



CITIZENS' PERSPECTIVE ON POTENTIAL TOPICS OF THE FINAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN KOSOVO-SERBIA

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INTRODUCTION

The Public Opinion Survey "Citizens' Perspective on Potential Topics of the Kosovo - Serbia Final Agreement " is the ninth consecutive survey conducted by Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) since 2016, in order to highlight citizens' views about the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue process. Also, the results from this surveys aim to present the citizen's perspective about their expectations about the future of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, which should be taken into account by all stakeholders involved in this process.

Since the decision of the Government of Kosovo dated 21 November 2018, the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia continues to be suspended. In spite of the international representatives' insistence that the parties return to the dialogue table, there has been no change in the positions of the parties even a year after the measure was imposed. Specifically, Serbia has refused to return to the dialogue before the 100% tariff is suspended by Kosovo, which the latter refused to do.

The ninth opinion survey report reflects citizens' position towards political developments, especially the 100% tariff on Serbian and BH products, the border correction thesis, the association of Serb-majority municipalities and the elements that the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia should contain. The first part of the report reflects the results of the public opinion survey regarding the citizens' understanding of the border correction thesis and association of Serb-majority municipalities, as well as their views about the 100% tariff on Serbia and BH. This survey also highlights the civic stance on the elements that the final Kosovo-Serbia potential agreement should contain. The conclusions of the findings of public opinion survey are presented in the second part of the report.

These public opinion surveys aim to promote transparency, accountability and responsible democracy. The survey organized within the project "European Perspective - Building a National Consensus on the Normalization of Relations with Serbia2" is financed by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.





METHODOLOGY

The survey was implemented at country level using a systematic random sampling method. Its sample consisted of 1070 respondents selected to ensure a representative sample, stratified by ethnicity (Albanian, Serbian and other non-majority communities) and settlement distribution (urban/rural), as well as the demographic composition. The survey was implemented in the period 2 - 8 September 2019.

Its error margin is $\pm 3\%$ in selection, with a credibility interval of 95%. Household selection was made using a systematic random sampling method, by surveying the person over the age of 18 with the first upcoming birthday. The survey was performed face-to-face, where the surveyor read the questions and recorded the answers in the electronic questionnaire.



**PUBLIC
OPINION
SURVEY
RESULTS**

QUESTION

Do you think that the next government should open the path to dialogue with Serbia by suspending the tax?

On 21 November, it will be one year since the Kosovo Government led by Ramush Haradinaj decided to impose a 100% tariff on Serbian and BH products.¹ The measure also had an impact on the dialogue process itself, as Serbia refused to participate in the dialogue before this measure is removed. Since that time, the Government of Kosovo has faced constant demands and pressure from the international community to suspend the tariff so that the dialogue process could resume. The tariff had also caused divisions among government coalition partners, with PDK favouring the tariff suspension, whereas the AAK considering that the tariff should remain in force. The head of PDK, Mr. Kadri Veseli proposed temporary suspension of tariff for 120 days, as a measure of confidence towards the US and EU.² However, PDK representatives' statements regarding the tariff had changed, especially during the election campaign, where they expressed their support for continuation of the measure.³ LDK and LVV political entities considered that full reciprocity should be imposed on Serbia, considering that the decision on tariff imposition by the previous Government was taken without a proper analysis.

The international community also began to put pressure on Serbia to withdraw from the international campaign against the state of Kosovo. This was also articulated by the Special Envoy of the State Department for the Western Balkans. Mr. Matthew Palmer has stated that Kosovo should suspend the tariff, but Serbia as well should stop its campaign for "derecognition" of Kosovo.⁴ Currently Kosovo is in the process of establishing the new governing institutions and the issue of tariffation will be one of the remaining topics related to the dialogue process and will need to be addressed by this Government. Therefore, citizens in this survey were asked about their stance on whether the next government should open the path for dialogue with Serbia by suspending the tariff.

The response of 59% of the surveyed citizens were that the Government should not suspend the tariff to open the path for dialogue, while 34% of them thought that this should happen, and 8% of citizens responded that they did not know what the Government's decision on this issue should be.

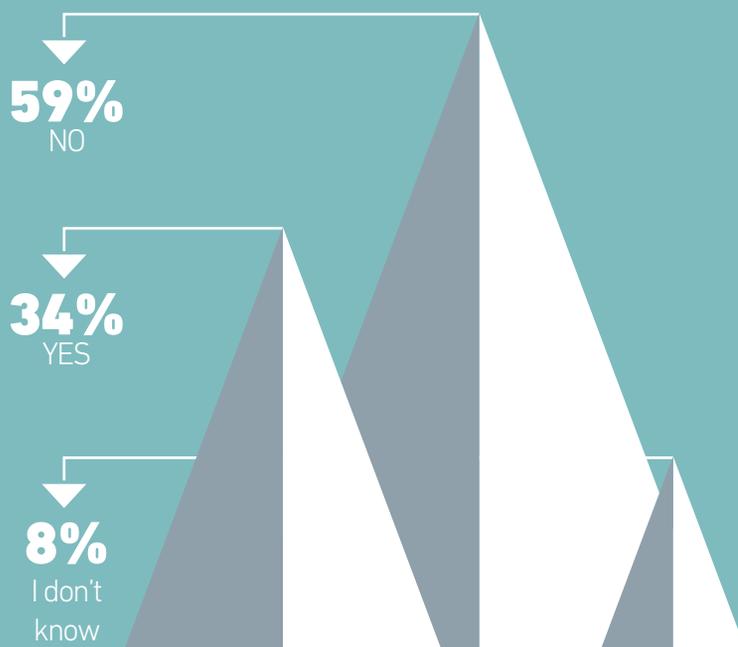
1 See Government Decision dated 21 November 2018 at, <http://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Lista-e-mallrave-te-perjashtuara.pdf>

2 Koha Net, "Veseli proposes tariff suspension for 120 days", 28 January 2019 at, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/142112/veseli-proponon-qe-taksa-te-pezu-llohet-per-120-dite/>

3 See statement of Enver Hoxhaj dated 6 September 2019 at, <https://zeri.info/zgjedhjet-2019/285525/partite-politike-thone-se-taksa-mbetet-edhe-pas-zgjedhjeve/>

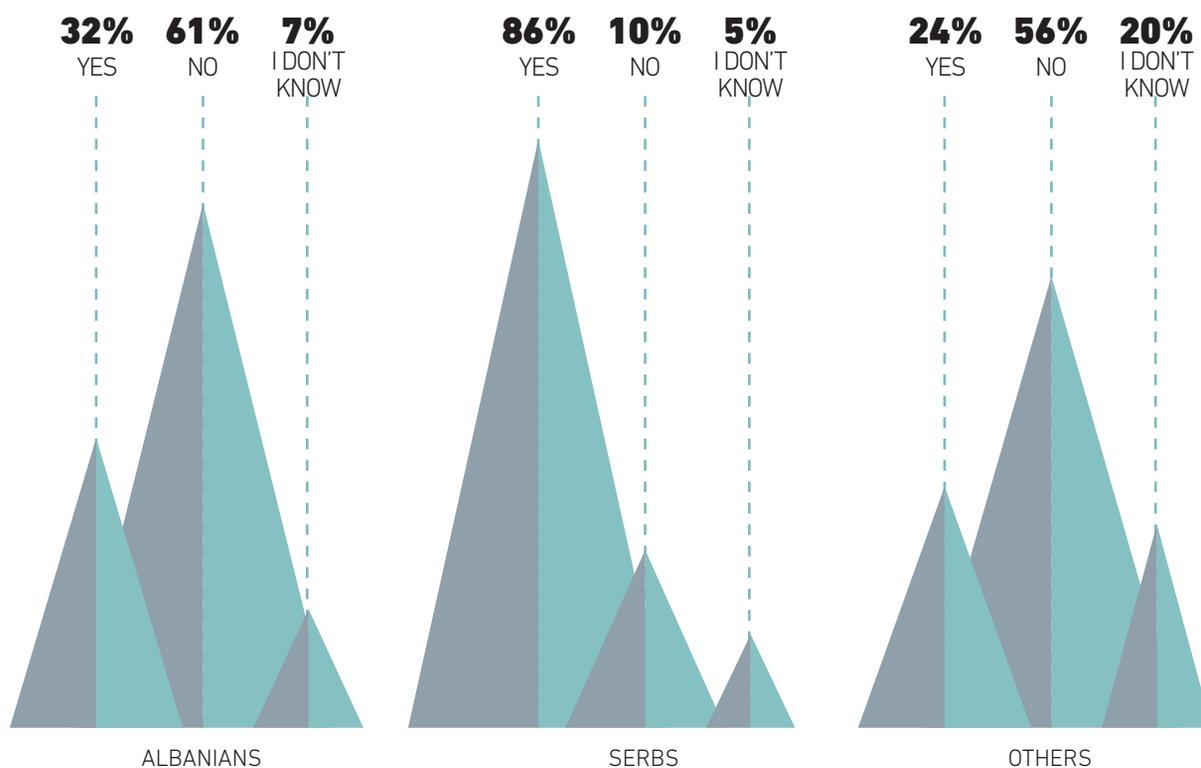
4. <https://klankosova.tv/matthee-palmer-serbia-ti-ndale-cnjojhet-kosova-ta-heqe-taksen/>

The response of **59%** of the surveyed citizens were that the Government should not suspend the tax to open the path for dialogue, while **34%** of them thought that this should happen, and **8%** of citizens responded that they did not know what the Government's decision on this issue should be.



Based on the ethnicity, there were differences in the responses of respondents from the Albanian community, the Serb community and other non-majority communities. 86% of Kosovo Serb respondents think that the Government of Kosovo should suspend the tariff to open the path for dialogue versus 32% of Kosovo Albanian respondents

and 24% of other non-majority communities that share the same opinion. On the other hand, 61% of the respondents from the Albanian community, 56% of the respondents from other non-majority communities and 10% of the respondents from the Serb community think that the tariff should remain in force.



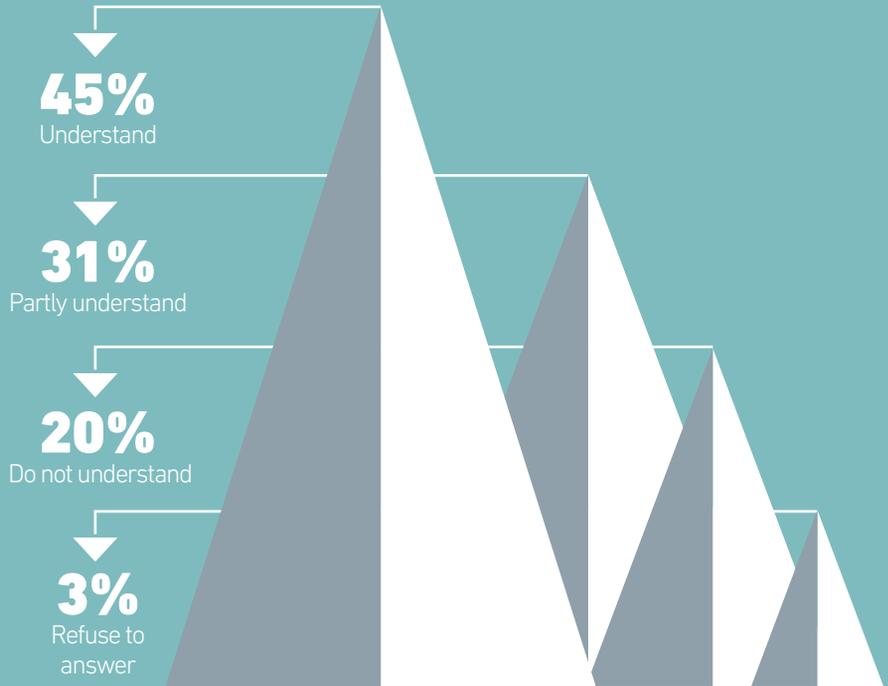
QUESTION

Do you understand the meaning of the term 'border correction'?

When the idea of 'border correction' was introduced to the public by President Thaçi in 2017, there was vagueness about what the term 'border correction' meant. President Thaçi insisted that this meant merging the Preshevo Valley with the Republic of Kosovo, whereas concerns were raised in the public that border correction meant the exchange of territories between Kosovo and Serbia, specifically the exchange of northern Kosovo with Preshevo Valley in Serbia. President Thaçi himself failed to clarify why Serbia would agree to give Kosovo a part of its territory, without demanding a part of Kosovo for itself. There were also elaborations of other theses that contributed to different interpretations related to this notion.

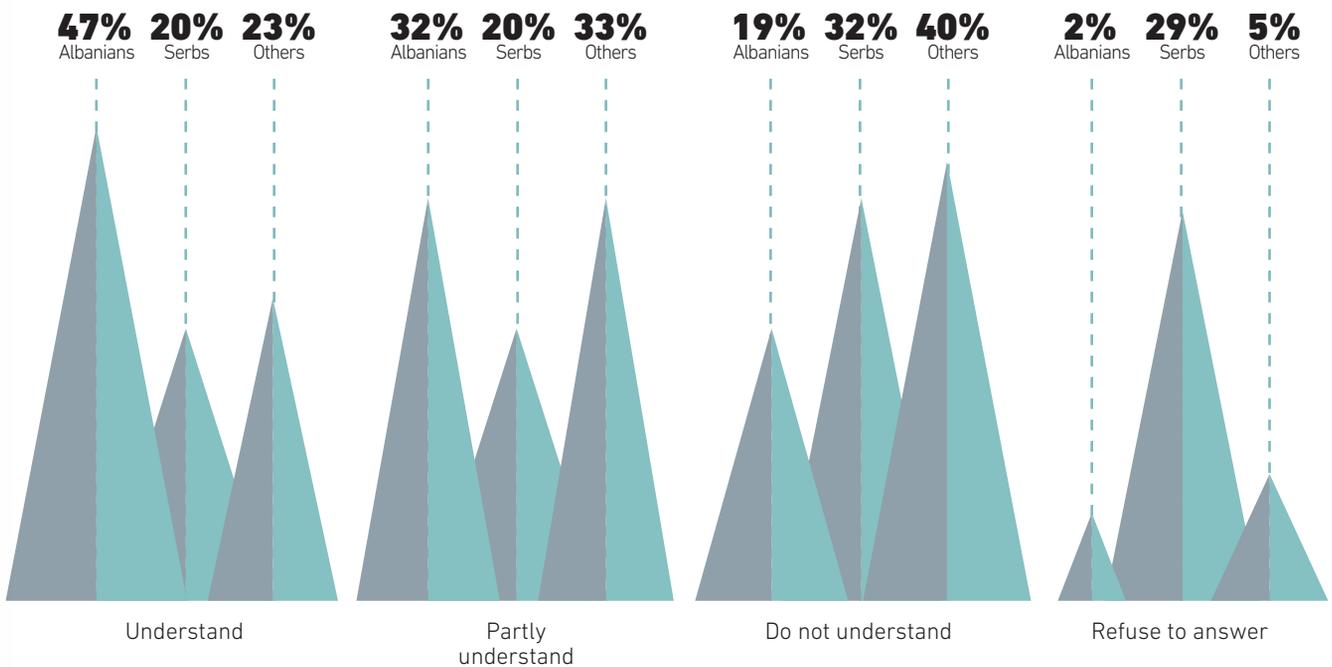
Given the ambiguity that the 'border correction' thesis could have, KDI asked Kosovo citizens whether they understand the meaning of the term 'border correction'. In relation to this, 45% of respondents responded that they clearly understood the meaning of this term, versus 31% of respondents who understood it partly and 20% of respondents that did not understand what the term 'border correction' meant. Only 3% of the respondents refused to answer this question.

In relation to this, **45%** of respondents responded that they clearly understood the meaning of this term, versus **31%** of respondents who understood it partly and **20%** of respondents that did not understand what the term 'border correction' meant. Only **3%** of the respondents refused to answer this question.



Responses according to ethnicity have shown differences among communities regarding the understanding of the 'border correction' thesis. Thus, 47% of respondents from the Albanian community stated that they understood the meaning of 'border correction', versus only 20% of respondents from the Serb community and 23% of respondents from other non-majority communities that shared the same opinion. Whereas, 51% of the respondents from the Albanian community, 52% from

the Serb community and 73% from other non-majority communities, generally stated that they did not fully understand this concept, varying from their answers partly understand to do not understand. 29% of respondents from the Serb community, 5% from other non-majority communities and 2% from the Albanian community refused to answer this question.



QUESTION

Do you understand what does "Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities with Executive Powers" mean?

The Kosovo-Serbia Agreement for the Establishment of the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities was reached in Brussels since 2013 under the First Agreement on Principles on the Normalization of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia⁵. Two years later, in 2015, the parties agreed on the general principles of the Association⁶, which set out the key elements for establishing of this mechanism⁷. Both of these agreements encountered heavy criticism in Kosovo, which raised concerns about the possibility of establishing a third level of government that could jeopardize the unitary character of the state of Kosovo. Protests were also organized by a part of the political spectrum and tear gas was thrown inside the Kosovo Assembly. Following the institutional blockade that was created as a result of opposition to this agreement, the then President Mrs. Atifte Jahjaga addressed the Constitutional Court asking to interpret the 2015 agreement on the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities. The Court had concluded that the principles elaborated in the content of the Association Agreement were not fully in line with the spirit of the Constitution and held that both the Government Act and the Statute establishing the Association had to be in accordance with the relevant constitutional chapters⁸.

The Judgment of the Constitutional Court affected the eagerness of Serbian representatives to take the necessary steps in establishing the Association in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. As a result this mechanism was not established to this day. However, the possibility of this issue being part of the discussions in the final phase of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, whenever this process continues, and attributing potential executive powers to the Association is not excluded. There have been different interpretations of what this association should look like, and whether it should entail power of a non-governmental organization or executive powers of a decision-making mechanism. The discussions also addressed the impact that the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities could have on the unitary internal functioning of the state of Kosovo, the relationships it would create between the Serb community in Kosovo and the state of Serbia, and the functioning of the state of Kosovo as a multi-ethnic society. With this in mind, KDI wanted to know what the citizens thought of the Association, namely how well did they understand what the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities with executive powers meant.

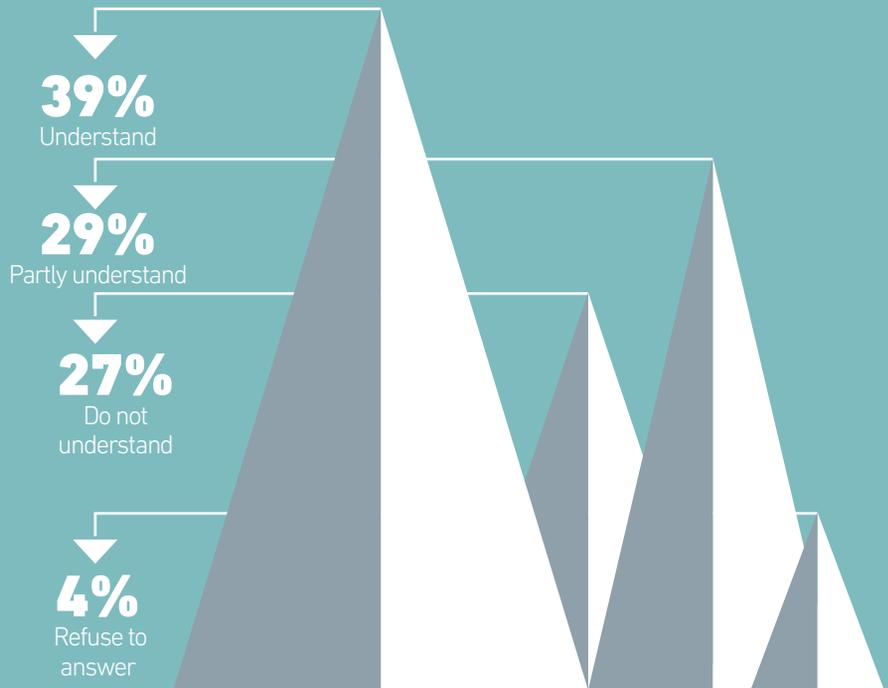
5 See First Agreement on Principles for the Normalization of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia dated 19 April 2013 at, http://www.votaime.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/TekstiiMarreshjes_19prill2013_HGXf5EDTG4.pdf

6 It is worth noting that only the first agreement of principles was ratified by the Assembly of Kosovo, while the Association Principles were not brought up for ratification, claiming to be a derivative of the basic agreement.

7 See the Agreement on Basic Principles of the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities dated 25 August at http://www.votaime.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/TekstiiMarreshjes_25gusht2015_EVDK4S6aE9.pdf

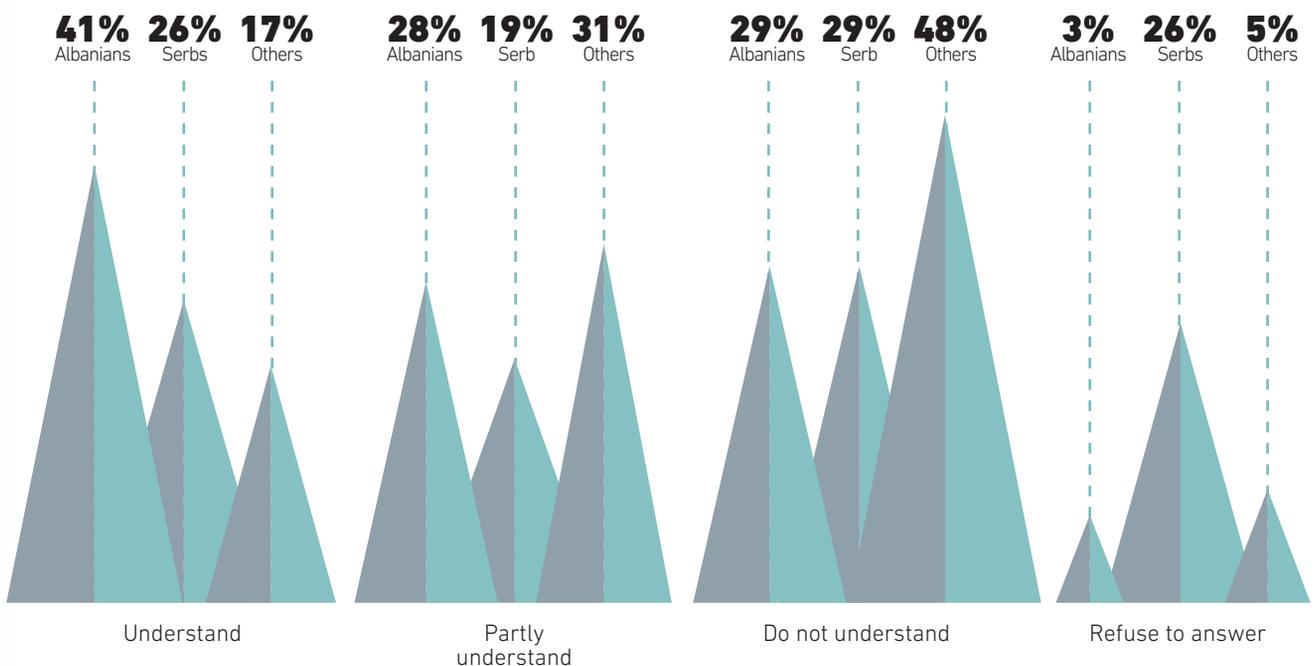
8 See the Constitutional Court's decision on the Association Agreement of 23 December 2015 at http://gjk-ks.org/ep-content/uploads/vendimet/gjk_ko_130_15_shq.pdf

In relation to that, **39%** of the surveyed citizens responded that they understood what this term meant, versus **29%** of the surveyed citizens who stated that they did not understand what the Association with executive powers meant. Whereas, **27%** said that they partly understood what this term meant. Whereas, **4%** of the surveyed citizens refused to answer this question.



As regards the ethnicity, 41% of respondents from the Albanian community stated that they understood what the Association of Serb-majority municipalities with executive powers was, compared to 26% of Serbs and 17% of non-majority communities who have shared the same stance. 48% of respondents from other non-majority communities stated that they did not understand the meaning of the term, compared to 29% of respondents from Albanian and Serbian communities who expressed similar views. Whereas, 31% of respondents from other non-majority communities, 28% of respondents

from Albanian community and 19% of respondents from Serb community stated that they partly understood what the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities with executive powers meant. 26% of respondents from the Serb community, 5% of respondents from other non-majority communities and 3% of respondents from the Albanian community refused to answer this question.



QUESTION

Which topics, in your opinion, should be included in the Kosovo-Serbia agreement?

Since the beginning of the dialogue process in March 2011, Kosovo and Serbia have reached about 33 agreements including basic agreements, agreed conclusions, implementation plans and agreements that have been renegotiated.⁹ These agreements reached include several areas such as, civil registries, cadastral registries, integrated border management, diplomacy, justice, energy, telecommunications, police, regional cooperation, dissolution of some of the parallel Serbian structures in Kosovo, customs stamps and other areas. However, many issues remain unaddressed so far in the dialogue process. In this regard, in 2016, the former chief negotiator for the dialogue Mrs. Edita Tahiri stated that topics such as war reparations, the issue of missing persons, return of pension fund, succession, etc. were expected to be discussed in the dialogue.¹⁰ On the other hand, the former Prime Minister of Kosovo, Mr. Ramush Haradinaj had published a draft agreement which included issues that, according to him, the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia should contain.¹¹

Currently, the dialogue process remains suspended and the future of this process is unclear. It is also unknown what topics will be discussed in this process, which topics could potentially be part of a comprehensive legally-binding agreement between Kosovo and Serbia.

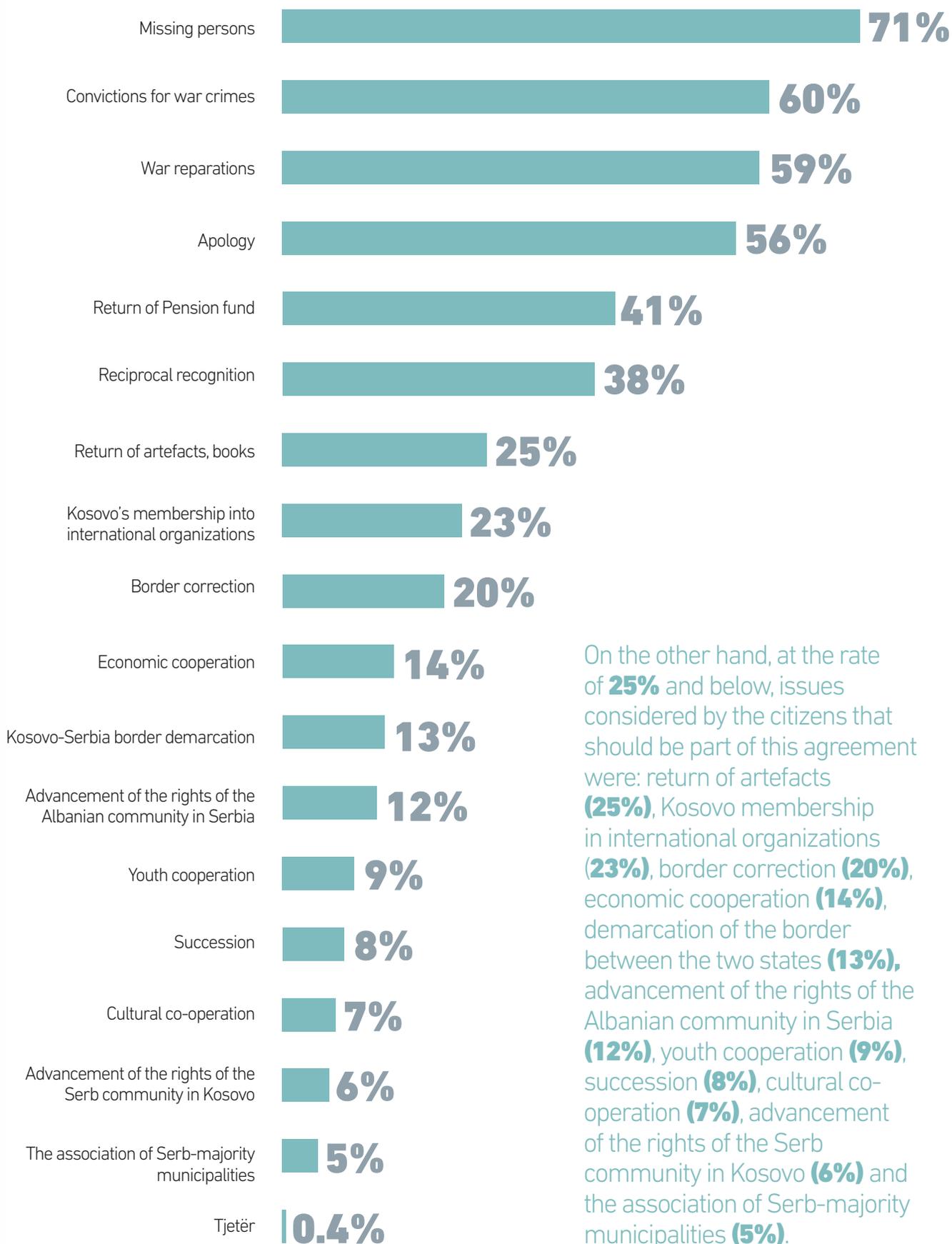
In this regard, KDI wanted to know the opinion of the citizens of Kosovo about the topics that the Kosovo-Serbia agreement should contain. One of the issues that citizens rated as the most important issue at 71%, is the one of missing persons. On the other hand, war crimes (60%) and war reparations (59%) rank as very highly in percentage, which according to the citizens should also be an integral part of the Kosovo - Serbia agreement. Further, citizens also consider the war apology as an important part of the agreement with 56% and the return of the pension fund with 41%. Whereas, mutual recognition was assessed with 38%, which according to the citizens, should also be one of the components of this agreement.

On the other hand, at the rate of 25% and below, issues considered by the citizens that should be part of this agreement were: return of artefacts (25%), Kosovo membership in international organizations (23%), border correction (20%), economic cooperation (14%), demarcation of the border between the two states (13%), advancement of the rights of the Albanian community in Serbia (12%), youth cooperation (9%), succession (8%), cultural co-operation (7%), advancement of the rights of the Serb community in Kosovo (6%) and the association of Serb-majority municipalities (5%).

⁹ You can find all the agreements concluded in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue at <http://votaimo.org/Public/Dialog>

¹⁰ Insider, Edita Tahiri's Statement: "The Five New Topics That May Be Discussed in Brussels" <https://insajderi.com/pese-temat-e-reja-qe-mund-te-diskutohen-ne-bruksel/>

¹¹ Comprehensive Agreement between the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia, December 2018 at, http://www.votaimo.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/DraftMarreshjaGjithperfshiresendermjetKosovesdheSerbise_zGN5KTvtm_RjV5CWhpTz.pdf



On the other hand, at the rate of **25%** and below, issues considered by the citizens that should be part of this agreement were: return of artefacts (**25%**), Kosovo membership in international organizations (**23%**), border correction (**20%**), economic cooperation (**14%**), demarcation of the border between the two states (**13%**), advancement of the rights of the Albanian community in Serbia (**12%**), youth cooperation (**9%**), succession (**8%**), cultural co-operation (**7%**), advancement of the rights of the Serb community in Kosovo (**6%**) and the association of Serb-majority municipalities (**5%**).

According to their ethnicity, differences were noted in the responses provided by citizens from the Albanian, Serb and other non-majority communities. For example, while citizens of the Albanian community rated at 73% the issue of missing persons as being one of the key elements that should be covered by the Kosovo-Serbia agreement, and citizens of other non-majority communities with 64%, citizens of the Serb community rated the advancement of the Serb community rights in Kosovo with 60%, as one of the key elements that they believe this agreement should contain.

	ALBANIANS
Advancement of the rights of Serb community in Kosovo	73%
Advancement of the rights of Albanian community in Serbia	62%
The association of Serb-majority municipalities	61%
Border correction	59%
Demarcation of Kosovo-Serbia border	42%
Reciprocal recognition	40%
Kosovo's membership into international organizations	26%
Succession	23%
Convictions for war crimes	21%
Apology	13%
Missing persons	14%
War reparations	11%
Economic cooperation	9%
Youth cooperation	9%
Cultural cooperation	6%
Return of Pension fund	4%
Return of artefacts, books	3%
Other	0%

On the other hand, while citizens from the Albanian community rated the apology at 59% as one of the elements that should be included in the Kosovo - Serbia agreement, citizens from the Serb community rated this component at only 11%. In mutual recognition as well, there is a significant difference between the citizens of the Albanian and Serb communities; 40% of the former saying that recognition should be one of the constituent elements of the agreement, while the latter with only 7%. Citizens from the Serb community with 47% consider that the essential part of the agreement should be the association of Serb-majority municipalities as an important element of the agreement, unlike the citizens of the Albanian community, who rated it at only 3% as an element that should be included in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue agreement.

	SERBS	OTHERS
	32%	64%
	34%	46%
	21%	52%
	11%	34%
	12%	47%
	7%	24%
	4%	29%
	8%	19%
	5%	18%
	22%	20%
	7%	8%
	15%	16%
	14%	12%
	2%	12%
	20%	13%
	60%	14%
	47%	4%
	0%	0%



SUMMARY

The results of this public opinion survey reveal the following findings:

- 1** The majority of citizens (59%) think that the upcoming government should not suspend the tax in order to open the path for dialogue with Serbia. However, according to their ethnicity, 61% of respondents from the Albanian community, 56% of respondents from other non-majority communities and only 10% of respondents from the Serb community share this opinion.
- 2** About 45% of respondents said they understood what the term "border correction" meant. Whereas, 31% of respondents said that they partly understood and 20% of respondents said that they did not understand what the term 'border correction' meant. Divided by ethnicity the term is understood by 47% of the respondents from the Albanian community, by 20% of the Serb community and 23% of other non-majority communities.
- 3** There are 39% of citizens who stated that they understood what "Association of Serb- Majority Municipalities with executive powers" meant. While 29% of the surveyed citizens stated that they did not understand it and 27% stated that they partly understood what the term meant. By ethnicity, this term is understood in higher rates among citizens of the Albanian community, at 41%, versus 26% of the Serb community and 17% of the non-majority communities.
- 4** According to the surveyed citizens, some of the most important elements that should be covered by the Kosovo-Serbia agreement are the issue of missing persons (71%), war crimes convictions (60%), war reparations (59%) and apology (56%). However, there were differences that arose between citizens from different communities regarding the elements that the Kosovo - Serbia agreement should contain.





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