

Oral History, Historical Dialogue, and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies

HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-07: Supporting Post-Conflict Democracy and Reconstruction

Potential Partner

Ilia State University (Georgia), through its Memory Studies Center in the Caucasus, seeks to join a prospective consortium as a work package (WP) partner addressing interconnected topics including, but not limited to, oral history, contested historical narratives, reconciliation practices, public scholarship, and democratic resilience.

Unit Lead

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Conceptual Framework and Relevance

The proposed contribution examines how competing interpretations of history shape conflict dynamics, exclusion, intergenerational transmission, and prospects for reconciliation. It transforms oral testimony from an archival output into a participatory infrastructure for historical dialogue: affected communities jointly document lived experiences, critically examine competing narratives, and co-design locally grounded pathways toward accountability, coexistence, and sustainable peace. The Georgian–Abkhaz and Georgian–Ossetian conflicts provide particularly relevant South Caucasus cases for comparison with other regional, European, and international post-conflict settings.

Research and Innovation Approach

- **Oral histories:** Record, transcribe, translate, and ethically curate life-course interviews with conflict-affected communities, IDPs and returnees, civic actors, educators, veterans, officials, and witnesses, while systematically ensuring the representation of women and marginalized groups.
- **Narrative and trajectory analysis:** Trace how historical interpretations, cultural sensibilities, inequalities, ethnic violence, and “biographical ruptures” interact before, during, and after conflict, while comparing contemporary standpoints with retrospective reassessments.
- **Historical-dialogue laboratories:** Bring testimonies and competing historiographies into facilitated, agonistic dialogue that acknowledges disagreement, counters competitive victimhood, and explores the conditions for empathy, recognition, and restorative practices without imposing artificial consensus.
- **Women as peacebuilders:** Document women’s often-unrecognized roles in mediation, care, survival, and civic engagement; involve women-led organisations as co-researchers; and translate their experiences into gender-responsive recommendations for peacebuilding and reconstruction.

Expected Outputs and Impact

The work package could deliver an oral-history collection; scholarly publications, including articles and/or monographs; a comparative dataset and analytical framework; community-based historical-dialogue pilots; guidance and toolkits for educators, media professionals, public administrators, and civil-society organisations; policy briefs and scenario-based recommendations; and training for facilitators. It would provide actionable evidence on reconciliation, accountability, social dialogue, conflict prevention, democratic inclusion, and intergenerational resilience, while generating reusable methods transferable across diverse post-conflict contexts.

Capacity

The team at the *Memory Studies Center* brings expertise in oral history, memory studies, historical sociology, contested narratives, critical peace education, and public scholarship. The Center recently completed the project *Transition to Georgian Independence: An Oral History (1985–1995)*, comprising a collection of 25 video interviews accompanied by transcripts and English translations. Curated by Harvard University's H.C. Fung Library, the archive documents the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia's independence, conflicts, and democratic transformation. It demonstrates the Center's end-to-end capacity, from fieldwork and interview processing to open-access archiving and curriculum development.

We seek research partners with expertise in peace and conflict studies, memory studies, transitional justice, and other relevant fields.

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