Trend Analysis
Attitudes of the Serbian Community in Kosovo

2020
TREND ANALYSIS 2020

Attitudes of the Serbian Community in Kosovo
Research client

NGO Aktiv

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INTRODUCTION

This year’s edition of Trend Analysis is the sixth in a row since 2015, when the NGO AKTIV started this research. The comprehensiveness of such an analysis was supposed to provide additional verification of some social trends that we noticed in previous research and to methodologically reduce statistical discrepancies, peaks and drops that apparently had no explanation in previous years and the like. At least that’s what it looked like in our plans.

However, COVID-19 happened. A unique phenomenon in modern human history, an unprecedented experience from the recent or distant past, an event whose consequences for society, economy and politics will be the subject of research for many years to come.

The extraordinary circumstances and confusion that the pandemic brought into everyday life had a huge impact on the population, its priorities, perceptions, behaviour and attitudes. The pandemic stressed the importance of having efficient institutions and, generally speaking, social responsibility. It therefore made more visible, and for the citizens more important, all those weaknesses of the system, social relations and generally negative socio-political characteristics that existed more or less imperceptibly even before the pandemic occurred. The same applies to positive manifestations in our society, solidarity, for example, cooperation of communities outside the usual political and ethnic divisions, that is, unity which did not exist before. This is another paradox of this phenomenon. At the same time, the pandemic increased both pessimism and optimism, both criticism and support, and both trust and distrust. What is certain, and what we have been able to observe in the data analysis, it has almost eradicated the indifference and passivity that are often present in such research.

The extraordinary circumstances in which this year’s research took place, contributed to smaller or larger (but certainly unusual) deviations from the trends that proved to be stable in our previous research. Thus, the pandemic, in addition to all the consequences, had another one, which only we who worked on this year’s research know about. It has made our job to identify, analyse and explain the main social, economic and political trends in the society in which we live much more difficult.

We did our best and you get to be the judge of to what extent we succeeded in that.

For the research team,

Miodrag Miki Marinković
Program Director of NGO AKTIV
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research method:
Face-to-face survey (F2F), focus groups, interviews

Survey:
The questionnaire consisted of 46 questions

Research period:
June - August 2020

Sample size:
540 respondents (270 in Northern Kosovo, 270 in Serb-majority areas south of the Ibar River)

Focus groups:
North Mitrovica / Zvečan, Leposavić, Gračanica, Štrpce

Interviewed persons:
Goran Avramović, Editor-in-Chief of RTV Kim
Dragiša Mijačić, Executive Director of the Institute for Territorial Economic Development (InTER)
Tanja Vujisić, journalist
Nenad Radosavljević, director of RTV Mir
**MAIN RESEARCH RESULTS**

14.4% of respondents are optimistic about the general tendencies in Kosovo society, which is almost twice as many as in 2019 (7.4%).

58.7% of surveyed citizens do not trust political leaders in Kosovo, and only one in seven respondents answered that they did (14.3%).

Citizens’ trust in the work of major international institutions, the EU, EULEX, UNMIK and KFOR, although still low, is slightly higher than last year. The EULEX administration was rated with an average score of 1.96 on a scale of 1 to 5. Although still predominantly negative, there has been a general increase in confidence in the work and results of international organizations in Kosovo.

25% of citizens advocate the status quo, and 1/5 of them see the formation of the Union of Serbian Municipalities as a solution to the Kosovo issue. Only 6% of respondents see the solution in the exchange of territories or the recognition of Kosovo by Serbia.

58% of respondents believe that the ASM will not be formed, which is in line with the growing trend of mistrust since 2017.

83% of citizens do not support at all or say that they do not have enough information, but do not support demarcation. Last year, 73% of respondents gave such answers to the same question. These data unequivocally indicate that the idea of demarcation does not have the support of Serbs from Kosovo.

A significantly larger number of citizens, more precisely 34% (which is even 10% more than in 2019) believe that they could freely express their views in public communication.
In an evenly distributed sample, **22.6%** of respondents residing in predominantly Serb areas south of the Ibar river indicated that at one or more moments during the previous year they felt threatened, while in the north that percentage was lower (14.4%).

**46.1%** of citizens do not see themselves in Kosovo or will leave Kosovo in the next five years if given the opportunity. In the category of respondents aged 18 to 29, almost 70% show a desire to leave Kosovo.

Three out of four respondents (**75.6%**) believe that the European Union protects Pristina’s interests in the dialogue, and less than 1% think that the EU’s position in the negotiation process is closer to Belgrade’s interests.

**80.4%** of respondents believe that members of the Kosovo Police did their job professionally during the Covid-19 pandemic and even showed constructive flexibility in certain situations.
SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

1. Sample structure by gender of respondents

- Male: 50.2%
- Female: 49.8%

2. Structure of respondents according to place of residence

- Northern Kosovo: 50%
- Serb majority areas south of the Ibar river: 50%

3. Sample structure according to the education of the respondents

- Elementary school: 4.6%
- High school: 25.4%
- College: 17.8%
- University: 52.2%
4. Sample structure according to the age of the respondents

- 18-29 years old: 23.1%
- 30-45 years old: 35.2%
- 46-65 years old: 29.6%
- 66 and more years: 12%

5. Sample structure according to the working status of the respondents

- Retired/housewife: 13.9%
- Employed in the non-profit sector (NGO): 3.3%
- Student: 7.2%
- Unemployed (not looking for work): 7.2%
- Unemployed (actively searching for work): 14.8%
- Selfemployed/ I have my own business: 5.2%
- Employed in private sector: 13.1%
- Employed in public sector in Kosovo institutions: 9.3%
- Employed in public sector in Serbian institutions: 25.9%
Question (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “very bad” and 5 is “very good”, assess the material, political, economic and security situation, Table 1) which explores the general impression of the population on the basic factors that affect the quality of their lives, from year to year stagnates on the values that indicate the dissatisfaction of citizens with the general situation in society. Compared to last year, this research records a small increase in respondents who see an improvement in their own financial situation (income at the family level). The answers, seemingly inconsistent with the general trends of declining economic activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, indicate that income of a large number of inhabitants in the Serbian community comes exclusively from budget grants (pensions, salaries, social benefits from Pristina and Belgrade). Such payments were not suspended during the epidemiological crisis, they were even increased to some extent by one-time budget subsidies, which explains the growth of respondents who see their financial situation favourably.

"Institutions of the Republic of Serbia also play an important role in employing people from the north of Kosovo. It is estimated that around 8,000 people work in these institutions in northern Kosovo. Having in mind their families, we come to the fact that in the north of Kosovo the existence of about 35-40,000 people directly depends on the salaries they receive from the Government of the Republic of Serbia, which practically makes up about 80% of all inhabitants of northern Kosovo." Source: Institute for Territorial Economic Development (InTER). Public institutions of the Republic of Serbia in Kosovo: What future awaits us? (2017). http://www.lokalnirazvoj.org/upload/Publication/Documents/2017_08/Javne_institucije_i_ustanove_Republike_Srbije_na_severu_Kosova.pdf (accessed October 20, 2020).

Report from the focus group in Štrpce on the results of the Trend Analysis.
THE MATERIAL SITUATION IN KOSOVO

When comparing the answers of the respondents in the north of Kosovo in relation to those living south of the Ibar river, the only noticeable difference is noticed in almost twice as many respondents in the north who rated their financial situation as very bad (15.2% in the north and 8.9% south of Ibar river, Graph 1). In the qualitative part of the research, this disproportion could not be explained by objective socio-economic trends, so the focus group participants interpreted it with subjective perceptions of what a favourable material situation means.3

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN KOSOVO

Respondents from northern Kosovo and members of the Serb community living south of the Ibar River share their views on political trends and the impact of such trends on their own interests, to an almost identical extent. Perhaps it is more precise and objective to say that both share pessimism and dissatisfaction with the main political tendencies in the past year, because only slightly less than 10% of the total population evaluates the political circumstances positively. (Graph 2).
When it comes to the perception of the economic environment in Kosovo in 2020, the largest percentage of respondents from both tested environments marked general trends as bad or very bad, which is the expected result in light of the large economic stagnation caused by measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic (Graph 3).
According to respondents from northern Kosovo and those from Serb-majority areas south of the Ibar, the security situation in Kosovo is very poor (or poor), with a higher percentage of respondents from northern Kosovo agreeing with this statement. Despite the prevailing negative perception of the security environment, this year saw a significant decline in the percentage of respondents who rated the security situation as very bad (10% less in northern Kosovo and in the predominantly Serb areas south of the Ibar river, Graph 4). Participants in focus groups organized in several Serb communities throughout Kosovo point to a decline in the number of respondents who assess the security situation as very bad or see slight positive changes in the perception of personal security, and paradoxically explain this impression by the COVID-19 epidemic.4 Namely, according to the focus group participants, the epidemic pushed the political agenda (as the main factor that generates ethnic tensions) into the background of social priorities, and thus forced political leaders to focus on epidemiological threats, cooperate and act more responsibly. As an example of this claim, focus group respondents from northern Kosovo state that “there have been no serious security incidents this year, such as the crisis caused by the arrests in Zubin Potok and North Mitrovica in 2019, and thus a sense of security among citizens.”5

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4 Report from focus groups in North Mitrovica and Štrpce.
5 Report from focus group in North Mitrovica and Leposavić.
Although the number of respondents who are optimistic about the general trends in Kosovo society has almost doubled this year (from 7.4% in 2019 to 14.4% in 2020, Graph 5), their share in the general sample is still extremely small, because this year as many as 85.60% of respondents do not share their opinion, i.e. express pessimism regarding “the direction in which things are going in Kosovo.” Yet, although still almost sporadic, the rise in optimism in Kosovo is always “good news” and a significant socio-political indicator. This surprising trend was explained in the previous part of the text (improvement of the material and security situation), but the focus group participants pointed to another factor that influenced this result, and that was “at times constructive cooperation of political leaders from the Serbian and Albanian communities in Kosovo in the fight against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic”. Such, for Kosovo conditions, precedent, cooperation instead of constant tensions, had, in the opinion of focus group participants, a tangible impact on the temporary growth of optimism among the population. The qualification “temporary growth” was used because in the next question the respondents show a growth of pessimism that their lives will be better in the near future (Graph 6) i.e. that the effects of increased social responsibility and solidarity are only temporary and “will disappear as soon as the epidemic passes.”

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6 Ibid.
7 Report from focus group in Gračanica.
For several years in a row, the percentage of respondents who expect worsening living conditions for the Serb community has been on the rise. In the 2018 survey, only one-third of respondents (36%) said they expected life for Serbs in Kosovo to be worse in the next three years. In the research from 2019, that percentage increased to 40%, and this year to a record 46%. This pessimism is evident in all age groups, from 18 to 65, and shows a growth trend with increase of respondents’ age. Thus, in the older age group (respondents over 65 years of age), it reaches almost 60% (Table 2).

When the answers of the respondents are compared according to the place of residence, in connection with the same question, it can be noticed that there are no significant differences between the surveyed citizens living in the north of Kosovo and their compatriots from the areas south of the Ibar River, and both are equally pessimistic about their near future (Graph 7).
Graph 7

Serb majority areas

Northern Kosovo

south of Ibar river

Better
Worse

Same as now

45.6% 45.9% 45% 46.7%

9.3% 7.4%
The question “how often do you follow political events” (Graph 8) aimed to indicate the level of information and agility of respondents in monitoring political developments in and in relation to Kosovo. The analysis of the data showed an almost symmetrical division between those who actively follow political events (often and daily, cumulatively 48%) and those who only follow them sporadically or not at all (52%). Comparing the data with the research from 2019, a significant increase in the number of respondents who actively follow political events is noticed (from 35% from 2019 to 48% in 2020).
ARE THERE ANY POLITICIANS IN KOSOVO YOU TRUST?

One of the most stable trends identified over the years of this research is distrust of political leaders in Kosovo. With variations attributable to static error, for several years now 60% of respondents from the Serb community in Kosovo claim that they do not trust the people who represent them, and only one in seven respondents answered yes to this question (results for 2019 and 2020, Graph 9).

The age of the respondents has almost no influence on this attitude. Distrust is equally present in all age groups of the sample (Table 3) with a slight increase among the elderly (over 65 years of age), which in percentage amounts to 63.1%. When asked to identify political options or leaders in the Serb community they trust, the extremely high number of respondents did not find a single name on the offered list that they trust (as many as 87%). In the part of the sample that answered this question (13% of the total cause), by far the largest percentage gave their trust to the Serbian List (Srpska Lista). In the left section of Table 4 you can find the names of some political options or politicians who have gained the trust of at least one respondent.
Respondents showed even less confidence in political representatives from the Albanian community in Kosovo. Perhaps it would be more objective to say that there is no such trust among the inhabitants of the Serb community in Kosovo at all, because only 1.5% of them mentioned one of the Albanian leaders as a politician of trust, which is a percentage that borders on statistical error.

The trend of distrust towards politicians belonging to the Albanian community has been stable in the last few years (Table 5) and although previously taken as a well-known and unsurprising attitude, it may be time to point to this problem as one of the systemic problems of Kosovo society and inter-ethnic relations within it. In the qualitative part of the research, focus group participants pointed out a number of factors that contributed to this attitude, including: non-affirmative rhetoric towards the Serbian community; lack of political will to respond to its interests; neglect of the legally guaranteed rights of the Serb community; discrimination in access to resources, and many others.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serbian politicians</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Albanian politicians</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SNS/Srpska lista</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>Aljbin Kurti</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent liberal party</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>Vjosa Osmani</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marko Jakšić senior</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>Avdulah Hoti</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenad Rašić</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>Isa Mustafa</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Momčilo Trajković</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaviša Biševac</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>did not answer</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>did not answer</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.

The trend of distrust towards politicians belonging to the Albanian community has been stable in the last few years (Table 5) and although previously taken as a well-known and unsurprising attitude, it may be time to point to this problem as one of the systemic problems of Kosovo society and inter-ethnic relations within it. In the qualitative part of the research, focus group participants pointed out a number of factors that contributed to this attitude, including: non-affirmative rhetoric towards the Serbian community; lack of political will to respond to its interests; neglect of the legally guaranteed rights of the Serb community; discrimination in access to resources, and many others.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you trust Albanian politicians in Kosovo?</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016.</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017.</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018.</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019.</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.

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8 Reports from focus group in North Mitrovica, Gračanica and Štrpce.
The trend established in previous years, in the form of a steady increase in the number of inhabitants from the Serb community in Kosovo who have personal documents issued by the authorities in Pristina, was confirmed in this year’s survey (Table 6). Only three years ago, almost 40% of Serbs (mostly from northern Kosovo) said they did not have documents issued by Pristina institutions. Today, that number has dropped to 10.7%. The data indicates that the de-stigmatization of the trend that has long dominated the Serb communities in the north of Kosovo and was assessed as harmful to the interests of the Serb community is at work, which testifies to the growing institutional integration of the Serb community.

**Table 6.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When it comes to the trust expressed in the work of specific institutions, the results are similar to those from 2019 and certain patterns are noticeable. For example, as in previous years, the Serb community in Kosovo most favourably evaluates the work of those institutions that are established in the constitutional and legal system of the Republic of Serbia, more precisely its Government and its institutions that have a mandate to deal with Kosovo Serb issues, i.e. Office for Kosovo (and Metohija) the bodies of temporary local self-government. At the same time, these are the only institutions that were rated above 2.5 (as the boundary between the predominantly positive and predominantly negative impression). On the other hand, when it comes to Kosovo’s institutions, including the work of Serb members of parliament and ministers in the Kosovo government, respondents show a further decline in satisfaction with their work.

Finally, the last observed pattern is the increase in confidence in the work and results of international organizations in Kosovo (UNMIK, the EU Office in Kosovo, EULEX and KFOR) which have improved results compared to last year, although the results are also still predominantly negative. Focus group respondents explained this growth by the extraordinary circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the feeling of general solidarity and the constructive activities of international organizations in the fight against the pandemic.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provisional bodies of local self-government</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisional bodies of local self-government</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office for Kosovo and Metohija</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian government</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of Kosovo</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian PMs in the Assembly of Kosovo</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian ministers in the Government of Kosovo</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIK</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Office in Kosovo</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EULEX</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFOR</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 Reports from focus group in Leposavić, North Mitrovica and Gračanica.
By far the largest percentage of respondents believe that Russia is the best defender of the interests of the Serb community in Kosovo, as many as 64.3%. On the other hand, only 1.7% of respondents believe that it is the United States. Such attitudes of the respondents were the subject of discussion in focus groups organized within the qualitative part of the research. According to most participants, Russia primarily provides “moral support to Serbs in Kosovo and Serbia, but also, much more importantly, in the United Nations”, and is therefore considered a major partner in defending the interests of the Serb community in Kosovo. Respondents explain this attitude of the officials of the Russian Federation by the traditionally close relations between the two nations, but also by the strategic interests of Russia, which seeks to prevent the Balkans from being left to the influence of the NATO pact and the United States. On the other hand there were still focus group participants, though much fewer, who believed that Russia, like others, "does almost nothing for the Serbs in Kosovo, and that Serbs are left alone by the whole world in the fight for their rights.”

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10 Reports from focus group in North Mitrovica, Gračanica and Štrpce.
11 Report from focus group in North Mitrovica.
12 Report from focus group in Gračanica.
The largest percentage of respondents, slightly more than half, do not have an opinion on the issue of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina. Compared to last year, a lower percentage of undecided (from 58% to 50%) was noticed, which the focus group participants explained by frequent hints of process revitalization, as well as preliminary meetings in that (Brussels) format that were held immediately before this research. There was a slight increase in the percentage of respondents who approve of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade under the auspices of the European Union (from 16 to 20% this year) and an increase in the number of those who do not support such a format of dialogue. The reason for such attitudes may be explained by the results of the following question.

HAS THE LIFE OF SERBS IN KOSOVO CHANGED AFTER THE INTERRUPTION OF DIALOGUE BETWEEN BELGRADE AND PRISTINA IN 2018?

- Yes, it got better: 4.6%
- Yes, it got worse: 20.7%
- Nothing changed: 74.6%
By far the largest part of the respondents, almost 75%, claim that the interruption of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade that took place in 2018 did not have a tangible impact on them and the life of the Serb community in Kosovo. Analytically, this answer can be translated as a claim that the majority of citizens of the Serbian community believe that the process, even while it lasted, did not have a significant impact on their lives. Focus group participants interpreted this position as a consequence of a selective approach in the implementation of the agreements reached, which, along with the unwillingness of the European Union to develop effective mechanisms for monitoring this process, influenced the lack of effects of the solutions reached. In addition, focus group participants pointed to the problem of ambiguity in the wording of solutions that allowed free interpretation of obligations and modalities of implementation of the agreement, which in many cases violated the “spirit and essence” of the agreement to ensure that ordinary people and not exclusively the elites benefit from the agreements reached.

These shortcomings of the process, as well as its negative consequences, are pointed out by some experts from the Serb community in Kosovo. According to Goran Avramović, editor-in-chief of RTV Kim, the populist and triumphant communication of the solutions reached with the public had a negative impact on the security situation of the Serb community in Kosovo. Avramović warns that “every thunderous ‘declaration of victory’ of Serbia is a potential reason for Kosovo Serbs, especially in isolated returnee places, to lose their facades, windows, heads or to have their cattle and furniture stolen.”

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13 Report from focus group in North Mitrovica.
14 Report from focus group in Leposavić.
15 Interview with Goran Avramović on August 18, 2020.
Participation in the election process organized by Kosovo institutions, similar to the issue of possession of documents issued by Kosovo institutions, is a good indicator of the openness of the Serb community to participate in the socio-political life of Kosovo. More precisely, it is an indicator of the weakening of resistance to integration into Kosovo society, which has long been the dominant and socially validated position within the Serb community. On this issue, similar to the one regarding the possession of Kosovo personal documents, there is a trend of weakening resistance, so this year more than 70% of respondents claim that they regularly or occasionally took part in the Kosovo elections. For example, in the same survey from 2016, only 32% of respondents had such an attitude, and 67.8% of respondents had a very negative attitude. These data are constant and convincing enough to conclude that the willingness of the Serb community to actively participate in socio-political life in Kosovo is present and that the main obstacle to this trend resulting in improved interethnic relations now lies more in the responsibility and willingness of political leaders from the majority Albanian community to efficiently and consistently apply legal norms that regulate and protect Serbian interests.
The Association of Serb municipalities is perceived in the Serb community as a body of great importance for the autonomy of Serbs in Kosovo in matters of direct influence on their lives and interests. The initiative has gained and lost in importance in recent years, but it has never been completely abandoned in international circles, much less among Serbs in Kosovo. The previously mentioned shortcomings of the Brussels dialogue (ambiguity of the solutions, free interpretation, selective implementation) are directly related to the growing pessimism in the Serbian community about the formation of the Union of Serbian Municipalities. This year, 58% of respondents believe that it will not be formed (in 2019, that percentage was 51.2%) and, as a consequence, the number of those who believe that it will happen in the near future is declining.

**WILL THE ASSOCIATION OF SERBIAN MUNICIPALITIES BE FORMED?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, it will</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes it will, but not this year</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It will not be formed</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, WHERE 1 MEANS "I COMPLETELY DISAGREE" AND 5 "I COMPLETELY AGREE", HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE FOLLOWING VIEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION OF SERB MUNICIPALITIES?**

- **ASM will attribute to the improvement of the position of Serbs in Kosovo:**
  - 2019: 2.73
  - 2020: 2.72

- **ASM will contribute to the integration of Serbs into the legal-political system of Kosovo:**
  - 2019: 2.76
  - 2020: 2.61

- **ASM will allow for the economic development and employment:**
  - 2019: 2.61
  - 2020: 2.62

Graph 10.
The results of this research show that there is no clear understanding of the envisaged competencies of this body among the respondents from the Serbian community. This is evident from their "undefined attitudes" about the consequences / impact of the formation of the Association of Serbian Municipalities on their lives. Graph 10 shows that the average values of claims about the impact of the formation of the ASM always move close to the "golden mean", i.e. the average grade of 2.5. On the other hand, respondents in the qualitative part of the research indicate that unrealistic expectations are built in the Serbian community around this body (high degree of autonomy, employment, etc.) just as, according to focus group participants, suspicion is spreading in the Albanian community in Kosovo that such a body would provide a dysfunctionally high degree of autonomy to Serbs in Kosovo, to the extent that that community would become an obstacle rather than a contribution to the democracy and functionality of Kosovo society.16

In the context of possible solutions acceptable to stakeholders involved in the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue, the idea of territorial exchange seems to have lost significant support compared to last year when this research was conducted, mostly due to the refusal of leading EU diplomats, Germany and France, to consider the exchange of territories, i.e. demarcation according to ethnic principles as a model for resolving disputes. In the meantime, the Brussels dialogue has been revived, a process whose interruption in 2018 opened the space for the nomination of the idea of demarcation. However, the Brussels dialogue is also a process that, at least for now, does not provide a clear idea of which solution is being worked on, nor is there any speculation about it, so its end result is uncertain. In such uncertainty, one gets the impression that the idea of demarcation “lurks from the side lines” for the failure of the dialogue in order to “triumphantly” return to the stage. That assessment prompted us to continue measuring the support that this idea has in the Serb community in Kosovo this year as well. You can see the results in the graphs that follow. In Graph 11 the answers in 2019 and 2020 are presented while Graph 12 shows the answers obtained in the north in relation to the south of Kosovo.

16 Reports from focus group in Gračanica and Štrpce.
The results of the research show that the idea of demarcation has lost even more support among Serbs in Kosovo compared to last year. The number of respondents who support or are open to this idea with some clarification has dropped from almost 25% in the total sample in 2019 to 17% this year. This means that in the Serb community in Kosovo, five out of six respondents do not accept this idea (83%). As expected, a higher number of respondents support this idea in northern Kosovo (almost 21%) compared to respondents living south of the Ibar River (12%) (Graph 12). In line with this trend are the results of research on the possible effects of this idea (Graph 13).
This year, a significantly smaller number of respondents believe that the realization of the idea of demarcation would have a positive impact on their chances of staying in their current place of residence (down from 17.1% in 2019 to only 7.6% this year as we see in Table 7). This difference in percentage (almost 10% less) merged into undecided respondents, which were more numerous this year than last year, while the number of respondents who believe they would be forced to leave their home due to the realization of the idea of demarcation is slightly higher than last year (41%).

These data unequivocally indicate that the idea of demarcation does not have the support of Serbs from Kosovo. This year we also tried to investigate which idea the Serbs from Kosovo support (Graph 14, "Apart from the stay / return of Kosovo in the constitutional and legal system of Serbia, which of the offered scenarios of a possible comprehensive agreement between Belgrade and Pristina would be the most acceptable for Kosovo Serbs?"). As a possible answer, only those options are offered which to a greater or lesser extent have their representatives in political circles in Belgrade, Pristina or the international community and are currently orbiting as one of the possible solutions in public discourse. The results show that the largest number of respondents, almost 50% do not have a preferred solution for Kosovo, but have the opinion that none of the offered has their support. As expected, ideas on maintaining the state of status quo and the formation of an association of Serb-majority municipalities are seen as the preferred scenario (cumulatively 45%), while only a small number of respondents (less than 6% in total) support resolving the dispute in some of the scenarios (exchange of territories of recognition within
Formation of Association of Serbian Municipalities (in accordance with the previously reached agreements)

Exchange of territories (Northern Kosovo for Preševo valley)

Recognition of Kosovo’s independence by Belgrade officials

Maintaining the current status (status quo)

Maintaining the current status

Graph 14.
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Compared to 2019, this year’s survey shows a declining trend in respondents’ trust in the information they receive from the media and government representatives, which was reflected in an increase in the percentage of citizens who diversified their sources of information in search of reliable knowledge (growth in percentage of respondents from 16% to 30% in 2020 who claim to seek the necessary information in all offered sources, Graph 15).

According to Nenad Radosavljević, director of RTV Mir in Leposavić, the media scene in the Serb community is “poisoned by misinformation and manipulation.” to the extent that it was visible and obvious to the citizens as well. Goran Avramović has a similar opinion, saying that “people do not trust institutions, politicians and religious leaders and are forced to rely on their common sense. Kosovo Serbs are no exception.”

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17 Interview with Nenad Radosavljević on August 24, 2020.
18 Interview with Goran Avramović.
Focus group participants explained this decline in trust with, at times, inconsistent behaviour of representatives of local and central authorities in charge of creating and implementing measures to combat the pandemic, but also with a large number of fake news that appeared in the media during the COVID-19 virus pandemic.\footnote{Graph 16 supports this, and it shows that the average assessment of trust in media reporting has decreased compared to 2019 in each of the listed sources of information.}

According to Nenad Radosavljević, a very small number of media in Kosovo manage to maintain financial independence and thus the independence of editorial policy, which is one of the main factors influencing viewer trust.\footnote{Goran Avramović explains the decline in trust in media coverage by the declining number of local media in Kosovo that have an independent editorial policy: “The vast majority of Serbian media that cover content from the life of Kosovo Serbs are under strict control of the state of Serbia.” All national televisions from Serbia have a clearly profiled news program. It is interesting that the situation is similar with the local media in Kosovo, which report in the Serbian language, so one can count on the fingers of one hand the newsrooms that have remained true to basic professional principles.”\footnote{Reports from focus group in North Mitrovica and Štrpce.} \footnote{Interview with Nenad Radosavljević.} \footnote{Interview with Goran Avramović.}}

\begin{center}
\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Media with national frequency from Belgrade & 2019 & 2020 \\
\hline
Independent media from Belgrade & 2.69 & 2.93 \\
\hline
Serbian media in Kosovo & 2.79 & 2.86 \\
\hline
Media in Albanian in Kosovo & 1.61 & 1.65 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
\end{center}
An unprecedented event such as the COVID-19 pandemic, according to focus groups respondents, also influenced greater citizen engagement, interaction with the authorities and the public, and thus resulted in an increase in the feeling of/need for freedom of expression. A significantly larger number of citizens, more precisely 34% (which is even 10% more than in 2019, Graph 17) believe that they could freely express their views in public communication. Although this is still an unacceptably low number (only one third of respondents), it is positive that this year’s results confirm the trend of increasing freedom of expression which swiftly decreased in 2018, after the assassination of opposition leader Oliver Ivanović (according to the results of that year’s Trend Analysis). According to journalist Tanja Vujisić, the increase in the number of people who freely express their views is visible in her work and is a consequence of the increase in the number of individuals who do not hesitate to publicly criticize without suffering consequences: "In the past year there were more who speak clearly and loudly without anything bad happening to them. It probably influenced the others to relax". Goran Avramović also claims that there was a certain liberation from fear in the public expression of attitudes: “Liberation from fear is the first presumption of free thought. In that sense, central Kosovo has come the furthest”.

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23 Interview with Tanja Vujisić, August 20, 2020.
24 Interview with Goran Avramović.
The ability of the media to report on events in and around Kosovo by conveying independent views in a critical manner is slightly declining compared to 2019, which is in line with the conclusion from the previous issue of declining public confidence in the information they receive through the media (Graph 16). This year, only 10% of respondents believe that the media have sufficiently built reports by presenting independent and critical opinions, and more than half of respondents believe that such quality was not present in the media reports (Graph 18). Journalist Tanja Vujisić disagrees with these results, interpreting the results of this research more as insufficient knowledge of the respondents, then as real shortcomings in presenting critical and independent views: "I have to express regret for the low percentage, because I don't think it’s true that there is no place for critical thinking in the media in Kosovo to that degree. The only reason I see for the small percentage is that people do not follow the media in Kosovo enough, except for TV channels."25

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25 Interview with Tanja Vujisić.
According to the explanation given in the qualitative part of the research, which supports the fact that political "disputes" were left aside during the epidemiological emergency, it is noticed that this year the number of respondents who think that the main security risks are in their environment due to political instability was significantly reduced (from 50% in the 2019 survey to just under 32% this year). On the other hand, respondents in this year’s survey indicated an increase in security risks due to interethnic incidents (an increase of 10%) and crime (an increase of 8%).

As already indicated in the first part of this research (Chart 4 "Security Situation in Kosovo" page 13), there is a slight increase in the sense of security of people, their families or property, caused by a complete change of focus in daily political life from political topics to emergency epidemiological situation. Thus, from the state of constant social and ethnic tensions that daily politics in Kosovo has been constantly producing for decades, we have moved to a broader social struggle against a common enemy, the corona virus, with at times visible empathy, solidarity and the ability to put ethnic divisions in the background. The effects of this phenomenon, however, were not so great as to lead to a significant decline in feelings of vulnerability, although a positive shift was observed (Graph 19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, it got better</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, it got worse</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing changed</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 19.
HAS YOUR SAFETY OR THE SAFETY OF YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY BEEN THREATENED IN THE PAST YEAR?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a noticeable difference in the sense of security of members of the community living in the north of Kosovo and those in Serb communities south of the Ibar River. In an evenly distributed sample, 22.6% of respondents residing in the southern areas indicated that at one or more moments during the previous year they felt threatened, while in the north this percentage was lower (14.4%) (Graph 20).

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BIGGEST SECURITY RISKS IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT?
In its independent research, in early summer NGO AKTIV published data on tracking the number of incidents in Serb areas across Kosovo, in which the personal or property safety of Serbs was threatened by perpetrators from other ethnic groups or still unknown perpetrators. A significant increase in such incidents was observed during the coronavirus pandemic (a total of 28 incidents were recorded in the period from March 15 to June 3, 2020). 26

In the qualitative part of this research, focus group respondents pointed out that the increase in such incidents was probably due to greater involvement of police forces in implementing preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19 infection, which created a certain vacuum in the security coverage of the Serbian community. 27 Most of these cases occurred in areas south of the Ibar river, almost as a rule in isolated enclaves where similar incidents had been reported before.


26 Reports from focus group in Gračanica and Štrpce.
Another issue that was greatly affected by the emergency situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and significantly complicated the analysis are the migration tendencies of the Serbian community. Although the data and results of this research offered their logic, it was very difficult to notice or interpret them in the given circumstances, more precisely when it comes to migrations in a situation where all borders were closed and movement, often outside the place of residence, was impossible. Yet even in such circumstances, this research confirmed some tendencies of population migration observed in earlier years. Thus, a certain increase in the percentage of respondents who claim that someone from their immediate vicinity (family, neighbours, friends) left Kosovo in the last year (Graph 21) which is a tendency observed in previous research.

To this question, as a rule, there is a significantly higher percentage of positive responses among respondents in Serb areas south of the Ibar River (85% in the south and slightly less than 70% in the north of Kosovo) (Graph 22).
“Do you see yourself in Kosovo during the next five years?” is a question that sought to determine the existence of intent or concrete plans to leave Kosovo. Almost half of the respondents, more precisely 46.15%, answered NO to this question or indicated that they would leave Kosovo if the opportunity arose.

Compared to previous surveys, this year the number of respondents from northern Kosovo who intend to leave their place of residence has increased to such an extent that for the first time it has almost equalled the percentage of respondents from Serb communities in southern Kosovo (Graph 23).

Interpretations of the increase in the number of Serb-majority respondents from northern municipalities wishing to leave Kosovo in the focus groups are diverse and suggest that it is a combination of factors including poor economic outlook, threats to personal and civil liberties, and exhaustion by political uncertainty which has been going on for 20 years, etc.28 What is worrying is the tendency

28 Reports from focus group in North Mitrovica and Leposavić.
to migrate among young people. Thus, almost 70% of respondents aged 18 to 29 show a desire to leave Kosovo. These percentages decrease as the age of the respondents increases, so in the end in the group of the oldest citizens (65+ years) it is only 13% (Table 8).

Do you see yourself in Kosovo in the next five years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I will leave if the opportunity arises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 – 29 years</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 45 years</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 – 65 years</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 and older</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.

Also, a correlation was observed between the expressed desire or plan to leave Kosovo and the level of education of the respondents. Thus, as many as 58% of university-educated respondents express a desire or intention to leave Kosovo in the next five years. Among respondents with secondary education, the result is 43% and among those with primary education only 12% (Table 9).

Do you see yourself in Kosovo in the next five years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I will leave if the opportunity arises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate studies</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.

These results indicate a trend of further decimation of the demographic and intellectual potential of the Serb community in Kosovo. When these percentages are compared with the data on the employment status of the respondents (Graph “Structure of the sample according to the employment status of the respondents” page 9), it can be concluded that a large number of able-bodied but also employed residents intend to leave Kosovo in the near future. Thus, the cause of such tendencies is not exclusively of an
nature (although this reason is dominant, see Graph 24) but is a combination of several factors, which include political instability or the effects of ethnic conflict in Kosovo, including security, disrespect for the rights of the Serb community and the like. Dragiša Mijačić, executive director of the Institute for Territorial Economic Development (InTER), agrees with this statement: “Economic and political instability have been key issues in Serb communities in Kosovo for many years, and the situation in these areas is not accompanied by the desired progress expected among the population. Migration flows caused by the poor economic and political situation are especially present among the young and highly educated population who emigrate most often.”

29 Interview with Dragiša Mijačić on August 15, 2020.

WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON WHY THEY WOULD LEAVE KOSOVO IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS? (A TOTAL OF 42.6% OF RESPONDENTS ANSWERED THE QUESTION)

- Personal security: 37.83%
- Economic uncertainty: 30%
- Disrespect of the Serb’s rights in Kosovo: 16.52%
- Political instability: 15.65%
ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION

In recent years, the European Union has lost its primacy in leading the process of normalization of relations between Pristina and Belgrade, and with its internal crisis, it has called into question the accession perspective of the Western Balkan countries. Nevertheless, its value system still survives as the "desired socio-political model" and the accession process and the reforms it entails continue to be the most effective direction in the normalization of regional relations.30 With that in mind, our research continues to explore the attitude of the Serbian community towards the European Union and its role in the process of normalization of relations between Serbs and Albanians.

This year’s survey shows a decline in the number of respondents who have a neutral attitude towards the European Union. Compared to 2019, when that percentage was 47.4%, this year it dropped to 39.4% of respondents. So, almost 8% more respondents than in 2019 formed an attitude towards the European Union, whether it is positive or negative (both answers are growing). According to focus group respondents, these changes reflect the reaction of the Serbian community to the hints of reactivation of the European Union in the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, which were increasing at the time this research was conducted.31

WHEN YOU HEAR “EUROPEAN UNION”, IS YOUR FIRST ASSOCIATION POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 Reports from focus group in North Mitrovica and Štrpce.
31 Ibid.
The increase in negative perceptions of the role of the EU (from 41 to 48%) also reflects the perceptions of members of the Serb community in Kosovo about the nature of such engagement. Thus, the largest number of Serbs from Kosovo (3 out of 4 inhabitants) believe that the European Union protects the interests of Pristina in the dialogue, and less than 1% (which is at the level of statistical error) think that the EU position in the negotiation process is closer to Belgrade’s interests.

In addition, the majority of respondents, compared to 2019, believe that the EU has improved its role in solving the problems of the Serb community in Kosovo (Table 10), and that it plays a key role in the process of reconciliation of ethnic communities in Kosovo (2.24) but not to a sufficient extent to be crucial for those processes. The only result that exceeds the threshold of 2.5 (the claim confirmation threshold) is related to the role of the EU in the process of normalization of relations after the announcement of the idea of territorial demarcation. The majority of respondents believe that the role of the EU as the bearer of this process is endangered, and the focus groups see the causes of that in the “flirtation” of the European Union with such an idea.32

**Table 10.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Average 2019</th>
<th>Average 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The EU has a key role to play in resolving the problems of the Serb community in Kosovo</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EU plays a key role in interethic reconciliation in Kosovo</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EU invests enough in areas with a Serb-majority population in Kosovo</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EU lost its role as the leader of the process of normalization of relations after the announcement of the idea of demarcation</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 Report from focus group in Strpce.
Ethnic distance in Kosovo society remains high and is one of its biggest problems. Thus, this year, the percentage of respondents from the Serb community who never or rarely go to areas where Albanians are the ethnic majority remains extremely high (around 63%), although this is a significantly lower percentage compared to 2019 (72%). This means that this year’s survey shows an increase in the percentage of residents who interact with the Albanian community on a daily or frequent basis (Table 11).

### Table 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of course, such interactions are more common in Serb areas south of the Ibar River (Graph 25). What is even more significant for such social dynamics is that the percentage of respondents who see such interactions as a positive experience is growing. This year, 21.5% of respondents rate such an experience positively, which is almost twice as many as those respondents who rate this experience as negative, 12% (Graph 26). Also, from 2017 to this year’s survey, a stable downward trend was observed in the category of respondents who rate this experience as negative (Table 12).
The trend of improving the ethnic relations between Serbs and Albanians this year is confirmed by a direct question to the respondents to rate them on a scale from 1 to 5. Thus, the average score from 1.95 in 2019, increased to 2.23 this year (Table 13). This shows that there is a positive trend, but also that there is still plenty of room for improving ethnic relations in Kosovo. There is also an improvement in relations between Serbs and other ethnic communities (Bosniaks and Gorani).

### Table 13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs and Albanians</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs and Bosniaks</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs and Gorani</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The trend of improving the ethnic relations between Serbs and Albanians this year is confirmed by a direct question to the respondents to rate them on a scale from 1 to 5. Thus, the average score from 1.95 in 2019, increased to 2.23 this year (Table 13). This shows that there is a positive trend, but also that there is still plenty of room for improving ethnic relations in Kosovo. There is also an improvement in relations between Serbs and other ethnic communities (Bosniaks and Gorani).

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "extremely bad" and 5 is "excellent", rate the condition of current interethnic relations between communities in Kosovo.
The table in front of you contains seven different types of contacts that you can make with members of the Albanian ethnicity. Please answer each of them based on your first impression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Type</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lives permanently in your town</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives in your neighbourhood</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a managerial position in the Government</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your direct supervisor at work</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your friend</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your son/daughter in law</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your partner in marriage</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 27:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Large distance</th>
<th>With moderate distance</th>
<th>With small distance</th>
<th>Without distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graph 28:**

- **Northern Kosovo**
- **Serb majority areas south of Ibar river**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large distance</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With moderate</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With small</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without distance</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results indicate that respondents generally show a moderate distance towards Albanians. The distance towards Albanians is somewhat more pronounced in Serb-majority areas south of the Ibar than among respondents from northern Kosovo. Only an extremely small number of respondents this year (2.6%) show that they do not feel any distance from members of the Albanian community. In conclusion, it can be said that this year’s results of measuring ethnic distance show certain positive trends in the convergence of the two largest ethnic groups in Kosovo, although their differences remain extremely large (Graphs 27 and 28).
The COVID-19 pandemic is a great challenge for governments and decision-makers around the world, not only in the epidemiological sense, but also economically, politically, and it has brought into question the very survival of the democratic values of society. Namely, the measures introduced by the countries of the region, following the example of the EU member states as a set of measures to combat the spread of the infection, included certain restrictions on personal freedoms, especially when it comes to freedom of movement, freedom of expression (due to the problem of defining the legal concept of “spreading the panic”), closure of schools, institutions, cessation of commercial activities and the like. So, a set of measures unprecedented in human history. Kosovo was no exception. The measures introduced in order to prevent the spread of the infection affected personal freedoms but also the personal rights not only of individuals, but also of entire ethnic groups due to the specific demographic and political character of Kosovo. The unpreparedness of the government in Pristina, obvious even before the pandemic, to ensure the comprehensive and consistent application of legal norms that define the rights of non-majority groups in Kosovo, came to the fore and became even more obvious and harmful during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of communication between the government and its bodies and the Serb community, the lack of translation of epidemiological and administrative instructions, and to some extent the inability of relevant institutions to provide personal and property security to members of the Serb community have been a major problem since the pandemic started.\(^{33}\)

This was recognized by the citizens who took part in this year’s survey, assessing the responsible institutions, the Kosovo government and local self-governments with low marks for crisis management (Table 14).

The dilemma of encroaching on personal, civil and human rights in defining epidemiological measures, as already mentioned, existed in the developed democracies of the Western world, as well as in the Western Balkans, and even in Kosovo. The answers of the surveyed citizens and focus group participants were thus "incomprehensibly" diverse. The largest percentage of respondents indicated that they were not sure whether the introduction of measures to combat the virus violated the peoples' Constitutional rights, and a slightly smaller percentage believe that these rights were partially endangered. The least are those who are completely sure that there was a violation of rights (17.40%) and those who are completely sure that there were no violations (11.30%) (Graph 29).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Local authorities in the place where you live</td>
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Table 14.

Were the rights guaranteed by the Constitution violated by Kosovo institutions during the Corona virus pandemic?

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One of the most noticeable problems during the pandemic was the communication of the Government and its institutions with the Serb community in a manner that allows it to receive information on time, and as the Constitution requires, in its own language. Thus, only 22% of respondents claim that they received relevant information related to prevention measures and the institutional response to the COVID–19 pandemic in time and in Serbian. On the other hand, almost half of the respondents (48.7%) alerted that this information came late, and almost 30% that the relevant information in Serbian was not available (Graph 30). Most of the respondents, logically, were informed from the media that report in Serbian, relying on both local and Belgrade media. Almost a third of the respondents rate the work of these media as bad (very bad and bad cumulatively, 33%). However, the majority of respondents (66%) believe that the information from the media was reliable.
An additional problem with some of the Kosovo Government’s measures to address the economic consequences of the pandemic was the way they were composed or translated. Thus, only 12.8% of respondents claim that the instructions for accessing financial assistance measures were completely clear, while the vast majority had difficulty understanding them at least in part (Graph 31).
The importance of the Kosovo government’s measures in a paralyzed economy was great, although most respondents claimed that the emergency had no impact on their incomes, and a small number claimed that their income had even increased (Graph 32). The director of the Institute for Territorial Economic Development (InTER), Dragiša Mijačić, believes that the negative economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and their impact on the economic status of the population are still to be expected: “The elasticity of economy in the Western Balkans, and especially in weak economies such as Kosovo’s, is very limited, which will lead to a significant recession in the last quarter of this year and the first quarter of next year.”

HAS THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED YOUR INCOME / YOUR FAMILY’S INCOME?

Graph 32.

HAVE YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACCESS REGULAR HEALTH SERVICES (MEDICAL EXAMINATION, CONTROL ...) IN YOUR MUNICIPALITY DURING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY?

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Interview with Dragiša Mijačić.
One of the most important factors in assessing the ability of institutions to deal with emergencies in the given context was the provision of timely and adequate health care, not only in relation to cases of coronavirus infection, but also when it comes to providing health services to chronic patients and patients who needed this type of help for other reasons. The results show that there were problems here as well, as 15% of respondents claim that they did not have access to the necessary health services. Focus group participants pointed to this problem, which arose due to quarantine measures and the closure of the crossings, so that the part of the Serbian community that is being treated in Serbia was denied treatment.

The members of the Kosovo Police took care that at least some things were not all bad, and they, according to the convincingly largest percentage of respondents, did their job professionally and even showed constructive flexibility in certain situations. This is claimed by 80%, or 4 out of 5 respondents, respectively in response to the question “How do you assess the work of the police during a state of emergency?” (Graph 33).

We left the question of how the respondents evaluate the work of the police for the end of this research, wanting to point out a large number of positive processes that the citizens of Kosovo witnessed during the unprecedented situation in our lives. Social solidarity, empathy, cooperation of institutions for the benefit of citizens, responsible behaviour of the police, all these are positive phenomena that have had and can have a strong impact on ethnic relations in Kosovo. Of course, only if they survive after the end of the pandemic.
TREND ANALYSIS