





CITIZENS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE KOSOVO-SERBIA DIALOGUE, FOLLOWING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE DELEGATION

APRIL, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The public opinion survey "Citizens' perspective on the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue following the establishment of the State Delegation" is the eighth consecutive survey since 2016, organized by the Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI), with the purpose of shedding light on the citizens' views of this process. Also, the results from this survey aim to present a citizen's perspective on their expectations regarding the future of this process, which should be taken into account by all stakeholders involved in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue.

The new phase of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue started on 3rd of July 2017, following the meeting held in Brussels between the President of Kosovo Mr Hashim Thaqi and President of Serbia Mr Alexander Vucic, under EU mediation¹. This phase is considered as the final one, within which a legally binding agreement between the parties is expected to be reached. Since then, the process of dialogue was characterized by a number of political developments, which are related to the issue of Kosovo's representation in the process as well as the topics that should and should not be subject to discussions under this process

The report of the eighth public opinion survey reflects the citizens' position toward political developments, especially after establishment of the Kosovo State Delegation. The first part of the report provides a comprehensive overview of political developments in Kosovo regarding the final stage of the dialogue. The second part of the report provides the results of the survey which point out citizens' expectations on the State Delegation in the dialogue process with Serbia, their assessments regarding the needs for building a broad political consensus on this process, as well as their opinions

about organizing elections prior to continuing the dialogue with Serbia.

Moreover, this survey reflects the citizens' opinion on timelines, i.e. the time when an eventual agreement between the two sides must be reached, broken down based on their ethnicity, and in certain cases, by age and political preferences.

These public opinion surveys aim to promote transparency, accountability and overall 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.

¹ For more, see: https://www.president-ksgov.net/sq/lajme/fillon-nje-fazee-re-ne-dialogun-per-normalizimin-e-marredhenieve-ndermjet-kosovesdhe-serbise [Accessed on April 08, 2019]

² For further information regarding Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, as well as preliminary public opinion surveys, visit: www.votaime.org/Public/Dialog

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 of Kosovo. The survey was implemented in the period 3-12 March 2019. Its error margin is ±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.

Its error margin is ±3% in selection, with a credibility interval of 95%.

POLITICAL CONTEXT ON KOSOVO-SERBIA DIALOGUE

On 3rd of July 2017, President Thaçi, following the meeting held with President Vucic in Brussels, stated that a new phase of the dialogue on the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia has commenced³. Whereas following his visit to US, made in September of the same year, he stressed the need for building a national consensus, which would conclude the process of normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia, including the issue on building a unity team, the epilogue deriving from this process, organization of a referendum, the role of the international factor and some other issues⁴.

Since the beginning of this new phase of the dialogue, which took place at the presidential level, the political spectrum in Kosovo was divided and had different opinions over the issue of who should lead this stage of the dialogue. These different opinions caused deep polarization between parties and led ruling parties to take a lot of decisions, but also led all parliamentary parties to initiate a lot of initiatives.

Opposition parties, such as LVV, LDK and PSD were against the proposal that President Thaçi be the leader of the dialogue, whereas the ruling coalition thought the opposite, i.e. they supported this proposal. This was also pointed out by the public statements of Prime Minister Haradinaj⁵, as well as in the project platform for the finalization of dialogue, which was approved by the Kosovo Government on 19 April 2018.

Among other things, in this document was stated that "the

Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo confirms that the President of the Republic of Kosovo and the Kosovo Delegation which will be established in coordination with the entire political spectrum, with maximum respect for political unity in the country, are authorized to conduct discussions on reaching the internationally binding legal agreement." Moreover, the President is obliged to report to the Assembly, on a regular basis, regarding the dialogue progress⁶. This document, which is created as a result of the debate called by the opposition, failed to be discussed in the Assembly of Kosovo as it was withdrawn by the Government due to the lack of sufficient support from the parliamentary parties, particularly those of the opposition.

The supportive position of ruling parties toward President Thaçi as the leader of Kosovo delegation in these talks was put in question after he presented the "border correction idea" between Kosovo and Serbia. As a result, the Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj was categorically against this idea, and opposition parties further strengthened their position in this regard. This led to the initiative of the latter for adopting a resolution in the Assembly of Kosovo that would deny the President the right to discuss Kosovo's borders in the dialogue with Serbia. But, this draft resolution proposed by opposition parties was not approved because the ruling parties were not willing to support this initiative⁷. Also, the ruling coalition proposed several resolutions, but none of them received the support needed to be approved by the Assembly. The Government of Kosovo, on 3rd of September 2018, took

³ For more, see: https://www.president-ksgov.net/sq/lajme/fillon-nje-fazee-re-ne-dialogun-per-normalizimin-e-marredhenieve-ndermjet-kosovesdhe-serbise [Accessed on 08 April 2019]

⁴ For more, see: http://votaime.org/Public/DialogActivity/Detail/130 [Accessed on 02 April 2019]

⁵ Metro Newspaper. "Haradinaj states again: Thaçi should lead the dialogue with Serbia", 4 July, 2018. Accessible in: https://gazetametro.net/haradinaj-e-thote-perseri-thaci-duhet-te-udheheq-dialogun-me-serbine/ [Accessed on 28 March 2019]

⁶ Koha Net. "This is the state platform for finalizing the Kosovo dialogue with Serbia", 19 April 2018. Accessible in: https://www.koha.net/arberi/88168/ kjo-eshte-platforma-shteterore-per-finalizimin-e-dialogut-me-serbine/ [Accessed on 28 March 2019]

⁷ For more, see: https://www.koha.net/arberi/114793/kryesia-e-kuvenditneser-shqyrton-kerkesen-e-opozites-per-seance-te-jashtezakonshme/ [Accessed on 28 March 2019]

another decision regarding the final stage of the dialogue by creating a comprehensive team for the dialogue, led by Fatmir Limaj, and composed by ten other members coming from the ruling coalition and opposition parties, and also one member from civil society⁸. The two opposition parties, LDK and LVV, refused to be part of this delegation.

The Assembly of Kosovo, on 15 December 2018, with 59 votes in favour, adopted the resolution on "the Dialogue Process for the Normalization of Relations between the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia" proposed by the Parliamentary Group of PSD.⁹ The resolution foresees the establishment of the state delegation co-chaired by Fatmir Limaj and Shpend Ahmeti. The resolution also foresees the drafting of the Platform and the Law on Dialogue.¹⁰ Both of these documents were approved by the Assembly on 7 March 2019, about three months later, although the basic resolution required these documents to be submitted to the Assembly no later than one month. On 15 March 2019, the opposition parties, namely LDK and LVV, sent the Law on Dialogue to the Constitutional Court, claiming that it was in violation of the Constitution¹¹.

Due to the conceptual differences about the final stage of the dialogue, political parties have failed to build a common position, despite attempts at the Assembly, or roundtables organized by political parties themselves or by civil society. Therefore, LDK and LVV as opposition parties called for the country to go in elections as soon as possible, to establish legitimate new institutions that could represent Kosovo in the new phase of dialogue with Serbia.

In the European Union Strategy for the Western Balkans, the urgent and essential need for reaching a comprehensive agreement between Kosovo and Serbia as soon as possible is presented as a key element in guaranteeing stability in the region, but also as a condition for both countries to advance on their respective European paths¹². Even the High Representative of the EU herself, Federica Mogherini, stated that the agreement could be reached by 2019, as both the presidents of the two countries have agreed in principle for such a timeline¹³.

On the other hand, the letter of the President of the USA, Donald Trump to President Thaci, by the end of 2018, underlined the need to reach the agreement as soon as possible, since, as stated in the letter "[...] failure to capitalize on this unique opportunity would be a tragic setback, as another chance for a comprehensive peace is unlikely to occur again soon"¹⁴. These requirements and, in general, the international pressure to reach an agreement within 2019, are also reflected in public discourse in Kosovo.

⁸ Decision of the Government of Kosovo No.01/63, 3 September 2018. Accessible in: http://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Vendimet-e-Mbledhjes-s%C3%AB-63-t%C3%AB-t%C3%AB-Qeveris%C3%AB-s%C3%AB-Republik%C3%ABs-s%C3%AB-Kosov%C3%ABs-2018.pdf [Accessed on 28 March 2019]

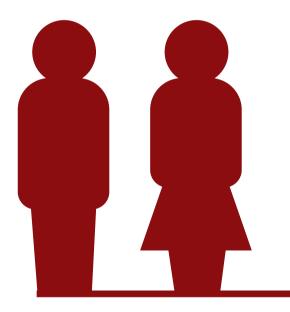
⁹ Assembly of Kosovo, "Resolution on the dialogue Process for the normalization of relations between the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia". 15 December 2018. Accessible in: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/ docs/2018_12_18_Resolution%2006-R-015.pdf [Accessed on 28 March 2019] 10 lbid.

¹¹ For more, see: https://www.koha.net/arberi/150647/vv-ja-e-ldk-ja-edergojne-ne-kushtetuese-ligjin-per-dialog/ [Accessed on 24 March 2019]

¹² For more, see the EU Strategy for the Western Balkans "A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans". Accessible in: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf [Accesed on 3 April 2019]

¹³ For more, see: https://gazetablic.com/mogherini-kosova-dhe-serbiaderi-ne-vitin-2019-te-arrijne-marreveshje-normalizimi/ [Accesed on 3 April 2019]

¹⁴ For more, see: https://www.president-ksgov.net/en/news/president-thacireceived-a-letter-from-the-president-of-the-usa-donald-trump [Accessed on 3 April, 2019]



RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

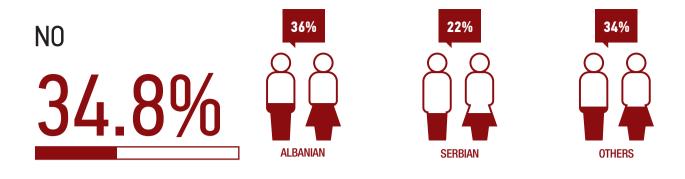
QUESTION 1

Do you believe that the State Delegation of Kosovo will be able to protect Kosovo's interest in the dialogue process?

onsidering the fact that the State Delegation is not being sufficiently supported by the political spectrum in Kosovo, the purpose of KDI was to present the opinion of Kosovo citizens on this delegation, using this public opinion survey

The citizens' opinion regarding the level of trust to the State Delegation is quite similar. Thus, 34.8% of citizens said they don't believe that the State Delegation of Kosovo will protect Kosovo's interest in the dialogue process, compared to 34.3% who believe that the delegation will protect Kosovo's interest. Whereas 28.2% of citizens said they don't know whether the delegation will protect Kosovo's interest, whereas 2.7% of respondents had no answer to this question.

Regarding citizens' responses based on the ethnicity of the respondents, 35.9% from Albanian community, 28% from other nonmajority communities and only 1.3% from Serbian community believe that the Kosovo State Delegation will be able to protect Kosovo's interest in the dialogue process. Whereas, 36% of respondents from Albanian community, 34% from other non-majority communities and 22% from Serbian community do not believe in this ascertainment. **34.8%** of citizens said they don't believe that the State Delegation of Kosovo will protect Kosovo's interest in the dialogue process.



YES 34.3%







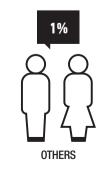
I don't know 28.29⁄0 ABANIAN SERBIAN OTHERS

No answer/NA









QUESTION 2

Should the two opposition parties (LDK and VV) be part of the State Delegation in the negotiations with Serbia for reaching the final agreement?

iven the fact that any eventual agreement reached between Kosovo and Serbia shall be ratified as an international agreement by twothirds of votes of all members of the Assembly of Kosovo, the need for broad political consensus is inevitable. Therefore, reaching a broader consensus between political parties, prior to the ratification phase, would avoid eventual delays and recurrences of scenarios happened in the case of ratification of the demarcation agreement with Montenegro. Therefore since the very beginning, KDI has consistently called for consensus and unity of the political spectrum for this stage of dialogue.

Considering the position of LDK and LVV towards the State Delegation, the purpose of KDI was to present the opinion of Kosovo citizens, using this survey, on whether these two parties should be part of the State Delegation in the negotiations with Serbia for reaching the final agreement.

In this regard, 46% of citizens stated that both of these parties should be part of the State Delegation, while 22.1% of citizens stated that none of these parties should be part of the State Delegation. On the other hand, 7.1% of citizens think that only LDK, while 3.9% think that only LVV should be part of the Delegation. Whereas 20.9% of citizens stated that they have no answer to this question.

Citizens' responses to this question, by their political party affiliation, have indicated that 54.5% of LDK voters and 54.5% of LVV voters

think that both parties should be part of the State Delegation. On the other hand, 16.7% of respondents who stated to be LDK voters think that only LDK should be part of the State Delegation, whereas 19.6% of LVV voters think that only LVV should be part of the State Delegation. These data indicate that LVV voters have expressed greater support for the inclusion of their political entity in the dialogue process, compared to LDK voters, who have shown a slightly higher level of reserves for the inclusion of their political entity in the dialogue process.

Regarding citizens' responses by ethnicity, 47.8% of respondents from Albanian community and 46% from other non-majority communities think that both opposition parties, LDK and LVV, should be part of the State Delegation, whereas, the citizens of the Serbian community did not answer the question. On the other hand, 21% of respondents from Albanian community, 56% from Serbian community and 20% from other non-majority communities share the opinion that neither of these two opposition parties should be part of the State Delegation. As regards to the possibility of involvement of only one of the opposition parties, this option is generally less favoured among citizens



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should be part of the State Delegation. These data indicate that LVV voters have expressed greater support for the inclusion of their political entity in the dialogue process, compared to LDK voters, who have shown a slightly higher level of reserves for the inclusion of their political entity in the dialogue process.



QUESTION 3

Do you think that the country should hold elections before continuing (the final stage) the dialogue?

ue to the disagreements pointed out in the previous chapters, the opposition repeatedly called for early elections, arguing that the dialogue process with Serbia can be continued only after the institutions are re-legitimized. The opposition's request for early elections was also closely related to the absence of a consolidated majority of the ruling parties which also influenced the proceedings of the Assembly¹⁵

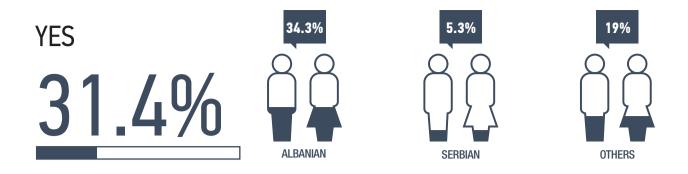
Therefore, considering these declarations which recently have been intensified, the Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI), through this survey, asked citizens about the possibility of having elections as a solution to the gridlock created in the country, in relation to the dialogue process.

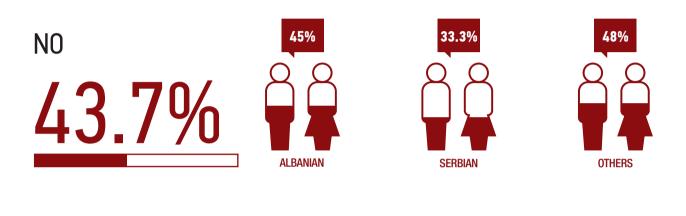
In this regard, based on the results obtained by respondents, it turns out that most of them, respectively 43.7%, do not consider elections as a solution to overcome problems related to the dialogue process. However, another significant part of the citizens, respectively 31.4%, stated that the country should go to elections before proceeding to the final stage, whereas, 24.9% of respondents had no opinion on this question.

From these abovementioned percentages, it can be concluded that there is no clear determination among public opinion of whether the country should go to elections before the final stage of

15 For more information, please see: http://kdi-kosova.org/ wp-content/uploads/2019/03/12-Dialogu-Kosov%C3%AB-Serbi-gjat%C3%AB-viti-2018-n%C3%AB-Legjislatur%C3%AB-se-Gjasht%C3%AB-t%C3%AB-Kuvendit-t%C3%AB-Kosov%C3%ABs-ALB-WEB1-1.pdf [Accessed on 9 April 2019] the dialogue, a result which may be related to the general scepticism of citizens about the possibility of overcoming issues among the political spectrum related to the dialogue process. Despite the fact that political parties expressed their support for the dialogue process, they share opposing views and approaches on the manner, format and results of it. Therefore, it can be said that for citizens it is hardly expected that elections would bring a significant change in relation to the dialogue process as a whole.

43.7% do not consider elections as a solution to overcome problems related to the dialogue process.





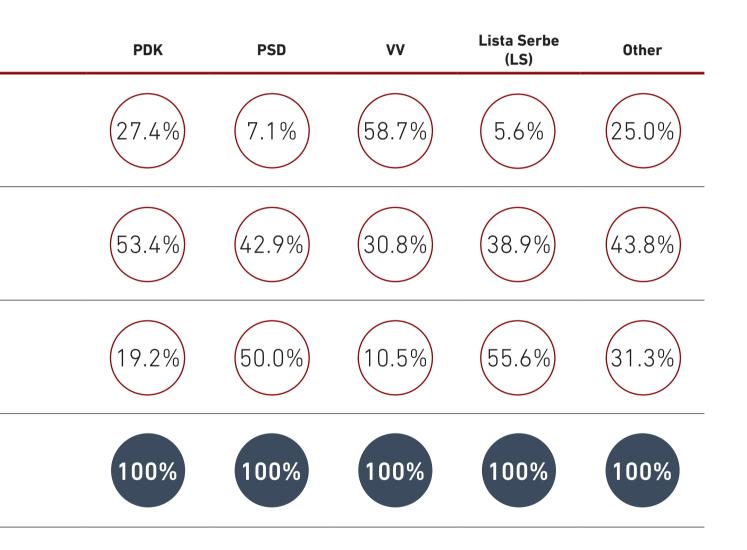


Viewed from the perspective of citizens' ethnicity, the percentages are somewhat similar to the overall average frequency. Nevertheless, a large percentage of 34.3% of citizens from Albanian community stated that the country must go to elections before the final phase of the dialogue, compared to only 5.3% of the citizens from Serbian community and 19% of citizens from other non-majority communities having the same opinion.

Based on political affiliation of voters, survey findings pointed out the fact that voters of both ruling parties and those of the PSD are in general against the option of having elections, while voters of opposition parties support this option, at a large extent. Regarding the support of this option, LVV voters lead with 58.7%, followed by 45.2% of LDK voters. On the other hand, this option is mostly opposed by AAK voters with 60.7%, followed by PDK voters with 53.4%, Nisma voters with 53.2%, AKR voters with 45.5%, and PSD voters with 42.9%.



Serb List voters represent the group of respondents with the lowest level of support for election, only 5.6%, and also the highest level of respondents having no opinion on this question with 55.6%.



QUESTION 4

When do you think that an agreement regarding normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia shall be reached?

ithin the survey, the Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) asked questions to address the citizens' perspective regarding the timeline within which an agreement on normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia shall be reached.

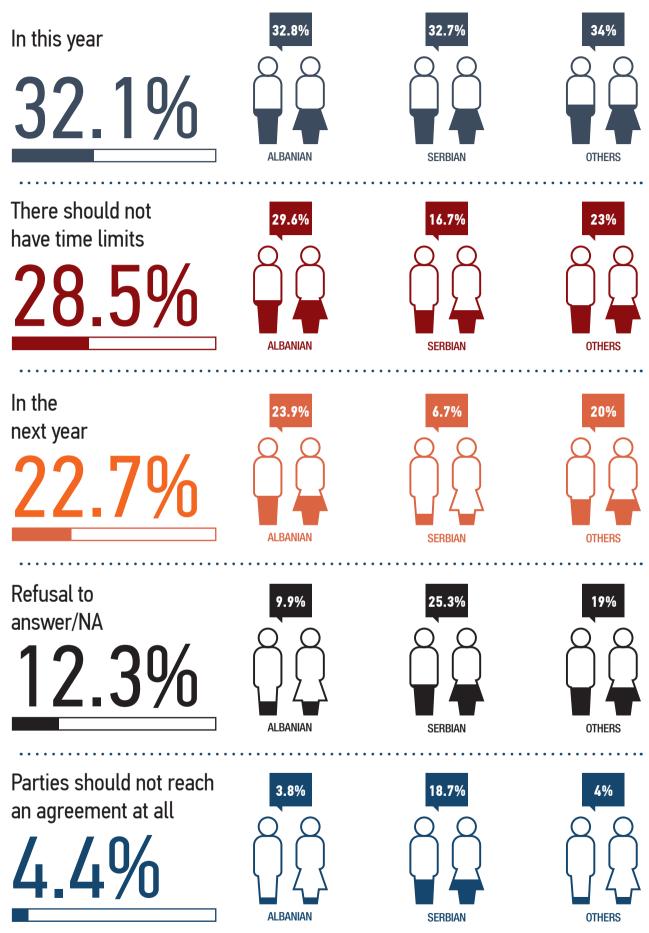
More respondents (32.1%) think that the agreement should be reached this year. Meanwhile, 28.5% of them estimate that there should be no timeline set. The option of reaching an agreement over the next year is supported by 22.7% of respondents, while 4.4% stated that the parties should not reach an agreement at all. 12.3% of respondents did not have an opinion or refused to respond this question.

The opinion of citizens from different ethnicities regarding timelines in reaching the final agreement with Serbia, points out the fact that despite their ethnicity, citizens estimate that the agreement between the parties should be reached in 2019. Nevertheless, regarding the option of reaching the agreement over the next year, there is a greater discrepancy in the opinions of citizens from different ethnicities. Whereas 23.9% of citizens from Albanian community support this option, only 6.7% of citizens from Serbian community and 20% of citizens from other non-majority communities estimate that the agreement should be reached next year.

The request of not having a time limit for reaching the agreement is significantly more expressed among Albanian community citizens with 29.6%, followed by citizens from other non-majority communities with 23%, and citizens from Serbian community with 16.7%. Based on data regarding the response that parties should not reach an agreement at all, only 3.8% of citizens from Albanian community and 4% of citizens from other non-majority communities support this option, compared to 18.7% of citizens from Serbian community who are in favour of this option.

Considering the abovementioned data, a rush in reaching the agreement it is noticed among citizens, which can be viewed as a reflection of their general exhaustion from dealing continuously with the dialogue issue. Because of this, according to the data, it can be concluded that the majority of citizens require from the current political class to conclude the dialogue process at the furthest within the next two years.

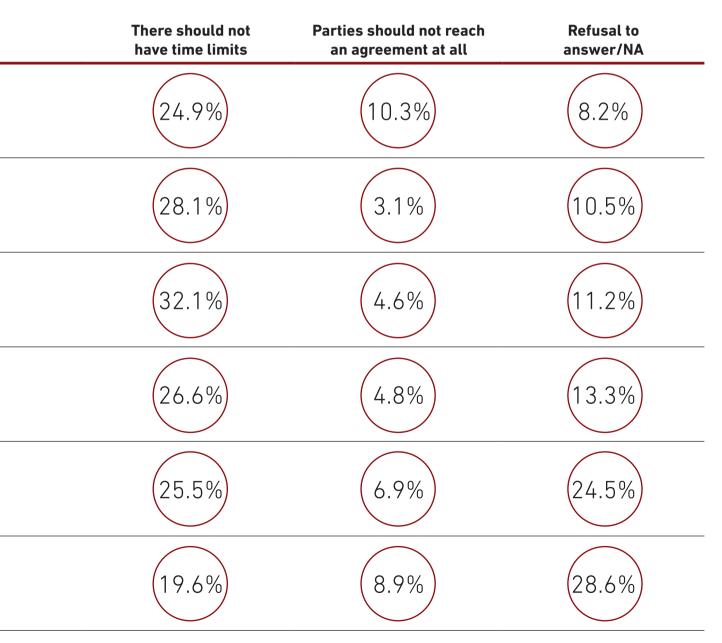
32.1% Of citizens think that the agreement should be reached this year.



Regarding the demographic aspect of respondents, i.e. their age, the data indicate a greater support by the youth for the option of reaching the agreement within this year. The support percentage to this option reduces progressively among older age-groups, particular among those

	In this year	In the next year	
18-24	36.5%	20.2%	
25-34	36.6%)	21.7%	
35-44	32.1%	19.9%	
45-54	28.7%	26.6%	
55-64	28.4%	14.7%	
65+	23.2%	19.6%	

over 65 years old who have the lowest percentage in supporting this option compared to all other age groups. Within other age groups, in general there is a relatively moderate support for almost all options.



CONCLUSIONS

The results of this public opinion survey disclose the following:

- 01 Citizens are divided on their opinion regarding the trust on the State Delegation of Kosovo. About 35% of citizens surveyed do not believe while 34% of them believe that the State Delegation will be able protect Kosovo's interest in the dialogue process. The rest of the respondents have no opinion regarding this issue.
- **02** Citizens request that the negotiating team have a composition that reflects broad political consensus regarding the topic of Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. About half of the citizens, 46% of them said LDK and LVV should be part of the State Delegation. While 22.1% of citizens stated that none of these parties should be included in the State Delegation.

03

Elections were not seen as a solution to overcoming the problems related to the dialogue process by almost half of the citizens, respectively 44% of them. However, 31% of citizens stated that the country must have elections before proceeding to the final stage.

04

Concerning the timeline regarding the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, the options of reaching the agreement in 2019 and removing the timeline in general are the most preferable by the citizens. About 32% of citizens want the final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia to be reached in 2019. While around 29% of citizens estimate that there should be no time limits. The possibility of reaching an agreement over the next year is supported by 22.7% of citizens, while 4.4% stated that the parties should not reach an agreement at all.



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