



KCSS
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

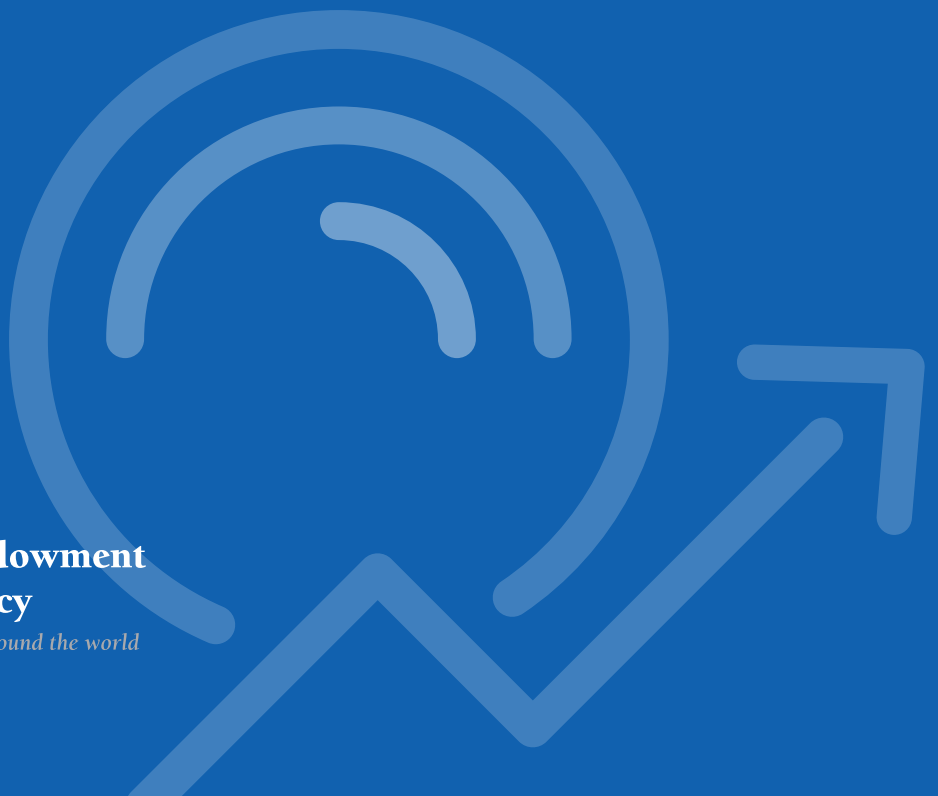
Kosovo Security Barometer

Fifth Edition

December, 2015



**National Endowment
for Democracy**
Supporting freedom around the world



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Perceptions presented in this report are a summary of information gathered from respondents and it only demonstrates how people percept 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)

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List of Abbreviations

AoK	Assembly of Kosovo
EULEX	European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
GoK	Government of Kosovo
KCSS	Kosovar Centre for Security Studies
KFOR	NATO-led Kosovo Force
KIA	Kosovo Intelligence Agency
KP	Kosovo Police
KSB	Kosovo Security Barometer
KSF	Kosovo Security Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
PIK	Police Inspectorate of Kosovo
PSC	Private Security Companies
RAE	Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian

WHAT IS THE KOSOVO SECURITY BAROMETER?

The Kosovo Security Barometer (KSB) is a specific programme of Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) designed to serve as an annual publication. The primary focus of the KSB is to measure the public opinion perceptions towards security institutions. It also measures the public perception on the internal and external security threats to Kosovo. The KSB marks one of the largest and rather first initiatives designed, implemented, and communicated by a local think tank in Kosovo. KCSS has no political constraints in communicating the findings and messages. Lastly, the KSB is unique for its methodological approach, such as the unique tailoring of the quantitative and qualitative methods which aims to offer realistic results on public perceptions towards security related issues.

Whom do we target?

The KSB targets a wide variety of actors interested in the public opinion trends in Kosovo in the field of security and justice. It targets policy makers in Kosovo as well as the Western Balkans; the international organizations in Kosovo and their headquarters; local and international civil society organizations; academia and the media.

Impact

The impact of the KSB can be expected to multiply in the mid-term for a number of reasons, which include (a) KCSS's credibility as a politically non-affiliated and independent think-tank; (b) KCSS's track record of employing appropriate scientific methods in its research; (c) the importance of local ownership; and (d) the professional capacities available at the KCSS. In the three previous editions, the KSB has achieved the four aforementioned aims.

Methodology

The forth-annual edition of the KSB provides a summary of citizens' trust towards security and justice. It measured particularly the public perception towards internal and external safety and security related concerns as well as issues pertaining to the future of the KSF and the international security presence.

Answers to the KSB questionnaires were collected through face-to-face interviews conducted around Kosovo. Most of the questions were close-ended in the form of five-point Likert scales. Few questions were open ended allowing respondents the opportunity to provide their opinion without predefined options. The sampling, piloting, and interviewing were conducted by the KCSS team of 35 field researchers. The national sample from which the research was drawn featured 1,070 households, following a representative sample of the population above 18 years old in Kosovo. The ethnic breakdown of the interviewed respondents was: 88.4 percent K-Albanian, 7.7 percent K-Serbian, and 3.9 percent others (of which, 1.4 percent Turks, 0.6 percent Bosnian, 1.0 percent RAE and the rest include Gorans, Croats, and Montenegrins).

The sample frame was based upon telephone code areas, and, as such included the following 7 regions: Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica, Peja, Prishtina and Prizren. The first stage of geographical clustering was based on the 2012 Kosovo Census Report, the second stage involved clustering samples by municipal area with a stratified rural/urban sample as per the number of households. The last stage followed a random sampling method using the nearest 'birthday method'. Random sampling ensures that each resident in Kosovo has an equal probability of being chosen for an interview. With the sample used for this study, the results of the survey project the mirror image of trends in attitudes and perceptions amongst the entire adult population of Kosovo in general. The margin of error is 3 percent with a confidence interval of 95 percent.

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, a pilot interview was conducted at the beginning of October 2015, in order to test the feasibility of the questionnaire. The research team subsequently reported that the pilot interview was successful, and no problems were encountered with the questions asked to the pilot interviewee. All interviews were completed from 21st until 29th of October 2015. Data processing and analysis has been completed using the SPSS software.

Perceptions presented in this report are a summary of information gathered from respondents and it only demonstrates how people perceive these institutions. Hence, this report does not represent a conclusive assessment of the quality of the work of the institutions subject to this study. The KCSS's intention with this publication is solely to interpret the perceptions, or in other words, "what is the say" of Kosovo's citizens in areas covered by the questionnaire. The KCSS team does not take responsibility for the outcome of the data, especially if and when this should trigger any reactions amongst specific actors. The team remains ready to make the entire process, and the methodology used, transparent should any subject be interested in them.

CHAPTER I:

SECURITY AND JUSTICE

The list of institutions considered by this survey is similar to the previous editions. It included: the Kosovo Police (KP), the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), the Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA), the Government, the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), private security companies (PSCs), Prosecution, Courts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious institutions and the media. The Assembly of Kosovo (AoK) and the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (PIK) are the new debutants of the KSB survey. While the primary targets are the security institutions, the KSB views the security sector from holistic perspective in which all other public institutions have relevance to the security environment.

This section provides the interpretation of the KSB results based on the following indicators: citizens' trust towards security and justice institutions; citizens' interaction with security and justice institutions, and their perceptions on corruption. This edition provides the data on public perceptions on the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force; the withdrawal of the international security presences, namely KFOR and EULEX, for the first time.

1.1. Citizens' Trust towards Security and Justice Institutions

Measuring citizens' trust towards security and justice institutions represents one of the most important objectives of the Kosovo Security Barometer (KSB) program. The KCSS has categorized the results of the trust towards security and justice institutions in four groups: security institutions; justice institutions; the Assembly and the Government of Kosovo; and non-state actors.

1.1.1. Trust towards Security Institutions

Among the security institutions measured by the KSB this year include: the KIA, the KSF, KFOR, the PIK, the KP and the PSCs. The most trusted security institutions among these resulted to be: the KSF (with 69 percent) and KFOR (with 65 percent), followed by the KP (with 56 percent). Indeed, these institutions not only resulted being the most trusted among the others; the results showed that there is also an increase in trust towards these three institutions compared to the results of the previous KSB editions. The most notable case was the KP which according to the results of the current edition of the KSB, the total percentage of respondents who trusted this institution increased by 10 percentage points compared to the previous year.¹ In the meantime, based on the observations from field research, the main arguments in which respondents based their perception about police were: the arrests of individuals affiliated with extremist groups,² the

¹ Notice that the Survey was conducted before the latest violent protest which occurred in November 2015

² Kosovo Police Arrest 5 Individuals Suspected for the Terrorism, <http://www.zeriamerikes.com/content/kosovo-police-terrorism/2857719.html>

arrests of the Serbian citizen accused for the terrorist plot in the center of Prishtina;³ increased number of arrests for corruption and organized crime;⁴ as well as their perceived 'victimhood' during the protests that occurred in Prishtina during the early 2015^{5,6}

On the other hand, the increase in trust towards the KSF and KFOR compared to the last edition of the KSB was more modest, it increased only 3 percentage points compared to the previous editions of the KSB).⁷ When referring to the KSF, the respondents usually drew a link between this institution and their expected transformation to the Kosovo Armed Forces⁸. Meanwhile, the respondents' trust towards KFOR was related, as usual, with its role during the immediate post-war peace keeping efforts, and not with its current role.⁹

In addition to the three most trusted institutions, the survey results also showed that the trust towards the PIK is not low either. Respectively, 40 percent of the respondents stated that they trust the PIK, compared to the 30 percent of those who stated the opposite. This institution has been constantly a subject of various accusations from different stakeholders including the media. It is worth mentioning that the PIK is not one of the frontline institutions which would allow citizens to form their perceptions and opinions from direct personal experiences. Therefore, given that this is the first time that the perceptions of citizens are taken regarding the PIK and no comparative analysis can be drawn, it can be concluded that the public perception about this institutions leans more towards the positive side.

The survey data of the current edition of the KSB show that trust towards the PSCs stands at around 35 percent. What needs to be noted when it comes to the private security stakeholders is that citizens continue to perceive the security sector from traditional point of view; therefore, they do not pay much attention to the role of the PSCs when it comes to its exercising safety duties in the society.¹⁰

Finally, with only 14 percent of the respondents who stated to have trust on the KIA, this institution continues to remain one of least trusted security institution in Kosovo. Around 43 percent of respondents stated that they do not trust the KIA. What is surprising is that the level of distrust resulted despite its managerial changes that occurred in the beginning of 2015. Indeed, it is interesting to mention that since the managerial changes occurred in KIA, there were no negative references in the public affiliating this institution. On the contrary, some interesting positive movements were initiated by the new management which logically should have contributed to the improved reputation of the institution. It seems, however, that stereotypes towards the KIA embedded among citizens as result of scandals that emerged in the previous years are continuing to haunt this institution. Likewise, considering undisclosed mandate that KIA has, it is more likely that the results of its work to be attributed to the KP rather than to the agency itself. Meantime,

3 A possible terrorist attack prevented in Prishtina, DW, 25.12.2014, <http://www.dw.com/sq/pengohet-nj%C3%AB-sulm-eventual-terrorist-n%C3%AB-prishtin%C3%AB/a-18152832?maca=alb-rss-alb-polballkani-3242-rdf>

4 Major Police Action: 39 Policemen and 9 Custom Officers arrested for corruption and bribe <http://lajmi.net/aksion-i-madh-policor-arrestohen-39-police-dhe-9-doganier-per-mitmarrije-dhe-korrupsion/>

5 Violent Confrontations between Protesters and Police in Prishtina, 27th January 2015, <http://www.reporter.al/galeri/perleshje-te-dhunshme-mes-protestuesve-dhe-policise-ne-prishtine-fotogaleri/>

6 Input collected from Focus Group organized by KCSS with Field Researchers on 16 November 2015

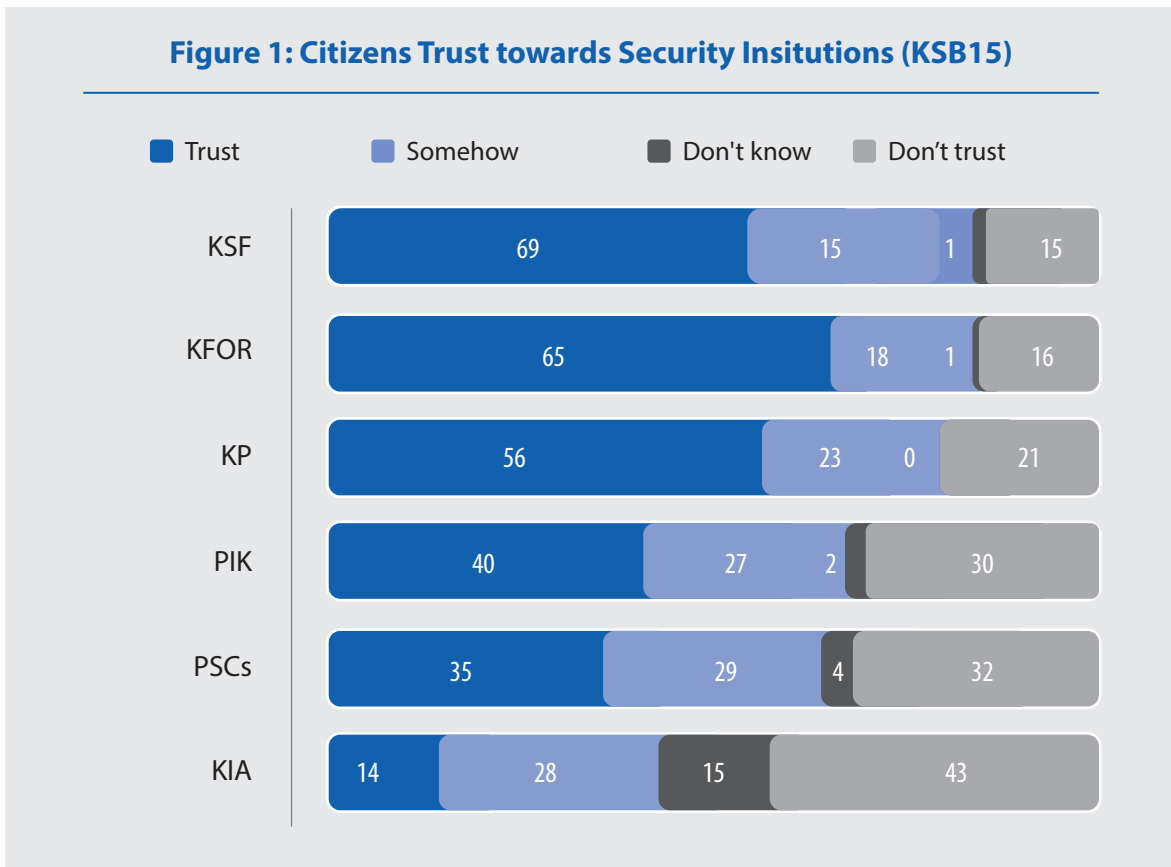
7 See the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) 2014th Edition of Kosovo Security Barometer, Launched in December 2015

8 Input collected from Focus Group organized by KCSS with Field Researchers on 16 November 2015

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid

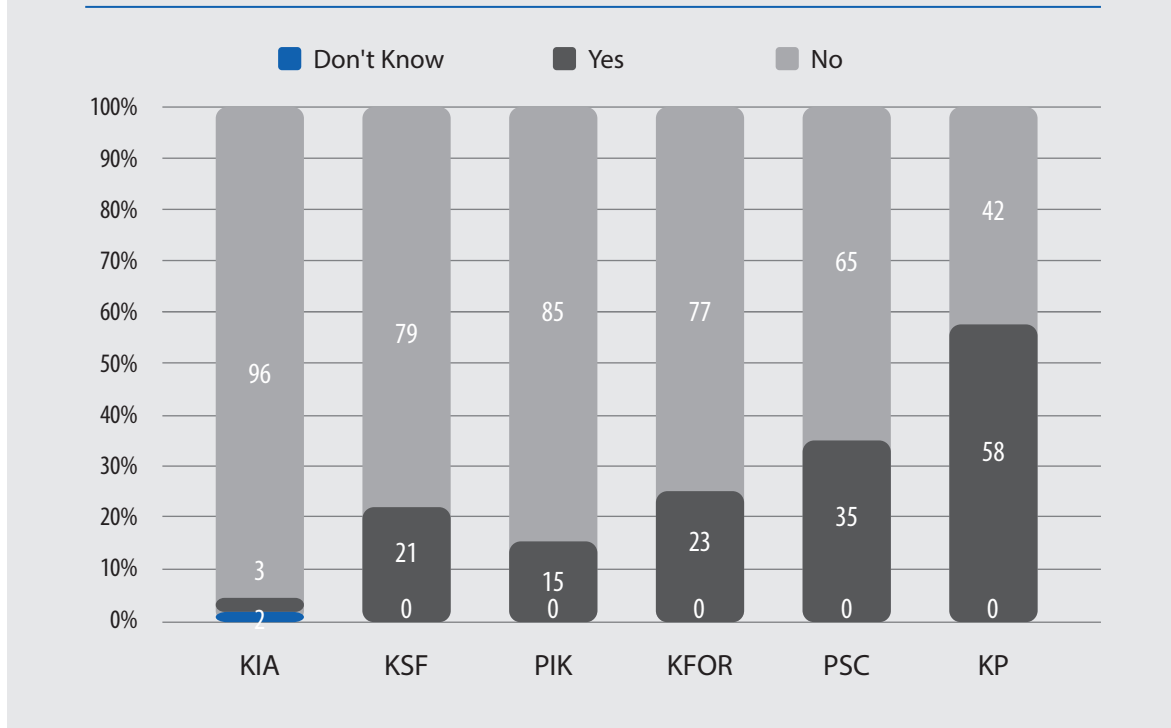
critical results like this should serve as reminder to KIA for the immediate need to review its communication strategy in order to rebuild its trust with citizens.¹¹



It is worth mentioning that perceptions on trust mostly depend on the source of information which usually influenced citizens’ thoughts. Therefore, in addition to measuring the trust towards security institutions, the KSB has also measured the frequency of contacts that citizens have had with these institutions. The aim, therefore, was to identify whether perceptions towards these security institutions was created based on personal experiences or based on their passive observation. What is important to highlight here is that with the exception to the KP, according to the survey results, the citizens’ perceptions towards all other security institutions were influenced mainly based on their passive observation and not through direct contact.

In fact, KP is the only institution which resulted to have been directly contacted by the majority of the respondents (58 percent). This is not surprising given the nature of the work of the police. And it could be this direct contact that lends a more rational base for respondents’ perceptions towards the KP, which was not always the case with other security institutions measured by the KSB. The second most frequently contacted institution resulted to be the PSCs with 35 percent of the respondents claiming to have had direct contact with these private institutions. Meanwhile, KFOR and the KSF which both resulted being the most trusted institutions resulted being contacted only by 23 percent and 21 percent of the respondents respectively. The PIK also resulted in being contacted only by 15 percent of the survey respondents. Finally, the KIA was the least contacted institution with only 2 percent of the respondents claiming to have had contacted this institution. However, one must point out that the fact that the KIA is the least contacted institution cannot be taken as negative. Indeed, it is the very nature of the work of this institution that lends it to be listed at the bottom of those institutions in direct contact with citizens.

¹¹ Ibid

Figure 2: Frequency of contacts with Security institutions

1.1.2. Trust towards Justice Institutions

The judicial sector continues to be a subject of criticism for years, including this one. This is confirmed also by the results of the current edition of the KSB, which show that trust towards judicial institutions such as Courts, Prosecution, and the EULEX¹² continue to be very low. More precisely, the survey results show that 54 percent of the respondents do not trust EULEX, which means that from all institutions measured this year only AoK and GoK had poorer results. Indeed, compared to last previous edition the results show that this year the distrust towards EULEX has increased by 10 percentage points. This increase marks also the highest negative trust trend measured by this KSB 2015.¹³ As a result of the massive drop in trust, EULEX is listed, for the first time, below the domestic Prosecution and Courts when it comes to citizens' perceptions and their trust towards these judicial institutions. The respondents' perceptions on EULEX were mainly based on their belief that it lacks efficiency to combat corruption in Kosovo. They clearly tie their perceptions also with the alleged corruption scandals which emerged in late 2014 and the beginning of 2015 about the possible involvement of EULEX judges and prosecutors working for this mission in major corruption affairs^{14, 15}

Citizens were critical also when it comes to domestic justice institutions. According to the survey results, more than 51 percent of the respondents declared that they do not trust Kosovo Courts, while 40 percent stated that they do not trust Kosovo Prosecution. The survey results show, that there has been very limited improvement in citizens' trust toward domestic institutions. Compared

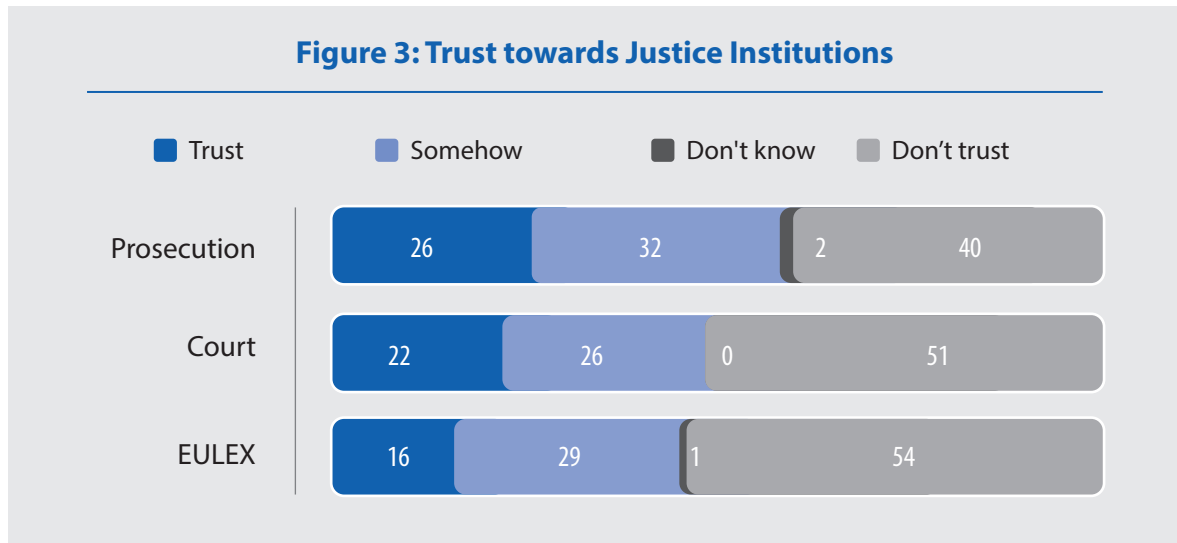
12 This year the EULEX is purposefully included among the justice institutions only considering that its vast majority of remained competences of this missions are now concentrated in the justice sector.

13 See the Kosovo Security Barometer Regular Annual Edition for 2014 published by Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS),

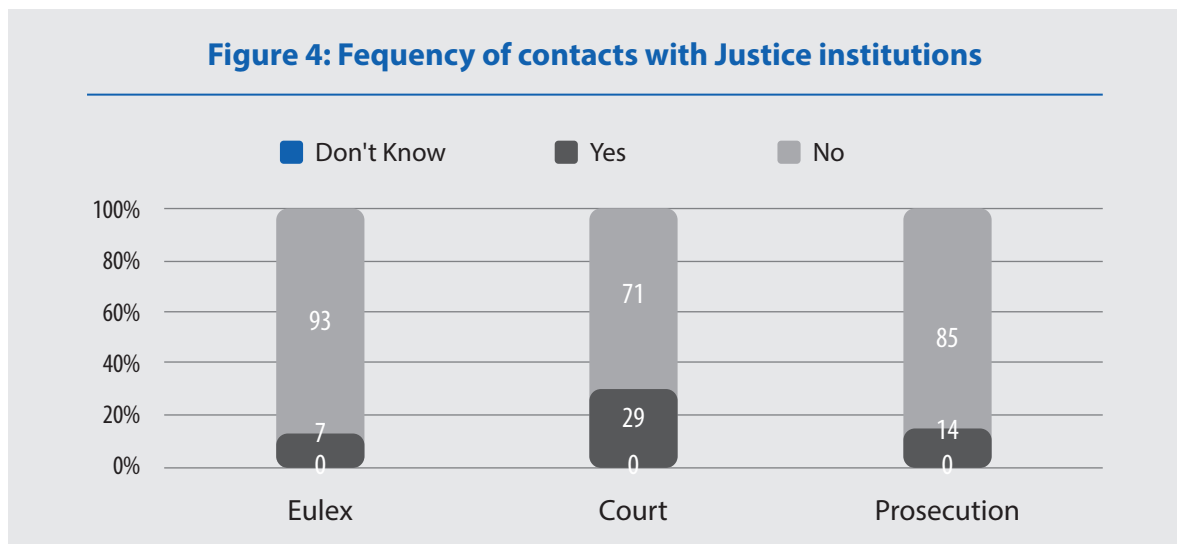
14 Suspected Corruption Affairs in EULEX further diminishes trust of Kosovo citizens towards justice institutions, DW, November 2015, <http://www.dw.com/sq/dyshimet-p%C3%ABr-aferra-korruptive-n%C3%AB-eulex-zbehin-besimin-te-organet-e-drejt%C3%ABsis%C3%AB-n%C3%AB-kosov%C3%AB/a-18038448>

15 Input collected from Focus Group organized by KCSS with Field Researchers on 16 November 2015

to the previous edition of the KSB, the number of those who expressed distrust towards the Courts has slightly increased, while the trust toward Prosecution increased by 5 percentage points. What is worth noticing, however, is that citizens very often mistakenly link the judiciary only with the courts, leaving the prosecution, to a certain extent, outside the public opinion scrutiny.



In the other hand, the KSB survey results show also that citizens' contacts with justice institutions are relatively low. However, this must not necessarily be taken as a negative indicator since not all citizens are obliged to have direct contacts with justice institutions or vice-versa. Hence, according to the KSB, only 29 percent of the respondents claimed to have had direct contacts with the courts; 14 percent claimed to have had contacts with the prosecution; whereas 7 percent of them claimed to have had contact with EULEX. It is worth highlighting that citizens' perceptions towards justice institutions are mainly based on prevailing public discourse and their general observations about rule of law in Kosovo.



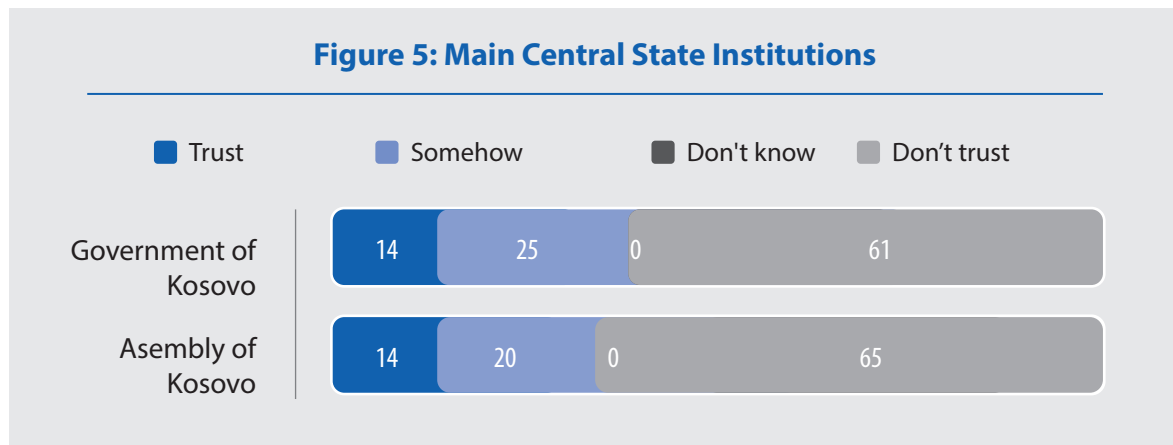
1.1.3. Trust towards the Assembly and the Government of Kosovo

Viewed from the security and justice point of view, the Assembly of Kosovo (AoK) and the Government of Kosovo (GoK) are among the institutions which have crucial stakes in this sector. Their importance is both, strategic and operational - which means that they are not only

responsible to define the entire security and justice policies in Kosovo but they also play an important role when it comes to their role and mandate from the 'human security' point of view.

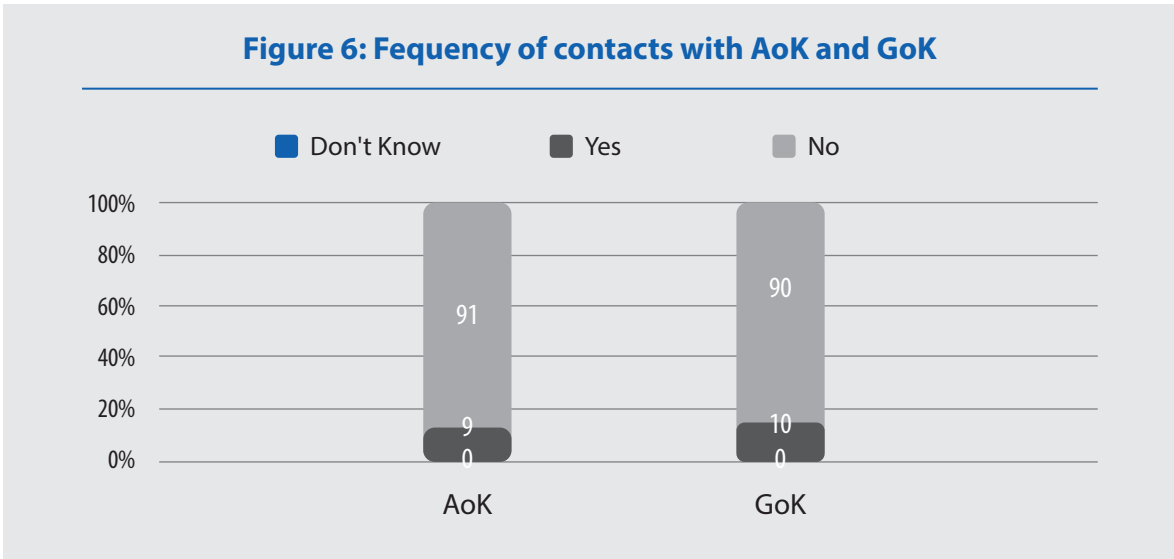
Despite their importance for the sector, the survey results show that citizens' trust towards both the Assembly and the Government are at a critical state. More precisely, 65 percent of the respondents stated that they do not trust the Assembly of Kosovo, which is the highest level of distrust among all the institutions considered by the KSB. Similarly, 61 percent of the respondents stated that they do not trust the Government of Kosovo, which makes it the second most distrusted institution among the institutions considered by KSB.

The observations from field research while interviewing respondents showed that their perceptions are shaped by general political developments of the last couple of years. It was clear that their perceptions are not based on and limited to the latest political impasse in the AoK. On the contrary, they also attributed their perceptions to the outcomes of the last years' pre-election shifts as well as post-election political crises, which still seem to have an impact on daily political developments. Indeed, as the results of the 2014 edition of the KSB showed, the level of citizens' trust towards the GoK was also low.



On the other hand, it is important to mention that the survey results not only show that citizens share very low level of trust towards the AoK and the GoK, but it also shows that they do not generally sense any meaningful impact of these two institutions in their lives. More precisely, only 9 percent of the respondents (or approximately 1 in 11) stated that they had contacts with their elected representatives from the Assembly of Kosovo. Similarly, only 10 percent of the respondents (or 1 in 10) stated that they have been contacted by this institution. In addition, as witnessed by field researchers, the respondents usually accused their AoK and GoK representatives for being in contact with the citizens only during the electoral campaigns.¹⁶

¹⁶ Input collected from Focus Group organized by KCSS with Field Researchers on 16 November 2015



1.1.4. Citizens' Trust towards Key Non-State Actors

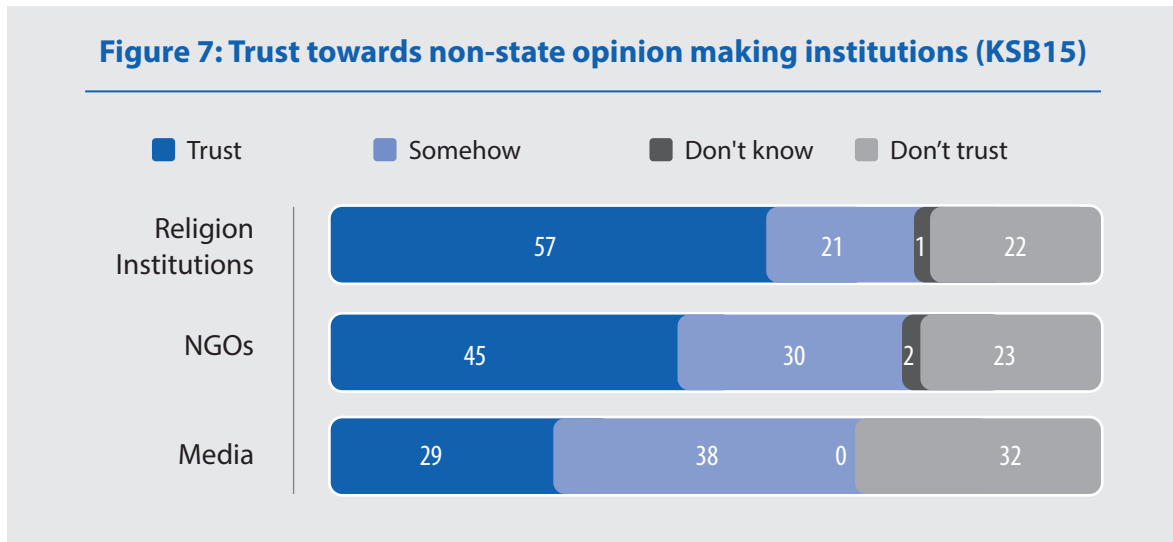
KSB's current edition continued to pay attention towards some specific non-state actors in Kosovo such as civil society, the media, and the religious institutions which, among others, bear an important role when it comes to security, justice, and fundamental moral values of the society in Kosovo. Indeed, over the last few years, these institutions have increased significantly their prominence as actors in the Kosovo security and justice sector. As a result, the KSB's current editions will publish the results of citizens' trust towards these institutions.

The survey results show that the religious institutions continue to be more trusted compared to the civil society and the media. Around 56 percent of the respondents stated that they trust their respective religious institutions compared to 22 percent who stated that they do not trust them, which, comparative aspect, is an almost identical with last year's survey results. In the meantime, considering that Kosovo is characterized by three main religious confessions, it is worth noticing that respondents belonging to different religious confessions have varying degrees of trust in these institutions. For instance, 76 percent of those belonging to the Christian Orthodox confession (usually among the Serbs) stated to have trust towards the Serb Orthodox Church Patriarchate, followed by Catholics, 63 percent of whom declared that they trust their Kosovo's Apostolic Church Administration, while 51 percent of Muslim respondents (which were the vast majority of the overall respondents) stated that they trust the Islamic Community of Kosovo. The main argument why respondents belonging to orthodox community (the vast majority of whom were Serbs) showed so much trust towards their religious representatives can be related to the importance that Kosovo has to the Serbian Orthodox Church and its nationalistic agenda. Meanwhile, the main arguments why respondents were less predisposed to show trust towards their representing religious institutions was related to their inability to prevent the penetration of extremist movements in Kosovo aiming, according to the respondents, to misuse a particular religion for a specific political agenda.

The level of trust in civil society seems to have increased compared to previous results. The survey results of the current edition of the KSB show that 45 percent of the respondents trust the Civil Society Organizations, which is 13 percentage points higher than a year before.¹⁷ The public opinion continued to have less trust in the media, however. Only 29 percent of the respondents

¹⁷ Kosovo Security Barometer 2014, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, December 2014

stated that they trust the media, while 32 percent stated that contrary. Their main references when it comes to their perceptions towards the media is that they are politicized, also very much business oriented, and the respondents share the feeling that they do lack objectivity in their reporting. In addition to that, among the arguments mentioned was also the lack of professionalism demonstrated by certain number of journalists.

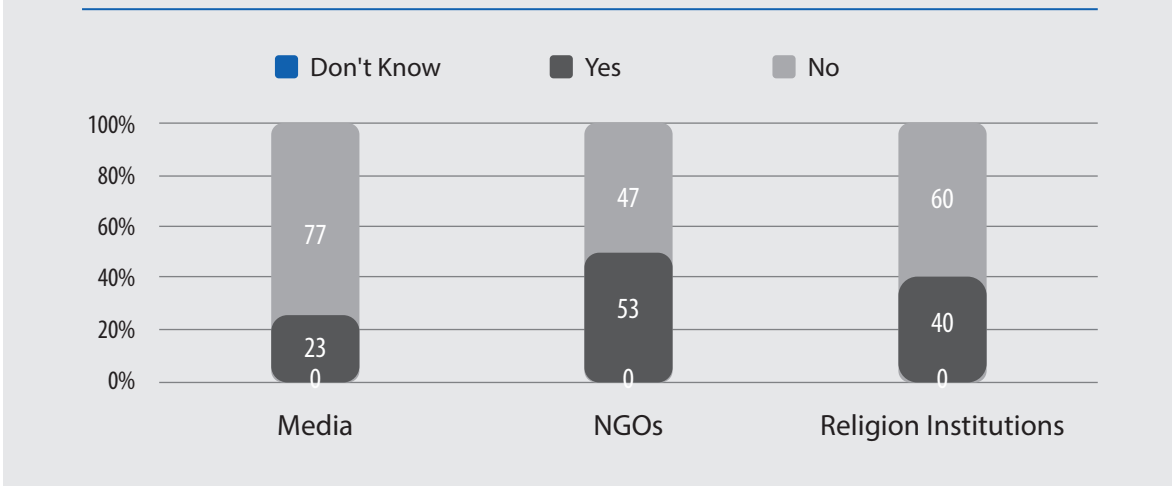


The KSB has also measured the frequency of citizens' contact with these three institutions. The survey results show that the most contacted of institutions resulted to be the NGOs, with 53 percent of the respondents claiming to have had contact with them. According to the field researchers, the respondents pointed out that their contacts with NGOs came mainly through surveys conducted by these organizations. Indeed, it is also very important to mention that a significant number of the respondents considered surveys as an opportunity provided for them to express their increased socio-economic concerns. In the meantime, respondents have also mentioned to have had contact with NGOs through the community related activities and projects undertaken by NGOs in which they were engaged on different capacities.¹⁸

When it comes to the religious institutions, only 40 percent of the respondents stated that they have had contact with their respective religious institutions of some kind. With this percentage, they were mainly referring to their closest imams or their priests which means that the contacts with more senior structures of their religious community were less frequent. Finally, according to the survey results of the KSB, only 23 percent of the respondents stated to have had direct contact with the media. Indeed, this is a very interesting finding. It shows that citizens do not consider watching TV, listening to the radio, or reading written news as the direct contact with media.

¹⁸ Ibid

Figure 8: Frequency of contacts with Non-State Institutions



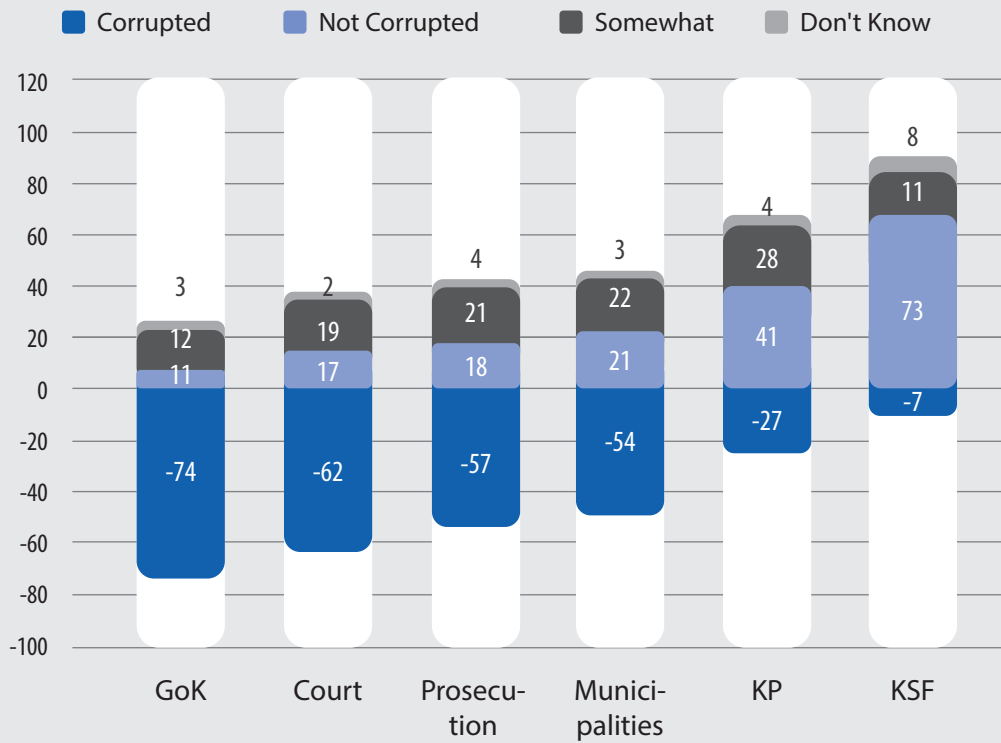
1.2. Perceptions on corruption

This edition of the KSB continued to collect citizens’ perceptions towards corruption in the security and justice institutions in Kosovo. The list of the institutions measured includes: the Kosovo Police, the Kosovo Security Force, the Courts, the Prosecution, the Municipal Institutions, and the Government.

According to the results, the citizens are mainly predisposed to think that security institutions are less corrupted compared to justice institutions, municipal administration, or Government. More precisely, around 73 percent of the respondents stated that the Kosovo Security Force is not affected by corruption, compared to only 7 percent who stated the opposite. This is an exceptional positive perception especially when compared to other institutions considered by this survey. Indeed, this perception is significantly more positive also when compared to the Kosovo Police which resulted being the second least perceived corrupted institution from the list. Accordingly, only around 41 percent of the respondents stated that the KP is not corrupted, compare to 27 percent of those who stated otherwise, while additional 28 percent of the respondents stated that this somehow corrupted.

Contrary to the aforementioned security institutions, both, the justice and the executive institutions are perceived as very corrupt institutions. More precisely, 62 percent of the respondents stated that the Courts are corrupt as also 58 percent stated that the prosecution is corrupt. In the other hand, 64 percent stated that the Kosovo Government is corrupted while 54 percent stated that the municipal institutions are corrupt as well. The perceptions on corruption are correlated to the perception on trust because respondents happened to have expressed consistent opinions on the trust and corruption.

Figure 9: Citizens perception toward corruption extent in the Security and Justice institutions in Kosovo (KSB15)

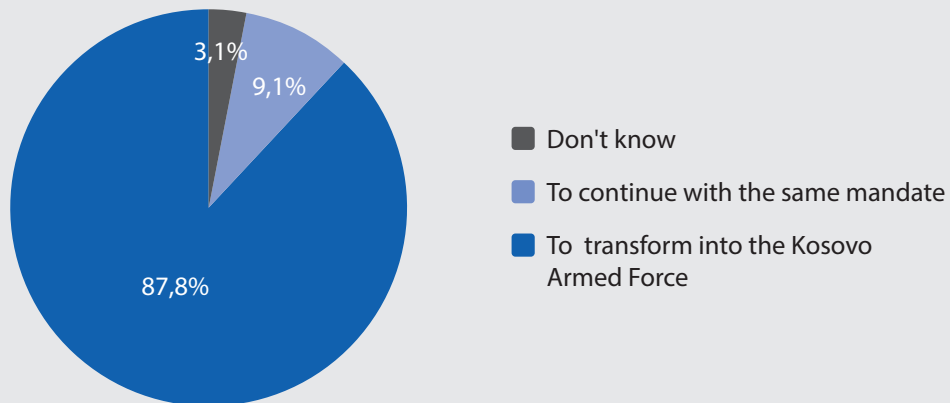


1.3. Perceptions towards the future of the KSF and the mandate of KFOR and EULEX

Despite the end of transitional period with regards to Kosovo’s supervised independence, the security sector is expected to undergo reform in light of new circumstances on the ground. During the last few years there have been constant discussions related to the future of the Kosovo Security Force. Such a debate has prevailed especially in regards to the future of the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), and to a lesser extent, of KFOR’s mission in Kosovo.

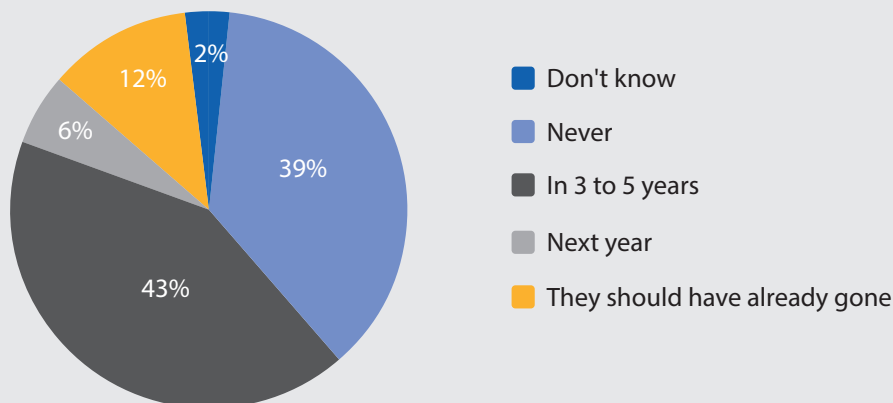
As for the future of the KSF, up to 88 percent of the respondents supported the government’s proposal for the transformation of the institution into the Kosovo Armed Forces. This represents the most endorsed policy decision by the citizens of Kosovo. The respondents have based their perception on the need of Kosovo to have its defence capabilities and also pointed out the symbolic importance of the institution for statehood.

Figure 10: Transformation of KSF into Kosovo Armed Forces



In the mind-set of Kosovo respondent, the continuation of KFOR mandate is clearly linked to the developments pertaining to the future of the KSF. The less local defence capabilities the more calls for continuation of KFOR mandate. While there is on-going endorsement towards KFOR mission, the public perception does not reflect a support for indefinite presence. Instead, the public opinion opts for the withdrawal of KFOR in the next 3-5 years (42.5 percent) with only 5.8% requiring its withdrawal next year (in 2016). While there is a small percentage expecting that the mission was supposed to be withdrawn already (12 percent), on the other hand 37.5 percent believe that the mission should never withdraw. The latest category of respondents base their opinion on the on-going challenges of normalisation of the relations between Kosovo and Serbia and the perception of having the latter posing a security threat towards Kosovo.¹⁹

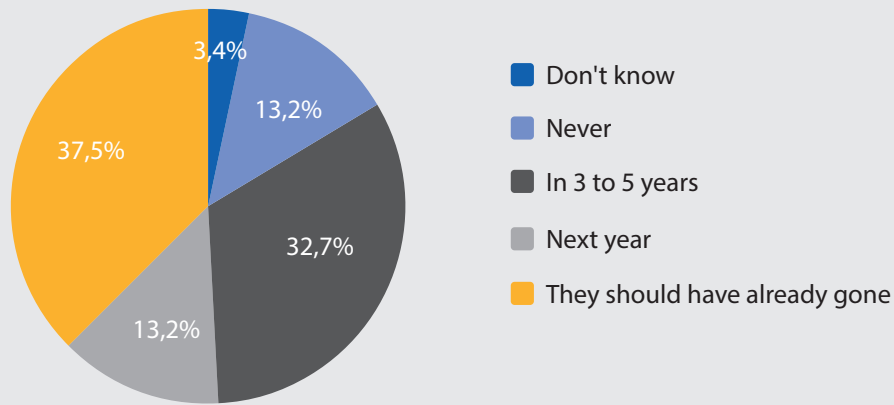
Figure 11: Respondents respond on when should the KFOR end its mandate in Kosovo (KSB15)



¹⁹ Focus Group with the field researchers, organized to discuss about the respondent perceptions. The focus-group is organized by KCSS on the 16th November 2015.

The same question was also asked about the future of EULEX. Here, however, the answers were quite different; the majority of the respondents were in favor of EULEX leaving Kosovo. Around 37 percent of the respondents stated that the EULEX should have already withdrawn whereas another 6 percent stated that this mission should leave next year. Respectively, if added up, it means that 43 percent of Kosovars are in favor of this mission leaving Kosovo very soon, perhaps in 2016 when the mission’s mandate practically ends. On the other hand, up to 33 percent felt that EULEX has still job to do in Kosovo by stating that the EULEX should stay in Kosovo for another 3 to 5 years. Only 13 percent stated that this mission should never leave Kosovo.

Figure 12: Perception of Citizens towards the future of EULEX



CHAPTER II

CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THREATS AND RISKS

The aim of this chapter is to address citizens' concerns about the main risks and threats aggravating Kosovo's national security. This year was characterized by a series of political instability, social and religious events, which generally influence the public opinion in Kosovo towards national security. This chapter aims to scrutinise the extent to which such developments have affected citizens' perceptions. As it was the case in the previous edition of KSB, initially the respondents were introduced with a single open question to address the main risks and threats towards national security acknowledged by them. This was mainly done not only to exclude the possibility of influencing their opinions, but also to have a qualitative input that would help us understand better the answers provided by respondents when it comes to closed ending questions.

The open-ended question provides a common trend on the responses of the respondents with regards to external risks and threats. The citizens identified three categories of problems: political, economic and security challenges. When it comes to internal risks and threats, the majority of respondents rated corruption belonging to all three categories as the most concerning one. Likewise, also the current political instability and crises, involving disputes among the political parties, lack of domestic political consensus and violent protests happened to be frequently mentioned by the respondents. The second most indicated internal threats are those related to the economic factors starting from the unemployment, economic underdevelopment and lack of opportunities. The third most referred issues by respondents were those related to security - the main reference when it comes to this topic was the organized crime, followed by extremism and religious groups. Other issues mentioned included range of topics such as: weak educational system, Kosovo border demarcation with Montenegro, Kosovo's membership in UNESCO (indicated by Serbian minority respondents only), usuries, Association of Serb Municipalities etc.

Finally, when it comes to the external threats Serbia's approach towards Kosovo has been considered the most serious threat for most of the respondents. There were also references towards threat coming from global violent extremist groups and conflicts. The global economic crisis was mentioned also among the prevailing problems.

Subsequently to the open-ended question, this chapter observes the extent to which the security sector, political (in)stability and economic situation pose a danger or a potential threat to national security in Kosovo. These issues are referred to the sources of internal risks and threats towards the national security in Kosovo. In addition, the following part provides findings related to sources of external risks that citizens perceive as a potential destabilizing factor and a threat towards Kosovo's security. Those threats include international conflicts in Syria and Iraq, global economy, health issues, as well as the latest events involving the Syrian refugees.

Hereupon, the focal points of this chapter are public perceptions towards national security:

- Internal threats and risks vis-à-vis national security ;
- External threats and risks vis-à-vis national security;

2.1. Internal threats vis-à-vis national security

The survey results show that Kosovo citizens perceive a great array of internal risk and challenges implying the potential to destabilise the security and political environment. Unemployment and poor economic conditions represents the core internal challenges.

Around 97 percent of the respondents perceive the unemployment as the main security challenge. Security and social cohesion is gradually perceived complementary concern for ordinary Kosovars. They consider that high level of unemployment causes other social concerns such as increase of crimes rate and other wrongdoing activities involving in particular youth groups who have no bright perspective in their current society. Indeed, the high rate of unemployment along with the on-going political instability and high level of corruption led towards citizens' low level of trust towards the Government. One of the consequences deriving directly from all these issues is large number of illegal migration of citizens who are willing to search for better life abroad. The citizens also fear that this high level of unemployment may easily turn into a social revolt with unpredicted consequences. Therefore, the high level of citizens pointing at the unemployment as the main security challenge is not something that should be ignored by Kosovo institutions, the media, and the civil society. More specifically, this should be taken with an alert for all institutional policies that address such issues.

However, addressing the unemployment as an issue is deeply related to addressing the second most perceived internal threatening issue expressed by citizens which is corruption. Around 95 percent of the respondents out of the total perceive corruption to be a threatening phenomenon steadily sinking Kosovo. Through these answers, citizens once again reconfirmed that until now there were only limited or non-existent steps taken by the state institutions to reduce the level of corruption in Kosovo showing that there is no sufficient willingness of the government to improve the accountability of the state officials, undermining not just economic growth, but also the security situation and good governance.

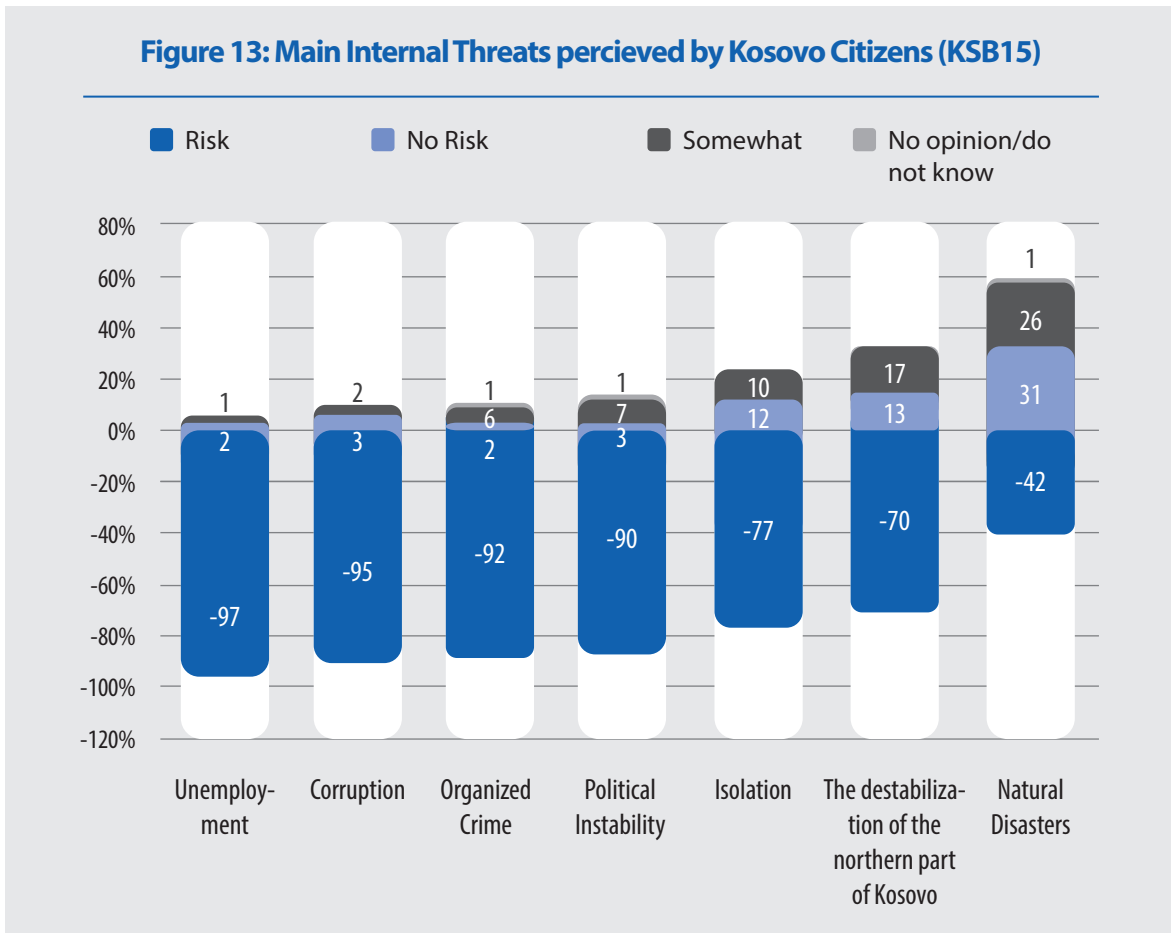
In the meantime, citizens showed significant concerns also towards crime. According to the respondents, organized crime is the third highest internal threat in Kosovo. More precisely, 92 percent of them stated that organized crime represents a high threat for Kosovo. The result is slightly more negative compared to the last years. One of the reasons for this is that there has been more publicity for the organized crimes committed which have resulted on slightly increasing the awareness of the respondents which at the same time was greatly supported by their low trust towards the state institutions as they perceive that these institutions have shown weak performance in combating organized crime.

Indeed, the lack of political stability and political impasse itself has been considered by 90 percent of respondents as a high risk issue for the general security in Kosovo. Compared to the previous editions of the KSB, the number of respondents stating that political instability is posing a high threat has increased by 16 percentage points. As already mentioned, perceptions on this matter are influenced by the political impasse which more or less is still on-going. Such perceptions in particular are triggered also by the recent developments in the Kosovo Assembly driven by deep disagreements between the ruling and the opposition parties on certain issues that have resulted in the inability to hold the regular sessions in the Assembly. According to citizens' perceptions, these acts are being carried for private and partisan interests and have expressed deep concerns in regards to political (un)willingness in resolving the current situation.

Another concern expressed by Kosovo citizens was isolation. Around 77 percent of the respondents considered that isolation of Kosovo, referring to the inability of the Kosovo citizens to travel to the European countries due to the lack of visa liberalization agreement, as a serious threat for Kosovo. The citizens highlighted that the latest increase of visa refusal is only contributing to the increase of migration and asylum seeking. The main concerns regarding these matters are linked, according to the interviewees, to the high unemployment rate, poverty, social issues, dissatisfaction with the state institutions etc. In addition, the respondents expressed serious concerns regarding the readmission of these citizens, namely the capacities of the state institutions to repatriate and further take measures to help these citizens resolve their financial and economic issues and improve the economic situation in general.

The destabilization in the northern part of Kosovo is another issue which citizens of Kosovo have concerns about. The concerns of Kosovo citizens over this part of the territory of Kosovo have been slightly overshadowed by the other political events in the capital. Yet, the survey results of current edition show that 70 percent of the respondents considered the situation in the northern part of the country as a challenge implying that it has a great potential to destabilize the security situation in Kosovo. This shows that the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia did not have the expected positive impact for the ordinary citizens when it comes to improving the relation between the two parties. On the other hand, 17 percent of the respondents perceive that there might be a risk, to some extent, from the northern part of Kosovo, while the remaining (13 percent) of the respondents do not perceive any risk from any kind of escalation of the situation in the northern part of the country.

Compared to other types of threats, Kosovo citizens seem not to be very concerned about the natural disasters such as fires, floods, landslides and similar hazards. Even though Kosovo is prone to natural disasters, respondents seem not to be concerned about these types of environmental risks and threats. There are 42 percent of those who do see such disasters as a threat, 26 percent of them see them as somewhat as a threat, while 31 percent of them do not perceive such natural disasters as a threat. Such minimal concerns for these types of threats, compared to others, could most likely come from the lack of adequate information and lack of awareness about the seriousness and consequences such hazards may pose. Since this issue was not often in public discourse, respondents seem not to have any strong opinion in this regard, since it was clear also during the surveying that many of them requested more detailed explanations about these issues.



2.2. External threats vis-à-vis national security

The respondents generally have shown lack of trust towards the state institutions and as such their perceptions towards the Kosovo’s institutions capacities to provide safety and security are not highly valued. Similarly to their general distrust in state institutions to protect its citizens from internal threats, the respondents have shared similar views about state institutions when it comes to their (in)ability to provide the public good of security from external threats.

Similarly to the survey results of the previous year, the issues pertaining to ISIS and participation of Kosovo’s citizens in the conflicts abroad continue to pose a threat and risk for the national security.

According to the majority of the respondents, the main external threat to national security is the so-called Islamic State (known as ISIS). In statistical terms, overall 76 percent of the respondents perceive ISIS as serious threat also towards national security of Kosovo. It is noteworthy that citizens’ opinions are significantly affected by what is being served to them by the media providing figures of over 300 Kosovo citizens (from 2012-2015) participating in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. The main concerns of respondents raised the ability of the recruiters to widespread violent extremism and recruit people for a foreign conflict in the Middle East. In the meantime, with similar arguments used, 57 percent of the respondents considered the international conflicts in Syria and Iraq to be a threat, while only 27 percent said that this conflict does not directly affect Kosovo.

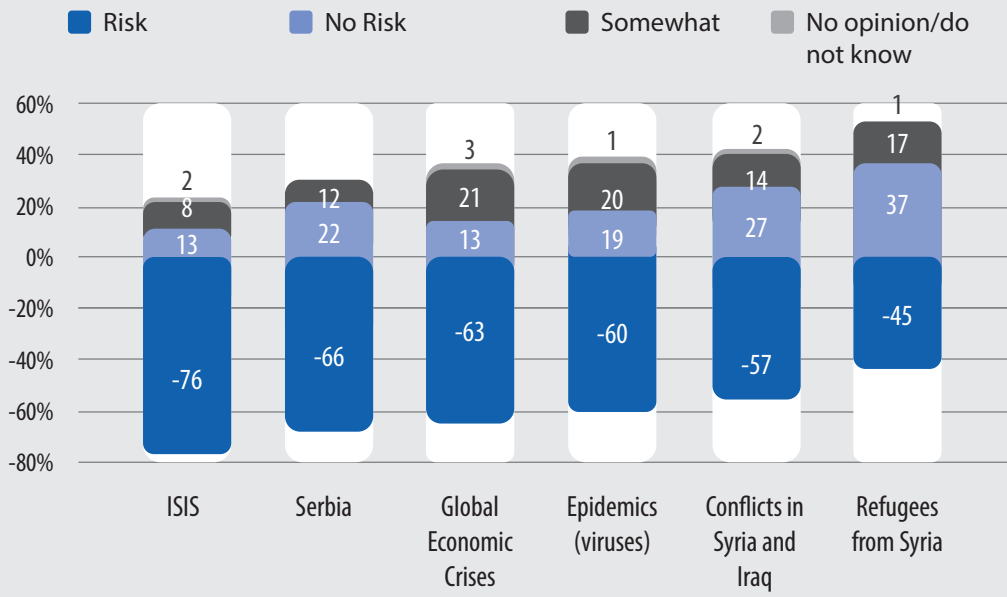
While the perception towards ISIS and its threat to Kosovo are high, the perception towards Syrian refugees appears to be slightly positive. The number of refugees of the Syrian civil war who left their country exceeded four million according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Considering this fact, although 45 percent of respondents perceived the arrival of the refugees as a threat, their main fear was based on the potential infiltration of the ISIS members among the refugees with the intention to recruit youngsters in Kosovo or even commit a terrorist act here. On the other hand, 17 percent of the respondents perceived this to be as somewhat of a risk, while 37 percent of them perceived no risk from the Syrian refugees at all. This last group of respondents shows more sympathy for the refugees given that Kosovars themselves were once forced to leave their country. This group of respondents went even further by acknowledging that there is the need to show solidarity towards them and that they would even offer help, even though they know Kosovo's capacities for accepting refugees are low.

Serbia continues to be perceived as an external security challenge for the Kosovo respondents. Given Serbia's approach towards Kosovo, the respondents perceive Serbia to be the second most threatening actor towards Kosovo. Around 66 percent of the respondents perceive Serbia's approach towards Kosovo to be mainly risky; while 12 percent of them believe that Serbia's approach towards Kosovo is risky only to some extent. The other part of the respondents (22 percent) does not perceive any immediate risk from Serbia. Compared to the last year's edition of the KSB, those who perceived Serbia as a threat dropped by 6 percentage points, which is in line with the other KSB editions in 2013, 2012 where the figures regarding Serbia's approach stood in between 60 percent and 70 percent. The respondents' perceptions in this regard are mostly based on the overall Serbia's political approach towards Kosovo.

Global Economy (recession, the decline in remittances) have been perceived as another security threat for the 63 percent of the respondents, followed by 21 percent of those who perceive this to be somewhat risky, and 13 percent of them who do not perceive much risk from the global economy. Even though the global economy and trade have been the main concern for most of the EU and other powerful economic countries, Kosovo citizens, due to the isolation that they are experiencing, have shown less concern in this regard, arguing mainly that the risk for Kosovo's economic conditions to worsen is low.

Finally, 60 percent of the respondents showed concern with the spreading of the potential global epidemic viruses in Kosovo; 20 percent of them perceiving this only as somewhat risky; while another 19 percent perceiving this as not risky. When answering this question, the respondents related with the low medical capabilities of Kosovo's competent medical centres, and their inability to address major health catastrophes.

Figure 14: Main External Threats perceived by Kosovo Citizens



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