



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Workshop “Towards a Strategy for Reconciliation in the OSCE Area”**

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Panel 2: Historical Reconciliation – Lessons Learned and Best Practices

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INTRODUCTION

1. I will define what I mean by reconciliation; and then set out what I call the ten principles of successful reconciliation.
2. By "reconciliation" I mean the process of building long-term peace between former enemies through bilateral institutions across governments and societies. Reconciliation involves the development of friendship, trust, empathy and magnanimity (not necessarily forgiveness). As process, reconciliation is ongoing, lengthy, and non-linear, different in texture and intensity from the minimal definition of peaceful coexistence, or the absence of war. It assumes “security community” embraces both soft power and hard power elements.

THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF RECONCILIATION

These principles are based on the experience of Franco-German, German-Polish and German-Czech reconciliation in the OSCE area. They also apply to German-Israeli relations outside the OSCE area.

- **1.** Reconciliation does not suggest harmony, but rather contains and manages disagreement, conflict and contestation in a cooperative framework.
- **2.** Reconciliation is driven by a combination of moral and pragmatic motivations.
- **3.** Reconciliation hinges on the mutual recognition of the grievances at the heart of past conflict.
- **4.** Reconciliation involves multiple levels and multiple actors, not only governments but also societies and Non-Governmental Actors (NGOs), not only central governments but also regional and local entities. Democracy and open, porous societies speed up the process of reconciliation. It's important to understand the connections among all of these actors.
- **5.** Non-governmental actors, often in the victim country, usually take the first step, ahead of governments. Issues of timing and sequencing are important in building reconciliation.
- **6.** Reconciliation entails the building of governmental and societal institutions that confer equality of both rights and responsibilities, even if structural equality is absent.
- **7.** History, and especially difficult history, cannot be a mere footnote in the relationship, but rather must act as a constant companion to structure a fundamentally different relationship from the past.
- **8.** Reconciliation requires political leadership and vision that can negotiate the inevitable opposition to a new framework for interaction and partnership. Key is the development of personal relations between leaders.

- **9.** Reconciliation needs a regional organization to buttress bilateral partnerships, to prevent the two sides from ignoring one another and to reduce asymmetries between the parties through the equality of membership.
- **10.** Young people need to be drawn into relations of reconciliation, so that reconciliation can be perpetuated with generational change.

#### CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS

World War II was a unique event, but one can still learn lessons from the mechanisms Germany devised after 1949 to confront its past. Some of these mechanisms are in an infant stage in OSCE regions requiring reconciliation and should be nurtured. Others are absent and should be developed. There are 5 key recommendations:

- **1.** Pragmatic economic and political interests in reconciliation should be identified for each side.
- **2.** Multiple channels for dialogue at the governmental and societal levels should be created. They should be regularized and institutionalized, not ad hoc. Involvement of religious actors should be a priority.
- **3.** Political and societal leaders should be engaged in dialogue in third countries to learn from historical examples how personal relations can ease conflict.
- **4.** Youth exchanges, pupil exchanges and exchanges of young professionals should be promoted to understand differences.

- **5.** Commissions of historians, textbook commissions, and historical institutes should be established to identify mutual grievances and share narratives about the past.