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CULTURAL INITIATIVES AS BRIDGES FOR INTERETHNIC RECONCILIATION IN KOSOVO



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INTRODUCTION

With its rich history and cultural diversity, Kosovo faces numerous challenges, including political instability, economic development, and maintaining peace and coexistence among ethnically diverse communities. Within this dynamic, Northern Kosovo has long stood out as a particularly complex region, differing from the rest with specific political and social characteristics that have deepened social divisions and limited interaction between communities, reinforcing prejudices and stereotypes.

In such an environment, cultural activities become key bridges for connecting communities, providing opportunities to overcome these barriers and open spaces for mutual understanding and cooperation.

The research conducted by the NGO ACDC within the "Canvas of Culture in Northern Kosovo" project, funded by the Swiss Cooperation Program, focuses on the impact of cultural initiatives in Northern Kosovo. The goal is to examine how these activities contribute to the promotion of interethnic understanding and the improvement of intercultural cooperation.

BACKGROUND

Cultural activities in the Balkans traditionally play a significant role in connecting communities and reducing prejudice. Numerous studies on cross-cultural activities show their significant role in bonding, especially against the background of different cultural and historical complexities. For example, youth exchange programs such as Erasmus+ and RYCO (Regional Youth Cooperation Office) have proven effective in promoting intercultural understanding and long-term stability in previously conflict-affected regions.¹ These programs allow young people to overcome historical differences through joint learning and cooperation, thus creating the foundations for a common European identity and diminishing nationalistic sentiments.

In Kosovo, numerous international and local projects have been launched with the aim of reducing tensions and building bridges between communities. Northern Kosovo is a region where these divisions are most apparent, but also a place where art and culture can play a significant role. Initiatives such as music festivals, theater performances, and cultural visits have already shown potential to reduce differences and promote dialogue among communities. The next part of the document will discuss these initiatives and their contribution to connecting communities in more detail.

To thoroughly examine the role of cultural activities, a study was conducted, the results of which illuminate the concrete impact of these initiatives on strengthening intercultural cooperation and reconciliation. In the following, we will present the key findings of this research, emphasizing its importance for the further improvement of cultural initiatives in the region.

¹ [MAPPING-ANALYSIS-OF-YOUTH-EXCHANGE-PROGRAMMES-IN-THE-WESTERN-BALKANS.pdf](#)

RESEARCH ANALYSIS - IMPACT OF CULTURAL
ACTIVITIES ON INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION
IN THE NORTH OF KOSOVO



Methodology

For the needs of this research, we used a combination of focus groups and online surveys in order to get a deeper insight into the attitudes and perceptions of the participants about cultural activities and their impact on interethnic cooperation.

Focus groups were organized to allow for a detailed discussion of specific topics related to cultural events and interethnic interaction. Participants from different ethnic communities of Northern Kosovo provided information about cultural needs, interests, and the obstacles participants face in cultural inclusion and cooperation.

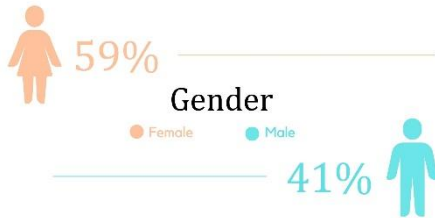
The research was carried out during November and December 2024, with a total of 30 participants representing different demographic profiles. All participants had secondary or higher education, ensuring a certain level of analytical approach and understanding of the topics. The gender distribution among participants was relatively balanced, with 53% female and 47% male participants.

Simultaneously, we conducted an online survey that was available to the wider population of Northern Kosovo with a total of 305 respondents participating. The survey was designed to collect quantitative data on the frequency of participation in cultural activities, perceptions of their impact on reducing prejudices and stereotypes, and motivational factors and barriers affecting participation. The survey questionnaire was available in Serbian and Albanian, ensuring inclusiveness and accessibility of the research. Responses from the survey were quantitatively analyzed to obtain general trends and statistical data that complement insights obtained from focus groups.

Both research methods enabled a comprehensive approach to understanding how cultural activities affect interethnic relations in

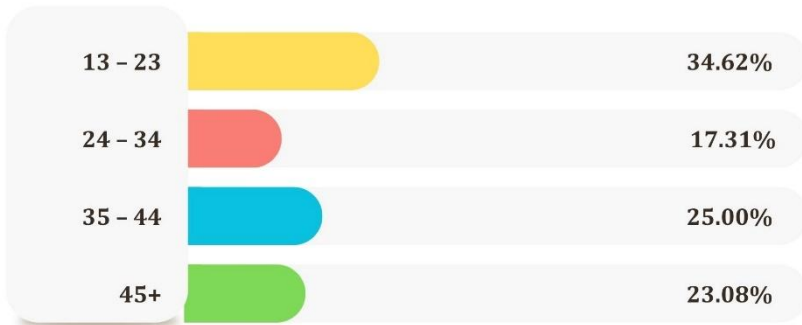
Northern Kosovo, allowing us to formulate recommendations based on actual needs and experiences of the communities.

Demographic data



Gender of participants: The study shows a significant representation of women, who make up 59% of respondents, while men represent 41%.

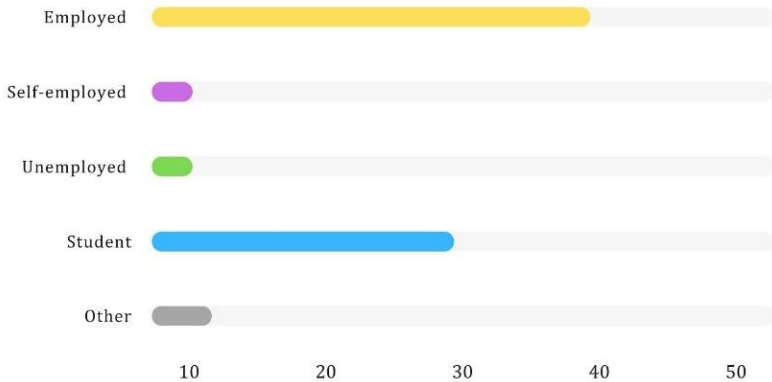
Years



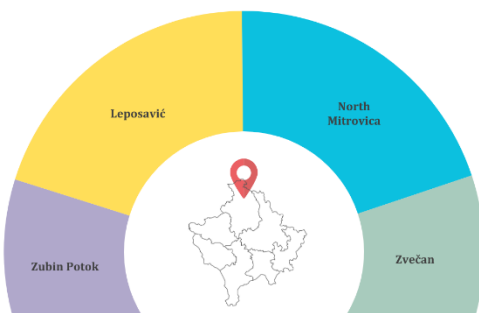
Age distribution: The most numerous age group among participants are youths between 13 and 23 years, making up 34.62% of respondents. Individuals between 35 and 44 years constitute 25% of participants, while the participation of people over 45 years is 23.08%.

Work status: Most of the respondents are students, while employed and unemployed together make up a significant part of the sample.

Working status



Geographic distribution: Participants are from municipalities in the north of Kosovo, including North Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zubin Potok and Zvečan.



Kosovo.

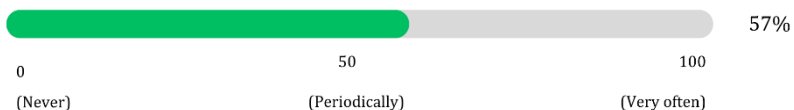
These demographic data provide insight into the structure of participants and enable a better understanding of how different demographic groups experience cultural activities and how they affect intercultural cooperation and understanding in northern

PARTICIPATION IN INTERCULTURAL EVENTS AND INFLUENCE

69% of respondents expressed a high willingness to participate in events organized by other ethnic communities.

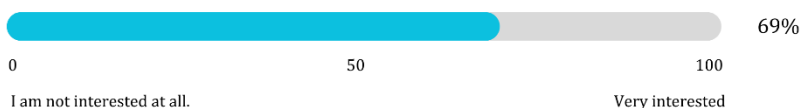
Most respondents agree that cultural activities have a positive effect on interethnic understanding and the reduction of prejudices.

How often do you participate in cultural events (such as concerts, theater performances, exhibitions)?

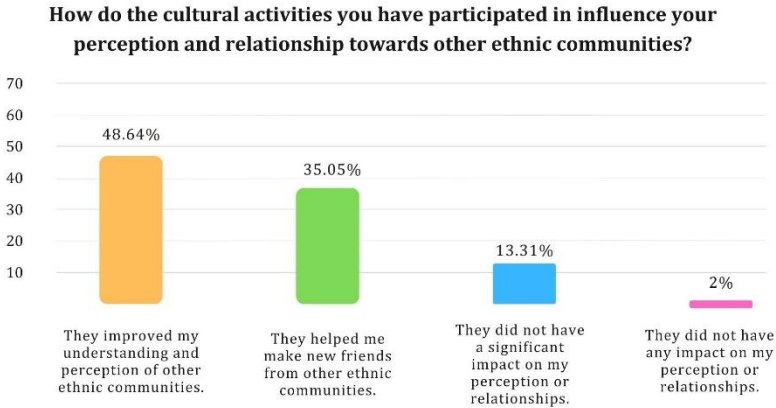


57% of respondents showed moderate frequency of participation in cultural activities such as concerts, theater performances, and exhibitions, measured on a scale from 0 (never) to 100 (very often). During discussions in focus groups, participants confirmed that there is considerable interest in participating in cultural events and expressed enthusiasm for such activities, which they noted enrich social life.

How willing would you be to participate in cultural events organized by members of other ethnic communities?

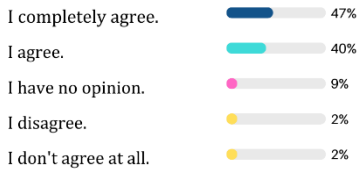


Furthermore, respondents demonstrated significant interest in participating in cultural events organized by other ethnic communities, with 69% of them expressing a high degree of willingness to participate, indicating openness and readiness for intercultural interaction. However, despite this interest, participants highlighted numerous challenges such as the political situation in Northern Kosovo, language barriers, especially in multi-ethnic environments where activities are often organized in a language that is not the first language of all participants.

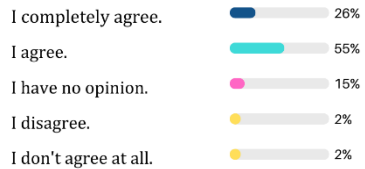


Regarding the impact on attitudes towards other communities, 48.64% of respondents stated that cultural activities they participated in improved their understanding and perception of other ethnic communities, indicating a significant positive effect of cultural activities on interethnic understanding and the reduction of prejudices. Then, 35.05% of respondents stated that cultural activities helped in creating new friendships with people from other ethnic communities. A smaller percentage, 13.31%, believes that cultural activities did not have a significant impact on their perception or relationships, while only 2% of respondents stated that cultural activities did not have any impact.

More intercultural activities contribute to understanding.



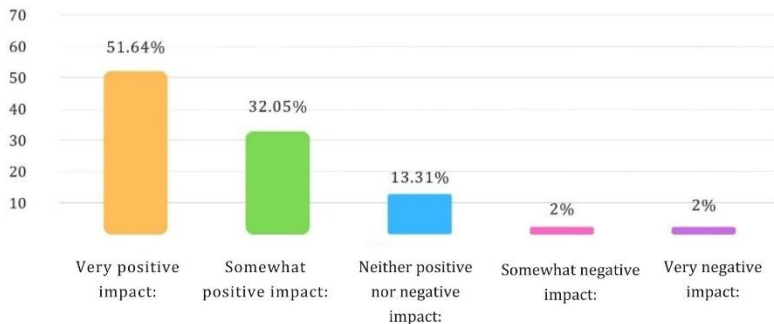
Cultural events reduce prejudice and stereotypes.



Most participants (87.24%) agree that more intercultural activities contribute to better understanding among communities.

Further, 81.1% of participants confirm the positive impact of cultural events on reducing prejudices. The data indicate that participants value intercultural activities and see them as key to improving interethnic understanding, reducing prejudices, and building trust among communities..

How do you assess the impact of cultural events on reducing stereotypes and prejudices among ethnic groups?



On the question of the impact of cultural events on reducing stereotypes and prejudices among ethnic groups, over 40% of respondents rate these events as having a "very positive impact," while about 30% think the impact is "somewhat positive." This shows broad support for the idea that cultural activities effectively contribute to intercultural understanding and the reduction of prejudices. A smaller portion, about 20%, believes that cultural events do not have a significant impact, while the percentage of those who see a negative impact is minimal.

Analyzing the data, it is evident that there is a basis for further strengthening cultural initiatives as a means to enhance intercommunal communication and understanding, which can be crucial for maintaining social cohesion and peace in Northern Kosovo.

Focus group participants agreed that cultural activities play a significant role in connecting people and building social cohesion. Instead of being seen as divided entities, participants said that cultural activities create space for the exchange of ideas, which is particularly important in post-conflict communities like Northern Kosovo. They shared experiences about how joint events, such as the Mitrovica Rock School and Zana Festival, opened up space for genuine interaction and cooperation. It was noted that such events allowed young people to meet in an informal and relaxed environment, often leading to the formation of friendships.

Furthermore, non-governmental organizations are recognized as key actors in promoting cultural cooperation and interethnic connection. Focus groups particularly highlighted organizations that have developed initiatives aimed at youth. Activities such as coffee festivals and music concerts were rated as particularly successful.

In conclusion, participants agreed that culture has the power to connect people through universal themes such as love, joy, and suffering. Through artistic projects, young people can overcome prejudices and develop a deeper understanding of other communities. According to the participants, this process can contribute to greater mutual tolerance and respect, regardless of ethnic or cultural differences.

MOTIVATIONS AND OBSTACLES

Two main motivations for participating in cultural events are interest and social aspects.

Lack of information about events, language barriers, and a feeling of insecurity during interactions with other communities are the main barriers to participation.

From the data collected in the survey about factors motivating participants to engage in cultural events, we obtained the following results:

How important do you consider the following factors to be for your motivation to participate in cultural events?

	IT DOESN'T MATTER	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	MODERATELY IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Interest in art	0%	8.70%	47.83%	41.30%	2.17%
Meeting new people	0%	6.82%	18.18%	52.27%	22.73%
Accessibility of cultural events	4.44%	4.44%	24.44%	55.56%	11.11%

The analysis shows that the majority of respondents (89.13%) consider interest in art a key or very important factor for participating in cultural events, indicating that personal affinity towards art plays a significant role in motivation for participation.

Besides personal interest, a large portion of respondents, namely 75%, see meeting new people as a very important or key motivational factor, confirming that the social aspects of cultural events have a significant impact on participation.

In addition to artistic interest and social motives, accessibility (time and place of event) is very important or key for 66.67% of participants, highlighting the need for organizing events at easily accessible locations.

These data indicate that, while interest in art is the primary motivator, social elements and logistical accessibility also play key roles in encouraging participation in cultural events.

Analysis of barriers to participation in cultural activities according to the survey shows the following key factors:

What obstacles do you consider to be the biggest challenges to participating in cultural activities?

	I DON'T AGREE AT ALL.	I DISAGREE.	I HAVE NO OPINION.	I AGREE.	I COMPLETELY AGREE.
Lack of information	4.35%	0.00%	15.22%	67.39%	13.04%
Lack of interest	4.35%	6.52%	15.22%	58.70%	15.22%
Language barriers	2.17%	15.22%	13.04%	52.17%	17.39%
Feeling of insecurity	2.17%	15.22%	19.57%	47.83%	15.22%

Regarding barriers, the majority of respondents (67.39%) consider the lack of information about cultural events a significant barrier to their participation, indicating the need for improved communication and availability of information about events.

A significant portion of respondents (58.70%) sees a lack of interest as a significant barrier. This could indicate that current cultural programs do not meet the needs or interests of certain segments of the population.

Over half of the respondents (52.17%) identify language barriers as a barrier, underscoring the importance of inclusivity in planning cultural activities, especially in multi-ethnic settings. During focus group discussions, participants often highlighted that the lack of common spaces for gathering further contributes to a sense of isolation. Language barriers were also a topic of discussion, where participants pointed out that even basic knowledge of another community's language can significantly facilitate interaction and reduce misunderstandings.

Approximately 47.83% of respondents point to a feeling of insecurity when interacting with other communities, reflecting the broader socio-political context in Northern Kosovo, where security challenges are still present. This feeling of insecurity is also reflected in focus group

discussions, where participants recognize political factors that create barriers to trust among communities.

In this context, participants emphasized the importance of cultural initiatives being independent of political influence for effective cultural initiatives.



"Effective cultural initiatives are important to be independent of political influence."

-focus group participant

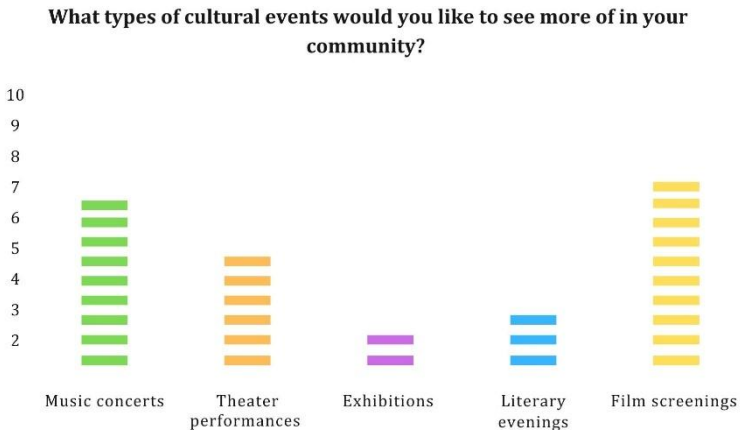
Many participants pointed out that negative political influences often hinder mutual cooperation among communities. Due to political disagreements, many cultural initiatives are affected and limited. If politics were excluded from cultural initiatives, participants believe it could lead to significant progress in building mutual trust and cooperation among communities.

Despite all the benefits that art and culture provide, participants confirmed the existence of a gap in understanding and accepting other cultures. This gap is often a result of a lack of education about other communities, as well as political factors that create barriers to trust. To address this issue, participants emphasized the importance of educational systems in promoting mutual understanding, through a teaching process that integrates topics of intercultural cooperation..

PREFERENCES AND INFORMATION

Research identifies musical concerts and theatrical performances as the most desirable cultural events, with a pronounced interest in performing arts.

Social networks are the main source of information about cultural events, indicating the need for stronger online promotion and engagement via social platforms..



In the focus of our research, musical concerts stood out as the most desirable cultural events among respondents, revealing a strong interest in this form of entertainment and culture in the community. In addition to musical concerts, there is also significant interest in theatrical performances, further indicating an affinity for the performing arts.

Programs like the Eco Art Festival and Mitrovica Rock School show how access to various forms of art can positively affect youth and enable them to overcome ethnic barriers through shared interests and activities.

Exhibitions are also recognized as desirable activities, reflecting an interest in visual arts and education through art. Literary evenings and film screenings, although less popular compared to the aforementioned, still have their audience that desires more such content.

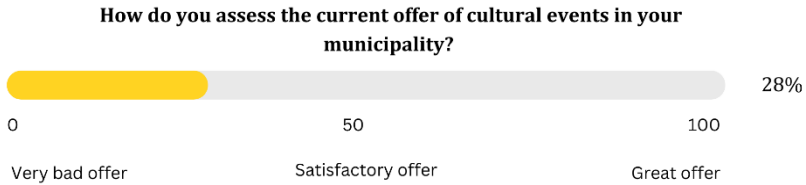
Through experiences with the Pirit Festival, participants indicated that musical events can play a key role in enriching the life of the community..



"The festival provided an opportunity for interaction among people, encouraged creativity, and allowed local artists to present

themselves to a wider audience."- Focus group participant

In addition, during the discussion at the focus groups, the participants stated that there is a positive response from the audience to events like this one, which shows a great desire for cultural manifestations.



However, although there is enthusiasm for such events, respondents rated the current offering of cultural events in their municipality at 28% on a scale from 0 to 100, indicating a perception that the offering of cultural events is far from satisfactory. This result suggests that there is significant room for improvement and expansion of cultural activities to better meet the needs and interests of the local community. This perception indicates that organizers and local authorities have the opportunity to enhance the cultural offering and adapt it to the needs and desires of various groups in the community..

Which channel do you most often use to get information about cultural events?



From the data on the channels through which respondents most often access information about cultural events, we see that social networks

dominate as the main source of information. A large majority of respondents rely on social networks for information about cultural events. These data certainly confirm the importance of digital platforms in modern communication and their ability to distribute information quickly and broadly.

According to the opinions of focus group participants, it is important that cultural events are held in languages understood by all communities, and that information about events be widely available through various media platforms. This includes not only social networks but also local media, websites, mobile apps, and newsletters that can be tailored to different groups, ensuring that no one is excluded from the cultural life of the community.

Local media and recommendations from friends also play a role but are significantly less represented compared to social networks, which certainly indicates that organizers need to invest more resources in online promotion and engagement via social platforms to effectively inform the community about cultural events. In addition to increasing online presence, it is important that organizers focus on developing strategies for audience engagement through interactive content and involving the community in creating programs, which can further stimulate interest and participation in cultural activities.

Respondents' feedback on suggestions for improving cultural activities:

Better information about cultural events, use of various media such as portals, radio and social networks for more efficient dissemination of information

Involving young people in cultural activities through specific programs and greater engagement in organizing events

Improving cultural cooperation at the regional level, which could enrich the local offer of events and enable the exchange of experiences and ideas.

Direct more resources towards cultural projects, especially less sensitive topics that can attract a wider audience without potential controversy.

Establishing centers that would promote multiculturalism and be open to all ethnic communities, which would contribute to better mutual understanding and cooperation.

Hosting a number of cultural events that encompass various forms of art, from music concerts to film screenings and literary evenings.

Organizing exhibitions and workshops that engage the community and strengthen or contribute to social relations between different communities.

Organizing sporting events that encourage participation and cooperation between young people from different ethnic communities.

Developing local platforms (internet portals, radio shows, social networks) that would enable interaction and dialogue between different communities.

OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL INITIATIVES AS A
FOUNDATION FOR INTER-ETHNIC
RECONCILIATION IN KOSOVO



The results of the research clearly indicate the significance of cultural activities in strengthening interethnic understanding and reducing prejudices in Northern Kosovo. Understanding the background of these activities is key to gaining a deeper insight into their impact and potential.

Below, we will present an overview of key cultural initiatives that have laid the foundation for these results. By analyzing their characteristics, challenges, and contributions, we provide a broader context that illuminates how art and culture have become bridges among communities.

In recent years, international organizations in Kosovo, as well as various non-governmental organizations, have launched a series of initiatives to enhance cultural inclusion and dialogue and improve relations between communities in Kosovo. These initiatives aimed to reduce prejudices, build bridges of understanding, and enable coexistence on this ethnically divided territory..

Projects such as the USAID program " **Advancing Kosovo Together**" (**AKT**)² program have contributed to increasing economic opportunities for minority communities and improved conditions that have enabled Kosovo Serbs and other ethnic minorities to become more actively involved in the workforce and government institutions while preserving their unique cultural heritage.³

In addition to economic empowerment, other programs such as **the 'Reconciliation and Conflict Transformation Program'** directly focus on restoring trust between communities.⁴ Supported by USAID, this

² <https://developmentpi.com/what-we-do/projects/usa-id-advancing-kosovo-together>

³ <https://chemonics.com/projects/strengthening-interethnic-cooperation-kosovo/>

⁴ <https://www.rctkosovo.com/>

program plays a key role in restoring trust between communities. The program enables deeper engagement with the cultural and social context of Kosovo, providing platforms for dialogue and joint problem-solving that communities identify as priorities. Within the RCT program, various cultural activities such as exhibitions, cultural visits, poetry evenings, and coffee festivals are organized, which allow people from different communities to connect, share their experiences, and work on building mutual trust. These activities provide space for creative expression, promotion of shared values, and contribution to the reconciliation process on an individual and collective level.

Similar to the RCT program, the initiative '**How do I see you ?**' uses art and media literacy as tools to deepen intercultural understanding and cooperation. The initiative ⁵is a program of the OSCE Mission in cooperation with DokuFest, which organizes intercultural exchanges and youth camps. The goal of the program is to strengthen mutual understanding and break stereotypes through the creation of audiovisual materials, where participants interview each other. Activities include cultural visits across Kosovo, meetings with organizations involved in cultural exchange and dialogue, and education in media and film literacy.

In the north of Kosovo, in the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica, music also plays a key role in bridging ethnic divides, especially through programs such as **the Mitrovica Rock School** .⁶Since its inception, the Mitrovica Rock School has been continuously led and attended by young musicians from both communities of the city, North and South Mitrovica, in equal shares.

The program develops based on the needs and demands of musicians from both parts of Mitrovica and has become the most famous extracurricular program in the city. Its innovative approach to

⁵ <https://www.osce.org/sr/mission-in-kosovo/544912>

⁶ <http://mitrovicarockschool.org/>

reconciliation and minority inclusion has been praised by international media such as BBC, ARD, and NBC..

Despite operating in a very politically sensitive environment, the success of MRS in bringing communities together is attributed to a neutral approach, which allows students to meet and connect on their own terms. This approach, along with strong community support, has enabled the program to continue operating even in times of political unrest and social upheaval.

Mitrovica Rock School is an excellent example of how creative, inclusive music programs can be key to building intercultural dialogue, reconciliation, and building a shared identity in divided societies.

Alongside the success of the Mitrovica Rock School, music festivals like the **Pirit Festival** further enrich the cultural landscape of North Mitrovica, promoting musical diversity and community. This rock and punk festival provides an opportunity for local and regional bands to showcase their work and contributes to the revival of the subculture scene in the city. The festival was first held in November 2023 and attracted both local and visiting bands, with the second annual Pirit Festival taking place on December 6 and 7, 2024, at the Mitrovica Rock School, featuring eight bands from the region..⁷

At the heart of the cultural development of northern Mitrovica is the private cultural center '**Aquarius**' ,⁸ which significantly impacts the city's cultural scene, serving as a key venue for cultural development and expression. Its wide range of activities, including exhibitions, theater performances, concerts, film screenings, and literary evenings, contributes to the rich and diverse cultural offerings of the city.

⁷ <https://radiomitrovicasever.com/2024/12/07/otvoren-drugi-pirit-festival-u-kosovskoj-mitrovica/>

⁸ <https://akvarijus.com/pkc-akvarijus/>

The center has the capacity to execute a variety of programs, including visual arts, performing arts, music, film arts, literature, and publishing, often in its own production, and is particularly significant for its dedication to promoting the arts through original and creative approaches, which include producing its own cultural content and collaborating with local and international artists and groups.

"Aquarius" also plays an important role in educating young people and promoting new generations of artists, through various workshops and art schools, contributing to the preservation and development of cultural heritage and artistic expression in the region.

The "Zana" Festival, organized by Aquarius in collaboration with "7 Arte," aims to overcome language and cultural barriers, promoting understanding and cooperation among Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo through literature and poetry. Besides literature, the festival includes multimedia workshops, film screenings, music evenings, and exhibitions, providing a broad platform for artistic expression and intercultural interaction. The festival's goal is to create a space for dialogue, understanding, and cooperation through art and literature, serving as a platform for positive change and promoting cultural exchange, also highlighting the importance of youth in culture and literature, encouraging them to create and participate in various activities. Over the years, "Zana" has brought together diverse authors, both local and international, and each year's poetry collection accompanying the festival testifies to the richness of artistic expression and the importance of this event for Kosovo's literary scene and beyond..

While the 'Zana' Festival emphasizes literary collaboration, **the Mitrovica Culture Festival** expands cultural dialogue through a series of art, music and literary events, enriching cultural life in North Mitrovica. It takes place in North Mitrovica and includes a diverse

program such as art colonies, exhibitions, poetry meetings and other cultural and artistic activities.⁹

The "North City" Jazz and Blues Festival is a prestigious music event held in North Mitrovica. The festival brings together domestic and international jazz and blues performers, with its mission to promote music as a means of connecting communities, preserving culture, and providing opportunities for artistic exchange.¹⁰

In addition, Mitrovica International Jazz Days (MIJD)¹¹ is an annual festival held in Mitrovica, Kosovo, which aims to connect communities through jazz music. The festival transforms the city into a vibrant cultural center, providing a unique opportunity for people to come together, enjoy the performances of top artists and experience the power of music in strengthening unity and cultural exchange.

The second edition of the festival in 2024 was held from August 22 to 24 and brought together outstanding artists, including the Swedish jazz star Gunnhild Carling. The festival's focus is on promoting cultural diversity, creating an inclusive environment and celebrating the global nature of jazz music.

Finally, it is important to note that non-governmental organizations in North Kosovo actively work on promoting interethnic cooperation and a culture of dialogue and play a significant role in organizing and supporting cultural events aimed at enhancing interethnic dialogue and reducing prejudices. These events not only enrich the cultural life but also build trust and mutual understanding, making culture a bridge between communities.

⁹ <https://radiokim.net/vesti/kultura/219681-likovnom-kolonijom-poceo-29-mitrovacki-festival-kulture/>

¹⁰ <https://alternativna.com/18-dzez-i-bluz-festival-north-city/>

¹¹ <https://telegafi.com/en/mitrovica-international-jazz-days-2024-music-as-a-bridge-of-union-in-the-heart-of-the-city/>

The Mitrovica coffee festival, under the slogan "Neighbor, let's have coffee", organized by CBM (Community Building Mitrovica) was held for the first time on September 29, 2022, in the immediate vicinity of the main Ibar bridge.



Slika 1– Cofee Festival, Main Bridge, North Mitrovica, 2022 © CBM

Through the Activity for Reconciliation and Conflict Transformation, supported by USAID in Kosovo, the event contributed to good neighborly relations in Mitrovica and was organized as a way to gather the population of all ethnic groups, regardless of origin, religion or identity, and create space for socializing together and getting to know each other.¹²

¹² <https://kallxo.com/gjate/festivali-i-kafes-modeli-qe-synon-perafrimin-ne-mitrovice/>

NGO ACDC in the promotion of culture as a means of reconciliation in Kosovo
 Through projects focused on culture, the NGO ACDC effectively uses artistic expression as a means to bridge ethnic and cultural divides, thereby strengthening justice and democratic values in a multiethnic society.



Slika 2 – The performance of the bend Something Went Wrong in PKC Akvarijus, 2024 © ACDC

In this context, the NGO ACDC actively contributes to the cultural life in Northern Kosovo by organizing and supporting various cultural events and initiatives. One of the notable events organized by ACDC was a concert by the Mitrovica band "Something Went Wrong" in May 2024, held at the PKC Aquarius. This

multiethnic band, whose members come from different communities, represents an example of successful intercultural cooperation through music.¹³

Another noteworthy performance was by Dragan Tešić at the PKC



Slika 3 – The melodrama of Dragan Tešić, PKC Akvarijus, 2024 © ACDC

Aquarius in 2024. The melodrama 'With Whom, With What in the EU???' by the author and performer Dragan Tešić, which also aimed at connecting communities through art, was held in 2024 at the cultural centers Aquarius

and Kadri Kadriu in Mitrovica. The play, dealing with the issue of

¹³ <https://acdc-kosovo.org/sr-latn/vesti/nastup-mitrovackog-benda-something-went-wrong>

European integration, provided an opportunity for people from different communities to come together and enjoy the same event, thus connecting these two cultural centers through a shared cultural experience and supporting cultural diversity.

Additionally, ACDC has organized cultural visits across Kosovo, including visits to Prizren, Dečani, Peć Patriarchate, and other significant cultural sites. These visits have enabled participants to better understand the cultural heritage and played a key role in strengthening mutual trust and promoting the values of culture as a means of reconciliation. Through these visits, young people had the opportunity to get acquainted with the common historical and cultural roots, contributing to the building of mutual respect and strengthening stability and peace in the region.



Image 4- Cultural visit to Prizren, 2024, @ACDC

Through all these initiatives, the NGO ACDC is actively engaged in promoting culture as a means of reconciliation, while creating space for mutual understanding and cooperation among the various communities in Kosovo.

CONCLUSION

Cultural initiatives have a profound impact on communities, especially in the context of overcoming ethnic and political divisions that are rooted in a post-conflict society like Kosovo. Through various cultural activities organized in Northern Kosovo over the years, a platform for mutual understanding, cooperation, and reconciliation among different communities has been created, laying the foundations for building a shared identity and reducing tensions.

The results of this research have clearly shown that cultural activities have an extremely positive impact on intercultural understanding and the reduction of ethnic prejudices. With significant interest in art (89%) and readiness for cooperation (69%), the results show a need for expanding the offering of cultural content, thereby fulfilling the potential for enhancing intercultural understanding and reducing prejudices.

However, barriers have been identified that hinder greater participation in cultural activities, including lack of information and language barriers, as well as a sense of insecurity when interacting with members of other communities. In addition, it is recognized that the unstable political situation also affects interethnic relations, which can further complicate the organization and participation in cultural events. To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to improve communication, organize multilingual events, and create safe spaces for mutual acquaintance.

Despite all challenges, the high level of willingness to participate and the positive effects of cultural activities indicate the importance of further investment in cultural projects as means for building lasting reconciliation and a shared identity. Further development of these initiatives, with support from international and non-governmental organizations as well as local authorities, is crucial for achieving sustainable peace and stability in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✓ Develop and strengthen communication channels through which information about cultural events is provided, especially through social media and local media, to make information more accessible to the wider public.
- ✓ Schools and universities can integrate topics of cultural diversity and interethnic cooperation into their curricula through subjects such as civic education, history, arts, and social sciences.
- ✓ Enable access to cultural activities for people of different linguistic backgrounds by providing materials and communication in multiple languages.
- ✓ Develop programs that specifically promote the inclusion of minority and marginalized groups in all aspects of cultural activities.
- ✓ Local organizations can contribute to funding cultural projects through sponsorships and donations, as well as by providing logistical support such as providing venues, technical equipment, or promotional resources.
- ✓ Ensure that the locations and times of cultural events are adapted to the needs and possibilities of the wider community.
- ✓ Specifically target young people through innovative and engaging cultural activities that attract their interest and actively involve them in creating cultural content.
- ✓ Organize a greater number of cultural events of various types, such as musical concerts, theatrical performances, and exhibitions, to cover different interest spheres.
- ✓ Regularly conduct research and analyses to monitor the effects of cultural events on intercultural understanding and adjust programs based on collected data.

- ✓ Work on creating and maintaining long-term partnerships between cultural institutions, local authorities, educational institutions, and the private sector to support the development and expansion of cultural activities.



" By promoting intercultural exchange and understanding, we can turn cultural diversity into a resource for building peaceful, inclusive societies ."

- Irina Bokova, former Director General of UNESCO.