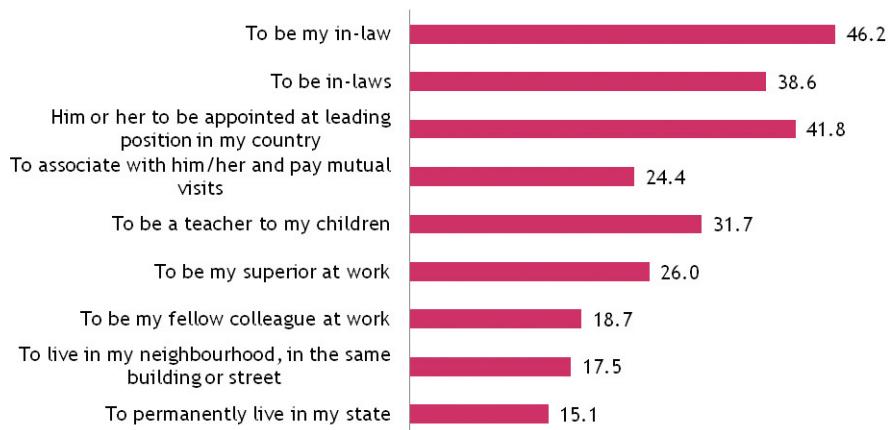
Finally, as expected and theoretically assumed, in the very process of scaling the distance, the highest levels of distance was measured in the case of the possibility of getting married with the members of different ethnic groups (Figure 9). The results indicate that over 15% of the total population would not want to get married to Montenegrins, while over 22% do not want this kind of relationship to Serbian nationals. When it comes to Bosniaks, the value distance goes to 43.4%, over 56% for Croats, and almost 63% for Albanians. Roma people are again the most distanced from and the value measured for them is almost 70%. Compared to the members of ethnic groups who do not live in Montenegro, the distance is also very prominent, ranging from 45.7% to 49.7%.

Figure 9 – To be in-laws %



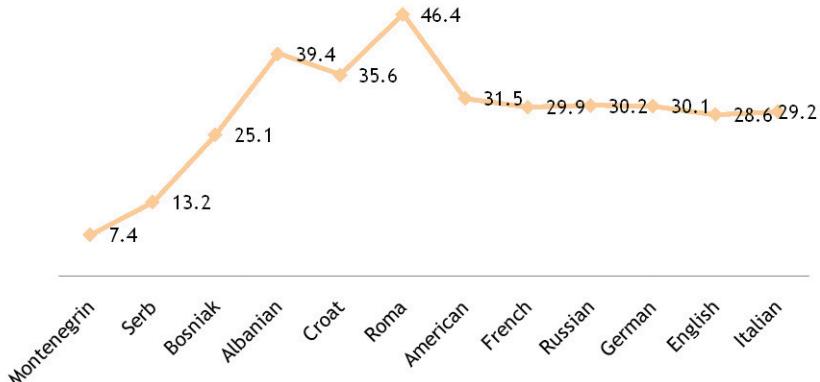
If we analyse the overall level of distance on all counts (Figure 10), it is clear that the highest level of distance exists in the case of kinship through marriage. However, just the second most important distance value exists in relation to the possibility for the members of other ethnic communities to have a leadership position in the country. The third is the distance related to marriage with distant relatives, and right behind it, and especially sensitive, is the issue of the education of children. The next in line of importance is to have the members of other nations as superiors at work, followed by the issue of mutual friendship and exchanging visits. Finally, the lowest level of distance was measured with regard to the situation of business associates who belong to other ethnic communities, being neighbours and the possibility of living in the same state.

Figure 10 – Overall distancing by items %



Observed by the very ethnic groups (Figure 11), the lowest level of the average distance exists toward the Montenegrins (7.4%), followed by the Serbs (13.2) and the Bosniaks (25.1%). Distancing in relation to the Croats is very high and goes beyond 35%, while the distance from Albanians is even higher and reaches nearly 40%. The average value of ethnic distance is most evident in relation to Roma people and it is over 46%. In relation to the members of the nations that do not live in Montenegro, firstly, it is interesting that the values are, on average, lower than in the case of distancing from Albanians and Croats, but are still relatively high and consistent, ranging from 28.6% in relation to the English, to 31.5% in relation to the Americans.

Figure 11 – Average distance in relation to the members of different ethnic groups %



All the data obtained through the measurement of ethnic distance can be analysed through the Table 1, which shows the percentage of the total variance in the level of the recorded distance from each individual ethnic group and in relation to each element (question) that measures the distance. The average values of distance for each ethnic group are given in the last column; all mean values for each item measuring the distance are provided in the last row.

Table 1 – Ethnic distance %

	To permanently live in my state	To live in my neighbourhood, in the same building, or	To be my fellow colleague at work	To be my superior at work	To be a teacher to my children	To associate with him/her and pay mutual visits	To be appointed at leading position in my country	To be in-laws	To be my in-law	TOTAL
Montenegrin	2,0	2,4	4,7	7,3	6,5	6,5	10,1	12,0	15,2	7,4
Serb	6,5	8,0	8,9	12,5	12,9	9,7	17,7	19,9	22,7	13,2
Bosniak	12,7	15,4	15,4	24,2	26,8	19,1	31,6	37,0	43,4	25,1
Albanian	18,7	24,9	25,1	36,8	46,1	34,6	51,9	53,4	62,8	39,4
Croat	19,9	24,1	23,4	31,1	39,1	30,8	49,6	46,5	56,2	35,6
Roma	22,5	31,5	31,8	43,5	53,2	42,8	58,4	64,1	69,7	46,4
American	18,9	19,2	19,6	26,1	34,9	27,0	48,0	40,3	49,7	31,5
French	15,3	16,7	18,9	27,0	33,8	25,2	47,2	37,6	47,8	29,9
Russian	16,8	17,6	19,1	26,7	33,3	24,7	48,0	39,2	46,7	30,2
German	16,5	18,2	19,6	26,6	32,5	23,5	47,2	39,1	47,8	30,1
English	15,2	16,1	18,5	24,8	30,6	23,9	46,3	36,7	45,7	28,6
Italian	15,7	16,2	19,1	25,4	30,8	25,2	46,1	38,1	46,1	29,2
Total	15,1	17,5	18,7	26,0	31,7	24,4	41,8	38,6	46,2	28,9

One of the aspects that was of particular interest were inter-national relationship, more precisely, interethnic distancing (Table 2). The measured values range from 0 (no distance) to 9 (the highest possible level of distancing). As it was presented in our previous researches, we found that, in relations between Montenegrins and Serbs, there is almost no distance. It is interesting that Albanians express low distance toward Montenegrins; however, Montenegrins express significantly high level of distancing toward the Albanians. Albanians, on the other hand, are at the very high level of distancing from the Serbs, but also show quite low level of distancing toward the Italians and Americans. Serbs seem to show very high level of distance from all entities, except in relation to Montenegrins. It is interesting that Bosniaks show significant level of distancing both from the Croats and the Roma. The main finding is that all national entities living in Montenegro show the highest distance in relation to Roma people. Therefore, from the aspect of ethnical distance, there is no doubt that Roma entity represents the most endangered ethnic group. Finally, it is interesting that Albanians show very low level of distance from the Bosniaks. However, on the other hand, Bosniaks show significantly higher level of distance from the Albanians.

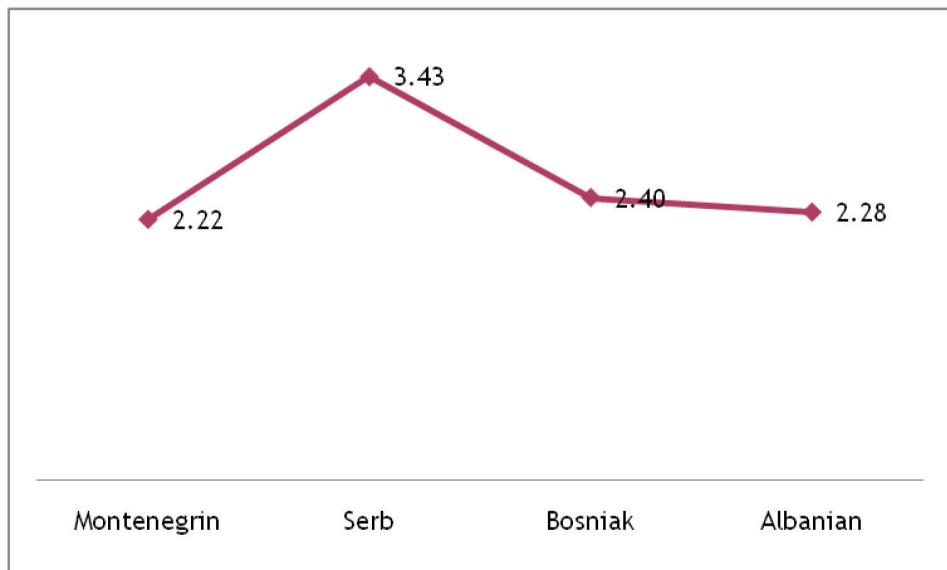
Table 2 - Interethnic distances (data are given by columns)⁶

	Montenegrin	Serb	Bosniak	Albanian
Montenegrins	-	0,85	1,48	0,58
Serbs	0,74	-	2,74	3,04
Bosniaks	2,29	3,97	-	1,44
Albanians	3,30	5,13	2,85	-
Croats	2,45	4,64	3,09	2,82
Roma	3,77	5,17	3,71	4,10
Americans	2,45	4,34	2,01	1,84
French	2,30	3,63	2,37	2,20
Russians	2,25	2,77	3,28	4,18
Germans	2,42	3,57	2,23	2,60
British	2,24	3,34	2,45	2,20
Italians	2,24	3,44	2,55	1,74

⁶ For example, Montenegrins demonstrate distance from the Serbs of 0.74 and the Serbs from the Montenegrins of 0,85. This is how all data should be read.

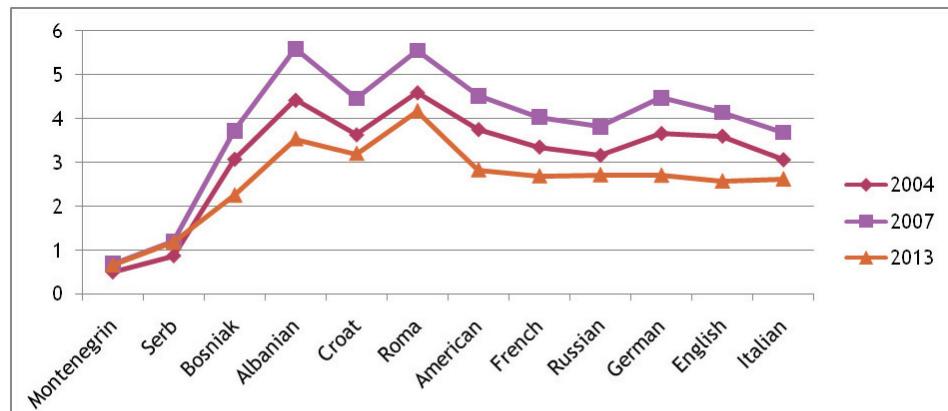
Graph 12 shows total ethnic intolerance by ethnic groups. The highest level of ethnic intolerance was measured for the members of Serbian nationality, while the members of other three biggest national entities in Montenegro are significantly more tolerant, with differences between them being almost negligible (differences are statistically irrelevant).

Graph 12 – Ethnic intolerance by national entities



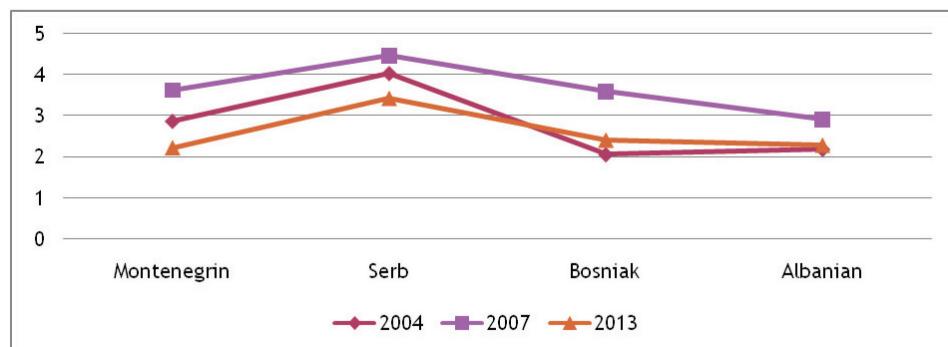
Finally, one of the key issues is the matter of trends. CEDEM conducted the first ethnic distance research in 2004, the second was done in 2007, thus, this research is the third in a row. Thus, we have the possibility to measure ethnic distance in relation to all groups from the aspect of trends and total distance. First, in terms of distancing trends with regard to different ethnic groups throughout different periods of time (Graph 13), the results indicate that ethnic distance in relation to Montenegrins and Serbs is, more or less, at the same level as in previous two researches. As regards other ethnic groups, distance is significantly lower compared to 2004 and 2013. Thus, the findings show positive trends.

Graph 13 – Ethnical distance in relation to ethnic entities - TREND



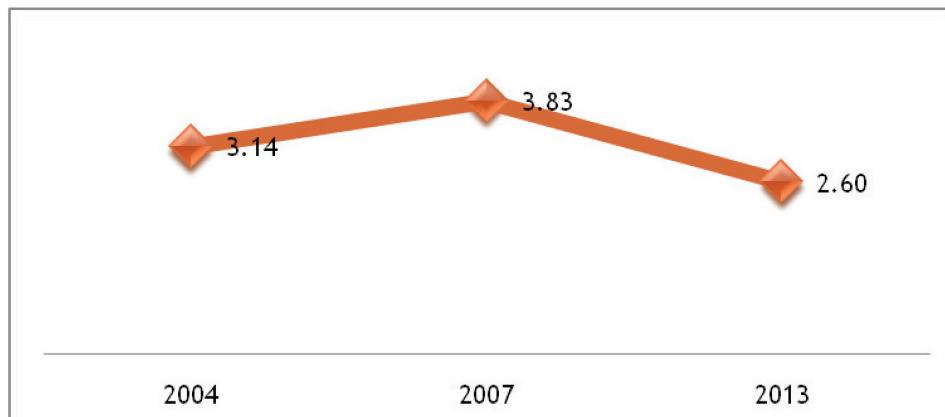
From the aspect of total distance throughout different periods of time (Graph 14), results indicate that Montenegrins and Serbs are significantly more tolerant in relation to 2004, and especially with regards to 2007. However, Bosniaks are more tolerant now in comparison to 2007, but still less tolerant in relation to 2004. Albanians are at the same level of ethnic distance as they used to be in 2004, but are significantly more tolerant with regards to 2007.

Graph 14 Total distancing of all ethnic groups - TREND



Finally, distance value can also be measured as the average value of all nine items for the whole society and observe the degree of distancing through time (Figure 15). Cumulative results clearly prove the above trends. Therefore, Montenegrin society is ethnically, significantly more tolerant than it used to be ten years ago, and particularly positive trend has been expressed in the last five years.

Graph 15 – Average value of total ethnic distance - TREND



Instead of conclusion

Results of measuring ethnic distance in 2013 unequivocally show that **Montenegrin society is more tolerant nowadays than ten years ago, especially in comparison to 2007**. This information is encouraging and indicates that with the lapse of time and with the action of relevant institutions and individuals ethnic relationships in Montenegro show upward trends. Also, the results show that extremely high values of ethnic distance recorded in 2007 were, in some way, the results of the violation of ethnic relations due to the referendum on Montenegrin independence, which had largely had ethnic matrix. Thus, the 2007 data represent ethnic reflex of Montenegrin political situation in the given moment.

Positive trends are especially important given that Montenegro, as well as in other EU member states and the region, faced negative economic trends that, according to all relevant historical interpretations and empirical researches, have negative influence on international relations. More precisely, as a rule, these trends increase the level of intolerance of dominant ethnic groups toward national minorities. According to our research, this process does not occur in Montenegro, which is really an encouraging fact, considering the fact that the end of economic crisis is not expected in the near future.

However, careful data analysis points out to certain problems which must not be neglected, regardless of generally positive trends. Firstly, **the level of ethnic distance in relation to the members of Roma population is worrying.** The data indicate that almost every second citizen of Montenegro shows very high distance from the Roma population. These data confirm that the Romani population is an especially endangered entity, and that they are marginalised in every area of social life. They are, simply, undesirable for the members of all other ethnic groups and this is especially important considering a great number of projects and investments aimed at the integration of Roma population in Montenegrin society at the equal basis. Thus, **the issue of Roma inclusion is still unsolved and will remain to be a serious challenge for Montenegrin institutions.**

Distancing in relation to Croats and Albanians is, also, at a very high level. Over 35% of total population expresses the distance toward Croats, and almost 40% show the distance toward Albanians, and again, regardless positive trends on the timeline, these data call for concern. It is evident that violated relations between majority ethnic groups on one hand, and Albanians and Croats, on the other, cannot be solved easily; hence, much more needs to be done towards the restoring of inter-national confidence and the strengthening of interethnic tolerance.

Ethnic distance of Montenegrin citizens towards ethnic groups who don't live in Montenegro, and who represent significant nations in Europe, together with the Americans, is at a relatively high level. In this case, the distance value is around 30%. In other words, almost **1/3 of Montenegrin population shows the distance in relation to foreign national groups.** These data actually show certain kind of tightness and xenophobia of Montenegrin society that, probably, has its own historical background. The proof of this is the fact that the degree of distancing in relation to "foreigners" is uniform; more precisely, almost the same level of distance is expressed towards the representatives of different national groups that don't live in Montenegro. Equally so, this can be a problem, due to the fact that we all live in the era of globalisation, internationalisation and the EU integrations. In other words, the representatives of these nations will relatively soon become co-citizens of Montenegrin people, when our country joins the EU. Also, this can constitute a kind of business barrier

since it is hard to imagine the development of Montenegrin economy without foreign investments which are mainly represented by those who belong to ‘foreign’ national groups.

Finally, one cannot ignore the comparison of ethnic distance with the affiliation to different ethnic entities. This approach unequivocally points to the finding that the **representatives of Serbian nation show significantly higher level of ethnic distancing in comparison to other ethnical groups** that traditionally live in Montenegro. According to the research, members of Montenegrin, Albanian and Bosniak ethnic groups are more tolerant than Serbs. From this point of view, Serbs demonstrate particularly high level of ethnic distance in relation to Albanians, but, also, to Bosniaks. On the other hand, Albanians and Bosniaks express significantly higher distance from Serbs than from Montenegrins. The reasoning behind this lies in a form of a traditional distance, but also, in the political conflict between the Serbs, on one hand and the Albanians, Bosniaks, on the other. The fact that the members of Serbian nation show significantly higher level of distance in relation to Americans than in case of other “foreign” nations, proves that this has more to do with political conflict rather than with pure ethnic intolerance. In other words, the **decrease in ethnic distance in Montenegro will greatly depend on the decrease in the distance between the Serbs and other nations, but, it will also depend on the decrease in the distance between others and the Serbs.** Thus, based on this empirical data research, one can reasonably assume that ethnic peace and stable international coexistence in multi-ethnic Montenegro depends mostly on the progress of relations in this area.

Miloš Bešić, Ph.D