

# ENHANCING INTER-ETHNIC COOPERATION IN ZVEČAN



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR  
DEMOCRACY

SUPPORTING FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD



Advocacy Center  
for Democratic Culture



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

05

**BACKGROUND**

12

**METHODOLOGY**

15

**PRIMARY  
CONCLUSIONS**

31

**CONCLUSION**

33

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

## BACKGROUND

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Zvečan is a town located in the northern part of Kosovo. The ethnic composition of Zvečan Municipality is predominantly Serbian. In addition to Serbs, there are also other ethnic groups living in the municipality, such as Albanians, Bosniaks, Roma, and others, although their numbers might be relatively smaller compared to the Serbian population. While the majority of the Albanian population lives in the separate villages of Lipa, Boljetin and Žaž, the rest of the ethnic communities live together with the majority Serbian population.

The current division among the population remains a relevant issue, despite the absence of major conflicts and the notable efforts of the municipality towards promoting inclusivity among non-majority communities. However, there continues to be a lack of meaningful interaction between different communities. Particularly concerning is the limited contact between young Serbs and Albanians, as both groups tend to gravitate towards larger urban centres, with Mitrovica being the primary focus. On the other hand, the situation appears to be relatively better in areas where other communities coexist with the Serbian population.

The purpose of this research is to address and transform this situation by fostering increased interethnic collaboration and understanding. By promoting initiatives that facilitate intergroup dialogue, cooperation, and cultural exchange, we aim to bridge the gaps between communities and encourage a more harmonious coexistence.

It is important to acknowledge that this document was developed during a period marked by significant political challenges within the municipality of Zvečan. Despite these challenges, it is precisely during such times that concerted efforts towards promoting interethnic cooperation become all the more crucial. By recognizing and understanding the underlying issues, we can work towards finding common ground and creating an environment conducive to meaningful intergroup interactions.

Through the implementation of this project, we aspire to promote mutual respect, foster cross-cultural awareness, and cultivate relationships built on trust and understanding. By engaging with local organizations, educational institutions, and community leaders, we aim to develop programs and activities that facilitate intercommunity engagement, encourage youth involvement, and nurture a sense of shared responsibility for the betterment of the entire region.

## **Legal framework of Local-level participation mechanisms**

Local-level participation mechanisms in Kosovo municipalities refer to the various processes and initiatives that aim to engage residents in decision-making, policy formulation, and governance at the local level. These mechanisms are designed to foster citizen participation, promote transparency, and ensure that the voices and needs of the community are taken into account.

One common local-level participation mechanism in Kosovo municipalities is the establishment of local councils or assemblies. These bodies consist of elected representatives who serve as a bridge between the residents and the local government. Local councils provide a platform for residents to voice their concerns, propose initiatives, and participate in decision-making processes that directly impact their communities.

Another mechanism is the use of public consultations and community meetings. Municipalities organize these events to gather feedback, opinions, and suggestions from residents on various issues, such as urban planning, infrastructure development, or social programs. Public consultations aim to ensure that community members have the opportunity to express their views and contribute to the decision-making process.

Furthermore, Kosovo municipalities often employ participatory budgeting processes, where residents have a direct say in how a portion of the municipal budget is allocated. Through participatory budgeting, residents can propose and prioritize projects and programs that they believe are essential for their communities. This mechanism enhances citizen engagement, accountability, and transparency in financial decision-making.

It is important to note that the effectiveness and extent of local-level participation mechanisms can vary across Kosovo municipalities. Some municipalities may have more advanced and comprehensive participation mechanisms in place, while others may still be in the process of developing or strengthening such initiatives. Nonetheless, the overall aim is to create inclusive and participatory governance structures that empower residents to actively contribute to the development and improvement of their local communities.

Local-level participation mechanisms offer significant assistance to communities in a numerical minority in any given municipality in realizing their human rights to education, to freedom from discrimination, to freedom of religion, to employment, and to access services and social welfare, among others.

In Kosovo, the key bodies acting at the local level to support all communities' equal enjoyment of their right to participation in public affairs are the:

Deputy Mayor for Communities (DMC)

Deputy Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly for Communities (DCMAC).

Communities Committees (CCs),

Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns (MOCRs),

It is important to note that, at the time of writing this report (May 2023), the situation in the municipality of Zvečan was highly complex. The representatives of the Serbian community, who constituted a significant majority of officials and workers, have left the Kosovo institutions. As a result, the municipal structures have practically become non-functional. This document addresses the situation that existed prior to the recent unfortunate events in the municipality of Zvečan, when the municipal structures were operating under normal conditions.

Deputy Mayor for Communities (DMC):

The appointment process for the Deputy Mayor for Communities (DMC) in municipalities where at least 10 percent of the citizens belong to non-majority communities involves several key steps. Firstly, the Mayor is responsible for proposing candidates for the DMC position. These candidates must then be approved by a majority vote of the Municipal Assembly (MA) members present and voting, including a majority of MA members from non-majority communities who are present and voting.

In the case of vacant DMC positions, they are to be filled within 30 days. The term of office for the DMC runs parallel to that of the Mayor. Additionally, according to the Administrative Instruction, candidates for the DMC role must have resided in the municipality for a minimum of three years and should be members of the minority group that constitutes the largest minority community in the municipality.

The Deputy Mayor for Communities (DMC) serves as a valuable support to the Mayor and provides advice and guidance on matters pertaining to the non-majority communities. Their role also involves advocating for and affirming the requests and concerns of the minority communities before the municipal organs.

By having a dedicated DMC, the municipality aims to ensure that the interests and needs of non-majority communities are duly considered and addressed in decision-

making processes. This position helps to promote inclusivity, representation, and effective communication between the local government and the various communities residing within the municipality.

#### Deputy Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly for Communities (DCMAC):

In municipalities where at least, 10 percent or more of the residents belong to communities in a numerical minority, the position of Deputy Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly for Communities (DCMAC) holds particular significance. The DCMAC is appointed based on the candidate from the non-majority community who received the highest number of votes on the open list of candidates for election to the Municipal Assembly. It is a requirement that the DCMAC must be a member of a community in a numerical minority within the municipality.

The role of the Deputy Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly for Communities (DCMAC) is to actively promote intercommunity dialogue and act as the official focal point for addressing the concerns and interests of non-majority communities during Assembly meetings and in the overall work of the Assembly. By assuming this position, the DCMAC plays a crucial role in representing the voices and needs of non-majority communities within the local legislative body.

The DCMAC acts as an advocate, ensuring that the issues faced by non-majority communities are recognized and addressed through appropriate channels. By facilitating dialogue and actively participating in the decision-making processes of the Assembly, the DCMAC strives to promote inclusivity, representation, and equitable treatment for all residents, particularly those belonging to non-majority communities.

#### Communities Committee (CC):

The Communities Committees (CCs) serve as important municipal mechanisms that consist of representatives from the communities residing within the municipality, as well as members of the municipal assembly. These committees have the responsibility of safeguarding the rights and interests of the communities they represent.

One crucial aspect of the CCs is that all communities living in the municipality must have at least one representative in these committees. This ensures that the voices and perspectives of all communities are included and considered in the decision-making processes of the municipality.



The primary role of the CCs is to review municipal policies and actions and provide recommendations to ensure that the rights and interests of the communities are respected and upheld. By actively engaging with municipal authorities, the CCs contribute to shaping inclusive and responsive policies that address the diverse needs of the communities.

To facilitate effective collaboration and ongoing engagement, the CCs are required to convene at least once per month. This regular meeting schedule allows for continuous dialogue and the exchange of ideas between the committee members, community representatives, and municipal assembly members.

Through their work, the CCs play a vital role in promoting community participation, enhancing intercommunity cooperation, and fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment among the residents. The committees serve as a platform for constructive dialogue and mutual understanding, ultimately contributing to the development of policies and actions that are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all communities within the municipality.

#### Municipal Office for Communities and Return (MOCR)

The Municipal Office for Communities and Return (MOCR) plays a crucial role in Kosovo by working towards the implementation of international community rights agreements and instruments, as well as the local legislation, specifically the Law on Local Self-Government and the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their members.

The primary objective of the MOCR is to protect and promote the rights of communities and their members. This includes ensuring equal access to services, resources, and opportunities for all community members, regardless of their background or affiliation. By upholding these principles, the MOCR aims to create an inclusive and equitable environment where every individual can fully exercise their rights and participate in community life.

Additionally, the MOCR plays a significant role in facilitating sustainable returns of displaced individuals or communities. This involves creating the necessary conditions and providing support to enable safe and dignified returns, ensuring the reintegration and well-being of returnees within their communities.

By actively engaging with various stakeholders, including community members, local authorities, and relevant institutions, the MOCR contributes to the development and implementation of policies and programs that promote the rights and well-being of

communities. It serves as a vital link between communities and the government, advocating for their rights, addressing their concerns, and working towards the resolution of community-related issues.

The MOCR's work aligns with international standards and commitments, reflecting the broader objective of fostering a democratic and inclusive society that respects and upholds the rights of all community members.

### **Situation of Local-level participation mechanisms in municipality of Zvečan.**

It is important to note that, at the time of writing this report (May 2023), the situation in the municipality of Zvečan is highly complex. The representatives of the Serbian community, who constituted a significant majority of officials and workers, have left the institutions. As a result, the municipal structures have practically become non-functional. This document addresses the situation that existed prior to the recent unfortunate events in the municipality of Zvečan, when the municipal structures were operating under normal conditions.

#### **Deputy Mayor for Communities (DMC)**

Municipality of Zvečan had a deputy mayor, Mr. Florim Kelmendi, who comes from the communities and is deeply committed to advocating for the rights and positions of communities and other vulnerable groups. His dedication to serving in this position for multiple mandates highlights his sustained commitment to promoting inclusivity and addressing the needs of marginalized populations.

Having a deputy mayor who understands the specific challenges and concerns faced by communities and vulnerable groups can significantly contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive municipality. Mr. Kelmendi's role provides a valuable platform for amplifying the voices of these communities, ensuring that their rights are protected, and their interests are represented in decision-making processes.

#### **Deputy Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly for Communities (DCMAC).**

Municipality of Zvečan had a Deputy Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly for Communities (DCMAC) named Selvete Kelmendi, who comes from the Albanian community. Her election to this position, in accordance with the prescribed procedures, demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and representation within the municipality.

As the Deputy Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly for Communities, Selvete Kelmendi plays a crucial role in promoting intercommunity dialogue and serving as

a formal focal point for addressing the concerns and interests of the non-majority communities during Assembly meetings and in its overall work. Her position provides an opportunity to ensure that the voices and perspectives of the Albanian community, as well as other non-majority communities, are taken into account in decision-making processes.

#### Communities Committee (CC)

Municipality of Zvečan has established a Communities Committee (CC) that includes representatives from various communities, namely the Serbian, Albanian, Bosniak, Turkish, and Montenegrin communities. The fact that the committee is composed of representatives from diverse backgrounds demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and ensures that the voices and perspectives of different communities are represented in the decision-making processes.

The election of a representative from the Bosnian community as the chairman of the CC further emphasizes the municipality's dedication to fostering intercommunity cooperation and collaboration.

It is commendable to note that out of the six representatives on the committee, three are from the Serbian and Albanian communities, while one representative each is from the Bosniak, Turkish, and Montenegrin communities. Additionally, the representation of six female members on the committee indicates a commitment to gender balance and inclusivity.

Although the CC functions in a formal legal sense and holds regular meetings, you mentioned that the committee faces capacity limitations. However, the willingness of the committee members to engage in their work and be active is a positive sign. Providing constant support and training to the committee members will be instrumental in enhancing their capabilities and enabling them to effectively fulfill their functions.

By investing in the development and empowerment of the CC members, the municipality can strengthen the committee's capacity to review policies, provide recommendations, and effectively address the needs and concerns of the communities they represent. Ongoing support and training opportunities can help committee members gain the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute more effectively to the decision-making processes and better serve their respective communities.

## METHODOLOGY

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The research conducted in the Municipality of Zvečan aimed to assess the perception of communities in the area regarding inter-ethnic relations and cooperation. The research utilized a combination of methods, including a door-to-door survey, focus groups, and interviews with specific community members. The survey was conducted during March 2023. A total of 200 respondents participated in the survey, with each of the targeted settlements: Zvečan, Lipa, Boljetin, and Žaž. The survey aimed to capture the perspectives of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, including K-Serbs, K-Albanians, K-Bosnians and others. The survey ensured representation of all communities, as well as equal representation of men and women, and citizens of all age groups.

Four focus groups were conducted in April 2023. These group discussions provided an opportunity for targeted groups within the communities to express their views and share their experiences. The focus groups involved individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, fostering a diverse and inclusive dialogue on inter-ethnic relations and cooperation.

Ten interviews were conducted in May 2023. These interviews targeted specific community members and aimed to gather in-depth insights and perspectives on inter-ethnic relations. The interviews may have included individuals representing various ethnic communities within Zvečan.

By utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions and experiences of communities regarding inter-ethnic relations and cooperation in the Municipality of Zvečan. The research design ensured the participation of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, equal representation of genders, and inclusion of citizens across different age groups.

**Demographic data of survey:**

Gender:	42% female
	58% male
Age:	34% under 25 years
	57% between 26-59 years
	9% older than 60 years
Ethnicity:	39% K-Albanian
	47% K-Serb
	6% K-Bosnian
	8% Others (Gorani, Montenegrin, Turkish, RAE)
Working status:	19% students
	15% unemployed
	34% employed in the public,
	21% employed in the private sector
	4% employed in an NGO
	4% owner of own business
	3% Pensioner

**Demographic data Focus groups:**

4 focus groups were held with 40 participants (19 male and 21 female).

Ethnicity:	10 Albanians,
	19 Serbs,
	6 Bosnians,
	5 Other communities

**Interviews:**

In addition to the surveys and focus groups, the research included interviews with representatives of institutions that work with communities in the Municipality of Zvečan. These interviews aimed to gather insights from key stakeholders who are actively involved in community-related work. By engaging with these individuals, the research sought to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the institutional perspectives, challenges, and efforts related to inter-ethnic relations and cooperation.

Furthermore, meetings were conducted with all members of the Community Committee, which ensured direct engagement with the committee representatives. These meetings likely provided an opportunity to discuss the committee's role, functions, and challenges, as well as to gather their perspectives on inter-ethnic relations and cooperation.

The research also included meetings with the Vice President of the Assembly, who comes from the communities. This engagement allowed for discussions on the Vice President's role, their perspective on community-related issues, and their efforts towards fostering inter-ethnic relations and cooperation.

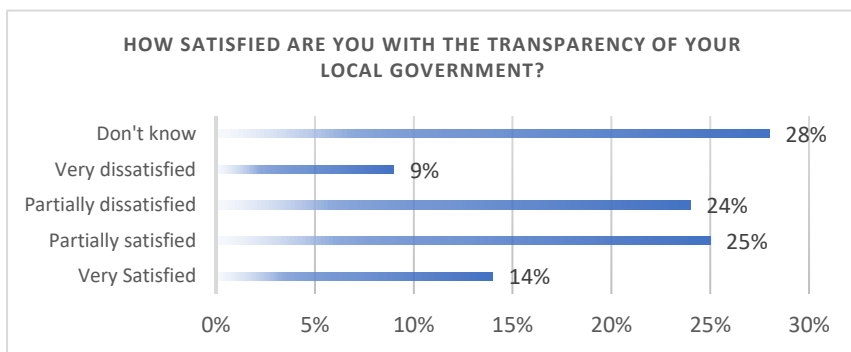
Additionally, prominent citizens in the settlements covered by the project were interviewed. These individuals, likely recognized for their active involvement in community matters, provided valuable insights and perspectives from their respective communities. Their input may have shed light on community dynamics, challenges, and potential solutions.

By incorporating interviews with institutional representatives, members of the Community Committee, the Vice President of the Assembly, and prominent citizens, the research aimed to gather diverse viewpoints and gain a comprehensive understanding of inter-ethnic relations and cooperation in the Municipality of Zvečan. These interviews helped capture the perspectives and experiences of key individuals who play significant roles in community-related work and decision-making processes.

# PRIMARY CONCLUSIONS



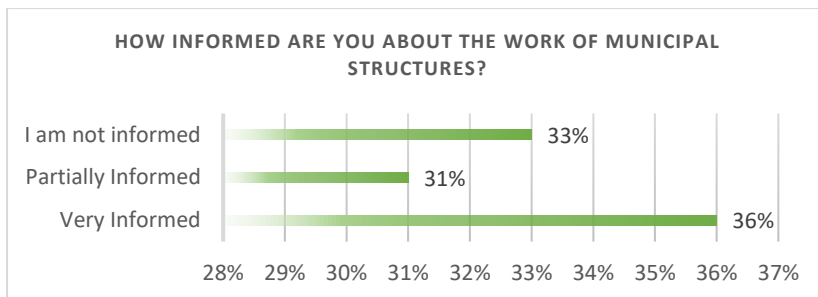
## On work and transparency of local self-government



In the questionnaire, we asked questions related to how satisfied people are with the cooperation and information they receive from their municipality. Our goal was to determine the knowledgeable and informed the residents of these multi-ethnic areas. Similar questions were asked in the focus groups and in the interviews.

The survey results indicate that the residents of Zvečan municipality have a moderate level of satisfaction with the transparency of the municipality. There is no significant variation in the results when analysed by individual ethnic groups or the age of the respondents.

Specifically, 39% of the survey participants expressed satisfaction or partial satisfaction with the transparency of the local government. On the other hand, 33% of respondents reported being dissatisfied or partially dissatisfied with the transparency. In terms of being well-informed, 36% stated that they were adequately informed, while 31% mentioned being partially informed.

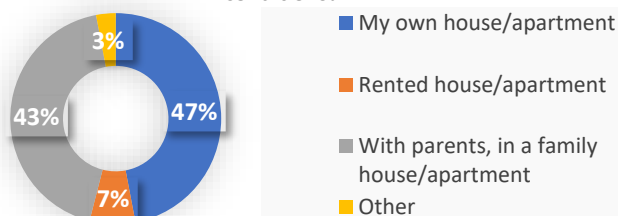


Similar findings emerged from focus groups and interviews. Participants acknowledged their awareness of municipal activities and ongoing projects. However, they highlighted the absence of a consistent mechanism for communication with the settlement residents. As a solution, they suggested organizing regular meetings between municipal representatives and the residents of multi-ethnic settlements, as these areas require specific and increased attention. Younger respondents also raised concerns about the municipality's website not being regularly updated, while members of the Albanian community noted the lack of translation into the Albanian language on the municipality's social media platforms.

#### Perception of living conditions

To assess the perception of living conditions in the settlements of the Municipality of Zvečan, a survey was conducted to gather information on residents' satisfaction levels and their outlook for the future. The main objective was to understand the residents' experiences and perceptions of their current living situations, as well as to gauge their perception of progress and development within their communities.

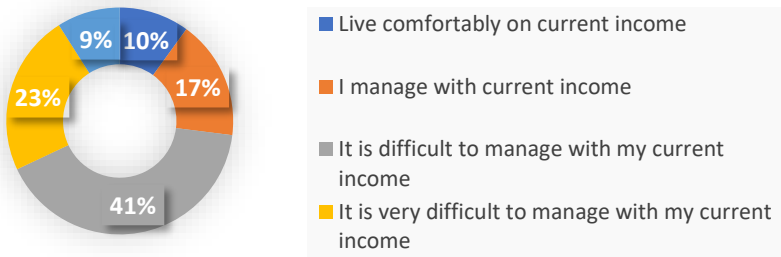
#### Which of the following best describes your current living conditions?



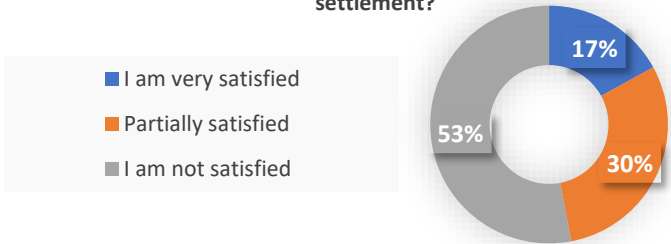


Through the survey, residents were asked about their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their living conditions. This allowed for an assessment of the overall satisfaction levels among the surveyed population. Additionally, questions were included to gather insights into how residents perceive life within their settlements, including any signs of progress or development they may have observed.

**Which of the following best describes how you feel about your income currently?**



**How satisfied are you with the living environment in your settlement?**



The aim was to capture a comprehensive view of the residents' satisfaction with their living conditions and to identify areas for potential improvement. By considering their perceptions and outlook for the future, the research aimed to inform decision-making processes and policy initiatives that could enhance the quality of life and foster a positive environment within these settlements.

By conducting the survey, the research team sought to gather valuable insights that could guide future actions and interventions. The findings can be used to address

specific challenges, implement targeted improvements, and prioritize initiatives that are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the residents. Ultimately, the goal is to improve living conditions, promote development, and create a positive outlook for the future of the settlements within the Municipality of Zvečan.

The research findings indicate a significant dissatisfaction with living conditions in the settlements of the Municipality of Zvečan, particularly among the younger population. Over half of the respondents (53%) expressed dissatisfaction with their living environment, while only 17% reported being satisfied. However, the level of dissatisfaction was even higher among Albanian responders from remote villages, with 73% stating their dissatisfaction and only 9% expressing satisfaction.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents (90%) indicated that they live in their own property or with their parents. This suggests that a significant portion of the population faces challenges in achieving independent living arrangements.

Financial difficulties were also evident, as 64% of the respondents reported finding it difficult or very difficult to manage with their current income. This finding highlights the economic strains experienced by the residents, which can further contribute to their dissatisfaction with living conditions.

The focus groups and interviews supported these findings, with participants emphasizing the presence of a large number of extremely poor citizens in need of social and community assistance. They also expressed the view that insufficient efforts are being made to improve living conditions in multi-ethnic settlements.

Findings suggest that residents, particularly Albanian ethnicity, face extremely challenging living circumstances. These difficulties can contribute to various problems and, in particular, migration. The issue of migration will be further explored in the research to gain a deeper understanding of its implications.

The research findings highlight the urgent need for attention and action to address the difficult living conditions faced by the residents, especially the younger population. The results call for targeted interventions and initiatives aimed at improving living conditions, providing social and community assistance, and creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

## MIGRATION

Understanding migration patterns and the residents' attitudes towards it is an important aspect of the research conducted in the settlements of the Municipality of Zvečan. By exploring the topic of migration, the research aimed to shed light on

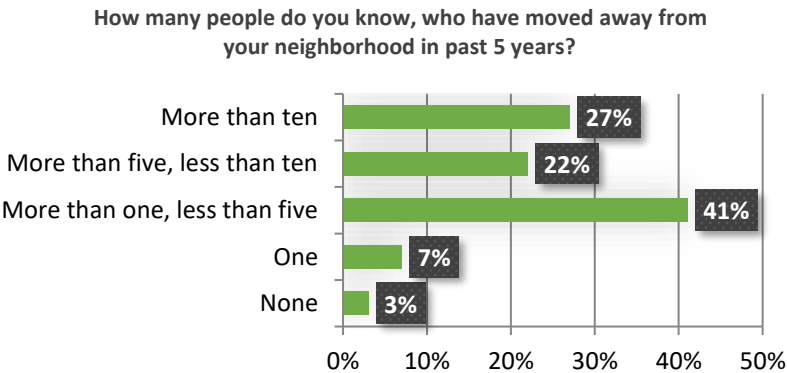
the extent to which migration is perceived as a problem within the settlements and to gain insights into the attitudes and perspectives of the residents on this issue.

Through the survey and discussions in the focus groups, questions were asked to assess the impact of migration on the settlements and the challenges associated with it. The research aimed to determine the extent to which migration is perceived as a problem and to identify the factors driving migration among the residents.

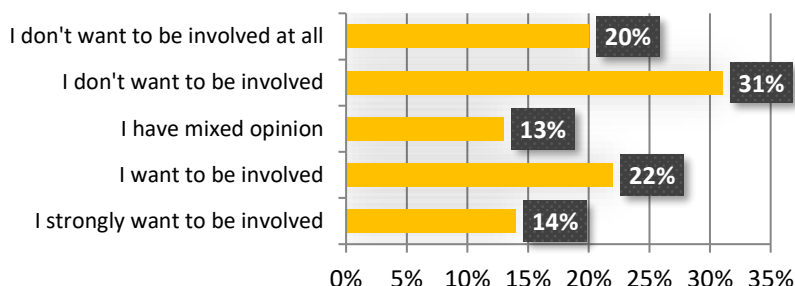
Additionally, the research sought to understand the attitudes of the residents towards migration. This includes their perspectives on the reasons behind migration, their own aspirations, and their outlook for the future of the settlements in relation to migration.

By addressing these questions, the research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of migration in the settlements and its implications for the residents. The findings can inform policymakers and stakeholders in developing strategies and initiatives to address the challenges associated with migration, support the needs of the residents, and create opportunities for sustainable development within the settlements.

By examining the issue of migration, the research aimed to contribute to a more holistic understanding of the social dynamics and challenges within the settlements, facilitating informed decision-making and the development of targeted interventions that address the concerns and aspirations of the residents.



**To what extent do you want to be involved in activities that contribute to the solution of problems in the local community and society?**



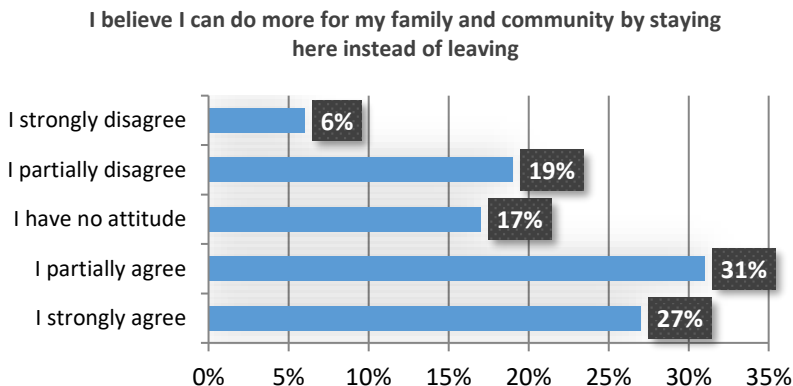
Findings in research highlight that migration a significant issue in the settlements of the Municipality of Zvečan. The poor living conditions and dissatisfaction among young people are identified as contributing factors leading to migration and the departure of young individuals from the settlements.

A notable percentage of respondents, 27%, reported knowing more than ten people who have moved out of their neighborhood in the past five years. Additionally, 32% of respondents admitted to contemplating leaving or moving out of the settlement in the last twelve months. It is concerning that the majority of respondents expressing a desire to leave the settlement are under the age of 25 (71%).

However, there are also positive findings indicating that more than half of respondents (58%) believe they can contribute more to their community by staying rather than leaving. This suggests an opportunity to work on initiatives aimed at reducing migration and fostering a sense of community engagement and empowerment.

Nevertheless, the research underscores the severity of the problem as a substantial number of respondents are personally aware of individuals who have already migrated. This highlights the existing challenge of youth outflow and its negative effects on the settlements. The focus groups also confirmed this as the primary concern, particularly regarding the departure of young people from Albanian and other non-Serb communities. Factors influencing this migration include a lack of job

opportunities, limited prospects, inadequate infrastructure conditions, and the political situation.



These findings provide a valuable understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding migration in the settlements. They emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of migration, improve living conditions, create economic opportunities, and promote social cohesion. By addressing these challenges, it is possible to mitigate the negative effects of migration and foster a more favorable environment that encourages young people to stay and contribute to the development of their communities.

**PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT OF CONDITION IN SETTLEMENTS**

Understanding the perspective of the respondents regarding the improvement of conditions in the settlements is crucial for assessing their hopes, expectations, and overall outlook for the future. By examining their attitudes towards potential improvements, the research aimed to gain insights into the residents' level of optimism and their perceptions of the possibilities for positive change.

Through a series of questions, the survey, focus groups, and interviews sought to capture the residents' perspectives on whether they believe the situation in their settlements is improving or if they have hope for future improvements. The research aimed to understand their attitudes towards various aspects, such as infrastructure development, access to services, employment opportunities, social cohesion, and the overall quality of life, by identify the residents' aspirations, concerns, and areas they consider in need of improvement. This information can guide policymakers,

local authorities, and stakeholders in developing targeted strategies, policies, and interventions that address the specific needs and aspirations of the residents.

Additionally, understanding the residents' perspective towards improvement can help in fostering a sense of ownership, empowerment, and engagement within the community. It can also facilitate dialogue and collaboration between community members and relevant stakeholders to collectively work towards achieving positive change.

**I believe that the conditions in the neighborhood where I live are improving.**



**I believe that the situation in the neighborhood where I live can be improved**



The research findings regarding the current improvement of living conditions in the settlements indicate a generally divided opinion among the respondents. It is encouraging to note that 46% of the respondents expressed a negative attitude, while the small majority either have a positive belief or are undecided.

Furthermore, when asked about their belief in the potential for improvement, a smaller number of respondents (26%) expressed a positive belief, with an additional 11% having a partial belief. This indicates a lack of optimism and hope among the residents regarding the possibility of enhancing the living conditions in the settlements.

Different sentiments were echoed in the interviews and focus groups, where participants shared a positive attitude towards the improvement of the situation. There was a strong conviction that the worst times in these settlements have passed and that conditions for progress have been established. This optimistic outlook suggests that there is a collective belief in the potential for positive change and a shared commitment to working towards that progress.

While it is important to acknowledge the cautious approach due to the significant number of respondents who did not express a clear opinion, the overall attitudes and beliefs among the majority of respondents and participants in the focus groups indicate a large influence of the current situation on these responses.

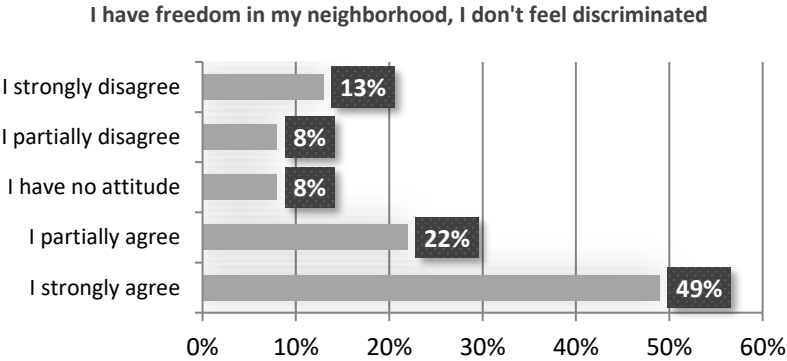
## INTERETHNIC COOPERATION

The research placed significant emphasis on exploring the topic of inter-ethnic cooperation between communities within the settlements. Various questions were included in the questionnaire to gauge the level of trust, feelings, and expectations of the communities residing in multi-ethnic environments. The aim was to gain insights into the nature and frequency of interactions between different communities, as well as to identify potential areas for improvement.

The focus groups and interviews conducted during the research further delved into the topic of inter-ethnic cooperation, serving as platforms for in-depth discussions and conversations among participants. These discussions aimed to uncover the existing dynamics, challenges, and opportunities related to inter-ethnic relations within the settlements. By focusing on this topic, the research sought to highlight potential areas of concern and recommend strategies for fostering better cooperation and understanding among the communities.

The findings from the questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews will provide valuable insights into the current state of inter-ethnic cooperation in the settlements. They will help identify any existing gaps or barriers that may hinder effective collaboration and trust-building among the communities. Additionally, the discussions and suggestions provided by the participants will offer valuable perspectives on the changes and improvements needed to enhance inter-ethnic cooperation and create a more inclusive and harmonious living environment for all residents.

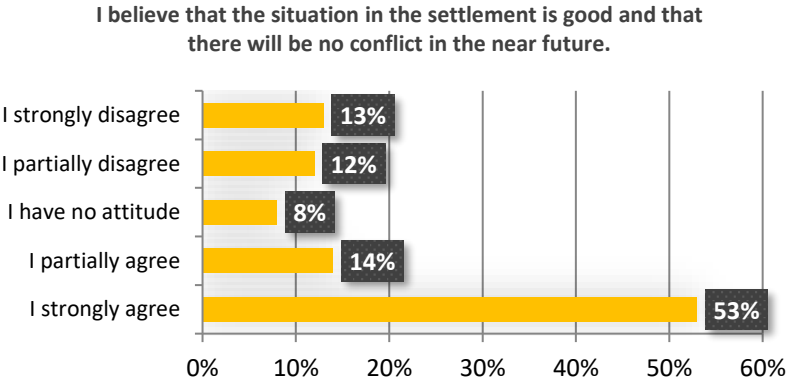
These research findings can serve as a foundation for future initiatives, policies, and programs aimed at promoting inter-ethnic dialogue, strengthening relationships, and fostering a sense of unity and cooperation among the communities in the settlements. By addressing the identified challenges and building upon the shared aspirations and recommendations, it is possible to work towards creating a more cohesive and inclusive community fabric that celebrates diversity and promotes inter-ethnic understanding.



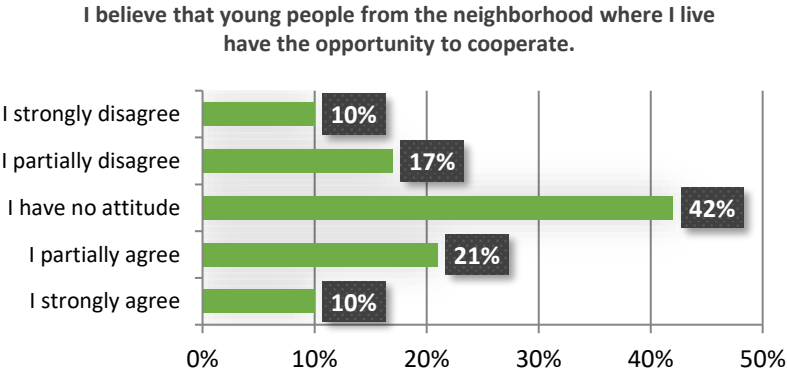
The majority of respondents, as well as participants in the focus groups and interviews, expressed the belief that conflicts are unlikely to occur. The participants' views align with the notion that inter-ethnic relations have improved over time and that previous periods of conflict and tension are now behind them. This positive assessment reflects a sense of tolerance and mutual respect among residents, indicating that inter-ethnic interactions are not burdened by conflict and that people feel secure in their multi-ethnic environments.



It is worth noting that even when incidents occur in the broader context, the situation in the settlements remains unaffected, reinforcing the notion that inter-ethnic relations are stable and peaceful no meter to political problems.



These findings are encouraging as they demonstrate a positive social climate and a lack of significant inter-ethnic tensions within the citizens. This perception of harmonious coexistence can contribute to fostering trust, cooperation, and social cohesion among the communities. It also highlights the potential for building upon these positive dynamics to further strengthen inter-ethnic relations and promote sustainable peace in the settlements.



The findings regarding youth cooperation and opportunities for making friends highlight a concerning aspect of the current situation. The research indicates that there is a lack of perceived opportunities for youth cooperation and limited avenues for building relationships and friendships across different communities.

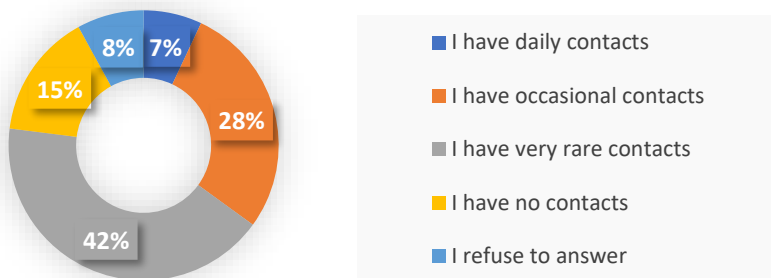
The majority of respondents remaining neutral or expressing a lack of opinion regarding youth cooperation suggests a general sense of uncertainty or unawareness about the potential for collaboration among young people from different communities. This may be attributed to a lack of existing platforms or initiatives that facilitate such interactions.

Similarly, the belief that there are limited opportunities for making friends further emphasizes the social barriers that young people face in developing cross-community relationships. The absence of spaces or activities that promote inter-ethnic interaction contributes to the perceived lack of opportunities for youth to come together and form meaningful connections.

The confirmation of these findings through focus groups and interviews underscores the need for concerted efforts to address this issue. Creating structured programs, community spaces, and platforms that foster inter-ethnic youth cooperation and provide opportunities for friendship-building could help bridge these social divides. By actively promoting and supporting initiatives that bring young people from different communities together, it is possible to encourage collaboration, understanding, and mutual respect among them.

Investing in projects that facilitate youth engagement, cultural exchanges, and joint activities can help break down barriers and nurture positive relationships between young people from various backgrounds. By doing so, the municipality can foster a sense of belonging, inclusivity, and social cohesion among its youth population, leading to a more harmonious and interconnected community.

### How often do you have contact with people from other communities living in your neighborhood?



### HOW DO YOU RATE YOUR CONTACTS WITH MEMBERS OF OTHER COMMUNITIES IN THE SETTLEMENT?



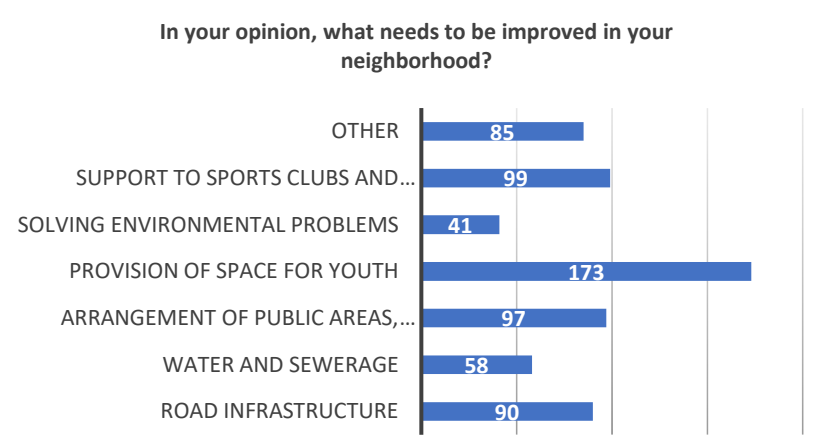
The survey results regarding trust between communities and the belief in relying on neighbors from other communities for help indicate a certain level of distrust and reservation among a significant portion of respondents. However, it's worth noting

that the focus groups and interviews provided a more positive outlook, indicating better relationships and cooperation.

To foster greater trust and improve inter-ethnic relations, it is crucial to address the reservations and build bridges of understanding and cooperation. Efforts should be made to promote dialogue, encourage community events that bring different communities together, and create opportunities for meaningful interactions. By facilitating communication and fostering shared experiences, it becomes possible to break down barriers and build trust between communities. Additionally, initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, inclusion, and mutual respect can play a vital role in strengthening inter-ethnic relations and creating a sense of unity within the settlements.

It is important to recognize that improving inter-ethnic relations requires long-term and sustained efforts, as changing perceptions and building trust takes time. By promoting dialogue, cooperation, and inclusive community practices, it is possible to create an environment where residents can develop positive relationships and overcome reservations towards inter-ethnic interactions.

IMPROVMENT OF LIVING CONDITIONS



The respondents' feedback regarding the changes needed to improve living conditions in the community aligns with the recurring themes observed throughout the research. The majority of respondents emphasized the importance of creating

spaces where young people can socialize and establish connections, as this was identified as a significant issue. Additionally, a considerable number of respondents highlighted the need for infrastructure repairs within the settlement, as well as addressing the employment challenges.

During the focus groups and interviews, similar concerns were raised, and additional issues were identified. Participants mentioned the difficulties faced by members of non-majority communities in finding employment, the lack of information available in official languages, insufficient access to basic education and healthcare services, and a shortage of cultural events catering to non-majority communities.

Based on these findings, it is clear that addressing these challenges and implementing necessary changes can contribute to improving the overall quality of life in the community. Efforts should be directed towards creating safe and engaging spaces for young people to socialize and fostering employment opportunities. Prioritizing infrastructure repairs can enhance the physical environment and residents' well-being. Additionally, ensuring equal access to information, education, healthcare, and cultural events for all community members, regardless of their ethnic background, is crucial for promoting inclusivity and fostering a sense of belonging.

It is essential to engage with the local community, stakeholders, and relevant institutions to develop comprehensive action plans that address these identified needs and challenges. By working collaboratively and considering the diverse perspectives and priorities of the residents, it becomes possible to implement targeted initiatives that can lead to tangible improvements in the community's living conditions.

## CONCLUSION

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In conclusion, the research conducted in the Municipality of Zvečan shed light on various aspects related to living conditions, migration, inter-ethnic cooperation, and the challenges faced by different communities within the settlements. Here are some key points to summarize the findings:

The research revealed a significant level of dissatisfaction among residents, particularly among young people, regarding the living conditions in the settlements. Poor infrastructure, limited opportunities for socialization, and difficulties in managing current incomes were among the major concerns. However, there was a positive belief among respondents that the situation can be improved.

Migration emerged as a major issue, with a substantial number of respondents knowing people who have moved out of their neighbourhoods in recent years. The dissatisfaction with living conditions, especially among the younger population, contributed to the high rate of potential emigration. Efforts to reduce migration should focus on improving living conditions, providing support and opportunities for young people, and addressing the underlying causes.

The research highlighted both positive and challenging aspects of inter-ethnic cooperation. While there was a general perception that inter-ethnic conflicts were unlikely to occur and that people were treated with respect by neighbors from other communities, there were concerns regarding limited youth cooperation, lack of opportunities to make friends across communities, and a sense of discrimination in some cases.

The level of trust between communities was relatively low, with a significant portion of respondents expressing neutral or negative attitudes. Limited everyday contact with people from other communities also contributed to the reservations and lack of trust. Efforts should be made to foster more interactions, build trust, and promote cooperation among different communities, particularly among the youth.

Respondents identified several areas that require attention to improve living conditions. These included the need for spaces where young people can socialize, infrastructure repairs, employment opportunities, access to information in official languages, improved education and healthcare services, and the availability of cultural events for non-majority communities.

Overall, the research findings emphasize the importance of addressing the identified challenges and working towards inclusive and sustainable development in the

settlements. Collaborative efforts involving the local community, institutions, and stakeholders are essential for implementing targeted initiatives that address the specific needs of different communities. By focusing on infrastructure improvements, employment generation, youth engagement, and promoting inter-ethnic cooperation, positive changes can be achieved to enhance the overall well-being and prospects of the residents in the Municipality of Zvečan.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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Prioritize infrastructure repairs and improvements in the settlements to enhance living conditions. This includes investing in road networks, water and sanitation systems, electricity supply, and public spaces. Collaborate with relevant authorities and stakeholders to secure funding for infrastructure projects.

Create dedicated spaces and facilities where young people from different communities can come together, socialize, and engage in collaborative activities. Establish community centers, sports facilities, cultural venues, and youth clubs that promote inclusivity, cooperation, and personal development.



Address the issue of limited employment by promoting job creation initiatives. Work closely with local businesses, private sector organizations, and development agencies to attract investments, support entrepreneurship, and provide vocational training programs.

Develop and implement programs that foster inter-ethnic cooperation and understanding. Facilitate joint projects, cultural exchanges, and community events that bring people from different communities together. Promote dialogue, tolerance, and appreciation of diverse backgrounds through workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns.



Enhance language accessibility by providing information, services, and educational materials in official languages spoken by different communities. Promote bilingual education and encourage the preservation of cultural and linguistic heritage.

Collaborate with healthcare providers, NGOs, and government agencies to address healthcare disparities, improve infrastructure, and provide necessary medical equipment. Promote outreach programs that focus on community health, preventive care, and health education.







Encourage active civic participation and representation of all communities in decision-making processes. Strengthen community committees, encourage community members to take on leadership roles, and ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives in local governance structures. Support initiatives that promote inclusive participation, dialogue, and cooperation among communities.

Enhance access to information and communication channels for all community members. Improve the dissemination of relevant information through multiple platforms, including websites, social media, and community bulletin boards. Ensure that information is available in official languages and consider targeted outreach strategies to reach marginalized or less-connected communities.



Foster cultural events and celebrations that highlight the diversity and heritage of all communities. Support community-led initiatives that promote cultural exchange, traditional arts, and cultural performances. Encourage participation from all community members, celebrate commonalities, and promote intercultural dialogue.

These recommendations should be tailored to the specific context and needs of the Municipality of Zvečan. Collaboration among local authorities, community representatives, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders is crucial for the successful implementation of these recommendations and the long-term improvement of living conditions, inter-ethnic cooperation, and overall well-being in the settlements.





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