



FORUM
for
SECURITY

**PEOPLE'S VIEWS
ON KEY PEACE AND
SECURITY ISSUES
IN KOSOVO**

Pristina, October 2013



An EU funded project managed by
the European Union Office in Kosovo



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The Forum for Security aims to contribute to improve the security environment by promoting effective institutions and policies. The forum serves as a discussion platform among civil society organizations and authorities in Kosovo, and provides possibilities for exchange of experiences and lessons on security, regionally and internationally. Forum for Security is comprised of the following organisations: Forum for Civic Initiatives (FIQ), Institute for Development Policy (INDEP), and Kosovo Law Institute (KLI)

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I. Introduction

During June – July 2013, FIQ and AKTIV in collaboration with seven local CSOs mentioned above organised community dialogue meetings in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Shterpçë/Štrpce, Klinë/Klina, Gjakovë/Đakovica and Prizren/Prizren and brought together diverse societal groups to discuss key peace and security issues that have a substantial impact on peoples day-to-day lives. Over 135 participants have participated in the meetings and 11 semi-structured interviews with respective authorities have been conducted by KLI in Prishtinë/Priština, and Conflict Prevention Forum members in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica north. Information obtained during this process has been reviewed through desk research.

II. Key Findings

The following key findings identified during the dialogue meetings will be shared with local, national and international actors in Kosovo and will be used by the CSOs for targeted advocacy with these actors as well as promoting continuing dialogue between CSOs and authorities on security policy and decision-making:

- **Concerns regarding the police performance** - Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and Kosovo Police (KP) stand at a critical crossroad as they have to make important decisions over allocation of police resources. On one hand, there are citizens' demands for more pro-active role of the police to tackle ordinary crimes. On the other hand, KP considers fight against organized crime and corruption as priority, rightly addressed so by EU progress report on Kosovo for 2012. MIA and KP seem to face challenges on addressing these priorities, even though citizens' demands are no different with the requirements and standards set out by the EU.
- **Danger from presence and use of drugs among youth.** Young people may be categorized as part of vulnerable groups exposed to drugs (therefore to criminal activities), where the main age group affected by the drug use mainly marijuana is 17 years old. Very little attention has been given to the utilization of Public School System to prevent the use of drugs by students.

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- **Traffic accidents part of peoples' daily lives.** Even though 120 people die on annual basis on traffic accidents in Kosovo, KP and other justice providers have not yet reached a satisfactory level of cooperation among themselves, and effectiveness to prevent traffic accidents.
 - **Lack of transparency and clarity about the Agreement.** The Kosovo-Serbia dialogue lacks transparency, which results in ambiguity over the issues being discussed and agreements reached between the respective governments.


Concerns regarding the police performance

Participants at the community dialogue meetings have raised concerns that security providers are not quite effective and their response time is quite slowⁱ. Citizens in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica raised the most serious concerns about the security providers habituated to ignore even offences such as gunshots. Some reports that involve also public perceptions suggest that citizens' dissatisfaction with the work of KP is on riseⁱⁱ. Public confidence is quite important to ensure fruitful cooperation of citizens with KP and enhance effectiveness of the police in all areas.

Our research shows that policy makers including KP leadership have identified fight against serious criminal offences rather important. The new normative guides for policies, laws and other strategic documents of Kosovo as well as EU Progress reports suggest that the security providers face problems that require them *to demonstrate immediate results in fighting organized crime and corruption*ⁱⁱⁱ that derive from different processes such as *Stabilization and Association Agreement process and Visa Liberalization process*. However, the inability of police officials to grasp and approach security issues from a comprehensive and inclusive perspective affects the decision making process over allocation of police resources thus leading to partially implementation of police priorities in compliance with key political processes^{iv}.

Danger from presence and use of drugs among youth

In the process of identifying its priorities and given Kosovo's geographic position as a transit country for drugs destined to reach Western Europe^v, it is imperative that KP reviews its approach towards the issue of drugs highlighting the importance of cooperation with local citizens. Considering local information regarding large numbers of drug users and young people at risk of easy access to drugs^{vi} requires a new dimension of cooperation with local citizens.



A number of reports suggest that youth is highly exposed to drugs and has easy access to it and that “one in ten students find cannabis readily available implying that it is fairly easy to find cannabis”^{vii}. It is therefore important to stress that drug related issues among young people should be a priority of police work. In doing so, it is necessary that a new approach towards youth should be in place with the purpose of combating use of drugs and cutting the link of drug dealers with the most vulnerable group. At the end, such work compliments the segments of fight against organized crime.


There are no reliable sources or comprehensive assessments regarding the number of drug users in Kosovo, however the information by Psychiatric Clinic of the University Clinic Center of Kosovo (UCCK) and Medico-Psychotherapeutic Center NGO “Labyrinth” reveal that in 2010 the both institutions treated around 186 cases^{viii}. “Labyrinth” has around 923 patients, where heroin is the primary choice for 93% of them, while marijuana was first drug for 73 % of them^{ix}. The latter emphasized the fact that drug users include even very young people that by international definition are children of primary schools^x. The most concerning issue is that the main age group who start using marijuana is 17 years old^{xi}. Even though marijuana is a “light drug”, it represents a major problem, because it leads to other more addictive and harmful drugs^{xii}. Youth is the most vulnerable group, easy to convince to use drugs and they can easily turn into regular customers.

The fragility of the relation police-teachers-students-parents contributes towards an environment where students have easy access to drugs and they are not aware of risks and consequences of drug use^{xiii}.

Traffic accidents part of peoples' daily lives

Although at the political level citizens feel that they are not being included in any of the decisions made on their behalf, they feel unsecure even in their daily routine. Traffic safety remains one of the most concerning issues identified by the citizens. It is challenging to assess the effectiveness of existing policy, due to poor implementation.

From 2008 until 2011, there have been 71,140 traffic accidents in Kosovo with almost half of them occurred in Prishtina/Priština. The above figure includes 557 fatal accidents, 3,524 hit and run accidents, 17,397 accidents with injuries. Almost 98% of accidents happen due to driver factors, whereas the other 2% are caused by pedestrians, vehicles' technical condition, road infrastructure, climate and other factors. In addition to enforcing the law on traffic, many suggest that policies should focus on improving driving behavior, as this would be a sustainable approach to tackle traffic accidents. As these remain top issues, KP seems to work quite slowly in developing adequate strategies and plans. As in other areas, matching solutions with real problems on the ground remains a key challenge to KP.



KP, courts and other institutions have engaged in advancing their cooperation in general, but this is not the case yet on traffic accidents. Proper implementation of existing policies and effective enforcement of judicial decisions has not been on priority list of inter-institutional cooperation. Offenders pay only 10% of convictions issued by police officers as there are poor mechanisms to ensure law enforcement on this issue.

More than 120 people die on yearly basis due to traffic accidents. Providing policy alternatives may be unsound, unless KP and justice providers further enhance their cooperation and enforce existing policies. While cooperation among KP and other justice providers in areas such as fight against corruption or organized crime have progressed in an accelerated manner.

Lack of transparency and clarity about the Agreementⁱ

A milestone of the EU facilitated talks between Kosovo and Serbia has been the agreement reached on April 2013, which included 15 points related to local governance, security, and judicial structures in the north of Kosovo. An overwhelming common perception in both communities is that the dialogue process lacks transparency.

Citizens have identified an amount of ambiguity over the content as well as the timeline of the implementation in the field of this agreement^{xiv}. They are not informed about the potential immediate and long-term effects of this agreement in their lives. The Kosovo Serb citizens express their concerns regarding their jobs that so far have been paid out by institutions in Serbia^{xv}. Another factor contributing to the citizens' confusion with regard to the agreement is precisely the political interpretation that Kosovo and Serbia government officials apply to the agreement, which most of the times differ from each other.

Lack of transparency over the process^{xvi}, has resulted with inaccurate and misleading information provided to the public. In addition, both parties are continuously engaged in a blame game over who is posing obstacles for implementation of agreement, which indicates that without EU this dialogue would not be possible.

Ambiguity over the agreements, especially The fifteen-point agreement signed on April 2013^{xvii}, could lead to negative rather than positive consequences, as lack of adequate information has provided the space and opportunity to politicians, government officials, civil society, analysts, media and communities for making their own interpretations on how the agreement will be implemented and how it will affect the life of citizens. This has an impact on peoples' perceptions and expectations from the dialogue and agreements including immediate, short and long-term effects.



III. Recommendations

- **Kosovo government** should engage in an open dialogue with civil society organisations and communities in order to greater reflect peoples' peace, conflict and security related concerns in their future agreements with Belgrade as part of the dialogue process.
- **Kosovo Police** should enhance its cooperation with justice providers in order to ensure that traffic accidents receive the necessary attention and increase their effectiveness in decreasing the number of traffic accidents in which more than 120 people die on annual basis. In order to deal adequately with this and new challenges, decisions need to be based on well-analyzed policies and factors contributing to traffic accidents which should be comprehensive and ensure that address immediate causes to traffic accidents and accomplishment of long-term strategies. This should include consultation with as broad range of those affected by this: drivers, taxi drivers, driving schools, traffic inspectorate, public transport and other transportation companies, schools, etc.
- **Cross-departmental and multi-dimensional approach to drug use. Ministry of Education, Municipal Education Directories, School authorities, police, health institutions, etc.,** should ensure that the issue of drug use by youth receives a multi-dimensional, cross-departmental attention. Parent-teacher-local police officer networks are necessary to be established where they don't exist and further strengthened those that don't function effectively and serve as a hub of communication, exchange of information and mechanisms that promote and take a proactive approach to address issues concerning drugs, school abandoning and illegal activities in an inclusive manner.
- **European Union High Representative for Foreign Policies and Security** should encourage more communication and debate of governments of Serbia and Kosovo with the wider public in order to avoid ambiguity. This includes support to local CSO's through IPA mechanism to promote greater communication and cooperation between the government institutions and civil society as well as creating more opportunities and encouraging CSOs to actively contribute to improved relations and peace and stability in Kosovo and wider region.
- **Civil Society** should establish contacts and engage in constructive discussions with local and national authorities in order to seek greater transparency and accountability and promote an inclusive and participatory security policy and decision-making which addresses peoples' needs and concerns and contributes to long-term sustainable security in Kosovo.

Bibliography

ⁱ A report on public perceptions shows that 14% of respondents assessed that KP is very slow in terms of timely response, while 41% of respondents assessed that KP is slow, and another 31% assessed KP responded fast. Reeve, R., *Still time to act* (Saferworld, October 2012), p. 16.

ⁱⁱ UNDP's Public Pulse which suggests that in October 2012, 28% of respondents perceive that KP is corrupt. A Saferworld report states that 49% of respondents perceive that KP is corrupt. Whereas, Kosovo Center for Security Studies states that only 42% of respondents are satisfied with the work of KP. Public Pulse report V (Prishtina/Priština): UNDP, February 2013), p. 16. Also, Reeve, R., *Still time to act* (Saferworld, October 2012), p. 16. Muja, A., *Kosovo Security Barometer – Kosovo Voices: Insights and Perceptions* (Prishtina/Priština): KCSS, May 2013).

ⁱⁱⁱ See Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on a Feasibility Study for a Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo (Brussels: European Commission, October 10, 2012).

^{iv} KLI interview with Mr Fisnik Rexhepi, Advisor to the Minister of Internal Affairs, September 2013.

^v 2013 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report – Volume 1 Drug and Chemical Control (U.S. Department of State – Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 2013), p. 219.

^{vi} Citizens in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Klinë/Klina, and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica have raised their concerns over the use of drugs by youth. Also, KLI interview with Mr. Safet Blakaj, Executive Director at the Medico-Psychotherapeutic Center "Labyrinth", September 2013.

^{vii} Mytaher, H., *ESPAD Kosovo Country Report 2011* (Prishtina/Priština): Fondacioni Together Kosova, 2012), p. 4.

^{viii} *Kosovo Country Overview 2010* (Luxemburg: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2011), p. 10. KLI interview with Mr Fisnik Rexhepi, Advisor to the Minister of Internal Affairs, September 2013.

^{ix} Statistics provided by Medico-Psychotherapeutic Center "Labyrinth", printed on 2/13/2013.

^x Lushi, T., *Kosova me 20 mijë përdorues droge* ["Kosovo with 20 thousand drug users"], *Zëri info*, 12 September 2013, available at <http://www.zeri.info/artikulli/14709/kosova-me-20-mije-perdorues-droge>.

^{xi} Statistics provided by Medico-Psychotherapeutic Center "Labyrinth", printed on 2/13/2013.

^{xii} KLI interviews with Mr. Shaban Mecinaj, Chief of the Ward for Treating Addiction at the Psychiatric Clinic at UCCK, and Mr. Safet Blakaj, Executive Director at the Medico-Psychotherapeutic Center "Labyrinth", September 2013.

^{xiii} KLI interviews with Mr. Shaban Mecinaj, Chief of the Ward for Treating Addiction at the Psychiatric Clinic at UCCK, and Mr. Safet Blakaj, Executive Director at the Medico-Psychotherapeutic Center "Labyrinth", September 2013. Mr. Blakaj has stressed out the need to involve psychologists and physicians in school system.

^{xiv} Concerns were mostly raised in community consultation meetings in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica north and south, Shterpçë/Štrpce, and Prizren/Prizren.

^{xv} These issues were raised by citizens in community consultation meetings in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica north and Shterpçë/Štrpce.

^{xvi} Confirmed by citizens in the community consultation meetings as well as majority of interviewees.

^{xvii} http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/Vendimi_i_mbledhjes_se_126-te_te_Qeverise_2013.pdf

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