EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES KOSOVO

Socioeconomic Conditions in Northern Kosovo
Factsheet on Social Welfare

This municipality factsheet seeks to provide a specific overview of the findings reported in the recent survey on the "*Socioeconomic Conditions in Northern Kosovo*". The full comprehensive narrative of the report, issued by ECMI Kosovo in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and the British Embassy in Prishtinë/Priština, is available in pdf on ECMI Kosovo official webpage, under our "Publication" section: https://ecmikosova.org/publications/.
The objective of this report, based on the perceptions and subjective opinions of the respondents, is to spotlight issues encountered by northern Kosovo residents in their daily lives, to voice their needs, concerns and aspirations. The report shows a quantitative and qualitative analysis of answers from a questionnaire administered to a sample of 721 respondents living in the four municipalities of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveqan. When analysing and comparing responses between municipalities, it is very important to remember that the questionnaire addresses perceptions and not necessarily the objective reality of the current situation.
For the sake of clarity, all the data and figures published in the following factsheet refer to the abovementioned report – where not otherwise specified.

Introduction

Social welfare is not just limited to government assistance programmes, and is affected by a variety of factors. Indeed, poverty is considered to be the biggest problem by local communities, second only to unemployment[1]. But also important is overall safety, which many observers target as an area that needs improvement. Media reports of violence in northern Kosovo are common, and the issue of violence among youth persists. Nevertheless, perceptions of safety seem to have risen among residents, raising a question about the day-to-day experience of life in northern Kosovo. Finally, even though a lack of cultural and social development programmes have less striking negative effects, they remain an integral factor for the long term perception of satisfaction and social welfare of the communities.

Key Findings

- Participation and assistance from social welfare schemes is perceived as insufficient.
- Public programmes and services for older people and people with disabilities are considered unsatisfactory.
- Cultural programming is viewed as unsatisfactory, particularly by young people.
- There is a pervasive feeling of safety despite perceived shortcomings of local authorities' ability to respond to violence.

I. General Perceptions

The level of information about social welfare programmes is generally low. This could be associated with complications arising from having parallel sources of public funding in northern Kosovo.
Only a very small percentage of respondents reported being among the beneficiaries of social welfare programmes; this could also be an underestimation due to the essence of the question; respondents might not

[1] According to UNDP opinion polls, UNDP, *Public Pulse Poll: Fast Facts V*, Nov. 2012 *available at* http://www.kosovo.undp.org/repository/docs/2012/Fast_Facts_5-Final.pdf, at p. 5.

feel comfortable disclosing what state benefits they receive, despite guaranteed anonymity. Most of the respondents have answered to be “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” with the abovementioned programmes.

II. Public Programmes and Services

Respondents in all four municipalities expressed significant dissatisfaction with the three types of public programmes and services: those for older people, those for people with disabilities and those related to cultural events and initiatives. Programmes and services targeting older people are far from satisfactory according to respondents; a lack of satisfactory programmes does, however, affect the younger population who are expected to take care of parents once they grow old. There was also a negative consensus from 50-70 year olds when asked whether they think their income is able to meet their basic requirements (negative answers ranged between 62% and 82%). Social development services for people with disabilities also seem far from satisfactory based on local perception: the sample also helps identify how well known such programmes are locally. Perceptions about cultural events are also generally negative, with a total of 40% dissatisfied and 24% somewhat dissatisfied in northern Kosovo. In all four municipalities, respondents aged between 15 and 24 were the main contributor to these negative results. This information can indicate a certain lack of cultural programmes targeting young people, or the inadequacy of such programmes in meeting certain expectations.

III. Safety

When asked to report their perceived degree of safety, the least amount of respondents for each municipality declared that they felt completely unsafe (between 2% and 8%).Even feeling somewhat unsafe is the next most unpopular option, for the municipalities of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, and Zvečan/Zveqan (between 8% and 10%); respondents in Zubin Potk, however, felt somehow more unsafe (26%).

The above findings are somewhat inconsistent with perceptions regarding local authorities’ and civil societies’ capacities to respond to violence, found somewhat or completely unsatisfactory by a range of respondents between 33% up to 70%.

Because the survey did not provide a definition of safety, some respondents might not have replied in a strictly physical context. Similarly, safety can be perceived both as an everyday issue, such as walking alone at night, or a more general one, such as long term stability in the region. These variations dilute the correlation between adequate response to violence and general feelings of safety.

Recommendations

- Conduct further research with beneficiaries of social welfare.
- Increase efforts to provide adequate social development for people with disabilities and for older people.
- Increase efforts to match local desires (especially of young people) with cultural events.