



**KCSS**  
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

# KOSOVO SECURITY BAROMETER

## Special Edition:

Public Perceptions on Kosovo's Foreign Policy  
and Dialogue with Serbia





# **KOSOVO SECURITY BAROMETER**

## **Special Edition:**

## **Public Perceptions on Kosovo's Foreign Policy and Dialogue with Serbia**

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Information presented in this report are a summary of respondents' perceptions only, and should be treated as such. It is in no way a definite assessment of the quality of the work of institutions or policy subject in this study. It shall serve as an instrument for the institutions and policy-makers for addressing potential weaknesses but it can also serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of their communication with the people.

The views presented in this report are perceptions of the respondents and do not necessarily represent the views of the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies. Opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) either.

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## WHAT IS THE KOSOVO SECURITY BAROMETER?

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The Kosovo Security Barometer (KSB) is a specific programme of the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) designed to serve as an annual publication. In addition to the general findings, the programme launches special editions in the pre-defined areas. The primary focus of the KSB is to measure the public opinion perceptions towards security institutions and policy-making. It also measures the public perceptions on the internal and external security threats to Kosovo. The KSB marks one of the largest and rather first initiatives designed, implemented, and communicated by a local think tank in Kosovo. KCSS has no political constraints in communicating the findings and messages. Lastly, the KSB is unique for its methodological approach, such as the unique tailoring of the quantitative and qualitative methods which aim to offer realistic results on public perceptions towards security related issues.

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## WHOM DO WE TARGET WITH THIS SPECIAL EDITION?

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This Special Edition of the KSB targets a wide variety of actors interested to follow citizens perceptions towards Kosovo's main strategic partners in the regional and international levels. More precisely, it targets an audience which is interested in following the public opinion trends in Kosovo, focusing on Kosovo's foreign policy, regional and international cooperation, as well as the perceptions towards political dialogue with Serbia. Generally, the KSB targets nation-wide policy makers; the international community presence in Kosovo; local, regional and international civil society organizations; academic community and the media.

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## IMPACT

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The impact of the KSB can be expected to multiply in the mid-term for a number of reasons including (a) KCSS's credibility as a politically non-affiliated and independent think-tank, (b) KCSS's track record of employing appropriate scientific methods in its research, (c) the importance of local ownership and (d) the professional capacities available at the KCSS. The previous KSB editions have proven the achievement of the four aforementioned aims.

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## METHODOLOGY

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This special edition of the KSB reflects citizens' perceptions towards the Kosovo's foreign policy, regional and international strategic partners, and dialogue with Serbia. It allowed the data interpreters an in-depth deconstruction of people's perception. The interpretation reflects upon the set of political and societal factors which influenced the opinion of the respondents. The deconstruction of opinion has been based on the direct involvement of the data interpreter in the face-to-face interviews with the respondents. Also, focus groups with the field researchers supported the endeavors of the KCSS team in further deconstructing and analyzing the opinions contained in this special edition.

Answers to the KSB questionnaires were collected through face-to-face interviews conducted around the territory of the Republic of Kosovo. Most of the questions were close-ended in the form of five-point Likert scales. Few questions were open ended allowing respondents the opportunity to provide their opinion without predefined options. The sampling, piloting, and interviewing were conducted by the KCSS team of 35 field researchers. The national sample from which the research was drawn featured 1,070 households, following a representative sample of the population above 18 years old in Kosovo. The ethnic breakdown of the interviewed respondents was: 88.4 percent K-Albanian, 7.7 percent K-Serbian, and 3.9 percent others (of which, 1.4 percent Turks, 0.6 percent Bosnian, 1.0 percent RAE and the rest include Gorans, Croats, and Montenegrins).

The sample frame was based upon telephone code areas, and, as such included the following 7 regions: Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica, Peja, Prishtina and Prizren. The first stage of geographical clustering was based on the 2012 Kosovo Census Report; the second stage involved clustering samples by municipal area with a stratified rural/urban sample as per the number of households. The last stage followed a random sampling method using the nearest 'birthday method'. Random sampling ensures that each resident in Kosovo has an equal probability of being chosen for an interview. With the sample used for this study, the results of the survey project the mirror image of trends in attitudes and perceptions amongst the entire adult population of Kosovo in general. The margin of error is 3 percent with a confidence interval of 95 percent.

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, a pilot interview was conducted at the beginning of October 2015, in order to test the feasibility of the questionnaire. The research team subsequently reported that the pilot interview was successful, and no problems were encountered with the questions asked to the pilot interviewees. All interviews were completed from 21st until 29th of October 2015. Data processing and analysis has been completed using the SPSS software.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The chapter on regional and international cooperation has been an integral part of the KSB since the launch of this programme. KCSS considered it necessary to launch the special edition and continue identifying the trends on public perceptions towards the most relevant countries and organizations, which are also a matter of interest to Kosovo. The ongoing trends of establishing bilateral and multilateral ties, relations with neighbouring countries, and the events taking place in the Kosovo- Serbia dialogue remain the key objects of analysis in this edition. Moreover, this publication marks the second special edition with special focus on Kosovo's foreign policy and dialogue with Serbia. This KSB special aims to provide a detailed insight of citizen's perceptions towards countries and relevant international organizations, including those domestically present with active missions in Kosovo. The edition will also manifest citizens' perceptions towards regional and international actors, including the positioning towards neighbouring countries. Comparing to the first edition, here we provide a new list of issues pertaining political dialogue with Serbia, especially the agreements which have been reached during 2015.

Hereafter, the special edition covers the following dimensions:

- Public perceptions towards relevant regional and international actors;
- Public perceptions towards international organizations, the Euro- Atlantic integration process and other potential strategic partnerships;
- Public perceptions towards the political dialogue with Serbia

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## KEY FINDINGS

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This special edition of the KSB reflects citizens' perceptions towards the Kosovo's foreign policy, regional and international strategic partners, and dialogue with Serbia. The ongoing trends of establishing bilateral and multilateral ties, relations with neighbouring countries, and the events taking place in the Kosovo- Serbia dialogue are the key objects of analysis in this edition. The interpretation reflects upon the set of political and societal factors which influenced the opinion of the respondents.

The general trends show that the respondents share different and rather distinct perceptions towards Albania and Serbia. The findings show that Albania is perceived as the greatest ally of Kosovo by over 90 percent of the respondents. Serbia on the other hand was listed as the most hostile state towards Kosovo by 90 percent of the

respondents. While positioning to Albania and Serbia is very clear, there are mixed perceptions on two other neighbouring countries of Kosovo, respectively, Montenegro and Macedonia. Almost half of the respondents perceive these two countries as neutral towards Kosovo.

The western states, mostly USA and Germany still remain Kosovo's biggest allies in the international arena, also seen as the main partners in Kosovo's state building process. On the other hand, Turkey is being perceived as a new potential ally, with a large portion of Kosovars believing that Kosovo should strengthen its partnership with Turkey.

The citizens of Kosovo have shared positive perceptions in relation to the EU and NATO integration process by clearly showing a large level of enthusiasm and willingness to join such structures. On the other hand, a rather considerable amount of the respondents believe that the EU does not have a constructive approach towards Kosovo. A close examination of the results shows that the difference between membership in the EU, the strategic partnership with the USA and Turkey is rather small in the eyes of the respondents. Correspondingly, the failure to gain membership in or establish good relations with one of the aforementioned subjects, the shift to the other options can be an easier alternative according to the results.

Almost five years after the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia was launched, both in the technical and political level, this long-lasting and difficult process have triggered many heated debates among the political elite in Kosovo and its citizens. In this regard, almost half of the respondents believe that Serbia is benefiting more than Kosovo in this process by referring to the EU integration processes in both states. Similarly, the majority of the respondents believe that the dialogue is failing to reach the overarching goal - the actual normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

The findings show that the opinions towards one of the most heated debates in the framework of the Kosovo- Serbia dialogue, the establishment of the of the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities has been perceived negatively by a vast majority of the respondents. An overwhelming majority of the respondents, or over 70 percent of them share negative attitude with regards to the establishment of the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities by seeing it as very harmful and harmful to Kosovo.

# CHAPTER I

## 1. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS RELEVANT REGIONAL STATES

The list of regional states considered in the KCSS survey remained unchanged from the previous editions. The list included Kosovo's neighbouring states, such as Albania, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro. The respondents were asked to rate the relations and the attitude of these countries towards Kosovo starting from the negative scales such as very hostile, and hostile, continuing with the neutral scale, and the positive side with friendly and very friendly. It is of crucial importance to mention that when asked about regional states the respondents shaped their opinion based on their personal experience and opinions created over time, whereas the same does not apply for other non-regional states as it will be further elaborated in the next section. The states are clustered in a way that it reflects the key findings of this report, starting with the states having most intense relations with Kosovo such as Albania and Serbia, and it continues with two other neighbouring countries for which the respondents seemed to have neutral opinions.

### 1.1. Public perceptions towards Albania and Serbia

The KSB respondents generally share different and rather distinct perceptions towards Albania and Serbia as two of the four neighbouring countries. As shown in Figure 1, the respondents share predominantly positive perception towards Albania. Contrary to this, and as one would expect, perceptions towards Serbia remain negative with some slight increase of negative opinion compared to KSB results in 2014.

With regard to Albania, 94.6 percent of the respondents consider Albania as a friendly neighbour, thus listing Albania as Kosovo's largest partner in the region, while only 2.2 percent of the respondents have listed Albania to be as a hostile neighbour. Up to 2.2 percent of the respondents have chosen to remain neutral in their views towards Albania. The insignificant percentage of neutral or negative is seen mainly to derive from some respondents of the Serbian community in Kosovo.

The positive perceptions towards Albania can be explained by a large number of factors, which are predominantly driven by the shared traditional, national, cultural

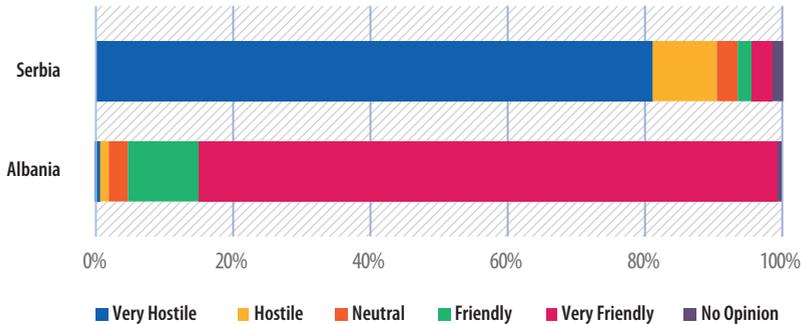
and historical values. Furthermore, the increasing mobility between citizens from Kosovo and Albania could further be said to have fostered this positive opinion among the respondents. Furthermore, joint cultural activities and events have also played a crucial role in shaping the perception towards Albania.

The slight increase in the positive opinion about Albania, compared to the previous edition of the KSB, has also been boosted by the political factors, more precisely by the proactive approach of Albania towards Kosovo's independence in international arena. The leading role of Albania, the political discourse of the Albanian leaders showing support in numerous regional and international initiatives and taking a stronger stand in support of Kosovo's independence in the international arena was listed as one of the key factors behind positive approach towards Albania.

While the positive perception towards Albania continues to widely be observed, the opposite appears to be the case towards Serbia. In the eyes of the Kosovar Albanian respondents, Serbia continues to be perceived as a very hostile state. Notably, the perceptions towards Serbia are strictly divided with large differences between the respondents with Albanian background from those with Serbian background. For instance, 90.4 percent of the respondents believe that Serbia maintains a very hostile approach towards Kosovo; the negative opinions about Serbia have slightly increased compared to the previous edition of the KSB. Only 3 percent of the respondents think that Serbia is neutral while a very small percentage of the respondents, or 5.1 percent, list Serbia as a rather friendly country towards Kosovo.

Evidently, the negative opinion of the Kosovar Albanians respondents manifested towards Serbia is still being influenced not only by the historic memory of conflict and repression but also as a result of Serbia's destructive role towards Kosovo's statehood and the ensuing discourse. The failure to witness tangible results from the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, the unchanged approach of Serbia towards Kosovo statehood, and the dissatisfaction with the agreement reached between Kosovo and Serbia, especially the one on the establishment of the Association of Serbian Municipalities has further fed the pessimism towards Serbia. Moreover, as the KSB's 2015 Fifth Edition results show, Serbia continues to be perceived as one of the largest external security threat to Kosovo; around 66 percent of the respondents still judge Serbia as a security threat towards Kosovo and its citizens (KSB 2015, p. 24).

In this regard, the Kosovar Serbian respondents, including the respondents in the northern part of Kosovo gave their opinion on Serbia's approach towards Kosovo, thus showing a clear separation between Serbia and Kosovo. This, therefore, is a gradual acceptance of the factual reality of Kosovo's existence as a state, and their reality of living in Kosovo.

**Figure 1 Public Perceptions towards Albania and Serbia**

## 1.2. Public perceptions towards Macedonia and Montenegro

While the public perceptions towards Albania and Serbia are clearly different among the respondents, the opinions towards Macedonia and Montenegro as the other two neighbouring countries is rather mixed with a tendency of the respondents to position their opinions towards both countries on neutral territory.

On average, Macedonia is perceived neutral towards Kosovo by 45.0 percent of the respondents, while up to 31.4 percent have shared positive opinion about it and 5.7 have viewed Macedonia as a very friendly neighbour towards Kosovo. The negative trend towards Macedonia is relatively low, with 19.6 percent of the respondents listing it as hostile state. The field researchers have observed the ability of the respondents to make a difference between the states of Macedonia with the Albanian community living in Macedonia.

As the public opinion and perceptions are largely driven by daily politics, the overall positive and neutral attitude towards Macedonia could be shaped by the fact that, unlike Serbia, Macedonia has recognized Kosovo. In addition, it appears that the sound economic cooperation and freedom of movement have further boosted the positive attitude. On top of these claims, there are also the close ties of the Kosovar Albanians with the Albanian community in Macedonia. The respondents opting for neutral or hostile options vis-à-vis Macedonia have made reference to the unfair treatment of the Albanian community in Macedonia, and to the skirmishes in Kumanovo in May 2015.

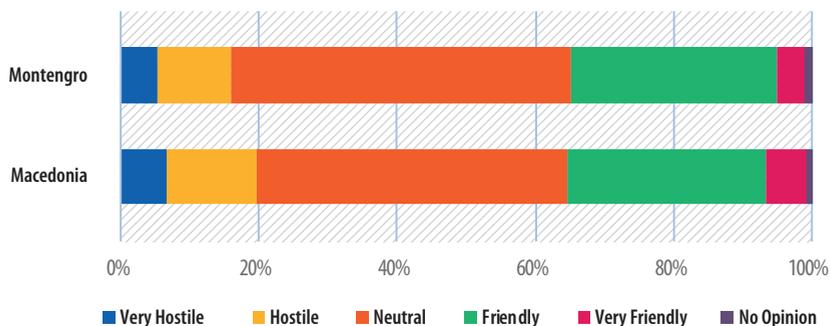
Similar to the case of Macedonia, almost half of the respondents, or 49.2 percent have qualified Montenegro as a neutral state towards Kosovo. Half of the respondents do not perceive Montenegro as a friendly state per se, though neither do they share

hostile stance points towards it. Another 33.7 percent believe that Montenegro's position towards Kosovo is rather positive, whereas 15.8 consider Montenegro as a hostile state towards Kosovo.

The soft and positive trend towards Montenegro is mostly driven by the political stance that this neighbouring country has taken towards Kosovo's independence. The act of recognition has marked a diplomatic turn clearly showing support for Kosovo, while outshining the perceptions of congruence between Serbia and Montenegro. Moreover, the existence of an Albanian community in Montenegro and the freedom of movement between Montenegro and Kosovo have also contributed to the softer stance among the respondents towards Montenegro.

The negative stance, on the other hand, has been largely attributed to the latest political events that have to do with the border demarcation between Kosovo and Montenegro. The negotiations regarding the border demarcation commenced in 2012, however, it was only in 2015 when the European Commission presented the final plan which made the Kosovar public opinion express disagreements. The negative political discourse and the feeling of "loosing lands" in the border with Montenegro led to protests, political debates and in the end stagnation of the entire process. Correspondingly, the political discourse towards this issue followed by protests of the opposition in Prishtina has been used as one of the arguments by the respondents' justifying the negative connotation towards Montenegro.

**Figure 2 Public Perceptions towards Macedonia and Montenegro**



# CHAPTER II

## 2. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS MAJOR POWERS

Along with Kosovo's neighbouring states, the respondents were also asked to share their perceptions about other states, namely the main powers having direct or indirect influence in Kosovo's state-building and its future. While the perceptions towards neighbouring countries reflected a mixture of respondents' immediate political, social, cultural opinions, on the other hand, the perceptions towards major powers is predominantly based upon the attitude of these countries towards Kosovo's political status and statehood. The role of the media should not be ignored, since the respondents' opinions about major powers in the world are significantly shaped by the media and general public discourse.

As will be seen in the section below, there is a clear distinction of perceptions towards the Western states including Turkey on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other hand. While the western states are seen through a positive lens, there is a lack of enthusiasm towards Russia and China, with small exception in the case of Kosovar Serb respondents.

### 2.1. Public perception towards the United States of America and Germany

Similarly to the KSB 2014 results, the USA and Germany top the list of being perceived as friendliest states towards Kosovo. Over 90 percent of the respondents' have listed both countries as friendly or very friendly marking a slight increase compared to the previous year. Statistically speaking, there is a wide scale of support towards the USA with 91.4 percent perceiving it as a friendly state (70.7 of those listed it as a very friendly, whereas 20.7 percent considered it as a friendly state). Similarly, Germany was considered as friendly by 91.9 percent of the respondents (54.2 of which considered it as a very friendly and 37.7 as a friendly state) towards Kosovo. The positive perception towards these states goes beyond bilateral matters, thus, the USA and Germany are perceived as the key partners and allies in the Euro-Atlantic integration process for Kosovo as well as in their general support in international arena.

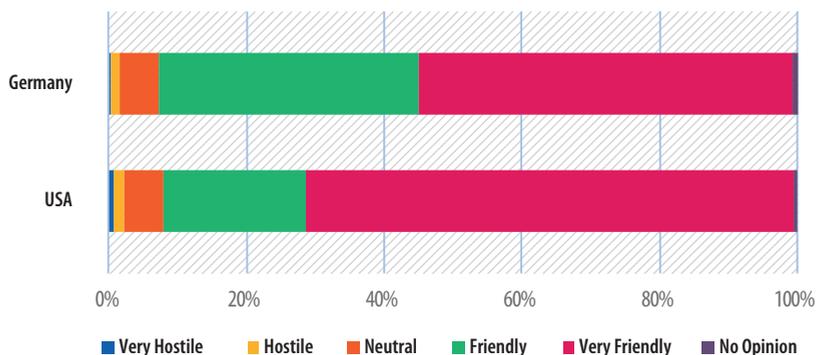
There is also a wide range of other factors contributing to the positive approach towards these states mostly originating from the political support in the past 15 years,

including the periods during the conflict until nowadays. The memories seem to be still fresh. The respondents have highlighted positive attitude towards the USA due to the support given by the US Government within NATO, and later in the diplomatic sphere and the proactive role in supporting Kosovo's independence and state-building process.

While the respondents see the USA as the main global ally, in the case of Germany, trends show that the citizens of Kosovo perceive Germany as their main ally within Europe, evidently, the German foreign policy towards Kosovo and Serbia (the EU membership conditionality) has contributed to this positive trend. Another contributing factor affecting the positive views on Germany is the Kosovar Diaspora in Germany and the remittances sent back home from Germany. In this respect, it is worth noting that the "zero tolerance" approach of the German Government towards economic asylum seekers from Kosovo in the past year did not change the positive perceptions towards this state.

The negative trends towards the USA and Germany are mainly attributed to the Kosovar Serbian respondents. The quantitative data gathered in the field indicate that in spite of their positive perception for the USA and Germany as friendly states towards Kosovo as a state, they still expressed reservations towards both USA and Germany.

**Figure 3 Public Perceptions towards USA and Germany**



## 2.2. Public perceptions towards the UK and Turkey

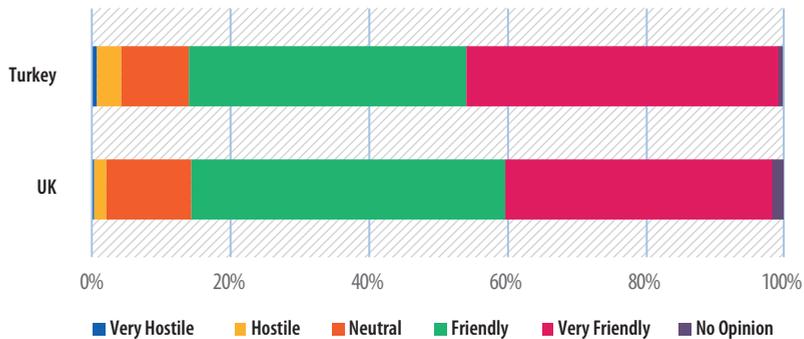
The UK and Turkey are the second most ranked states with almost equal results in terms of respondents' perception whereby over 80 percent of them had positive opinions

about both of these states. While the results show similarity, the factors leading to such positive perceptions are constructed on rather different basis. It is clear that in the eyes of the Kosovar citizens, the UK and Turkey are seen as strategic partners of Kosovo.

While most of the respondents show appreciation towards the UK's unreserved support during the war, their opinions are also shaped by the UK's support during the post-independence period and for the state-building process. Moreover, the UK is perceived as the biggest USA ally in Europe, thus reflecting the political support towards Kosovo in general. In statistical terms, 83.9 percent of the respondents share positive perceptions towards the UK, followed by 12.3 percent perceiving it as neutral towards Kosovo, whereas only 2 percent believe that the UK approach towards Kosovo is hostile.

On the other hand, the factors behind the positive trends in the case of Turkey are mainly due to the increased economic cooperation and Turkish investments in Kosovo. The trade volume between Turkey and Kosovo was 206, 5 million Euros in 2012 (Turkish MFA, 2012). Moreover a large number of Turkish companies and banks operate in Kosovo, whereas the airport and the motorway are Turkish led projects well known for the broad public in Kosovo (Philips, 2015). Additionally, Turkey is one of the few states in which Kosovars can travel without entry restrictions; a visa free regime signed in 2009 between the two governments (Balkan Insight, 2009). Henceforth, the increase of mobility between Kosovar and Turkish citizens has boosted the positive approach mostly based on personal experiences of the respondents.

On the other hand, 9.9 percent of the respondents perceive Turkey as neutral, followed by 4.1 percent of which see it from a negative prism. The reluctance to see Turkey as potential strategic partner has been depicted among the Kosovar Serbian respondents mainly triggered by the explicit support given by the Turkish government towards Kosovo in general. A level of scepticism was seen among the Kosovar Albanian respondents mostly driven by the fear of the perceived and alleged Turkey's Islamist agenda in Kosovo and the spread of religious extremist ideas. We could comfortably conclude that certain media reports in this regards may have helped to shape such an opinion.

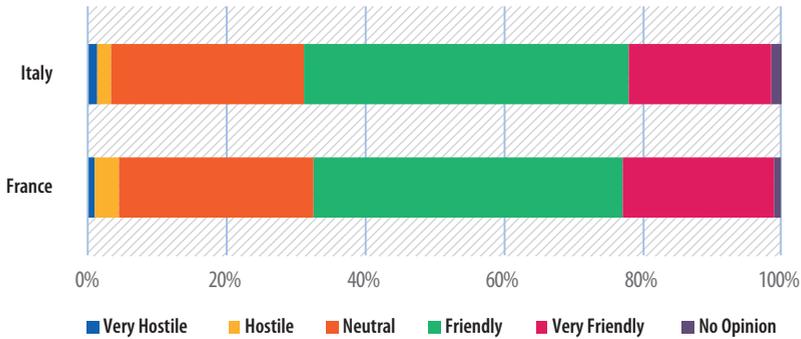
**Figure 4 Public Perceptions towards UK and Turkey**

### 2.3. Public perceptions towards France and Italy

In the group of the global strategic partners for Kosovo, France and Italy are ranked as the third more friendly ones in the eyes of Kosovo's public opinion. Around 60 percent of the respondents view these states as friendly in general.. Clearly, the Kosovar citizens do not perceive these two states with remarkable role in Kosovo's political aspect; however, there is a sound attitude due to the support given during the war and post-war period.

On this list, France has been seen from a positive angle by 66.3 percent of the respondents listing it as a friendly country, while 28.1 percent were of the opinion that it is a neutral state, the other 4.4 percent believed it to be a hostile country. Seemingly the main dissatisfaction towards France is expressed due to the inefficiency of French troop's (part of KFOR) in preventing the division of Mitrovica back in 1999. On the other hand, a large segment of the respondents highlighted the overall positive approach of French diplomacy towards Kosovo's independence and state-building process.

As for the case of Italy, in spite of it not being perceived as a crucial partner in Kosovo's EU agenda, the overall perceptions towards this state is positive. Up to 67 percent of the respondents perceive Italy as a friendly state towards Kosovo, mostly due to the support showed during the war and in the post-independence Kosovo, followed by 27.7 percent who believe it to be a neutral state. While, only 2.2 share negative perceptions towards Italy.

**Figure 5 Public Perceptions towards France and Italy**

## 2.4. Public perceptions towards Russia and China

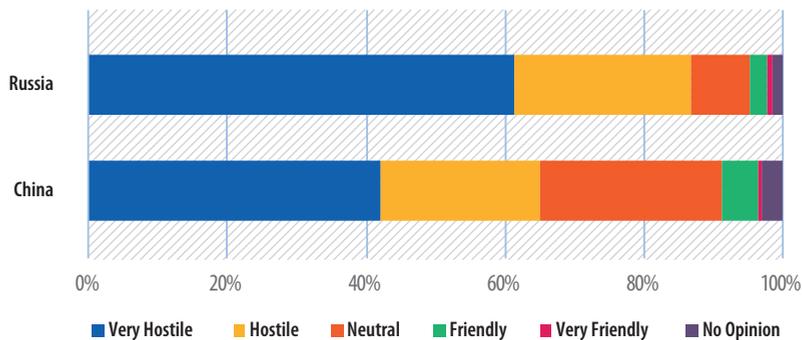
Contrarily to the perceptions regarding the aforementioned groups of states which have been mostly perceived positively, the opinions move towards the negative side when it comes to Russia and China. Evidently, these states do not appear to be very popular among Kosovo citizens. Geographically located far from Kosovo, the perceptions towards these states have been mainly built according to their approach towards Kosovo's independence and political status in international arena.

Russia has been considered as a hostile state by 86.7 percent of the respondents, followed by 8.5 who believe that it is neutral towards Kosovo and only 3.2 percent listing it as a friendly state. The positive opinions about Russia are reflected among the Kosovar Serbian respondents taking part in this survey. The negative trends among Kosovar Albanian towards Russia can be also explained by the close ties it has with Serbia and the constant political support towards Serbia especially with respect to the case of Kosovo. Being perceived as the largest Serbian ally in international arena, Russia has been qualified as the "hand of Serbia" predominantly used to block Kosovo's membership in international organizations. This is also seen in any attempt Kosovo makes in its aspiration to become a member of the UN or of any of its agencies; Russia in these cases has been a staunch supporter of Serbia using its power as the permanent member of the Security Council to veto any initiative that would support Kosovo's international legitimacy.

Similarly, China has been perceived as a hostile country towards Kosovo as well, up to 65 percent of the respondents have considered China's approach towards Kosovo

as hostile, followed by 26.4 of which consider it as neutral, and 5.6 as a friendly one. China, too, has been seen as an obstacle in the international arena. China's reluctance to recognize Kosovo's independence and its veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has highly influenced the opinion of the citizens of Kosovo towards China. In general, the opinions towards China are built based on its influence and position within the UN, and not necessarily on any track of practice or personal experiences that Kosovars have with them. Despite a general negative opinion on China, it still ranks better than Russia, and this could be explained by two factors. First, China is not perceived as a staunch supporter of Serbia as Russia is. Second, there are higher trade and commercial relations between Kosovo and China, and there are reports that Kosovars can still travel to China to do business, while they have no chance to do so when it comes to Russia.

**Figure 6 Public Perceptions towards Russia and China**



# CHAPTER III

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## 3. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS KEY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND KOSOVO'S EURO ATLANTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Along with relevant states, the respondents were asked to give their opinion towards the international organizations in which Kosovo is clearly aspiring membership into. The opinions and perceptions given in this section are highly influenced by the mission these organizations lead and represent in Kosovo, having some still present in Kosovo with active missions.

### 3.1. Public perceptions towards NATO, EU and UN

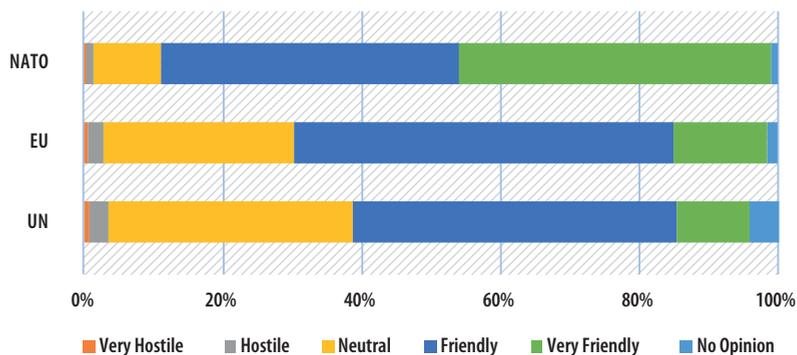
Similarly to the previous KSB results, NATO remains the friendliest international organization in the eyes of the citizens of Kosovo. The positive attitude is generally based on NATO's military intervention in Kosovo during the 1999 war; this was further boosted by the KFOR presence as a NATO successor ensuring Kosovo's security. NATO is perceived as a positive international organization by 87.9 percent of the respondents, while 9.5 percent perceive it from neutral light. Those not sharing a positive opinion regarding NATO based their perceptions mainly on NATO's neutral stance towards Kosovo. Only 1.7 percent perceives NATO as a hostile organization, a result which is reflected mostly by the Kosovar Serbian respondents.

When asked about the EU approach towards Kosovo, the findings show that there is a solid positive perception towards the EU. Accordingly, up to 68 percent of the respondents perceive the EU as a friendly organization, whereas 27.4 percent see it as a neutral one, followed by 3.0 percent who consider the EU approach as hostile towards Kosovo. The results show that in spite of consequent disappointment and lack of "carrots" provided by the EU, the citizens of Kosovo still see the EU from a positive prism; the positive opinion can also be explained by the Stabilization Association Agreement (SAA) reached between the Kosovo government and EU (EU Commission, 2015), and the way it was presented in the media. Whereas those who have listed the EU as a neutral and hostile organization have also provided a list of expectation that the EU failed to meet, such as: the lack of visa liberalization; the continuous status-neutral

approach of EU towards Kosovo; and difficulties in ensuring the implementation of agreements with Serbia.

Almost similar trends can be seen regarding the UN; the findings show that 57.1 percent of the respondents consider the UN to be a friendly organization, while 35.1 percent consider it as neutral towards Kosovo, followed by 3.6 percent who perceive it as hostile. The positive approach can be explained by the overall desire among Kosovars to join the UN so to stand along with other states as equal subjects. On the other hand, a considerable number of respondents that consider the UN as a neutral organization towards Kosovo clearly show that respondents have made a connection between the UNMIK mission in Kosovo and the UN, which clearly has directly influenced the opinion of Kosovars.

**Figure 7 Public Perceptions towards NATO, EU and UN**



### 3.2. Public perceptions towards Kosovo's potential strategic partners

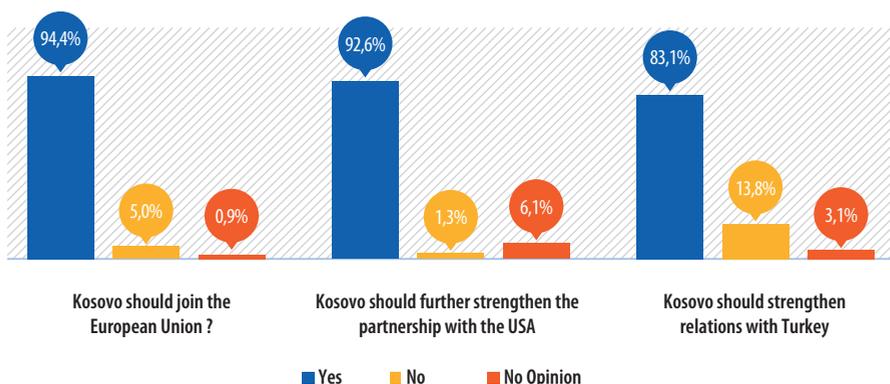
For the first time in the framework of the KSB fifth edition, the respondents were asked to share their thoughts on the streams that Kosovo's foreign policy should follow. Standing in the verge of establishing contractual relations with the EU, close and rather strong partnership with the USA, and the recent, mainly economic, relations with Turkey, the respondents were asked to rank the potential strategic partners for Kosovo.

Among the three options: joining the EU, partnership with USA, and further strengthening relations with Turkey, evidently the EU membership received the most positive answers by the majority of the respondents, more precisely by total 94

percent, whereas only 5.0 percent believe Kosovo should not join the EU. Standing in line with the priorities and the aspirations of the Government of Kosovo, Kosovo citizens perceive the EU membership as one of the most important diplomatic paths for Kosovo to take. Similarly, maintaining the partnership with the USA has been considered important by 92.6 percent of the respondents, followed by 1.3 percent who share negative perceptions, and with a rather large group of respondents, i.e. 6.1 percent who were reluctant to share their opinion on this matter. As far as Turkey is concerned, up to 83.1 percent of the respondents believe that Kosovo should strengthen its partnership with Turkey, mostly based on the economic factor. Whereas, 13.8 percent of the respondents have shown reluctance mostly fearing the religious factor, and the potential alleged Islamist agenda behind the partnership, with some even seeing Turkey as less of a relevant “power” in international arena.

A close examination of the results shows that the difference between membership in the EU, the strategic partnership with the USA and Turkey is rather small. This means that the failure to gain membership in or establish good relations with one of the aforementioned subjects, the shift to the other options can be an easier alternative according to the results.

**Figure 8 Public Perception towards Kosovo's Strategic Partnerships**

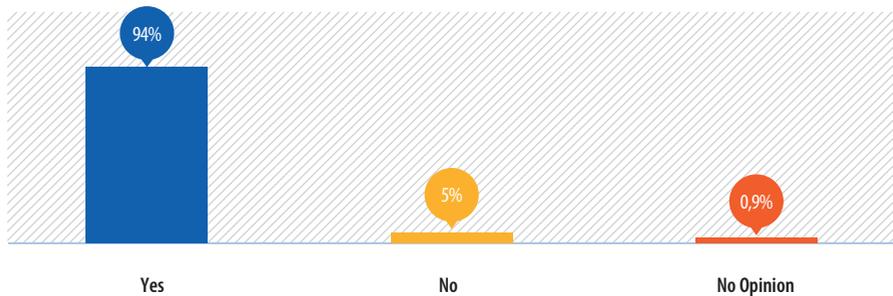


### 3.3. Public perceptions towards Kosovo's membership into the EU

As the EU integration and membership represents one of the main pillars of Kosovo's foreign policy, measuring the perceptions towards the EU integration process has been one of the key questions of all KSB editions. Evidently, the citizens of Kosovo have shared positive perceptions in relation to the EU integration process over the past five editions of the KSB by clearly showing a large level of enthusiasm towards EU membership.

A positive trend and attitude towards EU integration has been shown throughout the years, with a slight increase by 4.0 percent compared to the previous year. Up to 94 percent of the respondents believe in and are willing to join the EU in spite of it being a “far-fetched” goal for Kosovo considering the reforms and the number of conditions to be fulfilled, as well as the fact of dim chances because of the EU non-recognizers. Evidently, the EU enlargement stalemate for the next five years, as stated by the EU commissioner Johannes Hahn (Economist, 2015), did not manage to alter the positive opinion towards EU membership. On the other hand, only 5.0 percent of the respondents oppose Kosovo’s membership into the EU considering that before seeking membership Kosovo should reach political ripeness and internal stability.

**Figure 9 Public Perceptions towards Kosovo’s membership into the EU**



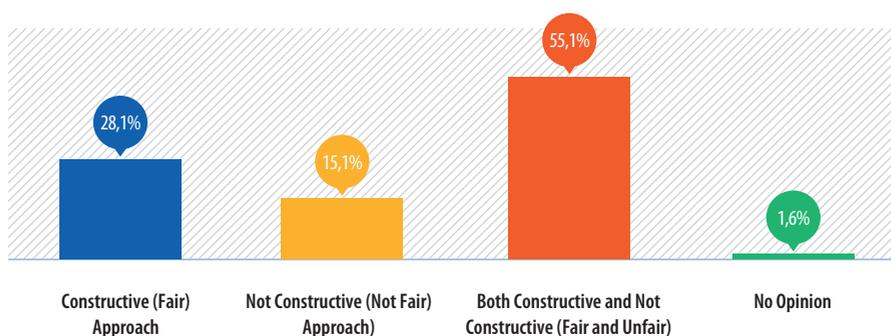
The positive trend is present among the citizens of Kosovo also in spite of reservations with regard to the EU’s approach towards Kosovo. When asked about the EU approach towards Kosovo, roughly half of the respondents believe that the EU’s approach is constructive and the other half believes that it is not constructive. It seems that half of the respondents believe that the EU has a pretty well calculated “carrot and stick” approach, by balancing the number of “sticks” with the number of “carrots” given to Kosovo in the EU integration process. This is followed by 28.1 percent who believe that the EU has a constructive approach towards Kosovo, this positive approach can be rather attributed to the SAA, being considered as one of the biggest successes, and as a landmark agreement reached in the process of the EU integration.

On the other hand, 15.1 percent believe that the EU is not constructive in its approach towards Kosovo. The reservations come as a result of constant disappointment in the visa liberalization process, thus depriving the Kosovars from the freedom of movement to the EU countries. The second factors is driven by the inability of the EU to ensure

better implementation of the agreements derived from Kosovo- Serbia dialogue, and the neutral approach that the EU has towards Kosovo in this process.

Notwithstanding some of the dilemmas, the findings show that the citizens of Kosovo still consider the EU as a relevant partner and as a solution somewhat to resolving economic, political and security related problems.

**Figure 10 Public Perceptions towards the EU approach towards Kosovo**

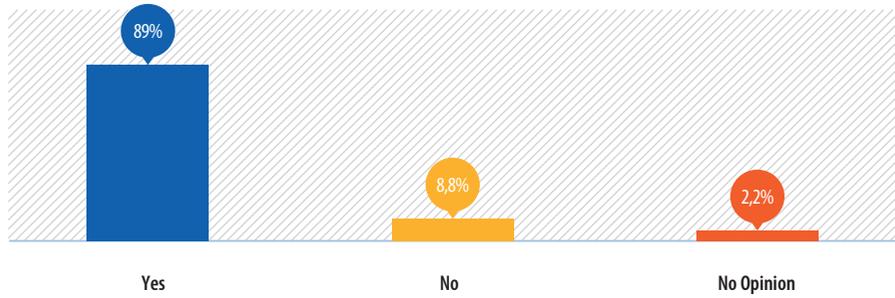


### 3.4. Public perception towards membership into NATO

Following the Euro-Atlantic agenda, a vast majority of the respondents or 89.0 percent believe that Kosovo should also become a NATO member. In spite of NATO's neutral approach towards Kosovo and lacking any official relations with Kosovo, the desire to become part of this structure is rather high. Undoubtedly, NATO enjoys a sound level of trust among the citizens of Kosovo mostly based on the military intervention during the war in 1999. The opinions are also shaped by the presence of KFOR in Kosovo. Moreover, the membership in NATO seems to be linked with the aspiration to possess a solid armed force that will work along with other NATO members in international arena.

On the other hand, 8.8 percent of respondents oppose membership into NATO; the negative perception is present mostly among the Kosovar Serbian respondents who firmly oppose the integration of Kosovo into NATO.

**Figure 11 Public Perceptions towards Kosovo's membership in NATO**



# CHAPTER IV

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## 4. PUBLIC PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE POLITICAL DIALOGUE WITH SERBIA

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Almost five years after the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia was launched, both in the technical and political level, this long-lasting and difficult process have triggered many heated debates among the political elite in Kosovo and its citizens. The responses of this survey vary from those debating whether Kosovo should continue the dialogue with Serbia, whether Kosovo should change the bargaining position, and so on. Many doubts regarding the process were raised from different standpoints by both the Kosovo Albanians and the Kosovo Serbs.

The question whether Kosovo is benefiting from this process have led to major division between the government and opposition in Kosovo, and massive protest have unfolded by large group of people in capital Prishtina. The Kosovo Serb minority, on the other hand, perceives the dialogue as a positive process, expecting it to improve their lives in Kosovo, yet as a costly process taking into consideration that it does represent a step forward in the recognition of Kosovo's statehood by Serbia - according to their perception.

### 4.1. Political dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia: Who is the winner?

Almost all the agreements that were reached between Kosovo and Serbia have been interpreted differently from the parties involved in the process, as well as the facilitators in the EU themselves. The lack of transparency throughout the process, and behind the "closed doors" decision-making, left room for misinterpretation, misuse of the content of the agreements by the political elites in both states, as well as it hampered many aspects of its implementation and its potential impact on the lives of citizens. Consequently, this led to an increase in confusion among the respondents both Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs as seen in the figure 13.

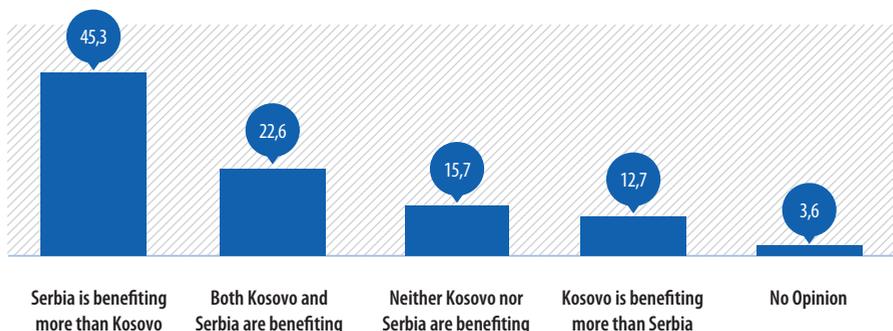
When asked about who is benefiting more from the dialogue Kosovo or Serbia, almost half of the respondents or 45.3 percent of them believe that Serbia is benefiting more than Kosovo. Most of the arguments used by the respondents were related to Serbia's accelerated path towards the EU, while at the same time Kosovo is stagnating, and

the large number of benefits that Serbia has been extracting from this process. With Kosovo having been left outside the visa free regime, and Serbia, on the other hand, opening the chapters in the EU accession process, the Kosovar Albanian respondents believe that Kosovo is becoming Serbia's *stepping stone* in its path to EU membership.

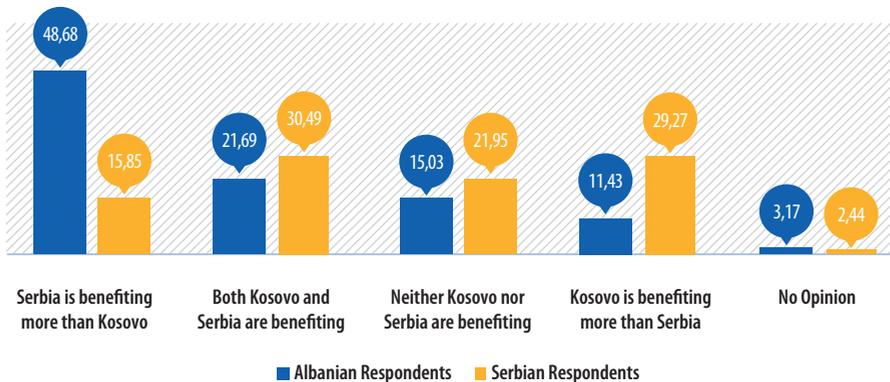
Alternatively, only 12.7 percent of the respondents believe that Kosovo is benefiting more than Serbia in this process. The factors behind such standpoints are mostly related to the SAA, thus believing that it marks the first contractual relation between Kosovo and the EU and a landmark agreement in Kosovo's path towards the EU. In addition, many of the respondents who believe that Kosovo is benefiting more than Serbia claimed that the dialogue will eventually result in the recognition of Kosovo's independence by the Serbian authorities. This is problematic, because this indicates that even this small percentage of people who believe that Kosovo is benefiting more than Serbia, can easily shift their opinion on the opposite direction when it becomes clear that the process is actually not leading towards what they are hopping for - a likely chance in the near future. On the other hand, this positive opinion may further strengthen in the future depending on the content of the Chapter 35 in EU's accession negotiations with Serbia, which mostly refers to the normalization of relations with Kosovo prior to entering the EU. This process is, however, too long for such a positive opinion to hold ground.

On the other hand, less than a quarter of the respondents or 22.6 percent of them believe that the dialogue is a win-win situation for both Kosovo and Serbia, and that both are benefiting equally by gaining a lot in the EU integration process. A totally opposite opinion is shared by 15.7 percent of the respondents who believe that neither Kosovo nor Serbia are benefiting from this process.

**Figure 12 Public Perceptions on the Outcome of the Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia**



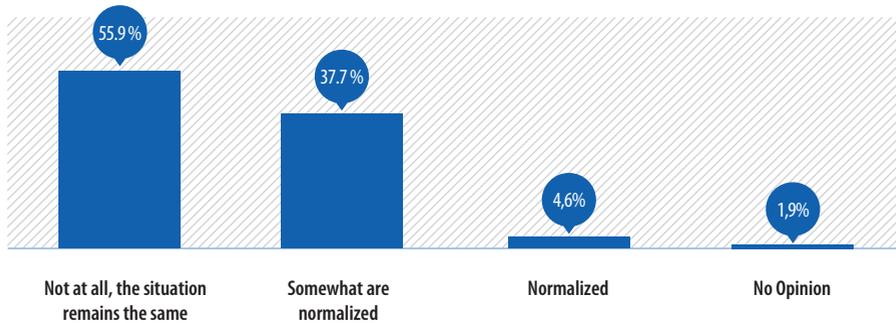
**Figure 13 Perceptions of the Albanians and Serbs on the Outcome of the Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia**



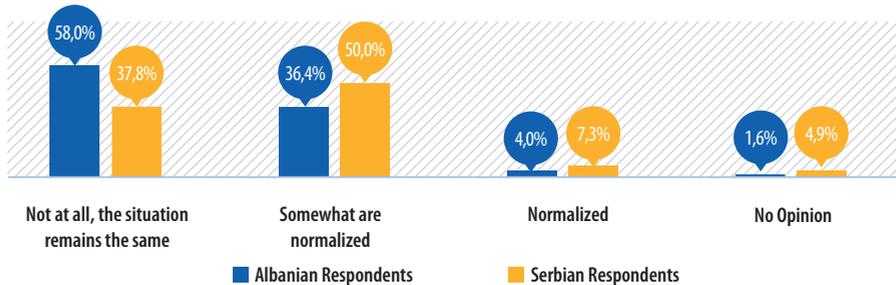
## 4.2. (Mis) carrying out normalization

When asked whether the dialogue has contributed to the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, majority of the respondents believe that the dialogue is failing to reach the overarching goal - the actual normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. In statistical terms, 55.9 percent of the respondents are pessimistic in this regard, believing that the situation has not changed from prior to the commencement of the dialogue, and that the relations are not normalized at all. The vast majority of the respondents believe that the dialogue is a political process detached from the reality in Kosovo; hence it has failed to ensure progress in the lives of the citizens, both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs.

On the other hand, more than a quarter of the respondents, or 37.7 percent of them claim that the relations are normalized, followed by a small number of respondents, or a total of 4.6 percent who stated that the relations between Kosovo and Serbia are normalized.

**Figure 14 Public Perceptions on the Normalization between Kosovo and Serbia**

Given the fact that numerous agreements derived from the dialogue are directly related to the lives of the Kosovo Serb minority, especially in the northern part of Kosovo, the Kosovar Serbian respondents have positive opinions on the normalization of the relations between Kosovo and Serbia. 57.3 percent have stated that the relations are normalized or slightly normalized, followed by 37.8 who believe that the situation has not been normalized and remains the same.

**Figure 15 Perceptions of the Albanians and Serbs on the Outcome on the Normalization between Kosovo and Serbia**

#### 4.3. Public Perceptions on the establishment of the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities

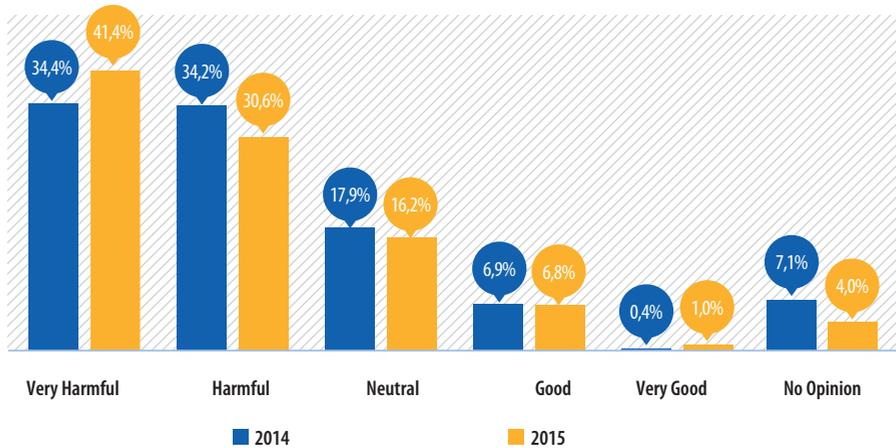
The agreement on the establishment of the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities (ASMM) was reached and signed by the Kosovo and Serbian authorities in August 2015, as a part of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue in Brussels (Commission, 2015).

It did not take too long before it reached the peak of heated political debates among the government and opposition in Prishtina over the content of the agreement. Consequently, it became one of the reasons which led to the political stalemate in Kosovo and increased dissatisfaction with the government in Kosovo, the benefits of the talks, and the future of the multi-ethnic state created in 2008. Henceforth, this edition of the KSB continued to examine one of the most debatable issues deriving from the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue. As the field research took place in October, the perceptions have been collected in the midst of discussions on this matter, and before major protests in the capital Prishtina took place.

In general, the findings reflect the political situation in Kosovo; an overwhelming majority of the respondents, or 71.7 percent of them share negative attitude with regards to the establishment of the ASMM by seeing it as very harmful and harmful to Kosovo. It is worth noting that the finalization of the agreements and the published details of its contents have outraged the Kosovar Albanian respondents. In addition, the increase of awareness on this matter, being the most discussed issue on the media and among politicians, contributed to a an increase in the negative perceptions by almost 10 percent when compared to the previous KSB results. It is worth noting that this discourse, the lack of transparency and the uncertainty in this process is one of the leading factors why the citizens of Kosovo have assessed this issue by inertia, and not based on the content of the agreement.

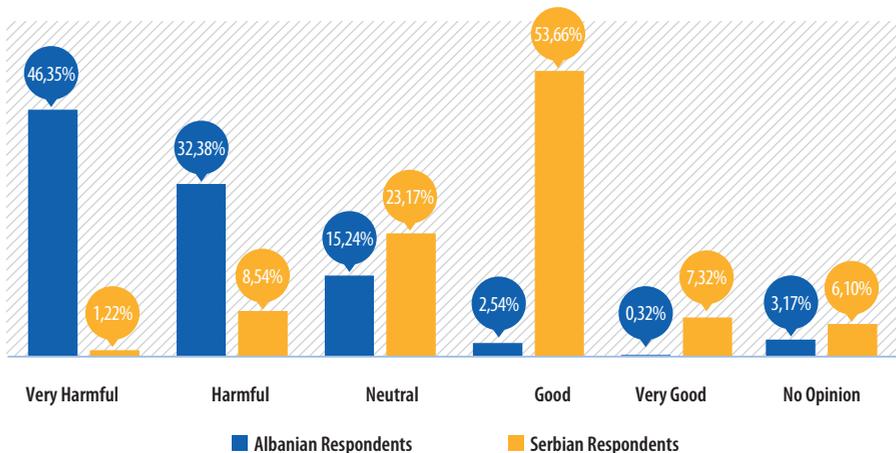
On the other hand, 16.2 percent of the respondents share a balanced perception towards the ASMM, while only 7.8 percent believe that its implementation is positive. From the qualitative feedback of the respondents, it appears that the Kosovo Serbs generally share positive views, while the Albanians believe that the establishment of the ASMM seriously violates Kosovo's constitutional order and its stability. In general, a 4.0 percent, from all the ethnicities did not want to answer nor had no information on the matter.

**Figure 16 Public Perceptions on the Establishment of the Association of Serbian Municipalities in Kosovo**



On the other hand the positive perception of the Kosovo Serb minority in this regard is quite solid, being 60.98 percent in total perceiving the agreement on the ASMM positively, followed by 23.17 percent who think it is neutral; there is a slight increase in the positive attitude as compared to the results of the KSB 2014. On the other hand, 9.76 percent of the Kosovar Serbian respondents shared negative perceptions towards the ASMM. The negative perceptions behind the negative attitude included arguments such as lack of trust towards the entire process; moreover many of the respondents think that the existence of the ASMM will not impact their lives at all.

**Figure 17 Perceptions of the Albanians and Serbians on the Establishment of the Association of Serbian Municipalities in Kosovo**



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