

**TWO OPPOSITE VIEWPOINTS:**

# **OVERVIEW ON HOW CITIZENS SEE KOSOVAR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH SERBIA AND WITH ALBANIA?**





**KCSS**  
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

## Authors:

Dea Fetiu, Mentor Vrajolli

© All rights reserved to Kosovar Center for Security Studies. Law on Copyright and Related Rights protects rights and intellectual property. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any forms or by any means, electronic, mechanical or other, without the permission in writing from the publisher. Commercial use of all media published by the Kosovar Center for Security Studies (KCSS) is not permitted without the written consent of the KCSS. Please contact: [info@qkss.org](mailto:info@qkss.org) or +383 38 221 420.

The data presented in the report derive from the Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) survey. WBSB is a new regional initiative launched by KCSS in 2020, implemented in cooperation with the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) in Serbia and Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance (CSDG) in Albania, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). WBSB serves as an instrument to measure public perceptions in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia on different security-related issues. The findings demonstrate how citizens perceive or are informed about the issues presented in this report. As such, the views presented in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the KCSS, BCSP, CSDG or NED

Supported by:



Consortium led by:



**TWO OPPOSITE VIEWPOINTS:**

**OVERVIEW ON HOW CITIZENS SEE  
KOSOVO BILATERAL RELATIONS  
WITH SERBIA AND WITH ALBANIA?**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	1
Methodology .....	3
1. The overall perception of Kosovo citizens towards Serbia, Albania, and the respective citizens.....	4
2. Citizens Perceptions on the Dialogue and Bilateral Relations between Kosovo and Serbia .....	9
3. Citizens Perceptions on Bilateral Relations between Kosovo and Albania .....	17
Key takeaways .....	20



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the perception of Kosovar citizens on bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and Kosovo and Albania. The report is divided into three chapters: elaborating the findings on citizens' perceptions regarding ethnic distancing with the two countries, bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and bilateral relations between Kosovo and Albania.

Kosovar citizens perceive Albania as the biggest partner and as the country with the highest positive influence in Kosovo from the countries of the region. On the other hand, Serbia is perceived as the least friendly country for Kosovo among the Western Balkan countries, as the vast majority of the respondents rate Serbia's influence towards Kosovo as negative.

Regarding the citizen-to-citizen relations, Kosovar respondents have expressed positive attitudes to build co-living, co-working, and to develop interpersonal trust with Albania citizens. Contrary to it, the attitude of respondents seems highly negative regarding forming these relations with Serbia citizens. The respondents express reluctance, especially in developing interpersonal trust with Serbia citizens, specifically to form family relations with them.

Concerning bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia, citizens express high support for the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. However, even though supportive, citizens tend to be very skeptical on grounds of rating the dialogue's success, as most of them perceive the dialogue to not have been successful in improving bilateral relations until now. Moreover, citizens seem to be highly pessimistic that a final agreement will materialize soon; however, they believe that there will be peace between the two countries in the near future. Respondents also believe that Kosovo will not suffer serious consequences if an agreement fails to be reached, and even though they strongly support the dialogue, they think that Kosovo's development is possible without a positive outcome from this process.

Surprisingly, 96 percent of citizens note that they have not experienced personal benefits from the dialogue process, and the vast majority of them rate its transparency as very low. Additionally, more than half of them are not aware of Kosovo's goal in the dialogue. Despite the lack of knowledge, they believe in the current government's position in the dialogue process and think that it is oriented towards a successful dialogue and normalization of relations between the two countries.

As per the dialogue solutions, Kosovo citizens rate mutual recognition as the best potential outcome from the dialogue, and the key solution to normalize the relations between the two countries. Regarding areas of cooperation, respondents' rate economic and political cooperation as the most productive one towards better bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia. They believe that the international community is contributing the most to this cause, while local political leaders are the most harmful actors. Within this international community, Kosovo citizens are not very satisfied with the EU facilitation of the dialogue and would prefer a bigger presence of the US in the facilitation process.

When asked if Albania should be involved in the internal politics of Kosovo, a little more than half of the citizens would not prefer such a case. Contrastingly, they vastly believe that Albania should have an active role when it comes to Kosovo's relations with other countries in the region. On this note, most of the respondents believe that Kosovo and Albania should coordinate and unify their foreign policy.

Kosovo citizens agree that Kosovo and Albania should further develop their relations, and they rate both governments as responsible for the economic barriers between the two countries. They also agree that border checkpoints between the two countries should be removed, and more than half of them express support for the idea of a unification of Kosovo and Albania.



## METHODOLOGY

The analysis of this report is based on the results of the survey through face-to-face interviews with randomly selected respondents throughout Kosovo. The field research was conducted between 17-25 of September 2021. The questionnaire for the survey primarily consisted of closed-ended questions in the form of a five-point Likert Scale, followed by several open-ended questions without predefined options. The national sample for the survey featured 1,197 households. The first stage of drawing the sample was based in the administrative divisions of the regional directorates of the Kosovo Police, including the eight districts: Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica South, Mitrovica North, Peja, Prishtina and Prizren. The number of surveys conducted in each district was drawn in proportion to the number of populations for each municipality within the respective districts based on Kosovo's 2011 population census. Within the municipalities, the sample was stratified into urban/rural sample based on the number of households in each area. Random patterns were used to select the households within the sampled locations, while the randomization within the households was based on the next adult birthday method. The data were verified in real time through field coordinators that visited a predefined sample of households after the completion of the survey in the respective households, through telephone contact with all respondents to confirm the adherence to the methodology and some of the key answers and by analyzing the logical consistency of the answers when processing and analyzing the data. The margin of error is 3 percent with a confidence interval of 95 percent



# 1. THE OVERALL PERCEPTION OF KOSOVO CITIZENS TOWARDS SERBIA, ALBANIA, AND THE RESPECTIVE CITIZENS

Cross-border cooperation remains one of the most important segments of Kosovo's foreign policy. Kosovo Government, as part of the Berlin process and the road to EU integration, is attempting to play a constructive role, and dedicating efforts, to further improve relations with its neighbors. However, this process remains highly challenging considering that many agreements have not reached the planned efficiency.

Evidently, Serbia continues to remain the most challenging neighboring country of Kosovo when it comes to developing positive bilateral relations. Although Kosovo and Serbia are under the EU facilitation negotiations table for a decade now, the stagnation and the setbacks of the dialogue process seem to hinder building functional relations between the two countries. Lack of tangible success in the dialogue has shifted general opinion away from optimism and shapes a skeptical attitude towards a successful future of this process as well as the normalization of relations. Moreover, Serbia's unwillingness to recognize Kosovo's independence and the hesitancy to treat it as a sovereign country only adds on to the difficulty of the process of establishing efficient bilateral relations.

Contrary to Serbia, the relationships of Kosovo with other neighboring countries tend to be highly positive and with a constant improvement trajectory. The key factor for this is that first and foremost, the other neighboring countries do not have to go through dealing with the past process, which seems to be particularly hard for Serbia and Kosovo. Accordingly, the other neighboring countries are seen as promoters of peace and stability in the region and are dedicated to strengthening regional cooperation as part of their foreign policies, towards a mutual goal- becoming members of the EU. This is also the case with Albania, where the perception on good neighboring relations seems to be the most positive compared to any other country in the region. However, this is also largely impacted by ethnic factors. Henceforth, the potential of Albania to influence Kosovo and its citizens seems immense.



Thus, according to WBSB results, Albania and Serbia remain two of the most influential neighboring countries of Kosovo, despite for the very opposite reasons.

Conform to this, the WBSB survey also exposes the polarization that exists among Kosovar citizens towards Serb citizens, as they tend to play down to some extent Serbian factor's importance compared to the Albanian one.





However, this could generally be interpreted also as a protesting note against the hostile attitude that the Serbian state has towards Kosovo.<sup>1</sup>

**TABLE 1** WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE INFLUENCE OF FOLLOWING COUNTRY TOWARDS KOSOVO

HOW DO YOU CONSIDER THE INFLUENCE OF FOLLOWING COUNTRY TOWARDS KOSOVO?		Positive	Negative	Neutral/Don't Know
	Serbia	4%	90%	6%
	Albania	77%	10%	13%

**TABLE 2** WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ALBANIANS AND SERBS FOR THE BALKANS

DO YOU THINK THAT ALBANIANS AND SERBS ARE IMPORTANT FACTORS IN THE BALKANS?		Yes	To some extent	No	Don't know/ No opinion
	Serbs	49%	22%	26%	3%
	Albanians	75%	16%	7%	2%

Taking these perceptions into account, it is obvious that the existing tensions in the state level between Kosovo and Serbia contribute to widening the ethnic distancing gap between the respective citizens, something which is not the case between Kosovo and Albania where the ability to inter-communicate without any barriers between respective citizens over the past two decades have been unlimited.

<sup>1</sup> Focus group with WBSB field researchers, 2021

This becomes clearer while analyzing the WBSB diversity indicators. According to the results of these indicators, in contrast from their attitudes toward Albania citizens, Kosovar respondents seem to have no major interest in co-living; working together; or developing interpersonal trust relations with Serbian citizens.

**TABLE 3 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON CO-LIVING RELATIONS BETWEEN KOSOVO CITIZENS AND SERBIA OR ALBANIA CITIZENS**

<b>WOULD YOU ACCEPT A CITIZEN FROM SERBIA:</b>	Yes	No	Don't know/ no opinion
<b>to Live in Kosovo?</b>	47%	52%	1%
<b>to Live in your neighborhood/street/ apartment?</b>	39%	60%	1%
<b>WOULD YOU ACCEPT A CITIZEN FROM ALBANIA:</b>	Yes	No	Don't know/ no opinion
<b>to Live in Kosovo?</b>	92%	7%	1%
<b>to Live in your neighborhood/street/ apartment?</b>	92%	7%	1%

**TABLE 4 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON CO-WORKING RELATIONS BETWEEN KOSOVO CITIZENS AND SERBIA OR ALBANIA CITIZENS**

<b>WOULD YOU ACCEPT A CITIZEN FROM SERBIA:</b>	Yes	No	Don't know/ no opinion
<b>to work together as colleagues?</b>	44%	55%	1%
<b>to be your supervisor?</b>	28%	71%	1%
<b>to serve as public official?</b>	33%	66%	1%
<b>WOULD YOU ACCEPT A CITIZEN FROM ALBANIA:</b>	Yes	No	Don't know/ no opinion
<b>to work together as colleagues?</b>	94%	5%	1%
<b>to be your supervisor?</b>	89%	10%	1%
<b>to serve as public official?</b>	90%	9%	1%

**TABLE 5** WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON DEVELOPING INTERPERSONAL TRUST RELATIONS BETWEEN KOSOVO CITIZENS AND SERBIA OR ALBANIA CITIZENS

WOULD YOU ACCEPT A CITIZEN FROM SERBIA:	Yes	No	Don't know/ no opinion
to be your friend?	27%	72%	1%
to marry a family member?	10%	89%	1%
to educate/teach your children?	20%	79%	1%
WOULD YOU ACCEPT A CITIZEN FROM ALBANIA CITIZENS:	Yes	No	Don't know/ no opinion
to be your friend?	93%	6%	1%
to marry a family member?	76%	22%	2%
to educate/teach your children?	92%	7%	1%

Nevertheless, despite the results above at first glance indicating that Kosovo's bilateral relations with Serbia and Albania respectively seem to be considerably straight forward, the results of WBSB in both cases note the presence of many nuances too. For more, in Serbia's case, although bilateral relations continue to remain stuck into the turbulent past, the ongoing EU-facilitated dialogue which is taking place for more than a decade remains an important agent which keeps hopes alive that the key for unlocking the bilateral disputes is still on its way.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the elaboration of this crucially important process from the lens of citizens' views is a highly important tool not only to measure the current state in which these bilateral relations are, but also to serve as an advocacy tool which pushes Kosovo's governmental institutions to be proactive as well as accountable towards these processes.

On the other hand, in Albania's case, although cooperation and inter-cultural

<sup>2</sup> Focus group with stakeholders, 2021

exchange between citizens in both countries have advanced over the past years, inter-state cooperation at the political and economic level has not necessarily followed the same dynamics. Hence, identifying shortcomings that are affecting the joint cooperation at the political and economic level through citizens' perspectives, and advocating in both respective Governments to address those challenges, remains of utmost importance for the citizens of both countries.

In the following section of the report, the citizens' perceptions on existing bilateral relations between Kosovar Government and Serbia on the one hand, and of Kosovo with Albania on the other, focusing on key specificities that surround the respective contexts.



## 2. CITIZENS PERCEPTIONS ON THE DIALOGUE AND BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA

Aside from measuring the relations between citizens of Kosovo and citizens of Serbia, one of the goals of the WBSB has been to measure the perceptions on bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia, with a special emphasis on the ongoing dialogue between the respective governments. The focus of this section is to elaborate citizens perception on some key elements related to dialogue process such as: their understanding, support, and so-far satisfaction with this process; their optimism regarding the conclusion of this process; their perceptions towards possible consequences if the process fails regarding the integration processes and development; their support towards governmental dialogue platform; and their view towards international dialogue facilitators.

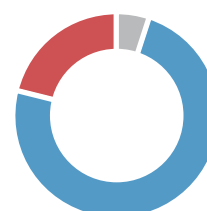
Overall, the survey results show that Kosovo citizens have mixed feelings when it comes to the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. This seems inevitable, taking into consideration that until now this process has been difficult and faced major stagnations and setbacks, including the inconsistency in implementation of agreements, and the very limited concrete outcomes.

The WBSB results show that Kosovo citizens tend to understand the importance of the dialogue. This can clearly be seen by the fact that a vast majority of them express support for this process. Nevertheless, they immediately share their doubts on how this process progressed until now and to what extent it produced concrete outcomes. About 85 percent of the respondents questioned the transparency of the dialogue process, and 94 percent of them think this decade-long process has not provided any tangible benefits to them. Moreover, almost 80 percent of the respondents think that dialogue did not improve the relationships between Kosovo and Serbia, and among them are also 11 percent who think that the relationship between the two countries has only deteriorated since the dialogue started.

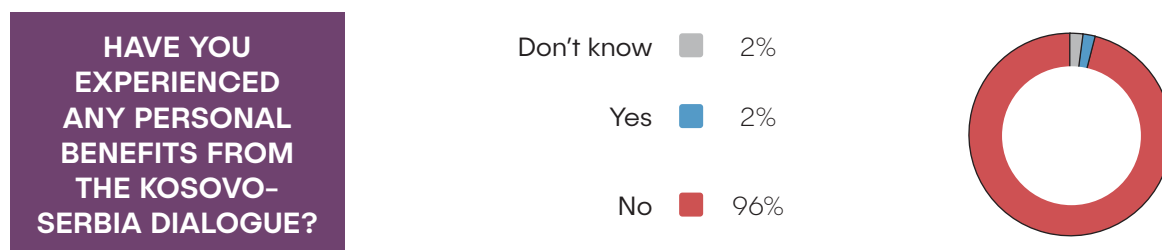
**TABLE 6** WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE SUPPORT FOR KOSOVO-SERBIA DIALOGUE

**DO YOU SUPPORT THE KOSOVO SERBIA DIALOGUE?**

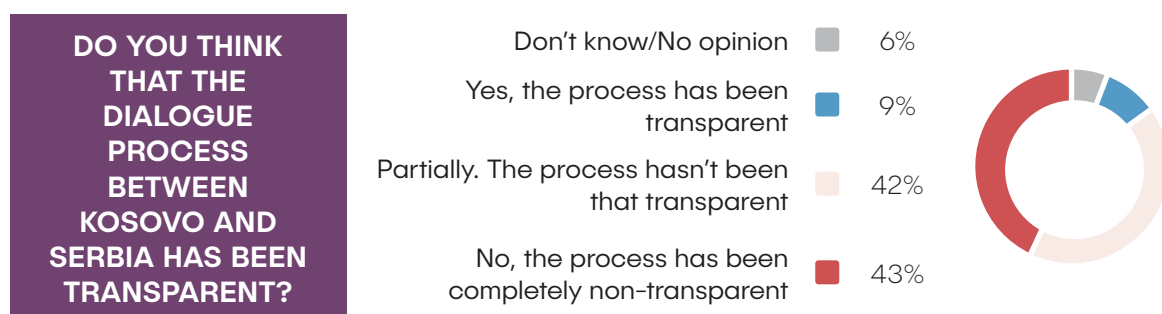
Don't know/no opinion 5%  
Yes 74%  
No 21%



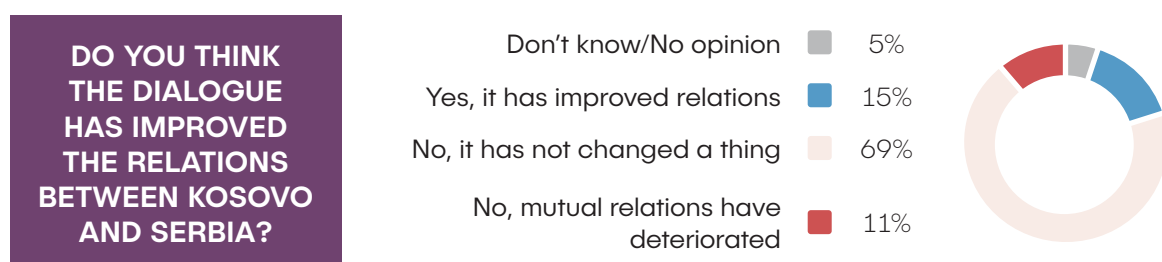
**TABLE 7 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON PERSONAL BENEFITS FROM THE DIALOGUE**



**TABLE 8 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON DIALOGUE TRANSPARENCY**



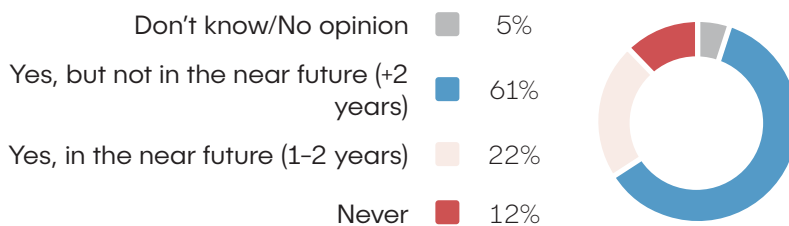
**TABLE 9 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE SUCCESS OF THE KOSOVO- SERBIA DIALOGUE**



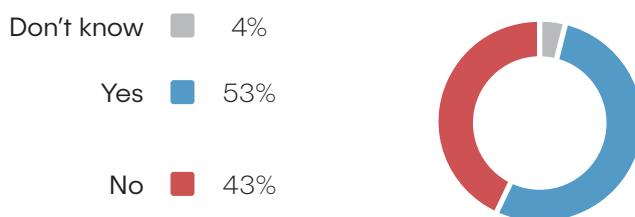
This lack of tangible results felt by the public, together with the evident stagnation of the dialogue process on the ground, seems to be reflected also when it comes to the skepticism that has grown when it comes to the possibility of reaching a final solution anytime soon. The WBSB results now show that around 3/4 of respondents doubt that any final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia will be reached in the near future. Meanwhile, although the opinions seem split, more than half of Kosovo citizens believe that peace in the foreseeable future will persist between Kosovo and Serbia, regardless of if there will be an agreement or not.

**TABLE 10 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF KOSOVO-SERBIA RELATIONS**

**DO YOU THINK THAT KOSOVO AND SERBIA WILL REACH A FINAL AGREEMENT?**



**DO YOU BELIEVE THERE WILL BE PEACE BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA IN THE NEAR FUTURE?**



As noted, respondents were also asked about the impact that a potential failure of the dialogue may have on Kosovo’s future development. Results show that many of the respondents share the concern that Kosovo will suffer consequences if an agreement is not reached with Serbia, even though the majority of them believe that these consequences will not be unbearable. The same indications have also been given when asked directly if Kosovo can progress in its statehood development without reaching an agreement, as 72 percent of respondents of the respondents were positive that this would not result in a major problem.

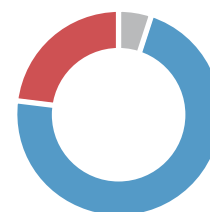
**TABLE 11 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FAILURE TO SUCCEED IN THE DIALOGUE**

**DO YOU THINK THAT KOSOVO AND SERBIA WILL REACH A FINAL AGREEMENT?**



**DO YOU THINK THAT DEVELOPMENT OF KOSOVO IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT AN AGREEMENT?**

Don't know 5%  
 Yes 72%  
 No 23%

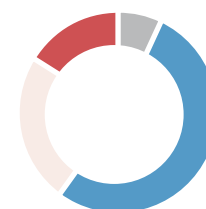


Furthermore, the respondents were asked if they support the Government's position on the dialogue and whether they believe that there is a willingness from Kosovar side to finish this process successfully. Results show that, in general, citizens support Kosovo Government's stance in the dialogue, with more than 79 percent believing in Prime Minister Kurti's commitment to this process and his willingness to succeed. This result is very encouraging, even though it seems to be contradictory, taking into consideration the fact that citizens seem largely unfamiliar with Kosovo's goal in this process. Yet, it once again exposes that public perception views dialogue as a top-down run process and that citizens seem not to be much complacent to it.

**TABLE 12 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON SUPPORT OF KOSOVO'S POSITION IN THE DIALOGUE**

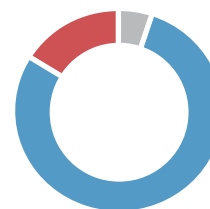
**DO YOU SUPPORT THE CURRENT POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER KURTI IN THE DIALOGUE?**

Don't know 7%  
 Yes, it is entirely in line with my expectations 53%  
 Somehow, it is partially in line with my expectations 24%  
 No, it is completely against my expectations 16%



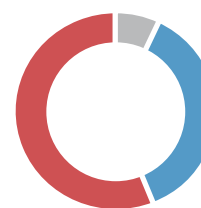
**DO YOU BELIEVE THAT PRIME MINISTER KURTI WANT THE DIALOGUE TO SUCCEED?**

Don't know 5%  
 Yes 79%  
 No 16%



**ARE YOU AWARE OF KOSOVO'S GOAL IN THE DIALOGUE?**

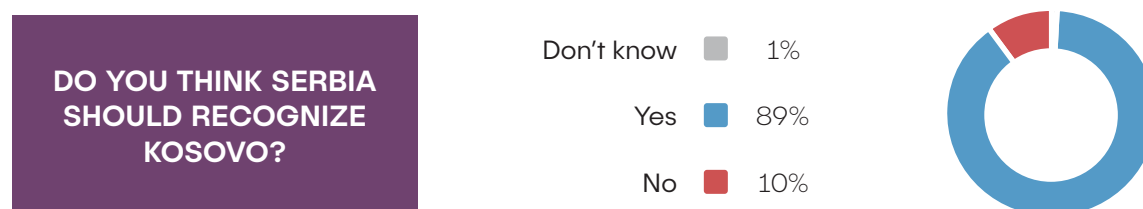
Don't know 7%  
 Yes 37%  
 No 56%



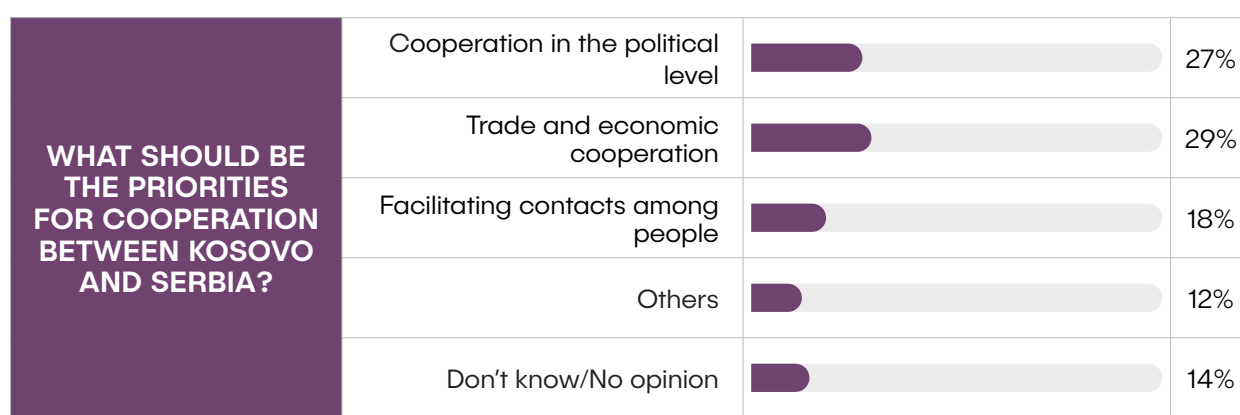


The citizens were also asked about the outcome of the dialogue. It is evident that Kosovar respondents quite unanimously believe that Serbia should recognize Kosovo’s statehood, and most of them list mutual recognition as the best potential solution of Kosovo–Serbia dialogue. Mutual recognition also takes the lead when it comes to naming the best way to normalize bilateral relations between the two countries, but the importance for improvement of trade and economic cooperation, political cooperation, and the facilitation of contacts between people are also emphasized as key factors which could lead towards mutual normalization of relations.

**TABLE 13** WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS’ PERCEPTIONS ON SUPPORT OF KOSOVO’S POSITION IN THE DIALOGUE



WHAT WOULD BE THE BEST SOLUTION FOR THE KOSOVO-SERBIA DIALOGUE?	Mutual recognition	75%
	An agreement that consists of no mutual recognition but membership in UN and other international organizations (incl. formation of the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities, special status for monasteries)	9%
	Return of Kosovo with wide autonomy to Serbia	3%
	Mutual recognition with the land swaps	3%
	None of the above, we remain without agreement	5%
	Don't know/ No opinion	5%



Finally, the WBSB has measured the role of various internal and international actors in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue process. The results show that the international community leads by considerable distance when it comes to who is contributing the most to the normalization of relations, followed by political leaders, and the business community. Meanwhile, when asked who is harming this process the most, almost 2/3 or the respondents pointed local political leaders as the most harmful actors.

On another note, when it comes to the international community, citizens mostly show dissatisfaction with the EU as the leading facilitator of this dialogue. Most of the respondents would rather prefer a direct involvement of the United States in this process, either together with the EU, or as a lone facilitator of this process. This on the one hand reflects the support and trust that Kosovar citizens have for the US, but on the other hand further highlights that the EU so far is not perceived as successful when it comes to facilitating this process towards achieving tangible results.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed analysis on the citizens perceptions on the EU's facilitation of the dialogue read the KOSS report "Citizens' perceptions on Kosovo's EU Integration Perspective and Regional and International Cooperation" available on: <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/perceptimi-i-qytetareve-per-perspektiven-integrimit-te-kosoves-ne-be-dhe-bashkepunimin-rajonal-e-nderkombetar>




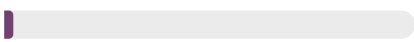


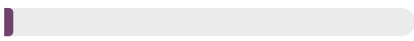
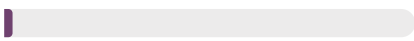
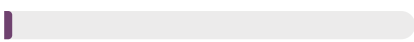
**TABLE 14** WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE DIALOGUE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE INFLUENCERS

<b>WHO IS CONTRIBUTING THE MOST TO THE RELATIONS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA?</b>	Business community		16%
	International community		44%
	Political leaders		25%
	Others		5%
	Don't know/No opinion		10%
<b>WHO IS HARMING THE MOST THE RELATIONS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA?</b>	Business community		8%
	International community		12%
	Political leaders		63%
	Others		6%
	Don't know/No opinion		11%
<b>WHAT SHOULD BE THE PRIORITIES FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA?</b>	I'd rather trust EU to mediate the dialogue		4%
	I'd rather trust US to mediate the dialogue		50%
	US and EU should mediate the dialogue together		35%
	Neither EU or US should be involved in the dialogue		6%
	Don't know/No opinion		5%

At the end of this section, WBSB survey measured the level that Kosovar citizens would feel to travel to Serbia. Only a quarter of the citizens stated that they feel safe, while most of the others express partial safety or no safety. This shows that the dialogue still has important technical and political goals to achieve; most importantly with freedom of movement and people-to-people exchange, where safety and mutual trust have a crucial role. Indeed, it is very important that the direction of the upcoming parts of the dialogue process, alongside with objectives to achieve political agreements, to be focused in improving the mutual safety and trust feelings among the respective citizens which would result from the freedom of movement and people-to-people exchange.

Another point which is going to be elaborated in this section is the sources where Kosovo citizens get information about the Kosovo-Serbia relations. Television as a transitional means of communication seems to remain the main source on where Kosovo citizens get informed regarding this issue. However, the internet as well (primarily the online news portals and social media) results as an important source of information that Kosovo citizens use regarding the Kosovo-Serbia relations. The objective and credible media reporting in this process is very important to create an environment which helps the improvement of the normalization of relations process. For this purpose, it is important to have ongoing media monitoring to ensure that information produced by the respective outlets is objective, denouncing on time any disinformation and malicious content.

**TABLE 15** WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE INFORMATION SOURCES AND SAFETY TO TRAVEL

<b>HOW SAFE WOULD YOU FEEL TO TRAVEL TO SERBIA?</b>	Safe		24%
	Somewhat safe		28%
	Unsafe		46%
	Don't know/No opinion		2%
<b>WHERE DO YOU GET THE INFORMATION ABOUT KOSOVO-SERBIA RELATIONS?</b>	TV		62%
	Internet		33%
	Family discussions		2%
	Other		2%
	Don't know/No opinion		1%



### 3. CITIZENS PERCEPTIONS ON BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND ALBANIA

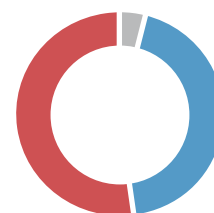
As mentioned above, Kosovar citizens perceive Albania as the friendliest country in the region. However, the existing level of cooperation between Kosovo and Albania on political, interexchange, and economic fronts, still has room for improvement. Some of the respondents tend to consider Albanian foreign policy as not delicate enough towards Kosovo's sensitive position both in the region and international level.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, although the interexchange of people and goods between Kosovo and Albania is relatively sound at present, in the past there have been occasional cases of temporary barriers imposed by both countries against each other when it comes to importing specific goods. This too had contributed to restraining economic cooperation, keeping the import-export balance relatively low. Having this in mind, the WBSB survey conducted in Kosovo has measured the citizens perception all the key political areas.

When it comes to the political issues, the WBSB survey results show that slightly more than half of the respondents think that the Albanian Government should not be involved parallelly in Kosovo's internal politics, such as Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and other internal political developments. Citizens feel different regarding Albania having an active role in issues concerning Kosovo's relations with other countries in the region, as most of them believe that Albania should have an active role on this part of Kosovo's foreign policy, while in close coordination with Kosovo. Likewise, more than 2/3 of respondents think that Kosovo and Albania should have a mutually coordinated foreign policy. This further emphasizes the need for more joint policies which citizens believe would contribute positively to both countries.

**TABLE 16** WBSB RESULTS- ALBANIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN KOSOVO POLITICS

**DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBANIA SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN INTERNAL POLITICS OF KOSOVO (SUCH AS KS-SRB DIALOGUE, INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS ETC.)?**

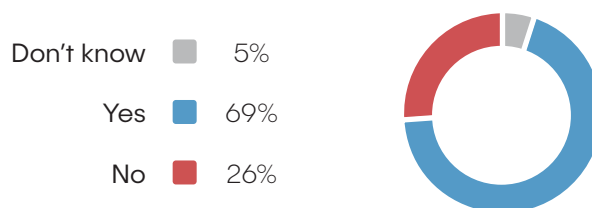
Don't know 4%  
Yes 44%  
No 52%



<sup>4</sup> Focus group with WBSB field researchers, 2021

<b>DO YOU THINK THAT ALBANIA SHOULD HAVE AN ACTIVE ROLE WHEN IT COMES TO KOSOVO'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION?</b>	Yes. Proactively, without needing prior consent from Kosovo		24%
	Yes. But only upon Kosovo's specific request		48%
	No		23%
	Don't know/No opinion		5%

**DO YOU THINK THAT KOSOVO AND ALBANIA SHOULD COORDINATE AND UNIFY THE FOREIGN POLICY?**

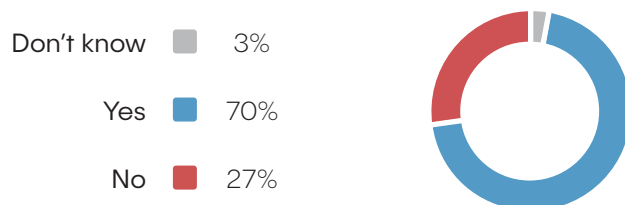


On this note, Kosovar respondents also highlighted the need for removing the border checkpoints between the two countries as a key for increasing the mutual exchange of people and goods. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents would support the idea of a unification of Kosovo and Albania.

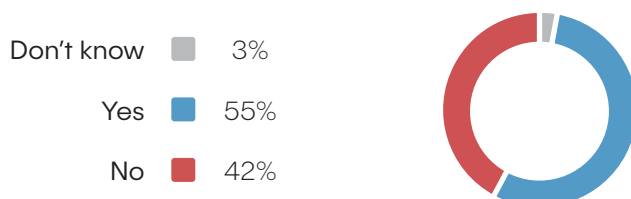
Regarding the economic barriers between Kosovo and Albania, most Kosovar respondents hold both governments accountable for burdening economic cooperation. The other part of the respondents holds Albanian government more responsible than the Kosovar one for economic barriers, while organized crime is seen as a harmful factor in this regard as well.

**TABLE 17 WBSB RESULTS- BORDER CHECKPOINTS AND KOSOVO AND ALBANIA UNIFICATION**

**DO YOU THINK THAT THE BORDER CHECKPOINTS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND ALBANIA SHOULD BE REMOVED?**



**DO YOU SUPPORT THE UNIFICATION OF KOSOVO WITH ALBANIA?**



**TABLE 18** WBSB RESULTS- ECONOMIC BARRIERS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND ALBANIA

<b>WHO DO YOU BELIEVE STANDS BEHIND THE ECONOMIC BARRIERS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND ALBANIA?</b>	The respective governments in both countries		57%
	The government of Albania		16%
	The government of Kosovo		2%
	Business community		3%
	Organized crime		8%
	Other countries		2%
	Others		1%
	Don't know/ No opinion		11%



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

It is evident that for two very different reasons, Albania and Serbia are the two most important and the most influential countries for Kosovo. Yet, while the relationship between Kosovo and Albania is only a subject of moving to another cooperation level, without major barriers between one and another, this does not seem to be the case when it comes to cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia.

The cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia in general seems to remain at a relatively low level. This includes both on the political level but also on the inter-citizens level, which means that while the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia has gone at a relatively slow pace, and the efforts to improve the interaction between citizens have stalled too. Kosovo citizens seem to undermine the importance of the ethnic Serb factor in the region, which mainly seem to be as a protest of Serbia's past and present attitude towards Kosovo. At the same time, they express reluctance to accept Serbian citizens in their living, working or private environment showing that relationship between Kosovo and Serbia did not improve much, despite the active conflict having ended more than two decades ago and regardless of the ongoing dialogue between both countries.

Regarding the dialogue, the survey highlights that Kosovo citizens are aware of its importance and are supportive of it. However, they also seem to be highly dissatisfied with the progress reached so far during the frame of this process. Furthermore, they share a supportive attitude towards Kosovo Government's stance and willingness to progress in this process. As per potential solutions for a final agreement, citizens believe that mutual recognition is the only best option for this to happen. However, considering Serbian Government's stance regarding this process, they seem to be highly pessimistic for it materializing soon.

One crucially important remark noted by the WBSB is also the fact that Kosovo citizens seem to be highly critical towards the EU's facilitation of this process. For these reasons, most respondents thought that it is very important for the US to be directly involved in the process.

Meanwhile, the WBSB results also point out that, regardless of Governments representing both countries seating on the negotiation table for years, distrust among citizens remains relatively high. This can be seen by the fact that the vast majority of Kosovo citizens still fear traveling to Serbia. Yet this at the same



time exposes one crucial fact that dialogue so far lacked- a primary focus of improving concretely the relationship between citizens of both countries. For this reason, the mutual trust between citizens in the respective countries continues to remain at a fragile level and needs improvement. Henceforth, such an approach needs to be changed. The focus of the dialogue should shift more towards inter-citizens cooperation between respective countries. For this to happen it is very important that transparency during this process improves, and it is crucial that the dialogue is followed by an inclusive debate between political and non-governmental stakeholders, ensuring that the primary focus of the dialogue is to serve the best interest of directly affected citizens and not the populist nationalistic narratives.

In relation to bilateral cooperation with Albania, the situation seems to be much different. Kosovo citizens seem to have unlimited appreciation for both the state and citizens of Albania. This can be shown also by the vast majority of citizens who would not have a problem sharing the living environment, workspace or personal life with citizens from Albania.

However, according to their responses, citizens believe that cooperation between Kosovo and Albania can be further developed into reaching its full potential. Most notably, they question the attitude of Albania's foreign policy towards Kosovo, with regards to Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, regional cooperation, and diplomatic relations in general, requesting from it to be much more synchronized and coordinated with the Kosovar one.

On another note, respondents do think that the exchange of goods and people between Kosovo and Albania should be improved further. For this, they believe that it is very important for freedom of movement between both countries to advance to another level, removing the board control between countries and the existing sporadic import barriers that have been imposed by both respective governments.

Katalogimi në botim **(CIP)**

Biblioteka Kombëtare e Kosovës - "Pjetër Bogdani"

303.425.6(496.51)

*Two Opposite Viewpoints : Overview on How Citizens see Kosovo Bilateral Relations with Serbia and with Albania? / Dea Feti, Mentor Vrajolli. - Prishtina : Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, 2022. - 20 f. ; : ilustr. ; 24 cm.*

*Testet e opinionit publik – Kosovë*

**ISBN 978-9951-799-67-6**

*Aleph [000103291]*



ISBN 978-9951-799-67-6



9 789951 799676

