SHAPING PEACE:
WOMEN'S INCLUSION IN THE KOSOVO-SERBIA PEACE PROCESS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2023, the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter referred to as Kosovo and Serbia for the sake of brevity and consistency), with support from the European Union and the United States, reached a normalisation agreement, followed by the Implementation Annex signed on 18 March. This was understood as the expression of mutual commitments to finding solutions for longstanding problems. However, the peace process has faced significant obstacles, particularly regarding the normalisation agreement's implementation. Despite both ample empirical evidence as to the positive effect of greater women's inclusion in political processes such as peacemaking and peacebuilding, and normative demands for greater women's involvement in political processes, encapsulated under the Women, Peace and Security agenda, centred around UNSCR 1325, women's exclusion from the Kosovo-Serbia peace process also persists.

The normalisation process between Kosovo and Serbia is not isolated from the broader context of contemporary peace processes. Findings and experience from research, policy, and practice increasingly highlight the need to explore alternative spaces and approaches to peacemaking and peacebuilding to address stalled negotiations and deficits in implementation. Illustrated by instances of currently stalled formal peace processes, when navigating multi-layered processes, two distinct inquiries come to the fore: how to establish new spaces and entry points for peacemaking and peacebuilding across different levels, and how to overcome obstacles in formal and informal spaces to increase the involvement of historically marginalised actors such as women.

In this regard, the multitrack approach, which has long distinguished between formal Track I and informal Track II settings, has been instrumental in comprehending inclusion across various levels. The framework in the following report, thus, draws on secondary literature and comparative evidence on 'inclusion' and a 'multitrack' model to analyse primary sources on the peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia. The analysis of the interviews aims to serve two primary purposes: first, to take stock of lessons learned from the peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia, and second, to examine the issue of women's inclusion, providing insights into strategic options to enhance women's role in Track II and exert influence on the formal Track I process.

The report employs a qualitative study of 43 structured interviews involving political, civil society and international actors directly or indirectly engaged in Track I and Track II peacemaking and peacebuilding in Kosovo. Drawing on concepts from existing theory and, normative international policy frameworks, and analytical frameworks developed by Inclusive Peace, the data collection on women's inclusion in Track II addressed three distinct periods in the Kosovo-Serbia peace process: the past experience of women's engagement in formal and informal processes, the context of the implementation phase of the Brussels Agreement, and future ways forward to render the ongoing processes more inclusive. The roles, contributions, and influence of women - and civil society actors more broadly - in the negotiation and implementation phases were thus at the crux of the investigation.

Key Findings

The interview data revealed contrasting perspectives regarding potential solutions to address the commonly recognised deadlock. Across the interviews, what stands out amid this broad spectrum of perspectives is the shared understanding that women have been excluded and that there is a need to enhance their inclusion.

First, peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia are viewed as being in a condition of stalemate, with political stakeholders perceiving them as a platform for unnecessary compromises or a zero-sum game. Others express concerns about weak internal commitments and the diminishing external leverage of the EU, which has spearheaded dialogue efforts aimed at advancing the process. The findings substantiate the notion of the broadly exclusive nature of the process, with many respondents criticising it for being elitist, top-down, and imposed by international actors.

Second, the interviews bring into focus the challenge of *meaningful* women's inclusion, particularly in the sense of being 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.

Third, concerning women's inclusion in Track II, only a limited number of the participants who directly engaged in previous initiatives could identify specific examples of women's contributions to the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. Even in the few examples of previous efforts,

women actors encountered obstacles in recognition. The most prominent process and context-related constraining factors for women's inclusion in peace processes include underrepresentation in decision-making and formal negotiations and societal attitudes and expectations pertaining to gender roles in Kosovo.

The report identifies the following entry points and options to move forward and enhance women's inclusion in the Track II peace process and transfer across the tracks:

- Rethinking and changing the approach and strategies on inclusion vis-à-vis domestic and international actors;

- Local ownership and an intersectional approach in developing inclusion criteria;

- Promoting trust-building and reconciliation on the grassroots level (and scaling up local engagement);

- Improved transparency and communication between government and civil society in Kosovo;

- Developing shared advocacy strategies among Kosovo women peacebuilders;

- Establishing consultative mechanisms between Track I and Track II actors; and

- Changing the scope of the agenda to ensure it is gender sensitive.

The interview respondents underlined that enhancing women's inclusion is seen by many as being necessary for the sustained successful implementation of the peace process. The significance of women's involvement in advancing stalled processes emerged as a critical focal point for potentially breaking the current stalemate. However, women's inclusion in contributing to and monitoring the progress is still lacking. Across those interviewed, consensus exists on the need to reshape the implementation process into a more bottom-up, citizen-centred undertaking. Interview participants seeking new solutions and instruments to improve monitoring and implementation emphasise inclusive joint monitoring, consisting of civil society, women peacebuilders, government, and international representatives. Effective collaboration in separate tracks and across tracks would also benefit from concrete indicators and steps that engage local communities in Kosovo.

I.   INTRODUCTION

In February 2023, building on previous EU-facilitated dialogues, Kosovo and Serbia reached the Brussels Agreement on normalisation, with international support from the European Union and the United States of America. This landmark agreement was further reinforced by the Implementation Annex signed on 18 March 2023 in Ohrid. However, despite the recent achievements (termed as diplomatic breakthroughs), with the issues persisting at the core of the longstanding dispute, the subsequent implementation of the agreements has encountered significant challenges.

Amidst the persisting problems, it is evident that substantial gaps persist in women's participation in formal peace processes (Track I) and informal peacebuilding activities (Track II). To this end, this report aims to address these critical gaps, focusing on Track II activities, given their potential significance for reshaping the engagement to make the processes more inclusive. The primary objective of this study is two-fold: firstly, to serve as a stocktaking undertaking on women's role and potential in different phases of peace processes between Serbia and Kosovo, and secondly, to provide a contextualised understanding of the constraining and enabling factors for women's inclusion in peace processes and offer strategic options for internal and external actors to render ongoing processes more inclusive.

The policy report is organised as follows: Chapter I provides the introduction and overview situating the policy report in the contemporary context; Chapter II outlines the data collection, research design and methodology, and the theoretical concepts used for the subsequent analysis. Chapter III presents a literature review on the multitrack peace processes and women's inclusion. This part further draws on the previous findings on inclusion in the implementation of peace agreements. Chapter IV qualitatively examines interviews and offers the report's key findings on women's inclusion in peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia. The policy report's final section is dedicated to identifying the key entry points and recommendations for peacebuilding practitioners to consider in their efforts to render Track II peace processes more inclusive.

II.   METHODOLOGY

The policy report draws its basis from – interviews conducted by the Research Institute of Development and European Affairs (RIDEA), aimed at taking stock of past peace processes and gaining insights into women's inclusion in Track II activities in peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia. Data collection relied on 43 structured interviews with political actors, international stakeholders, and national and local civil society actors from Kosovo, including women's rights organisations, activists, experts, and the media (most participants were women). The interview guide was designed based on Inclusive Peace's knowledge base on the inclusion of civil society actors in peace and political transition processes, including two specific analytical frameworks,[1] and served as the cornerstone of the data collection process. Given this report's focus on women's participation in Track II processes, 'inclusion' in the study specifically refers to the participation and influence of diverse women actors beyond the principal negotiation parties. The interviews focused on different phases of the past and ongoing processes. First, participants with knowledge and professional experience reflected on past peace processes and Track II initiatives, mainly focusing on the role of women in these efforts. This initial stage aimed to identify and analyse past engagements using fundamental concepts of 'Track II' diplomacy, 'inclusion' and 'transfer'. Drawing upon these lessons, the interview transitioned to the current context and explored the implementation phase, specifically focusing on women's roles and their challenges. Finally, the interviews concluded by gathering participant perspectives on future entry points in peacebuilding to render them more inclusive.

The collected data was subsequently organised into themes through qualitative content analysis software. After a sample of 43 structured interviews was coded, the relevant segments were examined utilising conceptual tools developed within the research frameworks of meaningful inclusion and broadening participation. This approach helped to identify and interpret findings to meet the objectives of the following policy report. Besides, to gain a more comprehensive understanding, the study examines not only the themes but also the frequency of their occurrence. The final stage of analysis included internal organisational quality control mechanisms of review and stakeholder feedback.

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[1] The "inclusion modalities" framework; and the "civil society peacebuilding functions" framework.

The following analysis acknowledges the limitations of understanding women's roles and inclusion in peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia. Being a qualitative study, which reflects researcher bias in interpreting data, operationalising concepts and extending them to observable indicators is challenging, given the subjective nature of qualitative coding. Despite these limitations, the report offers valuable insights for researchers and policymakers by examining previously neglected aspects of the context.

III.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.   Track I Peace Processes and Women's Inclusion: General Trends

Grounded in several political and peace studies theories, the term *inclusion* has evolved into an umbrella concept that encapsulates a broad range of practices and policies and both participation and representation of diverse actors. While the concept of inclusion has progressed in many ways, this report delves explicitly into gender inclusion. It is also crucial to highlight that women's inclusion has served as a catalyst for encouraging the participation of other groups. Research over the past decade has conceptualised how civilian actors beyond the principal parties to a conflict can be involved in peace and political transition processes,[2] and evidence has also demonstrated various positive impacts that women's inclusion in formal peace processes has had. Specifically, women's access to and influence over formal peace negotiations increases the chance of reaching and implementing peace agreements.[3] Peace agreements with women signatories are also more likely to produce long-lasting peace than

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[2] The multi-year project "Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation", applying comparative analysis of 40 case studies conducted a comprehensive examination of societal participation and representation in formal peace and political transition processes. The research gave rise to a typology of inclusion modalities, spanning direct representation at the negotiation table, observer status, consultations, inclusive commissions, high-level problem-solving workshops (track I.5), public decision-making, and mass action. Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, "Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations," (Geneva: 2011-2017), https://www.inclusivepeace.org/project/broadening-participation/

[3] Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, "Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations," (Geneva: 2011-2017), https://www.inclusivepeace.org/project/broadening-participation/ [last accessed: 25 May 2024]; Joakim Kreutz and Magda L. Cárdenas, "The Women and Men that Make Peace: Introducing the Mediating Individuals (M-IND) Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research* (2024): 1-11; Thania Paffenholz, Nick Ross, Steven Dixon, Anna-Lena Schluchter, and Jacqui True, "Making Women Count — Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations," Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (The Graduate Institution of International and Development Studies) and UN Women (2016), www.inclusivepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/report-making-women-count-en.pdf [last accessed: 25 March 2024]; Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, and Thania Paffenholz, "Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes," New York: International Peace Institute (2015), https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IPI-E-pub-Reimagining-Peacemaking.pdf [last accessed: 25 March 2024].

those women do not sign.[4] Thirdly, women's meaningful participation in Track I or Track II peace processes increases the probability of peace agreements, including gender provisions.[5]

Despite the established normative commitment to women's inclusion in peace and political transition processes – chiefly grounded in the WPS agenda centred around UNSCR 1325 – and the growing body of evidence of the positive impact of women's participation, women's exclusion from peace processes is still prevalent. Specifically, women have, on average, accounted for 13 per cent of all negotiators involved in formal peace processes around the world between 1992 and 2019. Peace processes with women mediators and signatories of peace agreements have been even more of an exception during that period.[6] Moreover, several factors have constrained women's influence over the few formal peace processes in which they have been included (see below).

At the same time, formal peace processes are increasingly stalled or blocked. Currently, there are only four UN-led peace processes which have struggled to make progress for years. Therefore, Researchers and practitioners increasingly question the predominance of the traditional negotiating table for peacemaking and peacebuilding.[7] Exploring alternative spaces and approaches to peacemaking and peacebuilding[8] and revisiting the common understanding of inclusion are two entry points in this regard. Inclusion, for example, might be better understood as gender-related issues being addressed during negotiations rather than women's

4 Laurel Stone, "Women Transforming Conflict: A Quantitative Analysis of Female Peacemaking," SSRN Scholarly Paper (2014), https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2485242; Jana Krause, Werner Krause, and Piia Bränfors, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace," *International Interactions* 44, no. 6 (2018): 985–1016, https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386.
5 Jacqui True and Yolanda Riveros-Morales, "Towards Inclusive Peace: Analysing Gender-Sensitive Peace Agreements 2000–2016," *International Political Science Review* 40, no. 1 (2019): 23-40.
6 Council on Foreign Relations "Women's Participation in Peace Process," Council on Foreign Relations (2020), https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/ [last accessed: 25 March 2024].
7 Jan Pospisil, "Peacebuilding and Principled Pragmatism," In Navigating Inclusion in Peace Process, ed. Andy Carl, ACCORD 28, Conciliation Resources (2019), 18-22.; See also Esther Meininghaus, "A New Local Turn for Track One Peace Process Research: Anthropological Approaches," *Negotiation Journal* 37, no. 3 (2021): 325-359.
8 Thania Paffenholz, "Perpetual Peacebuilding: A New Paradigm to Move Beyond the Linearity of Liberal Peacebuilding," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 15, no. 3 (2021): 367–85; Antonia Porter and Heidi Riley, "Beyond the Vertical: What Enables Women Mediators to Mediate." Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) (2021), https://www.c-r.org/learning-hub/beyond-vertical-what-enables-women-mediators-mediate [last accessed: 25 March 2024]; Cedric De Coning, "Adaptive Peacebuilding," *International Affairs* 94, no. 2 (2018): 301-317; Noah Aboueldahab, "Track II Diplomacy: How Can it Be More Effective?," Middle East Council on Global Affairs, Issue Brief (2022), https://mecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/English.pdf [last accessed: 25 March 2024].

mere physical presence at the negotiating table. [9] Paying attention to different spaces and dynamics at play in formal and informal peace processes may help both understand and address the barriers to women's inclusion and promote impactful peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives (see subsection on "framework of multitrack diplomacy" below).

These factors - the lack of influence in formal peacemaking, coupled with the increasing ineffectiveness and stagnation of the formal peacemaking process - raise fundamental questions regarding the directionality and utility of traditional approaches to inclusion. This policy report seeks to reflect on and interrogate these questions in the context of peacemaking efforts in Kosovo (and Serbia) and seeks to shed light on alternative approaches given these factors and prevailing dynamics.

2. Inclusion during Implementation

Inclusion in the implementation stage is one of the key themes explored in this policy report. The successful implementation of peace agreements is indispensable for achieving quality peace, which encompasses state-building and durable social, economic, and political transformations.[10] However, despite the clear evidence for the crucial role of implementation in qualitative and quantitative studies, a significant part of the analysis in peacebuilding has a disproportionate focus on the formal negotiation phase.

As peace agreements are often criticised for being power-sharing elite deals that last shorter, exacerbate divides and exclude marginalised groups, including women, [11] they often fail to address the underlying causes of conflict. [12] The focus on "who gets what" and power distribution during negotiations matter for implementing provisions. Comparative research suggests that implementation often involves a continual renegotiation of agreements, occurring

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[9] Andreas T. Hirblinger and Dana M. Landau, "Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking," *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 4 (2020): 305-322.

[10] Terrence Lyons, "Peace Implementation and Quality Peace," in Understanding Quality Peace: Peacebuilding after Civil War, eds. Madhav Joshi and Peter Wallensteen, *Routledge*, (2018):29–44.

[11] See e.g., Maria-Adriana Deiana, "To Settle for a Gendered Peace? Spaces for Feminist Grassroots Mobilisation in Northern Ireland and Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Citizenship Studies* 20, no. 1(2016): 99-114; Ronan Kennedy, Claire Pierson, and Jennifer Thomson, "Challenging Identity Hierarchies: Gender and Consociational Power-Sharing," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18, no. 3 (2016): 618-633; Laura Wise, "Setting Aside the 'Others': Exclusion Amid Inclusion of Non-Dominant Minorities in Peace Agreements," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 24, no. 3 (2018): 311-323.

[12] Roger Mac Ginty, "No War, No Peace: Why so Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace," *International Politics* 47, no. 2 (2010): 145-162; See also Porter and Riley 2021.

within a mix of formal and, quite frequently, informal negotiation settings.[13] Peace agreements are also seen as roadmaps that need a flexible approach to implementation rather than a strict framework for implementing change. [14] A growing body of evidence suggests that the conventional peacebuilding model according to which peace processes progress from a ceasefire and subsequent pre-negotiations to negotiations and eventually the implementation of a political settlement in a linear fashion is misleading.[15] In fact, the implementation phase in different contexts (including agreements between Kosovo and Serbia) often coincides with negotiations and entails long changes in political processes and governance. This alternate perspective also shifts the analytical unit of focus from the negotiations and agreement to the *process* where a wide range of actors play an essential role in shaping the societal power structure. Even though the role of inclusion in the implementation process (both in terms of inclusive *participation* and in terms of inclusive *outcomes*) has not received sufficient attention from researchers and practitioners, recent evidence from comparative research supports the view that inclusive implementation can help a peace or political transition process to continue.[16]

More than negotiations, implementation often becomes a complex process that takes place across a multitude of formal and informal settings, creating a multi-layered process.[17] As such, while the above-mentioned inclusion modalities remain highly relevant, the implementation process - primarily as it encompasses different levels in the renegotiation of the terms - can also broaden the scope of inclusion beyond the initial negotiation table. Finally, while women bear the brunt of the economic, social, and medical hardship that armed conflict causes,[18] they

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[13] Alexander Bramble and Thania Paffenholz, "Implementing Peace Agreements: From Inclusive Processes to Inclusive Outcomes?," United Nations Development Programme, Empowered Lives. Resilient Nations", Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, (2020), https://www.inclusivepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/report-inclusive-implementation-en.pdf [last accessed: 25 March 2024].

[14] Terrence Lyons, "Successful Peace Implementation: Plans and Processes," *Peacebuilding* 4, no. 1 (2016): 71–82.

[15] Paffenholz 2021. See also Christine Bell and Jan Pospisil, "Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalised Political Unsettlement," *Journal of International Development* 29, no. 5 (2017): 576-593 and De Coning 2018 on deviations from the liberal peacebuilding model.

[16] Bramble and Paffenholz 2020.

[17] Ibid.

[18] See e.g., Dara K. Cohen and Ragnhild Nordås, „Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict: Introducing the SVAC Dataset, 1989-2009," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 3: 418-428; Eran Bendavid et al., "The Effects of Armed Conflict on the Health of Women and Children," *The Lancet* 397, no. 10273 (2021): 522-532; Karen Brounéus, Erika Forsberg, Kristine Höglund, and Kate Lonergan, "The Burden of War Widows: Gendered Consequences of War and Peace-Building in Sri Lanka," *Third World Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2024): 458-474; Susan McKay, "The Effects of Armed Conflict on Girls and Women," *Peace and Conflict* 4, no. 4 (1998): 381-392; Kien Le and My Nguyen, "Armed Conflict and Birth Weight," *Economics & Human Biology* 39 (2020): 100921; Nathaniel Danjibo and Adebimpe Akinkuotu, "Rape as a Weapon of War against Women and Girls," *Gender and Behaviour* 17, no. 2 (2019): 13161-13173.

can also use periods of escalating violence to occupy influential economic and social positions in society previously held by men.[19] However, during the implementation phase, women often have to grapple with men's attempts to re-establish the pre-existing patriarchal order. This "patriarchal backlash" is driven by a combination of patriarchal norms, militarised behaviours, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as facilitated access to weapons.[20] Men employing violence against women proponents of peace and women's rights[21] and women more generally[22] or undermining the implementation of gender quotas[23] are all examples of manifestations of patriarchal backlash. A potential entry point towards mitigating patriarchal backlash is the employment of gender quotas with other temporary special measures (TSMs) that enable the *transformation* of deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and values. This is also an example where elements geared towards inclusive *participation* can shape inclusive *outcomes*. These other TSMs could take the form of effective training for women delegates in peace negotiation and implementation bodies or advocacy campaigns that empower women and enhance public support for gender provisions, among others.[24] As women encounter limitations, a gender-sensitive agenda that is mindful of disparities and takes into account the impact of gender on a particular issue may create an opportunity for marginalised gender identities to exercise agency.

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[19] Kaitlyn Webster, Chong Chen, and Kyle Beardsley, "Conflict, Peace, and the Evolution of Women's Empowerment," *International Organisation* 73, no. 2 (2019): 255-289; Aili M. Tripp, "War, Revolution, and the Expansion of Women's Political Representation," *Politics & Gender* 19, no. 3 (2023): 922-927; Ingrid V. Bakken and Halvard Buhaug, "Civil War and Female Empowerment," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65, no. 5 (2021): 982-1009.

[20] Marie E. Berry, "Barriers to Women's Progress after Atrocity: Evidence from Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Gender & Society* 31, no. 6 (2017): 830-853; Marie E. Berry, Yolande Bouka, and Marilyn M. Kamuru, "Implementing Inclusion: Gender Quotas, Inequality, and Backlash in Kenya," *Politics & Gender* 17, no. 4 (2020): 1-25; Sophia Close, "Gendered Political Settlements: Examining Peace Transitions in Bougainville, Nepal and Colombia," Conciliation Resources (2018), p 11, www.c-r.org/accord/gendered-political-settlements [last accessed: 25 March 2024].

[21] Julia M. Zulver, "The Endurance of Women's Mobilisation During 'Patriarchal Backlash': A Case from Colombia's Reconfiguring Armed Conflict," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 23, no. 3 (2021): 440-462.

[22] Hilary Matfess, Roudabeh Kishi, and Marie E. Berry, "No Safety in Numbers: Political Representation and Political Violence Targeting Women in Kenya," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 25, no. 3 (2022): 506-528.

[23] Close 2018; Sara Niner, Deborah Cummins, Selver B. Sahin, Stella Mulder, and Emily Morrison, "Women's Political Participation in Post-conflict Settings: The Case of Timor-Leste," *Asian Studies Review* 46, no. 2 (2022): 1-19.

[24] Philip Poppelreuter, Alexander Bramble, and Nick Ross, "Using Temporary Special Measures for Inclusive Processes and Outcomes," Geneva: Inclusive Peace (2022), https://www.inclusivepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/TSM-final-Inclusive-Peace-Mar2023-UNW.pdf [last accessed: 25 March 2024]; see also Nick Ross, "A Practical Guide to a Gender-Inclusive National Dialogue," Geneva: Inclusive Peace (2022), https://www.inclusivepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/National-Dialogues-final-Inclusive-Peace-Mar2023-UNW.pdf [last accessed: 25 March 2024].

3. Process and Context Factors Enabling or Constraining Women's Inclusion

There are a number of factors that may either enable or constrain the influence of women on peace and transition processes. They can be grouped into two categories: the first set of "process factors" is related to how the process of inclusion is designed; the second set of "context factors" is related to the context in which this inclusion occurs.

Nine process design factors that enable or constrain the ability of women to participate in and influence peace processes are:[25]

1. Selection criteria and procedures;
2. Decision-making procedures;
3. Coalitions and joint positions;
4. Transfer, communication and advocacy strategies;
5. Attitude of conflict parties and mediators;
6. Early involvement of women in the process;
7. Support structure for women;
8. Monitoring of women and gender provisions;
9. Funding.

Nine context factors that affect women's inclusion are:[26]

1. Elite resistance or support;
2. Public buy-in;
3. The influence of regional and international actors;
4. The presence of strong women's groups, networks, or movements;
5. The heterogeneity of women's identities;
6. Societal attitudes and expectations surrounding gender roles;
7. Regional and international women's networks;
8. The existence of prior commitments or gender provisions;
9. The preparedness of women.

These process and context factors relate to various modalities of inclusion and occur in different phases of peace and political transition processes. Certain factors, particularly selection and

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[25] Thania Paffenholz et al. 2016, pp. 8-9.
[26] Ibid., pp. 50-54.

decision-making criteria and procedures, can help increase the number of women participating in or represented in a peace process. Nevertheless, research also suggests that an increase in women's participation/representation does not automatically translate to *meaningful* influence.[27] First, conflict parties or third parties supporting the process may see women's involvement as merely symbolic (token representation). Even in instances where women's involvement is meaningful, integrating gender perspectives into the design and focus of a peace process (and implementation of any eventual agreements) is often limited. Second, a lack of unity and self-organisation among women can hinder their collective influence, as demonstrated by the cases of the Nepalese (2008-2012) and Yemeni (2013) national dialogues. [28] Third, patriarchal stereotypes have often sought to depict women negotiation delegates as unfit to participate in peace negotiations and politics. Excluding women delegates in peace negotiations from informal decision-making spaces has further undermined their influence over negotiations.[29] Finally, societal norms and expectations can weaken public buy-in, and women themselves may face limitations due to societal pressures and a lack of capacity.

In this context, it is relevant to note that an over-focus on formal peace processes often hinders women's inclusion while overlooking the spaces and strategies women use to influence in less visible, less formal ways. According to Paffenholz, civil society participants are frequently left out of peace negotiations due to concerns that their involvement may complicate the talks, lead to selection challenges, and face opposition from significant conflict parties. [30] The radicalisation of societies and a relatively limited number of initiatives and participants can hinder the effectiveness of Track II initiatives.[31] This is especially pertinent for this report, which identifies the trends of radicalisation, the politicisation of the environment, and tensions

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[27] See also Karen Ellerby, "A Seat at the Table Is Not Enough: Understanding Women's Substantive Representation in Peace Processes," *Peacebuilding* 4, no. 2 (2016): 136-150; Sumie Nakaya, "Women and Gender Equality in Peace Processes: From Women at the Negotiating Table to Postwar Structural Reforms in Guatemala and Somalia," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organisations* 9, no. 4 (2003): 459-476.

[28] Bramble and Paffenholz 2020, p. 41; Porter and Riley 2021, p. 15.

[29] Paffenholz et al. 2016, pp. 24 and 39-40; Denise Kostovicova and Tom Paskhalis, "Gender, Justice and Deliberation: Why Women Don't Influence Peacemaking," *International Studies Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2021): 263-276.

[30] See also Isa Mendes, "Inclusion and Political Representation in Peace Negotiations: The Case of the Colombian Victims' Delegation," *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 11, no. 3 (2019): 272-297, p. 276.

[31] Thania Paffenholz, "Summary of Results for a Comparative Research Project: Civil Society and Peacebuilding," *Centre on Conflict, Development & Peacebuilding Working Paper* (2009), https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/library/publications-institute/civil-society-and-peacebuilding-summary-results-comparative-research [accessed February 13, 2024].

in the normalisation process. These pose significant obstacles to the meaningful inclusion of Track II actors if the scale and nature of interventions do not match the challenges.

4. Framework of Multitrack Diplomacy

The framework of multitrack diplomacy provides a model to examine women's meaningful inclusion in peace processes, including the one between Kosovo and Serbia. It acknowledges and delineates distinct tracks (and the linkages between these tracks) in peacebuilding and peacemaking and continues to have a significant role in informing practice in the field. Formal negotiations and high-level talks between the conflict parties are usually placed in Track I. Concurrently, Track II initiatives represent workshops, dialogue sessions and problem-solving activities strategically designed to rebuild trust and relationships among diverse stakeholders. Their core purpose has commonly been understood as directly and indirectly influencing and supporting so-called Track I negotiations.[32] Nevertheless, the impact of Track II diplomacy on Track I negotiations may fall short of expectations (see more below on Transfer). Bottom-up engagement in peace processes that involve community-based grassroots initiatives is termed Track III. These tracks are designed to create horizontal and vertical linkages, and new approaches often highlight the growing recognition of the need for effective connections across multiple levels, from grassroots to formal negotiations. More recent theory and practice highlight a distinction between first and second-generation Track II. The term Track I.5 encompasses the original Track II concept and broader and distinctive peacebuilding activities across formal and informal settings. [33] Overall, the multitrack model, allowing for the involvement of a broader spectrum in society, has emerged as a preferred model for peacebuilding, making it a legitimate and more effective process.

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[32] Thania Paffenholz and Kaitlyn Hashem, "Transfer from Track Two Peacebuilding to Track One Peacemaking: A Focus on Yemen and Syria", Geneva: Inclusive Peace (2022), https://www.inclusivepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/TrackII-Report-final-Inclusive-Peace-Mar2023-UNW.pdf [last accessed: 25 March 2024]; see also Heidi Burgess and Guy Burgess, "Conducting Track II Peacemaking," United States Institute of Peace (2010), https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PMT_Burgess_Conducting%20Track%20II.pdf [last accessed: 25 March 2024].

[33] Thania Paffenholz, "Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment," in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), https://doi.org/10.1515/9781685856878.

Infographic 1. Definition of Tracks-based model to Peacemaking [34]

With regards to conceptualising *transfer,* recent debates discuss whether Track II *complements* or *shapes* the formal settings. In the context of Track II processes, the ideas and actions may move *upwards* to influence Track I negotiations or *downwards* to impact public opinion. The understanding of transfer has accordingly moved beyond Track II activities merely supporting or influencing Track I processes. There is also a distinction between *insider* (e.g. consultations with decision-makers) and *outsider* (e.g. involving media) strategies.[35]

Five additional observations related to transfer stand out. Firstly, transfer remains an ambiguous concept that peacebuilding actors and researchers struggle to define clearly. Practical insights on effective transfer strategies, therefore, remain scarce.[36] Secondly, stalled Track I processes complicate women's and civil society's efforts to boost Track I.[37] Women's "informal" dialogue efforts, such as shuttle diplomacy, back-channel mediation or confidence-

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[34] Paffenholz and Hashem 2022.

[35] Esra Cuhadar and Thania Paffenholz, "Transfer 2.0: Applying the Concept of Transfer from Track-Two Workshops to Inclusive Peace Negotiations," *International Studies Review* 22, no. 3 (2020): 651–70, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viz031; see also Julia Palmiano Federer, Julia Pickhardt, Philipp Lustenberger, Christian Altpeter, and Katrina Abatis, "Beyond the Tracks? Reflections on Multitrack Approaches to Peace Processes," Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (2019) on broadening the understanding of Track II processes.

[36] Paffenholz and Hashem 2022; see also Palmiano Federer et al. 2019.

[37] Ibid.

building measures, have nevertheless been identified as an entry point towards reviving stalled Track one peace processes.[38] Those efforts may also enhance women's influence over formal peace processes. Thirdly, women representatives in Track I processes are often disconnected from "local" women who work in fragile areas affected by conflict. A better grasp of the dynamics, tensions, and obstacles related to the exchange between women in formal peace negotiations and their local counterparts would help to design more robust transfer strategies that promote inclusive Track I processes.[39] Fourthly, independent Track II-level diplomacy efforts could be more effective in addressing context-specific structural conflict drivers than formal peace processes, often mediated by Western actors, who may prioritise short-term solutions to end armed conflict.[40] Treating Track II and Track I processes as equal and moving away from the *transfer* concept could promote more inclusive peacemaking and peacebuilding and detach the path dependencies and contingencies which often tie the "success or failure" of Track II processes to Track I efforts.[41] Fifthly, the trend of broadening conceptualisations of Track II diplomacy mentioned above has been conducive to civil society's inclusion in Track II activities.[42]

5. Women Inclusion in Track II Peace Processes

Peacebuilding practice has frequently neglected the diversity within civil society. Emphasis has often been placed on elite-oriented minority civil society groups, which only partially mirror the broader societal landscape, especially in non-Western societies where political participation takes different forms from those encompassed by Western Liberal peacebuilding theory and practice. Although the recent analyses of peace processes still continue to revolve around activities among political and military elites, there is a growing acknowledgement of the potential contribution that civil society can make to peace processes (see below).[43] The new

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[38] Christine Bell and Robert Forster, "Re-Invigorating Stalled Peace Negotiations: Challenges and Opportunities for Women's Inclusion," PA-X Report, Spotlight Series, Edinburgh: Global Justice Academy, University of Edinburgh (2019), https://peacerep.org/publication/re-invigorating-stalled-peace-negotiations-womens-inclusion/ [last accessed: 25 March 2024].

[39] Meininghaus 2021.

[40] Aboueldahab 2022.

[41] Paffenholz and Hashem 2022.

[42] Julia Palmiano Federer, "Toward a Normative Turn in Track Two Diplomacy? A Review of the Literature," *Negotiation Journal* 37, no. 4 (2021): 427-450.

[43] See e.g., Desirée Nilsson and Isak Svensson, "Pushing the Doors Open: Nonviolent Action and Inclusion in Peace Negotiations," *Journal of Peace Research* 60, no. 1 (2023): 58-72.

approaches also spotlight issues of marginalisation, coordination challenges, and fragmentation within the broader context.

In contrast to the patterns of marginalisation in Track I processes described above, women have a vast record of active engagement in Track II diplomacy to promote a negotiated settlement of armed conflicts. Comparative evidence indicates that 60 per cent of formal peace processes between 1989 and 2017 were accompanied by informal peace processes. There is clear evidence for women's groups' involvement in 71% of all those informal peace processes.[44] Specifically, track II diplomacy that involved women has aimed to enhance the legitimacy of formal peace processes, advocated for women's inclusion in formal peace talks, monitored human rights violations, mediated local conflicts, and pushed for the inclusion of women's rights in formal peace agreements, amongst others.[45] Inter-women dialogue across conflict divisions has also helped to mitigate polarisation and create a more conducive environment for comprehensive peace talks.[46]

IV. KEY FINDINGS

Introduction

The paper's structure presents key findings of the report in three sections that follow thematic order in line with the framework of inclusion in multitrack processes, as it allows for a nuanced exploration of women's roles and involvement at each stage and across different tracks. The first section features an overview of key findings on the current context and existing perspectives regarding the nature of past Track I and Track II processes and the role of different actors. The second section explores the theme that receives particular attention for the report: women's inclusion across different tracks of peace processes and constraining process and context factors that potentially limit women's influence in negotiations and implementation. The final section considers the entry points and future scope of action for women peacebuilding practitioners and national and international stakeholders.

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[44] Agathe Christien, "Advancing Women's Participation in Track II Peace Processes," Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (2020), https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Good-Practices-for-Womens-Involvement-in-Track-II.pdf [last accessed: 25 March 2024].

[45] Anjali K. Dayal and Agathe Christien, "Women's Participation in Informal Peace Processes," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 26, no. 1 (2020): 69-98.

[46] María Villellas Ariño, "The Participation of Women in Peace Processes: The Other Tables," International Catalan Institute for Peace, Working Paper 2010/5, pp. 26-27.

1.   Taking Stock on Lessons Learned on Track I and Track II Processes

1.1.   Overall Context Assessment: Critical Junctures and Track I Processes

For most interview participants, the launch of the EU-facilitated dialogue between the governments of Serbia and Kosovo was seen as a critical milestone. For others, the most critical moment dates back to the Rambouillet Agreement (1999) and Vienna talks (2004-2007) or the newest process in 2023 with the Brussels Agreement on normalisation (with Ohrid annexe). Most of the interview answers also attach high importance to the negotiations on the Association of Serb-majority Municipalities (ASMM), which has become a controversial stumbling block for every party engaged in the negotiation and implementation phases (for a breakdown of critical junctures, see Appendix C).

Many of the challenges evident in peacebuilding in Kosovo and Serbia repeat similar patterns observed in other contexts. This confirms how formal peace processes in recent times have encountered setbacks and stagnation in their approach. Salient characteristics unveiled in the context assessment include exclusion, lack of transparency, ethnic division, growing radicalisation, and the instrumentalisation of past agreements and initiatives.

Exclusion and lack of ownership in formal peace processes

The peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia are widely characterised as exclusive, lacking genuine local ownership. Many previous endeavours, seen as a top-down process, have been criticised for being elitist and imposed by international and political actors. Despite some positive results, these assessments are applied broadly to the EU-facilitated dialogue - "the dialogue has been constructed without the actual political will and public buy-in" (Interview 39). Yet, while a broad consensus exists for making the processes more inclusive, with many advocating for a more open and participatory approach, opinions diverge on the effectiveness of pathways to achieving lasting solutions. Others believe meaningful progress can only be secured through direct political negotiations at the highest levels. Occasionally, this is also viewed positively as providing international backing to previous peacebuilding efforts.

The divergence in perspectives regarding the unfolding process underscores how negotiations and implementation have evolved into a multi-layered dynamic, with varying interpretations of its changing capacity. Regarding recent developments and the 2023 agreements, divergent perspectives emerged. On the one hand, they were perceived as exacerbating the crisis due to their ambiguity regarding governance in Kosovo and empowering non-democratic elements in

politics (Interview 17) and (Interview 1). On the other hand, they were deemed "more holistic" and had the potential to be "game changers", offering a broader scope for implementation (Interview 26), (Interview 20), and (Interview 17).

Challenges of women's inclusion in Track I formal settings

There appears to be a majority consensus among participants that the representation of women in the dialogue process has been lacking from the very start. Despite certain legal mechanisms in place, the UN Resolution 1325 advancing Women, Peace and Security agenda is yet to garner commitments and recognition and be implemented (Interview 43), (Interview 12), (Interview 6).[47] Track I continues to be a men-oriented process where women have been absent in decision-making positions besides the previous chief negotiator, Ms. Edita Tahiri.

The absence of the gender perspective in the dialogue process is reflected in the topics raised during the dialogue, which focus on traditional security over human security, as is reflected by the fact that issues directly affecting women, such as wartime sexual violence, are yet to be brought into these discussions. Emphasis is given to the importance of having women as representatives and ensuring a gender-sensitive approach to peace agreements. The lack of such an approach is considered an important setback in the current mediation process (see below for more on women's inclusion).

Lack of transparency in Track I processes

Restricting access to information posed significant barriers to civil society's ability to monitor the process and inform the public and communities directly affected by the reached agreements. Moreover, some observed problems with the documentation and reporting of the processes and a lack of coordination among Track I actors - "first of all, there needs to be a dialogue between the dialogue makers" (Interview 9).

Ethnic relations and social cohesion

The Draft Statute on the Association of the Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASMM) in Kosovo is seen as one of the most controversial parts of the peace process. Several participants

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[47]Although there appears to be renewed efforts to bolster commitments towards advancing the WPS agenda and implement UNSCR 1325.

expressed concerns that it establishes a new (termed as unconstitutional) governance level in Kosovo, possibly leading to disintegration (Interview 8), (Interview 1), (Interview 14), (Interview 24), (Interview 35), (Interview 27). According to some, the ASMM is considered a critical juncture where the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia has derailed, mainly due to the lack of clarity and consensus towards the ASMM from all involved parties. The lack of transparency, alongside the ambiguity of the language of the agreements reached, is seen as a big problem as it leaves space for different interpretations regarding the implementation. The lack of consensus over the legal status of the agreements reached without signatures from representatives of both countries is heavily criticised, as leaders of both countries, alongside EU representatives, present different narratives to the public.

1.2.   Implementation of Agreements between Kosovo and Serbia

Most of the answers confirm that progress in dialogue has been stalled for some time, and implementation lags behind. Without clarity on how to address the issues, the whole process and, particularly, government commitments remain ambiguous. The research identified several reasons for the widespread sense of stalemate regarding the success of peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia.

Ambiguity and lack of transparency in implementation

The absence of transparency in implementation, including national programs and reforms within the European integration process, hampers accountability. The government's reluctance to engage with civil society further compounds the issue and impedes citizens' participation and local initiatives at the grassroots level. Moreover, the lack of transparency from the governments of Serbia and Kosovo is a key factor in the general public's lack of trust in this process, and there is tension between ethnic communities as they do not understand what agreements are being reached. There are concerns that there is no genuine interest among politicians, with past efforts on internal dialogue driven mainly by the international community (Interview 5). The case of the ASMM is referred to as an example which deepens mistrust due to the lack of transparency from the government. Thus, transparency is seen as crucial in civil society's work to inform the general public, mobilise the people's acceptance of this process and prevent group polarisation and inter-ethnic tensions due to elevated threats and due to misunderstanding of the meaning of the reached agreements.

Moreover, an important lesson drawn from the region is to avoid a similar scenario to Bosnia in terms of ethnic division and tensions ('Bosnianization' of Kosovo). Furthermore, participants expressed concerns that other non-majority communities (other than Serbs) are marginalised, overlooked and not included in the dialogue and reconciliation process. Subsequently, almost ¼ of the participants expressed the need for intra-Kosovo ethnic dialogue.

Limited political will

Some participants share the concerns that, on the one hand, the loss of political will to implement critical policies, and on the other hand, unilateral decisions have resulted in stagnation and a breakdown in transparent communication, diminishing public trust towards the process. This is combined with rapid political changes and Kosovo's government structure. Some respondents consider that there tends to be a mismatch between the demands of society and civil society activities and the government, which, despite spearheading the implementation, does not seem to give due importance to monitoring the process.

EU's diminished leverage

Overall, international actors seem to have a significant influence on the implementation process, offering guarantees and bolstering support for governments and civil society in Kosovo and Serbia. Even though implementation has become a part of the European integration process, according to some respondents, integrating implementation into the EU accession path did not lead to tangible results in terms of overcoming implementation challenges. Notably, the co-occurrence of emerging codes in the interviews shows that participants correlate the lack of political will and government incapacities to implement with repeated instances of infringement cases, often encountering inadequate responses from the EU.[48] However, it could also be worth mentioning that some participants consider the invasion of Ukraine and geopolitical conditions as providing the momentum to resolve the problems in the Western Balkans and push for the agreement in 2023.

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[48] The EU has also been critisised for appeasing Serbs during negotiations and implementation.

1.3.   Track II Initiatives in Kosovo and the Role of Different Actors

Most participants were able to recall the past initiatives that were directed at supporting the negotiations. According to many participants, Track II processes in Kosovo *complemented* and *supported* both bilateral and multilateral political-level negotiations.

Objectives and functions

Track II initiatives in Kosovo played different roles at different times. This is especially important to discuss as none of the separate functions enables the meaningful participation of women actors in peace processes. Instead, the different functions and objectives establish the process pertaining to the meaningful inclusion of women.

The analysis shows that civil society's direct engagement with the dialogue process was limited. Working *parallel* to formal Track I, they have mainly initiated ad hoc and issue-based initiatives, activities on reconciliation, dealing with the past, the internal dialogue between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs, monitoring of the processes of the dialogue and implementation, demanding governmental accountability, and keeping the public informed. In Kosovo, the actors in Track II, in many cases, had the watchdog function, holding governments accountable for their actions in the peace process and pressuring political figures in the Assembly to report back on progress (Interview 35). Furthermore, they actively worked to increase transparency by facilitating intra-Kosovo dialogue across different communities. A prime example is the parallel Track II Pristina-Belgrade format between the civil society actors from both sides. Additionally, Track II was related to agenda-setting by raising awareness on critical issues that were often overlooked (such as missing persons, victims of rape, and documentation of war crimes). There is an emphasis on the role of Track II *in supporting the formal negotiation process through* monitoring and conducting qualitative work done by civil society, including advocacy and research reports as a part of the dialogue (see below for more on transfer).

Challenges

At the same time, there are rare initiatives related directly to the implementation of the agreements. There is an over-reliance on donors' funds, and the lack of activities is viewed as a problem due to funding.

A lack of information, transparency, and communication has often hampered civil society's work. This is further compounded by a communication breakdown between technical working

groups, activists, and political actors. One of the participants even expressed concerns over how CSOs in Kosovo and the region are now less proactive in finding common solutions compared to past efforts (Interview 2). Funding constraints are highlighted as a major factor contributing to the reduced activity of civil society, consequently limiting opportunities for women and youth to engage in peacebuilding activities.

The interviews also showed concerns about the existing political interference, resistance and failure to grant space to Track II activities that limit the impact on Track II Processes.

Effectiveness and impact on formal processes

When it comes to the effectiveness of past actions and the contribution by civil society, almost ⅓ of the participants think that there were limited efforts and impact of initiatives that draw sufficient attention in the society and political circles. Track II was relatively more active prior to 2019. The Brussels Agreement was deemed a catalyst for more inter-ethnic collaboration between civil societies in the North of Kosovo and the rest of the country. A few participants interpret the past as a series of missed opportunities for the government and civil society to achieve results with ethnic Serb communities (in 2015-18), resulting in shrinking space for Track II activities starting from 2019 (Interview 13). Others think that the past initiatives were designed to have a limited impact on the formal peace process (including those on women's inclusion) and were confined to a small group of civil society actors (particularly from Pristina) (Interview 24), (Interview 21), (Interview 27). Previous artistic and cultural activities were mentioned as examples of successful initiatives that have brought different parts of society together (Interview 13).

On the transfer from Track II to Track I process, there are mixed perceptions whereby some actors perceive a successful transfer, albeit limited, while others do not perceive any successful transfer. This lack of transfer is attributed mainly to the governments of Kosovo, Serbia, and the EU due to their approach, which is regarded as non-transparent and non-inclusive of the civil society, women, and non-majority communities. Moreover, there is an emphasis on the role played by political developments, which negatively impact the ongoing work of civil society on the ground, with examples of increasing tension in the situation in the North. The terrorist attack against Kosovo Police in Banjska is mentioned often as an example that overshadowed achievements. Specific to the Kosovo government, challenges also extend to the change of political representatives as there is not much transfer of information, and institutional

memory, subsequently diminishing the role carried out by CSOs. In contrast, specific to the Serbian government, challenges extend to the prevalence of ongoing nationalist rhetoric, which further hinders inter-ethnic relations. Positive instances of transfer refer to *downward* transfer - from Track II initiatives to the public (Track III).

International Support to Track II peace processes

Many stressed the vital role of international supporters in strengthening the civil society in Kosovo. Regarding international support, diplomatic missions mainly funded and facilitated activities/initiatives targeted at interethnic communication and collaboration. Particular focus has been given to activities and initiatives to support the Kosovo Serb community on issues such as education, access to healthcare, and everyday issues. Track II initiatives that previously targeted diverse actors from Kosovo and Serbia were funded and supported by the Swiss government (providing technical expertise, convening Track I.5 meetings). Another international actor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, was singled out for its role in supporting dialogue in Kosovo (Interview 13). However, international support from other donors was also singled out, such as Quint embassies in Kosovo, the Norwegian embassy, etc. International support also led to more active government engagement by parties from Belgrade and Pristina (Interview 4). The specific engagement with national and local actors, to some extent, also involved coalition-building in order to support the stalled process and organise multi-stakeholder events (e.g. Kosovo Peace and Democracy Summit).

2. Kosovo Women's Representation and Inclusion in Peace Processes

2.1. Kosovo Women Inclusion in Track I Processes

The role of Kosovo women in promoting women's rights, empowerment, and political participation is recognised amongst almost all the participants. However, the active role and involvement rarely extend to direct engagement in formal peace processes. A common response to this question is *"I cannot think of any" (Interview 20, Interview 33).* Even when UN Resolution 1325 is mentioned as an example of formalising the institutional commitment to women's inclusion across various levels in peace processes, the efforts stay on paper without being translated into implementation.

Specific names known to participants included not only a chief negotiator, Edita Tahiri, but also the key women negotiators in the Vienna process and in peacebuilding before the Brussels process, including the collaboration between the women of Kosovo and Serbia. Tangible work

is noted in the advocacy for survivors of sexual violence in Kosovo, with the appointment of the Special Envoy of the President for the issue of sexual violence during the war as a positive example. Although Edita Tahiri is recognised as a prominent figure and chief negotiator in the earlier stages of the dialogue, achieving progress in the formal Track I process during her tenure in negotiations, concerns are raised that Tahiri's contributions might have been marginalised or overlooked. Some also point to the fact that the breakthroughs in the dialogue happened during periods when women, such as Catherine Ashton and Federica Mogherini (from the EU side), were involved. Since Ms. Tahiri, besides the indirect role of women in office, President Osmani and President Jahjaga, there has been an absence of women from Kosovo's side in Track I. When chief negotiator Edita Tahiri led the negotiations, this also focused on consultations with women from different communities (Interview 31). Even though consultations by the mediation team before and during the negotiations engaged communities across Serbian and Albanian-majority municipalities, including women, they did not produce effective follow-up mechanisms.

However, there were a small number of participants who drew on comparative perspectives, saying that in terms of women's inclusion, peace processes in Kosovo (and Serbia) witnessed major breakthroughs and could be considered more inclusive than in other contexts (Interview 31), (Interview 11), and (Interview 4).

In Kosovar politics, the previous local and national elections saw an increase in women's representation due to the implementation of 30% gender quotas. In the last parliamentary elections, there was notable progress in women's representation, with their success highlighting reduced reliance on quotas for securing Assembly seats. Nevertheless, the representation of women has been close to the threshold. Among the respondents, there is a widespread feeling that while quota systems have increased the number of women in parliaments and cabinets, their presence often fails to translate into meaningful participation. Despite occupying these positions, women can feel excluded from genuine decision-making circles. Even women in leadership positions in the government and Assembly face difficulties in influencing the agenda within the political parties and institutions, which tends to show a persisting gender gap in the political and institutional settings. This corroborates with the recent debates that while quantitative involvement is important, women's mere physical presence does not enable the transformation of patriarchal structures, pointing towards considerations that quotas should be combined with other temporary protective measures to achieve inclusion.

Overall, while certain civil society actors and women actively engaged in Track I or Track II activities acknowledge women's roles and contributions to peace processes, those who were not directly involved in peace negotiations or civil society initiatives find it challenging to navigate past dynamics and pinpoint specific roles women have played. The following subsection will further elaborate on factors contributing to women's exclusion.

2.2.   Constraining Factors for Women's Inclusion

Examining the connections among the coded segments in the document shows that the main constraining factors repeatedly mentioned for explaining the absence of women's involvement in peace processes are:

1) Societal attitudes and expectations surrounding gender roles;

2) Attitude in institutional settings and indifference from the state and political actors;

3) Underrepresentation of women in decision-making and formal negotiations.

Women are seen as being weaker and not ready to participate in the dialogue as it seems as a "men's process" (Interview 36). Some participants expressed views that the mentality is slowly changing (e.g. having two women presidents and the election of women in the Assembly without the quota); however, it is acknowledged that women bear the heavier household burdens, including house chores and raising kids, which impacts their careers, including their participation in politics. Additionally, the negative public perception of the dialogue and public contestation influences women's reluctance to be associated with it, especially as they are more judged and face more considerable negative consequences than men. Elitism is another observation whereby the government is criticised for excluding women and other non-majority communities from the process.

The other factors that consistently come up, pointing to the key challenges for inclusion, involve high political cost and public scrutiny of women compared to men, negative portrayal by media, lack of motivation among women actors, general lack of inclusion in society, lack of visibility of women actors in peace processes, and limited access to economic resources and property.

The following table shows the emergent codes based on frequency, consistency and connection to explain the barriers, characterised as process and context factors constraining women's involvement in the peace processes:

Themes	Emergent Codes
Process Factors	Underrepresentation in decision-making and formal negotiations (particularly the absence of consultations with local actors)
	Indifference from the state and political actors
	Quantity-based selection in leadership positions
	Barriers for women in institutional settings
	Absence of inclusion strategies and support structures
Context Factors	Societal attitudes and expectations surrounding gender roles
	High political cost and more public scrutiny than male counterparts, resulting in lack of motivation and will for commitment
	Lack of Gender sensitivity
	Lack of visibility and acknowledgement of women's contribution to peace processes
	Limited access to economic resources and property

Table 1. 5 Most Prominent Constraining Process and Context Factors for Women's Inclusion in Peace Processes

2.3. Women's Inclusion in Track II and Transfer from Track II to Track I Processes

There is a general lack of knowledge on past peacebuilding initiatives that were directed at the inclusion of women, which shows signs of few past efforts or lack of visibility for initiatives that previously took place. Based on general reflections, the challenges faced by the women actively engaged with decision-makers and Track I actors in Kosovo and the European Union

have been noteworthy. Women were engaged in Track II space, but their efforts and contributions were disregarded by Track I actors. Women actors, previously engaged in peacebuilding initiatives, express disappointment at the rapidly changing attitudes of negotiators and a struggle for recognition. This underscores a resistance against genuine inclusion, revealing the need for continued efforts to dismantle barriers and foster a more equitable and appreciative environment for women's vital contributions to decision-making.

Women's Networks

Kosovo Women's Network

Against these backdrops, efforts made by Kosovo Women's Network have garnered recognition among diverse stakeholders for their positive influence in advocating and pushing for women's inclusion in past peace processes. As a result of mobilisation, women consulted with the key negotiators and advocated for equal representation in the negotiations in accordance with Resolution 1325. Beyond the context factors and international support, this active role has been credited to the women's strong will to self-organise and commitment to exert influence in the dialogue.

Transfer across tracks in Kosovo

The past experience and insights indicate that transfer from Track II to Track I has proven challenging due to the confidential nature of negotiations, the government's reluctance and limitations to have discussions and cooperate with Track II actors, as well as rapid political changes and ineffectiveness of past efforts. Factors like the underrepresentation of the groups in formal processes especially contribute to this disconnect. Many interviewees described Track I and Track II as *parallel* processes despite a general feeling that the essential role of the former is to *complement* the latter. When it comes to cooperation between state actors and civil society, past experience of the civil society actors who worked closely with the representatives of the Assembly expressed frustrations that fast political changes have significantly complicated the transfer of knowledge, expertise, and influence across Tracks.

However, there were positive examples, such as policy proposals, consultations and problem-solving workshops. At certain times, civil society played an active role through advisory input

and participation in problem-solving meetings alongside the EU (Track I.5). Regular meetings between civil society and the EU further facilitated communication and exchange. The period from 2015 to 2018 in EU-facilitated dialogue was also named a "golden period" of transfer (Interview 14). One of the participants recalled the positive example when sexual violence during the war and missing persons issues were incorporated into the dialogue, mainly as an outcome of grassroots advocacy (Interview 32).

However, it should be noted that the experience of women civil society actors has been that during the meetings with the state representatives, they talk to the women actors rather than women voicing their needs and suggestions (Interview 32).

2.4.   Women's Involvement and Inclusion in Implementation

There is a wide range of perspectives on women's roles in Kosovo, ranging from the limited involvement of women actors in Track I and Track II peace processes to the emergent leadership of women within civil society. However, when it comes to implementation in particular, like the negotiations, direct participation remains limited, and there is limited knowledge and understanding of women's inclusion in the implementation process (besides Edita Tahiri as Chief Negotiator). As previously mentioned concerning the complexity and multi-layered nature of implementation, involving various inclusion modalities, often similar to the context in Kosovo, it is perceived as a top-down process, reflecting power dynamics influenced by societal attitudes. A rare case of women's engagement in the implementation of agreements includes intra-parliamentary work in the form of statements, recommendations, clarifications and opinions from female MPs (Interview 38). With respect to indirect engagement in implementation, women are active in research and advocacy, but there is no familiarity with women-led initiatives that support implementation (Interview 13).

3.   Towards Inclusive Processes in Kosovo

3.1.   Entry Points and Strategic Recommendations to Increase Women's Inclusion in Track II Processes

The importance of involving women in advancing stalled processes was one of the key focus areas that emerged concerning the potential driving force positively affecting the stalemate. Concerning the future role and contribution of Track II, participants emphasised its potential to be' informative' (Interview 40), (Interview 18), fostering 'coordination' and 'cooperation'

(Interview 27) among actors, while remaining 'independent' and 'neutral' (Interview 18). Participants emphasised the collaboration between the government and civil society to ensure there is a proper representation of the needs and demands of the diverse communities in Kosovo. Moreover, calls for more transparency on the dialogue developments and agreements reached are seen as crucial in civil society's work to inform the general public, mobilise the people's acceptance of this process and prevent group polarisation and inter-ethnic tensions due to elevated threats as a result of misunderstanding the meaning of the reached agreements, especially the ASMM. Moreover, calls for the inclusion of the gender agenda, with a focus on bringing to the table of negotiations the issue of wartime sexual violence, alongside calls for more women participation in the negotiation team, are prevalent.

Based on the study participants' viewpoints and subsequent analysis of the data, possible entry points and options to move forward and address the problem of women's inclusion in Track II peace process and enhance transfer from Track II to Track I can include the following:

- **Need to rethink and change the approach and strategies:** strategy is less effective when targeting the international actors who are already supporting inclusion. On the contrary, there is a need for advocacy that targets domestic actors with decision-making power. Map out and think about the strategies for transfer targeting the political actors and the new EU representatives.

- **Local ownership and intersectional approach in developing inclusion criteria:** there is a need to enhance the inclusion of diverse groups who will feel ownership over the process. Inclusion criteria should entail ethnic, religious, gender and age aspects to enable sustained and meaningful engagement of local mediators, women, and civil society organisations.

- **Trust-building and reconciliation on the grassroots level (and scaling up local engagement):** civil society needs to engage on the ground with Serb minorities (raising awareness and facilitating direct interaction between government and local communities). This can also imply continuing talks beyond the EU-led process. In terms of the existing approach, one interview participant working on educational and humanitarian programs criticised the dispersed and small-scale nature of interventions and suggested establishing a prominent umbrella organisation (as a significant Track II player) working towards reconciliation of Serbs and Albanians (Interview 40).

- **Improved transparency and communication:** since one of the major problems is 'the lack of transparency substantially affects the proper organisation of civil society to influence the implementation' (Interview 25), improved communication and transparency in the process can play a major role in changing behaviour and enabling inclusive and comprehensive implementation processes. Mitigate communication challenges to improve coordination across tracks and enable inclusion in implementation. Considering the confidentiality of the format, the improved communication may also involve consultations and exchanges between the convenors of the two tracks.

- **Developing advocacy strategies among Kosovo women peacebuilders:** women peacebuilders in Track II may pursue either *insider* strategies, involving direct exchanges with the mediator or negotiation teams, or *outsider* strategies, which encompass public outreach, media engagement, and advocacy efforts. It is essential that the timing of active lobbying by the women actors could make a big difference (for example, Kosovo women can design advocacy strategies and tactics vis-à-vis the incoming EU envoy).

- **Consultative mechanisms between Track I and Track II actors:** consultations, endorsed by negotiators and mediators, directly connect negotiators with diverse stakeholders, including women, offering a crucial platform for those typically excluded from high-level decision-making to voice their needs and concerns (for example, the dialogue led by Edita Tahiri, a chief woman negotiator from Kosovo, could proceed with talks engaging other women). Continuity in the process can involve women's early participation in agenda-setting and regular communication, potentially helping to avoid the obstacles previously faced by women actors in civil society.

- **Change the scope of the agenda and address gender-sensitive issues:** after taking stock of the meaningful inclusion and influence of women in peace processes between Kosovo and Serbia, the report concludes that the quantitative presence of women, even in leadership positions, does not have a transformative capacity without addressing gender-sensitive problems that persist in formal and informal settings. This includes ensuring that measures address the specific vulnerabilities and needs of both men and women. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge the gender dimension of hard

security policy, especially with Kosovo moving towards implementing action plans on Women, Peace, and Security.

3.2. Implementation and Monitoring

Different perspectives have emerged regarding the path forward for implementation, reflecting diverse opinions on how to address the existing challenges. Some participants expressed the need to impose sanctions on parties to address infringements and non-compliance, viewing this as crucial for upholding the integrity of the agreements. Besides, some share the viewpoint on the need for international pressure, which implies more involvement from the US or the EU and stricter EU conditionality, which, while sticking to the existing arrangements, could leverage its influence to move implementation forward. While some acknowledge its central role in identifying the needs on the ground, others think the role of civil society should be limited to monitoring, advocacy and confidence-building measures.

In terms of inclusion, there is a consensus on the need to reshape implementation into a bottom-up, citizen-centred approach. This involves actively engaging with stakeholders, including consultations with women's civil society organisations and community representatives, to ensure that diverse voices and perspectives are heard and incorporated into decision-making processes. By prioritising inclusivity and fostering meaningful dialogue with key stakeholders, it is believed that implementation efforts can be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the broader community, ultimately contributing to greater legitimacy and effectiveness in achieving sustainable peace and development.

It is also recognised that monitoring progress in implementation might pave the way to more inclusive engagement. General reflections on how to proceed with monitoring include two diverging positions: 1. Monitoring framework already exists (including the EU mechanism that is part of the European integration processes), and they need to stick to and implement the existing framework. 2. There is a need to seek new solutions and instruments to improve the monitoring and implementation process, which is w non-transparent and lacks tools to measure impact, especially on a local level.

The proposed areas of improvement in progress monitoring can potentially include:

- **Inclusive Joint monitoring committee:** this will include civil society, women peacebuilders, government, and international representatives from the EU and Western

countries (some especially stress the importance and necessity of the EU's involvement in monitoring; others emphasise local ownership and the vital role of women). The civil society actors potentially take the lead in needs assessment and report developments.

- **Making more concrete and localised indicators for monitoring entails adapting indicators to reflect local communities' needs, priorities, and capacities** while ensuring meaningful participation and ownership throughout the process**.** This can include sequencing and defining indicators to operationalise the Implementation Annex.

- **Improved and real-time collaboration between the government and civil society:** collaboration is seen to be essential in sequencing events and establishing formal procedures. One potential solution could be establishing a nondisclosure agreement between civil society and the government to enhance inclusivity and address the issue of transparency gaps in implementing agreements. Furthermore, the early involvement of women in the implementation of Kosovo-Serbia peace agreements also seems important, together with promoting inclusion, for establishing sustainability in cooperation.[49]

3.3.   Engaging International Actors to Support the Inclusive Processes

There are mixed views over the international community's role in pushing forward the dialogue and rendering this process more inclusive through calls for the inclusion of women, youth, non-majority communities and persons affected directly by the conflict. Funding of civil society is also seen as a key point for international support in peace processes; however, it is noted that this involvement should be meaningful to avoid supporting organisations intending to "check boxes". While there is a general census that the international community needs to restart the stagnated dialogue and that it could lobby more for the inclusion of women and non-majority communities, there is also an acknowledgement that pressure coming from outside is not a sustainable solution. Changes need to be made within the country, and local ownership should be involved in the process of promoting inclusion. For example, there have been criticisms regarding the communication of the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina

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[49] For example, the case of Colombia shows that women's participation in the early agenda-setting stages of a peace process can be effective to make peace process more sustainable.

Dialogue with women groups in Kosovo, alongside the European Union's double standards in approaches towards Kosovo vis-à-vis Serbia. Based on international comparative experiences, the level of support, attentiveness and responsibility of international actors tend to be key enabling or constraining factors in women's inclusion, and the interviews suggest that more could be done in this area.

Strategic Recommendations for International Actors

- Hold consultations with women and local actors to broad participation and co-design and co-implement the inclusive processes;

- Support, fund, and empower local actors (awareness raising, expertise, facilitating their involvement at decision-making and formal Track I level);

- Promote intra-state and inter-state dialogue by facilitating communication, restructuring format and implementing confidence-building initiatives;

- Continue to accompany the progress monitoring, including improving the existing EU mechanism in cooperation with the civil society in Kosovo and Serbia; and

- Exert pressure or provide incentives to political actors to advance the implementation process.

Linkages to European Integration and the Role of the EU

Furthermore, the interviews tend to show a shared perspective that steps toward European integration, despite being an undertaking accompanied by varying legal and political challenges, have significantly contributed to advancing dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. This is why, on the one hand, some emphasised the necessity for strict EU conditionality for sustained progress during the implementation phase. On the other hand, there was a different view that integrating implementation into the EU accession path did not lead to tangible results in terms of overcoming implementation shortcomings. Providing rationale for their support of peace processes, international actors also call attention to the great importance of the advancement of the process to the Western Balkan's accession to the EU.

V.   CONCLUSIONS

The report analysed primary data retrieved from the interviews to present findings on women's inclusion and Track II initiatives in the Kosovo-Serbia peace processes. Examining past experience and taking into account different perspectives, it found the commonly identified constraining factors and future entry points to adapt, support or complement the ongoing efforts for increasing women's inclusion.

To conclude, exclusion findings substantiate the notion of the exclusive nature of the Kosovo-Serbia peace processes. Likewise, a number of constraining factors (Section 2.2) hinder women's meaningful participation in Track I and Track II activities. While represented in leadership positions, different constraining factors limit their influence in Track I and Track II spaces. At the same time, few disclosed cases of women's contributions, while often overlooked, were deemed notable in accordance with secondary literature on the positive impact of women's engagement in peace processes.

In the context of persisting challenges in Track I and Track II, it becomes critical to rethink the peace process and how actors engage and collaborate. Notably, in light of existing ambiguity in commitments and stalemate in the implementation of the Brussels Agreement, Track II efforts may offer a more effective avenue for sustainable peacebuilding and enhance the legitimacy of the peace process by fostering a sense of ownership in communities. This also underscores the critical importance of Kosovo women's inclusion in separate tracks and across tracks, which emerged as a key focal point for potentially breaking the stalemate.

The report highlights several entry points and options for advancing women's inclusion in the Track II peace process and facilitating cross-track transfer (presented in Section 3.3):

● Rethinking and changing the approach and strategies on inclusion vis-à-vis domestic and international actors;

● Local ownership and intersectional approach in developing inclusion criteria;

● Promoting trust-building and reconciliation on the grassroots level (and scaling up local engagement);

● Improved transparency and communication between government and civil society in Kosovo;

● Developing advocacy strategies among Kosovo women peacebuilders;

● Establishing consultative mechanisms between Track I and Track II actors;

● Changing the scope of the agenda and addressing gender-sensitive issues.

Finally, while the research revealed differing perspectives on the past contributions of international actors to advancing the dialogue and fostering inclusivity, the interview respondents voiced the need for international engagement (particularly the European Union) in supporting and empowering civil society and women actors in Kosovo.

VI.   APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interview Guide

Looking back/context assessment

1. Milestones and progress

    .   What were critical junctures/moments in past peace processes? Which of those specifically led to the agreements? Do you think the recent agreements could provide a more comprehensive framework to address the challenges of the EU-facilitated peace process?

    .   What role have civil society actors and women played in past peace processes? Are you aware of any achievements with regard to making the processes more inclusive? What do you see as challenges or barriers to inclusion in these processes to date?

2. Taking stock of Track II peace processes

    a. Please can you tell me about any Track II initiatives in which you have been involved? (Follow-up questions on thematic purpose and set up if necessary and appropriate):

        i.   What were its aims? What did the initiative entail substantively?

        ii.   When did this project begin? How did you become involved? Who else was involved? Which body funded the project?

    b. How do you see these Track II initiatives contributing to peacebuilding outcomes? And how do you see them being connected to and influencing Track I efforts? We are interested in the concept of 'transfer'. Have you come across this term before? (If the participant has not, provide a brief explanation). Returning to the project(s) we discussed earlier in the interview, did you plan to achieve particular types of transfer during these initiatives, and to what extent were these achieved? Where these were not (fully) achieved, what do you see as the obstacles? Which actors or individuals did the initiative plan to target in terms of transfer and what were the results?

Implementation stage

3. What are current civilian-led initiatives to support the implementation of the agreements?

4. How have women engaged in these efforts related to and worked with each other? Do any coalitions, networks or platforms exist which have sought to combine efforts, influence and leverage? If so, what have been some lessons learned from these efforts and what do you see as opportunities going forward? If not, are there particular insights regarding "how" women peacebuilders have (or have not) interacted with each other, and is this connected to the kinds of inclusion outcomes seen to date?

5. To what extent are women currently involved in the implementation process? What specific roles do women play in these activities (e.g., leadership, research, advocacy)?

6. What are the key obstacles to women's participation in peace processes in Kosovo?

Moving forward

7. How would you plan the implementation of the Brussels Agreement – who would you involve and how? Would it be different from the implementation annexe?

8. How would you want to monitor and check progress – what indicators would demonstrate progress? How would you deal with any infringements?

9. In the current political and peacebuilding climate in Kosovo, which seems to feature a number of challenges, how do you see entry points to render ongoing processes more inclusive (focus on regional and local)? What, in your view, should the role be for Track II initiatives?

10. How can the international community most effectively support the fulfilment of those entry points? What additional resources, mechanisms or support would be needed to achieve increased participation?

Additional question(s):

1. Would you like to add anything, or is there anything I have not asked which I should have?

2. Are you aware of any other (civil society) stakeholder you would recommend we speak with for this policy paper?

Appendix B. Interview Bibliography

Interview 1: Prishtina, 30.01.2024

Interview 2: Prishtina, 02.02.2024

Interview 3: Prishtina, 06.02.2024

Interview 4: Prishtina, 08.02.2024

Interview 5: Prishtina, 09.02.2024

Interview 6: Prishtina, 09.02.2024

Interview 7: Prishtina, 12.02.2024

Interview 8: Prishtina, 12.02.2024

Interview 9: Prishtina, 13.02.2024

Interview 10: Prishtina, 13.02.2024

Interview 11: Prishtina, 13.02.2024

Interview 12: Prishtina, 13.02.2024

Interview 13: Prishtina, 14.02.2024

Interview 14: Prishtina, 14.02.2024

Interview 15: Prishtina, 14.02.2024

Interview 16: Prishtina, 15.02.2024

Interview 17: Prishtina, 15.02.2024

Interview 18: Prishtina, 16.02.2024

Interview 19: Prishtina, 16.02.2024

Interview 20: Prishtina, 16.02.2024

Interview 21: Prishtina, 16.02.2024

Interview 22: Prishtina, 16.02.2024

Interview 23: Prishtina, 16.02.2024

Interview 24: Prishtina, 16.02.2024

Interview 25: Prishtina, 16.02.2024

Interview 26: Prishtina, 19.022024

Interview 27: Prishtina, 19.02.2024

Interview 28: Prishtina, 19.02.2024

Interview 29: Prishtina, 19.02.2024

Interview 30: Prishtina, 20.02.2024

Interview 31: Prishtina, 20.02.2024

Interview 32: Prishtina, 20.02.2024

Interview 33: Prishtina, 20.02.2024

Interview 34: Prishtina, 21.02.2024

Interview 35: Prishtina, 22.02.2024

Interview 36: Prishtina, 23.02.2024

Interview 37: Prishtina, 23.02.2024

Interview 38: Prishtina, 23.02.2024

Interview 39: Prishtina, 23.02.2024

Interview 40: Prishtina, 26.02.2024

Interview 41: Prishtina, 29.02.2024

Interview 42: Prishtina, 29.02.2024

Interview 43: Prishtina, 07.03.2024

Appendix C. The distribution of coded segments from the data regarding pivotal moments in the peace processes

Critical Junctures

Legend:
- Vienna process and Ahtisaari Plan (2004-2007)
- Invasion of Ukraine (provided momentum for the EU)
- New EU-led process in 2018 to reach CPA
- Agreement on Integrated Border (IBM) (2011)
- The Brussels Agreement
- Rambouillet process (1999)
- EU-facilitated Dialogue (2011-present)
- Agreement on Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities

14.8% 3.7% 1.9% 3.7% 13.0% 9.3% 16.7% 37.0%