

# INCREASING THE PARTICIPATION OF KOSOVO'S WOMEN IN THE KOSOVO-SERBIA PEACE PROCESS THROUGH TRACK II ACTIVITIES

## 1. Project background

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As part of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)'s Rapid Response Window (RRW), the Research Institute of Development and European Affairs (RIDEA) implemented the project *Increasing the participation of Kosovo's women in the Kosovo-Serbia peace process through Track II activities* between January and June 2024. RIDEA organised activities involving influential women, policymakers, civil society organisations, journalists and scholars from both ethnic communities in Kosovo (Albanian majority and Serb minority), as well as foreign diplomats accredited in Prishtina, aiming to influence or complement a Track I peace process between Kosovo and Serbia.

RIDEA produced a joint policy report with think-and-do tank Inclusive Peace titled 'Shaping Peace: Women's Inclusion in the Kosovo-Serbia Peace Process', and shared these findings and recommendations at a high-level conference in April 2024. Following this, RIDEA conducted a comprehensive national public opinion survey on public perceptions of the peace process and women's participation within it, culminating in a report titled 'Vox Populi on the 'Peace Trail' between Kosovo and Serbia: Unveiling Women's Role'. The poll results were presented and discussed at another high-level conference in June 2024, where RIDEA advocated for Kosovo women's inclusion in the Kosovo-Serbia peace process.

This policy brief combines and integrates findings and recommendations from these two reports, and provides integrated recommendations for increasing Kosovo women's inclusion in the Kosovo-Serbia peace process.

*Shaping Peace: Women's Inclusion in the Kosovo-Serbia Peace Process*, conference hosted by RIDEA in Pristina, Kosovo, 22 April 2024.



## 2. Policy report: ‘Shaping Peace: Women’s Inclusion in the Kosovo-Serbia Peace Process’

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### Key findings

- **Stagnated dialogue:** Peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia were viewed by those interviewed as in a condition of stalemate, with political stakeholders perceiving them as a platform for unnecessary compromises or a zero-sum game.
- **Challenge of *meaningful* women’s inclusion:** Women are present but not represented. Despite advancements in women’s representation in leadership positions, this progress has failed to translate into broader meaningful inclusion and a lack of genuine commitment to a gender-sensitive agenda that is mindful of how women are affected in different situations.
- **Women’s inclusion in Track II:** A limited number of interviewees could identify specific examples of women’s contributions to the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, and women have encountered obstacles in recognition. The most prominent constraining factors to women’s inclusion in the peace processes are women’s underrepresentation in decision-making and formal negotiations, and societal attitudes and expectations of gender roles in Kosovo.

### Strategic recommendations

Drawing on the above findings, the policy report proposed three strategic recommendations to enhance women’s inclusion:

- **Multitrack approach:** To promote participatory decision-making processes and diversify involvement channels, combine official Track I negotiations with informal Track II dialogues.
- **Local ownership:** Ensure wide-ranging community engagement, greater transparency and local ownership by incorporating grassroots organisations and civil society in discussion processes.
- **Gender-sensitive policies:** Implement policies that promote gender equality in peace talks. These policies should address social norms and incorporate women’s views into frameworks for decision-making.

### 3. Survey report: ‘*Vox Populi* on the ‘Peace Trail’ between Kosovo and Serbia: *Unveiling Women’s Role*’

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#### Key findings

- **Public dissatisfaction:** Nearly half of respondents<sup>1</sup> expressed discontent with the present EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, mentioning concerns over European integration, global recognition of Kosovo and unresolved internal community issues.
- **Support for inclusivity:** The public’s desire for inclusivity is demonstrated by the fact that more than 80% of respondents believe the Kosovo government should make efforts to include women actors and peacebuilders in the dialogue process, and 82% would support the appointment of a woman to lead the dialogue process.
- **Barriers to women’s participation:** Respondents felt that persistent gender biases in society, a male-dominated political system, and a lack of government support for women’s involvement were the key barriers to women’s participation in the dialogue process.

#### Strategic recommendations

Drawing on the findings of public sentiment from the nationwide survey, the following three strategic recommendations aim to enhance women’s representation and participation:

- **Advocacy for inclusive dialogues:** There is extensive public support for extending dialogue representation beyond governmental levels to include opposition parties, civil society, academia and women peacebuilders. The government should include representatives from these groups in the dialogue/negotiating team.

1. 49% of respondents were dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied with the current dialogue process. 26% responded that they were satisfied or strongly satisfied. 25% responded ‘do not know/do not really have a view’ on this issue.

*Vox Populi on the ‘Peace Trail’ between Kosovo and Serbia: Unveiling Women’s Role* – conference hosted by RIDEA in Pristina, Kosovo, 20 June 2024.



VOX POPULI ON THE  
**‘PEACE  
TRAIL’**  
BETWEEN  
**KOSOVO AND SERBIA:**  
*Unveiling Women’s Role*

- **Women actors/peacebuilders in the dialogue:** Strong endorsement exists in favour of including women actors/peacebuilders in the dialogue. Strategies to enhance women’s inclusion should be considered by governmental actors, and follow-up policy actions must be taken.
- **Women’s leadership:** There is strong support for appointing a woman to lead the dialogue process. The government and other relevant stakeholders should heed this substantial support and consider designating a woman to lead the dialogue.

## 4. Integrated strategic recommendations from the policy report and survey report for enhancing Kosovo women’s inclusion in the Kosovo-Serbia peace process

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- **Utilise an inclusive multitrack approach with a focus on women’s leadership** to increase the involvement of women, and commit to their adequate representation in formal and informal decision-making procedures. This would involve integrating official Track I negotiations with unofficial Track II dialogue, ensuring that diverse perspectives from academia, women peacebuilders, civil society and opposition parties are included in these sessions. Designate a woman to lead these talks to strengthen gender-sensitive leadership throughout both tracks.
- **Enhance representation of women peacebuilders and strengthen local ownership** to ensure that women’s opinions and inputs are acknowledged and considered at grassroots levels, improving transparency and community involvement. In addition, women-led organisations, women peacebuilders, civil society organisations and grassroots organisations should be included in decision-making and dialogue processes.
- **Develop and implement gender-sensitive policies** that support gender equality and are influenced by various viewpoints, including those of women and other underrepresented groups. Moreover, gender-sensitive policies should be drafted that incorporate women’s perspectives into decision-making frameworks and that address the social norms that limit women’s participation.

A more inclusive and productive dialogue framework can be established via incorporating other viewpoints and advocating for gender equality in decision-making. Encouraging women to actively participate in peace talks not only reinforces democratic procedures but also supports Kosovo and Serbia to maintain long-term stability and sustainable peace. Following the above recommendations will help to ensure that all voices are heard and represented in determining a peaceful future between Kosovo and Serbia.

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**Disclaimer:** The views and analysis in this report are solely those of RIDEA and do not reflect the donor’s views.

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