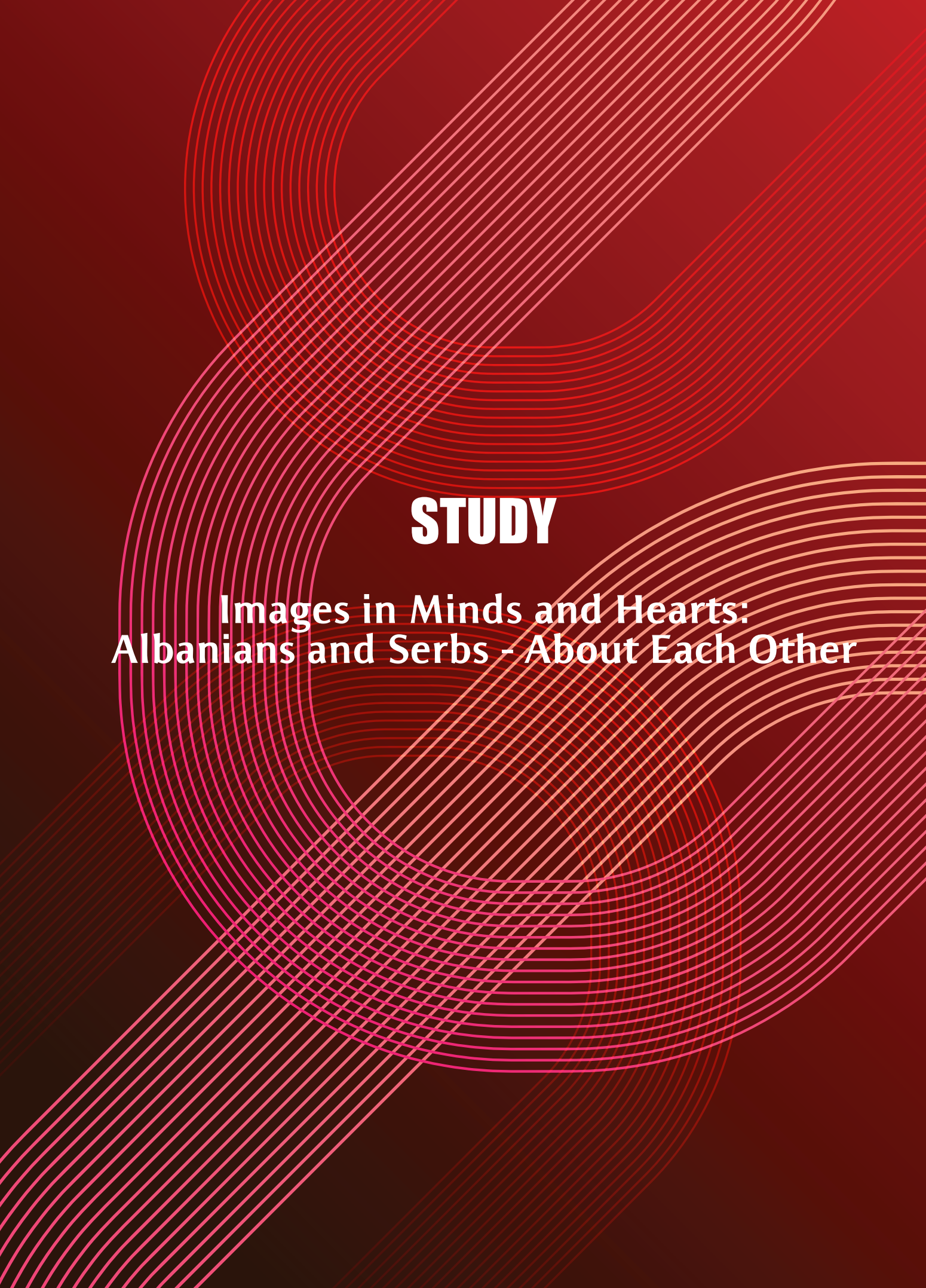


The background of the entire page is a solid dark red. Overlaid on this are numerous thin, wavy lines in a lighter shade of red/pink. These lines flow across the page in a series of overlapping, undulating patterns that create a sense of movement and depth. Some lines are more densely packed, while others are more spread out, creating a complex, organic texture.

STUDY

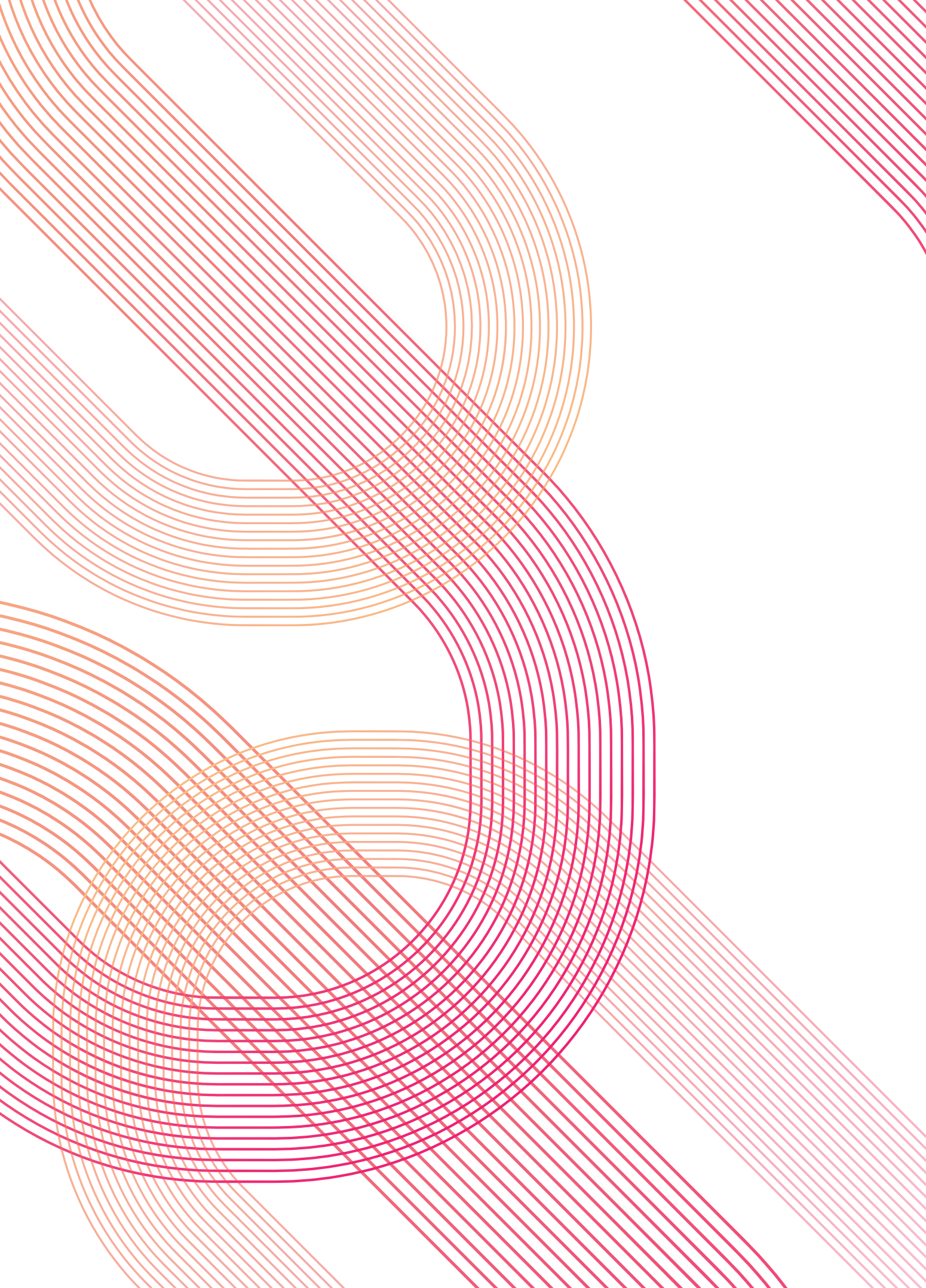
Images in Minds and Hearts: Albanians and Serbs - About Each Other



ZORAN GAVRILOVIĆ • DUŠAN RADAKOVIĆ

STUDY

Images in Minds and Hearts: Albanians and Serbs - About Each Other



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project *Serbian-Albanian Media Mirror*, implemented by organizations BIRODI and ACDC, is designed to improve media relations and mutual understanding between Albanians from southern Serbia and Serbs from northern Kosovo. The project focuses on the municipalities of Bujanovac, Preševo, and Medveđa in southern Serbia, as well as North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok, and Leposavić in northern Kosovo – regions where relations between these communities are often strained by political and media narratives.

Recent events, such as the conflict in Banjska and tensions surrounding political developments, have highlighted the need to analyze the perceptions and understanding between these two ethnic groups. The role of media and political narratives in shaping mutual attitudes has proven to be a crucial factor in both exacerbating and potentially improving relations. Therefore, through research and interactive activities, this project aims to identify dominant narratives and offer recommendations for their transformation.

As part of the project, surveys, focus groups, and media monitoring were conducted, providing insights into the “images in minds” – perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes that shape daily life and mutual relations. The goal was not only to map current challenges but also to identify concrete solutions to improve communication and understanding between Serbs and Albanians. The project results will be presented in a comprehensive analysis with recommendations, which will be made available to the public and key stakeholders. Additionally, to contribute to the lasting improvement of relations, an annual award for promoting Serbian-Albanian relations will be established.

The following analysis will present in detail the results of the research conducted within the project. Particular emphasis is placed on the perceptions of participants from different ethnic and social groups, the impact of media narratives, and suggestions for improving inter-ethnic cooperation in the analyzed regions.

ZORAN GAVRILOVIĆ

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

Preševo valley sample

The survey was conducted on a sample of 500 respondents, with 250 respondents from the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo, and a northern Kosovo subsample of 250 respondents from the municipalities of North Mitrovica, Zubin Potok, Zvečan, and Leposavić. Within the Preševo Valley subsample, 135 respondents were surveyed in the municipality of Preševo, and 115 respondents in Bujanovac. The selection of respondents was carried out in three steps.

In the first step, the sampling process included selecting local communities at the municipal level in Preševo and Bujanovac. These communities were categorized by size to ensure equal representation of both small and large local communities.

The selection of respondents in urban and rural areas was conducted by requiring interviewers to choose a central street and identify a starting address in the area being surveyed (e.g., the center of the local community, a major intersection, a central bus station, a community center, etc.). After determining the starting address, the interviewer would proceed along the left side of the street and select every seventh address (e.g., 1, then 8, then 15, and so on).

In cases where the selected address was an apartment building with multiple residential units (up to four floors), the interviewer was required to survey only one household or one respondent. In high-rise buildings with more than four floors, the interviewer could survey two households or respondents. For instance, if the first respondent was interviewed on the first floor, the next should be on the seventh floor, or if the first respondent was on the second floor, the next should be on the ninth floor. The principle of the “seventh step” was strictly followed. If the interviewer encountered an institutional building at a given address, they would move to the next residential building.

In rural areas, the selection of respondents followed a similar approach. In linear villages, the selection mirrored the urban method, with every seventh house being chosen. In scattered villages, such as those in mountainous regions, every fourth house was selected. If this was not feasible, alternative selection methods were applied based on the circumstances, such as every second house, or, in extreme cases, every house.

In the third and final step, which pertained to selecting respondents within a household, only individuals over the age of 18 were eligible to participate in the survey. Among eligible individuals, the person whose birthday was closest to the survey date was selected to respond.

Northern Kosovo sample

In Northern Kosovo, the survey was conducted on a sample of 250 respondents, evenly distributed across the municipalities of North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok, and Leposavić. The selection of respondents in this area was also carefully planned to ensure the representativeness of the sample, including citizens from different ethnic communities, such as Serbs and Bosniaks.

The methodology used for respondent selection relied on the identification of key urban and rural areas in each municipality, with an additional focus on achieving a balance between different social strata. Special attention was given to including respondents with higher levels of education to obtain data that reflect the attitudes and perceptions of informed individuals, which significantly contributes to the quality and validity of the analysis.

In addition to the survey, focus groups were organized in all four municipalities in Northern Kosovo. The participants in these focus groups were selected to include representatives of the local community, civil society organizations, students, entrepreneurs, and journalists. The goal of this approach was to gather diverse perspectives on interethnic relations and the everyday challenges faced by the residents of these areas.

This combination of quantitative and qualitative research provided a comprehensive insight into the social dynamics in Northern Kosovo while ensuring that the voices of all relevant stakeholders were heard.

Concept of Nation among Respondents

The first topic that the respondents encountered was the concept of nation. Specifically, they were given the opportunity to choose how they define a nation—whether as primarily a community of people who share the same citizenship or as a community of people who primarily belong to the same ethnicity, sharing a common religion, language, culture, and tradition.

The research findings, presented in Graph 1, indicate that an ethnic perception of the nation dominates among both Albanians and Serbs living in northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley. The percentage of respondents in northern Kosovo who chose this option is 76.2%, while in the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac, it is 92.8%. The option defining the nation as a community of people who share the same citizenship was chosen by one in five respondents (19.9%) in northern Kosovo, compared to 6.4% of respondents in Preševo and Bujanovac.

Table 1. Concept of nation among Serb respondents in northern Kosovo and Albanian respondents in Preševo and Bujanovac

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
Community sharing the same citizenship	19,9 %	6,4 %
Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)	76,2 %	92,8 %
Don't know / No opinion	3,9 %	0,8 %

These findings reflect the presence of mechanical solidarity among respondents, signifying an environment of pronounced ethnocollectivism in which Serbs in northern Kosovo and Albanians in the Preševo Valley live, on the periphery of ethnonational worlds centered in Belgrade, Pristina, and Tirana.

The fact that 92.8% of respondents from Preševo and Bujanovac perceive the nation ethnically does not provide a methodological basis for statistical analysis of results based on sociodemographic variables. Statistical analysis of sociodemographic data is justified only for the sample of respondents from northern Kosovo.

Considering the obtained results, according to the gender structure of respondents in northern Kosovo, we concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in terms of attitude¹ towards the concept of nation between women and men. In addition, if the obtained results are considered within the age structure of respondents from northern Kosovo, it can be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference² between generations.

1 Contingency coefficient (hereinafter CC) (0,587;0,105)
2 CC (0,278; 0,008)

Table 1.1. Attitude of respondents in northern Kosovo towards the concept of nation depending on the age of the respondents

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Community sharing the same citizenship	15,1%	16,2%	10,8%	45,7%	17,6%
Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)	80,2%	81,1%	86,5%	54,3%	82,4%
Don't know / No opinion	4,7%	2,7%	2,7%	0%	0%

By cross-referencing the findings on the education of respondents in northern Kosovo and their attitude towards the nation (Table 1. 2), we conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in responses about the concept of nation in relation to the education of research participants³.

Table 1.2. Respondents' perception of nation in northern Kosovo by education level

	Elementary School	Vocational Secondary School	General High School	Higher School –	University	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Studies
Community sharing the same citizenship	50,0%	18,5%		4,0%	12,9%	30,7%	21,4%	22,2%
Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)	50,0%	79,6%	100,0%	96,0%	80,6%	66,7%	71,4%	77,8%
Don't know / No opinion		1,9%			6,5%	2,7%	7,1%	

By comparing responses from northern Kosovo participants regarding the definition of the nation in accordance with their ethnic self-perception, it was found that there is a statistically significant difference⁴. Specifically, this means there are moderate but statistically significant differences in how the nation is perceived depending on the respondents' ethnic (self)identification.

³ CC (0,29; 0,114)

⁴ (p=0.026)

Table 1.3. Attitude of respondents in northern Kosovo towards the concept of nation depending on ethnic identification

	Albanian	Serb	Bosniac	Gorani	Montene- grin	Yugoslav	Undeclared
Community sharing the same citizenship		17,9%	26,1%	100,0%	100,0%		50,0%
Community belong- ing to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)	100,0%	79,2%	73,9%			50,0%	50,0%
Don't know / No opinion		2,8%				50,0%	

Comparison of findings by place of residence in the four municipalities in northern Kosovo revealed that there is no statistically significant difference regarding the dominant ethnonational perception of the nation⁵.

Table 1.4. Attitude of respondents in northern Kosovo towards the concept of nation depending on place of residence

	North Mi- trovica	Zvečan	Zubin potok	Leposavić
Community sharing the same citizenship	24,1%	11,1%	9,4%	19,4%
Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, lan- guage, culture, tradition)	73,0%	84,4%	87,5%	80,6%
Don't know / No opinion	2,9%	4,4%	3,1%	

Finally, an analysis of the statistical relationship between the definition of the nation and the employment sector of respondents from the four northern Kosovo municipalities was conducted. Research findings presented in Table 1. 5 indicate a weak statistical dependence or correlation between these two variables.⁶

5 CC (0,169; 0,28)

6 CC (0,48; 0,000)

Table 1.5. Attitude of respondents in northern Kosovo towards the concept of nation depending on the employment sector of the respondent

	Community sharing the same citizenship	Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)
Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Water Management		100,0%
Industry and Mining		100,0%
IT	12,5%	87,5%
Construction, Utility Services		100,0%
Craftsmanship	42,9%	57,1%
Transport and Communications	0%	0%
Trade, Hospitality, Tourism	25,0%	75,0%
Personal Services		100,0%
Finance		100,0%
Education, Culture, Healthcare, Social Protection	20,6%	76,5%
Police, Military, Security		100,0%
Government Bodies, Organizations, Political Parties etc.	26,9%	73,1%
Homemakers		100,0%
Unemployed	11,8%	88,2%
Retirees	23,1%	76,9%
Social Benefit Recipients		100,0%
Students		100,0%
Other	33,3%	58,7%
Worker		100,0%
No response	12,5%	87,5%

Social Identities

The next topic in our study examines the social identities of the respondents, focusing on how they prioritize their social identities and perceive themselves within the societies they inhabit.

Table 2 highlights that the two most prevalent identities — ethnicity and religious affiliation — are equally significant among Albanians from the Preševo Valley and Serbs living in northern Kosovo municipalities.

Interestingly, except for the ethnophyletistic identity that combines belonging to both one’s nation and religious community, no other identity scored less than 50%.

In addition to similar findings, survey also shows differences.

According to the data from Table 2 for respondents from northern Kosovo, the hierarchy of social identities is as follows: belonging to a state, region (northern Kosovo), profession, and city of residence.

In contrast to these findings, the findings from the sub-sample from the Preševo Valley, whose hierarchy of social identities, in addition to the ethnic and religious component as the dominant one, are: belonging to a profession/occupation, city, region (Preševo Valley) and finally the state.

Table 2. Attitude towards the significance of social identities depending on the place of residence of the respondents

	Northern Kosovo	Rank	Preševo Valley	Rank
Belonging to the state you live in		3	62,0	6
Belonging to a nation	77,9	1	84,3	2
Religious affiliation	77,9	1	89,9	1
Belonging to the region of residence	61,3	4	72,2	5
Belonging to the town of residence	55,8	6	76,7	4
Belonging to profession/occupation	56,4	5	77,2	3

The findings reveal the presence of “micro-worlds” in the two regions, each with its hierarchy of societal identities shaped by their respective social and political contexts. Both regions exhibit a foundation rooted in ethno-religious identity, which serves as a basis for all other identities.

This finding, along with the finding of pronounced ethnonationalism as a form of conceiving the nation, indicates a deep and long-lasting impact on relations between Serbs and Albanians, but above all an obstacle in the process of transition from a community to a society, or as sociologists would define it, from a community of mechanical solidarity to a society of organic solidarity.

The presented findings show that a larger part of the respondents at the ethno-regional level construct their ethno-spatial identity in opposition to the legal-political entity in which they exercise their rights and fulfill their obligations. Thus, those surveyed from northern Kosovo link their spatial identity to the state (Serbia), which they recognize as a legal-political entity, or rather the region and town in which they actually live. Professional identity is suppressed in this hierarchy in relation to other social identities.

On the other hand, respondents from the Preševo Valley have chosen profession/occupation as their most important identity, followed by city, region, and finally the state in which they live.

The findings from Table 2 show that, on the one hand, we have a finding that respondents from northern Kosovo have their own reality, which is linked to the state of Serbia as a (symbolic), or rather legal-political space, which in real life is transferred to the region and city as social spaces in which a kind of (self)isolation takes place. Almost the same process of (self) isolation was found through the research at the level of Bujanovac and Preševo, where respondents, with their answers, showed that their least identification is with the state (Serbia) in which they live, or rather that the identification with the profession, but also with the city and region as legal-political and symbolic enclaves, is significantly greater.

Table 2.1 shows age analyses of responses depending on the place of residence

Table 2.1. Attitude towards the importance of identity depending on the place of residence of the respondents

	Pripadnost		18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Northern Kosovo	Country you live in	Important	50,00%	32,40%	32,40%	28,60%	47,10%
		Very Important	31,40%	45,90%	43,20%	62,90%	47,10%
			81,40%	78,30%	75,60%	91,50%	94,20%
Preševo Valley	Country you live in	Important	21,40%	1,90%	19,00%	11,80%	22,20%
		Very Important	45,50%	49,10%	40,50%	50,00%	55,60%
			66,90%	51,00%	59,50%	61,80%	77,80%
Northern Kosovo	Nation you belong to	Important	33,70%	17,60%	21,60%	34,30%	29,40%
		Very Important	47,70%	59,50%	51,40%	60,00%	70,60%
			81,40%	77,10%	73,00%	94,30%	100,00%
Preševo Valley	Nation you belong to	Important	19,60%	13,20%	26,80%	17,60%	11,10%
		Very Important	63,40%	67,90%	65,90%	67,60%	66,70%
			83,00%	81,10%	92,70%	85,20%	77,80%
Northern Kosovo	Religion	Important	45,30%	29,70%	32,40%	65,70%	35,30%
		Very Important	34,90%	45,90%	43,20%	25,70%	64,70%
			80,20%	75,60%	75,60%	91,40%	100,00%
Preševo Valley	Religion	Important	13,40%	5,80%	4,90%	20,60%	0,00%
		Very Important	73,20%	86,50%	92,70%	67,60%	88,90%
			86,60%	92,30%	97,60%	88,20%	88,90%
Northern Kosovo	Region	Important	44,20%	29,70%	27,00%	28,60%	41,20%
		Very Important	27,90%	31,10%	37,80%	14,30%	47,10%
			72,10%	60,80%	64,80%	42,90%	88,30%
Preševo Valley	Region	Important	30,40%	9,60%	34,10%	20,60%	22,20%
		Very Important	44,60%	46,20%	48,80%	52,90%	55,60%
			75,00%	55,80%	82,90%	73,50%	77,80%
Northern Kosovo	Town	Important	29,10%	24,30%	10,80%	11,40%	47,10%
		Very Important	31,40%	29,70%	40,50%	20,00%	41,20%
			60,50%	54,00%	51,30%	31,40%	88,30%
Preševo Valley	Town	Important	32,10%	20,80%	31,70%	23,50%	22,20%
		Very Important	47,30%	47,20%	51,20%	47,10%	66,70%
			79,40%	68,00%	82,90%	70,60%	88,90%
Northern Kosovo	Profession	Important	23,30%	20,30%	29,70%	25,70%	35,30%
		Very Important	32,60%	24,30%	29,70%	11,40%	47,10%
			55,90%	44,60%	59,40%	37,10%	82,40%
Preševo Valley	Profession	Important	36,00%	13,20%	30,00%	15,20%	0,00%
		Very Important	40,50%	66,00%	52,50%	54,50%	77,80%
			76,50%	79,20%	82,50%	69,70%	77,80%

Attitudes Toward Offensive Militarism

To investigate the militant component of Serbian-Albanian relations in border areas, the survey included a Militarism Scale. This was designed to measure the potential for (military) conflict by assessing respondents' willingness to support war as a means to rectify historical injustices done to the state and nation they belong to or as a method of uniting the majority of their nation into one state.

Table 3 reveals differences between Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley. Slightly more than one-fifth of respondents from the Preševo Valley are willing to support offensive militarism compared to respondents from Northern Kosovo in order to rectify injustices committed against the state in which they reside, as well as to address historical injustices against their own ethnic group. This support aims at uniting the majority of their ethnic group into a single state.

Table 3. Attitudes toward offensive militarism

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley	+/-
If it is a way to rectify historical injustices done to your state	38,1	61,2	-23,1
If it is a way to rectify historical injustices done to your nation	37,0	57,6	-20,6
If it is a way to unite the majority of your nation into one state	35,9	58,8	-22,9

The segmentation of results based on sociodemographic data indicates that, for respondents living in Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley, there are no statistically significant differences in attitudes towards offensive militarism as a means of territorial revisionism. However, exceptions are observed among respondents from Northern Kosovo who have completed secondary vocational education, grammar school, or hold a master's degree. Additionally, differences are noted among respondents who reside in the four northern Kosovo municipalities and are employed in sectors such as industry and mining, construction, personal services, government institutions, and political parties.

Table 3.1. Attitudes toward offensive militarism depending on respondents' sociodemographic characteristics

		If it is a way to rectify historical injustices done to your state	If it is a way to rectify historical injustices done to your nation	If it is a way to unite the majority of your nation into one state
Preševo Valley				
Gender	Kruskal-Wallis	0,000	0,473	2,355
	Degree of Freedom	1	1	1
	Significance	0,998	0,492	0,125
Age	Kruskal-Wallis	3,413	5,508	7,943
	Degree of Freedom	4	4	4
	Significance	0,491	0,239	0,094
Education	Kruskal-Wallis	1,452	6,497	2,133
	Degree of Freedom	5	5	5
	Significance	0,919	0,261	0,830
Employment Sector	Kruskal-Wallis	27,836	23,255	24,545
	Degree of Freedom	24	24	24
	Significance	0,267	0,505	0,431
Northern Kosovo				
Gender	Kruskal-Wallis	0,428	0,730	0,475
	Degree of Freedom	1	1	1
	Significance	0,513	0,393	0,491
Age	Kruskal-Wallis	4,255	2,808	3,605
	Degree of Freedom	4	4	4
	Significance	0,373	0,590	0,462
Education	Kruskal-Wallis	12,278	9,011	14,615
	Degree of Freedom	7	7	7
	Significance	0,092	0,252	0,041
Employment Sector	Kruskal-Wallis	41,193	34,540	51,719
	Degree of Freedom	19	19	19
	Significance	0,002	0,016	0,000

The findings indicate that there is a majority consensus in northern Kosovo rejecting offensive militarism. However, there is a segment of citizens who consider offensive militarism justified. On the other hand, a larger proportion of respondents from the Preševo Valley supports offensive militarism

Mutual feelings between Serbs and Albanians

The next step in our research on inter-ethnic relations between Albanians and Serbs was to explore the emotions that each group holds towards the other. It is important to remember that emotions are part of attitudes, and as such, they influence the formation, reproduction, and change of attitudes. In other words, emotions are part of the attitude structure of both individuals and the social groups to which they belong, and the nation is certainly one of those social groups.

Therefore, in the questionnaire, we included a question that measured the attitudes of respondents towards the concepts of: Serbia, Kosovo, Albanians, and Serbs. Our goal was to determine the emotional side of the attitudes of Serbs and Albanians living in northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley.

It was not difficult to predict, as shown by the data in Table 4, that there would be clear divisions when it comes to positive (respect, admiration, love) and negative (hatred, contempt, fear) emotions of respondents, in such a way that the majority of respondents living in the Preševo Valley have positive emotions towards Albanians and Kosovo and negative emotions towards Serbia and Serbs. Conversely, the majority of respondents living in northern Kosovo have positive emotions towards Serbia and Serbs, and negative emotions towards Kosovo and Albanians.

Table 4. Emotional reactions toward the concepts of Serbia, Kosovo, Albanians, and Serbs by place of residence

Place of Residence	What do you feel toward ?	Hatred	Fear	Con-tempt	Respect	Admira-tion	Love	Indif-ference	No opinion
Northern Kosovo	Kosovo	13,3	17,7	16,0	1,1	2,8	21,0	16,0	23,2
Preševo and Bujanovac		2,4	3,2	2,8	45,6	31,2	65,6	6,4	4,8
Northern Kosovo	Serbia	0,0	0,0	1,7	26,5	9,4	30,4	17,1	18,2
Preševo and Bujanovac		45,6	44,8	35,2	17,2	3,2	1,2	18,4	7,6
Northern Kosovo	Albanians	6,6	17,1	14,9	4,4	1,1	6,1	39,8	16,6
Preševo and Bujanovac		2,0	2,4	6,9	36,7	52,4	56,0	4,4	3,2
Northern Kosovo	Serbs	0,6	0,0	1,1	17,7	3,9	41,4	13,8	24,9
Preševo and Bujanovac			26,1	21,6	15,8	2,9	1,7	7,9	22,8

In addition to the emotional component, attitudes also have a conative (interest/motivational) and cognitive component, i.e., the citizens' access to information about the subject of the attitude.

The findings presented in Table 5 indicate varying levels of information about Albanians and Serbs. There are notable exceptions, such as respondents from northern Kosovo who are very poorly informed about events in the Preševo Valley (14.9%), and only slightly more than one-quarter of respondents (27.2%) from the Preševo Valley are informed about the situation in Serbia.

Table 5. Frequency of information-seeking (moderate and high) based on respondents' place of residence

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
How much do you inform yourself about Serbia?	82,3	27,2
How do you inform yourself about Kosovo?	80,1	67,6
How do you inform yourself about Northern Kosovo?	87,8	56,8
How do you inform yourself about Bujanovac and Preševo?	14,9	75,2
How do you inform yourself about the situation of your people?	80,1	60,4
How do you inform yourself about the circumstances of people who live next to you?	74,0	46,8

In addition to measuring the volume of information consumption (quantitative component), the research also assessed the topics respondents follow regarding Albanian-Serbian relations (qualitative component).

Respondents from Northern Kosovo reported that they most frequently seek information about politics and the political situation (14.2%). Following this, 13.9% of respondents focus on the actions of Kosovo institutions, particularly the conduct of the Kosovo Police towards Serbs, which some respondents described as terror—imposing fear on the Serbian community.

Multicultural cooperation is a topic of interest for 7.4% of the survey participants, the same percentage (7.4%) as those interested in events in Northern Kosovo. Only one in twenty respondents (5.4%) expressed interest in the Serbia-Kosovo negotiation and dialogue process. One in five respondents answered with "I don't know – no answer."

In contrast to the Northern Kosovo sub-sample, respondents from the Preševo Valley primarily seek information on politics (38.8%), followed by the economy (18.8%) and societal conditions (12.4%). More than a quarter of respondents (27.2%) stated that they stay informed on all topics.

Findings from Table 6 indicate that research participants, whether from Northern Kosovo or the Preševo Valley, have a social contact network that spans Serbia and Kosovo, including Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley. Naturally, the intensity of social networking varies among participants.

Within these networks, familial and friendship ties are the most common, although business connections are also present.

Table 6.1. Social networking

Do you have?	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
Relatives living in Serbia	91,7	81,2
Friends living in Serbia	94,5	78,4
Business partners/colleagues in Serbia	76,2	56,0
Relatives living in Kosovo	84,0	75,6
Friends living in Kosovo	84,0	81,6
Business partners/colleagues in Kosovo	73,5	57,2
Relatives living in Northern Kosovo	87,3	51,6
Friends living in Northern Kosovo	94,5	57,6
Business partners/colleagues in northern Kosovo	87,3	42,4
Relatives living in Bujanovac or Preševo	5,0	86,0
Friends living in Bujanovac or Preševo	18,2	79,6
Business partners/colleagues in Bujanovac or Preševo	9,4	67,2

Thus, almost every tenth respondent (9.4%) living in Northern Kosovo has a business partner in Bujanovac or Preševo, while nearly half of the respondents living in Bujanovac and Preševo have business contacts with people living in Northern Kosovo.

As part of the study, respondents were asked about the reasons for their visits to Serbia or Kosovo. The results indicate that personal reasons are the dominant motive for visits from respondents in Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley to Serbia or Kosovo. Friendship is the second most common reason, followed by professional and business-related motives. It is worth noting that every fifth respondent from Bujanovac and Preševo has never visited other parts of Serbia.

Table 6.2. Spatial-Social Mobility

Place of Residence	Reason for Visit	Personal	Friendship	Business Professional	Have Not Been
Northern Kosovo	To Serbia	70,7	19,9	2,2	7,2
Preševo Valley	To Serbia	56,4	14,4	8,4	20,8
Northern Kosovo	To Kosovo	60,2	16,6	12,7	10,5
Preševo Valley	To Kosovo	19,6	58,8	15,6	6,0

We now move to the analysis of results related to respondents' attitudes toward the institutional framework, specifically those institutions responsible for representing the interests of citizens at the level of parliamentary bodies and executive authorities in the area of minority rights.

Regarding respondents living in Northern Kosovo, the majority do not hold a specific opinion about the MPs representing the Albanian community in the Serbian Parliament, while one in four (24.3%) has a negative view of their performance. It is notable that 16% of respondents neither have a positive nor negative opinion regarding the work of MPs representing the Albanian community in the Serbian Parliament.

Nearly half of the respondents (46.4%) from Northern Kosovo hold a negative opinion of the representation in the Kosovo Assembly by MPs from the Serbian national community. Almost one-third (29.8%) of respondents from Northern Kosovo negatively rate the performance of relevant ministries in the Serbian Government responsible for minority rights. Dissatisfaction is higher regarding ministries in the Kosovo Government tasked with minority rights, as 55.8% of respondents gave a negative assessment of their work.

Survey participants also demonstrated significant dissatisfaction (more than 50%) with the Brussels and Ohrid Agreements.

Table 7. Attitudes toward the institutional framework among respondents living in Northern Kosovo

Are you familiar, and how do you assess them?	Not Familiar	Familiar and Assess Positively	Familiar and Assess Neither Positively Nor Negatively	Familiar and Assess Negatively	Familiar but Cannot Assess
MPs representing the Albanian community in the Serbian Parliament	28,7	9,4	16,0	24,3	21,5
MPs representing the Serbian community in the Kosovo Assembly	9,4	1,7	13,3	46,4	29,3
Ministers in the Serbian Government responsible for minority rights	19,9	2,8	19,3	29,8	28,2
Ministers in the Kosovo Government responsible for minority rights	7,2	2,2	16,6	55,8	18,2
Brussels Agreements	10,5	1,7	16,6	54,1	17,1
Ohrid Agreement	11,6	1,7	15,5	54,1	17,1

Perceptions of Institutional Mechanisms by Respondents from the Preševo Valley

The majority of respondents from the Preševo Valley, four out of ten, positively assess the actions of the members of parliament representing the Albanian national community in the National Assembly of Serbia. When it comes to the performance of Serbian representatives in the Kosovo Assembly, more than a quarter of respondents (28.8%) were unable to express or provide an opinion, while 31.2% rated their performance as neither positive nor negative.

Regarding the work of the relevant ministries within the Government of Serbia that deal with the rights of national communities, nearly a third of respondents (29.6%) expressed a neutral stance, neither positive nor negative, while 27.2% had no opinion on the matter. On the other hand, one-third of the respondents (33.6%) positively evaluate the work of ministries in the Government of Kosovo that handle minority rights.

When it comes to the Brussels and Ohrid agreements, only one in ten respondents, on average, views these agreements positively, while one in five respondents holds a negative opinion.

Table 8. Attitudes toward the institutional framework among respondents living in the Preševo Valley

Are you familiar with and how do you assess?	Not familiar	Familiar and evaluate positively	Familiar and evaluate neither positively nor negatively	Familiar and evaluate negatively	Familiar but cannot assess
MPs representing the Albanian community in the Serbian Parliament	4,8	40,8	18,4	9,6	26,4
MPs representing the Serbian community in the Kosovo Parliament	4,4	17,2	31,2	18,4	28,8
Ministers in the Serbian Government responsible for minority rights	5,6	16,0	29,6	21,6	27,2
Ministers in the Kosovo Government responsible for minority rights	4,8	33,6	23,6	8,8	29,2
Brussels Agreements	6,4	11,2	28,0	21,2	33,2
Ohrid Agreement	8,4	10,8	22,4	23,6	34,8

None of the analyzed components of the satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) balance, created specifically for this study, exceeded 50% satisfaction. This indicates a prevailing sense of dissatisfaction among citizens of Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley.

Respondents from Northern Kosovo expressed the highest level of satisfaction with opportunities for education in their native language (48.6%), followed by their material standard of living (36.5%), and overall educational opportunities. In contrast, respondents from the Preševo Valley reported the highest satisfaction with their ability to practice religious rights (43.2%), followed by their material living conditions (34%), and opportunities for education in their native language (31.2%).

Table 9. (Dis)satisfaction Balance

To what extent are you satisfied within your town of residence?	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
Living standards of your family	36,5	34,0
Healthcare system	23,8	26,4
General educational opportunities	25,4	19,6
Education opportunities in your mother tongue	48,6	31,2
Exercise of rights within the judicial system	6,1	22,8
Preservation of your mother tongue	22,1	27,6
Preservation of cultural heritage	23,8	27,2
Opportunities to exercise your religious rights	23,8	43,2

A specific question was posed to assess interethnic relations between Albanians and Serbs in Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley.

Respondents from Northern Kosovo overwhelmingly provided a negative assessment of Albanian-Serb relations. In North Mitrovica and Zvečan, none of the respondents stated that relations between the two communities are good. In Zubin Potok and Leposavić, only 0.6% of respondents shared a positive view.

In contrast, respondents from the Preševo Valley displayed a significantly more positive perception of interethnic relations. More than half of the respondents (57.2%) in Bujanovac believe that Albanian-Serb relations are good, while in Preševo, this percentage stands at 44%.

Participants from both regions were also asked about their views on the future of Albanian-Serb relations. Among respondents from Northern Kosovo, 72.9% believe that the future of these relations in the region involves conflicts of varying intensity. In the Preševo Valley, a third of respondents (33.6%) share this view regarding the future of relations in Northern Kosovo, while an equal percentage (33.6%) could not provide an assessment.

On the other hand, more than half of respondents (54.1%) from Northern Kosovo could not assess the future of interethnic relations in the Preševo Valley. Meanwhile, 40.8% of respondents from the Preševo Valley believe that Albanians and Serbs in the region will continue to live side by side without conflict.

Table 10. Respondents' predictions about the future of Serb-Albanian relations

Respondents' place of residence	When it comes to Serb-Albanian relations, what is your assessment of their future direction?	Toward new conflicts of varying intensity	Toward living alongside each other without conflict	Toward cooperation and tolerance	Unable to assess
Northern Kosovo	Northern Kosovo	72,9	7,7	7,2	12,2
Preševo Valley	Northern Kosovo	33,6	26,0	6,8	33,6
Northern Kosovo	Bujanovac and Preševo	26,0	11,6	8,3	54,1
Preševo Valley	Bujanovac and Preševo	15,6	40,8	21,6	22,0

Problems and Solutions

Respondents were asked to identify the major issues burdening Serb-Albanian relations.

For respondents from Northern Kosovo, the primary issues are: politics (15.5%), takeover of Northern Kosovo, land seizure, and police repression (15.5%), actions by the Kosovo Government (9.4%) and Albin Kurti (6.6%). On the other hand, for respondents from the Preševo Valley, the main issues are: social problems (22.8%), legacy of war (10.4%), language (10.4%) and discrimination against Albanians (10%).

At the end of the survey, respondents shared their views on who contributes to problems and who could contribute to solutions in Serb-Albanian relations.

Respondents from Northern Kosovo see the main contributors to problems as: Kosovo Government (81.8%), the West (80.7%) and Ohrid Agreement (63%).

Respondents from the Preševo Valley identify the following as contributors to problems: Government of Serbia (46%), Members of Parliament representing the Serbian community in the Kosovo Assembly (45.6%) and Russia (41.2%).

Table 11. Sources of Problems in Serb-Albanian Relations

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
The West	80,7	24,8
Russia	29,8	41,2
Government of Serbia	30,9	46,0
Government of Kosovo	81,8	30,0
MPs representing the Albanian community in Serbia's Parliament	44,8	33,6
MPs representing the Serbian community in Kosovo's Parliament	37,6	45,6
Ministers in Serbian Government responsible for minority rights	19,9	38,8
Ministers in Kosovo Government responsible for minority rights	53,6	29,2
Municipality of North Mitrovica	57,5	32,0
Municipality of Zubin potok	55,8	31,2
Municipality of Leposavić	55,8	30,0
Municipality of Zvečan	55,8	28,4
Municipality of Bujanovac	20,4	32,8
Municipality of Preševo	18,8	39,2
Municipality of Medveđa	10,5	38,4
Albanian National Council in Serbia	28,2	32,4
Serbian Chamber of Commerce	11,0	38,8
Kosovo Chamber of Commerce	40,3	34,4
Brussels Agreement	54,7	22,0
Ohrid Agreement	63,0	16,8
Media	54,7	26,8
Members of the Serbian community	9,4	27,6
Members of the Albanian community	44,8	16,0
No opinion	9,9	9,2

According to respondents from Northern Kosovo, the actors most actively improving Serb-Albanian relations are: members of the Serbian people (49.2%), Serbian Government (43.1%) and Serbian Chamber of Commerce (38.1%).

According to respondents from the Preševo Valley, the most significant contributors to improving relations are: the Government of Kosovo (53.2%), The Albanian National Council in Serbia (48.4%) and MPs representing the Albanian community in Serbia's Parliament (46%).

It is noteworthy that both groups of respondents view the chambers of commerce of Serbia and Kosovo as key contributors to fostering better relations between Serbs and Albanians.

Table 12. Who of the below mentioned is trying to improve relations between Serbs and Albanians

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
The West	1,1	33,2
Russia	21,5	37,2
Government of Serbia	43,1	34,8
Government of Kosovo	1,7	53,2
MPs representing the Albanian community in Serbia's Parliament	7,2	46,0
MPs representing the Serbian community in Kosovo's Parliament	13,3	33,6
Ministers in Serbian Government responsible for minority rights	24,3	35,6
Ministers in Kosovo Government responsible for minority rights	2,2	45,6
Municipality of North Mitrovica	8,8	31,2
Municipality of Zubin potok	8,8	24,8
Municipality of Leposavić	8,8	22,0
Municipality of Zvečan	8,8	26,8
Municipality of Bujanovac	8,8	51,2
Municipality of Preševo	8,8	45,2
Municipality of Medveđa	20,4	43,2
Albanian National Council in Serbia	13,3	48,4
Serbian Chamber of Commerce	38,1	33,6
Kosovo Chamber of Commerce	13,8	34,8
Brussels Agreement	9,4	31,2
Ohrid Agreement	4,4	34,8
Media	8,3	25,6
Members of the Serbian community	49,2	24,4
Members of the Albanian community	13,8	34,0
No opinion	35,4	13,2

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Methodological Framework

Two focus groups were conducted in Bujanovac with representatives of the local community. The selection process was marked by a low willingness to participate in the discussions. During the sessions, participants exhibited a certain level of restraint. Responses were provided in written form, in the language of participants' choice, predominantly Albanian. Each focus group lasted 60 minutes.

Focus Group Report – Preševo Valley

Thematic Framework:

The focus groups explored three topics: history, present and future of interethnic relations between the Serbs and Albanians

- Perspectives on the History of Serb-Albanian Relations

According to the focus group participants, the history of Serb-Albanian relations can be divided into two main periods.

The first period - marked by coexistence i.e., cooperation during the fight against Ottoman rule. The second period - the post-independence period when Serbia aimed to reclaim Kosovo. Then comes a period of territorial struggle and hatred, or rather, conflict between Serbs and Albanians. A conflict arises over who is the indigenous people and who is the newcomer to Kosovo, i.e., whose territory Kosovo is. Throughout history, both nations play the roles of victim and hero, who conquers the other side.

According to focus group participants, excluding northern Montenegro, Serbs and Albanians did not have significant interactions throughout history.

Key events shaping the contemporary relations between Serbs and Albanians, as identified by participants, include:

- The 1974 Constitution granting Kosovo the status of a province within SFRY,
- The 1981 Kosovo protests,

- The revocation of Kosovo's autonomy,
- The Kosovo War and NATO intervention
- The declaration of Kosovo's independence

- *Perspectives on the Current State of Serb-Albanian Relations*

The current state of Serbian-Albanian relations is a product of the past, which has significantly influenced the construction of each group's image of the other. Participants noted that Serbian-Albanian relations exist on two levels.

The first is the personal level, characterized by individual-to-individual interactions such as friendships or business relationships. These personal connections often remain private and are not publicly promoted.

The second level is the collective level, shaped by historical narratives and stereotypes that foster mutual distrust. Collective perceptions tend to overshadow personal relationships, reinforcing positive self-images and negative views of the "other".

Albanians who participated in the focus groups perceive themselves as hardworking, moral individuals who keep their word, as reflected in their tradition of giving a "besa" (a solemn promise). They describe themselves as humane, tolerant (highlighting the coexistence of three religious denominations), and educated, particularly among the younger population.

Regarding the issues affecting Albanian-Serb relations, focus group participants emphasized a general lack of understanding between the two communities. They noted that while Serbs and Albanians live side by side, they do not truly know each other. This lack of familiarity is attributed to both the media and the educational system. Additionally, Albanians highlighted specific problems, including inadequate educational materials and the issue of individuals being removed from public citizenship registers in the municipalities of Medveđa, Preševo, and Bujanovac.

Some participants expressed awareness that unless the issue of relations between Kosovo and Serbia is resolved, progress in the status of Albanians in the Preševo Valley cannot be expected. They described the Preševo Valley as effectively neglected by Serbia, as if it is being prepared for a "swap" with northern Kosovo.

- *Perspective on the Future of Serb-Albanian Relations*

Regarding the future of Serbian-Albanian relations, several perspectives emerged among respondents. One viewpoint suggests that a territorial demarcation between Serbia and Kosovo should be established, after which both entities could become members of the European Union. This approach is seen as a way to create favorable conditions for various forms of cooperation between Serbs and Albanians living in Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania.

Another group of respondents believes that the improvement of Serbian-Albanian relations must be based on acknowledging the existing realities and focusing on building trust between the two communities. This perspective emphasizes the importance of reducing discrimination, fostering economic cooperation—citing the Serbian and Kosovo Chambers of

Commerce as examples—and enhancing cultural collaboration, particularly among youth. The key stakeholders identified as capable of driving progress in peace and stability are the governments of Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania.

Focus Groups in Northern Kosovo

Three focus groups were organized in Northern Kosovo with the aim of gathering insights into interethnic relations and the challenges faced by the Serbian, Bosniak, and other ethnic communities in the region. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes and involved a total of 26 participants. The participants included community leaders, representatives of civil society organizations, journalists, students, entrepreneurs, and local government officials.

The discussions focused on the historical and current status of interethnic relations, personal experiences, stereotypes, and concrete recommendations for improving communication and trust among communities.

Topics and Key Findings:

1. Historical and current relations between Serbs and Albanians

- Participants highlighted a historical pattern of tense relations between Serbs and Albanians, which has worsened due to recent political developments. Many pointed to the establishment of the current government, led by Albin Kurti, as a turning point that has exacerbated tensions in Northern Kosovo.
- Family histories and past experiences continue to shape perceptions, with recent events further entrenching negative sentiments and distrust towards the Albanian community.

2. Distrust in Government and Institutions

- Distrust towards the Kosovo government was a recurring theme, particularly among Serbian and Bosniak community members. This distrust has been amplified by what participants described as targeted policies and actions in Northern Kosovo. Key issues include:
 - **Land expropriation in Zubin Potok and Leposavić**, which has reinforced perceptions that the government is threatening the livelihoods of local Serbs, fostering feelings of injustice and marginalization.
 - **Kosovo police conduct and detention conditions**: Many participants voiced serious concerns about police behavior, particularly regarding the arrests of Kosovo Serbs and the conditions in which they are held. Reports of detainee mistreatment, and in some cases, physical abuse, have heightened fears and eroded trust in law enforcement.

- **Police Inspectorate and international oversight:** Trust in the Kosovo Police Inspectorate and the international community has significantly declined, as participants believe these bodies have failed to respond adequately to reports of misconduct and abuses by the Kosovo police.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Reports of harassment, particularly sexual harassment of women by Albanian nationalists, present a significant problem that affects daily life and further deepens distrust.
- **Economic obstacles:** Measures such as the ban on Serbian goods, restrictions on the use of the Serbian dinar, closure of Serbian post offices, and the shut-down of Poštanska Štedionica bank are seen as deliberate attempts to economically isolate Northern Kosovo and disrupt daily life.

3. Impact of recent policy changes on local communities

- Participants expressed concerns over the closure of municipal offices operating under the Serbian system and the perceived expansion of predominantly Albanian institutions in Northern Kosovo. These changes are seen as efforts to diminish Serbia's presence in Kosovo and exert economic influence in the region.
- The establishment of new Albanian businesses, such as Misini and Hebs, was perceived by some participants as potential provocations aimed at the local Serbian and Bosniak communities.
- Concerns were raised about the opening of new Albanian enterprises intended to marginalize Serbian entrepreneurs, making it more challenging for Serbian and Bosniak businesses to sustain operations.

4. Stereotypes and perceptions

- Deep-rooted stereotypes continue to hinder interethnic relations. Participants acknowledged that these stereotypes stem from historical narratives (related to the Kosovo conflict) and recent negative interactions, maintaining an "us versus them" mentality.
- Many noted that political figures, media, and everyday conversations often reinforce these stereotypes and tensions.

5. Experiences and perceptions in everyday life

- Everyday interactions with the Albanian community have recently become more tense, with limited positive experiences that could help alleviate negative prejudices.
- The lack of constructive or peaceful interactions perpetuates a cycle of mutual distrust and segregation.
- Participants emphasized the need for reliable community-oriented information sources to counter misinformation and provide a more balanced narrative.

6. Suggestions for improving communication and information sharing

- Participants highlighted the need for safe, neutral platforms for interethnic dialogue to foster understanding and build trust. Suggested initiatives include:
Non-political community meetings
Social media campaigns aimed at breaking harmful stereotypes
Joint activities addressing shared interests across communities
- Increased governmental accountability and stronger international involvement were frequently cited, with calls for more oversight and interventions to address concerns in a balanced manner through dialogue.

Preliminary Observations:

- **Stereotypes and distrust** remain significant challenges, with participants emphasizing the need for initiatives that encourage dialogue and mutual understanding.
- **Historical narratives and recent events** strongly influence community attitudes, with participants pointing to long-standing issues and recent incidents as reinforcing factors.
- **Institutional distrust** is prevalent, particularly concerning the actions of the Kosovo police, the effectiveness of the Police Inspectorate, and the perceived inaction of the international community. Many participants expressed frustration over the lack of thorough investigations and resolutions to reported abuses and targeted actions.

ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE

As part of its ten-year media monitoring, BIRODI focused on the media coverage of Kosovo in the Serbian media, particularly on politicians and the Brussels Agreement. The analyses revealed some interesting facts. One of them is that, the Kosovar side was portrayed in an extremely negative light in the Serbian media during this period, with a narrative of separatism, terrorism, and criminal activities. With the start of the negotiations in Brussels, media coverage in Serbia became more neutral, except when it came to politicians who were against the Agreement.

At the same time, the media in northern Kosovo, reported on the improved Serbian-Albanian relations, and it seemed that things were moving forward. Citizens felt a sense of relief because there was no “their side” or “our side” in the story.

With the aim of improving the media situation, and communication between the communities, the media analysis focused on the existing perceptions of the non-majority communities. For issues dominated by high-level politics and the presentation of statements by officials, citizens from both majority and minority communities were left out.

The results of the media analysis will contribute to a better understanding of the existing attitudes of citizens, as media coverage and information are of great importance for how citizens perceive the society they live in and understand the existing socio-political processes.

The media monitoring was conducted by tracking the work and public information of the public media services RTS and RTK live.

The monitoring of media reporting covered the following:

- **Actors** – individuals or entities that commented on the selected topics
- **Topics** – Kosovo, Serb-Albanian relations, the Brussels Agreements, national identities of Serbs and Albanians, North Kosovo, the Preševo Valley (Bujanovac, Preševo, Medveđa)
- **Narrative** – the way in which the reported topics or actors are presented
- **Argumentation** – the arguments used by journalists or the actors portrayed
- **Epithets** – epithets used as illustrations and arguments for the views presented
- **Sources** – the sources of the information quoted in the news (statements by citizens, officials, institutional announcements, etc.)

Media Monitoring of Dnevnik 2 (RTS1)

The analysis of the media coverage of media from Serbia included coverage in the central news program, Dnevnik 2, which is broadcast every day at 7:30 p.m. Dnevnik 2, as a central news program, provides a daily overview of the most important events at the national and international level in the period September and October 2024.

Events And Thematic Areas

In the context of the analysis covering Serbian-Albanian relations, as well as issues of mutual cooperation, coexistence, and the improvement of relations, the following events have been highlighted:

- Protests of Albanians in Southern Serbia
- The position of the Albanian minority
- Local politics in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo and their relationship with the executive power at the central level
- Foreign policy – meetings of officials of the Republic of Serbia, as well as political representatives of Albanians from Southern Serbia with representatives of other countries
- Closure of Serbian institutions in Kosovo
- Blockades of Serbian institutions in Northern Kosovo – The blockades of institutions that began on August 30, 2024, received the most coverage in the reporting on RTS's Dnevnik 2 news program. This topic was continuously and thoroughly reported on throughout September 2024.

Protests Of Albanians In Southern Serbia

Protests by Albanians from Southern Serbia were not reported on Dnevnik 2 on RTS1 in the observed period.

Status Of The Albanian National Minority

In the Dnevnik 2 of Radio Television of Serbia, during September and October 2024, there was no reporting on issues concerning the position of the Albanian national minority.

As a starting hypothesis, the research team, after discussions with the coordinator of survey research and focus groups, set up a list that includes several problems/events, which are cited as factors that contribute to the unfavorable position of the Albanian national minority. One of the anticipated problems is the passive residence status, a process recognized as problematic due to the significant number of cases of passive residence status among members of the Albanian minority in the municipalities of Bujanovac, Preševo, and Medveđa. Another issue that is often highlighted concerns the announced return of mandatory military service, which "causes great fear and will prompt young Albanians to leave the country." The lack of textbooks in the Albanian language is also cited as a problem contributing to the emigration

of young people from the country. The non-recognition of Kosovo's (higher education) diplomas is an integral part of the arguments made by political representatives of the Albanian community when discussing the unfavorable position of Albanians, especially the youth, and which is one of the factors influencing their decision to emigrate from Serbia.

The monitoring established that none of the mentioned problems were present in Dnevnik 2.

Local Politics In The Municipalities Of Bujanovac And Preševo And Relations With The Central Executive Government

Local politics in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo during the analyzed period was not the subject of reporting in Dnevnik 2 on the First Program of RTS.

Foreign Policy – Meetings Of Serbian Officials And Albanian Political Representatives From Southern Serbia With Representatives Of Other Countries

The dominant narrative in the statements conveyed by the media when reporting on these events is gratitude for support and cooperation. In the case of RTS reporting in Dnevnik 2, in which statements of gratitude from high-ranking officials of the Republic of Serbia to ambassadors or representatives of other countries are conveyed.

In the Dnevnik 2, high-ranking officials of Serbia express gratitude to their foreign colleagues most often for 'respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia,' as well as for participating in KFOR forces during a period that is extremely difficult for the Serbian people in Northern Kosovo (examples include meetings of Marko Djurić with the Finnish Ambassador in Serbia, Aleksandar Vulin with Sergey Shoigu and the Chinese Foreign Minister at the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Aleksandar Vučić at numerous meetings during the sessions at the United Nations Summit, and Marko Djurić's address at the UN Security Council meeting where the Report on Kosovo was discussed).

Epithets and phrases conveyed from officials' statements include "great gratitude," "contribution to improvement and development," "support," and "preservation of national identity."

For Serbian politicians, emphasizing international support is crucial, especially during what they describe as an "exceptionally difficult period for the Serbian people," and in efforts to improve the currently "extremely difficult situation" of the Serbian people".

Closure Of Serbian Institutions In Kosovo

The closure of Serbian institutions in northern Kosovo was the most covered topic in RTS Dnevnik 2 compared to other analyzed topics.

Most of the primetime news broadcasts on RTS1 reported on these events and their consequences for the lives of Serbs. A significant number of newscasts included information about the closure of municipal offices, pension fund branches, social work centers, and highlighted the fact that employees cannot go to work and that citizens cannot exercise their rights or obtain necessary documents.

The narrative in reporting on these events focuses on two elements: the threat to the Serbian population in Northern Kosovo due to the denial of rights and the inappropriate behavior of Kosovo institutions. The insistence on the violation of the rights of Serbs dominated both in journalistic addresses and in statements by citizens and officials from Serbia.

Reporting on this topic was comprehensive and included a wide range of actors. In segments addressing the closure of Serbian institutions, the audience had the opportunity to hear the perspectives of citizens from Northern Kosovo, who were primarily affected by these decisions, as well as representatives of the Serbian government in Belgrade (the President of Serbia, representatives of local authorities from the four municipalities in Northern Kosovo, representatives of closed institutions, associations of citizens, and analysts). Official statements from Kosovo authorities and police were also conveyed. Significant airtime was given to Aleksandar Vučić, who in numerous statements condemned the actions of the Pristina authorities, and to Petar Petković, the Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, and Marko Đurić, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Through conversations with representatives of other countries, they highlighted the negative consequences of these actions for citizens, the intentions of the Pristina authorities to discriminate against Serbs and make the situation more difficult for them.

In news broadcasts, citizens had the opportunity to present their perspective on the situation and to highlight the problems they faced as a result of these measures. Officials from Belgrade, through announcements of packages of measures aimed at supporting citizens, demonstrated their determination to protect their rights, for example, by declaring “areas of special social protection” and providing support primarily for the unemployed and elderly.

The authorities in Pristina, notably Albin Kurti as their representative, were presented in a negative light. Albin Kurti was viewed by Serbian politicians and local officials as the main culprit, or the person who made the decisions to close Serbian institutions with the intention of discriminating against the Serbian population.

The arguments used to illustrate the vulnerability of Serbs revolve around the inability of citizens to access necessary services and documents, which prevents them from exercising many rights, such as obtaining health insurance cards and receiving assistance from Social Work Centers. Additionally, citizens face significant time and financial costs when they must travel to Raška to attempt to resolve their issues.

The behavior of the authorities in Priština, particularly that of Prime Minister Albin Kurti, is interpreted as pre-election maneuvering—drawing attention to himself and gaining political points through actions directed against Serbs.

The epithets accompanying the reporting strongly emphasized the polarization between the Serbian and Albanian sides. When referring to the citizens of northern Kosovo, they were described as “victims of terror,” “endangered,” and “hundreds of employees unable to go to work.” However, there was also optimism expressed through statements that “the Serbian people will endure” despite the difficulties. On the other hand, statements from politicians included phrases such as “Pristina’s terror,” “an attack on us,” “Kurti intends to cleanse ev-

everything Serbian from Kosovo,” and “his elections are coming up; he has no successes, so he turns against the Serbs.”

Sources

“Prime Minister Miloš Vučević reiterates that Kurti intends to cleanse Kosovo and Metohija of Serbs.” – Dnevnik 2, 06.09.2024, 00:04:30

“The essence here is that for the past four years, and even earlier, there has been an enormous pressure on everything Serbian that remains functioning and living in Kosovo and Metohija. There is no doubt that this is a classic political process, an attack on the institutions of the Republic of Serbia. Of course, we have acted responsibly in the interest of our people. This is currently an attack on us, meaning that the issue is not about us as individuals, but about the ongoing daily pressure on the Serbian people, banning everything that is Serbian.” – Zoran Todić, President of the Provisional Municipal Authority of Leposavić, 06.09.2024, 00:03:15

“The Prime Minister expressed concern over the situation in Kosovo and Metohija and the terror that the Serbian people face daily due to the efforts of the Prime Minister of the provisional institutions, Albin Kurti, to ethnically cleanse the southern Serbian province.” – Report from the meeting with the Cuban ambassador, 24.09.2024, 00:13:25

DUŠAN RADAKOVIĆ

Analysis of RTKLive Reporting

This report analyzes the content analysis of RTK live media coverage of key events in Kosovo in the period from August 1, 2024, to October 30, 2024. The analysis particularly examined events related to the Brussels negotiations and their implementation, especially with regard to the closure of institutions that were part of the so-called Serb system, the arrests of members of the Serb community in northern Kosovo, and the prosecution of those responsible for the Banjska case.

Table 13. Overview of Media Events

Kosovo-Serbia dialogue at a standstill, the process has stagnated
Lajčák announces preparations for the upcoming Bislimi–Petković meeting
Lajčák and Bislimi discuss full implementation of the Agreement
Lajčák: Time to begin implementation of the normalization agreement
New round of dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia on October 24, 2024
Joint meeting of the EU, Kosovo, and Serbia begins in Brussels
EU confirmed: Meeting of chief negotiators in Brussels tomorrow
New meeting of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue in Brussels today
On the anniversary of Banjska, SD called on Serbia to bring the perpetrators to justice
Terrorist attack in Banjska, Hovenier: The perpetrators must be held accountable
EU: Serbia must bring to justice those responsible for the Banjska attack
Osmani: Bunjaku gave his life to prove that the borders of this country are eternal.
Ibishi: The terrorist group did not act alone; it had direct support from Serbia
Police operation in premises of illegal postal services in the North
EU: Closure of post offices in the North was a unilateral and uncoordinated step
Operation in the North, U.S. Embassy: Disappointed with unilateral actions
Bislimi: Postal services of Serbia operated illegally on the territory of Kosovo
Kosovo Police: Arsenijević and Veljković released

The analysis of actors shows that among the 127 mentions of actors in the analyzed news items, citizens, i.e. Serbs living in northern Kosovo, were the most represented, followed by the Kosovo government, representatives of the Serbian community at the Kosovo-wide level, Albanian citizens living in Kosovo, the government of Serbia, the European Union, and representatives of the Serbian community at the local level.

Table 14. Representation of Actors

Citizens (Serbs living in Kosovo)	18
Government of Kosovo	16
Representatives of the Serbian community at the national level	16
Albanian citizens living in Kosovo	16
Government of Serbia	13
EU	11
Representatives of the Serbian community at the local level	9
Representatives of the Albanian community at the local level	7
Kosovo police	6
SAD	4
International actors (aggregate)	4
President of Serbia	3
Expert	2
Serbian political parties in Kosovo	1
Kosovo courts and prosecution	1

Analysis of the tone of the news coverage shows that there is a certain balance: The Serbian side was portrayed almost equally positively (17 times) and negatively (21 times). An almost identical pattern of coverage was observed on RTK live in relation to the Albanian side, which was presented positively 17 times and negatively 21 times.

The approach of RTK live journalists was largely passive, meaning that in most cases they simply reproduced the statements of officials and functionaries, regardless of whether they represented the so-called Serbian side or the Albanian side.

May Analysis of Reporting by Radio Television of Kosovo and Radio Television of Serbia on the Socio-Political Life of Serbs in Northern Kosovo and Albanians in the Preševo Valley

Methodological and Conceptual Framework of the Research

The analysis of the coverage of Radio Television of Kosovo⁷ and Radio Television of Serbia⁸ in their main news programs on the socio-political life of Serbs in northern Kosovo and Albanians in the Preševo Valley is based on an examination of the coverage of the events that shaped May 2025. The following components are presented as part of the analysis:

- Actor analysis - the examination of the actors who were directly or indirectly represented in the analyzed reports, with the aim of evaluating the social and political inclusivity of the reporting of the observed media;
- Thematic analysis – overview of the perspectives on the events as shaped by journalists and editors at Radio Television of Serbia and Radio Television of Kosovo;
- Argumentative analysis – examination of the sources, positions, and facts on which the journalists relied in the analyzed reports;
- Narrative analysis, which was divided into:
 - Ethno-national narratives – narratives that focus on the ethnic identities of the Albanian and Serbian communities and emphasize ethnicity as the primary identity of Serbs and Albanians;
 - Constitutional-patriotic narratives – narratives that emphasize legal-political identities, i.e., the society, associations, and state framework of Serbia and Kosovo in which citizens live, as well as identities related to citizenship, profession, or political engagement.
 - Within these two types of narratives, sub-narratives were also identified, that describe the relationship with the other ethnic community through characterizations. These were categorized as negative (conflictual), neutral (tolerant), or positive (cooperative).
- The journalistic approach - assessment of the manner in which information is reported. The aim is to determine whether journalists acted as active or passive participants in the analyzed segments and, if so, to what extent. Were they merely transmitting information, were they reporting objectively while respecting the principle of balance, were they advocating for solutions, were they critically questioning and analyzing, or were they instead engaging in promotion and propaganda, which at times included elements of hate speech.

⁷ <https://www.rtklive.com/srpski/?id=2>

⁸ www.rts.rs (monitoring of media content during the duration of Dnevnik 2)

Research Findings

Table 15 presents a list of events collected by the research team through media monitoring. These events include statements by Serbian and EU politicians, as well as events resulting from actions by state institutions, civil society organisations, political parties, religious communities, ethnic communities and other social actors.

Table 15. List of Analyzed Events

May 1 – Vučić's statements on Kosovo
May 3 – Tenth attempt to constitute the Kosovo Parliament
May 7 – Vučić's statement on Kosovo
May 8 – Constitution of the Kosovo Parliament
May 14 – Meeting of foreign ministers in Luxembourg
Closure of the Sports and Youth Center, Mitrovica sports hall
May 15 – North Kosovo – closure of institutions
Arrest in Zvečan on charges of war crimes
Closure of institutions in northern Kosovo
May 16 – Vučić's statement
Kosovo Police closed the branch of the National Employment Service
Protest against the closure of the sports hall
May 17 – EU calls on Kosovo to stop shutting down services in the North Kosovo
May 18 – Telekom Srbija travels to the U.S. to resolve the issue of not obtaining a third
May 19 – Vatican – new Pope, position on Kosovo
May 20 – Closure of the Red Cross Educational Center Gazivode
May 21 – Warnings of human rights violations against Serbs in Kosovo
Closure of institutions
Municipal Enterprise Štrpce
May 22 – Director of BIA: security situation assessment included Kosovo
Vučić's statement on the CSM
Three young men detained and later released
Vatican does not recognize Kosovo
May 23 – Kaja Kallas visits northern Kosovo
May 24 – Ministry of Interior issues arrest warrant for a policeman accused of assaulting a high school graduate
May 25 – Police Inspectorate launches investigation into incident with a high school graduate
May 26 – Two years since appointment of Albanian mayors in municipalities in northern Kosovo
May 27 – Trial in Pristina of suspects for the 2022 attack on the Election Commission
Housing for displaced persons in Leposavić – problems, some families forced to relocate
May 29 – The Feast of the Ascension in Prizren
Vučić's statement
Post Office in Priluzje
Security in Kosovo – police overstepping authority, sexual harassment of Serbian women in the North

May 30 – Press conference by Todić – closure of institutions, comments on Pristina authorities, exodus of Serbs
May 31 – Second National Symposium of Health Workers in Gračanica
Protest by 17 families in the village of Lešak facing eviction from illegally built homes
Trial of four Serbs for the 2022 terrorist attack on the Election Commission offices in Mitrovica
Adoption of Tonino Picula's report on Serbia's progress in EU integration
Statement by Ana Brnabić at the Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments
Celebration of the municipal feast of Leposavić – St. Basil of Ostrog
Holy Assembly of Bishops – reminder to the international community about the suffering of Orthodox Christians worldwide and in Kosovo
Raška–Prizren Eparchy files criminal charges for a break-in at a church near Podujevo
May 23 – Kosovo Police officer assaults Serbian high school student
The trial of a Serb for the abuse of Albanian civilians, a verdict overturned by the Court of Appeals
International military exercise DEFENDER
Break-in at the sports hall and Sports-Tourism Organization in Leposavić
SANU poetry awards ceremony
Meeting between Vučić and a U.S. congresswoman
26th anniversary of the Battle of Paštrik

When these events are taken as the selection criterion, the sample of observed news items included 62 items in total. Of these, 53 items were analyzed on Radio Television of Serbia, accounting for 85% of the total sample, while (only) 9 items were analyzed on Radio Television of Kosovo, making up 15% of the total.

Actor Analysis

When looking at the actor structure, the findings reveal that in the reports aired on Radio Television of Serbia, the most frequently mentioned actors were: the Kosovo Police (13 times), experts (11 times), and citizens, particularly Serbs living in northern Kosovo (9 times). The President of the Republic of Serbia, the Government of Kosovo, and the EU were each referred to 8 times. Representatives of the Albanian community in Serbia at the national level appeared 5 times, while representatives of the Albanian community at the local level, specifically in the Preševo Valley, were featured 3 times in Radio Television of Serbia's programming during May 2025.

The actor structure on Radio Television of Kosovo included representatives of the Serbian community at both the national and local levels, along with the Government of Kosovo; each appeared 9 times. Serbian political parties in Kosovo were mentioned 8 times. Representatives of the Albanian community in Serbia at the national level appeared 6 times, while representatives of the Albanian community at the local level appeared 5 times.

Table 16. Actor Structure in the Analyzed Reports on RTS and RTK Live

	TV		Total
	RTS	RTK	
Government of Serbia	4	3	7
Office for Kosovo and Metohija	3	0	3
Serbian President	8	1	9
National Assembly of Serbia	2	0	2
Representatives of the Albanian community at the national level	5	6	11
Representatives of the Albanian community at the local level	3	5	8
Albanian religious communities	1	0	1
EU	8	2	10
USA	3	0	3
Russia	2	0	2
Government of Kosovo	8	9	17
Prime Minister of Kosovo	1	4	5
Representatives of the Serbian community at the national level of Kosovo	3	9	13
Representatives of the Serbian community at the local level	1	9	10
Serbian Orthodox Church	5	0	5
Serbian civil society in Kosovo	3	4	7
Serbian political parties in Kosovo	6	8	14
Serbian public figures in Kosovo	0	2	2
Self-Determination	5	0	5
International actors (aggregate)	7	0	7
Kosovo courts and prosecution	3	0	3
Lawyers	1	0	1
Citizens (Serbs living in Kosovo)	9	0	9
Kosovo Police	13	0	13
Deputy Director of the National Employment Service in Kosovska Mitrovica	1	0	1
Member of the Serbian National Assembly	1	0	1
Expert	11	0	11
Citizens, Albanians living in Kosovo	1	0	1
Chief of General Staff	1	0	1

Thematic Analysis

As far as the thematic structure of the analyzed Serbian radio broadcasts shown in Table 3 is concerned, the most important topic was the open topic "The situation of Serbs in Kosovo", which was mentioned 8 times. In second place, with seven mentions, were the general speeches of the President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, on Serbia's foreign policy from the perspective of Kosovo. In third place, with five mentions, was the absence of the Constitution of the Kosovo Assembly.

In May 2025, Radio Television of Kosovo focused mainly on the takeover of the temporary institutions that previously operated within the Serbian system in Leposavić, North Mitrovica, and Zubin Potok. Other frequently discussed topics were: Statements from Kosovo authorities regarding the incident with a student in North Mitrovica (mentioned twice), the non-constitution of the Kosovo Assembly (mentioned twice). Additionally, the following topics also received notable attention: Arrests in northern Kosovo on suspicion of war crimes, the EU's concern over actions in northern Kosovo, meetings between Prime Minister Kurti and EU officials.

Table 17. Thematic structure of analyzed news items on RTS and RTK

	TV		Total
	RTS	RTK	
Constitutive session of the Kosovo Assembly interrupted again	5	1	6
The 24th attempt to constitute the Kosovo Assembly failed	1	1	2
Closure of the parallel public company "Vodovod Ibar" in North Mitrovica	1	1	2
Kosovo authorities took control of another facility in Leposavić	0	1	1
Arrest on suspicion of war crimes in northern Kosovo	1	1	2
EU concerned over actions in the north	2	1	3
Police assisted in the takeover of a facility in Zubin Potok	1	1	2
Closure of the National Employment Service in North Mitrovica	1	1	2
Kurti presented demands to Kaja Kallas at a working dinner	0	1	1
Kallas visited KFOR and met with Bardhani	0	1	1
Hodža: The red mark on the student's neck was marker ink, not blood	0	1	1
Musliu: Graduation parade in North Mitrovica is not a celebration but a provocation	0	1	1
Rašić's party condemned the incident with graduates and demanded investigation	0	1	1
Vučić spoke about Serbia's domestic and foreign policy	7	0	7
Trial of accused Serbs	3	0	3
Position of Serbs in Kosovo	8	0	8
Observance of religious holidays in Kosovo	2	0	2
Closure of the cultural and sports institution Kosovski božur	1	0	1
Kosovo's membership not placed on the agenda of the Council of Europe session	1	0	1
Will the new Pope change the stance on Kosovo	2	0	2
Closure of the Red Cross educational center	1	0	1
Position of MTS in Kosovo – attempt to obtain a third operator license	1	0	1
Raška-Prizren Eparchy filed a criminal complaint over church break-in	1	0	1
Closure of Serbian institutions	9	0	9
Three young Serbs detained and released after posters were found in their car	1	0	1
Visit of Kaja Kallas to northern Kosovo	1	0	1
Attack of a police officer on a Serbian graduate	3	0	3
Military analyst on the treatment of Kosovo forces during the 2023 exercise	1	0	1
Culture – award ceremony	1	0	1

Argumentation Analysis

In contrast to Radio Television of Serbia, which had a larger number of reports compared to Radio Television of Kosovo, the argumentation was more diverse, which is reflected in the presence of public officials (7 times), experts (7 times), citizens (5 times), and representatives of political parties (3 times). In the reports on the Serbian community, Radio Television of Kosovo journalists relied mainly on statements from Kosovo officials and civil servants.

Table 18. Argumentation in reporting on the Serb community in the analyzed news on RTS and RTK live

	TV		Total
	RTS	RTK	
Statements of public officials	7	2	9
Statements of civil servants	1	2	3
Statements of party actors	3	0	3
Statements of citizens	5	0	5
Statements of experts	7	0	7
Statements of international actors	2	0	2
Statements of civil society representatives	1	0	1
International legal instruments	1	0	1
Studies	1	0	1
Historical facts	3	0	3
	28	2	30

An identical result is obtained when looking at the coverage of the Albanian community, as shown in Table 5.

Radio Television of Serbia had a more diverse range of arguments, which was mainly reflected in the statements of experts (11 times), public officials (10 times), and representatives of political parties and citizens (four times each).

In its coverage of the Albanian community in Serbia, Radio Television of Kosovo used as arguments the representatives of Albanian political parties (3 times), as well as public officials, international actors, representatives of civil society, representatives and international actors themselves (twice each).

Table 19. Argumentation in reporting on the Albanian community in the analyzed broadcasts on RTS and RTK

	TV		Total
	RTS	RTK	
Statements of public officials	10	1	11
Statements of a civil servants	8	2	10
Statements of party actors	4	3	7
Statements of citizens	4	0	4
Statements of experts	11	1	12
Statement of international actors	3	2	5
Statement of civil society representatives	1	2	3
International legal instruments	0	2	2
Studies	2	0	2
	37	8	45

Narrative Analysis

The analysis also examined the narratives concerning the perception of national identity along the continuum between ethnonationalism and constitutional patriotism, expressed through conflict, tolerance, or cooperation.

In the case of the Serbian community in Kosovo, Dnevnik 2 of Radio Television of Serbia portrayed this group primarily within a narrative of constitutional patriotism and tolerance, portraying Serbs as citizens of the Republic of Serbia. In contrast, Radio Television of Kosovo constructed the image of the Serbian community primarily through a conflictual or, sometimes tolerant ethno-nationalism and portrayed Serbs as members of a national minority in Kosovo.

Table 20. Narratives in reporting on the Serbian community in the analyzed broadcasts on RTS and RTK

	RTS	RTK
Ethno-national – conflictual	1	3
Ethno-national – tolerant	4	3
Ethno-national – cooperative	3	0
Constitutional-patriotic – tolerant	9	0
Constitutional-patriotic – cooperative	2	0
	19	9

In the reporting on the Albanian community by Radio Television of Kosovo, we find the presence of a constitutional-patriotic–conflictual narrative (Albanians framed as citizens of the Republic of Serbia), as well as an ethno-national–tolerant narrative (Albanians in Serbia depicted as members of the Albanian community). By contrast, Radio Television of Serbia exhibits a hybrid pattern: the use of a constitutional-patriotic–conflictual narrative (Albanians as citizens of the Republic of Serbia), a constitutional-patriotic–tolerant narrative, and an ethno-national–conflictual narrative (Albanians in Serbia portrayed as members of the Albanian community).

Table 21. Narratives in reporting on the Albanian community in the analyzed broadcasts on RTS and RTK

	RTS	RTK
Ethno-national – conflictual	10	1
Ethno-national – tolerant	2	3
Ethno-national – cooperative	2	0
Constitutional-patriotic – conflictual	14	4
Constitutional-patriotic – tolerant	10	1
Constitutional-patriotic – cooperative	1	0
	39	9

The analysis also encompassed the conduct of journalists. The conclusion is that journalists from both Radio Television of Serbia and Radio Television of Kosovo acted as passive observers in the analyzed media content. In both the Serbian and Albanian cases, reporting was explicitly dominated by the mere transmission of information.

Table 22. Journalistic conduct – reporting on

	Serbian community		Albanian community	
	RTS	RTK	RTS	RTK
Transmits information	27	6	35	9
Reminds	1	0	0	0

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of media reports. The examination of events indicates the persistence of a “post-conflict” configuration within the socio-political sphere of northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley, regions inhabited by both Serbs and Albanians. This structure prioritizes events during the war period, as well as ongoing activities to secure peace. Specifically, the events reported frequently reflect the (non-)implementation of the Brussels and Ohrid agreements in the case of Kosovo, and the lack of implementation of these agreements—particularly the Seven Point Plan—in the case of Serbia. A direct consequence of this phenomenon is the public’s lack of familiarity with these documents.

This leads to two predominant narratives. On the Albanian side, the primary concern is the enforcement and implementation of legal frameworks, while on the Serbian side, the emphasis is on the closure or dismantling of institutions. The outcome of this dynamic is the establishment of parallel media realities, a phenomenon that is further entrenched by the absence of public discourse or media coverage regarding the documents themselves (namely, the Brussels Agreement, the Ohrid Agreement, and the Seven Point Plan). The aforementioned phenomenon serves to perpetuate the binary consciousness of “us” and “them,” or “ours” and “theirs.”

Another complicating factor is the dominance of political actors in communication. These entities are the primary producers of media content, while the media themselves assume the role of mere “microphone holders” or news transmitters. This position is considered unacceptable for public broadcasters, particularly within the context of central news programs.

The media plays a crucial role in shaping the constitutional and patriotic discourse, yet it often falls short of this responsibility. Radio Television of Serbia has portrayed northern Kosovo Serbs as an integral part of Serbia’s legal and political framework. However, this portrayal is not supported by the institutional and normative foundations necessary to substantiate such a claim. Conversely, Radio Television of Kosovo portrays northern Kosovo Serbs from an ethno-nationalist perspective, disregarding their status as citizens of Kosovo and the rights that accompany this status.

On the other hand, Radio Television of Serbia identifies the Albanians from the Preševo Valley as its own citizens, embracing a constitutional and patriotic narrative. However, this acknowledgment lacks the necessary media engagement and consistent focus on the conditions of this national minority within Serbia. Mentions of Bujanovac and Preševo in RTS’s main news broadcasts have primarily centered around economic and infrastructure topics.

The portrayal of the Albanian community on Radio Television of Kosovo, as noted by our monitors, predominantly depicts them as protesters, seeking to obtain the rights that Serbs in northern Kosovo have under the Brussels and Ohrid agreements.

In essence, this phenomenon contributes to the perpetuation of ethnonationalism and hinders the transition toward constitutional patriotism.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the conducted public opinion polls and media analysis, we formulated Matrix of factors and solutions for improving relations between Serbs and Albanians (herein-after referred to as the Matrix).

Table 23. Matrix of factors and solutions for improving relations between Serbs and Albanians

COMMUNITY	Factors	Solutions	SOCIETY
	Ethnonationalism	Constitutional patriotism	
	Ethno-phyletism	Acquired identities, identities, which are related to personal achievements	
	Offensive militarism	Cooperation and agreement at the international level	
	Emotional barriers	Emotional closeness	
	Networking on a personal level	Networking at the professional and business level	
	Media polarization and lack of information.	Media deliberation	
	Dissatisfaction with the institutional frame-work.	Institutions that are in the function of the real community	
	Dissatisfaction with the quality of life	Accomplished members of the community	
	Ethno-enclaves	Inclusive Forms of Ethnic Autonomy	
		STATE	

The attached Matrix outlines the factors influencing the current relationship between Albanians and Serbs in northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley. It also presents a summary of the desired state, a transition from an (ethnic) community to a (civic) society capable of establishing a state based on the rule of law, institutional integrity, and a free public sphere. This envisioned transition represents a shift from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, the fundamental frameworks that regulate social relations and identities at the community and societal levels.

To refine the Matrix, we will elaborate on each dimension and recall the research findings.

The first dimension of the Matrix concerns the nature of citizens’ political identity, which lies between ethnonationalism and constitutional patriotism. Unlike ethnonationalism, rooted in ethnic identification, constitutional patriotism involves respect for the Constitution and its laws, as well as values and principles such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and equality before the law. The research has shown that both Serbs in northern Kosovo and Albanians in the Preševo Valley are dominated by ethnonationalism, which hinders the establishment of constitutional patriotism, the legitimizing framework for a state based on the rule of law, institutional integrity, and a free public sphere.

The second dimension of the Matrix, linked to the first, concerns citizens’ social identities, which exist on a continuum between ascribed and acquired identities. Ascribed identities

are acquired from family and community and their rejection is considered a betrayal. These often involve ethnic and religious affiliations. In contrast, acquired identities are acquired through personal effort. The research indicates a dominance of ascribed, particularly ethno-philetic identities, that prioritize religious and/or ethnic identity over other identities related to region, city, and profession.

The third dimension of the Matrix relates to offensive militarism, or the willingness to support war as a means of changing borders and rectifying perceived injustices against “one’s own” people. In contrast to offensive militarism, the matrix also considers the possibility of interethnic and interstate cooperation based on membership in associations and adherence to international standards. The research has revealed a tendency, more pronounced among respondents from the Preševo Valley, to support offensive militarism.

The fourth dimension focuses on the emotional component of relations between Albanians and Serbs, situated on a continuum between emotional closeness and distance. The research indicates the existence of barriers, or emotional distance, between Serbs and Albanians in the Preševo Valley, Northern Kosovo, Kosovo, and Serbia.

The fifth dimension concerns the social networking between Albanians and Serbs. At one end of the spectrum is personal-level connections, while at the other end is networking based on professional or business ties. The research findings show that personal-level connections exist, but professional and business connections are almost non-existent.

The sixth dimension pertains to media communication, which exists on a spectrum between unprofessional media, characterized by propaganda that reinforces ethnic divisions and stereotypes, and media deliberation, wherein media outlets investigate, analyze, question, and moderate dialogue between the Albanian and Serbian sides. Content analysis has revealed a media divide in most outlets, indicating that media often serve as defenders of nations rather than adhering to journalistic principles.

The seventh dimension concerns the functioning of the institutional framework, which is tasked with representing and protecting the interests of members of national communities. The research indicates a low level of satisfaction with the functioning of the domicile institutional framework among Serbs in northern Kosovo and Albanians in the Preševo Valley.

The eighth dimension relates to perceptions of quality of life, specifically the ability of residents of northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley to fulfill their rights as members of national communities. The research has shown that a majority of residents in both regions are dissatisfied with their quality of life and the realization of their rights as members of national communities.

The ninth dimension relates to the identification of members of national communities with an ethnic space where the community constitutes a majority, leading to ethnic isolation and closure, rather than a preference for inclusive forms of national community autonomy. The research has shown that respondents exhibit a preference for ethnic isolation.

The nine dimensions outlined in the Matrix provide an analytical tool for monitoring ethnic relations between Serbs and Albanians, as well as the broader social context in which these relations emerge and develop.

At the core of the monitoring instrument is a sociological approach focused on examining the transition from an ethnic community to a (civic) society, which requires a state based on the rule of law, institutional integrity, and a democratic public.

To understand the middle-range theoretical concept that helps us systematize the collected research findings, we can use the Analytical Matrix of Integrity of Democratic and Authoritarian Societies, which emerged from research on integrity. Its origin has the same theoretical foundation and is useful for understanding the logic of the nature of monitoring.

This is a division into a democratic society, which is by its nature an example of a society based on organic solidarity, and an authoritarian society based on mechanical solidarity. In addition to this division, there is a noticeable division according to the principle of autonomy and authoritarianism, then formality and procedure versus power and autocracy, as well as the subjective in terms of activism and individualization, and objectification in terms of passivity and subordination to the collective.

This matrix, like any other, is an ideal-typical example that does not include “gray” areas.

Table 24. The Analytical Matrix of the Integrity of a Democratic and Authoritarian Society

	The Integrity of a Democratic Society	Integrity of an authoritarian society
A type of social organization	Associations of participation	A community of loyalty and leadership.
Type of solidarity	Interests	Emotions, tradition
Handle	Norma	Power
Regulatory framework	Institutions	Will
Decision-making	Deliberation at the public level.	A leader or a powerful minority.
Type of choice	Elective Elections	Acclamation elections
Who chooses	Citizen	Supporter
Who do they elect	Institutional representations of interests	Leaders and/or millenarian movements.
Communication	Free media	The Industry of Populism

Recommendations

For Communities

1. **Promotion of intercultural dialogue:** Organize regular forums, workshops, and cultural events that involve members of both communities.
2. **Strengthening professional ties:** Initiatives that encourage joint business ventures and networking at the economic level can help break stereotypes.
3. **Media literacy and anti-stereotype campaigns:** Educational programs on the role of media in shaping opinions and campaigns promoting objective and inclusive reporting.

For Governments and Institutions

1. **Education system reform:** Integrate programs that foster intercultural understanding, especially in areas with pronounced ethnic tensions.
2. **Support for local institutions development:** Rebuild trust through transparency and by involving minority community members in institutional work.
3. **Economic integration:** Subsidy programs for joint businesses and infrastructural projects connecting northern Kosovo and southern Serbia.

For International Organizations

1. **Media and institutional monitoring:** a more active role for international actors in monitoring and reporting human rights violations and discrimination.
2. **Financial and technical support for reconciliation initiatives:** Support for projects aimed at reducing ethnic tensions through culture, sports, and education.

Long-Term Goals

1. **Establishment of an “Ethnic Bridge”:** Create sustainable partnerships among key regional actors to promote stability and development.
2. **Identity Transformation:** Shift from dominant ethnic identities to civic and professional identities as the foundation for future relationships.

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