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# The Key

Study on Key Problems of Kosovo Serbs





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# Introduction

## About the OPEN Initiative

“Democracy, Openness and Perspectives of the Serb Community in Kosovo - Open” is an initiative launched in 2020 that aims to develop an open and dynamic space for discussion within the Serb community in Kosovo, dialogue between Serb and other communities, including relevant institutions at the local and central level.

Members of the Open Platform are prominent civil society and media organizations from the Serb community in Kosovo that analyze and assess the impact of civil and political organizations on democracy and openness of the Serb community in Kosovo and analyze and assess the democratic character and openness of institutions, public policies, and processes of importance for the Serb community in Kosovo.

These analyzes will help to see the current situation and perspectives of the Serb community in Kosovo. At the same time, it will serve as a basis for reasoned advocacy activities towards citizens, local and central government institutions, and the international community with the aim of intensifying the engagement of all social actors in strengthening democratic practices and culture of dialogue.

## About the Study

The Serb community in Kosovo faces similar problems as most minority communities in the world. These problems are mostly of an economic nature, but they also exist in the sphere of exercising human and minority rights. However, the important difference is that Kosovo Serbs face obstacles in exercising

these rights, which are set by a dual system of institutions, one under the administration of Pristina and the other in Belgrade. Our analysis, along with previous public opinion research, is about finding the key - how to overcome existing institutional barriers and solve community problems.

This study will serve as a basis, and the findings will be used for the production of a television documentary-fiction form which, in addition to this research, will also contain stories reconstructed according to true events. Due to the sensitivity of the content, the characters in these stories will remain anonymous.

## Acknowledgements

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# Brief Overview of the Situation on the Ground

Building a system of legally regulated functioning of Kosovo society, or institutions in general, as well as their obstruction, distraction, evasion and circumvention is, so to speak, a permanent and cyclical process. One of the key reasons is the fact that this country has never functioned independently throughout history, but existed as part of a larger state (empire, kingdom) or as a territory under a protectorate. The ethnic structure of Kosovo, which, among other peoples, in various periods was mostly Albanians and Serbs, and which changed mainly due to population migration, but also birth rate, has dictated that sometimes one, and other times another nation impose themselves as collaborators and allies to the current rulers. The fact that the position of proximity to the ruler was used not only for personal gain, but also for the oppression of the other nation, contributed to the fact that change of the old "foreign" ruler and the arrival of a new one, was always accompanied by revanchism. In addition to the existing language, national and somewhat religious barriers, such relations between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo have resulted in a complete lack of serious joint work on building institutions that would serve all citizens. On the contrary, the prevailing view is that institutions serve to make life harder, not easier, and that "subjects" should flatter and often bribe officials in institutions to ensure their well-being.

With the end of recent armed conflicts and the establishment of democracy, the entrenched habit of undermining and bribing instead of building institutions has not disappeared in Kosovo. The idea of liberation from repression and the re-establishment of democracy,

which was wholeheartedly supported by the majority in the international community, failed to overcome the chronic shortcomings and tradition of an unorganized society. The root of that tradition is corruption, still at a very high level, so, accordingly, the most desirable is employment in institutions ("state job"), which essentially separates the so-called "new reality" in Kosovo from the old one. National divisions have remained petrified since 1999, and only the presence and activities of the largest military alliance, as well as the experience of NATO's response to the March 2004 civil unrest, keep them from escalating. New inter-national divisions and alliances in the management of institutions are emerging from the young democracy, so the ruling party is not measured by their construction of the institutions, but by the amount of influence and the degree of cooperation with those who are more important for Kosovo's future - the European Union and the United States of America. Because of all that, the prevailing opinion "among the people" is that "our folks do not decide", but that "America and Europe" decide on everything.

Those who remained outside, as undesirable on the margins of institutions or poorly represented in institutions, in each of the periods throughout history had the hardest time. Nowadays, these are, first of all, minority communities that do not have their stronghold in neighboring or home countries, such as Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Gorani, but also those that do, such as Serbs, Montenegrins, Turks, Bosniaks and Croats. Kosovo Serbs are certainly in a special position in this group, given the greatest polarization in relation to the majority people, Kosovo Albanians, but

also in terms of the current legal and political position of Kosovo and its relationship with Serbia, which is still being addressed in the form of mutual dialogue on the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. The Serbs in Kosovo did not wholeheartedly accept the declaration of independence, but they did not fight against it in an organized or institutional way. At the same time, they remained citizens of Serbia with (almost) all rights and benefits, but they also became the owners of all documents necessary for life in Kosovo and users of local administration services<sup>1</sup>. In this study, we will deal with this particular feature of the position of Kosovo Serbs, and whether and in what way it facilitates or complicates their life and functioning.

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<sup>1</sup> More on this in the OPEN 2020 Consolidated Report, p. 34



# Brief Overview of the Study Methodology

The field survey was conducted in the period August-September 2021 by the NGO Aktiv, on the entire territory of Kosovo. A total of 600 citizens of Serbian nationality were questioned. Regarding the distribution of respondents in the north and south, which are almost equal in the number of residents in Serbian areas<sup>2</sup>, the questionnaires were distributed evenly, ie 300. Further, according to estimates of the population living in certain regions, the stratification was as follows:

divided into 4 areas: personal documents and mobility, health, education and local administration. For all questions, it was only necessary to choose one of the offered three to six answers (on average five).

In our sample, there were a total of 53% men and 47% women. Approximately half of the respondents are between 18 and 40 years old, while the other half are over 40 years old. 7% of surveyed respondents completed only primary school, 45% with secondary

NORTH	
North Mitrovica	100 respondents
Leposavic	90 respondents
Zvecan	60 respondents
Zubin Potok	50 respondents
SOUTH	
Gračanica region	120 respondents
Kosovsko Pomoravlje	100 respondents
Strpce	60 respondents
Gorazdevac	20 respondents

**Table 1:** Number of respondents by municipalities

The entire research was conducted in such a way that through a system of short and simple questions, data can be obtained that will indirectly indicate the problems of citizens. The questionnaire was anonymous and purposefully short, so that the respondents kept their concentration and gave more truthful answers. It consisted of a total of 20 questions, 4 for general data (gender, age, education, employment) and 16 questions

school, while 48% with higher education and university. Of the total number of respondents, 23% are unemployed and students, while 65% are permanently or occasionally employed, with 12% retired.

Given that there are currently no official available statistics on the demographic structure of the population in Kosovo, we can only conditionally speak about the representativeness of the sample. However, what can be generally observed and

<sup>2</sup> NGO Aktiv data: 58,000 in the north versus 59,000 in the south according to the voter list in the 2017 elections.

concluded about this sample of respondents used for our analysis is that gender representation is equal and proportional, ie that it roughly corresponds to gender representation in Kosovo, where the number of men is slightly higher than that of women, if we take into account the world average<sup>3</sup>. The age structure of the respondents also roughly corresponds to the real situation, because different categories are approximately equally represented: from 18 to 29 years about 30%, about 20% for each of the categories 30-39, 40-49 and 50-64, while the category over 65 years represented by about 10%. We believe that the educational profile of the respondents does not reflect the real picture, because almost half (48%) have a college or university degree, of which almost 5% have a master's or doctoral degree. The reason for that may be the greater trust that more educated Serbs, in the current conditions, give to such polls.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://countrymeters.info/en/Kosovo>



# Key Findings

Regardless of skin color, nation or religion, the problems of people all over the world arise due to the failure to meet their needs. According to one of the generally accepted theories of human needs, authored by the American humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow <sup>4</sup>, the most important human needs are arranged hierarchically in a kind of pyramid. The basis of all needs are physiological (water, food, sleep ...), followed by the need for security (work, property, health care, security, education ...), followed by the need to belong (love, relationship, friendship, group ...), the need for respect (self-respect, self-confidence ...), and finally the need for self-realization (creativity, morality ...). Under the reasonable assumption that the majority of Kosovo Serbs have solved the first category of basic needs necessary for survival, in this study we examine the second category of needs, which come as an upgrade of the previous ones, and relate to security. The term security, in our conditions, often means exclusively the security of an individual from the threat of violence. This type of security is regularly researched among members of the Serb community in Kosovo, so, for example, in the **Trend Analysis** conducted by the NGO Aktiv for 2021 <sup>5</sup>, less than 6% of respondents believe that the security situation in Kosovo has improved; the other 94% believe that the situation has worsened, or that nothing has changed.

Therefore, the security we are dealing with in this study refers exclusively to the provision of the necessary documents and permits for free movement, the exercise of the right to education and health care and, to some

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.scribd.com/doc/65684313/>

Maslovljeva-Hijerarhija-Ljudskih-Potreba

5 p. 50, <http://www.ngoaktiv.org/uploads/files/>

Analiza%2021%20Final%20Srpski.pdf

extent, the development of entrepreneurial projects and economic safety. All of the above, in this part of the world, is unfortunately connected and permeated with corruption and corrupt activities, which, although obvious, are difficult to expose due to deep and traditional roots, and direct involvement and personal benefit of witnesses and actors. The mentioned **Trend Analysis** in this regard reveals that almost 44% of respondents believe that crime and corruption are among the main problems in Kosovo <sup>6</sup>. The very subtitle of their analysis says that it is about the attitudes of the community, because it is difficult, or impossible, to expose corruption through surveys. Therefore, our research will serve as a basis for a documentary-fiction television form that is in preparation, in which cases of corruption in these areas will be presented through acting dramatization. Without revealing the identity of the actors of real events, each of the areas will also contain a presentation of one or two cases in which the RTV Kim editorial office had an insight.

## Personal documents and mobility

Kosovo Serbs, as well as a good part of other minorities, as well as some members of the majority nation in Kosovo, kept personal documents of the Republic of Serbia after 1999 for several reasons. It is, above all, a freer movement towards Serbia, but also towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, where it is still possible to enter with a Serbian ID card, but not a Kosovo one. An ID card is also necessary for exercising the right to

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p.25

property, as well as to health and social protection. In addition, many remained employed in “soft parallel institutions”, which operate continuously in the Serbian system and which provide services available at the local level: social, educational and health. These are institutions that are still formally in the administrative and legal system of the Republic of Serbia. In the colloquial narrative, these institutions are also called “Serbian” (Serbian municipality, Serbian center for social services, etc.)<sup>7</sup>. The term “soft parallel institutions” refers to institutions that provide services of vital interest to the Serb community in Kosovo whose status, due to their importance, is the subject of special negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade<sup>8</sup>.

When it comes to the basic and most important documents for functioning under the Serbian system, our research shows that the vast majority of citizens, as expected, have an ID card (98.1%) and a health care card (95.3%). The allegation of having a health care card is confirmed by answering a later question on exercising the right to health services, where the same percentage of respondents say that they exercise this right in Serbian health care in Kosovo, but also in Serbia, for which they need the card. In addition, it should be noted that Serbian health care cards are issued in the institutes of health and social protection in Kosovo, while ID cards are issued in relocated police administrations in Serbia (in Niska Banja for Pristina, in Krusevac for Prizren, in Kragujevac for Peja/Pec, in Kraljevo for northern Kosovo, etc.). Taking into account the validity period of personal documents of 10 years, the conclusion is that the respondents had updated ID cards in 2011 at the earliest, ie that the issuance process is uninterrupted and continuous to this day.

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<sup>7</sup> Open 2020 Consolidated Report, p. 48

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 48, footnote 59

**Question:** Which of the Serbian documents do you have?



The Serbian ID card, issued by the relocated police stations in Serbia, is also the most desirable document for traveling outside Kosovo. Until recently, it could be used as a confirmation of identity when voting in the Kosovo elections, and it is still accepted as a valid document on the Kosovo side of integrated crossings. It is also valid for travel to neighboring countries that have recognized Kosovo (Albania, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia), as well as those that have not (Bosnia and Herzegovina). With a Kosovo ID card (or passport), you can enter Serbia only with a special accompanying document on movement issued by the Serbian police on the passages, while entry into Bosnia and Herzegovina is not allowed.

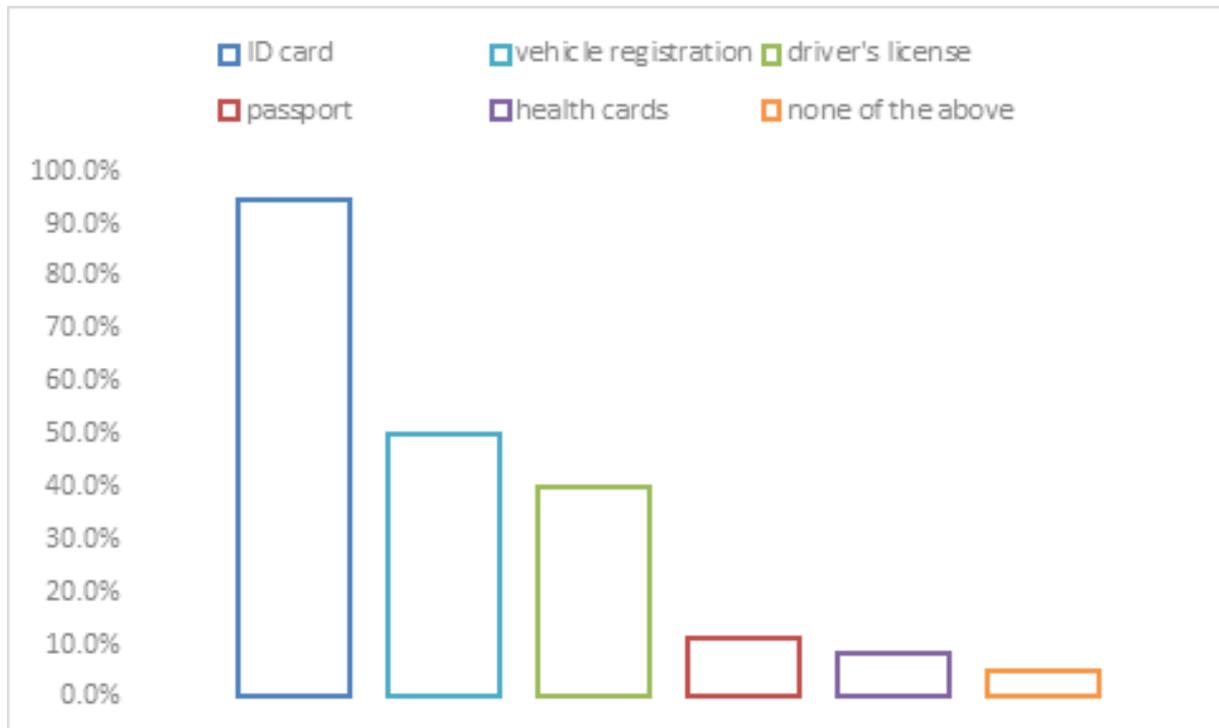
Possession of a Serbian passport (36.9%) in the case of our research, does not say so much about the mobility of respondents in relation to the type of passport they have; The passport issued to the people of Kosovo by the Coordination Administration in Belgrade

does not fall under the visa-free regime, while Kosovo has not yet been granted a “white Schengen”<sup>9</sup>. In other words, for both the Kosovo passport and the Serbian passport issued by the Coordination Administration, it is necessary to obtain visas to travel to EU countries, while travel to the countries of the region is free<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the respondents have only one of the passports, ie. some own only Serbian, while others own only Kosovo, because apart from additional costs - there is no additional benefit in owning both. Thus, the total share of those who have this travel document would be almost half of all respondents, more precisely 48.3%, of which 36.9% Serbian and 11.4% Kosovo.

<sup>9</sup> Possibility to travel without a visa to the member states of the European Union, and stay up to 90 days every 6 months.

<sup>10</sup> These include Albania, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, but also, say, Turkey and the Maldives. The exception is Bosnia and Herzegovina, where you can travel unhindered with a Serbian ID card or passport, but for a Kosovo passport it is necessary to get a visa - in Tirana.

**Question:** Which of the Kosovo documents do you have?



Since 1999 and the end of the conflict, and especially since 2008 and Kosovo's declaration of independence, the official narrative of Pristina authorities and majority public opinion have repeatedly said that Kosovo Serbs do not want to integrate and accept the "new reality" in Kosovo. This continues even after the Brussels Agreements of 2013, on the basis of which four northern municipalities were established (North Mitrovica, Zvecan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic); in addition to these municipalities, the Kosovo system integrated the police, the judiciary and one Serbian mobile operator. A key part of the agreement, whose ultimate goal is the integration of Kosovo Serbs, is the establishment of the Association / Community of Serb Municipalities (ZSO), which is still in question a decade later.

Therefore, the first big surprise of this research is the number of Serbs who possess a Kosovo ID card, regardless of whether they live north or south of the Ibar River. According to the

survey, as many as 94.5% of respondents are owners of a Kosovo identity document, for the issuance of which it is necessary, along with an excerpt from the birth register (extract)<sup>11</sup>, to enclose an excerpt from the book of citizenship of Kosovo. The fact is that it is now much easier and simpler for Serbs in the Serb-majority municipalities to get a Kosovo ID card than a Serbian ID card. The necessary documentation is issued by local Kosovo offices established in Serbian communities, and for all born Kosovans, the procedure is simple and fast. However, unlike Serbian documents, where 100% of respondents have at least one document, in Kosovo documents there are 5.2% of respondents (approximately one in twenty) who do not have any.

After 1999, license plates marked KS (Kosovo) were used in Kosovo, followed by RKS (Republic of Kosovo), while a large number of cars with license plates of Serbian cities and

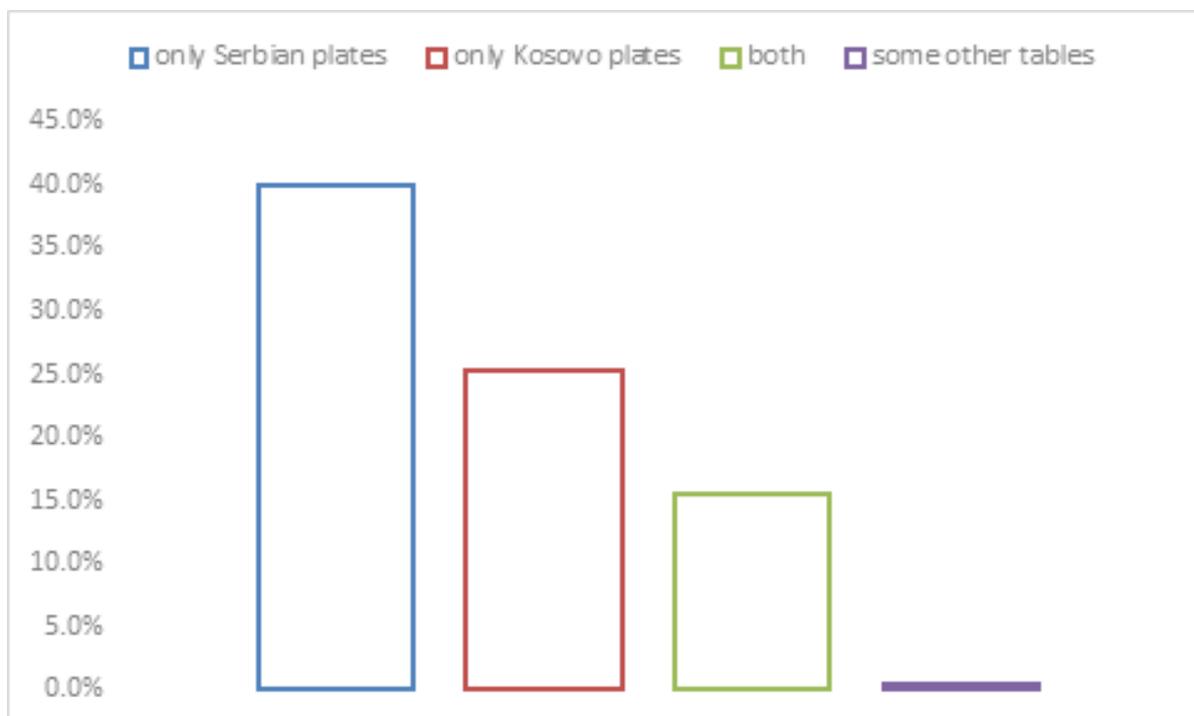
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.radiokim.net/blog/prakticni-vodic-za-ekstrakt.html>

old Kosovo ones could be seen on the roads, like registration plates of cities PR (Pristina), PZ (Prizren), KM (Kosovska Mitrovica), etc., especially in the northern part of Kosovo. In the southern part, however, many were justifiably reluctant to use these plates to pass

through urban areas<sup>12</sup>, or deeper into Kosovo. The owners of these vehicles, who, apart from the enclave, needed to travel outside, paid double insurance for years and took out the plates of Kosovo and Serbia in parallel.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.radiokim.net/vesti/?AID=13240#!>

**Question:** Do you or any of the residents own a car?



An agreement on freedom of movement between Belgrade and Pristina was reached in 2011. It envisages the abolition of old Serbian plates with the signs of cities in Kosovo, as well as the re-registration of those vehicles on the RKS or status-neutral KS signs issued by Kosovo institutions. Like many agreements between the two sides, this one has not been implemented on the ground; in four municipalities in northern Kosovo, populated by a predominantly Serb population, drivers retained license plates issued by the Serbian Interior Ministry. In 2016, Kosovo undertook to

issue KS license plates for another five years, which Serbia accepted as status-neutral, while drivers with RKS license plates had to replace them with test ones when entering, and pay a symbolic fee<sup>13</sup>.

After the five-year deadline expired in October 2021, the use of vehicles with license old plates with Kosovo city signs was completely banned in Kosovo, while stickers were introduced in order to cover Serbian state symbols on the plates. Serbia introduced the same for Kosovo. However, our poll was conducted just before

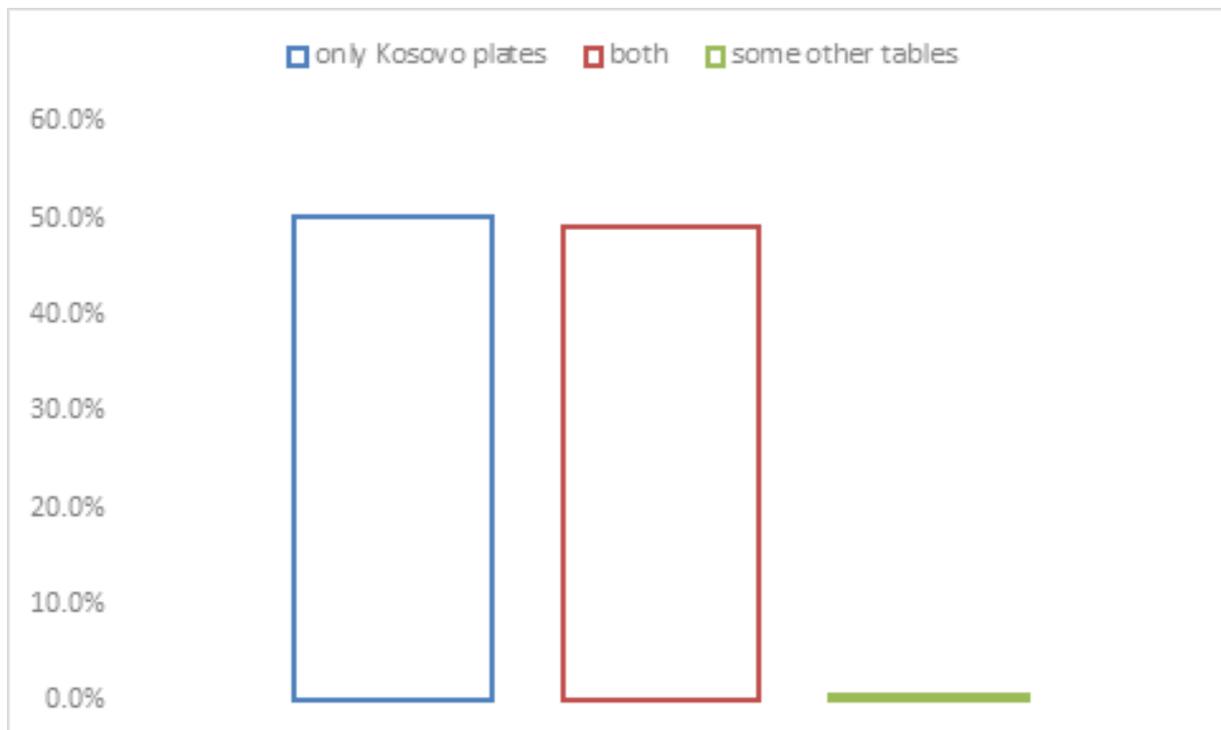
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-58631026>

this ban, ending in September 2021. The question in the survey was: "Do you, or any of the householders, own a car?", to which the answers were divided into categories according to the type of license plates, which focused not on the fact that the respondent should personally own a car, but what are the markings on the tables, that is, what are the needs of the respondents and the possibilities of travel. One in five respondents, or their family members, said they do not own a car, which is almost the opposite of the latest available statistics from the Kosovo Statistics Agency<sup>14</sup>. Namely, in 2019, about 300 thousand cars were registered in Kosovo, which is an average of one car for every 6 inhabitants. Although it is assumed that the number of cars has increased in the last two years, this difference occurs because the agency keeps statistics on registered vehicles, while we have not researched the number of vehicles. Of those who declared that they own a vehicle, the largest number are with Serbian license plates. In the survey, we did not choose the possibility to separate the old Serbian plates of Kosovo cities and the plates of Serbian cities, because our goal was to find out the total number of Serbs who still have any Serbian registration. Possession of only Serbian car plates was stated by 39.9% of respondents, which is in total 55.3%, if we add those with double plates (15.4%), or in other words more than half of the respondents. According to the survey, only 25.3% of respondents have Kosovo plates, which is in total 40.7% if we add those with double plates (15.4%). However, if only those (or someone in their household) who own car are taken into account, then the percentage of those who have Kosovo license plates is 31.2% (50.2% in combination with Serbian) and those who have Serbian 49.2% (or 68.2% in combination with Kosovo).

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14 <https://ask.rks-gov.net/en/kosovo-agency-of-statistics>

○ **Graph:** Result based on the number of only those who own a car.



Until the conclusion of the survey, unhindered movement for the registration plates of Serbian cities was possible only with the issued authorization, and double plates were mainly used for vehicles registered on Serbian plates of Kosovo, we can conclude the following: half of respondents (50.2%) have Kosovo registration plates marks, which in the second answer confirms the identical percentage of Kosovo traffic licenses for these vehicles (50.2%), while the other half (49.2%) have license plates of Serbian cities <sup>15</sup>.

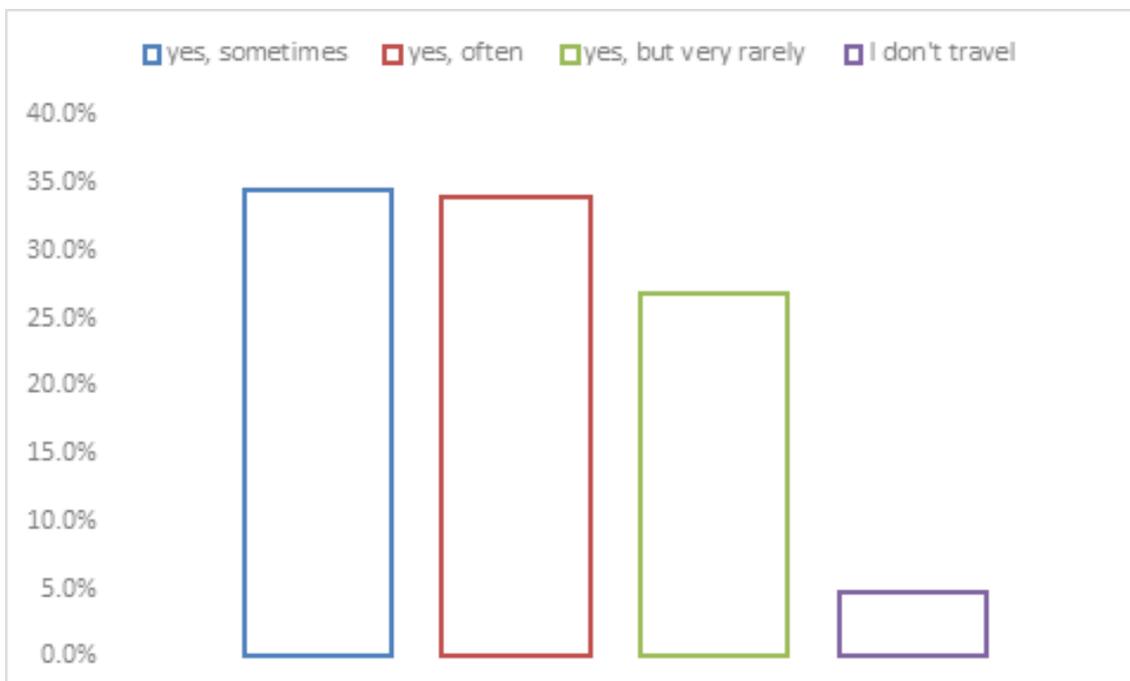
UNHCR, about 200,000 members of minority communities <sup>16</sup>, mostly Serbs, left Kosovo. Most of them settled permanently in Serbia, while smaller part returned to Kosovo, but due to family ties, or children leaving Kosovo for school, or people who receive health care in Serbia (10.4% according to our research), this migration is very high.

According to our research, the mobility of respondents between Kosovo and Serbia is huge, totaling over 95%. The largest number of those who travel often and sometimes (68.4%), while 26.9% travel very rarely. The reasons for this migration are multiple, and they are partly due to the fact that in 1999, according to the

<sup>15</sup> The remaining 0.6% said they owned some other plates.

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/oko\\_200\\_hiljada\\_ljudi\\_se\\_jos\\_nije\\_vratilo\\_na\\_kosovo\\_/24240855.html](https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/oko_200_hiljada_ljudi_se_jos_nije_vratilo_na_kosovo_/24240855.html)

### ○ Question: Do you travel between Kosovo and Serbia?



## Health care

After 1999, in some cases (especially in northern Kosovo), health care institutions continued to operate in existing facilities, while most others needed to provide new premises and create working conditions in the enclaves where Kosovo Serbs had fled. According to OSCE data from 2018, there<sup>17</sup> are a total of 92 health institutions operating in Kosovo under the Serbian system<sup>18</sup>. This number includes the larger Clinical Hospital Centers (KBC) in Gračanica and North Mitrovica, health centers, but also many smaller and larger clinics in almost all Serb villages. It is necessary to mention that tens of thousands of employed health care workers and staff, in addition to the basic salary prescribed at the

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.osce.org/files/Municipal%20Profiles\\_2018.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/Municipal%20Profiles_2018.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> The same source, by municipalities: Gjilan 3, Kamenica 5, Klokot-Vrbovac 2, Novo Brdo 8, Partesh 4, Ranilug 8, Strpce 7, Leposavic 3, North Mitrovica 2, Podujevo 1, Skenderaj 1, Vucitrn 4, Zubin Potok 8, Zvecan 5, Istok 1, Klina 1, Gorazdevac 1, Fushë Kosovë 2, Gračanica 17, Lipjan 1, Obilic 3, Pristina 1, Prizren 2, Rahovec 2.

Serbian level, received the so-called Kosovo allowance in the amount of 100% until 2008, after which the government of Vojislav Kostunica reduced that percentage to 50%. Two years later, the Constitutional Court of Serbia completely revoked the decision on additional payments to employees under the Serbian system in Kosovo, with the assessment that such a decision “is not constitutional and represents positive discrimination.” The Serbian government has not confirmed the court’s decision, and has decided to continue the payment “until a law is passed that will systematically solve the problem of financing Serbs in Kosovo<sup>19</sup>.” Such a law has not been passed until today, so the payment according to the old model has continued.

In addition to these incomes, some medical staff also receive a monthly allowance, so-called “vouchers”, from the Kosovo Ministry of Health. The exact number of those on Pristina’s payroll is not known, as those who somehow made it to both lists do not want to

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/756370/kosovski-dodatak-do-usvajanja-zakona.html>

talk about it, but it is assumed that it is a much smaller proportion of medical workers, mostly doctors. Given the high salaries and the number of doctors in health care institutions, the assumptions would be that the services are at a high level, the organization is enviable, medicines and medical supplies are available, and patients are very satisfied. Unfortunately, none of the assumptions stand, and due to the lack of control, corruption is chronically rooted<sup>20</sup>. In 2015, Marko Đurić, who at that time was the top Serbian Government official in charge of Kosovo (including Serbian health care system) “complained” about the number of doctors present in the country. He stated that there is a problem with a large number of health care workers who receive increased salaries according to the list, but do not live and work in Kosovo, while there is no one to provide health care to patients in some areas<sup>21</sup>.

This attitude of health workers and other employees in the public service or public companies, who receive salaries whether they live in Kosovo or not, and do not work, people usually do not accept with affection. According to official data, Belgrade allocates an average of 1.45 million euros a day for Kosovo Serbs<sup>22</sup>, and this largely includes the salaries of those who do not work. However, it should be said that this is a big problem that Serbia cannot easily solve due to the real legal obstacles, because it is very difficult to terminate the employment contract of those who have a permanent employment relationship. Thanks to the specific schedule of local health institutions in Kosovo, a large number of doctors and medical staff have found their model in two-week shifts, which are performed continuously day and night.

20 We will deal more with the corruption topic in the mentioned documentary-fiction form.

21 [https://www.radiokontaktplus.org/vesti/na\\_kosovu\\_veliki\\_broj\\_zdravstvenih\\_radnika\\_na\\_platnom\\_spisku\\_ali\\_ne\\_rade/4693](https://www.radiokontaktplus.org/vesti/na_kosovu_veliki_broj_zdravstvenih_radnika_na_platnom_spisku_ali_ne_rade/4693)

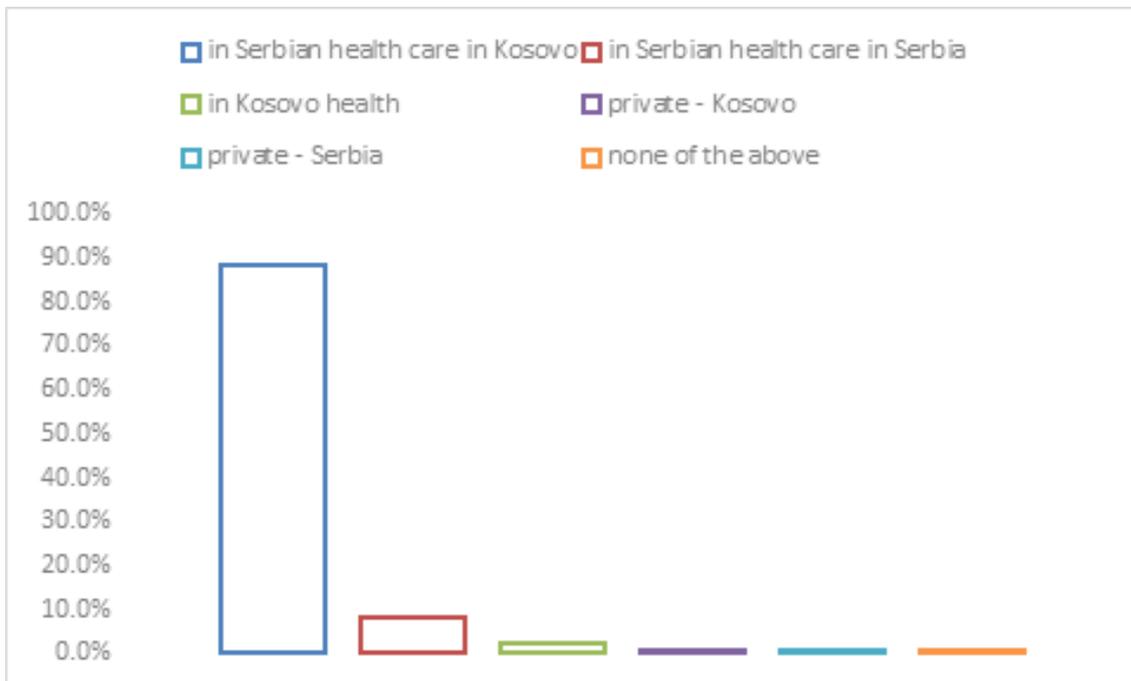
22 <https://insajder.net/arhiva/tema/nova-potvrda-dokaza-iz-serijala-patriotska-pljacka-u-proseku-srbija-dnevno-trosi-cak-1-45-miliona-evra-za-kosovo- video>

After that, they spend the next two weeks in their places of residence in Serbia. Due to the two-week shift, which usually starts on Monday and ends the following Friday, doctors are often available only from Tuesday or Wednesday, and no later than Thursday morning on the second week. Continuous twenty-four-hour shifts, which are physically impossible for one person to “cover”, often end in the absence of a doctor from the workplace, or superficial dedication to patients. Only at the end of 2021, at the decision of Belgrade, an attempt was made to put an end to such travel practices, and to force health workers to stay in Kosovo and perform regular shifts. However, in practice this only applies to the middle and lower medical staff, while doctors who anyway represent the minority, could not be “disciplined” in this way. The reason for that outcome is that the medical profession is already deficient, and there is a large outflow of doctors to the countries of Western Europe, where salaries and work conditions are incomparably better. Thus, only doctors who are in some way emotionally or family related to Kosovo remain there, as well as those who do not have the interests and opportunities to learn foreign languages.

Considering the number of respondents in our survey who have a Serbian health care card (95.3%), except for the one tenth of respondents who are treated exclusively in Serbia public or private clinics, most of them (88.2%) still receive health care in Kosovo, in health institutions under the Belgrade Ministry<sup>23</sup>. In other words, the health care of nine out of ten members of Serb community in Kosovo depends on the functioning of these institutions.

23 The trick question in this part of the questionnaire was: Do you have a Kosovo health care card? As many as 8.1% of respondents said they did. Namely, although the law stipulates that health care in public institutions under the Kosovo Ministry of Health is (almost) free, with participating co-payments (40%), Kosovo does not know the institution of the health care card as such, and all services are provided with presenting ID cards. Therefore, it is not clear why the respondents chose this answer, and whether it is an oversight.

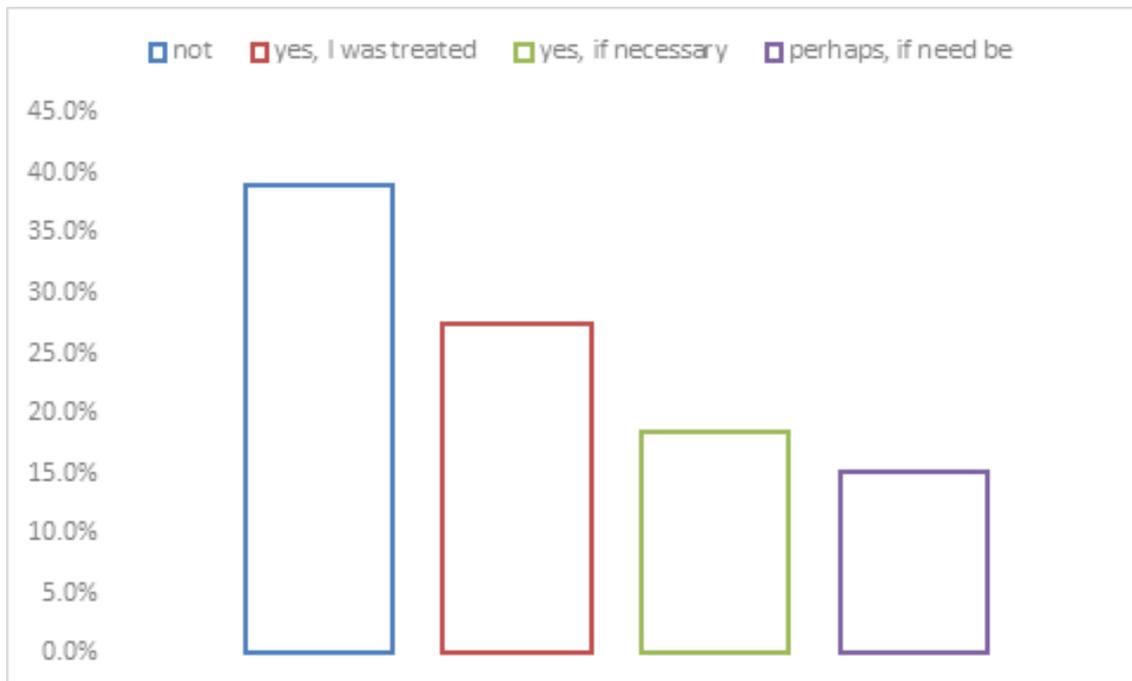
**Question:** Where do you exercise your right to health care?



Although they exercise their right to health care mainly within the Serbian system, we asked our respondents whether they would be treated by an Albanian doctor? In addition to the previous quest whether they have Kosovo documents, which are necessary in many situations, we were also interested in examining the degree of tolerance of respondents in the case of a delicate situation that requires a voluntary decision. Obtaining personal documents is an obligation, and an administrative job that does not require emotions, while the relationship between the patient and the doctor includes them, as well as a much higher degree of trust. Apart from the decisive “no” to treatment among Albanians, which was expressed by 39% of respondents, the other 61% would give, or have already given, their consent. Almost every fifth respondent has already been treated by Albanian doctors, while the answers that imply possible consent to treatment are intentionally slightly nuanced,

and regardless of the apparent differences (“yes, if necessary”, and “perhaps, if really necessary”), determine the respondents affirmatively according to this decision.

**Question:** Would you be treated by an Albanian doctor?



Less than one percent of our respondents opted for treatment in private Kosovo clinics (0.9%). However, in practice, especially in the municipalities south of the Ibar, it is that even doctors from the Serbian health care system, due to the lack of conditions, equipment, reagents or other materials, very often refer patients to X-rays, magnetic resonance imaging or blood tests in private Kosovo Albanian clinics. These institutions are relatively close to Serbian communities, they are organized so that the service is always available in Serbian, and Albanian doctors who spent their education and a good part of their working life with Serbian colleagues often work there. Market thinking and the fight against competition have made the staff of these clinics treat Kosovo Serbs professionally, so the number of those who use their services is certainly higher than the respondents were willing to admit, especially if we add dental services. After 1999, in Gracanica, for example, there was only one private dental practice

with one dentist, in very poor conditions, while conditions, availability, prices and quality of services attracted, and still attract Serbs to Albanian dentists.

The connection between health care and personal documents is especially reflected in cases of major health complications of Serbian health care users in Kosovo. There are no conditions in Kosovo for performing majority of more complicated medical interventions, so such cases are referred to centers in Serbia. This is not uncommon for other small towns in Serbia, but the difference is that in such cases, the availability of services for Kosovo Serbs is largely related to the possession of personal documents, and often the type of license plates on vehicles. Of course, the goal is for Serbs to encounter integrated crossings on the way to such a service, where it is necessary to have adequate documents, and spend some time on administrative procedures related to vehicle registration

plates. In addition, there are frequent traffic jams at crossings, especially during the holiday and holiday seasons, and the procedures themselves change frequently, so it is necessary to be constantly informed about the latest information.

This was especially evident during the Kovid-19 pandemic, when the procedures and necessary analyzes (tests, vaccination certificates) for entering and leaving one territory to another changed on a weekly basis. Also, the same contagious virus has equally affected the majority of Albanian and mostly Serb areas, but regardless of the new circumstances, the mutual (non) cooperation between the Ministries of Health of Belgrade and Pristina has remained at the same level<sup>24</sup>. The inability to procure a sufficient number of respirators, as well as the creation of additional adequate conditions in hospitals under the Serbian system, which would be necessary in case of deterioration of infected patients, has led to patients with complications being sent by ambulance to larger health centers (Nis, Kraljevo, Belgrade...). Apart from the fact that such transport represents an additional risk for the patient, due to the necessary paperwork, the duration of the trip is also extended.

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24 If we exclude the decline in the level of (non)cooperation due to the ban on Kosovo's import of coronavirus vaccines from Serbia, as they were available in Serbia months earlier, Serbian health workers in Kosovo organized immunization of all interested parties (including a significant number of Albanians) in health centers in Serbia that are closest. Thus, for the north of Kosovo, vaccination was organized in Raska, for the east in Vranje, and for the central, western and southern part in Kursumlija. In addition to providing opportunities for voluntary vaccination, Serbian health care also covered the costs of organized bus transportation of patients.

## Education

School institutions, which include primary, secondary and higher education, operate similarly to health institutions in continuity (almost) as before 1999. The great similarity with health care is that most of these institutions were forced to look for their work premises in newly adapted facilities. The Serb-run University of Pristina has thus moved entirely to North Mitrovica and some other places in the north<sup>25</sup>. Due to the large number of students and the reduced number of classrooms, many schools in Serbian communities would simultaneously host primary and secondary school students, which is why classes had to take place in up to three shifts. Many high school students are forced to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning during the entire course of schooling, so that they can take organized school buses to classes which end around noon. For the sake of better organization, the school hours themselves were shortened from 45 to 40 minutes, so the Serbian students in Kosovo are deprived of about 100 school hours a year, which is a fund of one month of classes per year<sup>26</sup>.

Textbooks and teaching aids for Serbian schools, as before the conflict, are printed and come from Serbia. Bearing in mind that Pristina is most concerned about the interpretation of Kosovo's history in Serbian textbooks, which Pristina treats as hazardous

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25 Immediately after 1999, many faculties of this university were moved to nearby cities in Serbia, so, among others, the faculty centers became town of Blace and Varvarin. Later, they were all returned to Kosovo, almost exclusively to its northern part.

26 The bill is as follows: on average 5 hours a day for 5 minutes is 25 minutes a day less education. For 5 working days a week, that is 125 minutes, and if we calculate that a month contains 4 weeks (more precisely 4.33), that is 500 minutes a month. Excluding holidays and vacations, children attend about 9 months of school during the year, which is a loss of 4,500 minutes due to shortened classes, or 100 school hours of 45 minutes each. For an average of 5 hours a day, that is 20 working days, ie one month lost.

material, it is not surprising that after 1999 any attempt to legally import textbooks or even send books by Serbian publishers by mail was prevented<sup>27</sup>. This is such a problem that at the beginning of each school year, parents

are forced to travel individually to bookstores in Serbia, buy textbooks according to the lists they receive from schools, and to “smuggle” them back at integrated crossings. Truth be told, the interpretation of Kosovo’s history is completely different in Belgrade and Pristina textbooks, largely filled with historically unfounded data, according to a 2016 survey<sup>28</sup>. The solution to this problem, which would largely be the basis for the true normalization of relations between nations, is not even on the horizon.

Apart from difficulties with time, space and textbooks, schools had a problem with professional staff immediately after 1999, as a good part of them moved away or were forced to leave Kosovo. In the absence of local teaching staff, these staff continue to be replaced by teachers from nearby cities in Serbia. Only in the last few years, the share of visiting or traveling teachers has dropped to some 5-10%, who due to frequent travel should have the appropriate documents, as well as go through all the procedures related to the license plates on the vehicle. When it comes to staff, workers in education, as well as in health care, receive a Kosovo supplement of 50% on salary, which is, say, a total of about 800€ for teachers’ salaries. A good part of the staff also receives “vouchers” from Pristina, which amount to 250 to 400€. Vouchers will be discussed later, because this type of income is directly related to municipal institutions, but also to their corrupt activities.

Due to the specifics of the organization of work with students, teachers must stay in Kosovo during working days (5 + 2), while the situation with university professors is similar to

that with doctors (15 + 15). Until a few years ago, all classes at some faculties in North Mitrovica were organized on a fifteen-day basis: for half a month all professors were present and give double lectures, and for half a month there were no students or professors at the faculty. In recent years, the situation is such that at some faculties, the professors present at the departments change for about a month, while at other faculties lectures are held one week and the exercises on the following, so the teaching process is continuous.

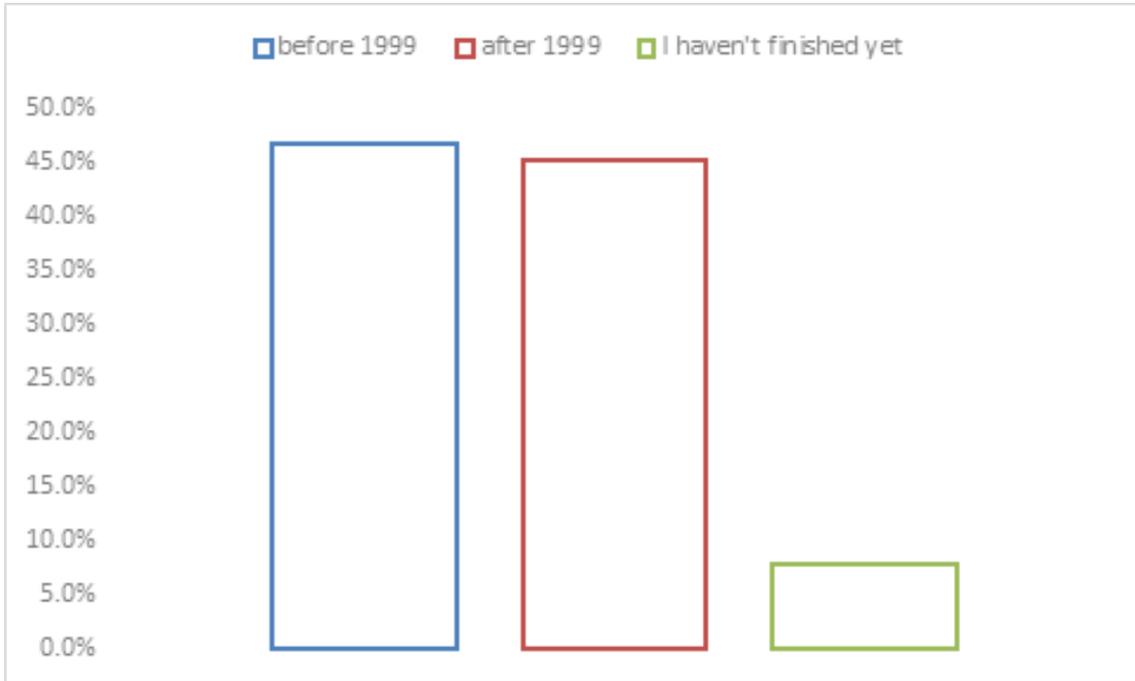
The school system in Kosovo in Serbian communities is a unique system with schools in Serbia, so after graduation, or during schooling in Kosovo, it is possible to transfer or continue uninterrupted education in Serbia, and vice versa. In proportion to the age structure of the respondents, about half of those who finished school<sup>29</sup> did so before 1999 (46.8%), and after that year 45.3% of survey participants.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.rtklive.com/rtk2/?id=2&r=50227>,

<sup>28</sup> <https://birn.rs/oprecne-verzije-istorije-kosova-u-balkanskim-udzbenicima/>

<sup>29</sup> 7.9% of respondents have not yet finished school.

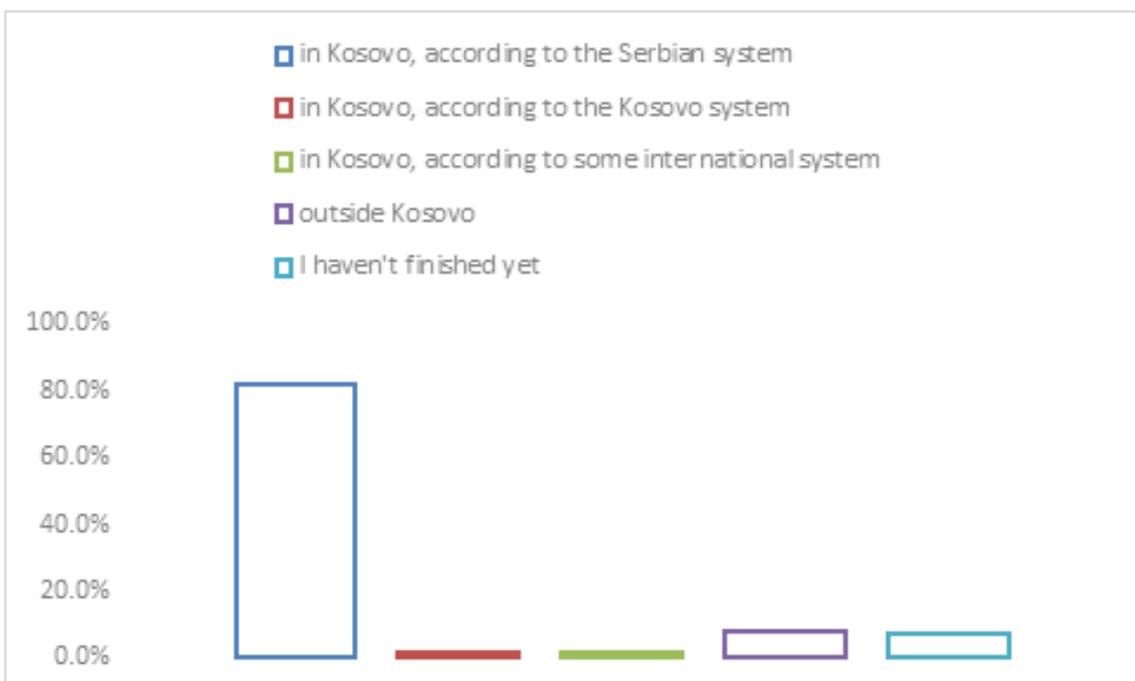
**Question:** When did you finish school?



As far as the place of schooling is concerned, the largest number, ie. 82% of respondents finished school in Kosovo, according to the

Serbian system, which confirms the primacy of such education and its importance for the community.

**Question:** Where did you finish school?



After committing to mutual recognition of diplomas in a Brussels agreement in late 2011, the two sides agreed that the European University Association should certify diplomas issued by each side's universities for use by the other side for further education or employment at public sector<sup>30</sup>. In Kosovo, the verification of diplomas takes place through the non-governmental organization "ECMI", which was authorized for the job by the Government of Kosovo. In addition, since 2015, Pristina has introduced a regulation on procedures and criteria for issuing certificates to citizens of Kosovo, who graduated in North Mitrovica, for the purpose of applying for a job with public institutions<sup>31</sup>. This process began a year later, and less than two thousand certificates confirming the validity of diplomas have been issued so far. On the other hand, under decision of the Belgrade's Ministry of Education, the nostrification of Kosovo diplomas in Serbia was performed for two years (2013-2014) by the Dutch non-governmental organization "SPARK". However, after their project expired, this organization left Serbia and since then the verification of Kosovo diplomas has stalled. Recognition of Kosovo diplomas is one of the obligations that Serbia undertook also with the Washington Agreement from September 2020. Item 6 of this agreement, initialed by Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, states that "both sides will recognize diplomas and professional certificates", but this agreement does not have much benefit for the inhabitants of southern Serbia<sup>32</sup>. Large number of students from Serbia and Montenegro, who failed to enroll at universities in their communities, are also studying at the University of North Mitrovica, for which the results of some

30 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/kosovo-i-srbija-neravnopravni-u-priznavanju-diploma/30992664.html>

31 Aleksandra Ničić, Mutual recognition of diplomas benefits everyone, [shorturl.at/bevA1](http://shorturl.at/bevA1)

32 The most affected by this attitude of Belgrade are Albanian students from the south of Serbia, who enroll in the faculty in Pristina due to their studies in their mother tongue. <https://balkans.aljazeera.net teme/2021/10/21/bez-priznavanja-kosovskih-diploma-mladima-s-juga-srbije-ostaje-biro>

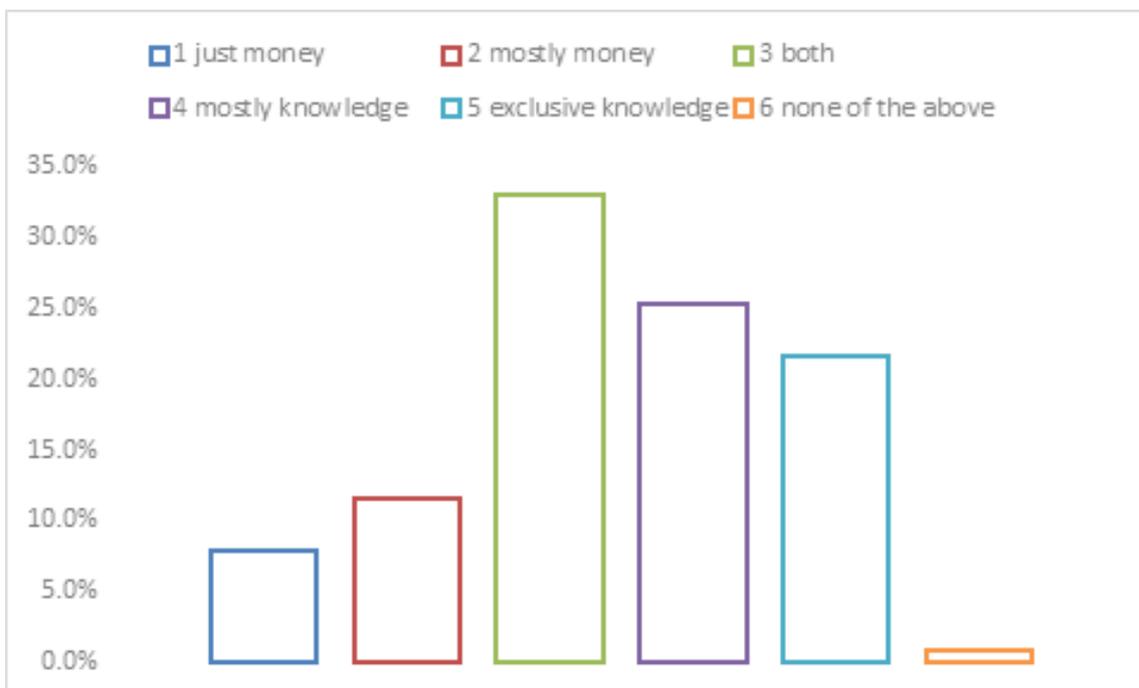
research show that it is susceptible to corrupt activities<sup>33</sup>. The results of the research, conducted in 2016 by the NGO Aktiv, also showed that there is a certain degree of corruption in higher education institutions. According to this survey, almost every tenth student (9.6%) has either paid for an exam or is considering it. On the other hand, as many as 61.8% had heard of someone who paid to pass the exam<sup>34</sup>. This result led the researchers at the time to an indefinite conclusion "that the students were either dishonest in filling out the questionnaire, or that there was much more talk about corruption at the University than there really is<sup>35</sup>". However, the conclusion could also be that corruption is generally an area that people are not ready to talk about openly, since they themselves take part in it, thus becoming accomplices. Therefore, the percentage of students who admitted such actions probably represents only a part of the total number of those who participated in it, because it is indicative that as many as 2/3 of students "heard about someone who paid for the exam". Our research was conducted on the general population, not only on students, but it shows that almost every fifth respondent (19.4%) believes that money is needed to obtain a degree, meaning - for the corrupt activities and not for the real costs of schooling. However, close to half (46.8%) believe that a degree requires knowledge, while one third (33%) believe that both are needed. Given that this part of the respondents allows money to have a part of the role in obtaining a degree, we can conclude that a little more than half of the respondents believe that money plays a predominant or partial role in this. It is very important to note that our respondents are quite familiar with this topic, as almost half of them (48.8%) have a university degree, with a high, higher and master's / doctoral degree.

33 NGO Aktiv, Quality of Education in Northern Kosovo, <http://www.ngoaktiv.org/uploads/files/Kvalitet%20obrazovanja%20na%20severu%20Kosova.pdf>

34 *ibid*, p. 10

35 *ibid*

**Question:** On a scale of 1 to 5, do you think that knowledge or money is needed for a diploma?



Buying diplomas and corruption is certainly not something that characterizes only this university. Let's also say that last year, the University of Belgrade annulled the doctorate of the Serbian Minister of Finance, Siniša Mali, whose doctoral dissertation was proven to be plagiarized, which the mentor and the commission at his faculty kept silent while defending it. Even much more developed countries are not immune to such things, so we note two similar scandals that shook Germany. Namely, in 2011, the Minister of Defense, Karl Theodor Gutenberg, resigned after it was revealed that he had plagiarized his doctoral dissertation<sup>36</sup>, and for the same reasons, in 2021, the German Minister for the Family, Francisca Gifai, resigned<sup>37</sup>. However, the difference between these cases is essential when it comes to the attitude

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.dw.com/sr/nemački-ministar-odbrane-podneo-ostavku/a-6454986-0>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.dw.com/sr/nemačka-ministarka-podnela-ostavku-zbog-plagijata/a-57579972>

towards the discovered crime: German ministers admitted their mistake and resigned themselves, while Siniša Mali was appointed Minister of Finance in Serbia at the middle of the doctoral plagiarism scandal.

## Local administration

As it has been said on several occasions, the institutions that functioned in Kosovo under the autonomous-provincial leadership until 1999, which, in turn, was functioning under the republican one in Belgrade, continued their work even after that. In the majority of Serbian communities, health and education are mentioned as systems that, in addition to being extremely useful for the Serbian community, also do not have their counterparts, so it is difficult to consider them "parallel". During all these years, Pristina has not made an effort, and does not have the capacity, to organize schools in Serb areas in Kosovo that would work according to the local curriculum, but in the mother tongue of the community, which is guaranteed by the constitution. Apart from the rooms and textbooks, there is also a serious problem of finding adequate teaching staff, which is difficult for schools to solve according to the Serbian system. The situation is similar with the health care system, although, as we have shown earlier, Serbs also use private health services in Kosovo Albanian clinics.

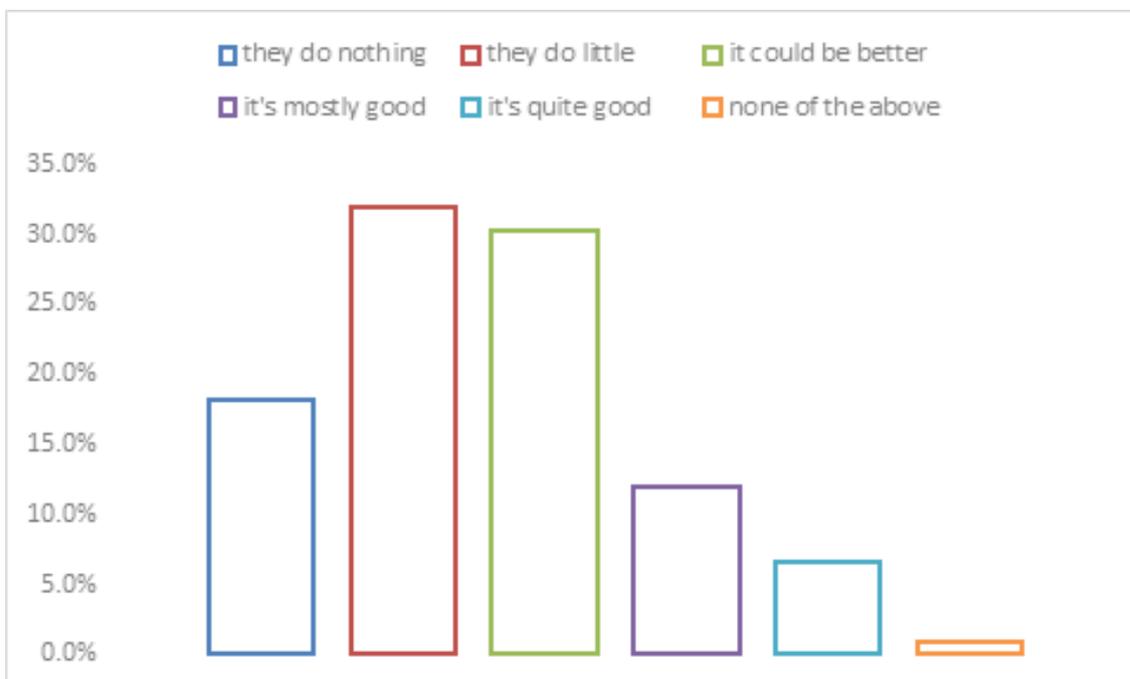
As for other institutions, things are different. This includes police structures, which functioned especially in the north of the country after the conflict, after that courts with offices in all major Serbian areas, and above all municipalities that, relocated to smaller places, actively performed their function. It should be noted that these municipalities functioned after 1999 with elected staff, until the expiration of their mandates, after which local elections in Kosovo were not allowed according to the Serbian system. That is why the Government of Serbia has since independently appointed the so-called Provisional Bodies of Municipalities, ie its political party cadres, who have very limited executive powers, and who only rotate in these places with each re-appointment<sup>38</sup>.  
<sup>38</sup> <https://kossev.info/vlada-srbije-imenovani-i-razreseni-clanovi-i-predsednici-privremeni-organa-opstina-sa-kim/>

Most of these municipalities<sup>39</sup>, whose budgets are mostly staff salaries, have almost no other activities or functions. Truth be told, their activity is greatly hindered by Pristina's opposition, but some of them are finding ways to allocate part of the funds intended for them, among other things, to the construction of social housing, assistance to farmers in subsidies, machinery and the like. Certainly, due to the lack of control of these bodies by Belgrade, the spending of earmarked funds is arbitrary and non-transparent. Serbia, which has neither the constitutional nor the legal preconditions to abolish these structures, has meanwhile used them as the voting machinery of the ruling party and collectors of secure votes in the Serbian parliamentary elections, which have been held regularly so far in Kosovo.

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<sup>39</sup> Municipality of Pristina with temporary headquarters in Gracanica, Municipality of Ferizaj/Urosevac with temporary headquarters in Strpce, Municipality of Peja/Pec with temporary headquarters in Gorazdevac, Municipality of Gjilan with temporary headquarters in Gornje Kusce ...

**Q Question:** On a scale of 1 to 5, do you think that the Serbian municipality is doing its job well?



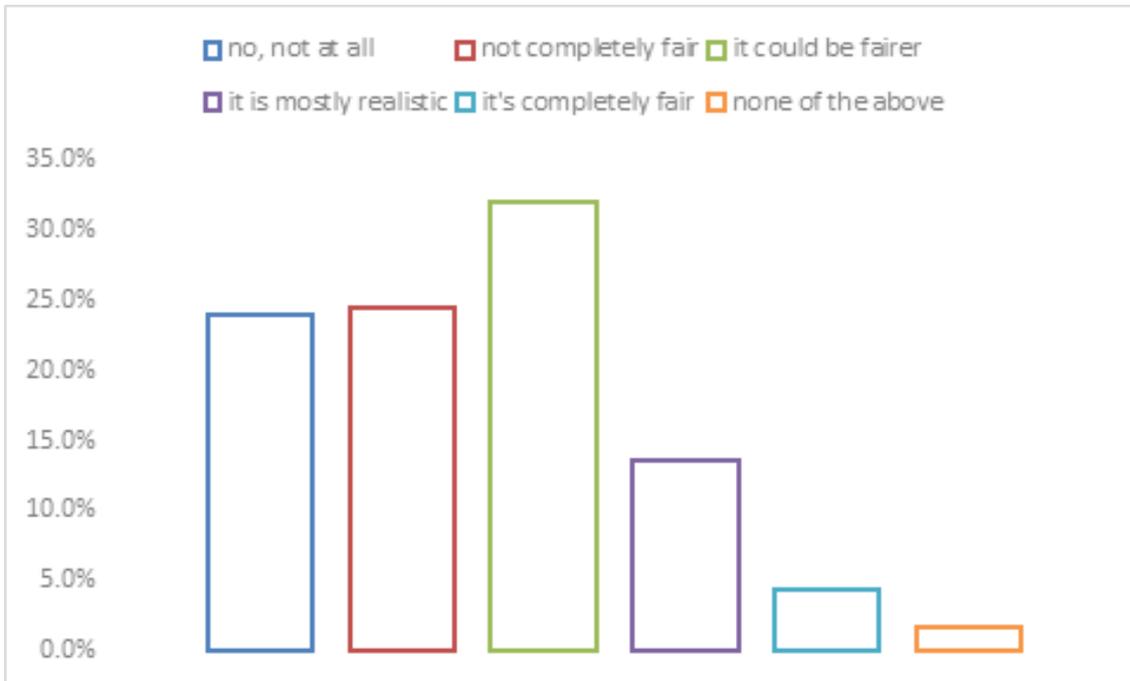
More than 80% of our respondents were negative about the work of Serbian municipalities or the so-called provisional municipal bodies in Kosovo, where the range of responses ranged from “they are doing nothing”, through “doing something small”, to “it could be better”, which actually means “they do not work and do not try very hard”. However, 18.7% of respondents believe that the work of these institutions is mostly or completely good, which is explained more by

their commitment and support to Serbia than institutions real results.

In testimony to that are the answers to our question about how fair the distribution of domestic grants is<sup>40</sup>. About 60% of respondents have never applied for these grants, and of those who have, and have experience with, more than 80% are dissatisfied with the distribution, which speaks in favor of corrupt activities that accompany local grants.

<sup>40</sup> It was emphasized in the question that these are either from the Serbian or Kosovo institutions.

**Question:** On a scale of 1 to 5, do you think that the distribution of domestic grants is fair?



Apart from public institutions, we will mention that several public companies continued to operate in Serbian communities after 1999, such as the public utility company (Komunalac), public transport services (GSP Pristina), postal services (Post of Serbia), mobile telephony (Telekom), and many others. To date, most of these companies, which continue to operate and function in some form, have undergone a kind of integration or re-registration, obtaining certain permits, and transitioning to the Kosovo system. However, there are also many public companies that exist only on paper, have no function, and have complete staff that is financed from the Serbian budget. According to the Serbian Business Registers Agency, more than 25 Serbian public companies based in Kosovo are in active status, including Pristina Airport, Termokos, which is supposed to maintain Pristina's central heating system, and the Public Display Company for films and organizing events of importance for

the city of Pristina<sup>41</sup>. The payment of salaries to "employees" in these companies also represents the purchase of votes for the ruling party, which is scaring them sayun they will be abolished if someone else comes to power.

With the Brussels agreement from 2013, Serbia committed itself to ending parallelism and integrating police structures and courts into the Kosovo system, which happened for the police in the same year, and for the judiciary only at the beginning of 2017. The same agreement provided for the establishment of four municipalities in northern Kosovo, following Kosovo's 2014 local elections: North Mitrovica, Zvecan, Leposavic and Zubin Potok. These municipalities then joined other Kosovo municipalities with a Serb majority<sup>42</sup>, formed according to the Ahtisaari plan and the Constitution of Kosovo and functioning

41 <https://insajder.net/arhiva/price/kosovo/srpska-jav-na-preduzeca-na-kosovu-i-dalje-budzetski-korisnici>

42 Gracanica, Strpce, Novo Brdo, Partes, Klokot, Ranilug

since 2009. The intention was to abolish and dismantle the parallelism of municipalities with the agreement, but that did not happen. On the contrary, since these elections in all Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, with rare and inconsistent exceptions, the Serbian List is in power as a branch of the Serbian Progressive Party ruling in Serbia, the provisional bodies of Serbian municipalities have partially merged with the new Kosovo municipalities. .

We will only mention that the current deputy president of the municipality of Gracanica according to the Kosovo system, Milan Joksimović, is at the same time the president of the temporary body of the municipality of Lipljan according to the Serbian system. Ljubinko Karadžić, at the time when he was the president of the temporary body of the municipality of Pristina (in Gracanica), at the same time performed the function of the deputy mayor of the Kosovo municipality of Gracanica. Aleksandar Spirić, President of the Provisional Authority of the Municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica under the Serbian system, from 2020 took over the function of acting Mayor of North Mitrovica under the Kosovo system, while longtime Mayor of Štrpce under the Kosovo system Bratislav Nikolić<sup>43</sup> at one point took over the position of Provisional Authority municipality of Urosevac (in Štrpce).

Kosovo's municipalities, unlike Serbian ones, have much broader powers and legally guaranteed work, as well as large budgets that are filled from the local and central levels. These institutions, among other things, issue building permits, collect property taxes, as well as taxes to companies operating in the municipality. In addition, they have the right to apply for domestic and international grants in Kosovo, which allows them to implement a large number of infrastructure

43 He is currently in custody due to the investigation into accepting bribes for issuing construction permits in Brezovca, as well as exerting pressure on officials to issue those permits, which the prosecution believes he illegally acquired over one million euros.

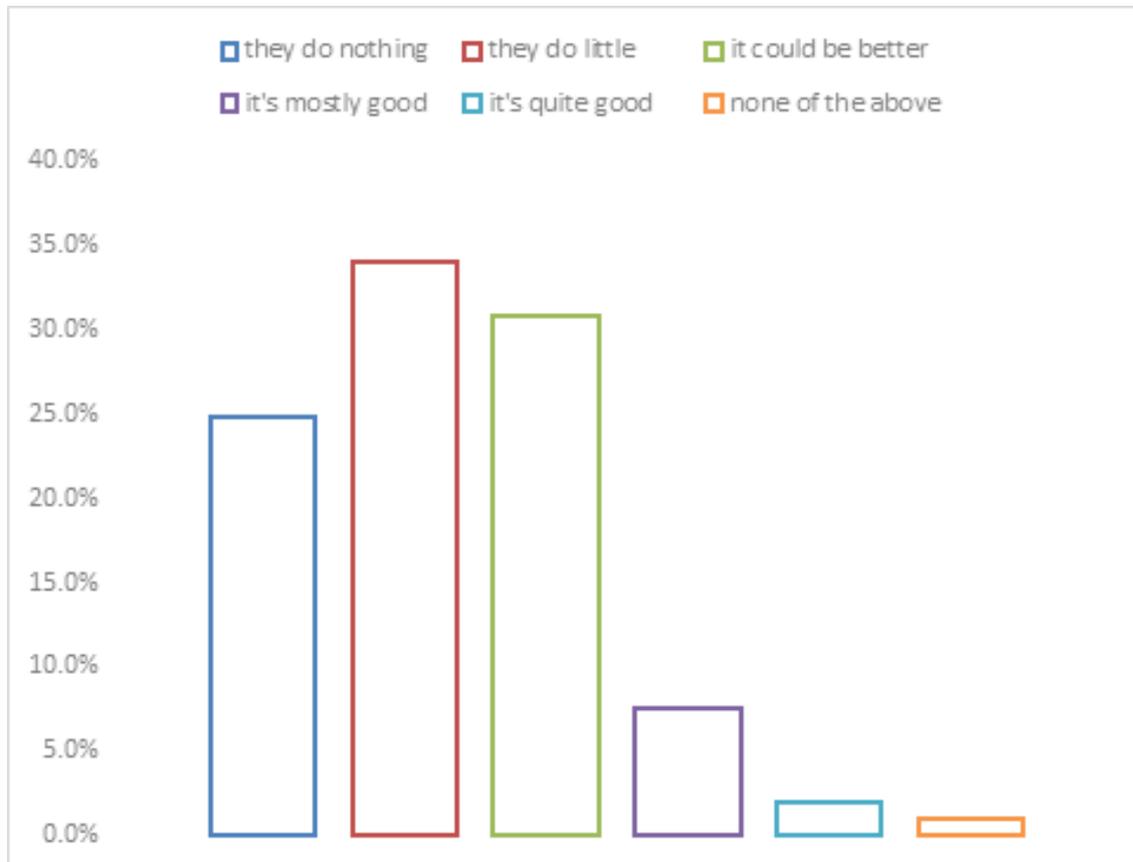
projects. After 2009, and especially after 2014, these municipalities were urbanized, water supply and sewerage installations were partially arranged, and the services of local institutions were made more available to citizens. However, the possibility of corruption has not been reduced, regardless of the much greater control than in Serbian municipalities, which is shown by the most recent example of the arrest of the mentioned mayor of Štrpce, Bratislav Nikolić<sup>44</sup>. In addition, we will mention the case of the attempt to allocate 245 thousand euros for 14 non-governmental organizations in Gracanica municipality, for the implementation of the project "prevention of the spread of the kovid-19 virus", which was annulled only after the media reaction<sup>45</sup>. It seems that the Albanian side, although aware of the problem, "turns a blind eye" at a large part of corrupt activities in Kosovo municipalities with Serb majority, sometimes because of the possible interethnic characterization and nature of such actions, and sometimes because of complicity.

However, our respondents spoke worse about the work of Kosovo municipalities than about Serbian ones. As many as 90% of respondents in total do not have a positive attitude about the work of these institutions. It is necessary to point out a few things on this occasion. Despite the twice shorter existence and work after the conflict in Kosovo, Kosovo municipalities with a Serb majority, which are led mostly or exclusively by Serbs, have practically contributed incomparably more to the lives of citizens than the temporary bodies of Serb municipalities. Therefore, we interpret the negative answers of the respondents more as a generally negative attitude towards Kosovo institutions, and commitment and support to Serbia, and not as an assessment of the real results of the work of Kosovo municipalities.

44 <https://www.radiokim.net/vesti/hronika/bratislav-nikolic-se-tereti-da-je-nelegalno-stekao-okolo-milion-evra.html>

45 <https://www.radiokim.net/vesti/drustvo/nvo-odustale-od-finasijskih-sredstava-ponistena-odluka-komisije.html>

**Question:** On a scale of 1 to 5, do you think that the Kosovo municipality is doing a good job?



Speaking about health and education, we also mentioned the existence of vouchers, which are paid to part of the employees, and are under the direct jurisdiction of Kosovo municipalities. For example, the Ministry of Health in Kosovo, which is responsible for all health institutions in the country, is not responsible for the three Serb-majority municipalities: North Mitrovica, Gračanica and Strpce, which are exceptions to this general institutional arrangement. These three municipalities, in addition to the competencies for the primary level, also manage the provision of secondary health care. According to the Law on Local Self-Government, "extended competencies of these municipalities include the right to register and license health institutions, hire

medical staff, pay salaries and train health staff and health care administrators<sup>46</sup>." In a similar way, municipalities have the fees of educators, which they pay in cooperation with the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MEST).

Payments of fees for health and education workers by Kosovo institutions through vouchers may be Pristina's attempt to show more interest in these institutions, but in practice they are an instrument by which municipalities reward their followers or buy votes in elections. Namely, as we have already shown, educators and health workers in Serbian communities in Kosovo

<sup>46</sup> Law on Local Self-Government, adopted in 2008, <https://gzk.rks.gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2530>

already receive one and a half salaries from Serbia, due to the difficult conditions in which they work. Additional fees, which Pristina offers through Kosovo municipalities, come exclusively for individuals, mostly senior educational and health personnel (professors, directors, doctors...) who are "in line with the party" ie the Serbian List. This is in return for a favor, for their obedience and loyalty to the party, as well as for influencing their subordinate colleagues and other staff when voting in elections. This claim is supported by the example of the temporary body of the municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica, which "called on the directors of municipal public companies to vote with their workers and members of their families and to go to the polls in an organized manner<sup>47</sup>."

Municipalities also pay vouchers to unemployed individuals, thus buying their loyalty, so that they, in addition to health and educational institutions, work on obtaining secure votes from the wider and poorer sections of the population. There are also frequent cases of nepotism, when the heads of municipalities pay such fees to their relatives and to the people who do not live in Kosovo at all, and do not even work in health care or education <sup>48</sup>.

47 <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/vece-organizovano-glasanje-u-severnoj-mitrovici-u-nedelju/rx8eyyq>

48 <https://www.radiokim.net/vesti/drustvo/protest-u-vrbovcu-se-nastavlja-predsednik-opstine-bezi-od-gradjana-i-novinara.html>



# Conclusions and recommendations

The mentioned Brussels Agreement from 2013 deals, for the most part, with the establishment of the Union of Serbian Municipalities (ZSO), ie the Association<sup>49</sup> of Municipalities with a Serb-majority population. It is envisaged that the Union will have a statute, a president, an assembly, a council, full control over economic development, education, health, urbanism and rural development, and a representative role for the central government<sup>50</sup>. Funding for the organization, with Kosovo's control, would come in part from Belgrade and in part from Pristina and other sources<sup>51</sup>. However, in 2015, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo decided that the agreed principles on the Association were not fully in line with the spirit of the Constitution of Kosovo, which suspended the process that did not meet with the approval of the majority Albanian population.

In a society deeply divided and unhealed by war, such as Kosovo, where national, religious and linguistic differences stand out, creating a special organization based on ethnicity, which poses a danger of the "third level of government", certainly does not seem the best solution. It would be incomparably better if the consciousness of the majority and minority peoples in the country was at the level that no one poses a threat to anyone's existence, but that everyone works together and in mutual trust to improve overall living conditions. But, until such a level of consciousness is reached, we need to create such conditions as the

current circumstances allow, but also the current and reached agreements require.

In this regard, and in light of all of the above, the Serb-majority Union of Municipalities is the organization with the greatest potential and interest in addressing all of these Kosovo Serb issues and concerns:

OO **The finances**, which Belgrade sends to the Serbian institutions in Kosovo, would go through one umbrella organization, which would deal with their distribution.

OO **The finances that Pristina allocates for education and health in Serbian communities** would also go through one organization. All sources of funding in this case would be protected from corruption and nepotism at the local level, assuming that the Union will have strong control mechanisms at the central level.

OO **The health care system**, which already operates uniquely and networked in all existing Serb-majority municipalities, would be managed by a Kosovo institution for the first time since 1999, which the Union, regardless of its ethnic background, would certainly represent. Procurement of medicines and medical devices from Serbia would be more transparent, transportation of patients through integrated crossings would be facilitated, and work reports would be available to Pristina.

OO **Educational institutions**, which do not have their counterpart or potential for formation by Pristina, would also "enter" the Kosovo system for the first time through the Union. The process of mutual recognition of certificates and diplomas would be facilitated,

49 In the Serbian language, the word association primarily means connecting one phenomenon or concept with another - in consciousness. It is rarely used for association.

50 Full text of the Brussels Agreement, <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/cinjenice/283757>

51 <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Politika/1452153/Moguće+finansiranje+ZSO+iz+više+izvora.html>

teaching aids and textbooks would be easier to come from Belgrade, and Pristina would have an insight into the curricula. In the spirit of improved communication, a climate would be created in which it would be possible to harmonize well-founded and scientifically confirmed controversial data in history textbooks, while accepting freedom of interpretation.

**OO Employees in the temporary bodies of municipalities under the Serbian system**, as well as fictitious public companies, would find a place of permanent and real employment in the Union, and only those staff who still live in Kosovo, who have work qualifications and abilities, and do not work at the same time. Kosovo municipalities or other institutions. This would remove and justly resolve the last parallelism of institutions in Kosovo, which would be especially in favor of Pristina.

Considering that, if it is understood correctly and if there is good will, all of the above will contribute to all parties<sup>52</sup>, everyone could declare a “victory” in their own way at the end of this process. All roads, which lead to the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, in one way or another, are currently going through the establishment of the Association of Municipalities with a majority Serb population.

Finally, let's go back to the aforementioned Maslow's pyramid of human needs, which is not exhausted by meeting the needs for security through addressing issues of work, health care, security, education ... For the Kosovo Serbs, the establishment of the Association would in a way represent the fulfillment of the need to belong to a group, which is vaguely defined in the current Kosovo framework, while the Kosovo majority public still accepts only the Albanian heritage as Kosovo's.

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<sup>52</sup> Pristina, Belgrade, Kosovo Serbs and the international community.

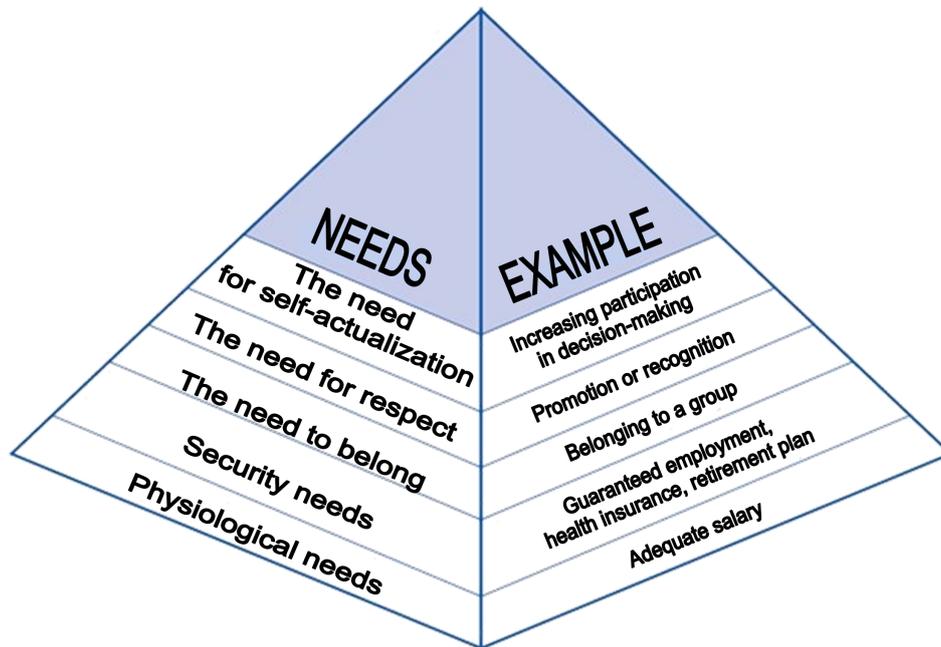


Illustration: Maslow's Pyramid of Human Needs<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from edukacija.rs, <https://edukacija.rs/menadzment-ljudskih-resursa/maslovljeva-teorija-motivacije>



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