



NEW PHASE OF KOSOVO – SERBIA DIALOGUE:

CITIZENS'
PERSPECTIVE



DEMOKRATIZIMI
DHE PRAKTIKAT
PARLAMENTARE





NEW PHASE OF KOSOVO – SERBIA DIALOGUE:



**CITIZENS'
PERSPECTIVE**



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CONTENTS

06 INTRODUCTION

07 METHODOLOGY

08 SURVEY QUESTIONS

10 **1** What role do you expect to assume President
Thaçi in Kosovo-Serbia dialogue?

12 **2** What do you expect to be the role (in the future)
of Assembly of Kosovo within Kosovo – Serbia
dialogue?

14 **3** Do you think the EU should become the guarantor
of the agreements between Kosovo and Serbia
by imposing sanctions on the parties that do not
implement the reached agreements?

16 **4** What does the normalisation of relations
between Kosovo and Serbia mean to you?

18

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS



INTRODUCTION

Public Opinion Survey “New Phase of Kosovo – Serbia Dialogue: Citizen’s Perspective” is the fourth survey that is organized by KDI with the aim of presenting the citizens’ opinion about the process of dialogue and its outcomes.

Since January 2017, President of the Republic of Kosovo, Mr. Hashim Thaçi, led the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. Consecutive incidents, namely building of the wall in the northern part of Mitrovica and the train departed from Serbia to Kosovo, which contained religious iconography, resulted in a tensioned situation between states. All these and stagnations in the implementation of agreements made the Brussels to act in more proactive manner, by inviting the parties to continue the dialogue.

Parties declared their readiness to continue this process and to commence the concluding phase of this process, at the end of which EU stated that it expects from parties to sign legally binding agreement.

In a roundtable organized by KDI ¹ in September (2017), President Thaçi discussed with civil society and media about the idea for a unity team to guarantee the inclusiveness in dialogue. He also mentioned the idea of a referendum for final agreement with Serbian state. Initiative of President Thaçi for unity team had various responses, as expected for the public. A part of civil society and political parties praised the initiative, whereas the other part expressed the scepticism and hesitation to be involved in the team.

Composition of the negotiating team of dialogue, the role of the Government, Assembly and opposition, civil society and media, discussion topics and the epilogue of the dialogue process, the role of EU and USA, remain issues being discussed in the political scene of Kosovo.

It is obvious that the greatest criticism of this progress was the lack of transparency, of wider political and public debate. KDI has continuously proclaimed for an inclusive dialog process, by asking institutions, political parties and citizens to jointly contribute in this process and above all to guarantee transparency and accountability.

This survey is focused on the new and concluding phase of Kosovo – Serbia dialogue, namely the impact of the role of President of Kosovo in Kosovo – Serbia dialogue, the role of the Assembly and position which EU should maintain to guarantee the implementation of concluded agreements. Above all, a special focus in this survey is the notion of normalization of relations between both countries, whose interpretation is revealed from the citizens’ perspective.

In this survey it is noticed the scepticism of citizens about the results which will be generated through the change of dialogue format on the enhancement of transparency and inclusiveness, request for an added and stronger role of the Assembly of Kosovo in this process, about the change of EU role and above all how citizens consider the normalization of relations between both countries.

These surveys are organized within the KDI mission to promote transparency, accountability and responsible democracy. This project for strengthening the parliamentary oversight of the executive and increasing the participation of citizens in the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue is funded by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

¹ For more, please visit <http://votaimo.org/Public/DialogActivity/Detail/130>

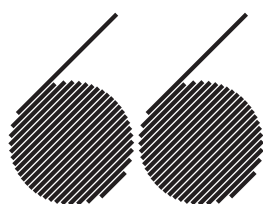




2. METHODOLOGY

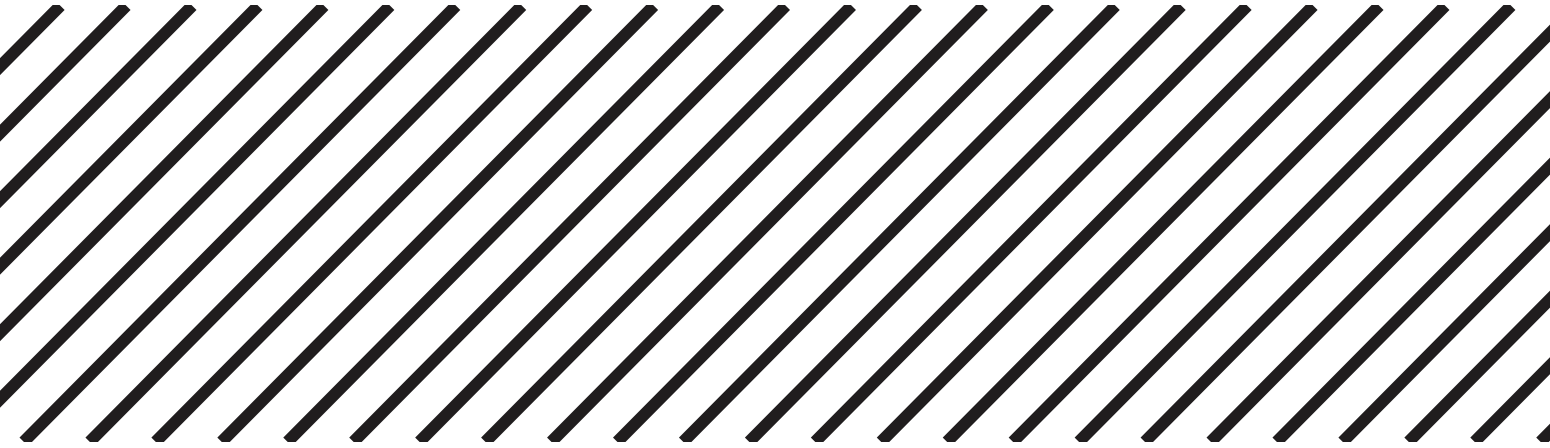
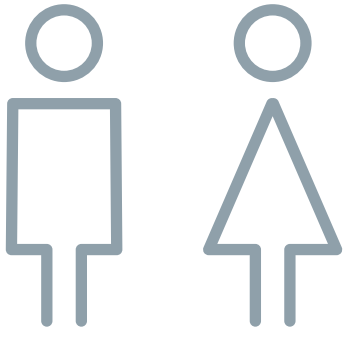
The survey has been carried out at the country level, by using the random system method, with a sample of 1065 respondents, designed to ensure the representative sample, broken down by

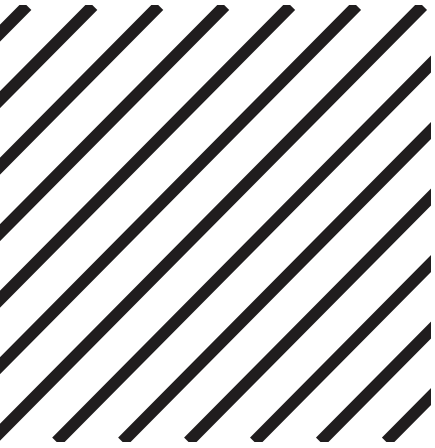
ethnicities: Albanian, Serbian and non-Serb minorities, extension by settlements (urban/rural). The survey was carried out during September 2017. The margin of error is around $\pm 3\%$.



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SURVEY QUESTIONS



What role do you expect to assume President Thaçi in Kosovo-Serbia dialogue?

Since the beginning up to now, Kosovo – Serbia dialogue had three different phases. The first phase of dialogue begun as technical dialogue, where negotiating teams were composed of special appointees of both Governments. Later on, commenced a new phase of political dialogue, where the negotiation in Brussels was led by the Prime Ministers of both countries. Now, when the third and concluding phase of dialogue is expected to commence, Presidents of both countries are expected to lead this process.

But, what do citizens of the country expect from President Thaçi in this new phase of dialogue?

Based on the survey carried out by KDI, 33% of respondents consider that the dialogue will remain the same, whereas 27% of them stated that President Thaçi will not improve the level of talks with Serbia, nor will manage to

guarantee transparency and inclusiveness. Most of citizens, namely 60% of them consider that the involvement of President Thaçi will not improve the dialogue level, and guarantee inclusiveness and transparency and the dialogue will remain the same.

Only 31% of respondent considered that President Thaçi will have a positive role in Kosovo – Serbia dialogue, and will improve the dialogue level and guarantee inclusiveness and transparency. Only 9 % of respondents do not know what impact will have the direct involvement of President Thaçi in Kosovo – Serbia dialogue.



33%  The dialogue will remain the same

K-Albanians  =  **33%** K-Serb  =  **27%** K-Others  =  **29%**

31%  It will improve the dialogue level, and guarantee inclusiveness and transparency

K-Albanians  =  **32%** K-Serb  =  **11%** K-Others  =  **25%**

27%  It will not improve the dialogue level and will not guarantee inclusiveness and transparency

K-Albanians  =  **28%** K-Serb  =  **13%** K-Others  =  **28%**

9%  I do not know

K-Albanians  =  **7%** K-Serb  =  **49%** K-Others  =  **19%**

Citizens' opinion about the role of President Thaçi in Kosovo – Serbia dialogue, by ethnicities

With regards to the citizens' opinion, broken down by ethnicity, 33.5% of Albanian respondents consider that the involvement of President Thaçi will not have a positive or negative impact in the dialogue process. Whereas 27.5% stated that President Thaçi will not improve the dialogue level and will not guarantee inclusiveness and transparency. Most of Albanian respondents, namely 65% of them, consider that the involvement of President Thaçi in the process of Kosovo – Serbia dialogue will not have an impact or bring positive changes.

32% of respondents of Albanian community consider that President Thaçi will improve the dialogue level with Serbia, and guarantee inclusiveness and transparency.

With regards to the opinion of Serbian citizens, almost half of respondents, namely 48.7% have no opinion whether President Thaçi will bring positive or negative impact on this process. 27.3% of Serbian respondents stated that the dialogue will remain the same, 10.7% stated that dialogue will be improved, whereas 13.3% stated that dialogue will remain the same even with the involvement of President Thaçi.

Even other non-majority communities stated almost the same as the Albanian respondents. Most of them, namely 53% considered that the involvement of President Thaçi will not have an impact in the dialogue, nor in the improvement of the dialogue level or transparency and inclusiveness. 24.7% of them consider that President Thaçi will improve the dialogue level with Serbia, and guarantee inclusiveness and transparency.

2

What do you expect to be the role (in the future) of Assembly of Kosovo within Kosovo – Serbia dialogue?

K The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, as the only institution which directly represents citizens of the country and at the same time exercises oversight competencies over the Government, adopted Resolutions whereby entitling the negotiating team to dialogue in Brussels with Serbia, and obliged them to regularly report to the Assembly and Assembly Committees.

Regardless of efforts of MPs and certain Assembly Commissions during the previous legislature to increase accountability and transparency of the Government with regard to the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue, this institution was avoided, uninvolved and not properly informed about the agreements reached and about the entire process in general. The role of this institution in the future of this process still remains to be defined.

KDI asked citizens about what role they expect from their elected officials in the new phase of dialogue. Almost half of respondents, namely 47.7% of them, stated that the Assembly should require regular reporting and transparency from the Negotiating Team, President and Government, before and after each round of Brussels talks. 33.4% of citizens consider that the Assembly should have the same role as up to now and require from time to time report from Negotiating Team, whereas 7.8% of citizens stated that the Assembly should not be involved in dialogue issues at all. 11% of the respondents had no response on what should be the role of Assembly in this process.



48%

Require regular report and transparency from the Negotiating Team (President and Government) before and after each round of dialogue

K-Albanian 49%

K-Serbian 6%

K-Others. 38%

33%

Have the same role as up to now, inviting the Negotiating Team from time to time to report on the agreements and dialogue progress.

K-Albanian 34%

K-Serbian 7%

K-Others. 29%

11%

I do not know

K-Albanian 9%

K-Serbian 67%

K-Others. 20%

8%

Të mos përfshihet në çështjen e dialogut

K-Albanian 7%

K-Serbian 20%

K-Others. 13%

Citizens' opinion about the role of the Assembly in the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue, by ethnicity

With regards to the citizens' opinion about the role of Assembly in the new phase of the dialogue broken down by ethnicity, most of Albanian respondents, namely 49.4% of them and other non-majority communities, namely 38.1% of them, required a greater role from the Assembly, requiring more transparency and accountability from the Negotiating Team, and to invite it every time before and after each round of talks with Serbia. Only 6% of Serbian respondents requested greater role from the Assembly.

Consistency in the work of the Assembly and inviting for reporting from time to time of the Negotiating Team was required from 34.4% of respondents from the Albanian community, 6.7% from Serbian community and 28.9% of other non-majority communities. With regards to the

idea of non-involvement of Assembly in dialogue issues, only 7.2% of Albanian respondents, 20% of the Serbian community and 13.4% of other non-majority communities agreed with this.

It is worth mentioning that 67.3% of respondents from Serbian community said that they have no response when asked about the role of the Assembly, compared to 9% of Albanian respondents and 13% of Serbian respondents.

Based on these data, it may be concluded that citizens are confused about the role of Assembly in dialogue. This may be due to the non-transparency so far and ambiguities in interpreting the agreements between Belgrade and Prishtina.



3

Do you think the EU should become the guarantor of the agreements between Kosovo and Serbia by imposing sanctions on the parties that do not implement the reached agreements?

Since the commencement of the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia in 2011 until now, a total of 23 agreements have been reached, most of them with many other specific agreements aimed at the detailed regulation of the issues discussed in Brussels. A very small number of agreements have been implemented as the process of their renegotiation has continued and new timeframes have been set for implementation, which once again have not been respected. Often, Kosovo in official reports submitted to the EU has blamed Serbia for not implementing agreements and disrespecting deals.

Considering that the process of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue is facilitated by the EU and that this process is linked to the path of the two countries towards the EU, the establishment of implementing mechanisms and guarantees by the EU is considered as very necessary for the implementation of the agreements, by using avail-

able mechanisms to condition both parties to implement the agreements.

Precisely this was the question that KDI submitted to the citizens of the country, in order to ascertain what their position was regarding the possibility of EU serving as the guarantor for implementation of agreements.

The vast majority of respondents, respectively 75.5% of them estimate that the EU should serve as guarantor for implementation of agreements between Kosovo and Serbia by imposing sanctions on parties not implementing Brussels agreements.

While only 9.3% of citizens estimate that the EU should not play this role. Whereas, 15.2% of respondents had no answer whether EU should become a guarantor of agreements reached between Kosovo and Serbia.



76% YES

K-Albanians 78%

K - SERB 13%

K-Others 65%

9% NO

K-Albanians 8%

K - SERB 31%

K-Others 13%

15% DO NOT KNOW

K-Albanians 14%

K - SERB 57%

K-Others 22%

Citizens' opinion about the EU role in Kosovo-Serbia dialogue broken down by ethnicity

Regarding the citizens' opinion about the EU role in Kosovo-Serbia dialogue broken down by ethnicity, the majority of respondents from the Albanian community, namely 77.9% and those from other non-majority communities, namely 64.9% agree that the EU should become the guarantor of the implementation of agreements and sanction the parties in case of their non-compliance, compared to only 12.7% of Serb respondents who have supported such an idea.

Respondents from the Serb community, respectively 30.7%, disagree with the idea that the EU should be the guarantor of agreements between Kosovo and Serbia or impose sanctions on the parties that do not implement the agreements. Disagreement about this idea was also

shown from 8.4% of respondents of the Albanian community and 13.4% of other non-majority communities.

While the respondents from the Serb community largely, respectively 56.7%, are undecided about the role that the EU should play in this process, compared to 13.7% of Albanian respondents and 21.6% of respondents from other non-majority communities.



4

What does the normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia mean to you?

One of the main issues related to the dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia is the epilogue of this dialogue itself. While the dialogue has entered in its third and final phase, the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo continue to hear different stances from the leadership of both parties regarding the epilogue of this process.

It has been often mentioned that by the end of the process, both countries will sign a binding legal agreement that will enable the "normalization of relations" between the two countries. However, despite the frequent use of this term, there is not a single official stance as to what is meant by normalization of relationships, what this concept really means? The discussed options related to the normalization of relations are different, such as mutual recognition, apology, removal of Kosovo from Serbia's constitution, reparations, non-hindrance of countries on their path towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

But what does the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia mean for the citizens of Kosovo ?²

Janë 71% e të anketuarve të sondazhit të cilët vlerësojnë se elementare për normalizimin e marrëdhënieve në mes Kosovës dhe Serbisë është kërkim falja nga ana e Serbisë për krimet e kryera në Kosovë.

Ndërsa 57% e të anketuarve e kanë përmendur gjithashtu se normalizimi arrihet me njohjen reciproke, 45% e tyre heqjen e Kosovës nga Kushtetuta e Serbisë, si dhe 37% e të anketuarëve kanë vlerësuar se normalizimin nënkupton mos-bllokimi i palëve në rrugën drejt integriteteve evropiane dhe anëtarësimit në organizatat ndërkombëtare, pa pasur nevojë të njohin njëra-tjetrën.

² This question is multiple choice question

71%

Apology for the crimes committed by Serbia



57%

Reciprocal recognition



45%

Removal of Kosovo from the Serbian Constitution



37%

Both parties shall continue European path of membership in international organizations, without blocking each other



0% Other



0% I do not know



What does the normalization of Kosovo - Serbia relations imply for Kosovo citizens by ethnic division

For the respondents of the Albanian community, respectively for 73% of them normalization of relations initially means Serbia's apology for war crimes, mutual recognition was also mentioned by 59% of respondents. While the removal of Kosovo from the Constitution of Serbia was mentioned by 46% of respondents from the Albanian community and 36.4% mentioned the mutual non-blocking of two countries on their path towards EU and membership in international organizations without the need to recognise each other, as normalization of relations.

Respondents from the Serb community have another point of view regarding the issue of normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. According to respondents from Serb community, for 60% of them, the normalization

of relations between countries initially implies non-blocking each other on the path to European integration and membership in international organizations without the need for countries to recognize one another. 18% of Serb community respondents have also mentioned the removal of Kosovo from the Serbian Constitution as a normalization of relations. Whereas only 6.7% of respondents from the Serb community mentioned the apology for war crimes, only 2% of citizens from the Serb community estimated that mutual recognition implies normalization of relations.

As for the respondents from other non-majority communities, most of them with normalization of relations imply apology of Serbia for war crimes (68%), followed by mutual recognition between the two states (41%), non-blocking on the path towards EU and membership in international organizations without the need to recognize each other (40%) and the last, removal of the Republic of Kosovo from the Constitution of Serbia (31%).





CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

In the fourth survey, for the measurement of public opinion about Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, KDI has addressed issues that are related to the future of this process. Specifically, KDI has aimed to present citizens' expectations about the role and impact of President of Kosovo in Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, the role that the Assembly should assume in this process and the role of the EU to guarantee the implementation of the agreements. Also, KDI has asked the citizens what the normalization of relations between the two countries implies for them.

Survey findings reveal that:

01 **Albanians and Serbs understand vastly different the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.**

About 71% of citizens estimate that the main element for normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia is the apology of Serbia for war crimes. About 60% of Kosovo Serb community citizens interpret normalization as not blocking each other on the European path or membership in international organizations without the need for states to recognize each other. While respondents from the Albanian community (73%) and other communities (68%) estimate that for normalizing the relationship it is essential for Serbia to apologise for war crimes committed in Kosovo.

02 **No major change of dialogue is expected with the inclusion of President Thaçi**

33% of respondents estimated that the dialogue would continue to remain the same, and 27% of them have stated that President Thaçi will not improve the dialogue level with Serbia nor guarantee transparency and inclusiveness. Therefore, most of the citizens, namely 60% do not expect the inclusion of President Thaçi to be a guarantee for a more transparent and inclusive process..

03 **Assembly should have a stronger role in the dialogue process**

Nearly half of the citizens, namely 48% of them, believe that Kosovo Assembly should require regular reporting and transparency from the Negotiating Team, from the President and the Government, before and after each round of talks held in Brussels.

04 **EU shall become a guarantor of agreements**

About 76% of citizens share the view that the EU should become the guarantor of the agreements between Kosovo and Serbia by imposing sanctions/conditioning the parties that do not implement the Brussels agreements.





RECOMENDATIONS

01 Kosovo Assembly should give legitimacy to the new phase of dialogue through the adoption of a Resolution defining the composition of the negotiating team, the issues that should be discussed and the involvement of this institution in this process.

02 New phase of Kosovo-Serbia dialogue shall ensure inclusiveness of the local political spectrum and civil society.

03 Development of a clear and well-defined platform of discussions based on a broad institutional and civic discussion to ensure inclusiveness and transparency by clearly articulating the expected epilogue of this process.

04 The reached agreements must have implementing mechanisms, clearly defined timelines and an enhanced EU role in guaranteeing the implementation of agreements and sanctioning of the parties in their path towards the EU for non-implementation of the agreements that were already reached.





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