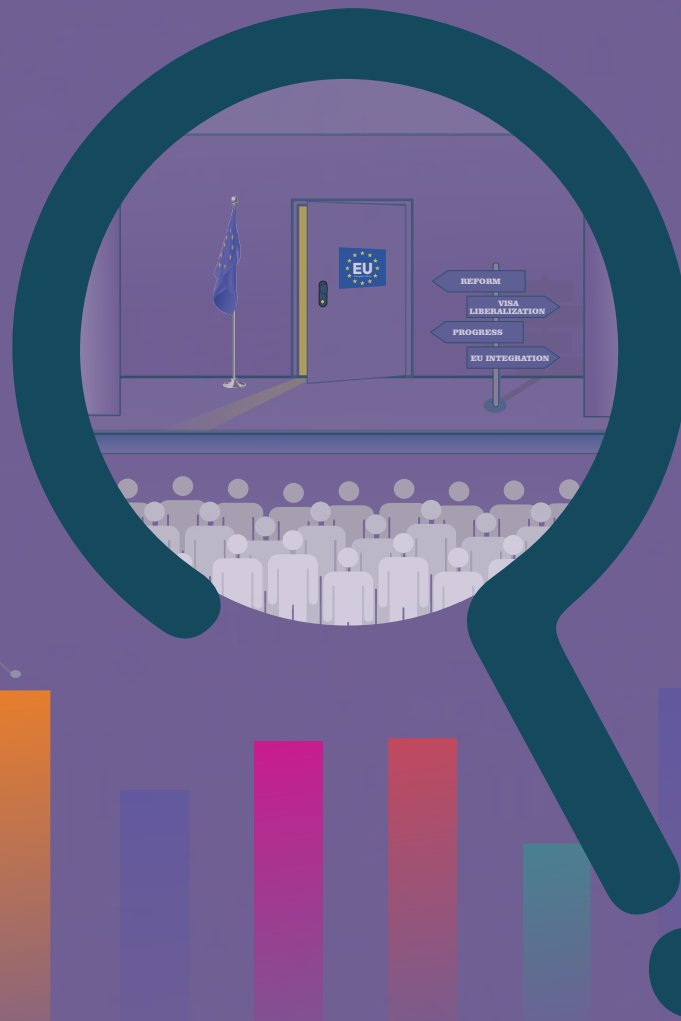


CITIZENS' PERCEPTION ON KOSOVO'S EU INTEGRATION PERSPECTIVE AND REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION





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The data presented in the report derive from the Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) survey. WBSB is a new regional initiative launched by KCSS in 2020, implemented in cooperation with the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) in Serbia and Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance (CSDG) in Albania, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). WBSB serves as an instrument to measure public perceptions in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia on different security-related issues. The findings demonstrate how citizens perceive or are informed about the issues presented in this report. As such, the views presented in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the KCSS, BCSP, CSDG or NED

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June 2022



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the perception of Kosovar citizens towards the European integration process and regional cooperation. The data, suggests that respondents that participated in the Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) are strong supporters of the process of accession into the European Union (EU), with 92 percent of them supporting Kosovo joining the EU, however 40 percent are not optimistic that the accession will happen in the near future.

Progress in implementing the criteria of EU membership was assessed poorly by the respondents. The areas with the highest positive progress assessment are strengthening regional cooperation, freedom of media, and ensuring free and democratic elections. The progress in securing an independent judiciary, fighting corruption, and organized crime is assessed as largely limited, while the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the depoliticization of the public administration are seen as the areas with the lowest progress.

The WBSB respondents see Germany as the most supportive and friendliest country towards Kosovo, among the EU member states, followed by Austria, Italy, and Croatia. The influence of France, Netherlands, and Hungary is seen as slightly less positive, while Bulgaria's influence is assessed as mainly neutral. On the contrary, the EU countries which have not recognized Kosovo's independence are seen as the most negatively influential.

The EU's performance as a facilitator of the dialogue for normalization of relations between Kosovo-Serbia is not seen satisfactory by the Kosovo citizens, and most of them would prefer that the US assume the role of mediating the dialogue and resolution of bilateral dispute with Serbia. This is an indicator of EU's growing crisis of credibility in the eyes of the Kosovars, largely as a result of the failure to deliver on the visa liberalization process.

Regarding the perceptions of Kosovars towards their neighbors, Albania is perceived the friendliest country, followed by Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Citizens' perceptions are mixed regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is shaped by the consistent negative approach of Republika Srpska towards Kosovo, whereas there is large consensus about Kosovars that Serbia has a highly negative influence in the country.

Half of the Kosovars support free movement of goods and peoples, exchange of information, and a common market for the Western Balkans. However, most Kosovars are not familiar, or lack information, about the so-called 'Mini

Schengen' initiative for regional cooperation, that was rebranded as the 'Open Balkan', while half of those who are familiar with the initiative, support the idea.



INTRODUCTION

Kosovo has an unwavering pro-EU stance, and the relationship between Kosovo and the EU covers different areas, including the normalization of relations dialogue with Serbia. The largely positive attitudes of Kosovo institutions, as well as citizens, towards the EU has been undermined in recent years as the Union fails to deliver on its commitment for visa liberalization for the Kosovars, who remain the only citizens from the Western Balkans that are isolated from free movement in the Schengen area. What exacerbates this perception, is that the blocking of visa liberalization for Kosovars persists despite repeated confirmations from the European Commission (EC) that Kosovo fulfilled all the conditions for visa liberalization and overwhelming support from the European Parliament (EP).

Regional cooperation is often promoted to the Kosovar public by the political leaders in a negative tone, as a zero-sum game, which leads to creation of unrealistic expectations and an environment that is often suspicious of agreements that advance regional cooperation. This is detrimental to Kosovo's aspirations for regional and European integration. The purpose of the Western Balkans Security Barometer (WBSB) is to have a deeper understanding of these challenges from the perception of the citizens. This report consists of two sections. The first section analyzes the public perceptions towards the EU integration, Kosovo's progress in fulfilling the EU membership criteria, the bilateral relations, and the influence of EU countries towards Kosovo, and an assessment of the EU as a mediator in the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. The second section addresses regional cooperation within the Western Balkans countries, the bilateral relations, and the influence of these countries towards Kosovo.

The analysis of this report is based on the results of the survey through face-to-face interviews with randomly selected respondents throughout Kosovo. The field research was conducted between 17-25 of September 2021. The questionnaire for the survey primarily consisted of closed-ended questions in the form of a five-point Likert Scale, followed by several open-ended questions without predefined options. The national sample for the survey featured 1,197 households. The first stage of drawing the sample was based in the administrative divisions of the regional directorates of the Kosovo Police, including the eight districts: Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica South, Mitrovica North, Peja, Prishtina and Prizren. The number of surveys conducted in each district was drawn in proportion to the number of populations for each

municipality within the respective districts based on Kosovo's 2011 population census. Within the municipalities, the sample was stratified into urban/rural sample based on the number of households in each area. Random patterns were used to select the households within the sampled locations, while the randomization within the households was based on the next adult birthday method. The data were verified in real time through field coordinators that visited a predefined sample of households after the completion of the survey in the respective households, through telephone contact with all respondents to confirm the adherence to the methodology and some of the key answers and by analyzing the logical consistency of the answers when processing and analyzing the data. The margin of error is 3 percent with a confidence interval of 95 percent.

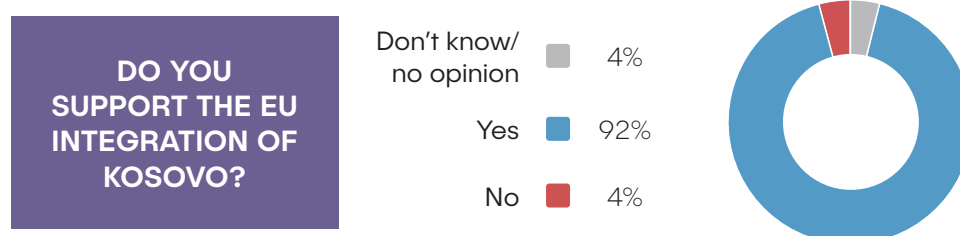


WHAT DO KOSOVARS THINK ABOUT THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR COUNTRY?

As already noted, the European integration process is the cornerstone of the Kosovar politics and decision-making process. Kosovo, as the rest of the Balkan countries, were promised European perspective in the Thessaloniki Summit of 2003¹, however since then only Croatia secured membership in 2013, while for the remaining six countries the process became a moving target, and increasingly unpredictable.

For Kosovo, the European integration process consists of particular challenges, including the five non-recognizers, the limited progress in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, and unsatisfactory implementation of the short-term measures from the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA). In this respect, the stagnation in the above-mentioned issues, among others, is highly related to the lack of political will to apply an actionable approach around such processes. Such lack of political will on one hand made the EU to fall short on its commitments, such as the inability to provide visa liberalization for Kosovo despite the fulfillment of all conditions by Kosovo side, while in the other gave the opportunity to political actors in Kosovo to build a populist narrative for daily political consumption. Despite this status quo that has been established around the issues that push Kosovo towards the EU, the citizens of Kosovo continue to strongly support Kosovo's integration into the EU. The vast majority of the WBSB respondents, respectively 92 percent of them, support Kosovo's membership in the EU. Four percent of the respondents do not support integration, while the rest do not have an opinion on this issue.

TABLE 1 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' OPINIONS ON EU INTEGRATION OF KOSOVO



Even though the citizens are strongly in favor of EU integration, they tend to be skeptical that this will materialize soon. When asked whether the EU is ready to accept Kosovo as a member state, 75 percent have responded positively, however, the majority (41 percent) of them believe that the membership will not

1 Read more at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_03_860

happen in the near future. On the other hand, 20 percent of the respondents believe that the EU is not at all ready to accept Kosovo as its member. Compared to previous edition of WBSB, this years' result shows that there is a slight decrease in the percentage of those who hold the opinion that Kosovo will receive the EU membership in the near future, while there is an increase of about four percent in those who believe that the EU is not willing to accept Kosovo as one of its members.

TABLE 2 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS FOR 2020 AND 2021 ON EU'S READINESS TO ACCEPT KOSOVO

DO YOU THINK THAT EU IS READY TO ACCEPT KOSOVO AS A MEMBER STATE?	Don't know/no opinion	Yes, in the near future	Yes, but not in the near future	No, it is not willing to accept
2020	7%	38%	39%	16%
2021	6%	34%	41%	20%

Regardless of this, citizens remain highly persistent that Kosovo should continue to be aligned with EU principles. A whopping 67 percent of the respondents stated that even if there is no EU integration prospect in horizon, Kosovo Government should continue to implement reforms and align its legislation and policies with EU acquis and Common Foreign and Security Policy. On the other hand, an additional 20 percent of them hold the opinion that in case of a failure in EU membership, Kosovo should continue to implement reforms, but lead its own Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which may not necessarily be in line with the EU.









TABLE 3 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON REFORMS TO ALIGN WITH EU ACQUIS AND CFSP

IN CASE THERE IS NO FURTHER INTEGRATION INTO THE EU OR MEMBERSHIP, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD:	Don't know/no opinion	Continue to implement reforms and align with EU acquis and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)	Continue to implement reforms, but lead our own Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which may not necessarily be in line with EU
	14%	67%	20%

The WBSB dug deeper into this issue by measuring the perception of the progress made by Kosovo institutions in implementing the criteria of EU integration such as the fight against corruption, the fight against organized crime, ensuring independent judiciary, the depoliticization of public administration, strengthening regional cooperation, ensuring continuous independence and freedom of the media, advancing the electoral processes etc.

The results show that citizens continue to be highly dissatisfied with the progress made in this respect, especially in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue (by 61 percent) and the depoliticization of the public administration (by 51 percent). Similar attitudes are observed in the perceptions towards the independence of judiciary. 48 percent of the respondents see only limited progress in this regard, while 20 percent see satisfactory progress in fulfillment of this criteria. As per fighting corruption and organized crime, 47 percent assess the progress in this regard as limited, while 22 percent perceive the progress as positive. Strengthening regional cooperation, freedom of the media and especially the provision of free and democratic elections were assessed by the respondents as the areas where Kosovo has marked the most considerable progress.

TABLE 4 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITERIA FOR EU INTEGRATION

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITERIA FOR EU INTEGRATION		Don't know/no opinion	No progress at all	Limited progress	Somewhat progress	Good progress	Excellent progress
	Fighting corruption	2%	23%	24%	29%	14%	8%
	Fighting organized crime	2%	22%	25%	28%	14%	9%
	Ensuring independent judiciary	4%	24%	24%	28%	11%	9%
	Depoliticizing public administration	5%	25%	26%	27%	9%	8%
	Ensuring free and fair elections	2%	13%	13%	18%	34%	20%
	Strengthening regional cooperation	4%	12%	15%	30%	25%	14%
	Kosovo-Serbia dialogue	5%	39%	22%	18%	10%	6%
	Media freedom and independence	3%	12%	15%	23%	26%	21%

Citizens' perceptions on EU facilitation in Kosovo-Serbia dialogu

The European Union has been a crucial actor in the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, serving as a facilitator for more than a decade. At certain stages during the dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia, the impartiality and effectiveness of the EU in facilitating the dialogue has been questioned in the public opinion in Kosovo. Therefore, through the WBSB questionnaire the respondents were also asked to evaluate this facilitation on grounds of transparency, treatment of Kosovo during the process, provision of funds for both countries, and the efficiency of the agreements that have derived from the dialogue. Even though Kosovar citizens are strong supporters of the dialogue (75% of them support the dialogue), they rate its progress and the EU facilitation as dissatisfactory.

Concerning transparency, the survey suggests that citizens are generally not satisfied with the EU facilitation. Many of them consider the dialogue as a "behind closed doors" process and are not aware of its results, goals, or implications. Only 14 percent of the respondents are satisfied with the EU's transparency and public communication of the dialogue results, while almost half (48 percent) are unsatisfied or completely unsatisfied.

Regarding the treatment of Kosovo during the negotiations process, almost half of the respondents (46 percent) are not satisfied, another 32 percent are somewhat satisfied, and only 15 percent are satisfied.

Similarly, almost half of the respondents (46 percent) express dissatisfaction about the efficiency of the already negotiated agreements (such as IBM, customs, police and justice integration, diploma recognition etc.), while 16 percent are satisfied.

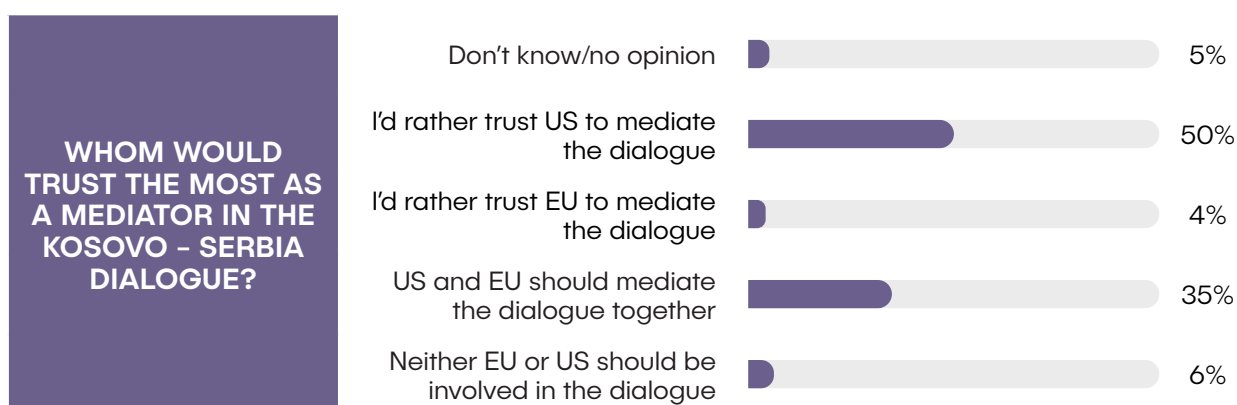
With reference to the provision of funds to Kosovo and Serbia by the EU over the course of dialogue, respondents were slightly more satisfied (by 22 percent), while 38 percent were not satisfied.

TABLE 5 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON EU'S FACILITATION OF THE KOSOVO-SERBIA DIALOGUE

	Don't know/no opinion	Completely unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied	Completely satisfied
Transparency	7%	24%	24%	32%	11%	3%
Treatment of your country	7%	21%	25%	32%	12%	3%
Efficiency in negotiated agreements	9%	21%	25%	28%	13%	3%
Provision of funds for Kosovo and Serbia	14%	18%	20%	25%	18%	4%

This survey highlights that the citizens vastly prefer the US to serve as a mediator in dialogue, as half of the respondents express more trust towards the US. Only 4 percent of them would prefer the EU to serve as a mediator, while 35 percent think it's best for the EU and US to jointly mediate the dialogue.

TABLE 6 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON WHO SHOULD SERVE AS THE DIALOGUE MEDIATOR



Citizens' perceptions on the political influence of EU countries towards Kosovo












The respondents were asked to evaluate the influence of some of the EU countries towards Kosovo. In this regard, Germany is listed as the friendliest partner when compared to other countries, as 88 percent of the respondents assess its influence as positive or extremely positive. Germany is followed by Austria (69 percent), Italy (68 percent), and Croatia (60 percent).

The respondents consider the influence of the Netherlands and France as less positive when compared to the aforementioned countries. In this respect, 45 percent of the respondents perceive the influence of France as positive or extremely positive, while 46 percent hold such opinion for the Netherlands. These two countries are mainly perceived as the member states that are delaying the visa liberalization process for Kosovar citizens, hence the public perception towards them has started to become faintly negative. They are followed by Hungary with 43 percent of the respondents rating its influence as positive.

Bulgaria, on the other hand, is seen as primarily neutral by 38 percent of the respondents.

EU countries that have not recognized the statehood of Kosovo have been widely viewed as having a detrimental impact. In this course, Greece is seen as the least friendly EU country, with 71 percent of respondents stating that its influence on Kosovo is mainly or extremely negative. Spain (with 69 percent) and Romania (with 42 percent) are listed next as countries with negative influence towards Kosovo.

TABLE 7 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON EU COUNTRIES INFLUENCE TOWARDS KOSOVO

COUNTRIES:		Don't know/no opinion	Extremely negative	Mainly negative	Neither negative, nor positive	Mainly positive	Extremely positive
	Germany	4%	2%	2%	4%	42%	46%
	Austria	7%	5%	4%	15%	47%	22%
	Italy	6%	4%	5%	17%	47%	21%
	Croatia	5%	11%	7%	17%	46%	14%
	Netherlands	9%	9%	9%	27%	34%	12%
	France	5%	11%	14%	25%	36%	9%
	Hungary	8%	9%	9%	31%	34%	9%
	Bulgaria	10%	16%	14%	38%	20%	2%
	Romania	11%	25%	17%	34%	11%	2%
	Spain	8%	49%	20%	14%	7%	2%
	Greece	6%	52%	19%	16%	6%	1%



CITIZENS' PERCEPTION ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Strengthening regional cooperation and improving relations with neighbors is a very important and challenging criteria to be achieved on the road of EU integration. Being a crucial element of the stabilization and association, the advancement of regional cooperation is part of the guiding process towards the EU for the WB countries. However, the dynamics of regional cooperation is subject to numerous challenges, while the oscillating bilateral relations between the WB countries undermine their efforts to get closer to the EU. The avoidance of dealing with the past, unresolved bilateral disputes and different stances towards regional initiatives present an obstacle for the regional cooperation and in cases serve as a source of instability.

While very often the regional cooperation is limited to these issues and consumes the political will, the shared challenges of the WB countries regarding energy, pollution, infrastructure, transnational organized crime etc. remain superficially treated in the framework of regional cooperation. While the WB leaders committed for a joint approach to furthering economic cooperation in the framework of the Berlin Process², the stagnations in regional cooperation have begun to produce parallel agendas, such as the idea of the so-called "Open Balkans" initiated by the leaders of Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia. Even the initiation of such an idea found the WB divided since it was not supported by other WB countries, including Kosovo. Given these challenges posed by WB regional cooperation and the different and often conflicting narratives of the WB countries for each other, the WBSB respondents were asked to assess the regional countries' influence on Kosovo.






Albania remains Kosovo's strongest regional partner, as 77 percent of the respondents rated its influence as mainly or extremely positive. On the other hand, 11 percent have expressed neutral perceptions toward Albania, while ten percent see Albania's influence as a harmful one. Montenegro has also been rated positively by 58 percent of the respondents. However, 25 percent of them consider Montenegro to be neutral in its attitude toward Kosovo, while 13 percent consider it to be negatively influential. Similarly, North Macedonia is viewed positively by 58 percent of the respondents. 24 percent consider its influence to be neutral, and 13 percent negative. Even though Bosnia and Herzegovina has not recognized Kosovo, perceptions towards it

² Read more at: [https://www.rcc.int/priority_areas/39/multi-annual-action-plan-for-a-regional-economic-area-in-the-western-balkans--map#:~:text=The%20Multi%2Dannual%20Action%20Plan%20\(MAP\)%20for%20a%20Regional,unique%20space%20for%20investment%2C%20creating](https://www.rcc.int/priority_areas/39/multi-annual-action-plan-for-a-regional-economic-area-in-the-western-balkans--map#:~:text=The%20Multi%2Dannual%20Action%20Plan%20(MAP)%20for%20a%20Regional,unique%20space%20for%20investment%2C%20creating)

remain mixed. The majority of the respondents (39 percent) see this country as neutral towards Kosovo, while 32 percent see its impact as negative. On the contrary, 21 percent see Bosnia and Herzegovina as positively influential towards Kosovo.

Serbia remains the most hostile country in the eyes of the respondents, 90 percent of which have rated its influence towards Kosovo as mainly or extremely negative. Only three percent assess it as neutral, and other four percent as positive.






TABLE 8 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES' INFLUENCE TOWARDS KOSOVO

COUNTRIES:	Don't know/no opinion	Extremely positive	Mainly negative	Neither negative, nor positive	Mainly positive	Extremely positive
 Albania	3%	3%	7%	11%	47%	30%
 Montenegro	4%	4%	9%	25%	48%	10%
 North Macedonia	5%	5%	8%	24%	50%	8%
 Bosnia and Herzegovina	8%	12%	20%	39%	19%	2%
 Serbia	3%	81%	9%	3%	2%	2%

Moreover, the respondents were asked if they would agree to receive assistance from the regional countries in case of an emergency or natural/humanitarian disaster.






On average, the vast majority of them (93 percent) would agree for such assistance if it came from Albania, Montenegro, or North Macedonia. Respondents remain divided in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but still 63 percent of them would agree to receive assistance from this country. In reverse, only 23 percent would agree to receive assistance from Serbia. Most of the respondents (75 percent) would not feel safe to accept Serbia's aid in times of an emergency.

TABLE 9 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS IN RECEIVING ASSISTANCE FROM THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

COUNTRIES:		Don't know	Yes	No
	Albania	2%	95%	3%
	Montenegro	2%	91%	7%
	North Macedonia	2%	92%	6%
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3%	63%	34%
	Serbia	2%	23%	75%

On the question of providing the regional countries with assistance in case of an emergency, Kosovar citizens have answered positively for Albania (96 percent), Montenegro (93 percent), North Macedonia (94 percent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (71 percent). However, 65 percent of them express hesitation when it comes to providing aid for Serbia.

TABLE 10 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS IN PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO THE WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

COUNTRIES:		Don't know	Yes	No
	Albania	1%	96%	3%
	Montenegro	1%	93%	6%
	North Macedonia	1%	94%	6%
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2%	71%	27%
	Serbia	2%	33%	65%

Kosovo Citizens' perception on "Open Balkans"

This survey asked the citizens regarding their perceptions of the idea of the Mini Schengen, which was recently renamed to Open Balkans. This idea intends to establish a free movement of people, goods, services, and capital in the Western Balkan countries, with the aim of strengthening regional cooperation. This idea was mainly pushed forward by the leaders of Albania, Serbia, and North Macedonia, while Kosovo institutions opposed such an idea as they consider it unfavorable for Kosovo and insist on advancing the regional cooperation within the margins of the Berlin process. Due to Kosovo's opposition to such a mechanism, Open Balkans has taken a fairly wide space in public opinion in Kosovo. Based on this, through the WBSB we have also assessed whether the citizens of Kosovo are familiar with the idea of Open Balkans and whether they support it. In this respect, WBSB survey data shows that just half of the respondents answered positively on the question whether they are familiar with the idea of Mini Schengen, and 42 percent of them support the idea of establishing Mini Schengen.

TABLE 11 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' FAMILIARITY WITH WESTERN BALKANS MINI SCHENGEN

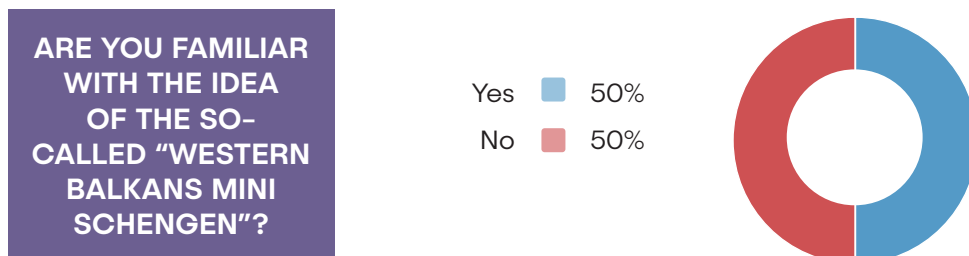
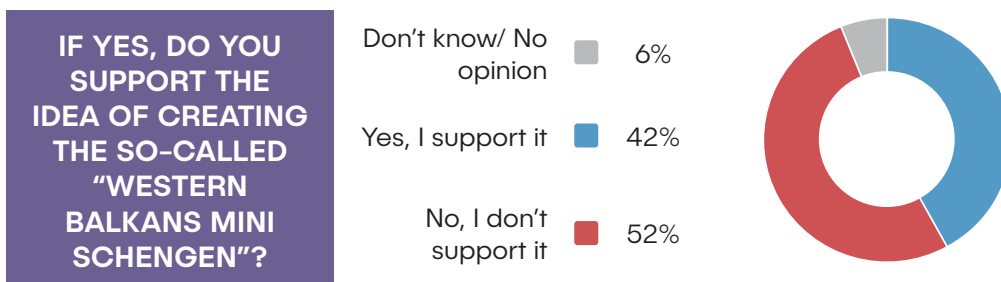


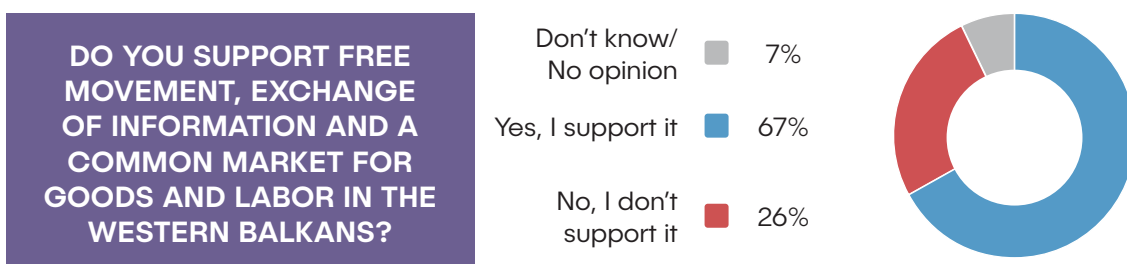
TABLE 12 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON SUPPORTING WESTERN BALKANS MINI-SCHENGEN



On the other hand, 67 percent of the respondents express support to free movement, exchange of information, and a common market for goods and

labor in the Western Balkans. 26 percent do not support it, and 7 percent do not have an opinion in this regard.

TABLE 13 WBSB RESULTS- CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS IN SUPPORTING FREE MOVEMENT, EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION, AND A COMMON MARKET OF GOODS AND LABOR IN WESTERN BALKANS





KEY TAKEAWAYS

The WBSB results show that the citizens of Kosovo see their future closely linked to the EU. However, the skepticism of citizens about the timing of Kosovo's EU membership indicates the need for a reality check on the proximity or distance of membership in the EU and a clear picture for the future steps on this regard. The perceptions for the 'distance' of the EU membership are potentially shaped due to the EU's neutral stance towards Kosovo and the five non-recognizing EU countries. Furthermore, the view of Kosovo citizens' that EU is not willing to accept Kosovo as a member state in a near future is a reflection of the open lack of willingness of EU member states to support an immediate and comprehensive enlargement and their opposition for delivering the visa liberalization for Kosovo. Moreover, Kosovo citizens seem to be aware that without resolving the open disputes with Serbia and putting greater efforts in fighting corruption, the EU perspective cannot be materialized.

The perception of the EU may be also potentially affected as a result of the dissatisfaction of the citizens of Kosovo with the facilitation of the EU in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, as evidenced in the results of this report. Given the positive perception of the citizens of Kosovo about the involvement of the United States of America (USA) in the dialogue process, this calls for increased cooperation between the EU and the US in this regard and increased visibility and transparency of their work in the dialogue. The further loss of confidence in the EU as a mediator of the dialogue could translate into a loss of confidence in this important process. This would inevitably lead to backward steps in Kosovo's EU perspective and the improvement and development of regional cooperation.

The poor assessment of WBSB respondents for the progress in implementing the criteria of EU membership reflects the low trust of Kosovo citizens towards the institutions and highlights the need for increased transparency and contact with citizens. In this regard, it is important that Kosovo institutions continue to align their actions with EU recommendations and policies, taking into account also the assessment of the majority of WBSB respondents that Kosovo should continue to implement reforms and align with EU acquis and Common Foreign and Security Policy in case there is no further integration into the EU. Furthermore, Kosovo's progress towards implementing the criteria should be recognized more loudly by the EU with concrete actions such as delivering its promises for visa liberalization for Kosovo. This would enable a clearer reflection of the reality of Kosovo's relationship with the EU and

progress or non-progress towards the EU integration, while increasing the reliance of Kosovo citizens in the EU and its member states.

Citizens' opinions on regional issues in principle reflect the state of play of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. Although addressing cross-border issues is of an utmost importance, this continues to be affected as a result of political relations and the lack of proper communication among the citizens of the countries of the region. The results for regional cooperation show the importance of moving forward with different regional issues such as the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and address the needs of the citizens of the region through such processes. This is particularly exposed with the fact that in certain cases citizens continue to be reluctant to seek support from neighboring countries even in cases of natural disasters. Furthermore, taking into account the positive perception of the citizens of Kosovo for the countries of the region with which the citizens have more direct contact, the results show a need for more cooperation in the community level and increased dialogue between citizens. In this respect, the fact that the results of the report show that a large part of the citizens of Kosovo do not have information about Open Balkans, and of those who have information more than 50 percent do not support such initiative, indicates that this platform does not necessarily contribute in bringing people together and fulfilling the citizens needs. Hence, such regional initiatives seek for a more open debate as to check and balance the expectations and needs of each society residing in the region. Initiatives that do not fully address the needs and expectations of all WB countries and their populations are counter-productive for the development of regional cooperation and the solution of problems that hinder this development.

Katalogimi në botim (CIP)

Biblioteka Kombëtare e Kosovës - "Pjetër Bogdani"

316.653:339.922(4)(496.51)"2021"

Fetiu, Dea

Citizens' perception on Kosovo's EU integration perspective and regional and international cooperation / Dea Fetiu, Shpat Balaj. - Prishtinë: Qendra Kosovare për Studime të Sigurisë, 2022. - 18 f. ; 24 cm.

Testet e opinionit publik -- Kosovë

Integrimi evropian -- Raport -- Kosovë

ISBN 978-9951-799-63-8

Aleph [000102431]



ISBN 978-9951-799-63-8



9 789951 799638

