



KOSOVO'S REGIONAL COOPERATION AND EU INTEGRATION

KOSOVO CITIZENS PERSPECTIVE



Data interpretation:
Plator Avdiu

Methodology and Review:
Mentor Vrajolli

© All rights reserved to Kosovar Centre 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 Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) is not permitted without the written consent of the KCSS. Please contact: info@qkss.org or +383 38 221 420.

Perceptions presented in this report are a summary of information gathered from respondents and they only demonstrate how people perceive institutions. It is in no way a conclusive assessment of the quality of the work of institutions subject to this study. It shall serve as an instrument to them for addressing potential shortcomings but also an indicator of the effectiveness of their communication with the people.

The views presented in this report are perceptions of the respondents and do not necessarily represent the views of the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies. Opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

PROJECT SUPPORTED BY:



National Endowment for Democracy
Supporting freedom around the world

KOSOVO'S REGIONAL COOPERATION AND EU INTEGRATION

KOSOVO CITIZENS PERSPECTIVE



2020 FIRST REGIONAL
SURVEY EDITION

Prishtina
March 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
KOSOVO'S BILATERAL COOPERATION, CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS.....	2
KOSOVO'S EU INTEGRATION PROCESS.....	7

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kosovo Security Barometer (KSB) is a distinctive tool through which Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) measures public perceptions in Kosovo on the trust in institutions and various security-related issues, including the regional cooperation and the EU integration. In its tenth edition, KSB has taken a regional dimension and marks the first edition of the Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) implemented simultaneously in Kosovo and Serbia in September-October 2020.¹ This report examines the perceptions of Kosovar respondents on the following issues: i) Kosovo's bilateral cooperation, cross-border cooperation and regional security, and ii) attitudes of Kosovars towards the EU membership process.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT ARE AS FOLLOW:

- The survey data show that political influences of Albania (82 percent) and Croatia (62 percent) towards Kosovo are perceived most positively by respondents, and are thus the friendliest Western Balkan partners of Kosovo.
- Serbia is perceived most negatively in Kosovo compared to other regional countries – around 90 percent of respondents viewed its political influence as very negative or mostly negative.
- Around 59 percent of respondents would disagree to receive assistance from security institutions of Serbia in case of an emergency or natural/humanitarian disaster in Kosovo.
- With regards to the police cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia, around 31 percent of respondents are discontented compared to 36 percent who consider it satisfactory. It is worth highlighting that 32 percent of respondents had no information on whether Kosovo Police and Serbian Police do cooperate.
- Only 35 percent of Kosovars perceived the joint border police patrolling between Kosovo Police and Serbian Police as being good, despite the fact that the Kosovo-Serbia technical agreement on internal border management has been reached within the EU-facilitated dialogue ten years ago.
- With regards to the EU membership, Kosovars are among the biggest supporters in the Western Balkans of the EU integration – with 92 percent in total being supportive of Kosovo's membership to the EU.
- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents (77 percent) are optimistic that the EU is interested in admitting Kosovo as its Member State in the future.
- The main reason behind the lack of EU's visa-free regime for the Kosovo citizens, according to 65 percent of respondents, is attributed to discrimination and prejudice from some of the EU Member States towards Kosovo.
- Almost half of the respondents (48 percent) perceived the widespread of corruption and organized crime activities as the most challenging issues for Kosovo's membership to the EU. The current dialogue with Serbia falls on the second place – with only 12 percent of respondents listing it as a challenge for the EU membership.

¹ The methodology of the first edition of the Western Balkan Security Barometer conducted in Kosovo and Serbia, published in the previous KCSS report, is available at the following link: http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/WBSB_ENG_Final_620419.pdf

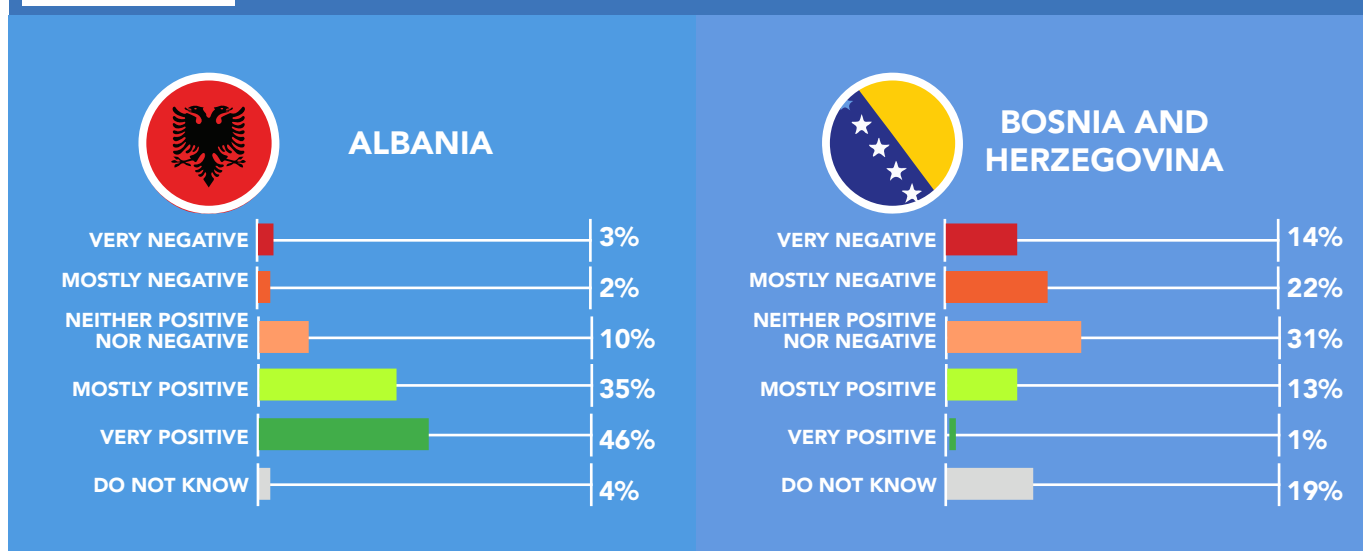
KOSOVO'S BILATERAL COOPERATION, CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

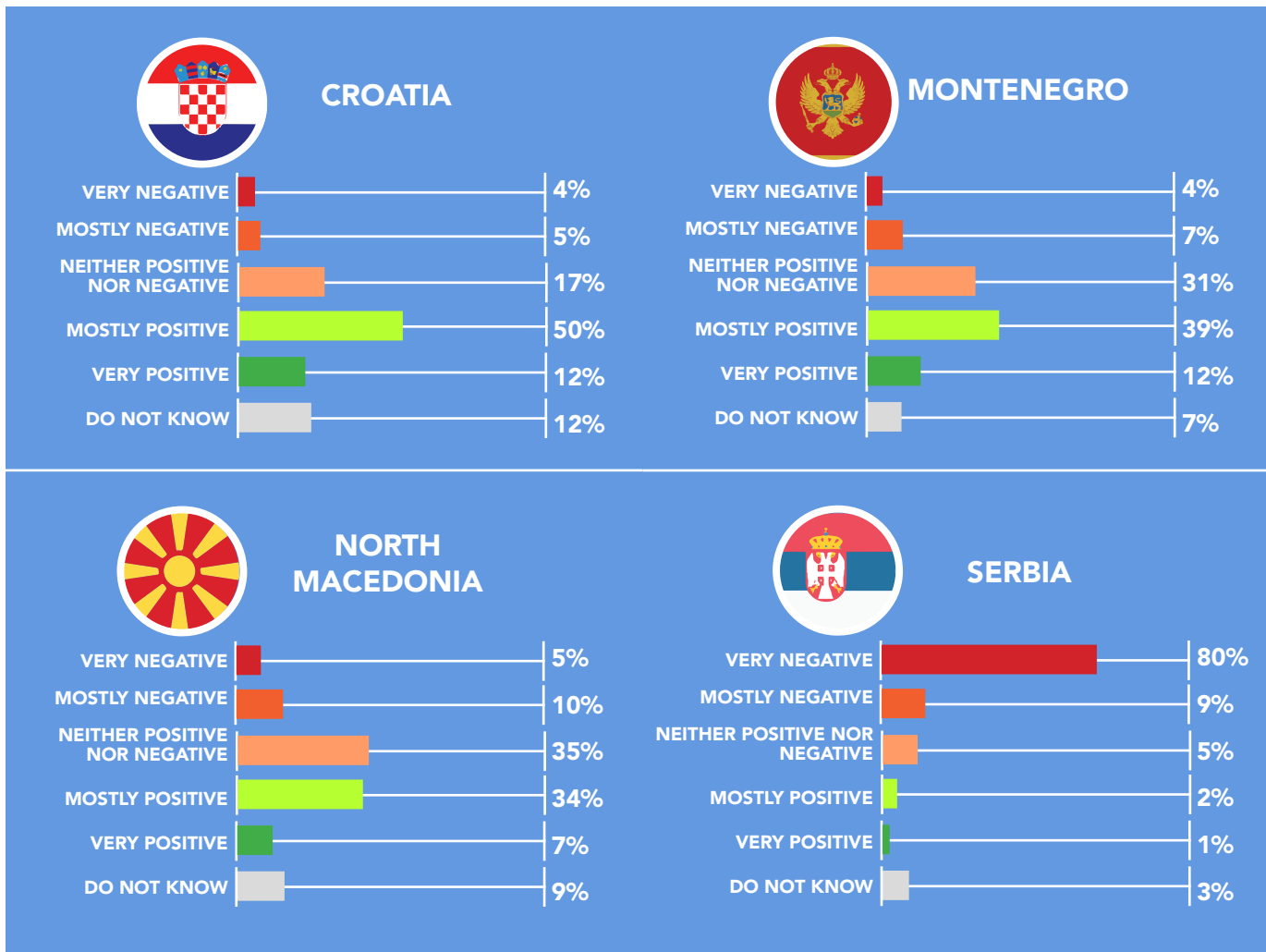
Similar to the respondents' perceptions of other Western Balkan countries towards Kosovo, the attitudes of Kosovar respondents towards these countries tend to be twofold as indicated by the survey results of the WBSW conducted in Kosovo. The neighbouring and regional countries which have recognized Kosovo's independence and have mostly friendly approaches vis-à-vis Kosovo (including Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia) are positively perceived by the respondents. Conversely, perceptions towards Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are highly negative due to their refusal to recognize the statehood of Kosovo, thus causing political obstacles towards Kosovo on regional and international level.

Albania is perceived as the most trusted Kosovo's regional and neighbouring partner when compared to other countries, as around 82 percent of respondents view its political influence within the country as positive. It is followed by Croatia (62 percent), Montenegro (51 percent) and North Macedonia (41 percent). Kosovo has established solid bilateral cooperation with these four countries on a wide range of issues of mutual interest, ranging from political, socio-economic, security to defence related matters.

However, cooperation with Serbia is lacking due to political disputes and unwillingness of its political elites to cooperate with Kosovo on bilateral state level. The vast majority of respondents (around 90 percent) perceived Serbia as very negative or mostly negative in relation to Kosovo. This derives mostly from the past history as well as constant Serbia's political obstacles against Kosovo, whilst respondents' perceptions towards Bosnia and Herzegovina are somewhat ambiguous although it has not recognized Kosovo. Around 36 percent of them perceive this country as having negative influence on Kosovo, 31 percent expressed neutrality and another 19 percent have no opinion on the influence of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards Kosovo.

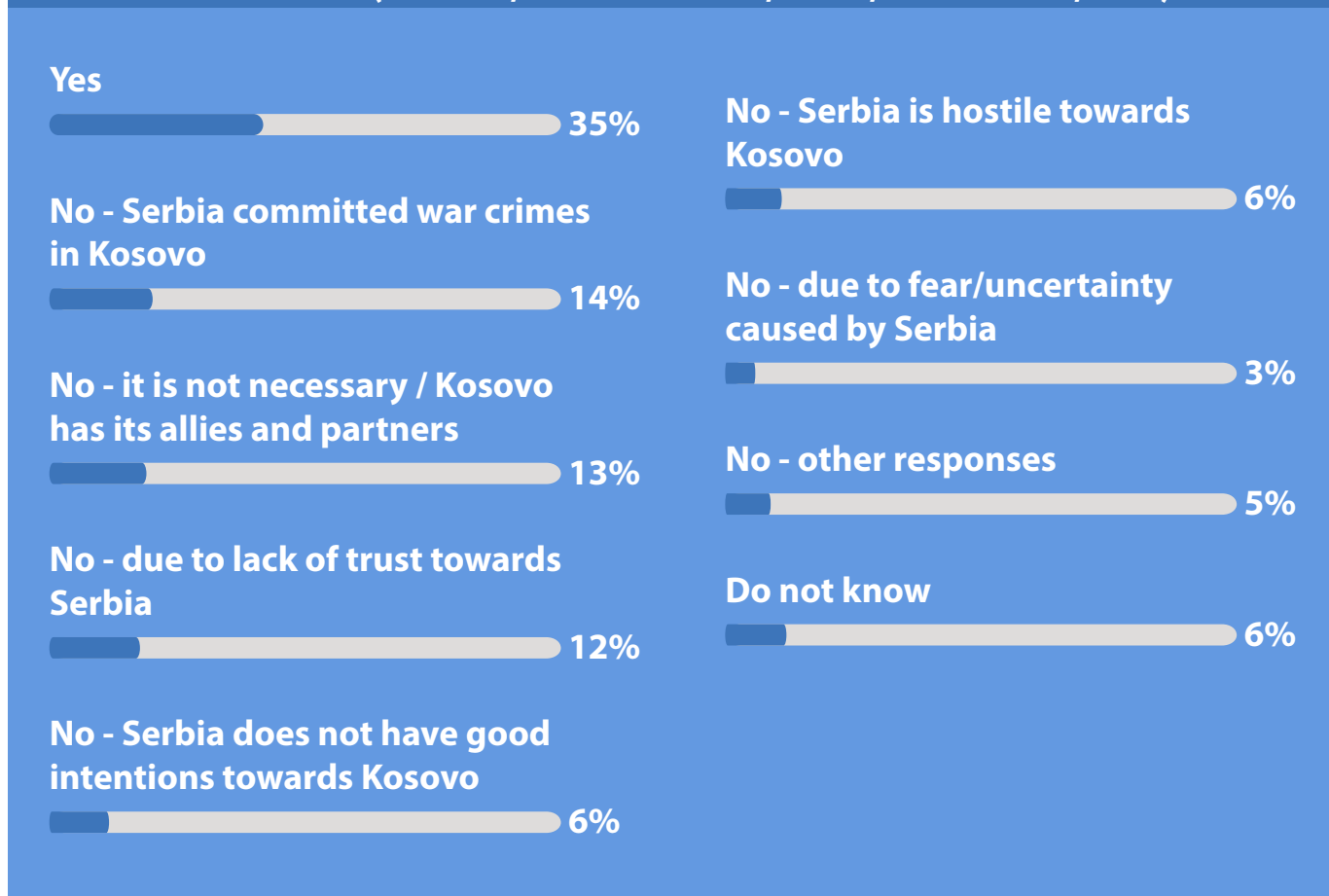
FIGURE 1 POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES ON KOSOVO





Kosovars would not feel safe to receive assistance from Serbia’s security institutions on the occasions of any emergency situations or natural/humanitarian disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, fires, pandemics, etc. Around 3/5 of the respondents (59 percent) would not agree to receive assistance from Serbian security institutions while 35 percent would agree to receive such assistance.

FIGURE 2 WOULD YOU AGREE TO RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM SECURITY INSTITUTIONS OF SERBIA IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY OR NATURAL/HUMANITARIAN DISASTER IN KOSOVO (FLOODS, EARTHQUAKES, FIRES, PANDEMICS, ETC.)?



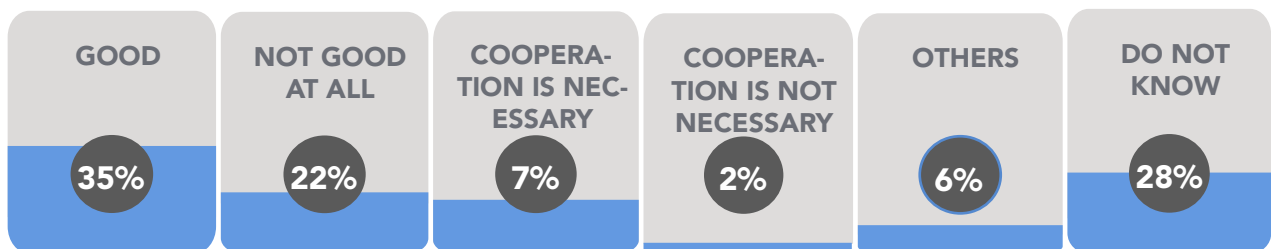
As regards police cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia, almost 1/3 of the interviewed respondents (31 percent) stated they were not satisfied with the current absence of police cooperation between both countries, mainly blaming Serbia for it, compared to 36 percent who stated that they were satisfied with the current state of cooperation. However, 32 percent of other respondents do not know or potentially are not informed on whether Kosovo Police and Serbian Police have joint police cooperation.

FIGURE 3 ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH POLICE COOPERATION BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA?



Regarding the joint border police patrolling of Kosovo Police with Serbian Police on the border crossing points, a solid number of respondents (around 35 percent) perceive it as positive. Another 7 percent of them consider that the cooperation of border police between Kosovo and Serbia is necessary. On the other hand, almost ¼ of respondents (22 percent) have shared negative opinions about the current state of border police cooperation considering it as not good at all, whilst another 2 percent perceive such cooperation as unnecessary. Although Kosovo and Serbia reached a technical agreement within the EU-facilitated dialogue on integrated border management (IBM) in 2011 for setting up “joint integrated posts at all common IBM crossing points”², around 28 percent of respondents still do not know about the agreement or whether there exists any mode of cooperation between Kosovo Police and Serbian Police at the border crossing points.

FIGURE 4 HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE THE JOINT BORDER POLICE PATROLLING BETWEEN KOSOVO POLICE AND SERBIAN POLICE?

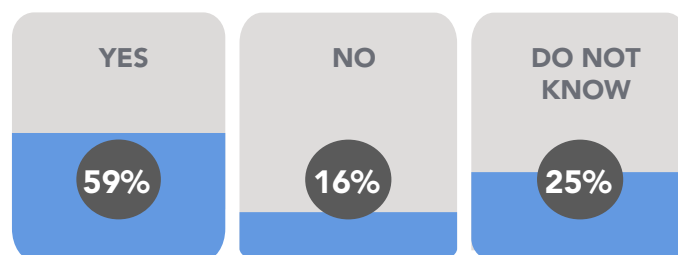


² For more information, see the IBM Agreed Conclusions between Kosovo and Serbia at the following link: https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/docs/agreement_0210_ibm.pdf

In terms of Kosovo's participation in regional security initiatives/organisations, more than half of the respondents (59 percent) are satisfied in comparison to 16 percent of those who expressed dissatisfaction. It is important to note that Kosovo is already a member of some regional security initiatives, including SEESAC (South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons), MARRI (Migration, Asylum, Refugee Regional Initiative), RCC (Regional Cooperation Council), SEECP (South-East European Cooperation Process), etc. Nevertheless, Kosovo is not yet a full member of a number of other regional security organisations, therefore it only participates in meetings of bodies such as RACVIAC (Centre for Security Cooperation) and the US Adriatic Charter.

Despite the fact that Kosovo and Serbia reached the 2012 technical agreement on Kosovo's regional representation (through the EU facilitation),³ Serbia has fiercely campaigned to block Kosovo's membership into regional initiatives, including the security ones where Kosovo currently is neither a member nor a participant. To sum up, around 25 percent of respondents have no information on Kosovo's participation into regional security initiatives leading to the assumption that they also do not know about Kosovo-Serbia technical agreement reached in Brussels almost a decade ago.

FIGURE 5 ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH KOSOVO'S PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL SECURITY INITIATIVES?

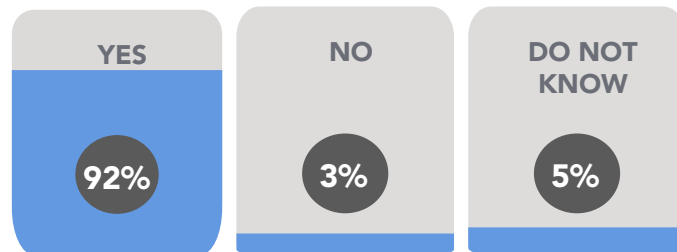


³ For more information, see the EU-facilitated dialogue for the technical agreement on Regional Representation and Cooperation reached between Kosovo and Serbia at the following link: https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/docs/agreement_0210_representation.pdf

KOSOVO'S EU INTEGRATION PROCESS

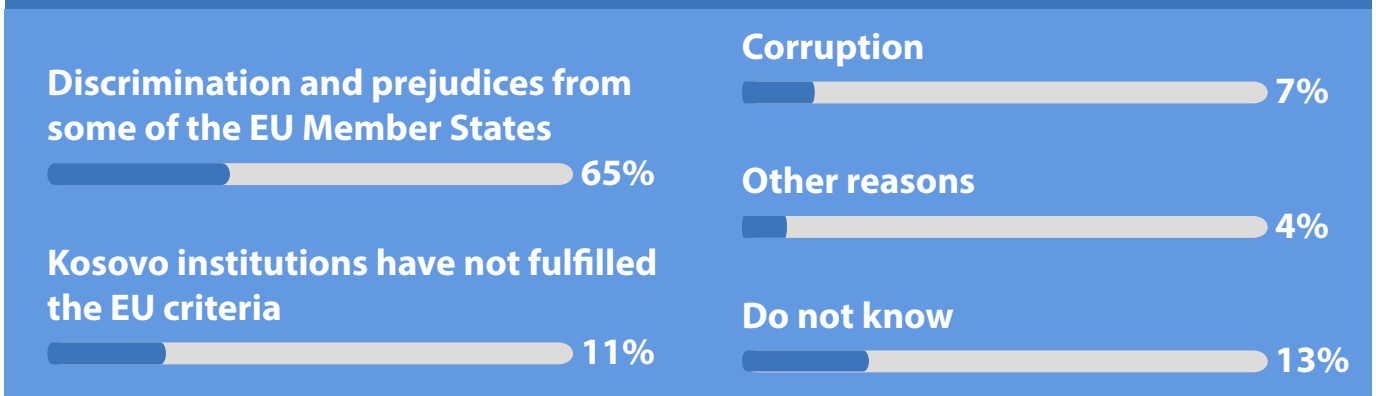
Kosovars are robust supporters of the country's membership into the EU and with regards to the public support of the EU integration process, they are unquestionably among the biggest supporters in the Western Balkans. Therefore, a vigorous majority of 92 percent of respondents are in favour of Kosovo's membership into the EU.

FIGURE 6 DO YOU SUPPORT THE EU INTEGRATION OF KOSOVO?



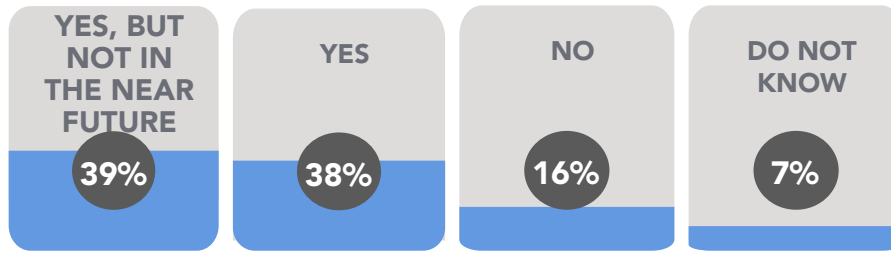
Despite the public support for EU membership, Kosovo is the only Western Balkans country isolated by the EU itself due to the reluctance of some of the EU Member States to grant visa liberalization for the Kosovo citizens. Thus, almost 2/3 of respondents, more precisely 65 percent of them shared their views that discrimination and prejudices by some EU Member States are the main reasons Kosovo is not granted visa liberalization by the EU. Meanwhile, fulfilment of criteria (11 percent) and corruption (7 percent) are listed among the second and third reasons for lacking visa liberalization.

FIGURE 7 PERCEPTIONS AS TO WHY THE EU IS NOT GRANTING VISA LIBERALIZATION TO KOSOVO



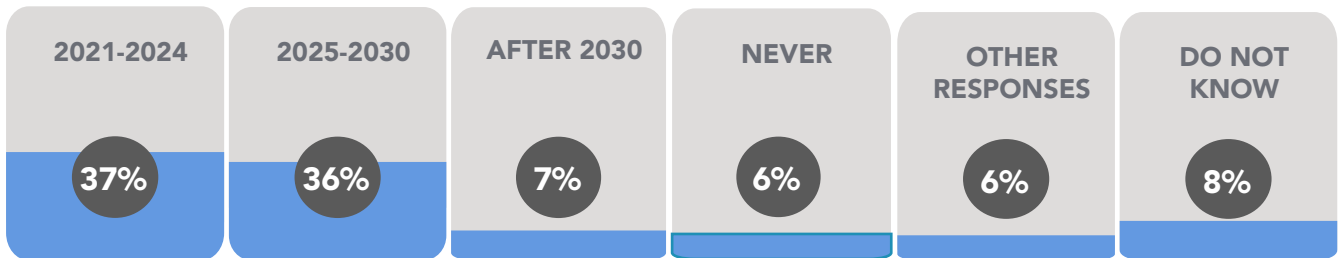
When asked whether the EU is interested in having Kosovo as a Member State, around 77 percent of respondents responded positively, although 39 percent of them considered this would not occur in the near future. On the other side, 16 percent of Kosovar respondents stated that the EU is not interested to admit Kosovo as its member.

FIGURE 8 DO YOU THINK THE EU IS INTERESTED TO ACCEPT KOSOVO AS A MEMBER STATE?



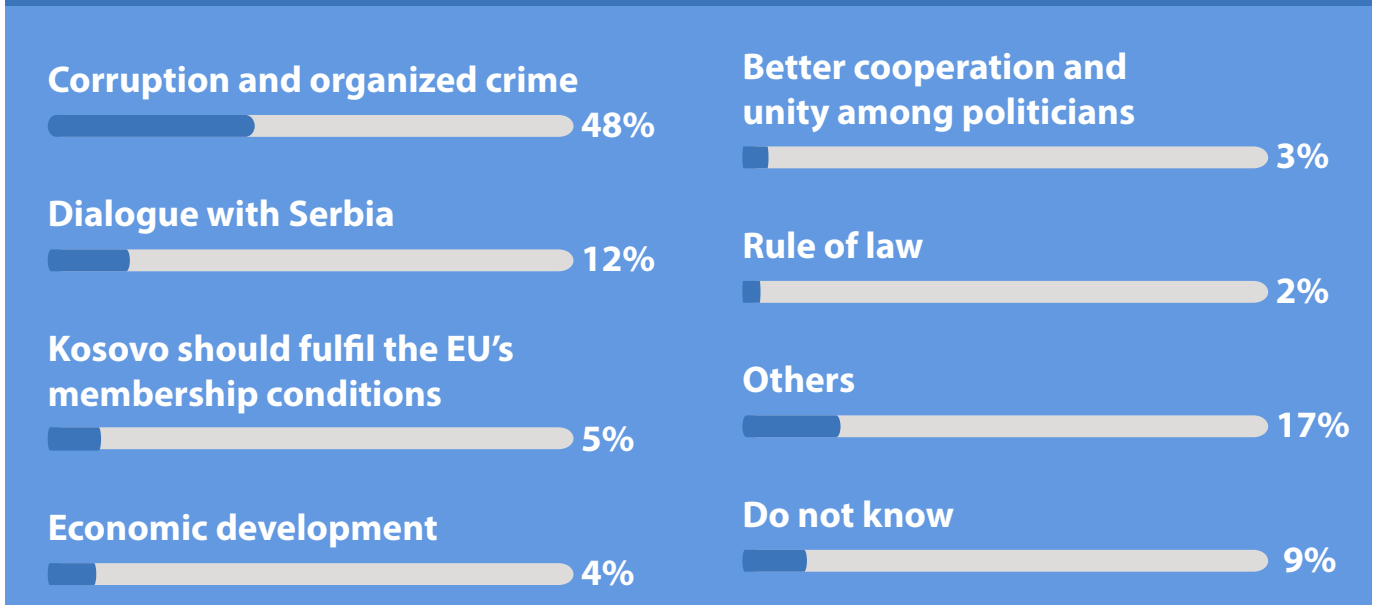
Respondents are not very optimistic as to when Kosovo will join the EU given that almost 2/5 of respondents, namely 37 percent of them, believe that Kosovo will be an EU Member State between 2021-2024. Another 36 percent of respondents think that Kosovo will be able to join the EU in the next 5-10 years, namely from 2025 to 2030. Around 7 percent of respondents are even less optimistic pointing out that Kosovo will be an EU Member State after 2030, compared to 6 percent who think that Kosovo will never join the EU.

FIGURE 9 IN YOUR OPINION, WHEN WILL KOSOVO BE ABLE TO JOIN THE EU?



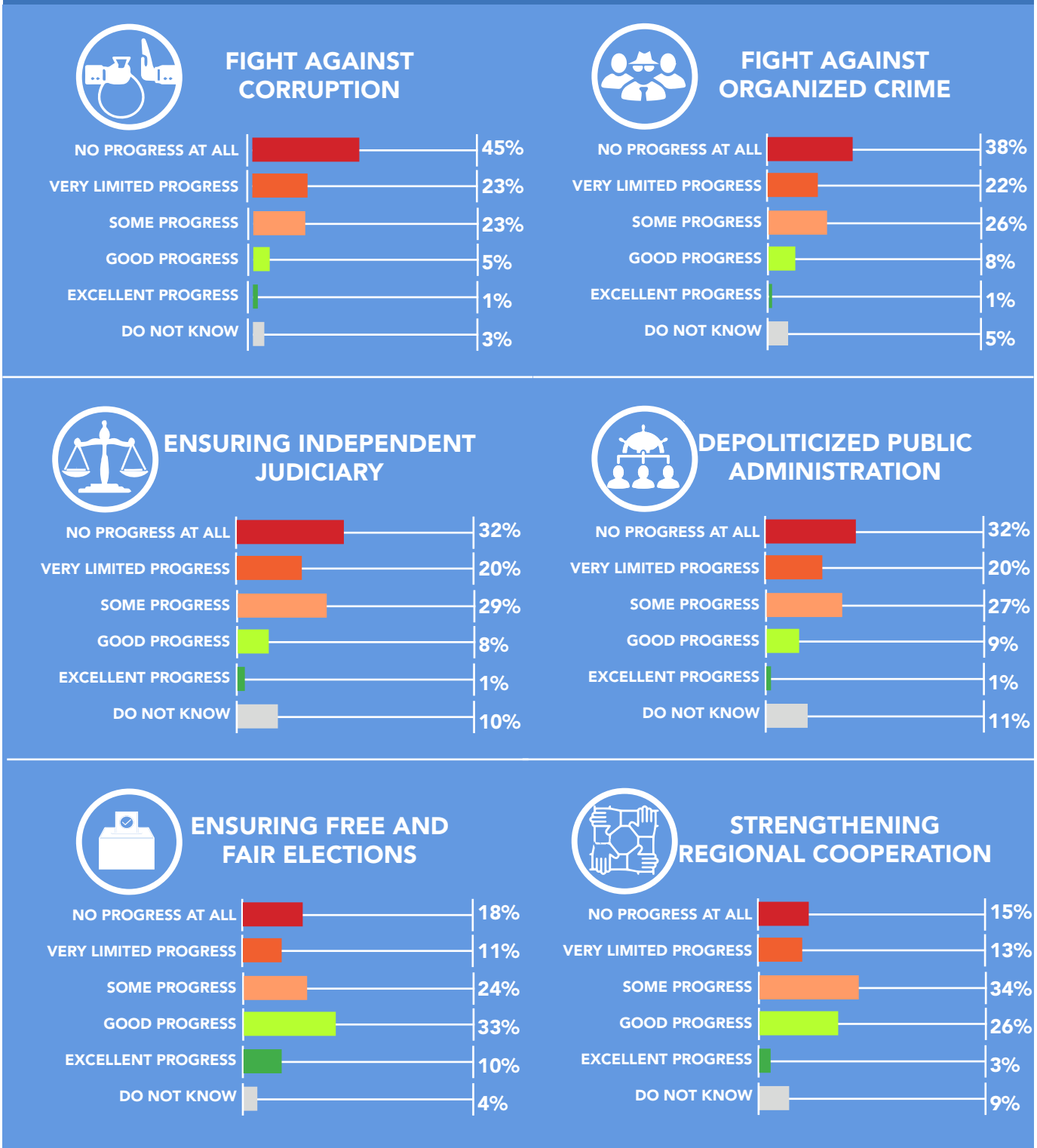
Almost half of the respondents (48 percent in total) have listed the presence of corruption and organized crime related activities as the key challenging issues on Kosovo’s path to EU membership. The ongoing dialogue with Serbia is listed as the second challenge for the EU integration, however it is clear that relations of Kosovo with Serbia are ranked significantly lower than corruption and organized crime – with 12 percent in total.

FIGURE 10 WHAT IS ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING ISSUES THAT KOSOVO HAS TO OVERCOME BEFORE JOINING THE EU?



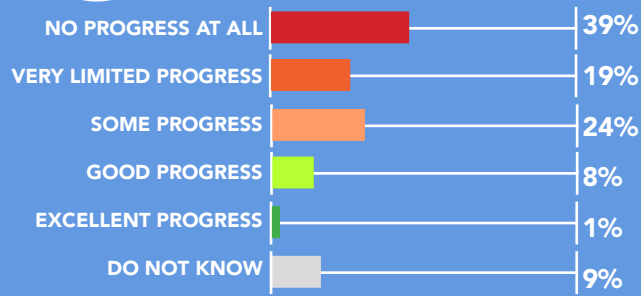
Implementation of the EU membership criteria has been assessed rather negatively by the respondents. In this regard, they do not view progress or note very limited progress undertaken by the Kosovo institutions in the fight against corruption and organized crime, ensuring independent judiciary, depoliticizing of public administration, and solving bilateral disputes with Serbia. Despite this, respondents perceived Kosovo has marked progress on ensuring free and fair elections as well as strengthening regional cooperation as the following figure indicates.

FIGURE 11 HOW DO YOU RATE KOSOVO'S PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOLLOWING EU'S MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA?





SOLVING BILATERAL DISPUTES WITH SERBIA



Katalogimi në botim – **(CIP)**
Biblioteka Kombëtare e Kosovës“Pjetër Bogdani”

327(4/9:496.51)(047)

Kosovo's regional cooperation and EU integration / data interpretation Plator Avdiu. -
Prishtinë : QKSS, 2021. – 9 f. : 21 cm.

1. Avdiu, Plator

ISBN 978-9951-799-31-7

ISBN 978-9951-799-31-7



9 789951 799317